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CONTENTS

NEW MODES OF SELF-FASHIONING

- Alberto Lazaro** The Culture of Migration in British Modernist Fiction / 9
- Alexandru Budac** The Zen Master's Comics: Self-Awareness and Popular Culture in Glen David Gold's *I Will Be Complete* / 19
- Abbas Goudarzi** Shakespeare and the Bakhtinian Dialogism: The Case Of *Othello* / 27
- Cristina Chevereşan** "A Stranger in Mitteleuropa": Central-European Insights in Philip Roth's *The Prague Orgy* / 39
- Xiaorui Du** Salvation through Individuation: A Jungian Interpretation of Larry Darrel's Spiritual Journey in *The Razor's Edge* / 49
- Oleksandr Kapranov** Self-Mention in Research Sections of University Websites in Estonia and the United Kingdom / 57
- Kevin Wolke** Racist Expatriate? Henry Miller's National Stereotypes in *Tropic of Capricorn* and *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* / 71
- Maulana Mualim** A City upon a Hill: Spirituality and Exceptionalism in the Founding of America / 85
- Paulina Napierała** Black Churches and African-American Social Activism. The 'Opiate View' and the 'Inspiration View' of Black Religion in the Selected Literature / 95
- Mihaela Georgiana Manasia** Pseudonymity: Victorian Women Authors' Recognition Strategy / 113

THE BEAUTY OF MEDUSA – PARADOXES OF CULTURE

- Andrea Velich** Ken Loach’s Fair Share of Home and Family Issues from *Cathy Come Home* and *The Angels’ Share* to *Sorry, We Missed You* / 125
- Estella Ciobanu** Silent Medusa? En-Gendering Knowledge in The West: A Case Study / 135
- Jovanka Kalaba** Aestheticism and Art Nouveau in Oscar Wilde’s *Salomé* / 147
- Adriana Răducanu** Laws of Attraction: Language and/as Magic in *Othello* and *The Enchantress of Florence* / 157
- Christopher E. Koy** Folklore and Voodoo in Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* / 167
- Juan de Dios Torralbo Caballero** “I Cannot Want a Muse, Who Write to You”: The Multiplicity of Rhetorical Styles in Behn’s *The Unfortunate Bride: Or, The Blind Lady A Beauty. A Novel* / 177
- Gabriela Glăvan** Years of the Plague. A Rereading of Philip Roth’s *Nemesis* / 191
- Kiyotaka Sueyoshi** Jeffersonian Whitman: The Impact Of Jefferson On Whitman / 201

SOWING THE WIND, REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

- Shreya Bera** Fear, Sexuality, and Liberation: Pursuit of the Sublime in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *Mistress of Spices* / 213
- Hogar Najm Abdullah** ‘Brutalized’ Black Masculinity: The Performance of Intersectionality in Ann Petry’s *The Narrows* / 221
- Kulamangalam Thiagarajan
Tamilmani
Rathinasamy Nagalakshmi** Narratives of Survival: Invisible Oppression and Retaliation in Joyce Carol Oates’ *Marya: A Life* / 231

Mustafa Wshyar	Structural Violence Representation in <i>And The Mountains Echoed</i> by Khaled Hosseini / 241
Sajad Ghanbari Sajad Gheytsi	The Study of Dissidence as Presented in <i>The Birthday Party</i> by Harold Pinter / 251
Mihaela Popuța	The Disunited States of America and the Liminality of Memory in Paul Auster's <i>4321</i> / 263
Ileana Șora Dimitriu	Literary Representations of Home, Belonging and Unbelonging in Amamanda Adichie's 'Migrant Bildungsroman', <i>Americanah</i> / 271

BOOK REVIEWS

Sorin Cazacu	Susana Onega, Jean-Michel Ganteau (eds). <i>Transcending the Postmodern: The Singular Response of Literature to The Transmodern Paradigm</i> / 285
Andreea Șerban	Cătălina Iliescu. <i>Traducerea textului dramatic</i> / 289
Mihaela Cozma	Najwa Hamaoui, Daniel Dejica (Guest eds.). <i>Interpersonal and Inter-Linguistic Communication in the Digital Age. Digital Inclusion and Accessibility</i> / 293
Valentina Mureșan	Nicoletta Vasta, Anthony Baldry (eds). <i>Multiliteracy Advances and Multimodal Challenges in ELT Environments</i> / 297

NOTES ON THE AUTHORS / 303

NEW MODES OF SELF-FASHIONING

THE CULTURE OF MIGRATION IN BRITISH MODERNIST FICTION

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***Abstract:** Issues of migration and exile have been explored by a wide range of well-known postcolonial writers such as V. S. Naipaul, Caryl Phillips, Monica Ali and many others, whose work has gained interest since the end of the Second World War. However, in the first half of the twentieth century, before the boom of the Caribbean and Asian migration novels, leading figures of the modernist movement had also dealt with experiences of exile, alienation and displacement, whether forced or self-imposed. This essay will examine a selection of texts by four representative modernist novelists – Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence – to show how, long before the postcolonial period, they addressed the essence of migration.*

***Keywords:** British, exile, fiction, migration, modernism*

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of migration has existed from the beginning of civilisation and has touched every corner of the world, fluctuating through various historical contexts. Today, it seems that we are flooded with news reports dealing with asylum seekers and refugee crises, as a result of armed conflicts or economic hardship. Similarly, issues of migration, exile and diaspora are being discussed by a large number of contemporary postcolonial authors. The anxieties of displaced life concern a wide corpus of writings by recent successful novelists, such as Caryl Phillips, V. S. Naipaul, Timothy Mo, Monica Ali, Hanif Kureishi, and many others from the Indian and other diasporas. Nevertheless, in the first half of the twentieth century, before the boom of Caribbean and Asian migration novels, leading figures of the modernist movement had also tackled experiences of exile, isolation, language barriers, cultural shock, segregation, and displacement, whether forced or self-imposed. Some of these authors were themselves migrants as well. Although modernist novelists have usually been linked to formal experimentalism and a rejection of realistic representation, the line of argument followed here is that modernist fiction is also concerned with social issues, such as migration. This approach goes along with research that encourages a reassessment of the social and political dimensions of literary modernism (Booth, Rigby 2000, Caneda 2002, Berman 2011). This essay will examine a selection of texts by four representative modernist authors – Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence – to show how they addressed the nature of migration long before the postcolonial era.

In recent years, the interest in postcolonial literature and theory has brought about many studies on the experience of migration. Some authors, among very many that could be considered here, are Homi Bhabha (1994), Bruce Bennett (1998) or Gillian Bottomley (1992). Very often, types of migrations are presented

in simple dichotomies, such as international and internal, temporary and permanent, regular and irregular, or voluntary and forced. Edward Said even distinguishes between “actual” and “metaphorical” exiles and migrations (1994: 39). However, sometimes these are hard and fast categories that offer problematic distinctions. For instance, voluntary migration is sometimes used synonymously with terms like “economic migration” (Keely 2000: 50), but we all know that even the voluntary migrations of this economic type or those meant to reunite families include some kind of pressure on the migrant’s free choice. Moreover, this type of voluntary economic migration might be very different from the voluntary bourgeois exile, done for pleasure, that Homi Bhabha evokes at the beginning of his essay “DissemiNation” (1994: 139). In the following lines, different types of migrations will be discussed, but the focus will be on how these modernist novelists understand the immigrant experience, what the determinants and consequences of the migration are, and how those who move experience departure, migration and settlement.

2. Joseph Conrad

Conrad’s experiments in style and technique made him one of the early representatives of British modernist fiction. In fact, he was not born in Britain. He was born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski in the Russian-occupied Poland. His father was arrested for being involved in the underground resistance to the Russian authorities and the whole family was exiled in northern Russia. When he was still a teenager, already an orphan, he went to Marseilles and began a maritime career with the French merchant fleet. Then, he spent some time working on various English ships before he settled down in England and became a British subject, at the age of 29. As most critics have pointed out, his stories were often inspired by his own life experiences at sea, travelling and living away from his native country. Therefore, themes of exile, expatriation and loneliness dominate his work. Many of his characters are expatriates who isolate themselves from their own cultures and countries, are exposed to extreme situations and do not often survive the tests they must face.

An interesting short story that illustrates all these themes is “Amy Foster”, first published in the *Illustrated London News* (December 1901) and later collected in *Typhoon and Other Stories* (1903). It is an anguished tale of migration and exile that Edward Said (2000: 179) read as “the most uncompromising representation of exile ever written”. It narrates the adventures of a poor illiterate man from central Europe, called Yanko Goorall, who, like the author, leaves his home to sail the seas. He is an economic migrant who, after a painful journey across northern Europe, sails with many others on board “an emigrant-ship” from Hamburg bound to America, in the hope of making his fortune: “for there was work to be got all the year round at three dollars a day in America, and no military service to do” (Conrad 1925: 116). But his ship sinks and he becomes a kind of “castaway” in a coastal village in England. At first, ignorant of the shipwreck, the people treat him as a dangerous beggar and a madman. Since he does not speak English, they are also frightened by his peculiar foreign language, and they give him no assistance. Eventually, an eccentric old local, Mr. Swaffer, offers him shelter and work. However, it is only after Yanko saves Swaffer’s grand-daughter from drowning that the latter begins to pay him regular wages. Eventually, he marries a dull and passive local girl (the Amy Foster of the title), who had shown him some kindness.

One day, when Yanko falls ill and starts raving in his native tongue, suffering from a fever, Amy, terrified, runs away. Yanko dies of heart failure the next morning, neglected, and bewildered. Then, we learn that he had actually been asking for some water in his native language.

It is true that nobody asks him for a passport or papers and he is not taken to a detention centre for illegal immigrants, as it might happen today, but Conrad here relates an anguished tale of an alien migrant in England, who suffered social rejection and isolation, exploitation, humiliation, loneliness, and who ultimately is reduced to the degree zero of existence. Despite his marriage, Yanko is still perceived in the locality as an outsider. Conrad uses a real event as the basis of his story and seems to reflect the experience of many other people who uprooted themselves in their search for a better life. It has even been read as “Conrad’s subterranean autobiographical reflection on life in England” (Israel 2000: 28). Though the story is narrated by Dr Kennedy, one of the few local characters who is sympathetic to Yanko, Conrad shows these terrible experiences through the emigrant’s naive and unsophisticated point of view. Yanko does not understand where he is or what is going on around him, but the reader is fully aware of his plight and the xenophobic reaction of the locals. This story is a clear representation of the traumas of displacement and transcultural misunderstanding. Yanko is baffled by the local customs and feels “like a man transplanted into another planet” (Conrad 1925: 132). What makes his situation even worse is that the locals never try to understand his feeling or his culture, which is utterly rejected.

One evening, in the tap-room of the Coach and Horses (having drunk some whisky), he upset them all by singing a love song of his country. They hooted him down, and he was pained; but Preble, the lame wheelwright, and Vincent, the fat blacksmith, and the other notables too, wanted to drink their evening beer in peace. (Conrad 1925: 132)

Yanko tries to integrate and learn the locals’ language, speaking at first what it is described as “a sort of anxious baby-talk”, then, using the language with fluency but a strong accent (Conrad 1925: 117). However, he fails in his struggle to perfect his English and to assimilate into a society that refuses to accept him. He never feels that he belongs.

3. James Joyce

Another representative modernist writer is the Irish novelist James Joyce, renowned for his playful experiments with language and new narrative techniques in works of fiction such as *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Though his books are about Ireland and the Irish people, he lived most of his life away from his country. Like Stephen in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce resolves to leave Ireland to encounter “the reality of experience” (Joyce 1982: 253) and to free himself from the nets of nationality, religion and family in order to become a writer. He fled Ireland into a voluntary exile in 1904 and did most of his writing in Trieste, Zurich, and Paris. In his work, Joyce often describes the Ireland of the emigration. A country with a tumultuous past and dominated by the English colonisation, it had endured several waves of mass emigration, particularly after the Potato Famine of 1848. Joyce wrote an autobiographical play entitled *Exiles* (1918), which concerns an Irish writer who returns home after living in Europe with his common-law wife and son.

To illustrate Joyce's views on emigration, we could take a look at "Eveline", a short story first published in 1904 by the journal *Irish Homestead* and later included in *Dubliners* (1914). Here, a young Irish working-class woman dreams of escaping a boring and oppressive life in Dublin, where she lives with her alcoholic and abusive father. A sailor called Frank urges her to go with him to Buenos Aires, where he has prospects. She loves him and, in secret, agrees to go with him. Argentina might be the place where she hopes to avoid her father's violence as well as her mother's "life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness" (Joyce 1989: 41). However, Eveline, however, faces a difficult dilemma: to stay at home like a dutiful and submissive daughter or leave Dublin with her new boyfriend. At the last moment, when they are about to board the boat, she refuses to elope to America and stays in Dublin. The story concludes in a gripping and sad way:

"Eveline! Evvy!"

He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition. (Joyce 1989: 42-43)

This ending is usually seen as another example of the Dublin paralysis and frustration that dominate all the stories of this collection. Gerald Doherty, for instance, discusses this paralysis in *Dubliners* as a metaphor for the plight of the characters of these stories that see themselves in situations that they cannot understand or control, "and from which they cannot escape" (1992: 35). Eveline is paralysed either by fear of the unknown or by her sense of duty, since she promised her dead mother "to keep the home together as long as she could" (Joyce 1989: 41). In fact, it represents the contrasting pull that many women in the early twentieth century Dublin felt between a traditional domestic life and the prospect of a new married life abroad. On the one hand, Eveline feels ready to leave her hard existence in Ireland and emigrate to Argentina, but, on the other, she worries about what she would be leaving behind. In the end, familiarity becomes more important than adventure. She is different from other characters in the story that represent the constant emigration that typified Ireland: some neighbours of her childhood are gone (Joyce 1989: 37), a school friend of her father's also went to Melbourne (Joyce 1989: 38) and Frank will also live in Argentina.

There is also another possible interpretation of Eveline's refusal to go with Frank to Argentina. Perhaps the paralysis felt by most Dubliners is not the only reason that made Eveline stay in Ireland. Perhaps it was her fear of what might happen to her in America with Frank. There is one detail that might shed some light on this. When the relationship between Frank and Eveline is described, we learn that one day Frank, who is fond of music, takes her to see the opera *The Bohemian Girl* (Joyce 1989: 40). Joyce often incorporates allusions to operas and songs in his stories and they have been proven to be central to the understanding of his writings (Bowen 1974). It is important to note that *The Bohemian Girl* is a ballad opera about the fortunes of a girl who is abducted by some gypsies and taken away from her home in Bohemia. Also, at that time Buenos Aires was associated with prostitution. Historians like Ivette Trochón (2006) show that, at that time, Buenos Aires was the centre of the white slave trade between Europe and South America. So, perhaps, Eveline made the right decision after all. It is true that Frank has told Eveline that he intends to marry her, but he is a somewhat enigmatic

character, a charming sailor whose intentions might be devious. Eveline might have ended up as a victim trapped in the sex trafficking industry. Indeed, some critics suggest that Eveline may have understood this better than many readers thought and controlled her destiny, thus escaping an ominous future in Buenos Aires (Mullin 2000 and Barberan Reinares 2013). All in all, it is important to see how, in this story, Joyce introduces the theme of emigration and presents the difficult situation of Irish women at the beginning of the twentieth century. Like men, they could try and emigrate, looking for a better life, but they would depend on men like Frank to go abroad. And they would have very little opportunity to prosper, their options being to either become the wife of a man like Frank or to get involved in the world's oldest profession.

4. Virginia Woolf

Our next author is Virginia Woolf, a prolific English novelist and essayist, biographer, and feminist, whose modernist style changed with each new novel. Her most famous works include the novels *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Orlando* (1928), and the book-length essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929). She was not an exile like Conrad or Joyce, but a Londoner who just left England when she went on holidays. However, her narrative is concerned with the theme of migration in different ways. Her first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), relates the journey of a young English woman, Rachel Vinrace, to South America. It is a kind of voluntary exile that represents a flight from a cloistered life in a London suburb to freedom and a metaphorical self-discovery voyage, something similar to what Woolf herself had experienced in her life, when she moved from the repressive household of her childhood to the intellectual stimulation of the Bloomsbury Group (Johnson 2001). In another novel, *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf includes two different types of real and physical migrations in the female characters of Lucrezia Smith and Maisie Johnson.

Lucrezia (usually called Rezia in the novel) is an Italian young woman from Milan, who met an English soldier, Septimus Warren Smith, at the end of the First World War. She was a hat maker, with her sisters, and loved her life in Italy, but she married Septimus and they both went to live in London. We could say that hers is a case of migration for love or marriage migration. In this novel, we see Rezia in a narrative that, running parallel to the protagonist's story, shows Septimus's struggles with his mental illness and final suicide. Rezia wanted a normal marriage, with children, but is now living with a war veteran, who suffers from delayed shell shock, who hears voices and speaks aloud with his friend Evans, who had died during the war. Although she makes every effort to help her husband and takes him to a renowned nervous disease doctor, she cannot avoid his tragic ending. Even though she is unable to support him throughout his fits of madness, Rezia is seen throughout as both protective and affectionate towards Septimus. She also appears as a powerful, resilient character, like Conrad's Yanko. Her refusal to leave her husband, as the well-intentioned but mistaken doctors suggest (Woolf 1986: 131) shows her to be brave and strong in the face of adversity.

However, in London, Rezia feels extremely isolated. She is away from home and family. She is in a foreign country and unable to communicate with her husband. She cannot understand his real suffering. Not only is the British culture dramatically different from her Italian roots, but she also really suffers because of Septimus's

mental illness. Making hats is one of her few joys in life. She makes hats for her landlady, Mrs Filmer, and for Mrs Filmer's daughter, Mrs Peters. She loves Septimus, but she is forced to bear the burden of his mental illness alone:

I am alone; I am alone! she cried, by the fountain in Regent's Park (staring at the Indian and his cross), as perhaps at midnight, when all boundaries are lost, the country reverts to its ancient shape, as the Romans saw it, lying cloudy, when they landed, and the hills had no names and rivers wound they knew not where – such was her darkness. (Woolf 1986: 23)

The comparison with the Romans is appropriate, since Rezia's country of origin is Italy. This loneliness and the "darkness" of his like in London, without anybody to share her pain with, make her suffer: "Never, never had Rezia felt such agony in her life! She had asked for help and been deserted!" (Woolf 1986: 8). Integration for her is impossible. The novel ends with Mrs Dalloway's party. It is significant that every major character attends the party, with two exceptions: Septimus and Rezia; Septimus because he is already dead and Rezia, ... well, she represents the outsider, the foreigner.

In *Mrs Dalloway*, there is also another type of stranger, Maisie Johnson, a young woman who has just arrived in London from Scotland. She is not a foreign migrant, but a representative of "internal migration", that is to say, migration within one geopolitical entity. But her motives are similar to Yanko's: she had come to London, a big busy city, to "take up a post at her uncle's in Leadenhall Street" (Woolf 1986: 25). When she is introduced, frightened by the Smiths (Septimus and Rezia) in Regent's Park, she appears as an outsider who reflects on the differences between life in London and her home in Edinburgh. It is a new world that bewilders her.

Both [Septimus and Rezia] seemed queer, Maisie Johnson thought. Everything seemed very queer. [...] now all these people (for she returned to the Broad Walk), the stone basins, the prim flowers, the old men and women, invalids most of them in Bath chairs – all seemed, after Edinburgh, so queer. (Woolf 1986: 25)

She is another unhappy migrant. At one point, after contemplating the differences between London and her home, in Woolf's complicated stream-of-consciousness style, we hear her voice expressing her feelings of despair with a phrase that reminds the reader of the famous words uttered by Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: "Horror! horror! she wanted to cry. (She had left her people; they had warned her what would happen.) Why hadn't she stayed at home? she cried, twisting the knob of the iron rail" (Woolf 1986: 25). She has barely arrived and already thinks that she might have made a mistake when she decided to migrate to London.

5. D. H. Lawrence

Another distinguished British modernist novelist, D. H. Lawrence is today best known for novels such as *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915) or *Women in Love* (1920), which maintained conventional syntax and straightforward plots, although their themes and poetic prose challenged the traditions of English fiction. Lawrence left Britain after the First World War years and began what he called his "savage pilgrimage", a time of voluntary exile (Carswell 1932), returning

only for brief visits. He lived in Italy, Australia, Ceylon (now called Sri Lanka), the United States, Mexico and the south of France. Many of these places and peoples appear not only in his travel books, but also in his novels. His personal experiences in Australia are incorporated in the novel *Kangaroo* (1923), which also shows the context of the long history of British migration to this continent.

Kangaroo is concerned with the marriage relationship between Richard Lovat Somers and his wife, Harriet. Richard is an English writer who has gone to Australia “to start a new life and flutter with a new hope” (Lawrence 1974: 14). Like Lawrence himself, he is in a voluntary exile, to avoid what he feels is Europe’s worn-out restrictive culture. The novel deals with the political, social and racial anxieties of the day, including the rise of communism and fascism, the future of the British Empire and migration, specifically British migration to Australia. This was a time when a lot of British people went away to Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, looking for material gain and a better life. Substantial numbers of British coal miners, for instance, arrived in Australia during the 1880s, and between 1921 and 1929 (Jupp 2004: 77). Since these territories were politically, culturally, linguistically, and racially linked to the United Kingdom, one would expect that this type of migration might involve positive experiences with successful results. One of these migrants could be Joseph Cook, who during his early life had worked in the coal mines of his birthplace of Silverdale, in Staffordshire, and after emigrating to New South Wales, became Prime Minister of Australia. However, in *Kangaroo*, Lawrence portrays a negative view of migration, criticising its motives and its consequences.

Firstly, the protagonist, Richard, who might be seen as a potential migrant to Australia, rejects the proposal of both competing political parties to settle down there and support their cause, leaving Australia at the end of the story. Australia might be an English-speaking territory, with a culture similar to that of the metropolis, but Richard sees himself as a writer-in-exile, suffering in an alien and barbarian environment:

He understood now that the Romans had preferred death to exile. He could sympathise now with Ovid on the Danube, hungering for Rome and blind to the land around him, blind to the savages. So Somers felt blind to Australia, and blind to the uncouth Australians. To him they were barbarians. The most loutish Neapolitan loafer was nearer to him in pulse than these British Australians with their aggressive familiarity. He surveyed them from an immense distance, with a kind of horror. (Lawrence 1974: 15-16)

Again, we see the “horror” of migration in the work of a modernist writer; a horror caused by differences between the two societies and the migrant’s social isolation. Richard and his wife feel very different from their Australian acquaintances. Harriet clearly states: “But I don’t want to spend my life with them. After all, that sort of people isn’t exactly my sort [...]” (Lawrence 1974: 61). For Richard, becoming an Australian carries the risk of degeneration, of losing his identity, his Englishness:

Yes he said to himself: “Do I want my blood to thin down like theirs [the Australian’s]? – that peculiar emptiness that is in them, because of the thinning that’s gone out of them? Do I want this curious transparent blood of the antipodes, with its momentaneous feelings and its sort of *absentness*? (Lawrence 1974: 148)

Another character in the novel that shows the negative side of migration is William James Trehwella (also known as Jaz), a Cornish migrant, who had gone to Australia with his brother when he was 15. Apparently, he represents the conventionally successful migrant who, after a childhood of hardships and poverty in England, leads a better life in Australia. Nevertheless, despite his material success, he could never completely integrate and, for some Australians, he remains an outsider. For instance, for Jack Callcott, the local organiser and activist of the political movement called Diggers, Jaz's nature is "secretive, may be treacherous" (Lawrence 1974: 57). What is more, Jaz himself feels he is still a foreigner. When Harriet asks him "You're Australian yourself now, aren't you? Or don't you feel it?", the way he answers suggests he is not very sure about it: "'Oh yes, I suppose I feel it,' he said, shifting uneasily on his seat" (Lawrence 1974: 69).

6. Conclusion

This brief discussion of how migration appears in four British modernist novelists is necessarily limited in scope. Without a doubt, many other authors could have been discussed here: Katherine Mansfield's *In a German Pension* (1911), Dorothy Richardson's *Pointed Roofs* (1915) and Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), among others. However, there is enough evidence to suggest that British modernist fiction offers abundant reflection on these issues of migration, displacement, exile, and alienation. We do not have to wait until the second half of the twentieth century and the boom of postcolonial literature to find moving and illuminating stories of migration. Even though modernist writers have often been considered as being committed to aesthetic experimentation rather than interested in social and political issues, the stories presented here reveal a different perspective. It is true that most of these novelists discuss exile as experienced by themselves and their stories draw on autobiographical details, but even Virginia Woolf, who only left England to enjoy some holidays on the continent, decides to address the problems of two migrants in her novel *Mrs Dalloway*. All this contributes to reinforce a more political and social reading of British modernist writers.

The reality of migration reflected in these narratives is far from being a romantic, liberating or enriching experience. Like many of those migration stories before and many of those to come, they show the dark side of the migrant's experience: loss, pain, fear, alienation, nostalgia for their homeland, loneliness and humiliation are often central to the characters who leave their country in search of better lands. Even for Eveline in Joyce's story, who in the end decides not to leave, the prospects were not very encouraging. Some characters are unable to overcome linguistic barriers; most often it is the cultural and environmental differences that make integration impossible. The challenges they encounter when trying to adjust to life in a new country are insurmountable. What is more, as we have seen, all these migration stories have dark or tragic endings. Finally, it is important to note that these modernist novelists introduce the theme of women in exile. Like the men, female characters – Eveline or Rezia – have little opportunity to prosper. However, they seem to face a double plight: on the one hand, the usual pains of displacement; on the other, their dependent position. They are each tied up to a relationship with a man, Frank or Septimus, which makes their migrant experience even more difficult.

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THE ZEN MASTER'S COMICS: SELF-AWARENESS AND POPULAR CULTURE IN GLEN DAVID GOLD'S

I WILL BE COMPLETE

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Abstract: *Raised in a chic California mansion at the peak of the counterculture movement, novelist Glen David Gold recounts the tormenting relationship with his estranged parents, and especially with his bohemian and deeply troubled mother. When the latter leaves him alone in San Francisco, at the age of twelve, he has to find ways to survive and attend school. I assess how comic books, movies, music, Gold's passion for the Japanese culture, and his perception of time make for the labyrinthine structure of his memoir.*

Keywords: *Glen David Gold, American memoir, San Francisco, comic books, Jun'ichirō Tanizaki*

1. Introduction: mother and son

Is the need to confess considerably stronger nowadays than it used to be? Probably not, but we have found the means to make this need a public – and global – asset. Or at least many people believe it to be so. Technically, in the age of the Internet and social media, everyone's private life might come under everyone's scrutiny and it is increasingly difficult to tell the mere online confession from dishonest self-advertising, or truth-telling from malicious fabrications. Assessing the impact of generalized "confessionalism", as he calls it ironically, on memoir writing – a venerable genre besieged by fraud and commercial success during the last decades – William Girdi (2018: 99) notices that "social media has turned untold citizens into hourly memoirists in miniature. We live now in a culture of incessant confession and self-discovery: a non-stop spelunking into empty caves."

It comes as no surprise then that professional writers stand up for the memoir as an artistic form and genuine self-examination, rather than self-interest. If, following Northrop Frye, Girdi believes that the notion of "self-expression" must be discarded in favour of the more literary (and philosophical) "self-assertion" – because "the trick is to keep precious personal experience from unwittingly becoming the antithesis of imagination" (Girdi 2018: 97, 99) –, Vivian Gornick (2002: 14) states no less bluntly that "the memoirist, like the poet and the novelist, must engage with the world, because engagement makes experience, experience makes wisdom, and finally it's the wisdom – or rather the movement toward it – that counts". I would round up these opinions with a third one, namely that of Sven Birkerts, who refines the notion by adding to the experience and imagination indispensable to a literary memoir a rather Greek approach to fate and temporality, and the Proustian "voluntary memory".

In his seminal essay *The Art of Time in Memoir*, Birkerts (2008: 3-4) tackles the genre not so much as the result of one's urge to narrate events – even though he

does not disregard this universal proclivity – as one’s unquenchable need to imbue a particular life with meaning. His argument and examples expound the conviction that the best memoirists are those who understand how the past shapes the present. One cannot miss here the echo from Augustine’s association of time perception and memory in Book XI of his *Confessions*, where he tries to make sense of divine signs and prophecy, while acknowledging that we live in the present moment only, because past and future do not exist:

When we describe the past correctly, it is not the past facts which are drawn out of our memories but only words based on our memory-pictures of those facts, because when they happened they left an impression on our minds, by means of our sense-perception. My own childhood, which no longer exists, is in past time, which also no longer exists. But when I remember those days and describe them, it is in the present that I picture them to myself, because their picture is still present in my memory. (Augustine 1961: 267)

Strip this of its religious overtones and you have Birkerts’ secular definition of the contemporary memoir. In place of Augustine’s angels, who need not read the sacred text, because they see the face of God in eternity (Augustine 1961: 322), Birkerts posits the vantage point of the hapless memoirist who struggles to make sense of her/his life:

Each account in some way proposes the idea that a life can be figured on the page as a destiny, a filling out of a meaningful design by circumstance, and that this happens once events and situations are understood not just in themselves but as stages *en route* to decisive self-recognition. (Birkerts 2008: 8-9)

Glen David Gold’s *I Will Be Complete* (2018) reads like a novel in part because the world he evokes and the relationships he describes seem so outlandish today, but mostly because his struggle to come to terms with his mother is so out of the ordinary that it really may pass as a piece of pure fiction. As one reviewer puts it, “the book’s driving force is the author’s relationship with his mother; the dynamic between them compels us through the story even as it increasingly repels the son” (Johnson 2018). Gold’s memoir is about how he came to not love his mother anymore. Stated like this, the whole undertaking might sound cynical, utterly immoral, or even vulgar. It is not the case. Writing his memoir works for Gold as a means to cope with a trauma and to finally accept that his mother abandoned him at the age of twelve, while still remaining painfully present in his life. Perhaps the most fascinating thing about *I Will Be Complete* – and I wonder if Glen David Gold realized this while structuring his book along the years – is that it adheres to an old narrative tradition, namely that of the princely offspring put in a wicker basket by his royal parents, just to be met at the other end of the river by hope, as much as by renewed suffering. Not that Gold introduces himself as a mythic character. On the contrary. His life is typically American, not a patterned one. It opens like this:

I think you’re an adult when you can no longer tell your life story over the course of a first date. I might have gotten this idea from my parents, because they reinvented themselves so often their stories have odd turns which speak not of one life, but of many that don’t seem to match up, and of choices you’d think no one would actually make. (Gold 2019: 3)

Sven Birkerts (2008: 145-146) tends to oppose the “traumatic memoir” – whereby the writer “keeps symbolically reenacting a distressing situation” – and the “coming-of-age memoir” which usually is more lyrical. Glen David Gold succeeds in mastering both subgenres. In *I Will Be Complete*, the coming-of-age story reveals the double trauma: that his mother abandoned him because she did not love him – he understood that too early –, and that he also ceased, at a certain point, to love her (the latter proved much harder to acknowledge). In the process of retrieving the past, the shattered days of his childhood are often like the adventures of comic book heroes, who rush on the panel from frame to frame, forcing you to fill in mentally the missing pieces of action. The introspection sustained from an early age by Zen practice makes some long locked doors burst open, thus giving away the true shape of events he could not look back at over his shoulder:

Then you know what it is like to be my mother’s son. It’s exhausting and it’s where art forms are born. I think Baroque draftsmen who made etchings of labyrinths were men raised by shattered women. (Gold 2019: 8)

2. The super-child dons the cape

Glen David Gold grew up in Corona del Mar, California. The mansion of his early childhood – “a five-thousand-square-foot ranch house” – looked like a Hollywood movie set, with a swimming pool and a jacuzzi, a custom-designed kitchen, a Derby Day pinball machine, a robotic toy offered as a gift by a cousin who worked at Mattel, a living room conversation pit “executed by contractors who’d worked on the Haunted Mansion at Disneyland”, the father’s futuristic office, which strikes the boy as snatched out of a sci-fi scenery, and his own bedroom furnished Danish-style, with movie posters and walls painted in psychedelic colors (Gold 2019: 17-18). Even more impressive are the family’s collections of art – let us not forget that it is the age of Pop – and rare coins – “Thomas Jefferson himself might have carried these pennies in his pocket”, says the father reassuringly –, and a splendid Fabergé chess set (which might be a fake). On top of these possessions is the child himself, introduced to family friends and visitors as a wonder kid: “The end of the tour isn’t the coins, but me – I am the big finish, the most curious gem in the collection. I tell my history stories, I actually bow for applause at the end” (Gold 2019: 20).

The Golds’ house is rich America itself during the ’60s. The oldest object in the collection dates from the XVIIIth century. However, it is displayed as an antiquity. Glen’s millionaire and workaholic father is the co-founder of Certron Company and one of the pioneers of the cassette tape. He drives a Porsche like James Dean’s and he uses his engineer’s skills to draw complex charts for his wife in order to clarify family issues. His mother is a beautiful English woman, a Linda Evans look-alike – her first husband, an American GI she married after the war, took her to Hollywood –, and an aspiring writer. She wants her son to become a writer too. Both parents want a better childhood for him, much better than theirs anyway. “I was born with a job” (Gold 2019: 12).

Mountain lions used to prowl Corona del Mar, but for Glen there is only the phantom of one of them, namely the imprints of its paws in the concrete of the school sidewalk. His parents buy him a kitten. He names it Leo (Gold 2019: 12-13). This is how Glen David Gold builds expectations. Later in the string of events, Leo will vanish too. The first part of the memoir is divided into chapters which

have California numbers and addresses instead of titles – mapping out the moves from house to house, a spectrum of wandering away from the sunny, orange scented and cornucopian world he was born into.

It takes only one disgruntled famous client to pull out from Certron for this Paradise to topple. After the divorce, the father returns to his native Chicago and marries a wealthy woman, and the mother squanders a good part of her settlement leaving for San Francisco with the boy. She starts dating insecure men, some with mental health issues, and gives them almost all her money. She attends night parties, brings strangers and drug addicts into the houses she lodges for her and her son, believing their preposterous stories and admiring their counterfeit auras, although even a ten-year-old child can see their true colours. All her acquaintances are bohemians who impersonate the celebrities they read about in cinema magazines. Many of them turn out to be damaging relationships (one in particular will reveal himself as deadly dangerous). It is here, in San Francisco, that another trait of his mother surfaces. She is a compulsive liar:

She was, by fate or irony or collision of time and circumstance, in a city populated with other folks whose histories were self-generated, too. She and San Francisco were a perfectly ill-fated match. (Gold 2019: 53)

The boy is more and more lonely, especially during nighttime, although his mother still ignites in him the conviction that he is gifted. Bullied at school, a junk food addict, Glen suffers from insomnia, watches tv shows incessantly and roams the roofs of San Francisco with Leo. They get poor progressively, each one of the mother's business ventures ending in another failure and a waste of money her lovers can take profit from. Then, one day she flies to New York with a fashion designer leaving her son in the city.

I started leaving the house. I'm not sure how often I did this, but it happened in spring and summer, when I had to be on the streets no later than 4:30 a.m. to truly feel how empty it all was. There was fog sometimes, mist blown in a slant across the arc lighting of streetlamps. The first time, I stood on the curb outside my house, heart in my mouth, feeling like Columbus, like Reed Richards at the maw of Subspace in *Fantastic Four* 51. (Gold 2019: 108-109)

Glen is the Little Match Girl of the '70s in a *noir* movie backdrop. He walks the beaches and arteries of dormant San Francisco pulsing with traffic lights, noticing cafés and bakery windows, and fantasizing about caring parents putting their children to sleep in their Pacific Heights mansions. He is cautious enough to avoid the nude bars of Lower Broadway and to head for Chinatown instead (Gold 2019: 109-110). The dreamlike fabric of these episodes is enhanced by the city's foghorns, its steep streets, hickory smells, and erotic temptations. Given Glen David Gold's passion for Japanese culture, I presume that in his urban depictions he draws on the *ukiyo* ("Floating World") culture from the other side of the Pacific.

It is during this time of utter loneliness that his self-perception becomes deeply imbued with comic book mythology. Buying comics turns out as another compulsion, and his mother's friends bribe him with the same merchandise when they want so settle things easily with the boy. He writes his own screenplay about Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D., and receives a surprise call from one of Marvel Comics company editors. The memoirist's emotions had chromatic suggestions and made use, from the start, of specific hyperboles – easily recognizable for the

initiated in the superhero lore – such as “My father wanted to be amoral the same way I wanted to be the Hulk. Cheerful amorality was his unattainable superpower” (Gold 2019: 32). Yet only in San Francisco, where he understands that the men his beautiful mother dates are more important than him, does the subtle analogy between the special abilities his parents bequeath on him and the teen’s immersion in the Marvel universe become transparent. Glen intuits that he is not his mother’s wonder kid, despite her sporadic assurances over the phone.

Gold’s mention of *The Avengers*, *The Fantastic Four*, and *The X-Men*, among other series, could offer us an unexpected key to the under-the-surface issues of his memoir. Gold refers directly to the comic book artist Jack Kirby only once, when he remembers the Pulsar digital watch that Peter Charming, one of his mother’s first lovers she brings home after the divorce, was wearing: “When he tapped a button on the side, the time appeared in ruby digits that illuminated the hints of mind-boggling Jack Kirby-like circuitry behind them” (Gold, 2019: 34). However, Gold, today an accomplished novelist, but also a comic artwork collector – he is very fond of original panels and covers that made history in the field –, does not flinch when he names Jack Kirby “the greatest mainstream comics artist of all time” (Smith, Gold 2012), leaving no doubt about his best childhood memories.

In the mid ’60s, Marvel Comics developed a new superhero formula, one able to suit the Cold War anxieties of that time. As Charles Hatfield notices, Stan Lee and his associates were better at building sagas and interrelated stories than their competitors. The crucial ingredient for the success of their vast narratives was the “the *family resemblance*: the fact that heroes and villains often come from common roots and boast similar or complementary powers” (Hatfield 2013: 139-140). This innovative approach was mainly Jack Kirby’s idea. Kirby not only penciled a baroque outer space and created ambivalent, versatile characters like the Silver Surfer, but he also brought genuine mythology into the dramatic conflict. He was able to adapt the story to the changes in his heroes’ development, making the super-humans and their archenemies look like a big “dysfunctional family” (idem: 141-142, 146-148).

In *I Will Be Complete*, Gold conjures up the image of a lonely and imaginative child, born in a dysfunctional family, by turning to the images and vernacular of the comic books in order to confront the adults’ world and its schemes. He reminisces a night in 1974, when he was ten, and a phone call from Peter Charming, meant to lure his mother to another party, interrupted his reading of a comic book (Gold 2019: 133). The cab brought them to a seedy neighbourhood, all neon lights and garish topless clubs. At a traffic light, a prostitute and her pimp hit the car window with a heavy thud, their faces intruding grotesquely into the boy’s view, yet he remained completely unfazed. The sensation that there is a space between the perception of things and the words needed to convey them stayed with him during that party, where people – his mother included –, abused their minds with LSD. Over the years, he tries to recreate that night’s thoughts in their original form, framing this episode symmetrically, like a draughtsman:

There was a comic book hero named Captain Marvel, who, in issue 29, gains “Cosmic Awareness.” It’s not exactly specific what that means except it’s a superpower. I felt like that jolt in the cab woke me up to what being in tune with the universe must be – following the chain of perception back into that tunnel so there’s no longer a space between what you see and how you react. I could never explain it

to adults in San Francisco because they, to a person, wanted to tell me about their acid trip. (Gold 2019: 134)

There are many other visual suggestions besides comics in Gold's memoir, such as movies – the cinema halls often further transformative experiences –, tv shows, Japanese prints and ideograms, logos and posters, specific types of mascara. Even the music he listens to has synesthetic qualities. Gold is very fond of the composer and pianist Philip Glass, whose album *The Photographer* is dedicated to Eadweard Muybridge's work. Almost everyone in *I Will Be Complete* looks like (or is compared to) a celebrity – Gold's own resemblance to the actor Timothy Hutton being the recurring motif –, although a few real movie stars and fashion models do appear in the memoir. These visual references make up a coherent semiotic system meant to sustain one of the book's tenets, namely that the narrator and the people around him in San Francisco substitute the genuine experience with glamorous images of it. During his college years Glen broods over the aesthetically torn jeans, the combat boots and piercings the punkers like to show off (Gold 2019: 230-231). Sometimes his perception of things turns out attuned with that of his girlfriends' – like a promise of perfect mutual understanding. Melanie, a dancer he makes acquaintance with during his summer job at an UCLA bookstore in Westwood, tells him about how movies may distort the way people look at artistic accomplishments and determines them to assume false identities:

I pointed out how people didn't want to have experiences, just buy the jacket or the faded jeans to suggest they were deeper than they were. She said she'd stopped wearing leg warmers outside of class. *Flashdance* meant women who'd never even bloodied a toe in dance class were wearing them in line at the Häagen-Dazs store. (Gold 2019: 249-250)

This spectrum of visual representations has, at its one extreme, the childish, comics-fueled belief in superpowers and, at the other, the desperate, albeit naïve self-initiation in Zen Buddhism. Despite the unsuccessful attempts to attain awakening, Gold's passion for the Japanese culture leaves significant tracks in his memoir. A not very conspicuous one is the prose of Jun'ichirō Tanizaki (1886-1965).

The Japanese writer's adoration of his beautiful mother bordered idolatry – his father was an unsuccessful businessman (Keene 2003: 5) –, a biographical aspect that later found its expression in the features of his fictive *femmes fatales*. Critics reproached him sometimes for his highly aestheticized and perverse writings, but, as Ian Buruma astutely notices, Tanizaki's *femmes fatales* were as much indebted to Gustave Flaubert, Charles Baudelaire, and Oscar Wilde as to the Japanese views on sexuality and to his own private obsessions (Buruma 2002: 24). On the flip side, his Westernized, demonic women are the unsettling embodiment of the modern Japan seduced by Western values and mores (idem: 25). Literary historian Shūichi Katō sums up the characteristics shared by almost all of Tanizaki's heroines:

They may be vulgar and dissolute, artistically talented and conceited, or elegant and reserved, but they are always young, full of life, beautiful and capable of fascinating and controlling the men. It is only through the bodies of these women that the men find – or actualize – themselves. (Katō 1983: 202)

Gold makes known his interest in Tanizaki's novels, their twisted plots, nose fetishes, and sado-masochistic relationships (Gold 2019: 199). He captures some of his girlfriends in a glamorous, *film noir*-like spotlight, and even though he is afraid of being manipulated, he rejects the feminist assessment of the *femme fatale* as the embodiment of male anxieties (idem: 343). He believes that *femmes fatales* are not mere fiction, yet his stance is not misogynistic. When his girlfriend Lindsay, an expert seducer – their passionate involvement has been intensified by some mysterious telepathic side-effects of an Ecstasy overdose –, tells him that she intends to go back to her fiancé, Gold sees this not as a let-down, but as Lindsay's theatrical way of coping with her own anxieties:

Here was where that feminist theory fell down, in that Lindsay was a real *femme fatale*. But the mistake was to think of that as nefarious. She wasn't so much manipulative as she was twisting under the hard mercy of questions that begin when you're twenty-two, twenty-three: *Who am I? What made me? Why am I here? Where does this ache come from?*

Getting answers always involved pain. Some people, like my dad, collected things to keep that away. That's what Lindsay did. She collected men, and why not? (Gold 2019: 346-347)

We know that he is not thinking of his father's collections and of Lindsay's infidelities only. Glen David Gold's longing for his mother may or may not have affinities with Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's, but it certainly made difficult for him too to sustain long-time relationships with women.

3. Conclusion: filial doubts

The novelistic structure of *I Will Be Complete* implies smooth transitions from Glen David Gold's first childhood reveries to comic book fantasies, blending the cinematic mirages of San Francisco and Los Angeles with the Japanese view on the transience of life – all these leading up to (and back to) his mother's lies. Gold is truly a memoirist in the vein preferred by Vivian Gornick, William Giraldo, and Sven Birkerts, that is one whose literary undertaking is neither confession, nor lamentation, but a self-discovery suffused with meaning. As Birkerts puts it,

Hindsight is transformative: what felt like a murky day-to-day travail can start to look like a fate, a destiny, an intended wresting of a single outcome from many possibilities. The chaos of experience has taken on the shape of a story, the most interesting one we have to tell. (Birkerts 2008: 81)

In *I Will Be Complete*, one can discern the old Aristotelian narrative devices of “reversal” and “recognition”. The reversal implies “a change to the opposite in the actions being performed”, while recognition is “a change from ignorance to knowledge” that marks the moment when the tragic hero fully apprehends the situation s/he finds herself/himself into (Aristotle 1996: 18-19). In *I Will Be Complete*, the reversal – which is a shocking denouement at the same time – begins with the discussion between Gold and Dr. Franklin Baum, his mother's therapist from the Corona del Mar days. Baum implies that he tried to cure Gold's anxiety by treating his mother, and tells him about her impoverished childhood in England, and about her own schizophrenic and alcoholic mother who used to lock her in a closet with service men during the war (Gold 2019: 474-481). For the readers,

these secrets, kept up the memoirist's sleeve, put Gold's mother in an unexpected light: she is a victim too. And then comes the narrator's full recognition.

While pursuing his treatment for depression, Gold signed for legal marijuana in order to fight off the after-effects of other medicines and, accidentally, took an overdose which made him undergo the "marijuana-induced psychosis" (Gold 2019: 487). That horrific state revealed to him a forgotten incident when he was two years old and almost drowned in a public swimming pool. Nevertheless, his mother kept dragging him to this same place – where he repeated the frightening experience – until she convinced herself that the child was dead scared and that she was not doing the right thing (Gold 2019: 488-489).

This disturbing memory stokes Glen David Gold's feeling that the relations between parents and children are not patterned in a deterministic matrix, but are weakened or strengthened by free choices, some of them unfortunate; parents still call them "love":

There's a sentence I've heard from people who have difficult parents: they did the best they could. It's a sweet idea, especially if you want to get on that scenic road to forgiveness that's supposed to be how being an adult works. But I'm not so sure every parent does the best they can. I'm not even sure what that means. (Gold 2019: 490)

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SHAKESPEARE AND THE BAKHTINIAN DIALOGISM: THE CASE OF *OTHELLO*

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Abstract: Bakhtin's innovative conception of language provided the ground for further studies on the nature of the language of literature. As the scientific advances were depriving literature from its social roots and reducing literary works to a mere ground for the play of formal "devices", Bakhtin's theory of language paved the way for the return of the social to the study of literary works. Bakhtin was certainly well aware that literature, as a reflection of socio-cultural relations, employs language to its greatest advantage as it is the only means literature has for expressing its themes. That is why he first proposed his theory of dialogism with regard to the language of literature in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Although he firmly believed that the language of novel was dialogic, Bakhtin did not hold the same stance toward drama. Taking Shakespeare's *Othello* as an example, we have tried in the present paper to account for the highly dialogic language of Shakespeare in this play.

Keywords: Bakhtin, dialogic, dialogism, *Iago*, improvisation, polyphony of language

1. Introduction: Bakhtin and language

Against the abstract objectivism of Saussurean linguistics and the stark formalism of the Formalists, Bakhtin and his colleagues, Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Voloshinov, forming the Bakhtin Circle, proposed their challenging ideas based on which language is considered in a social context from which it can never be separated. Such a social context, comprising a network of socio-economic relations, is inevitably the homeland of ideology, and as such, it provides for a mutual relation between language and ideology, in which language is the medium of ideology. In fact, "the Bakhtin School was not interested in abstract linguistics of the kind which later formed the basis of structuralism". They were concerned with language or discourse as "a social phenomenon" (Selden, Widdowson 1993: 38). The abstract sign system of Saussurean linguistics is rejected in favour of a more dynamic notion in which "words are active, dynamic social signs, capable of taking on different meanings and connotations for different social classes in different social and historical situations" (ibid.). As Terry Eagleton (2008: 101) succinctly puts it, "Bakhtin shifted attention from the abstract system of *langue* to the concrete utterances of the individual in particular social contexts. Language was to be seen inherently 'dialogic': it could be grasped only in terms of its inevitable orientation towards another". It is also true that signification, which is the result of the relation between signifier and signified of synchronic linguistics, is undermined and, at the same time, enriched by a third layer; *the social*.

Among the key concepts of Bakhtinian theories are “carnival” and “dialogism”, though the latter term was not used by Bakhtin himself.

Dialogism is the quality of language that comes about through its social application in human interactions. Don Bialostosky (1989: 215), in his “Dialogic Criticism”, says that “Bakhtin himself did not use the terms *dialogic* or *dialogue* in the title of any of his works, but his most influential and authoritative expositors in France and the United States, Tzvetan Todorov and Michael Holquist, both chose to bring his work forward under the sign of the dialogic”. Therefore, for Bakhtin, dialogue is not limited to the uses of verbal language; his view of language “extends beyond the written or spoken word alone to embrace the way reality is perceived in “the form of still latent, unuttered future work” (Bakhtin 1984: 90), which includes a consideration of tone, sound and body language as it is interpreted in dialogue” (White 2008: 92). Language in this sense, and through its various applicable forms, provides for the formation of consciousnesses in human interrelations. As Michael Gardiner (1992: 28) observes, “for Bakhtin, human consciousness is not a unified whole, but always exists in a tensile, conflict-ridden relationship with other consciousnesses, in a constant alterity between self and other”. This forms the basis of dialogical interaction which situates language, and the meanings communicated via it, deeply in the concrete web of relations among the consciousnesses and the agents of language use. Dialogism, as I said, underlies every aspect of language use, and language, in turn, includes any “signifying practice” that one may be involved in through his/her social life. Gardiner (1992: 29) points out that “every aspect of consciousness and every signifying practice a subject engages in is therefore constituted dialogically, through the ebb and flow of a multitude of continuous and inherently responsive communicative acts”.

2. Bakhtin and literature

Interestingly enough, Bakhtin first proposed the idea of *the dialogic* with regard to literature. In his study of Dostoevsky’s novels, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, he found the best examples of dialogic interactions in which there is no self in isolation and every consciousness comes about only in its complex interrelations with others. He writes:

In Dostoevsky, consciousness never gravitates towards itself but is always found in intense relationship with another consciousness. Every experience, every thought of a character is internally dialogic, adorned with polemic, filled with struggle, or is, on the contrary, open to inspiration from outside itself—but it is not in any case concentrated simply on its own object; it is accompanied by a continual sideways glance at another person. (Bakhtin 1984: 32)

Bakhtin is, however, careful not to reduce this idea of dialogism to the level of abstract verbalism. He is concerned that the homeland of language is the social and actual contextual relations that demand the uses of it. Thus he goes on, clarifying that:

It could be said that Dostoevsky offers, in artistic form, something like a sociology of consciousness—to be sure, only on the level of coexistence. But even so, Dostoevsky as an artist does arrive at an *objective* mode for visualizing the life of consciousness and the forms of their living coexistence, and thus offers material that is valuable for the sociologist as well. (1984: 32)

As Bakhtin explicitly states, dialogic relations demand the presence of another person as a, at least, mere listener. “In fact, a fully self-sufficient and isolated consciousness cannot possibly exist: the very process of acquiring self-consciousness from birth to maturity is, in Bakhtin’s eyes, utterly dependent upon discursive interaction with another ‘I’” (Gardiner 1992: 28). This other ‘I’ is essential to the dialogic communication as long as the subject’s utterances are oriented towards it. In her article on Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism*, for instance, Mary Ellen Bellanca (1994: 32) considers the traces of dialogism, stating that “Pope’s *Essay* reflects dialogism in several key respects”, one of which is “its variously shifting voices anticipating the response of their audience(s)”. The dialogic voice is always oriented toward the voice of the other: “It is always addressed to someone - a witness, a judge or simply a listener - and it is accompanied by the keen anticipation of another’s response” (Gardiner 1992: 28).

3. Bakhtin and Shakespeare

Although Bakhtin has sometimes gone to extremes in favoring the “polyphonic” and dialogic nature of Dostoevsky’s fiction, he is not so favourably certain about the nature of drama, nor does he say much about Shakespeare, in particular. In his introduction to *Shakespeare and Carnival after Bakhtin*, Ronald Knowles (1998: 10) states that “it is to be deeply regretted that Bakhtin did not write one of his lengthy essays on Shakespeare”. Before this, of course, he had briefly accounted for Bakhtin’s view on drama in general and on Shakespeare in particular. In his discussion of Dostoevsky as the creator of the polyphonic novel, Bakhtin, to some extent, agrees with his contemporary A.V. Lunacharsky that “Shakespeare is polyphonic to the extreme.” He writes: “Lunacharsky is correct in the sense that certain elements, embryonic rudiments, early buddings of polyphony can indeed be detected in the dramas of Shakespeare” (Bakhtin 1984: 33). This statement is, however, immediately undermined when he goes on to assert that “but to speak of a fully formed and deliberate polyphonic quality in Shakespeare’s dramas is in our opinion simply impossible.”

After this, Bakhtin gives his reasons for drama’s lack of polyphonic merits:

First, drama is by its very nature alien to genuine polyphony; drama may be multi-leveled, but it cannot contain *multiple worlds*; it permits only one, and not several, systems of management.

Secondly, if one can speak at all of a plurality of fully valid voices in Shakespeare, then it would only apply to the entire body of his work and not to individual plays. In essence each play contains only one fully valid voice, the voice of the hero, while polyphony presumes a plurality of fully valid voices within the limits of a single work – for only then may polyphonic principles be applied to the construction of the whole.

Thirdly, the voices in Shakespeare are not points of view on the world to the degree they are in Dostoevsky; Shakespearean characters are not ideologists in the full sense of the word. (1984: 34)

According to what Bakhtin states as reasons for the non-polyphonic nature of Shakespearean plays, Shakespeare is “carnavalesque”, but not polyphonic. One may, however, think otherwise, and Knowles (1998: 11) also believes that “The oddest thing of all is that the opposite seems self-evident”, that is to say Shakespeare’s plays allow for the greatest possible degree of polyphony and

dialogic contexts to emerge. They detect the deepest human feelings and passions which only happen when they come into contact, charged with conflict, with each other. One may recall Hamlet's famous soliloquy where he wonders:

To be, or not to be, - that is the question: -
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 And by opposing end them? - To die, - to sleep,-
 No more; and by a sleep to say we end
 The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to (III. 1. 64-71),

to see how the lives of characters in Shakespeare, as in any other work of literature, are inevitably and eternally as if conditioned by clashes and intense tensions, which are, after all, the result of their being in relation with others and their lives. As more evidence against Bakhtin's seemingly unjust position towards drama, we might simply say that no other genre in literature relies more on dialogue and characters' actual confrontation than drama. Though dialogue here is simply used to mean the conversations among the characters, it remains true that in it we need the presence of two people and a contextual set of communicative acts which come to mean what they mean only in relation to the presence of the other and what stance the speaker is taking towards them. Also, regarding the narrative point of view, nowhere is the author's hand more severely removed from direct intrusion in, manipulation of, and commenting on the conditions and lives of the characters. These two allow for the "polyphony" of language and "dialogism" to arise, as there is neither an author to subordinate all the voices to his own, nor are the characters so restricted in their actions and speeches. As human relations are imbued with conflict and clash, no uttered word or statement in such relations remains uncharged with intentions (meanings) which are not oriented toward the other. In such interactions, words are "signs [which are] in this view seen as an open meaning resource; their actual meaning can only emerge in situated, specific social interaction" (Bostad et al. 2004: 7).

4. *Othello* and dialogism

At the center of literary works, as in life in general, there lie a human being and his/her thoughts, beliefs, hopes, fears, etc. which come about only in a social context of mutual relations. Like other great works of world literature, Shakespeare's plays dramatize, before everything else, human relations in conflict-ridden contexts and this provides for the dialogic, as meant by Bakhtin, to emerge. Here the *dialogic* would be restricted to only two of its major implications, which I shall try to trace in the text of the play *Othello*. Michael Gardiner differentiates the *dialogic* word from the *monologic* one in two respects:

Unlike the monologic word, which always 'gravitates towards itself and its referential object', the dialogic word is locked into an intense relationship with the word of another. It is always addressed to someone – a witness, a judge or simply a listener – and it is accompanied by the keen anticipation of another's response. Nor is the dialogic word a passive vehicle of neutral description or information: because

it is designed to provoke a response, to initiate dialogue, it is an 'arena of battle between two voices' and is charged with polemic, parody, evaluation and so on. This is what Bakhtin means when he refers to the dialogic utterance as being 'double-voiced', 'vari-directional', and 'multi-accented'. (Gardiner 1992: 28-29)

These two respects are considered here in justifying the quality of dialogism in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Although such quality can be amply traced in the speeches and actions of all characters, the argument here will be limited to one of the most important characters of the play, Iago, and his relations with others.

Among the galaxy of great characters that Shakespeare has bestowed on the world of literature, Iago seems to be the most notorious one. Much ink has been used in long arguments on the motives for Iago's hostility against Othello. As back in the history of literature as early 19th century, the great Romantic poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (in Raysor 1930, vol. 1: 49), for example, points to the variety of the "villain's professed motives", when he refers to the process of such arguments as "the motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity". This process has often ended up in devising a set of epithets for encapsulating the complexity of the Iago phenomenon and his seeming motives. In his introductory note to the play *Othello*, Jacobus (2005: 417) refers to him as the "personifying devil". K G Hunter (2005: 488) seems to be infuriated by Iago as he calls him "envious, enigmatic and self-centered." A more telling term is used by Greenblatt (2010: 16) when he calls the cunning man a "demonic artist", writing that "He [Shakespeare] gave his character the qualities of a demonic artist". Ewan Fernie, in *Shame in Shakespeare*, considers "shame" as the motive of Iago's villainy:

Thus Iago's motive for attacking Othello is shame that Othello has promoted Cassio over him, which also causes him to resent the social order, and the shameful supposition to which this has given rise: that Othello has also debauched his wife. His project is to shame his shamer and pay back shame with shame, 'to serve my turn upon him' (I.1.41) and make him 'egregiously an ass' (II.1.306). (2001: 144)

In his introduction to *The Oxford Shakespeare, Othello, the Moor of Venice*, Michael Neil sums up all such motives based on evidence from the play itself:

While Iago admits in an almost casual way to frustrated desire for Desdemona (II.1.282-5), he confesses to a bewildering array of other motives that make Cassio and (above all) Othello the primary objects of his revenge. These include: (ironically in view of his own Spanish name) prejudice against foreigners, including the 'Florentine' Cassio (I.1.19); disgust at the military and sexual triumphs of a black man (I.1.32, 88-91, 110-16); the suspicion that both Othello and Cassio have cuckolded him (I.3.375-9; II.1.285-90, 298); and (most conspicuously of all) resentment at Cassio's promotion to become Othello's second-in-command, together with bitterness at the servile nature of his own office (I.1.7-60). (Neil 2006: 31)

"Improviser of power" is a last related epithet mentioned by Stephan Greenblatt for catching up with the endless process of "motive-hunting". I shall linger on a bit more on this last term. An authority and pioneer in Renaissance studies, Greenblatt has devoted a substantially long article, "Improvisation of Power", to the exploration of a "crucial Renaissance mode of behavior", which he calls "*improvisation*, by which [he] means the ability both to capitalize on the unforeseen and to transform given materials into one's own scenario" (Greenblatt 2012: 165). In this mode, "What is essential is the Europeans' ability again and again to insinuate themselves into the preexisting political, religious, even psychic

structures of the natives and to turn those structures to their advantage” (ibid.). He sees Shakespeare’s *Othello* “as the supreme symbolic expression of this cultural mode” (idem: 169), and Iago as a master improviser, who “Confident in his shaping power, has the role-player’s ability to imagine his nonexistence so that he can exist for a moment in another and as another” (idem: 171-172).

My point, however, is that Iago’s supreme power in turning everything in his own favour, in being an improviser, depends, more than anything else, on his cunning use of a language which is intensely *dialogic*, in that, first, it is so often “locked into an intense relationship with the word of the other” (Gardiner 1992: 3), is always addressed to someone, “and it is accompanied by the keen anticipation of another’s response” (ibid). Moreover, the language that Iago uses is never “a passive vehicle of neutral description or information: because it is designed to provoke a response, to initiate dialogue” (ibid). Early in the play, Iago announces his intention to play an “improviser” and to use whatever way possible, including “word-play”, in order to serve his own purpose:

O sir, content you.
 I follow him to serve my turn upon him.
 We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
 Cannot be truly followed. You shall mark
 Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave
 That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
 Wears out his time, much like his master’s ass,
 For naught but provender, and when he’s old - cashiered.
 Whip me such honest knaves! Others there are
 Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty,
 Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,
 And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,
 Do well thrive by them, and when they have lined their coats
 Do themselves homage. These fellows have some soul,
 And such a one do I profess myself - for, sir,
 It is as sure as you are Roderigo,
 Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago
 In following him, I follow but myself -
 Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
 But seeming so for my peculiar end;
 For when my outward action doth demonstrate
 The native act and figure of my heart
 In compliment extern, ’tis not long after
 But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
 For daws to peck at: I am not what I am (I.1.41-65).

This language ranks only with that of a learned philosopher, a public orator or rhetorician in its richness of signification and implicitness. About this part (line 8), Michael Neill (2008: 200) provides this footnote commentary pointing to Iago’s “devious” use of language: “The first of a number of oddly gnomic formulations that characterize Iago’s devious way of speaking. It seems to mean something like ‘If I were able to rise to the position of mastery now occupied by Othello, I would have no wish to return to my present servile status’”. Compared with those of the other characters, this language seems highly rich and charged with implications beyond the surface that wisely, though all maliciously, serve the evil intentions of the speaker. As we mentioned above, such *dialogic* instances of language are often

used to arouse a certain response from the addressee. Sometimes it is used for arousing the jealous bias of the person addressed. Such is the case when Iago, as a first measure against the Moor, stirs Brabantio, Desdemona's father (who is unbelieving as to what has happened) to such rage as to take the case to the Venetian state:

Iago: 'Swounds, sir, you are one of those that will not serve God if the devil bid you. Because we come to do you Service, and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your Daughter covered with a Barbary horse, you'll have your Nephews neigh to you, you'll have coursers for cousins And jennets for germans (I.1.108-113).

Words for Iago are signs which can be easily manipulated and charged in whatever way might better serve his purpose. His language is deeply rooted in the social context in which he might be temporarily situated. After enraging Brabantio, he leaves the scene saying:

Though I do hate him as I do hell pains,
Yet, for necessity of present life,
I must show out a flag and sign of love -
Which is indeed but sign. That you shall surely find him,
Lead to the Sagittary the raised search,
And there will I be with him. So farewell. (I.1.153-8)

Referring to the word Sagittary, Michael Neill (2008: 207) makes the following comment in a footnote, which indicates what wealth of meanings and implications can Iago put in just one word used dialogically:

Sagittary: an inn with the sign of Sagittarius (one of the twelve signs of the Zodiac, depicting a centaur with a bow and arrow). The Centaur was a monster with the body of a horse and torso of a man: the inn-sign thus becomes another perverted 'sign of love' with an ironic appropriateness to the union of Othello and Desdemona which Iago has already depicted as a monstrous coupling of horse and woman (II. 110–13). Calderwood notes the monster's ancient significance as a symbol of lust, barbarism, and (through the Centaurs' assault on Lapith women) the violation of kind. (pp. 22–5, 36)

The language that Iago applies for enthusing Roderigo is also highly dialogic and it is so carefully employed that the latter feels confusedly helpless without some word from Iago to set him in action. When Othello's marriage to Desdemona is publicly announced and approved of even by the Duke, Roderigo feels desperately at loss, saying: "I will incontinently drown myself", to which Iago delivers this lecture:

Virtue? A fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus, or
Thus. Our bodies are our gardens to which our wills
Are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow
Lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one
Gender of herbs or distract it with many – either to have it
Sterile with idleness or manured with industry - why, the
Power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills.

If the beam of our lives had not one scale of reason to
 Poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of
 Our natures would conduct us to most preposterous
 Conclusions; but we have reason to cool our raging
 Motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts – whereof
 I take this that you call ‘love’ to be a sect or scion. (I.3.315-327)

In its richness of significance and complexity of dialogism, this piece is well beyond poor Roderigo. It gives no solace, but further compels him into vengeance against the Moor, as it is conditioned by Iago to be so. Roderigo, who has been so helplessly confused as to what might be done, becomes strongly determined in his intention, after being exposed to such a provocatively meant language. He eagerly cries: “I am changed: I’ll go sell all my land” (I.3. 369-70). Most painfully, Roderigo is the one who finally falls victim to the deceitful language and knavery of Iago, though he is his accomplice and the only one who shall know of Iago’s fake tongue.

Iago’s *dialogic* language plays a decisive role when he comes to use it directly in relation to Othello himself. This happens in the famous “temptation scene” when “Iago’s most innocent-seeming speeches are peppered with lewd *doubles entendres* that heat Othello’s suspicions even as the tempter professes to soothe them with reassurances of Cassio’s merit and Desdemona’s generosity” (Neill 2008: 153). Here is some part of it:

Iago: My noble lord –
Othello: What dost thou say, Iago?
Iago: Did Michael Cassio, when you wooed my lady,
 Know of your love?
Othello: He did, from first to last –
 Why dost thou ask?
Iago: But for a satisfaction of my thought,
 No further harm.
Othello: Why of thy thought, Iago?
Iago: I did not think he had been acquainted with her.
Othello: O yes, and went between us very oft.
Iago: Indeed?
Othello: Indeed? Ay, indeed. Discern’st thou aught in that?
 Is he not honest?
Iago: Honest, my lord?
Othello: Honest? Ay, honest.
Iago: My lord, for aught I know.
Othello: What dost thou think? (III.3. 95 - 108).

I think this part is a prime instance of language use as meant by Bakhtin, because, as M. H. Abrams (2005: 63) suggests, it “owes its precise inflection and meaning to a number of attendant factors – the specific social situation in which it is spoken, the relation of its speaker to an actual or anticipated listener, and the relation of the utterance to the prior utterances to which it is (explicitly or implicitly) a response”. This “polyphonic” language is carefully calculated so as to work out the desired effect on the addressee. It is never a simple and neutral means for communicating information. As in the case of Roderigo, the ‘multi-accented’ language, first creates ambiguity and confusion on the part of the listener, and then asserts the desired significance. While Iago never uses the term *dishonest*, witness how he strives to make Cassio seem so:

Iago: For Michael Cassio,
I dare be sworn, I think, that he is honest.
Othello: I think so too.
Iago: Men should be what they seem -
Or those that be not, would they might seem none.
Othello: Certain, men should be what they seem.
Iago: Why, then I think Cassio's an honest man.
Othello: Nay, yet there's more in this!
I prithee speak to me as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts
The worst of words. (III.3.127- 137)

Now that he has prepared the ground for the assertion of his meaning, he pours out more of his enthusing words:

Good my lord, pardon me:
Though I am bound to every act of duty,
I am not bound to that all slaves are free to
Utter my thoughts? Why, say they are vile and false –
As where's that palace whereinto foul things
Sometimes intrude not? – who has that breast so pure
Where no uncleanly apprehensions
Keep leets and law-days, and in sessions sit
With meditations lawful? (III.3.138- 145)

Upon a more attentive observation, we can see that even more ends are intended in this multilayered language than just rendering Cassio dishonest; it means to prove Iago himself dutiful and honest. As Neill (2008: 168) remarks, “The rhetoric of this speech is calculated to persuade Othello of the maddening contrast between the frankness (freedom and honesty) of Iago's servantly ‘love and duty’ and the deviousness of Desdemona's supposed betrayal of wifely fidelity”. He works through the same “double knavery” of language and intention for persuading Othello that Desdemona is also infidel. The more Othello is persuaded, the more Iago reveals of his mind. To make his intention more effectively imposed through the language which he uses, Iago sometimes says the opposite of what he intends his words to mean to Othello, thus he finally says:

I hope you will consider what is spoke
Comes from your love. But I do see you're moved.
I am to pray you not to strain my speech
To grosser issues, nor to larger reach
Than to suspicion. (III.3.219-223)

Throughout his talk with Othello, Iago presents himself as a most humble and dutiful servant, who thinks nothing of himself and is only serving his master. This, however, is part of his strategy for producing the desired effect on Othello, because he uses his subordinated state to that of the Moor for tempting him into accepting what Iago wants him to know and believe. Or as Greenblatt wisely observes:

However galling it may be to him, Iago's subordination is a kind of protection, for it conceals his power and enables him to play upon the ambivalence of Othello's relation to Christian society: the Moor at once represents the institution

and the alien, the conqueror and the infidel. Iago can conceal his malicious intentions toward “the thick-lips” behind the mask of dutiful service and hence prolong his improvisation. (2005: 170)

Iago succeeds, as we know, in persuading Othello of his wife’s adultery and in ruining his life and happiness through his “word-play”; it remains for us to wonder how Othello was so susceptible to his persuasion. At the end of the play, when, upon the death of Desdemona, Emilia, all in rage, asks Iago if he has truly convinced Othello of Desdemona’s unfaithfulness, Iago reveals the nature of his *dialogic* speech through the use of which he has, in fact, told Othello what he *wanted* him to hear:

I told him what I thought; and told no more
Than what he found himself was apt and true (V.2.74-75).

5. Conclusion

What I have picked out and studied in *Othello* is a small portion of a vast array of human relations in which language is a key to both communication and gratification of desired intentions. Such relations, as we saw, are imbued with conflict and tension, which provide the ground for the *polyphony* of language to emerge. Language is never a simple means for cutting the world of abstract ideas into comprehensible forms. It is deeply charged with significances that, for sure, stay even beyond the scope and control of the speaker. I consider Iago’s language an example of *dialogism* which Bakhtin proposed when he first took the language to the social level of actual human relations. I have tried to show that Iago’s language is *dialogic* in two senses. One is that it “is locked into an intense relationship with the word of another. It is always addressed to someone [...] and it is accompanied by the keen anticipation of another’s response” (Gardiner 1992: 3). It is so also in that it is not “a passive vehicle of neutral description or information: because it is designed to provoke a response, to initiate dialogue, it is an ‘arena of battle between two voices’ and is charged with polemic, parody, evaluation and so on” (ibid.). Bakhtin’s groundbreaking ideas were first proposed in 1930s, when Stalinist “barrack-communism” was well established and harshly repressive, but as Gardiner affirms, “Bakhtin unarguably maintained a pronounced faith in the liberating potential of popular cultural forms, even during the darkest moments of Stalinist repression” (idem: 4). So is the case with Shakespeare in the hierarchal society of Elizabethan England; he has, also, made the disruptive voice of *dissidence* be heard through the *dialogism* of his characters’ language. The opening lines of Greenblatt’s *Shakespeare’s Freedom* crown and conclude my argument:

Shakespeare as a writer is the embodiment of human freedom. He seems to have been able to fashion language to say anything he imagined, to conjure up any character, to express any emotion, to explore any idea. Though he lived his life as the bound subject of a monarch in a strictly hierarchical society that policed expression in speech and in print, he possessed what Hamlet calls a free soul. (2010: 1)

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“A STRANGER IN MITTELEUROPA”
CENTRAL-EUROPEAN INSIGHTS IN PHILIP ROTH’S
THE PRAGUE ORGY

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***Abstract:** Starting from the premise that, as one of Roth’s shorter works, Philip Roth’s 1985 novella, *The Prague Orgy*, may have been insufficiently explored, the paper sets out to analyze its interconnectedness with and indebtedness to the Central-European historical and literary space. As part of a vaster project, via close readings in context, it will retrace the author’s preoccupation with major issues that, in time, shaped individual and collective, real and fictional trajectories across The Other Europe.*

***Keywords:** Central-Europe, dissident, ideology, Prague, totalitarianism*

1. Introduction

In most studies dedicated to Philip Roth’s work, *The Prague Orgy* plays a rather marginal part, featuring as the author’s epilogue to the acclaimed *Zuckerman Bound* trilogy. It is the piece that completes the puzzle and may, in fact, have triggered Harold Bloom’s praise for the intrinsic unity of the three novels and the novella: “as a formal totality, it becomes much more than the sum of its parts.” (Bloom 1985). A half-decade (1979-1985) of tightly-knit, yet independent samples of impressive prose is now frequently read and published as a whole. In this ensemble, reputed for its insightful autobiographical undertones, due to Nathan Zuckerman’s postmodern experimentations with and meditations about writing and its (dis)contents, *The Prague Orgy* goes beyond cleverly-disguised self-investigation. It stands out as a highly personal(ized) critique of the kind of totalitarianism that Roth had faced and observed himself.

Either directly, during his trips to Central Europe, or indirectly, from his fleeting acquaintance or close friendship with intellectuals of a cultural space he had become increasingly interested in, the novelist had gained intimate knowledge of the cynical distortion mechanisms that shaped the history, discourse and everyday reality of individuals and communities trapped behind the Iron Curtain. Habitually untamed, outspoken, provocative, Roth may never have been as openly political before. The novella is set in a distinguishably Jewish environment, on the Old Continent, at the physical and cultural roots of many future American citizens’ trajectories. Extremely rich, despite its brevity, it paves the way towards his later, acknowledged masterpieces, such as the *American Trilogy*, whose impact was to reside primarily in their socio-political resonance and, oftentimes, biting satire.

Consequently, the aim of this paper is to foreground elements of lived, performed, mediated, remembered or simply narrated experience that Roth toys with, in his account of the practically and psychologically overwhelming (though intellectually underwhelming) domination of 20th century Central-European

totalitarian regimes. Zuckerman's encounter with the topic seems rather accidental: a 1976 trip to communist Prague, in search of potentially promising manuscripts, never published by a departed Yiddish writer. Roth's own involvement in the study and exposure of societies set adrift by ruthless ideologies was by no means a literary whim. The following selection will prove the seriousness of his well-documented approach and the creative ways in which he broke the quasi-generalized silence regarding the oppressive atmosphere that enveloped a significant part of the European continent.

2. "We Want All the Wrong Things". Dissidents in a dark farce

As *captatio benevolentiae* and effective means of building credibility among American audiences, largely ignorant of communist practices (and not necessarily for lack of interest), *The Prague Orgy* condenses an intense story in a series of private diary entries. The assumption of truthfulness as to the portrayal of seemingly dystopian, though real, circumstances is strengthened by Zuckerman's journey of initiation towards a newly-discovered heart of darkness. He wanders through a territory that proves as corrupted as it is bleak, uninspiring and alienating for the types of individuals Roth dwells upon: typically free spirits, who find themselves demotivated, disoriented, broken.

In relatively few pages, the author brings to life a range of plausible protagonists, who do not as much push a substantial plot forth, as they muse upon the quandaries of their existence. Carefully drawn or merely sketched, these characters address the ravages of communism in Czechoslovakia in various ways, according to their position within and relation to the authorities. In the subtly subversive Rothian manner, evident to the systematic reader, the apparently marginal figures frequently deliver the most relevant lines. Apart from the main character's views, based on events that made him seek refuge and freedom in the United States, inconvenient truths are uttered with a naturalness that illustrates the depths of the foregrounded moral and humanitarian crisis.

Such narratives from the fringes, sometimes rather casual remarks, will help us grasp Roth's depiction of a world in dismay. The initial meeting between Nathan Zuckerman and Zdenek Sisovsky, the exiled Czech writer who asks for help in retrieving his father's short stories from his home country, happens in New York City, on January 11, 1976. The scene is set, the narrative pretext put in place for a literal and figurative investigation of Sisovsky's background. Quite reluctantly travelling to Prague, Zuckerman can verify the verisimilitude of the information he gets. Against a hibernal Central European background, fact meets fiction: Roth's alter-ego plunges into the twisted universe of dissident writers who seem to populate a dark fantasy, shaped by conspiracy theories and despotic orders. "*The Prague Orgy* is of that disturbing eminence: obscenely outrageous and yet brilliantly reflective of a paranoid reality that has become universal" (Bloom 2003: 2).

I shall scrutinize a few essential episodes, which reveal the diversity of the narrator's interlocutors, and their (and, inherently, Roth's) understanding of dictatorship. At the beginning of the novella, during the face-to-face encounter with Zuckerman, Sisovsky is accompanied by Eva Kalinova, an exquisite Chekhovian actress back in Czechoslovakia, and a tragic figure in her real, American life. An additional epic voice to her distressed lover's, she exposes the irreconcilability of creativity and obedience, imagination and the conformism

imposed by the communist aversion towards personal aspiration, for the alleged sake of the greater good. She is the first in the dense gallery of secondary characters whose insights contribute to Zuckerman's decoding of the generic context of the era.

Thus, some of Kalinova's interventions in the conversation prove relevant to the novella's underlying ideas, despite appearing to be parenthetical remarks, reveries, or nostalgic antics of a faded actress. Denied access to American stages by the language barrier, Eva attempts to justify her professional failure in the New World by a reconsideration. "I have had enough of being an artificial person. [...] It confuses me and it confuses everyone else. We are people who fantasize too much to begin with. We read too much, we feel too much, we fantasize too much – we want all the wrong things!" (Roth 2007: 458) To the attentive listener, already prepared to identify echoes of the repressive regime, Eva's renunciation of art for life, her manicheistic and reductionist denunciation of humanistic idealism may indicate the system's negative influence.

On the one hand, Kalinova has trouble adjusting to new rules and expectations. On the other hand, in the need to fill an ontological void, she embraces precisely the type of logic she has fled from. Having fallen from communist grace, initially because of her impulsive second marriage to a Jew, she has followed Sisovsky to the U.S. and become a saleswoman. Her position is nuanced by her desire to find utilitarian meaning in the new circumstances: "I sell dresses, and dresses are needed more by people than stupid touching Checkhovian actresses!" (ibid.). One might grasp a connection between this resignation and that enforced by the Czech institutions, whose strict interdictions and surveillance trigger opprobrium of the 'wrong things': idea(l)s, hopes, feelings, reactions – all traditional enemies of autocracy.

Emphasizing the web of Central-European references that Roth weaves into his *Zuckermann Bound* series, Kalinova channels one of famous Anne Frank's guest/ghost appearances. As pointed out by Wilson (2005: 108), "whereas Anne Frank's diary entries have been perpetually 'transmuted' and converted into 'usable goods,' we see Zuckerman not only coming to terms with his role as a writer through his diary entries but also taking control of the narration of his own story". This polyphonic story surpasses a journey into self-discovery: it offers insight into the rich texture of a collective (hi)story than has evolved in time and space, but has never ceased to unite via invisible threads. Coming from an oppressive system, Eva is symbolically bound to another, implicitly warning that the atrocities of the Holocaust could resurface, under modified guises and ideological justifications.

Her destiny as a fugitive and, currently, a hyphenated-American in the process of adjustment is further complicated by the diasporic individual's inherent torment, doubled by the sense of Jewish guilt, ubiquitous in Roth's work. While Sisovsky goes over past episodes to clarify life-choices for Zuckerman-the-outsider, Eva points to the essence of the problem. Resistance and rebellion against absurd regulations and inexplicable abuse go beyond private inconveniences, into the realm of civic consciousness: "All these people, they suffer for their ideas and for their banned books, and for democracy to return to Czechoslovakia—they suffer for their principles, for their humanity, for their hatred of the Russians, and in this terrible story I am still suffering for love!" (Roth 2007: 459)

It becomes obvious, even before Zuckerman's actual confrontations with representatives of the oppressed and their oppressors, that the focal point of the

narrative will not necessarily be the manuscript situation, as we are strategically made to believe, but rather the complex tension between the free world and totalitarianism, as illustrated by the Czech case. As Zdenek introduces his late father's story to Nathan, the interconnectedness of life and art, fact and fiction grows clearer, alongside the necessity to salvage the remnants of a supposedly outstanding secret career in Yiddish lore. "My father was the Jew. Not only a Jew, but, like you, a Jew writing about Jews; like you, Semite-obsessed all his life" (Roth 2007: 463).

3. Legacies of Central Europe: the authoritarian doom

The unpublished stories that must be recuperated trigger the son's meditation on the difference between value-scales and on the importance of chance and choice. After his arrival in the U.S., upon an inquisitive review of Jewish-related American literature, he realizes that his limited horizons had deprived him of the accurate comprehension of the phenomena his predecessor had attempted to capture. That is the legacy he intends to preserve, as it becomes evident that

in America my father would have been a celebrated writer. Had he emigrated before I was born, had he come to New York City in his thirties, he would have been discovered by some helpful person and published in the best magazines. He would be something more now than just another murdered Jew. (Roth 2007: 465)

The indicated tragic fate may be a figment of an overactive imagination, but it rings true due to the Central-European Jewish communities' similarities of fate. Taking advantage of Eva's absence, Sisovsky recollects his father's alleged murder in a fight between two Gestapo officers, who each protected the Jew that he needed (the chess master vs. the dentist). After heavy drinking, they killed each other's protégés over some trifle argument: Sisovsky's father and brother presumably fell prey to the sudden wrath: "There was no law in those days against shooting Jews in their houses, or even on the street" (Roth 2007: 464).

Foregrounding the disquieting status of a group treated as a collection of pawns rather than human beings under the Nazi regime, Roth takes aim at two totalitarian ideologies instead of just one, extending the critique and suggesting potential parallelisms. Two generations within the same family are subjected to distinct types of historical trauma, both devastating at communal and individual levels. While Sisovsky's morbid anecdote is dismantled by his estranged wife, Olga ("It happened to another writer, who didn't even write in Yiddish. Who didn't have a wife or have a child. Sisovsky's father was killed in a bus accident" (Roth 2007: 489)), the real-life inspiration lies elsewhere in the Central-European cultural legacy. Referencing the appalling death of one of Poland's outstanding writers, Bruno Schulz, Roth blurs geographical and symbolical boundaries between text, metatext and intertext.

His spirited novella connects multiple layers of fiction with elements of a larger mythology, kept alive by the collective memory he himself becomes integral part of, as his writing develops: reviving Central European life stories to raise awareness is an art that grows. As pointed out by Kinsky,

Sisovsky's father's story is that of Bruno Schulz, the Polish writer whom Roth published in his series *Writers from the Other Europe*. In reality, or in the unwritten,

Schulz was the one killed in tit-for-tat revenge, and Schulz was the one who became an iconic figure for Jewish authors – the one whose life story compelled written reimaginings by Roth, David Grossman (*See Under: Love*, 1986), and Cynthia Ozick (*The Messiah of Stockholm*, 1987)” (Kensky 2014: 205)

It is, therefore, Schulz’s horrific end in the Drohobycz Ghetto that Roth pays homage to, lending verisimilitude to Sisovksy’s version of his father’s death. Olga contributes to the epiphany of abjection, pointing out that tales of exploitation and abuse have become so common that they trigger a marketization of suffering. When Nathan expresses his disbelief as to Zdenek’s lying, she quickly replies: “Because it’s not as horrible a story! They all say their fathers were killed by the Nazis. [...] Only people like you, only a shallow, sentimental, American idiot Jew who thinks there is virtue in suffering!” (Roth 2007: 489)

The Prague Orgy proves to be a satirical outline of the waves of collective suffering inflicted upon Central European Jewry by the fickle circumstances of 20th century history (Roth Pierpont (2013: 138) even calls Roth’s accounts of life in Prague “piquant”). Additionally, it offers a detached, yet not distant view from the outside: as a Jewish-American writer fascinated by a biographically-rooted story, Nathan is within and without the plot, personal affection and communal affiliation challenging his trenchant objectivity. His evolving awareness of the persecution of his contemporary Czech writers indirectly reflects Roth’s own, as “Roth’s knowledge of the city had deepened since *The Professor of Desire*. He’s not a tourist anymore. Prague is a great deal more than Kafka. The Czech writers whom Nathan meets in his bugged hotel room or in their squalid quarters are sardonic, desperate, and full of stories” (ibid.).

4. A tragic-comedy of the absurd

Like Roth himself, caught in an intricate web of interests, Zuckerman rapidly becomes a victim of generalized suspicion, either as a defender of the dissidents, or as a profiteer who intends to make a fortune out of people’s misfortune. Olga mocks his quest and ironically accuses him of selfishness, proving the extent to which the system’s paranoia translates into its subjects’ affliction and contagion.

So *that’s* what you get out of it! *That’s* your idealism! The marvelous Zuckerman brings from behind the Iron Curtain two hundred unpublished Yiddish stories written by a victim of a Nazi bullet. You will be a hero to the Jews and to literature and to all of the Free World. On top of all your millions of dollars and millions of girls, you will win the American Prize for Idealism about Literature. And what will happen to me? I will go to prison for smuggling a manuscript to the West. (Roth 2007: 497)

Olga’s biting tirade does not solely target cultural vogues, ideological wars and the industries of trauma in a world of fashionable sensitivity. It brings to the fore, almost imperceptibly, the pervading fear instilled in individuals by the communist regime, its control and intimidation strategies. Apparently outspoken and provocative, Olga is a cog in the wheel of a mechanism that surfaces as ominously grim, despite the sometimes deliriously humorous narratives it engenders. Echoing Joseph Heller’s war satire, *Catch 22*, *The Prague Orgy* is built

upon revealing anecdotes of living in, under, with, against, even despite communism. An example is Olga's lover, whose transient appearance captures the paradoxes of authoritarianism and the ensuing contradictory choices.

"He has a note from a doctor saying he is a psychiatric case."

"Is he?"

"He carries the note to be left alone. They leave you alone if you can prove you are crazy. He is a perfectly reasonable person: he is interested in fucking women and writing poems, and not in stupid politics. This proves he is *not* crazy. But the police come and they read the note and they take him to the lunatic asylum. [...] But he is happy where he is. In the lunatic asylum he is not required to be a worker all day in the railway office. There he has some peace and quiet and at last he writes something again."

"How do you all live like this?"

"Human adaptability is a great blessing." (Roth 2007: 473)

This farcical situation with tragic undertones is an almost direct replica of Heller's (1994: 62-63) passage defining the Catch 22: "a concern for one's safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions". While Heller was indebted to various important names of world literature, including, naturally, Kafka, he had also manifested his appreciation for Hasek's *Good Soldier Svejk*. Roth joins the family of Central-European spirits, creating his own little joyful apocalypse and claiming a place of his own in a type of literature that examines and reunites opposites, equally challenging and deriding them. Opting for "a cleansing and continuous laughter, sometimes so intense that in itself it becomes astonishingly painful" (Bloom 2003: 3), the satirist employs humor to expose circumstances too difficult to bear or articulate otherwise. In doing so, according to Bloom (2003: 6), "unlike Kafka, Roth tries to evade, not interpretation, but guilt, partly because he lives the truth of Kafka's terrible motto of the penal colony: 'Guilt is never to be doubted'."

Likewise, already regarded with a suspicious eye by the oppressed, Roth's alter-ego, Zuckerman, is seen as a powerful enemy by the Czech authorities. He finds out from a student at Charles University that a case is being built against him for "plotting against the Czech people. Plotting with troublemakers against the socialist system. You are an ideological saboteur" (Roth 2007: 485). To the reader acquainted with totalitarian constraint and manipulation, what might appear as a ridiculously dystopian invention strikes a deeper chord. Constructing the enemy as a technique of ideological brainwashing is evident in the way in which an American citizen who visits Prague for intellectual reasons is presumably enlightened by representatives of the system that labels him as dangerous. Predictably, his success in retrieving the desired writings is annihilated by the authorities' effective defense: the police "seize the manuscript and force Zuckerman, ignominiously, to leave the country" (Roth Pierpont 2013: 139).

Zuckerman's encounter with the "Kulturminister" is equally flabbergasting and educational as to the repressive discourse of dictatorships against intellectuals. It also teaches a valuable lesson on the aforementioned 'adaptability', while disguising dependence and political subjugation as means of safeguarding national values:

This is not the United States of America where every freakish thought is a fit subject for writing, where there is no such thing as propriety, decorum, or shame, nor a decent respect for the morality of the ordinary, hardworking citizen. This is a small country of fifteen million, dependent as it has always been upon the goodwill of a mighty neighbor. Those Czechs who inflame the anger of our mighty neighbor are not patriot – *they are the enemy*. (Roth 2007: 503)

5. The propaganda lesson

In an era of fake news, based on crass generalizations and lack of supporting evidence, one can easily trace such bad habits back to the type of discourse Roth illustrates. Surges of rampant nationalism feigning patriotism, proclamations of superiority are not only historically frequent, but also cyclically recurrent. They create the illusion of decision-making in the commonest of individuals, pitted against alert and perceptive minds, likely to disrupt the subjugation of the masses. Posing as Nathan's benefactor and wise advisor, the Minister of Culture delivers a standard doctrinaire lecture. "Roth, through the minister's unknowing dramatic irony, indicts the ideology he supports" (Nadel 2011: 225).

Vilifying, minimizing, and relativizing critical attitudes and voices that are dissonant from the grand chorus, the regime seeks to destroy the influence of reason, analytical thinking, and militant dissent upon a considerable part of the population, easily controlled by terror and ignorance. As noted by Ira Nadel, "in a Prague where literary culture is 'held hostage,' stories substitute for life. The Czechs have become their stories. To tell a story is to resist the coercion that surrounds them" (ibid.). Inevitably, the state-and-party apparatus fabricates repulsive profiles for the country's leading writers, creating a false opposition between the intelligentsia and the common people and ostracizing the marginalized elites.

The Minister's attempt to illuminate Nathan about his bohemian cultural companions reveals the perverse essence of a trivializing structure, whose propaganda denigrates its dissenters, presented as categories, rather than opinionated individuals.

The ordinary Czech citizen does not think like the sort of people you have chosen to meet. He does not behave like them and he does not admire them. The ordinary Czech is repelled by such people. Who are they? Sexual perverts. Alienated neurotics. Bitter egomaniacs. They seem to you courageous? You find it thrilling, the price they pay for their great art? Well, the ordinary hardworking Czech who wants a better life for himself and his family is not so thrilled. He considers them malcontents and parasites and outcasts. At least their blessed Kafka knew he was a freak, recognized that he was a misfit who could never enter into a healthy, ordinary existence alongside his countrymen. But these people? Incurable deviants who propose to make their moral outlook the norm. The worst is that left to themselves, left to run free to do as they wish, these people would destroy this country. (Roth 2007: 501)

Minister Novak's speech is a textbook example of demonizing the other and resorting to any means to the end of attaining political supremacy. On the one hand, Roth offers chilling samples of dictatorial rhetoric, illustrative of the viciousness and aggressiveness with which the system proclaims its normality. None other than the Minister of Culture, "the last of the censorious patriarchs"

(Sandberg 2014: 181) - otherwise a secondary character overlooked by most reviewers – is selected to explain the role of literature in a country with a significant cultural heritage. His nonchalant equivalence between morals and moralization, creativity and normativity functions as a weapon of indoctrination, transforming art into a propaganda tool.

More subversively refined than the regime's openly repressive structures, Novak feigns nobility, generosity, inclusiveness, open-mindedness, i.e. exactly the attitudes that are feared, discouraged or annihilated, for lack of ideological alignment.

In this small country the writers have a great burden to bear: they must not only make the country's literature, they must be the touchstone for general decency and public conscience. They occupy a high position in our national life because they are people who live beyond reproach. Our writers are loved by their readers. The country looks to them for moral leadership. No, it is those who stand outside of the common life, that is who we all fear. And we are right to. (Roth 2007: 500-501)

By incorporating such passages in Zuckerman's investigation of a case deeply rooted in the aftermath of Nazism in Central Europe, the author may instill in the audience the justified temptation to compare, contrast, and find similarities in the practices, discourses and effects of two totalitarian regimes. Both are bent on the dissolution of landmarks and the blurring of standards, fomenting various segments of the population against each other and using divisive arguments having to do with alleged race, ethnicity, class, religion, morality issues. This results in generalized paranoia and surveillance: "No one can be trusted, and no room seems free of a recording device. This reaches a comic and absurd point" (Nadel 2011: 224).

6. Sharing the collective malaise

As expected, Kafka, the literary icon that represents a "freak" to a system which preserves multiple features he had openly criticized is a constant reference point for Nathan's intellectual friends, whose love-or-hate surfaces frequently. To Sisovksy, Kafka is a nucleus of Central European malaise: he represents a state of mind whose context may have become obsolete, but which lingers in the collective mind and creativity. Roth uses Kafka as a term of comparison multiple times, appealing to his initiated reader's accuracy in decoding the cultural references: "Kafka's homelessness, if I may say so, was nothing beside my father's. Kafka had at least the nineteenth century in his blood - all those Prague Jews did. Kafka belonged to literature, if nothing else. My father belonged to nothing." (Roth 2007: 464-65)

Building and burning bridges between the world of literature and that of experience, the fictional and the empirical, Roth creates an impactful and allusive subtext, leaving characters and readers to their own connections and conclusions. They will be, however, inevitably shaped by a guided and, therefore, shared intuition of a vast socio-historical and cultural context, which mirrors, to a point, Roth's revelations upon getting acquainted with Prague's peculiar atmosphere. While Zuckerman is a "stranger in Mitteleuropa", his real-life model had become a vessel for the type of energy the Central-European space radiates. At the exact time

of Nathan's fictional quest, in February 1976, Roth published an article in *The New York Times* on his personal experience on the Old Continent:

Within the very first hours of walking in these streets between the river and the Old Town Square, I understood that a connection of sorts existed between myself and this place: here was one of those dense corners of Jewish Europe which Hitler had emptied of Jews, a place which in earlier days must have been not too unlike those neighborhoods in Austro-Hungarian Lemberg and Czarist Kiev, where the two branches of my own family had lived before their emigration to America at the beginning of the century. Looking for Kafka's landmarks, I had, to my surprise, come upon some landmarks that felt to me like my own" (cf. Kensky 2014: 209)

7. (Instead of a) Conclusion. The anti-totalitarian report

In the shadow of the great empires, having struggled with contradictory, yet equally imposing regimes throughout the 20th century, it is not surprising that Prague and Czechoslovakia are presented by Roth as the essentializing nutshell of private and public existential crises. Inter- and trans-continently, historically-charged connections and disconnections surface in the frame of modern and postmodern fragmentation of identity and, ultimately, dissolution of values. In *The Prague Orgy*, trauma, confusion and misguidedness envelop a universe whose ethos has long been overshadowed by practicality. It is simultaneously depressing and unsurprising to see opportunism become virtue.

Novak, the ideologue of the regime's outlook on what may be admirable and praiseworthy, glorifies his father's love of his country, manifested as successive praises to whoever happened to be in power (Masaryk, Hitler, Stalin, Dubcek).

These are our people who represent the true Czech spirit – *these are our realists!* People who understand what *necessity* is. People who do not sneer at order and see only the worst in everything. People who know to distinguish between what remains possible in a little country like ours and what is a stupid, maniacal delusion—*people who know how to submit decently to their historical misfortune*'. These are the people to whom we owe the survival of our beloved land, and not to alienated, degenerate, egomaniacal artistes!" (Roth 2007: 504)

As pointed out by Sandberg (2014: 182), "Novak's father has adopted a series of monologic positions in line with the exigencies of Czech history, parroting each new authority as it supplants the previous one [...] This is a patriarchal narrative that glorifies silence and thus repudiates intertextual dialogism".

What Roth accomplishes masterfully in *The Prague Orgy*, one of his shorter pieces is not a mere piece of autocratic ventriloquism, based on gifted mimicry of the studied and dreaded sources. In 1985, at the height of Central European dictatorships, *The Prague Orgy* was more than a respectful nod to the author's cultural heritage: it was an act of defiance and an implicit call to action. In retrospect, as many a time in Roth career, against a background of growing political turmoil in the foregrounded area and increasing international awareness, it may appear prescient. It was, undoubtedly, a significant piece in the writer's efforts to contribute to the symbolic opening of the American – and global – mind.

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**SALVATION THROUGH INDIVIDUATION:
A JUNGIAN INTERPRETATION OF LARRY DARRELL'S
SPIRITUAL JOURNEY IN *THE RAZOR'S EDGE***

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Abstract: *The spiritual journey that Larry from The Razor's Edge makes after his traumatizing war experience deserves to be examined and its significance elucidated. Individuation, the central concept of Jungian psychology, offers a lens. In this interpretation, Larry's journey is understood as an individuation process whose three stages are represented by the shadow, the anima and the Self, all personified by the novel's characters. Just as individuation should be the goal of individual growth, Larry's spiritual journey exemplifies a solution to the spiritual crisis plaguing the historical background that the novel is set in.*

Keywords: *animus/ anima, archetypes, Carl Jung, individuation, shadow, the self*

1. Introduction

The spiritual journey of Larry Darrell, the protagonist of William Somerset Maugham's last major novel *The Razor's Edge*, is the main thread of the story. It started when Larry decided to forgo a materially affluent life, after witnessing the death of a friend in the war, and culminated in Larry's finding true happiness and settling for a modest life. The meaning and significance of such a remarkable journey merits close examination. Yet due to the overwhelming preoccupation among critics with the modernist literary movement of the first half of the 20 century, *The Razor's Edge*, a 1944 novel – like many of Maugham's other works – has suffered critical neglect. Even its tremendous commercial success did little to salvage it from such neglect. Of the few scholars who have written on the novel, Collins, in his review of the biography *Maugham* by Ted Morgan, characterizes Larry's journey as a quest for “the individualist spirit in a rationalist, materialist, mechanistic age” (Collins 1982: 7) that was much called-for following the collapse of the 19th century ideals and the catastrophic First World War; Holden, in his 1994 PhD dissertation, critiques Larry's trip to India - the culminating part of his entire journey - from a post-colonial perspective; Dong and Li (2011) approaches the journey by comparing its ethics with Max Weber's theory of theodicy in politics as a vocation. Adams (2016) treats the novel, along with Maugham's other novels, like *The Moon and Sixpence*, as an ethical parable that reflects the individualist philosophy of the Enlightenment philosopher Baruch Spinoza. Larry's journey is seen as a path to the human heart, which, for both Spinoza and Maugham, is where human nature lies. The goal of the journey is thus to “come to understand and appreciate it” (Adams 2016: 126).

The journey is depicted by the protagonist himself as “an experience of the same order as the mystics have had all over the world through all the centuries” (Maugham 1944: 301). Well-versed and careful readers may be reminded by

Larry's journey of the journeys made by Buddha, Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha, etc. It thus has an *archetypal* nature and invites a reading through the lens of Carl Jung, whose analytical psychology is also called *Archetypal Psychology*. The archetypes are defined by Jung as "the introspectively recognizable form of a *priori* psychic orderedness" (Jung 2010: 100). On the one hand, archetypes hide in the human unconscious, and, on the other hand, they permeate myths, fairy tales, dreams, literature, art and religions. Manifestations of an archetype may vary, yet a common pattern is always present. Among the most important archetypes in Jung's teachings are the shadow and the anima/animus and the Self. These archetypes, when properly understood and integrated into the conscious, facilitate a person's individuation, by which Jung means "the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'in-dividual,' that is, a separate, indivisible unity or 'whole'" (Jung 1968: 275). It is also the "final end" of individual growth and the treatment of psychological stasis. Joseph Campbell's famous "hero's journey", a common template of heroic adventures in mythologies and literature, is a cultural rendition of the individuation process.

This essay finds that the story of Larry's spiritual quest largely unfolds in accordance with the Jungian individuation process. It will therefore dissect the individuation journey by examining the three different stages that Larry goes through, each realized through a set of archetypal experiences involving the shadow, the anima and the Self, respectively. It then elucidates the moral message of the novel, which is a call for the restoration of life's meaning through individuation. Larry's success in attaining happiness marks an encouragement to address the spiritual crises represented in the novel through a quest for meaning.

2. The integration of the shadow

The shadow is one of the most notable archetypes in Jungian psychology. At the personal level, the shadow is the dark side of the psyche that contains instinctual drives, such as one's aggressive impulses and sexual desires, which are normally unacceptable in social life and therefore repressed by the ego into the unconscious. Although we are inclined to always repress the shadow in our unconscious, that does not make us perfectly adapted members of society. We are instead liable to project our own shadow onto others. Such a projection blinds us from our own problems and inhibits our personality growth. For the individuation process to develop, the ego must "master and assimilate the shadow" (Henderson 1964: 121). The individuation process therefore entails the realization and integration of the shadow.

The shadows in Larry's individuation process, however, are not personal ones, but collective shadows, that is, the many ills of society. As the opposite of light, the collective shadows of the early 20th century Western world, where the novel is set, consist of the problems caused by scientific and technological advancement and the dark side of the explosive increase in material comforts the Western civilization achieved through industrialization. In *The Razor's Edge*, the shadow is represented primarily by two elements of the novel. First, it is reflected in the demonic hostility of the war revealed by the tragic death of Larry's friend Patsy, who was shot by a German plane when trying to protect Larry. This traumatizing experience propelled Larry to find out why evil exists. His struggle with evil persisted throughout his journey, until at last he came to the realization that "the values we cherish in the world can only exist in combination with evil"

(Maugham 1944: 270). Although Larry did not consider this a completely satisfactory explanation, he did manage to come to terms with it: “something is inevitable[,] all you can do is to make the best of it” (Maugham 1944: 305) and decided to live “with calmness, forbearance, compassion, selflessness, and continence” (idem: 306). Such an attitude indicates his success in integrating the shadow, which, like evil, though it cannot be eradicated, can be brought to the conscious and made use of.

The second shadow that Larry tries to integrate is personified in the novel primarily by Elliott Templeton, who, although overall amiable and generous, was hopelessly snobbish and pathetically obsessed with parties and distinctions. Though an American expatriate, he exuded no authentic Americanness. Instead he spoke English with an Oxford accent and converted to Catholicism as a show of refinement and vanity. Yet “His career as a Catholic was in fact no less successful than his career as an *homme du monde*” (idem: 11). Elliott’s vanity lasted well into his last moment, when he was still tightly holding in his hand an invitation card to an aristocratic party that he had longed to attend, but was not invited to. The invitation card was appropriated by the narrator in order to appease his anger and disappointment. The author’s depiction of Larry, by comparison, shows an obvious effort to make him the opposite of Elliott. Larry gave himself to loafing and hardship in order to come to terms with evil and find the true meaning and purpose of life. His journey is highlighted by profuse reading of philosophy and psychology, hard labour in a coal mine and on a German farm, meditations and conversations in a monastery, art study, and a pilgrimage to India. Such physically and mentally strenuous undertakings are reminiscent of the Herculean “Twelve Labours”, Jesus’ journey in the desert or Siddhartha’s ascetic wandering. These heroic adventures coincide with the inner adventures into the depths of the psyche. Whereas the shadow is epitomized by Elliott’s fanatic and vain pursuit of wealth and social recognition, Larry’s effort is a determined and arduous endeavour to subdue such a shadow.

3. Dealing with the animas

On the Jungian map of the soul, the layer of the unconscious that lies beneath the shadow contains the anima archetype (for a man) or the animus (for a woman). Jung writes that if the encounter with the shadow is the “apprentice-piece” (1968: 29) in a man’s development, then coming to terms with the anima is the “master-piece” (ibid.). *Anima* and *animus* are Latin words for soul and spirit, respectively. The anima is composed of all the propensities in a man that are generally deemed feminine: tenderness, sentimentality and tolerance, while the animus of a woman is in charge of her rationality, aggressiveness, and tendency towards moral judgment. As anima and animus are embodiments of qualities that contradict conventional gender roles, they hide in the unconscious, but reveal themselves as a complement to the persona.

Similarly to the shadow, the anima and the animus are often projected onto the people of the opposite gender in real life. They can therefore be understood by observing one’s attitude towards and behavioural patterns of people of the opposite sex. In Larry’s case, there are three anima figures in his life story: Isabel, Suzanne, and Sophie. His interactions with each of them correspond to a discrete stage of his anima integration.

Jung (1969: 10) distinguishes four stages in a man's anima development and uses figures of mythology and religion - Eve, Helen, Mary, and Sophia - as their personifications. Eve, the biblical mother of all humans, represents the first stage of the anima work. It is the instinctual stage of a man's attitude toward women, like that of an infant son toward his mother. The character Isabel is no doubt such a figure: originally Larry's fiancée, Isabel had to break off her engagement with him when he decided to "loaf" in Paris. She instead married Grey Maturin, Larry's best friend and a much more "this-worldly" person, who was more eager to meet the society's expectations of him. Yet Isabel's love for Larry never died - although for her, practicality always outweighs feelings. As for Isabel, the narrator observes that "I don't know what it was that gave me the feeling that in her love for him there was also something maternal" (Maugham 1944: 20). Such a feeling may perhaps be best explained by the fact that Larry's mother died in childbirth and that he was raised by males (his father, and Dr. Nelson after his father's death). Larry's early interactions with Isabel sees him without much sense of a self. As Isabel points out: "I could always do anything I wanted with him. I could turn him round my little finger. He was never a leader in the things we did. He just tagged along with the crowd" (idem: 100). For Larry to grow out of this infantile state, it was only necessary that he part ways with Isabel when she preferred a comfortable life.

The second anima figure in Larry's life is Suzanne Rouvier, a model that posed for artists and occasionally engaged in love affairs with them. Suzanne's perennial unstable life caused her to be infected with typhoid and penniless when she met Larry, who offered to take her to live with him for some time in a ramshackle inn in the countryside. The experience, which she described as "the happiest weeks I ever spent in my life" (idem: 199), restored her health and revived her spirit. Larry also left her with a large sum of money. It is quite safe to also conclude that Larry also kindled her creativity and inspired her to become a painter in her own right. Suzanne epitomizes a higher stage of Larry's anima development - the "Virgin Mary" stage, where the person in the individuation process sees the transcending values of the *eros*. The narrator depicts Suzanne as a woman who is "rather ugly" (idem: 185) by popular standards, but is somehow actually attractive, which, along with her honesty and down-to-earthness, is reminiscent of Mary's humanity. Her genius in art certainly suggests transcension. Suzanne's many troubled relationships with Parisian artists corresponds with Mary's early interactions with Joseph, wherein the latter sought to divorce her upon hearing of her pregnancy. Suzanne's later devotion and anticipated success as an artist, fostered through her time with Larry, resembles Mary's conception and delivery of Jesus.

The character of Sophie marks Larry's highest stage of anima development. The name of the character is obviously suggestive of *Sophia*, the embodiment of wisdom. An important figure in Gnosticism, Sophia represents a lost soul, oblivious of her divine nature, as one story in this tradition relates:

Sometimes she mourned and grieved,
for she was left alone in the darkness and void;
Sometimes she reached a thought of the light which had left her,
And she was cheered and laughed;
Sometimes she feared;
At other times she was perplexed and astonished! (Baring, Cashford 1991: 620)

It was Christ who awakened her from her confusion and revealed her real nature to her. The prototypical story has a parallel in Sophie's life and her relationship with Larry, who decided to marry Sophie when she indulged herself in drinking, smoking opium, and promiscuity after losing her husband and child in a motor accident. Their planned marriage failed to materialize after Sophie ran off and relapsed into the same destructive indulgences when tantalized by Isabel. Larry remembered Sophie as a "modest, high-minded, idealistic" (Maugham 1944: 215) teenager who wrote poetry in the style of Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg and would lose herself in reading John Keats. The now destitute and depraved Sophie "offers him the most spiritual temptation of becoming a saved soul" (Gaździńska 2002: 79), that is by restoring her health, rekindling her high-minded artistic pursuits, and eventually marrying her. The proposed marriage symbolizes Larry's endeavour to integrate his most developed anima, which, in Sophie's own words, is "Mary Magdalen to his Jesus Christ" (Maugham 1944: 239). Her tragic death later and the fact that her body was thrown into a river symbolizes the sacrificial act through which Larry was baptized and the completion of his integration with the anima.

4. The realization of the self

The Self in Jungian psychology can be understood in a twofold manner. First, it is the ultimate guiding force that facilitates the individuation process. Individuation thus can be understood as "the drive of the Self to conscious" (Schmidt 2015). It is a suprapersonal psychic force that organizes the entire psyche and directs the conscious ego to unite with both the personal and the collective unconscious. In dreams, mythology or literature, the *wise old man* that sends the hero onto his journey or mentors him along the way is a common archetype of the Self. Secondly, the Self embodies the goal and culmination of the individuation process. It is a dynamic state in which the ego is aware of the wholeness of the psyche and the individual becomes "differentiated enough to perceive our interconnection and oneness with the universe" (Colman 1999: 18).

In his spiritual quest, Larry encountered three figures that were the embodiments of "the wise old man", namely Kosti, the retired Polish army officer, Father Ensheim, the French monk, and Shri Ganesha, the Hindi yogi. Such a sequence suggests the increasing depths that Larry reached in his quest toward the Self: Kosti was a former member of the European upper-class society and instilled in Larry the knowledge of the secular aspects of Western life. And the less prominent side of Kosti's life - the fact that he was a devout Catholic - served as a harbinger to Larry's encounter with Father Ensheim. It was also Kosti that taught Larry German, which later proves to be indispensable for Larry to be able to communicate with Father Ensheim. Ensheim, the Benedictine monk, stands for the religious establishment of the Western world. When Larry spent three months with Father Ensheim in his monastery in Alsace, he found himself in a religious world well-established in its teachings, yet inadequate to address his questions concerning the existence of evil. Fortunately, this establishment was still open enough to encourage Larry to carry on his individual quest, which then landed him in Bombay, India. India was not only a geographical and spiritual "antithesis" to Larry's Western world, but can also be understood symbolically as the unconscious realm that awaited the Western man to explore and integrate. There, he was introduced to the third Self figure - Shri Ganesha, who, echoing Father Ensheim's

assertion that “God will seek you out” (Maugham 1944: 280), claimed to have been expecting Larry. Larry’s spiritual exploration in India, guided by the yogi, culminated in his eventual spiritual awakening. Shri Ganesha embodies the Self not just in the sense of a guiding force, but also as its culmination, which is reflected in the saintliness he exuded. To Larry, the yogi’s mere “presence was a benediction” (idem: 298). Ganesha obviously epitomizes the successfully individuated self that Larry aspired to be. Larry later illustrated his spiritual journey’s culmination in India, which is characterized by a rapture and heightened consciousness:

I was ravished with the beauty of the world. I’d never known such exaltation and such a transcendent joy. I had a strange sensation, a tingling that arose in my feet and traveled up to my head, and I felt as though I were suddenly released from my body and as pure spirit partook of a loveliness I had never conceived. I had a sense that a knowledge more than human possessed me, so that everything that had been confused was clear and everything that had perplexed me was explained. (idem: 300-301)

When Larry looked at the three encounters retrospectively, he was able to connect the dots and feel the guiding force that directed him to spiritual awakening all along: “Almost all the people who’ve had most effect on me I seem to have met by chance, yet looking back it seems as though I couldn’t but have met them. It’s as if they were waiting there to be called upon when I needed them” (Maugham 1944: 269). A casual reader may call such a force “fate”, which Jung regards as an external manifestation of the unconscious. He (2014:71) points out that “The psychological rule says that when an inner situation is not made conscious, it happens outside, as fate”.

5. Conclusion

The Razor’s Edge is set in a time when the Western world was caught in some major crises, including the loss of faith, the mass atrocity that people and nations inflicted on one another, rampant materialism and nihilism, and lack of humanity - a state that can be succinctly encapsulated in Friedrich Nietzsche’s (2001: 120) ominous statement that “God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him”. As the story approaches its end, the narrator tries to understate such a state and, instead, to make everybody a success, so that he could satisfy the reader’s appetite for “success stories”, as he concludes:

For all the persons with whom I have been concerned got what they wanted: Elliott social eminence; Isabel an assured position back by a substantial fortune in an active and cultured community; Gray a steady and lucrative job, with an office to go to from nine till six every day; Suzanne Rouvier security; Sophie death; and Larry happiness. (Maugham 1944: 343)

Yet such a happy ending still invites one to wonder why Larry was the only one that found happiness. Despite the narrator’s seemingly non-discriminatory attitude towards the fates of all his characters, he undoubtedly deemed Larry’s pursuit as the path to true happiness. Yet he refrains from urging all his readers to emulate Larry, partly because of how risky such an undertaking would be, as warned in the novel’s epigraph: “The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over; thus the wise say the path to Salvation is hard” (Katha-Upanishad qtd. in Maugham

1944: front cover), and partly on the grounds that he could not ascertain that everyone would find success in such a life, since he believed that “Many are called but few are chosen” (Maugham 1944: 98).

This ambivalence shows that Maugham is not completely optimistic about the feasibility of the total salvation of an entire society from its crises. However, that does not stop him from pinning his faith on Larry’s individual effort and the difference he will make. As per his own plan, Larry would return to America, work first in a garage, then drive a cross-country truck, and eventually settle in New York as a taxi driver. The cosmopolitan New York here is a symbolic center of an entire “fallen” Western world. The taxi driver that Larry aspired to be is, metaphorically, a guide on people’s path to spiritual awakening and meaningful lives. Larry’s life plans appear to be lacking in ambition. The path he now set himself on, however, was toward the eventual salvation of society. As such, Larry is essentially a cultural hero who, after returning from a personal successful journey toward individuation, tries to remedy the one-sidedness of society by uniting the opposites (the West and the East). Joseph Campbell (1949: 296) describes the new purpose of the hero, after his return from the journey, as “serve[ing] as a human transformer of demiurgic potentials”.

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SELF-MENTION IN RESEARCH SECTIONS OF UNIVERSITY WEBSITES IN ESTONIA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Abstract: *This article presents a study that investigates how self-mention is represented in research sections of university websites in Estonia and the United Kingdom (the UK), respectively. The study is embedded in the view of the English language as the Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles (Kachru 1985). It is hypothesised that there would be quantitative differences in the use of self-mention in the research sections of university websites depending on whether or not they are associated with the Expanding Circle (e.g., Estonia) or the Inner Circle of English (e.g., the UK). The corpus of the study is comprised of research sections of the official websites of the University of Cambridge (the UK) and the University of Tartu (Estonia). The results of the quantitative analysis reveal that the most frequent self-mention per 1000 words is the pronoun “we” on the university websites in Estonia and the UK alike. These findings are further presented and discussed in detail in the article.*

Keywords: *Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD), the Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles of English, self-mention, university websites*

1. Introduction

This article presents a quantitative study that seeks to establish how discursive means of self-mention are represented in research sections of the leading universities in Estonia and the United Kingdom (the UK), respectively. Research sections of university websites serve as digital artifacts that are used to communicate, disseminate and promote research (Tomášková 2015). Typically, the university’s research communication on its website involves discursive means of self-mention, i.e. how the university refers to itself on the website. The specific aim of this study is to identify and juxtapose self-mentions in the research sections of the university websites in Estonia and the UK.

This study is grounded in the theoretical premises of self-mention in academic discourse that are formulated by Hyland (2001, 2008) and the construal of the Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles of the English language in the sense postulated by Kachru (1985). According to Kachru (1985), the Inner Circle of English is represented by the countries where English is the mother tongue, e.g., the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland. In the Inner Circle, English is “a mother tongue that is passed on to infants naturalistically across generations” (Bruthiaux 2003: 159). In the countries of the Inner Circle, English is used in a normative manner as a linguistically codified and socially accepted set of norms or standards that are regarded as norm-providing to the Outer and Expanding Circles (Bolton 2006; Kachru 1985). The Outer Circle is associated with the speakers of English as the second language (ESL) in the former British colonies (e.g., India, Jamaica, Singapore, etc.), where “English is only one of the community languages in what are clearly multilingual societies” (Bolton 2006: 3).

In contrast to the Outer Circle, the English language in the Expanding Circle of English does not have an official or semi-official status. The Expanding Circle is theorised to be associated with English as an international language in those countries where English is taught as a Foreign Language, or EFL (Bolton 2006: 3). English in the Expanding Circle is assumed “to be exonormative in that speakers, educators, and policy-makers have traditionally looked to American or British models for linguistic norms” (Bruthiaux 2003: 159-160). Arguably, the use of English in the Expanding Circle is norm-dependent, since EFL speakers need to be provided with a model or a codified norm of English associated with the Inner Circle (Bolton 2006).

The aforementioned characteristics of the Expanding Circle of English could be illustrated by the case of Estonia. Whilst English does not have an official status there, the importance and prestige of the English language increases in today’s Estonia (Lazdiņa, Marten 2019) due to the country’s participation in the “collective West”, as a member-state of the EU, NATO, OECD and other international organisations that use English as a lingua franca (Jurkynas 2020). In addition, the use of the English language in Estonia is facilitated by an increased number of international students at Estonian universities (Soler, Björkman, and Kuteeva 2018). After Estonia regained its independence after nearly 50 years of Soviet occupation, the teaching and learning of English have aligned with the practices that are found in the West (Alas, Liiv 2009: 20).

Given the increase in international co-operation and university mobility, Estonian universities maintain and regularly update websites in English (van Doorslaer, Loogus 2020; Virkus 2008). Presumably, English-mediated university websites in Estonia could be regarded as digital discursive artifacts that construe university-specific narratives associated with a variety of aspects, i.e. the presentation of the university’s structure, university’s identity, university student life, enrollment, and research activities. In this regard, it should be noted that university websites in Estonia and the UK alike could be theorised as a complex multimodal discursive space, where verbal and non-verbal discursive means are employed in order to achieve the pragma-communicative goals of promoting the university to the public (Tomášková 2015).

It could be assumed that, by serving the aforementioned pragma-communicative aims, the use of the English language on the English-mediated university websites reflects the realities of the Circles of English, as well as the cultural, educational, and socio-economic realities. Consequently, the discursive means of self-mention on the university websites might differ, due to the disparities between a university that is situated in a country of the Expanding Circle of English (e.g., Estonia) and a university in the UK that belongs to the Inner Circle of English. Currently, however, little is known about whether or not self-mentions are linguistically similar and/or different on the English-mediated university websites in the Expanding Circle of English (e.g., Estonia) and the Inner Circle of English (e.g., the UK). Furthermore, there are no prior studies that investigate self-mentions in the research sections of Estonian university websites in order to compare their use with that of the UK’s university websites. The present study seeks to address this under-represented issue.

This article is structured as follows. First, I will provide a review of the current literature associated with self-mention in academic writing in English and in computer-mediated discourse in section 2. Then, I will introduce and discuss the present study with its research questions, corpus, methodology, and results, and

provide a detailed discussion of the major findings in section 3. Finally, the article will be concluded with the summary of the results in section 4.

2. Literature review

As previously indicated in the introduction, self-mention is one of the theoretical tenets in the present study. Self-mention is defined as an explicit reference to the author/authors by means of such self-mention markers as *I/my*, and *we/our* (Hyland, Tse 2004). The use of these markers is theorised to be genre-specific (Hyland 2008). For instance, in the genre of academic discourse in English, self-mention markers typically involve the first person pronouns (Hyland 2001; Ivanič 1998) that serve as “an important rhetorical device which allows writers to emphasise their contribution to the academic debate and construct an authoritative discursual self” (Martínez 2005: 175). In this regard, Hyland (2001: 209) argues that any form of “writing carries information about the writer, and the conventions of personal projection, particularly the use of first person pronouns, are powerful means for self-representation”.

The current interest of applied linguists and discourse specialists in the manner of authorial self-representation in the sense postulated by Hyland (2001, 2008) is based upon seminal works of Bakhtin (1986), Foucault (1988), and Ivanič (1998), where the authorial presence is set within the co-ordinates of self and others (Bakhtin 1986), the author’s voice and the audience (Foucault 1988), and the writer and the writer’s identity (Ivanič 1998). Arguably, the construal of authorial self-representation which is manifested by the explicit discursive means of self-mention refers to any form of written discourse, inclusive of academic writing and computer-mediated discourse.

Whilst there is a cornucopia of prior studies that elucidate the use of self-mention in authorial representations in the genre of academic writing in English (Hyland 2008; McGrath 2016), self-mention in computer-mediated discourse (CMD) has received less scholarly attention (Malenkina, Ivanov 2018). In the present study, I follow the definition of CMD proposed by Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015), who posit that it involves the form of human communication produced by means of “transmitting messages via networked or mobile computers, where “computers” are defined broadly to include any digital communication device” (Herring, Androutsopoulos 2015: 127).

The current literature associated with self-mention on websites in the genre of CMD is represented by scientific inquiries into how self-mention is used in a variety of settings, for instance, in teaching and learning (Zhu, Herring, Bonk 2019), research projects (Lorés-Sanz, Herrando-Rodrigo 2020), as well as tourist (Malenkina and Ivanov 2018) and business (Pérez 2014) websites. In particular, Zhu, Herring, and Bonk (2019) indicate that the Internet-based university course is associated with the students’ social presence, which is manifested by using the first person singular pronoun *I* (Zhu, Herring, Bonk 2019: 219). Whilst the first-person mention *I* is prevalent in CMD in online university courses, Lorés-Sanz and Herrando-Rodrigo (2020) reveal that *we* is the most frequent form of self-mention on research projects websites. Moreover, they indicate that *we* on those websites refers to the following three types of self-mention: “we as project, we as partner/institution and we as group of researchers” (Lorés-Sanz, Herrando-Rodrigo 2020: 87).

A linguistic analysis of self-mention identified in a number of English-mediated official tourist websites in Spain is conducted by Malenkina and Ivanov (2018), who have found that self-mentions on those websites are “almost entirely displayed through the use of the first person plural, which helps to enhance the notion of a community or group of people as part of the tourism destination” (Malenkina, Ivanov 2018: 212). Whereas the first person plural seems to be prevalent in CMD on the tourist websites in Spain, the contrastive comparison of self-mention on business websites in Spain and USA reveals that business websites in the US are marked by the prevalent use of the first person singular, which is employed substantially more frequently in the US, in contrast to the analogous websites in Spain (Pérez 2014: 85).

As evident from the meta-analysis of the literature, there is a growing body of research associated with the use of self-mention in a variety of CMD contexts (Lorés-Sanz, Herrando-Rodrigo 2020; Malenkina, Ivanov 2018; Pérez 2014; Zhu, Herring, Bonk 2019). However, little is known about the use of self-mention on university websites that deal with the respective university’s research activities (Lorés-Sanz, Herrando-Rodrigo 2020). In particular, there are no state-of-the-art publications that address the use of self-mention in the research sections of websites by the leading universities in the UK, as a representative of the Inner Circle of English, and Estonia, that is associated with the Expanding Circle of English. In the following section of the article, I will present a quantitative study that aims at revealing new information about self-mention on university research websites in Estonia and the UK.

3. The present study

The present study sets out to explore the use of self-mention by the University of Cambridge (the UK) and the University of Tartu (Estonia) that are currently (in 2020) ranked as the leading universities in their respective countries (Times Higher Education 2020). As previously mentioned in the introduction, the present study is informed by the following theoretical tenets:

i) self-mention as an explicit reference to the author/authors by means of the first person pronouns and their forms, e.g. *I/my/me/mine*, and *we/our/ours/us* (Hyland 2001; Hyland, Tse 2004);

ii) the university website as a genre of CMD that is characterised by culture-specific and language-specific features, which are “unified by a common communicative purpose – presenting the institution and promoting it” (Tomášková 2015: 79), and

iii) the English language as a system of the Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles (Kachru 1985).

In line with these theoretical premises, it is assumed in the present study that the use of self-mention in the English-mediated research sections on the official university websites of the University of Cambridge (UC) and the University of Tartu (UT) would be reflective of these universities’ presentational and promotional purposes, that are, arguably, culture-specific and language-specific in the sense of the differences between the Inner and Expanding Circles of English. Concurrently with this assumption, however, it is not precluded that the use of self-mentions in the research sections on the UT website would be similar and/or identical to that of UC, given that it is a prestigious and well-established university,

with extensive discursive practices of CMD, and the standard use of the English language that is norm-bearing (Bolton 2006). Based upon these assumptions, the following research questions have been formulated:

RQ1: What are the most frequent discursive means of self-mention in the research sections of websites of UC and UT?

RQ2: Are there differences and/or similarities in the frequency of self-mention use between UC, as a representative of the Inner Circle of English, and UT, which represents the Expanding Circle of English?

3.1. Corpus

The corpus is comprised of the research sections on the official websites of UC and UT as they appear on the Internet in August 2020. The count of the total number of words in the corpus equals 29 831. The descriptive statistics of the corpus are provided in Table 1 below.

N	Descriptive Statistics	UC	UT
1	Total number of texts	31	10
2	Total number of words	23124	6707
3	Mean words	746.3	608
4	Standard deviation	289.2	588.2
5	Minimum	195	226
6	Maximum	1544	2173

Table 1. The Descriptive Statistics of the Corpus

The sub-corpus of the research section of the UT website is comprised of the texts available at <https://www.ut.ee/en/research>: i) the research brochure “Change the World with Us”, ii) Research in UT (NB, the attachments concerning ethics in this rubric are excluded from the corpus on the grounds that they are Estonia-wide and relate to all Estonian tertiary institutions), iii) Research at the cutting edge, iv) Research ethics Committee of the UT, and v) Research news. These rubrics are exemplified by Figure 1.

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

ENG

Change the world with us

Research

One gene affects ratio of boys and girls born
20.07.2020 #Research #Press release

Doctoral thesis helps better understand and predict carbon nanostructure and capacitance relationships in energy storage devices
14.07.2020 #Research #Press release

Research in UT

The University of Tartu belongs to the top 1,2% of world's best universities (THE World University Rankings) and is in the top 10 of the best universities in the Eastern region (Interfax). It is the highest ranked university in the Baltics.

Figure 1. UT's Research Section

The UC sub-corpus involves the research section found at <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research>: i) research home, ii) research news, iii) our people, iv) about research, and vi) research impact. The texts in the sections Spotlight, and Business and Enterprise are excluded from the corpus, since they

involve an array of texts and hyperlinks that refer to an amalgamated discursive space of business communication, journalese, and academic discourse. The research section of the UC is exemplified by Figure 2 below.

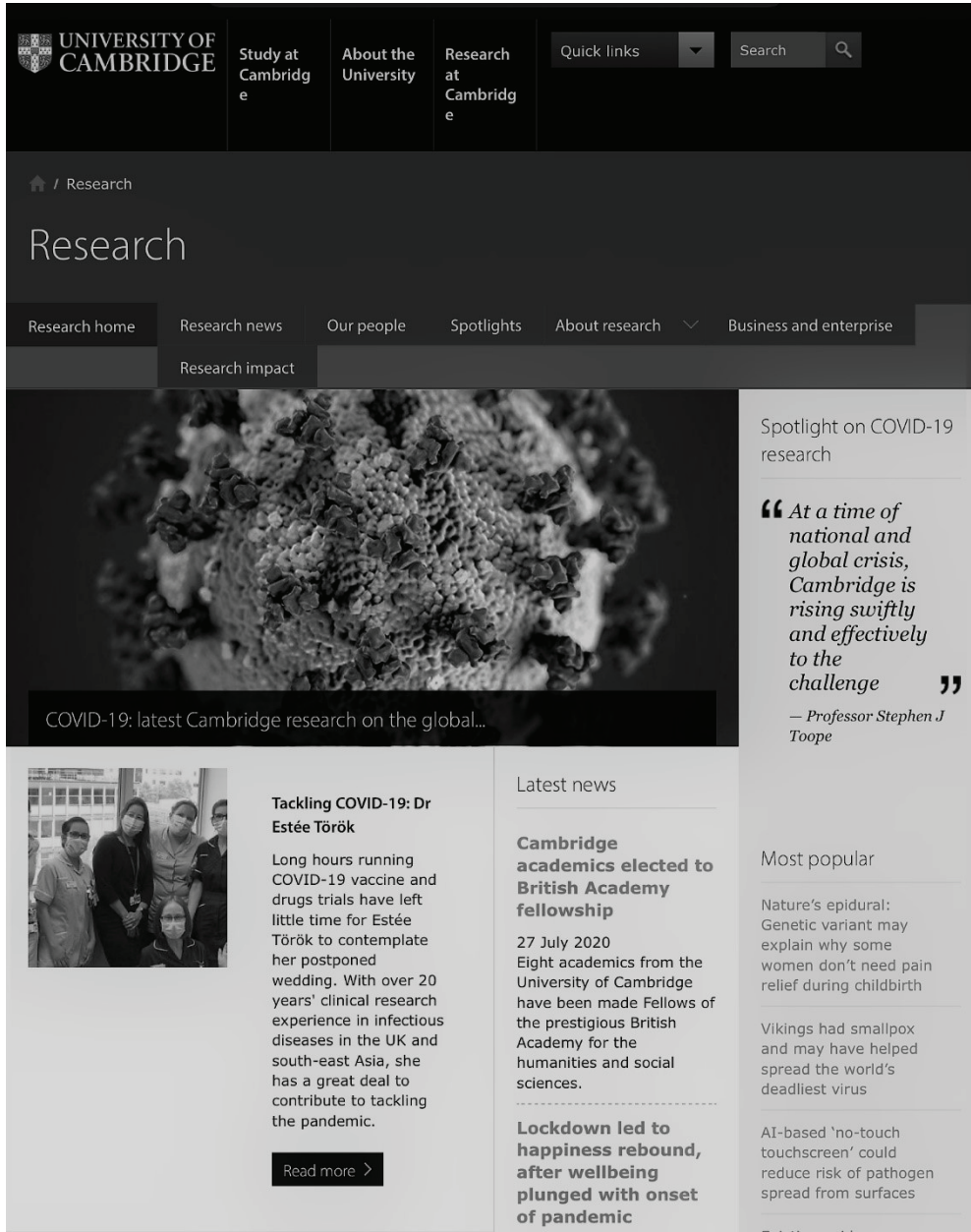


Figure 2. UC's Research Section

3.2. Procedure and method

Methodologically, the study was based upon the following procedure. First, the corpus of the study was collected. It was comprised of the research sections of the official websites of UC and UT that were available in free online access in August 2020. Then, the corpus was converted into plain text files (.txt). I manually searched for the presence of self-mentions in the corpus in accordance with the definition of self-mention formulated by Hyland (2001: 211). Thereafter, self-mentions in the corpus were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 18.0, (IBM 2009) as raw data in order to compute means and standard deviations of self-mentions in the corpus. Next, the raw data were normalised by means of applying a 1000 words cut-off and subsequently processed in the computer program WordSmith (Scott 2008) in order to establish the frequency of occurrence of self-mentions per 1000 words. The normalisation of the data was deemed a necessary procedure due to the differences in the number of words in the sub-corpora of texts by UC and UT (see Table 1). Finally, the normalised data were subjected to a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in SPSS (IBM 2009). The purpose of the one-way ANOVA was to establish whether or not there were statistically significant differences between the frequency of occurrence of self-mentions in the sub-corpora of texts by UC and UT.

3.3. Results

The analysis of the raw data (i.e., non-normalised data) in SPSS (2009) yielded the descriptive statistics that involved means and standard deviations (SD). The descriptive statistics were summarised in Table 2.

N	Self-mention	UC	UT
1	<i>I</i>	Mean 11.2 (SD 2.9)	Mean 0 (SD 0)
2	<i>Me</i>	Mean 1 (SD 0)	Mean 0 (SD 0)
3	<i>My</i>	Mean 2.7 (SD 1.6)	Mean 1 (SD 0)
4	<i>Mine</i>	Mean 1 (SD 0)	Mean 0 (SD 0)
5	<i>We</i>	Mean 6.9 (SD 8)	Mean 30.5 (SD 16.5)
6	<i>Our</i>	Mean 1.9 (SD 1.4)	Mean 10 (SD 3)
7	<i>Ours</i>	Mean 0 (SD 0)	Mean 0 (SD 0)
8	<i>Us</i>	Mean 1.3 (SD 0.5)	Mean 1 (SD 0)

Table 2. Means and standard deviations (SD) in raw values

The analysis of the normalised data in WordSmith (Scott 2008) provided the frequency of occurrence of self-mentions per 1000 words, as illustrated by Table 3.

N	Self-mention	UC	UT
1	<i>I</i>	11 (0.9%)	0
2	<i>Me</i>	1 (0.08%)	0
3	<i>My</i>	5 (0.4%)	0
4	<i>Mine</i>	1 (0.01%)	0
5	<i>We</i>	15 (1.2%)	14 (1.2%)
6	<i>Our</i>	7 (0.6%)	6 (0.5%)
7	<i>Ours</i>	0	0
8	<i>Us</i>	1 (0.08%)	0

Table 3. The frequency of occurrence of self-mentions in the corpus (normalised per 1000 words)

3.4. Discussion

Referring to the first research question in the present study, it is possible to observe that, in terms of the raw data, the most frequent self-mention in the UC's research section is the first person singular pronoun *I* (Mean 11.2; SD 2.9), whereas the first person plural pronoun *we* is the most frequent means of self-mention in the UT's research section (Mean 30.5; SD 16.5). These findings are illustrated by Figure 3 below.

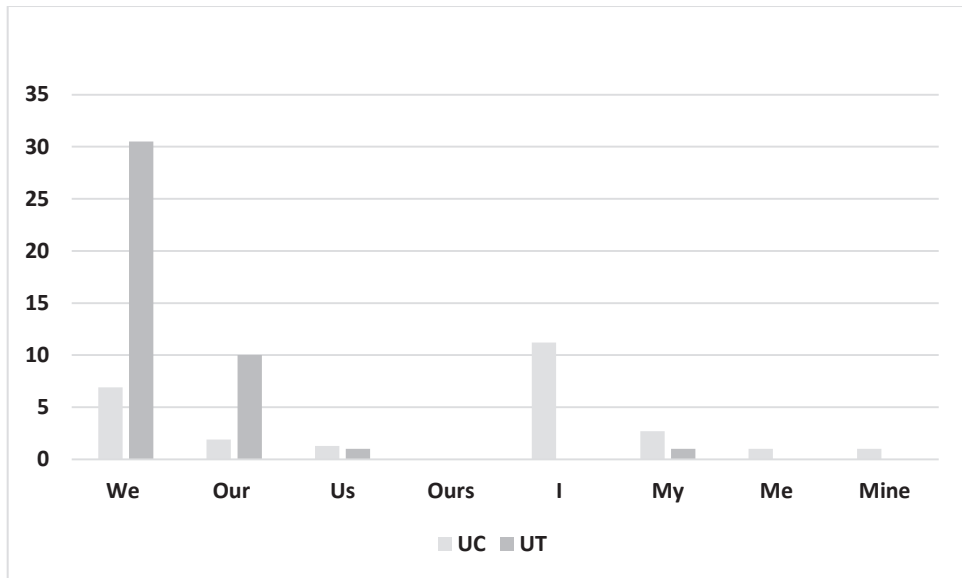


Figure 3. Self-mentions in raw values

The most frequent self-mention *I* on the UC's research website (in terms of the raw values) is employed as a grammatical subject in the sentences that impart the narrative about UC's research-related activities a personalised perspective. Specifically, the use of *I* on the UC's website is associated with the presentation of the current research and/or a research proposal by the research team leader or by a research team member, who communicate with prospective students and other

stakeholders by means of a personalised *I*-centred narrative, as illustrated by excerpt (1):

(1) Returning to full-time clinical practice after so long was daunting at first. I'm rusty in a number of areas if I'm perfectly honest, and it's a very different setting. The last time I wore surgical scrubs was decades ago. Being in a situation where I'm seeing people with masks, gloves, gown, hat – it's very, very different, but fortunately my colleagues have been incredibly supportive. (The University of Cambridge 2020)

In (1), the personalised narrative is employed to present a UC researcher, who is an eminent doctor conducting research on COVID-19. During the pandemic, the researcher returns to work at a hospital and continues his research on the virus. Presumably, the narrative is purposefully presented as a personalised *I*-centred account of that professor's research, seen through the lenses of a "researcher with a human face", in order to make the narrative more direct, understandable and, perhaps, more emphatic, so that the readers could relate to it both on the emotional and the personal levels. In this sense, it is, presumably, possible to describe the use of the self-mention *I* as a means of personification, whereby the university is framed in the narrative as a personified entity.

It could be argued that the strategy of using *I* as the most frequent discursive means of self-mention constitutes a typical approach to expressing self-mention in CMD in the countries of the Inner Circle of English (see Pérez 2014). As previously mentioned in the introduction, the literature indicates that CMD of business websites in the USA, i.e. in the country that belongs to the Inner Circle of English, is also characterised by the use of the first person singular, which is employed substantially more in the USA in contrast to the analogous websites in the countries of the Expanding Circle of English (idem).

Whilst UC seems to report its research-related activities by frequently employing the self-mention *I*, the UT's research section is marked by the predominant use of *we* and its forms (e.g., *our*, *us*) as far as the raw values are concerned. This finding supports the prior literature that points to *we* as the most frequent form of self-mention on research projects websites in Spain, a country which shares with Estonia the status of the Expanding Circle of English (Lorés-Sanz, Herrando-Rodrigo 2020). In addition, the present finding lends support to Malenkina and Ivanov (2018), who argue that *we* as a form of self-mention is routinely employed on websites in the Expanding Circle of English, e.g. in Spain, in order "to enhance the notion of a community" (Malenkina, Ivanov 2018: 212). Arguably, *we* and its forms on the UT's website serve the purpose similar to that described by Malenkina and Ivanov (2018) in the sense that UT frames itself as a research community, a team of researchers, and a collective body that conducts and facilitates research. Notably, the UT's research brochure on the UT website contains the form of *us* in its title "Change the World with Us" (see Figure 1). Further in the brochure, *we* as well as *us* and *our* are routinely employed to portray the community of researchers, a research team that UT stands for, as exemplified by excerpt (2):

(2) In the University of Tartu, **we** address this challenge by focusing on the person, and on one's genetic background, in addition to social and environmental effects. In case there are no technologies, **we** will make them! (The University of Tartu 2020)

In (2), the pro-active approach to health research in the sentence “In case there are no technologies, we will make them!” is, arguably, reinforced by the self-mention *we* that is indicative of the communal effort on the part of UT to present itself as a research team working at a research-intensive university. It should be noted that UC also makes ample use of the self-mention *we* as far as the raw values are concerned (Mean 6.9; SD 8).

Unlike the raw values, however, the analysis of the normalised data indicates that *we* is the most frequent self-mention on both the UC and UT websites. In conjunction with this finding, let us briefly discuss the second research question in this study, namely whether or not there are potential differences and/or similarities in the use of self-mentions by UC and UT. As evident from Table 3, the results of the normalised data analysis point to the similarities in the frequency of use of self-mention *we* and its forms between UC (N of occurrence = 15; 1.2%) and UT (N of occurrence = 14; 1.2%). The application of the one-way ANOVA to the normalised data reveals that the results are not significant at $p < .05$ [$F(1) = 0.79, p = .38$]. In other words, the use of the self-mention *we* is similar at UC and UT, as exemplified by Figure 4.

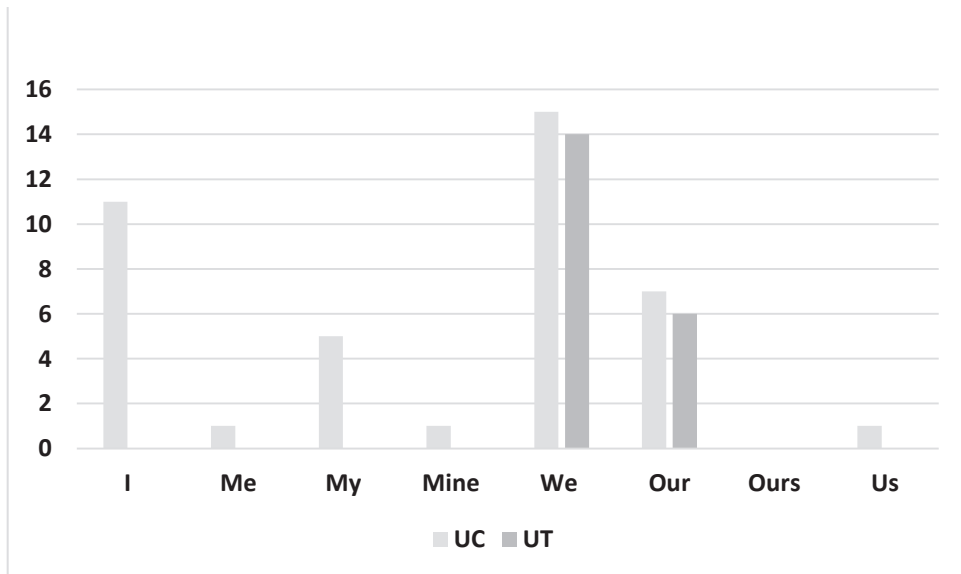


Figure 4. Self-mentions in normalised values

Notably, the use of *we* by UC and UT is similar to that in Lorés-Sanz and Herrando-Rodrigo (2020). In particular, both UC and UT employ *we* to refer to i) a scientific research project, e.g. (a) “**We** set up and implemented a system to rapidly sequence clinical samples” (The University of Cambridge 2020) and (b) “**We** recently demonstrated a novel phenomenon of multisite phosphorylation in cell cycle regulation” (The University of Tartu 2020); as well as ii) a tertiary research-intensive institution, e.g. (a) “In Cambridge, **we** are committed to achieving excellence in research and scholarship” (The University of Cambridge 2020) and (b) “**We** involve students in technology development during their studies already and thus contribute to the emergence of UT spin-offs” (The University of Tartu 2020).

4. Conclusion

The present article seeks to establish how discursive means of self-mention are employed in CMD by the leading universities in Estonia (UT) and the UK (UC). The results of the quantitative analysis indicate that both UC and UT use the self-mention *we* to present their research to the stakeholders. Arguably, the use of *we* is associated with the endeavour to impart a sense of scientific community, a scientific project, and to signal the presence of the research-intensive tertiary institution. As far as the normalised data are concerned, there is no statistically significant difference associated with the use of the self-mention *we* by these two universities. However, in terms of the raw values, UC appears to frequently employ the self-mention *I* in order to communicate a more personalised narrative about its research-related activities.

These findings could be interpreted as a certain convergence in terms of the use of *we* by UC as the representative of the Inner Circle of English and UT that represents the Expanding Circle. However, despite the convergence of discursive means of self-mention by UC and UT (e.g., *we*), UC's research-related discourse exhibits the Inner Circle-specific preferences for self-mention. Specifically, the self-mention *I*, which is amply employed by UC on its website, involves a personified dimension, whereby a research narrative is framed via the lenses of the *I*-narrator. That narrator is typically represented by an individual researcher as a member of the UC research team. In contrast, the individualised and personified dimension expressed by the self-mention *I* is absent in the UT's research-related discourse represented on its website. These findings suggest that the self-mention *I* that is found on the UC's website concerning research-related activities bears the mark of the language-, culture-, and discourse-specific conventions associated with the Inner Circle of English.

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RACIST EXPATRIATE?
HENRY MILLER'S NATIONAL STEREOTYPES IN
TROPIC OF CAPRICORN AND THE AIR-CONDITIONED
NIGHTMARE

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Abstract: *This paper argues that the antisemitism and racism found in the writing of Henry Miller relates to personal issues of self-identification. To understand his prejudices, the impact of New York City on Miller's perception of nationality and ethnicity before, during, and after his expatriation from the United States needs to be studied. Through the application of imagological theories, the textual function of his stereotypes is explained and placed in a larger, temporal context which reveals both the writer's struggle to detach himself from his German-American origins and his desire to embrace an otherness that he, for instance, finds in France.*

Keywords: *anti-Americanism, antisemitism, expatriation, imagology, national stereotypes, racism*

1. Introduction

Henry Miller's relationship to nationality and ethnicity is complicated. While the writer preaches detachment from Western civilisation, his novels often feature quintessentially American thought. After a happy childhood in Brooklyn around the turn of the 20th century, Miller's adulthood shows New York City to be "the embodiment of the evil forces of American capitalism and industrialism" that cause him "constant sufferings in all aspects of his life: family, work, love, writing, and money" (Jensen 2015: 188). His move to Paris in 1930 does not change his negative attitude but contextualises it, as he increasingly subscribes to predictions of universal rather than national decline. Miller's memories of the United States are narrated in the novel *Tropic of Capricorn* (1993 [1939]), while the travelogue *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* (1979 [1945]) features the returned writer's cross-country journey.

In a critical review in *The New York Times*, novelist Jeanette Winterson (2012) states that "[h]e had plenty of hatred, towards Jews, foreigners and especially America". While Miller's attitude towards the United States remains undisputed, publications like the periodical *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal* and the essay collection *Henry Miller: New Perspectives* (2015) discuss his racial bias. Unlike Winterson, scholar Paul Jahshan (2015: 33) contrasts Miller with other American expatriates in Paris, when he holds that "few of these writers embraced, so whole-heartedly, ethnic differences as Miller, who ended up incorporating the 'non-Western' into his writings, his philosophy, and his personal life". How can we make sense of these conflicting perceptions? While we cannot

neglect Miller's recurring ignorance of ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality, it seems unacademic to dismiss a precursor to the transgressive Beat generation (e.g. Dearborn 1992: 286) due to vulgar epithets and ranting streams of consciousness. Those need to be placed in their historical context, as attempted in this paper, and seemingly obscure Miller's substantial criticism of Western societies and the alienated existences they produce. This still-contemporary topic was recently discussed in Finn Jensen's *Henry Miller and Modernism* (2019). As a justification for the continuation of academic Miller studies, I refer to Indologist Wendy Doniger's (2008: 15) convocation speech at the University of Chicago, as cited in the foreword of *New Perspectives*: "[W]here, in our first naiveté, we did not notice the racism, and in our subsequent hypercritical reading we couldn't see anything else, in our second naiveté we can see how good some writers are despite the inhumanity of their underlying worldviews".

Even if one adopts this admittedly convenient style of reading, academia simultaneously requires scholars like Jennifer Cowe (2016a) and Paul Jahshan (2015), who analyse how Miller's internal conflicts facilitate a disdain for Jewishness. To separate his antisemitism from a more general xenophobia, I claim that additional insight can be gained by focusing on Miller's national stereotypes in *Tropic of Capricorn* and *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*. Curiously, casual accusations of racism disconnected from antisemitism have spawned comparatively few rebuttals, Jahshan's essay (2015) on both issues representing an exception. Cowe in her review of *New Perspectives* consequently criticises:

If one of the main aims for this collection of essays is to offer a 'new perspective' then it is crucial to address some of the long-standing criticism of Miller in relation to misogyny, racism and anti-Semitism. [...] [T]he fact remains that Miller's reputation and legacy are largely still seen through the lens of his perceived bigotry. (2016b: 2)

My aim is to consider parts of this appeal and to propose a new approach to understanding Miller's antisemitism by investigating his self-identification through nationality. Descriptions of his German family and the French can potentially explain how biased the American, expatriate, and ultimately repatriate writer truly is. Concurrently, I hope to reveal an internalisation of spatial and temporal conditions that the uprooted individualist denounces, yet possibly maintains. Firstly, imagological theories suggested by Joep Leerssen (2016; 2007; 2000) will be discussed to later unveil the subtext Miller's national imagery evokes. Secondly, I will lay out Miller's self-identification within changing environments through scholarship on expatriation and repatriation in literature. Only then will the subsequent analysis of the two selected works become feasible. A conclusion shall sum up my findings.

2. Imagological considerations

Joep Leerssen's work foregrounds Miller's identification of the *self* and changing environments. Here, I shall briefly lay out the imagologist's theories in order to understand Miller's national and ethnic stereotypes in the broader sociocultural context of America and Europe. Since the 1950s, image studies have been informing our understanding of national and cultural identity in literature.

Despite literary scholar Elisabeth Wesseling (2019) accusing imagology of methodological nationalism and blindness to postcolonial studies, it can still aid this paper if I widen the focus on admittedly Eurocentric categories by considering Miller's idealisation of marginalised minorities. With Leerssen's framework representing the continuously evolving basis for studies in the field, imagological works by Waldemar Zacharasiewicz (2010) and Seth Armus (2001) will be addressed in later sections.

Fundamentally, Leerssen finds that categorisations of people are subject to constant change. This assumption explains the perceived transformation of Germany during the 19th century, as "a country of tender individualism, metaphysical and musical sensibility, and romantic idyll" turned into "Krupp engineers, scientists, and bemonocled Prussian officers" (Leerssen 2000: 275). To understand such a change is to inquire about "cross-national relations rather than national identities" (Leerssen 2007: 29). One has to consider who starts and distributes stereotypes and why we more readily choose one over the other. What ideas we attach to our own nation or nationality and to that of others is subjective, as "[t]he nationality represented (the *spected*) is silhouetted in the perspectival context of the representing text or discourse (the *spectant*)" (idem: 27) and simultaneously limited, as we are provided with a mental selection of images to choose from. This container becomes the *image* which is "the bandwidth of discursively established character attributes concerning a given nationality" (Leerssen 2000: 279). While certain images about a nation prevail in our minds, we can assume others, possibly contradictory ones, to passively coexist until triggered by ourselves or others in order to support a desired perspective (idem: 278). Those images connected to national stereotypes can further be categorised into tropes that can be applied to any country.

Traditionally, people will characterise the concept of *the North* as "cerebral, individualist, more rugged, less pleasing but more trustworthy and responsible" and *the South* as "more sensual, collective, more polished, more pleasing but less trustworthy or responsible" (Leerssen 2000: 276). It is important to understand that imagological studies have emerged with a focus on the European context, a factor that needs to be considered when integrating such geographical terminology into the American context. Further tropes within *image*s relate to the dichotomy of politically strong and weak nations, as we often feel sympathy for underdogs and disdain for oppressors, or relate to centrality and periphery, when progressive urbanity is contrasted with conservative rurality (idem: 277). National stereotypes like these can also be turned into regional variations applied on an intranational level.

Lastly, ethnic stereotypes potentially overshadow a literary character's individuality. Through the external attribution of a certain nature, the associated image becomes "an essential characteristic rather than an incidental attribute, [so that] each act will be framed against this ethnic background and each individual will always be seen as a representative of his/her nation" (Leerssen 2016: 25). If not entirely ironic in its textual function, "[a] person or character with a given ethnicity always possesses more attribute than only ethnicity" (idem: 26). To understand textual function is to consider how certain stereotypes are fused with specific genders, religions, et cetera. Especially when a strong stylisation through the author takes place, these couplings might reveal superordinate messages about individuals or categories that the narrator conveys as subtext.

3. Shifting identities of the *self*

If imagology emphasises the interrelation of steady tropes and their deliberate manipulation, historical context must accordingly affect stereotype representation in fictional literature. Nowadays, the field increasingly considers textual and intertextual fluidity of identity. Leerssen (2016: 22) points out that “the study of identity, in its various layerings and degrees of self-awareness and explicit self-reflection, is one of the great emerging topics in imagology; as is the realization that this identity is as mobile as the text in which it is expressed”. In Miller, we are dealing with a first-person narrator who plays with chronology and impersonation, mostly regarding abandoned or exaggerated representations of the writer himself. The author’s gradual self-identification thus renders a biographical approach to his non-chronological writing indispensable for the current section. We will see, however, that who we encounter in *Tropic of Capricorn* and *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* often transcends the linearity of expatriation and repatriation, as different topics spawn different literary personae. Even though “[t]he ‘I’ now may have a different profile from ‘I’ in the past, [...] memories from the past determine how we now look at the world, and these diachronic links tie me to myself at different moments in my life” (ibid.). Hence, connections between narrated timelines must be established. The perceived identity of our own nationality, called *auto-image* by Leerssen, and that of others, the *hetero-image*, must also be explained along such parameters. I shall reveal how Miller’s stays in the United States and France shape his worldview and how it is impacted by historical context.

3.1. (Conflicted) anti-American

Henry was born to Lutheran, German immigrants in Manhattan, New York in 1891. Father Miller was running a tailor shop there, but the family soon moved to the German-dominated area of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The writer has fond memories of roaming the streets with his clique where the seed for racial stereotypes was sown, as different immigrant backgrounds became a topic of interest and the basis of racial slurs (Hughes 2011: 49; Cowe 2016a: 16). Due to a dislike for Eastern European Jews settling in Williamsburg, the Millers moved to the adjacent Bushwick neighborhood in the year 1900. Imagologist Waldemar Zacharasiewicz explains that “the Jewish ghetto on the Lower East Side in New York [...] had received from the early 1880s [...] thousands of East European Jews” (2010: 443-444). Henry’s mother fuelled his growing antisemitism and he “began to blame them for what he saw as the deterioration of his cherished old turf” (Hughes 2011: 50). Ethnicity connected to a painful uprooting made the child receptive to negative stereotypes.

In her study on the portrayal of Jewishness in Miller’s short story “Max” (1938), Cowe (2016a: 15) attributes to the adult writer “a lazy, intellectually sluggish dislike of Jews, which was a knee-jerk reaction to any Jew he didn’t like”. Possibly, this resulted from societal “[a]nti-Semitism [...] as a symptom of a wider hostility to minorities in general” (idem: 16). This, however, hardly applies to Miller who perceived people deviating from the Protestant standard to spiritually surpass his metropolitan environment. Hence, a more personal conviction must have driven his hostility. Cowe (idem: 23) finds that “Miller reverts to anti-Semitism to assuage his guilt at his own feelings of empathy” and that this

technique “increasingly allows himself [...] a way of denying his own humanity through the denial of another [one’s]” (ibid.). This practice of emotional detachment becomes a crucial path towards self-identification for the writer when complemented by spiritual detachment.

Throughout *Tropic of Capricorn*, adult Miller enjoys New York’s fleeting pleasures, like sexual affairs, but also believes that metropolitan America impedes his true calling, “not to live – if what others are doing is called living – but to express myself” (1993: 13). His reading of Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) fuelled his negativity towards his environment. The philosopher predicted that the metropolises would inevitably replace cultural progress with material obsession and the desire to have offspring with economic considerations, postulating “the sterility of man [...] as an essentially *metaphysical* turn towards death” (Spengler 1959: 103). This thought is echoed when Miller (1993: 177) finds that “from the unicorn by gradual stages was derived the late-city man of which Oswald Spengler speaks. And from the dead cock of this sad specimen arose the giant skyscraper with its express elevators and observation towers”. To interpret this terminology with Spengler, rationalising urbanisation apparently doomed “the unicorn,” meaning culture-promoting people like artists, while the non-reproducing “dead cock” of its citizens destroys the material metropolis.

Before departing for France in 1930, the writer became a world citizen through an epiphanic experience described as metaphysically drowning in the Gulf of Mexico (1993: 283). Stripped of the American identity his environment forced on him, he was reborn before his move abroad: “I was pure and inhuman, I was detached, I had wings. I was depossessed of the past and I had no concern about the future” (idem: 309). This development explains why his disdain for mass cities only partially transferred to Paris: Miller supposedly had learned to become detached from time and place. Rather than leading to a shift from an American towards a French identity, the years in Paris then resulted in the collapse of such concepts.

3.2. (Winged) expatriate

Finn Jensen (2015: 192) finds that after four years in Paris, Miller “had found a new identity” and “adopted a worldview, where his personal sufferings, so evident in [...] New York, now could be seen as a part of a total crisis of the Western civilization”. This relativising attitude of expatriates is also theorised by Susan Winnett (2012: 24), who suggests that “[t]he perspective on one’s native land that deems it unlivable is at least offset by a more generous attitude born of physical distance and the experience of cultural relativity”. While this would suggest a reconciliation with home through expatriation, generosity towards America remained impossible for Miller. Although in Spenglerian decline, his narrated Paris does not crush individual thought and allows non-conforming writers to survive. The atmosphere of Brooklyn, rather than metropolitan Manhattan, dominates, as leisure time is spent “enjoy[ing] the intimate feeling of the village-like Parisian neighborhood” (Jensen 2015: 190). Regarding Paris’ perks, we should not be deceived about Miller’s overall relationship to big cities. According to Jensen (idem: 195), the writer “lived in Paris as in a bubble: he lived among expatriates like himself with very little contact with ordinary Frenchmen”. To call Miller culturally assimilated would be wrong. His mindset, one could claim, had not changed much through expatriation. The writer still despised

America and had simply given up the hope that Europe's future looked different. His uprooting continued with the onset of World War II, as Miller returned to the United States in 1939.

Despite his metaphysical wings, the returning Miller of *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* feels tied to his past. When his ship reaches Boston in 1940, he finds that “[i]t was home, with all the ugly, evil, sinister connotations which the word contains for a restless soul” (1979: 10). Detachment becomes crucial again when discussing repatriation. In his article on the disappearance of American *place*, Andrew Gross goes beyond reading Miller as a nostalgic who longs for an intangible past. In Gross's (2009: 418) view, the travelogue breaks with the traditional notion of authenticity hiding behind artificial reality. This claim might confuse readers who focus on the picturesque episodes Miller frequently triggers to sublimate reality, like reflections on the Grand Canyon in the chapter “A Desert-Rat” or on a secluded garden in New Orleans in “The Shadows.” Such illustrations merely conceal the implied message that material place has vanished. The expatriate writer does not really return, as “Henry Miller rejects [...] the possibility of locating a particular American culture [...]. Miller is in short an unhappy tourist” (idem: 416). Gross stresses the status of Miller as a stranger trying to see the United States anew, “without a trace of loathing or disgust” (Miller 1979: 9), rather than “someone who has become both more and less of an American through living abroad” (Winnett 2012: 27).

Whatever the effect of the European experience on Miller, Winnett (idem: 42) clarifies that “[a]s often as not, the America projected as the author's incentive to expatriate is the name given to other issues that she or he works out in and through expatriation”. To understand Miller's mind, the images connected to America and his personal past are of much greater importance than the concepts of true or tainted place; this is where Gross's work connects to Winnett: “[Miller] locates authenticity in pockets of ‘otherness’ or ethnic difference, both living and monumental. [...] Any ethnicity, so long as it diverges from what Miller considers the American standard, can serve as a marker of authenticity” (Gross 2009: 420). Rootless and repeatedly displaced, he awaits the demise of civilisation. *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* becomes an ironic symbol of that idea, as Miller drives around the United States in search of a national identity that only exists in either the past or the future.

4. Being Nordic

Now, I shall turn towards national and ethnic imagery in *Tropic of Capricorn*. The point of this investigation is to understand the expatriate writer's identification with Brooklyn, especially considering his relatives. To help us understand how societal stereotyping affects Miller's auto-image, historian Detlef Junker (1995) explains that immigrant mentality contributed to a negative turn in stereotyping. With many Germans migrating to the US after failed revolutions in 1848-1849 (e.g. Zacharasiewicz 2010: 301), their establishment of a separate culture on American soil annoyed the English-speaking majority. As Junker (1995: 15) holds, the “sense of [the Germans'] own significance had been measurably increased by the German victory during the Franco-Prussian War, or the German university system, [...] which served as a model for the reform of American higher education”.

The American political sphere would soon fertilise aversions. The possible rise of the unified German Empire, formed in 1871, to the status of a world power was worrying. Therefore, “criticism of an autocratic, militaristic, rude, presumptuous Germany” (idem: 19) emerged and was hiding that “these two nouveaux riches, these upstarts of world politics, showed a lot of similarities and parallels in the substantive aspects of their foreign policies” (idem: 17). This corresponds with the imagological claim that the establishment of national stereotypes necessitates a renunciation of essential similarities (Leerssen 2016: 17). Both nations had comparable ambitions abroad, yet only the intentions of the respective other were declared barbaric.

However, Miller’s literary stereotypes demonstrably even predate the 19th century and occasionally transcend the geographical boundaries of nations. Even though Miller acknowledges distinctively Germanic traits, he establishes the broader categorisation of “[m]y people [who] were entirely Nordic, which is to say idiots” (1993: 11). Having explained his self-identification through nationality, how can we interpret this term? Here, I would like to refer to Thomas Jefferson as a defining figure for the American auto-image for two reasons. Firstly, the comparability of their stereotypes shows that Miller’s categories in the 1930s are not individualised despite personal experiences with his family. Secondly, it refutes the writer’s claimed detachment from time and place, as proven by the persistence of beliefs from the 18th century which obviously still influenced the working-class environment of early 20th-century Brooklyn. Visualised by Zacharasiewicz (2010: 105), Table 1 reflects Jefferson’s zonal climate theory which proves how dated Miller’s stereotypes are.

In the North they are	In the South they are
Cool	Fiery
Sober	Voluptuary [sic]
Laborious	Indolent
chicaning	Candid
superstitious and hypocritical in their religion	without attachment or pretentions to any religion but that of their heart

Table 1. Thomas Jefferson’s application of the zonal climate theory in a letter to the Marquis de Chastellux in 1785

Miller uses the concept of the North to emphasise differences on an intra- and international level, a belief related to old theories which uphold that people of certain geographical regions will receive certain characteristics (Zacharasiewicz 2010: 67-83). Miller (1993: 11) writes: “Wherever there is cold there are people who work themselves to the bone”. The emphasis on an inherent work ethic of Northern Americans specifically appears in Table 1. Miller’s allusions to Nordics, Northern Americans and Germans fit the “cool,” “laborious,” and “hypocritically religious” categories of Jefferson’s. The writer (ibid.) additionally calls Nordic people “painfully clean [...] [b]ut inwardly they stank,” “[r]estless spirits, but not adventurous ones” and “[a]gonizing spirits, incapable of living in the present”.

Shallowness, tension, and detachment from reality become defining qualities when the writer describes his parents. The conventionality of Miller's stereotypes leads to the assumption that stereotype omission rather than presence might reveal subliminal meaning in the following.

4.1. Cruel and dull: the German family

While Jensen (2019: 255) analyses Henry's "dysfunctional family structure [which] operates in the novel as a form of basic conflict between an I with a growing awareness and a family who lives completely absorbed by forces that it cannot understand", the current section examines individual family members and shows how the external attribution of individual or categorical identity might disclose the writer's relationship to bias. In *Tropic of Capricorn*, Miller (1993: 206) awards himself a German name: "Not God but *life* is love. [...] And in the midmost midst of it walks this young man, myself, who is none other than Gottlieb Leberecht Müller. [...] This is the name of a man who lost his identity". The irony behind this negated self-identification hints at the humour Miller's national stereotypes frequently evoke. He would probably not consider himself "loved by God" (*Gottlieb*) when he would like to "spit in His face" (idem: 9) and while he otherwise subscribes to the idea of "living rightly" (*Leberecht*), neither God nor society acknowledges that. The inconsistent image of a pious and moral person transfers to Miller's parents.

While several pages about abandoning alcoholism through religious enlightenment are dedicated to Miller's father, the mother's only role is to torment her family. Faced with her husband's addiction, "she became hysterical and went at him hammer and tongs" (Miller 1993: 141). When the father tries to become sober, she breaks his spirit, as Miller (idem: 142) writes that "[m]y mother was so astounded that, idiot that she was, she began to make fun of him, to quip him about his strength of will". Doubtful and hurtful, she reflects the nihilistic brutality stereotypically associated with the German Empire. Miller's mentally challenged sister "was whipped like a dog for having performed some beautiful act of grace in her absent-mindedness" and he himself "received a beating once, at the age of five, for having advised my mother to cut a wart off her finger" (idem: 297), advice that she follows. Mother Miller frequently deceives little Henry, as the writer contemplates: "That people could make promises without ever having the least intention of fulfilling them was something unimaginable to me" (idem: 140). The trustworthiness associated with Nordic people (Leerssen 2000: 276) is replaced with the "chicaning" trait (Table 1). While Jefferson's attribution of a "cool" temper to Northerners is confirmed by mother Miller, she also appears "fiery" like a Southerner in her outbursts of rage. Henry's aunt Caroline becomes a substituted motherly figure, who expresses warmth and shows him "a tenderness and a sympathy that I had never known before" (idem: 114). Hence, female characters do not necessarily undergo stereotyping and Miller's family represents more than personified image categories. This especially holds true for his father.

In his analysis of *Tropic of Capricorn* as a modernist text, Finn Jensen (2019: 251) contextualises that "the social and economic developments, with mass immigration and recession, [...] smash [...] his father's craft and destroys his pride [...] and it destroys the small brief idyll, Miller saw in his early childhood". The external forces that cause the tailor's downfall anger young Henry. The child is confronted with "the dramatic invasion of the childhood quarter by Eastern

European Jews” (idem: 253), as Miller summarises that “[t]he Jews came, as I say, and like moths they began to eat into the fabric of our lives [...]. Soon the street began to smell bad, soon the real people moved away, soon the houses began to deteriorate” (1993: 195). The imagery of plague-like swarms of insects that bring about decay is evoked. “Real people,” like Miller’s drinking father, are replaced by a faceless collective. This hatred for Eastern European Jewish immigrants who transform the German neighbourhood is highly ironic. Firstly, the writer’s parents were part of a similar mass settlement which originally angered New Yorkers. Secondly, expatriate Miller joins waves of foreign artists who crowd the streets of Paris after World War I. Is his anger then truly directed at Jewishness or rather at an urbanisation that extinguishes the village-like quality of smaller communities in Brooklyn? The writer empathises with his father as a victim of progressive civilisation, as mass migration becomes a perceived symptom.

Suspicious of institutionalised religion, the son prefers his father as a passionate drinker rather than a devout follower. Miller (1993: 147) considers him to be “a healthy, genial soul with a smile for every one”, who, before his abstinence, “drank because he was truly thirsty” (idem: 148). Dipsomania stereotypically attributed to Germans by Americans (e.g. Freese 2008: 304-307) loses its negative connotations when the reasons for developing a habit justify it. Here, alcohol becomes an effective escape from father Miller’s economic and marital worries, while his conversion through a minister violates his nature. In connection to Jefferson’s claim about Nordic hypocrisy (Table 1), Miller (1993: 141) holds that “neither my father nor my mother had ever shown any religious inclinations. Though always upholding the church to others, they themselves never set foot in a church”. His negative conception of Protestantism, addressed in subsection 4.2, might originate from this observation. After his father had already bonded with the minister, the clergyman leaves for a higher wage elsewhere. If “Congregational church [...] [was] a poor substitute for a man who had known the joys of that food which the body craved” (idem: 149), the loss of said substitute renders the tailor “the spectacle of a life extinct” (idem: 150). The corruption of authentic spirituality through the American economy destroys the “tender individualism” (Leerssen 2000: 275) once ascribed to Germans and leaves behind a disillusioned shell.

When young Miller’s family attends a funeral, he again employs categorical thought, as he extends his earlier reflections on Nordics. Despite the parents’ moral and religious hypocrisy, the writer does not consider them fundamentally bad. The setting of the funeral, fittingly, is “the beer garden next to the cemetery” and, while the younger Miller “thought they were just a bunch of hypocrites,” the adult writer finds that “[t]hey were just stupid, healthy Germans with a lust for life” (1993: 81). We are repeatedly confronted with terms like “idiots” and “stupid.” However, this terminology rarely relates to intelligence. What makes Miller’s Germans stupid is their inability to acknowledge essentially human experiences. Concurrently, the matter of death is touched on and the metaphysical and emotional limitations of his kin are revealed. As “cool” and “sober” Nordics (Table 1), “they really didn’t grasp it at all – not the way the Jew does. They talked about the life hereafter but they never really believed in it” (ibid.). Temperate in their demeanour, “[t]here were limits to sorrow as there were limits to joy” (ibid.). To attend a funeral is to renounce death, to enjoy food and drinks, and to be emotionally distant. If Miller practises detachment from time and place, his family escapes life. This finding corresponds with his opinion that Nordics are “incapable of living in the present”

(idem: 11), as his relatives cannot grasp the gravity of death and the funeral. Their only concern “was always the stomach which had to be filled – with limburger sandwiches and beer and Kümmel and turkey legs” (idem: 81). Allusions to food and drink suppress more complex stereotypes the imageme offers. Miller acknowledges that he is bound to his upbringing: “I thought I had escaped, but as time goes on I see that I am no better, that I am even a little worse, because I saw more clearly than they ever did and yet remained powerless to alter my life” (idem: 11). Maybe, the inability to become detached from his Germanic roots then makes him adopt his pre-expatriate, American state of mind when he feels that “somehow, I preferred these animated stomachs to the hydra-headed sorrow of the Jew” (idem: 82).

This analysis offers us the new insight that Miller’s expatriate, cosmopolitan identity, “not as a partisan of this country or that, but as an inhabitant of the globe” (Miller 1979: 43), might really be defined by national attachment rather than detachment. The finding that the writer’s point of view is an amalgam is not new, as his philosophical influences have been researched extensively in recent years (e.g. Jensen (2019) who reveals Miller’s connection to Nietzsche, Spengler, and others). However, the influence of lowbrow, conventional stereotypes on his thoughts and as a workable literary device has been understudied. Certain categories established through childhood experiences in the working-class environment of Brooklyn prevail and while his spiritual and physical distancing supposedly frees him from temporal and spatial constraints, these rather provide him with a multitude of identities to choose from. When he wants to relate to his father’s joys and struggles, the expatriate Miller sees the denationalised corruption of human nature through civilisation. When trying not to empathise or understand, like in the superficial stylisation of his mother or his perception of Jewishness, the American Miller uses inflexible rhetoric, as initially suggested by Cowe (2016a: 23). In *Tropic of Capricorn*, depersonalisation of characters and collective groups based on national categories occurs due to absent emotions, while the actions of stereotyped characters fit rigid categories.

4.2. A celebration of France or the submerged?

Having established Miller’s connection to and disconnection from his upbringing, I shall discuss his repatriate identity. Besides the personal fulfilment he enjoyed in France, his aversion towards the United States further relates to stereotypes. This becomes evident in *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*, as the chapter “Vive la France!” becomes a celebration of French culture which was certainly triggered by his dreaded return home. Here, he expresses the same Catholic anti-Americanism that Seth Armus (2001) sees emerging in France during the 1930s. The imagologist (2001: 328) finds that “[s]piritual ‘resistance’ to the United States would become critical to making a place for French identity. [...] The New World was all about ‘rugged individualism’ and a sort of personal independence that contrasted sharply with the communitarian interests of this spiritual tradition”. In fact, Miller has written on the same matter in the travelogue’s continuation *Remember to Remember* (1952 [1947]), where he emphasises the Catholic quality contained in his French hetero-image:

Everything which evokes raptures from me, in connection with France, springs from the recognition of her Catholicity. A man from a Protestant world suffers

from morbidity: he is uneasy in his soul. [...] Even Catholics, if they are born in such a world, assume the cold, inhibited qualities of their Protestant neighbors. The American Catholic is [...] just as Puritanical, just as intolerant, just as hidebound as the Protestant American. (175)

Mirroring Miller's self-perception, Armus's identification of a French desire to protect spirit and culture from American progressivism embodies an identity of its own that is grounded on temporal detachment. This assumption also explains why "it would be a mistake to think that Miller put all white, Anglo-Saxon Americans in the same basket" (Jahshan 2015: 41), when, for instance, considering his admiration for the Amish in *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*. On the one hand, the writer is able to categorically reject "the Protestant American," while simultaneously appreciating the modesty and overall isolation practised by followers of this traditionalist Christian faith, who, "clinging stubbornly to the ways of their ancestors in comportment, dress, beliefs and customs, have converted the land into a veritable garden of peace and plenty" (Miller 1979: 28). Remnants of the past found on American soil, such as the cultures of the Amish or Native Americans who exist in peaceful coexistence with nature, offer glimpses into vanishing microcosms of authenticity (cf. Gross 2009: 416). The latter, Miller (1979: 31) hopes, "may come alive one day to ride the plains where now the cities stand belching fire and pestilence". Whether French Catholic, American Amish or Native American, his anti-Americanism remains detached from national or ethnic specifics and highlights the value of nature and village-like communities. Following this thought, the antisemitism built upon the loss of his childhood accordingly might have fused with expatriate Miller's anti-urbanism, a hypothesis impractical to test within the scope of this paper.

While Miller fits Armus's description of a stereotypically individualistic American who undermines French aspirations, this tension is actually considered part of the stereotype. The scholar (2001: 331) holds that "French critics traditionally hit America from both sides – denouncing the triumph of the individual as opposed to a spiritually united French whole, while at the same time attacking the tendency for American society to subordinate individual freedom to the rule of the masses". Either accusation shaping the hetero-image can be employed by anti-Americans to fit a certain narrative. Miller chooses to highlight the positive connotations of French community whenever talking about the United States. During World War II, he finds that "[the French] attitude [...] was eminently pacifistic. They would fight out of a sense of duty and without hatred" (Miller 1979: 50). Americans would correspondingly fight for selfish, hateful reasons. On a positive note, the American ghettos of New York "remind him of his childhood days when the 'undesirables' invaded the old neighborhoods" (Jahshan 2015: 39). As Miller (1979: 18) appreciates the American ghetto as a non-American refuge and likens it to Europe, his conflicting antisemitism reveals its inconsistencies again. Out of purely selfish reasons maintained since childhood, the writer can simultaneously stress that only foreigners provide metropolitan America with culture and lament that Jewish immigrants brutally invaded his home.

How does this additional look into *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* complement our understanding of *Tropic of Capricorn*? If we proclaimed national attachment to define his German stereotypes in the previous subsection, we now must acknowledge his anti-American stance, which neither resembles pro-France attachment nor cosmopolitan detachment. It is the necessary idealisation of

otherness, an attachment to dreams contained in images, which hides the fact that Miller never really lived like a French Catholic, Native American or Amish person. Jennifer Cowe in her review of the essay collection *Henry Miller: New Perspectives* (2015) claims that Paul Jahshan's contribution, which I have also addressed here, "shows that Miller's perceptions of these contentious subjects are far more intelligent and nuanced than he has been given credit for" (2016b: 3). Maybe, the present investigation lets us take a step back again by suggesting that there might be a stable coexistence of both informed and biased perspectives in Miller's post-expatriation work and that this assumption adds rather than takes away from his belief that "[t]he old artificial line dividing the races [...] must disappear and humanity in its entirety must be one" (Jahshan 2015: 43).

5. Conclusion

In this article, I have examined Miller's alleged antisemitism through the lens of national stereotypes and achieved to reveal the parallel existence of characters experiencing categorical bias as well as sympathetic individualisation. As initially established, Cowe (2016a: 15) considers the writer's antisemitism "lazy" and "a way of denying his own humanity through the denial of another [one's]" (idem: 23). Likewise, it has been shown here that Miller categorically rejects and thus dehumanises progressive Americans and hypocritical Nordics whenever he emphasises their bad qualities. However, the stereotyping ends as soon as Miller shows sympathy which also confirms the laziness behind his more disapproving remarks. His self-identification remains highly complex when a nostalgia for the streets of Brooklyn mixes with a later disgust for corporate New York. The detached cosmopolitan who escapes to France is then brought back and chained to the horrors of his adulthood.

If Miller channels his childhood identity when describing Eastern European Jews, he assumes the expatriate stance only when evaluating his family who no longer seem so bad. Nevertheless, the repatriate-turned-tourist acknowledges the superiority of the French over the German mentality. Space and time clearly affect his image categories, as claimed in the beginning of this paper: Paris, even though highly idealised through the limited, cultural experiences gathered, becomes a spiritual safe haven that he tries to project onto American minorities in the travelogue. Further proving the laziness behind his stereotypes, Miller discusses how French Catholicism trumps American Protestantism, while praising the Amish who essentially belong to the latter category. Any nationality, ethnicity, or culture defying American metropolitanism, wherever located, can replace the French category, rendering Miller's auto- and hetero-images wholly anti-American. The writer's American bias towards Jewish people seems childish and simplistic in contrast to the more nuanced reflections of the expatriate or tourist Miller. While this does not excuse his antisemitism, it does contextualise and relate it to his struggle for self-reinvention. Finally, I would therefore like to quote Jahshan (2015: 43) who wonders whether the writer hoped to ultimately return "reincarnated in one of the ethnicities he loved so much or, better, in the all-encompassing New Human he hoped one day would rule the world".

The insights gained from this paper hopefully serve as a useful point of departure for future research on the still equivocal connection between Miller's implementation of historical setting and the development of his own national and ethnic stereotypes. The main understanding readers will hopefully acquire from

this short study is that writers may work out their complex identities through the creation of crude novels which appear void of self-reflection only if removed from their textual and intertextual context. Henry Miller displays different versions of himself without self-censorship and often without immediate confrontation of his thoughts. This technique does not necessarily render the author's ignorance extraordinary for its time, but it makes him appear lazy, as we are forced to connect the dots ourselves.

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A CITY UPON A HILL: SPIRITUALITY AND EXCEPTIONALISM IN THE FOUNDING OF AMERICA

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Abstract: *This article presents the concepts of puritan spirituality found in one of the most famous speeches of the founding fathers of America, entitled A Model of Christian Charity. A religious speech delivered by John Winthrop on board of Arbella during the great migration to America in 1630, to be perceived by his fellows as their modes of survival in the harsh wilderness of America. A qualitative technique combined with a socio-historical approach is applied to investigate the Puritans' values in the sermon grounding the foundation of America as a new exceptional nation of the world. The values of kindness, charity, love, and communalism are encouraged for the pilgrims to survive in the New Land and to make it a "City upon a Hill".*

Keywords: *America, city upon a hill, exceptionalism, puritan, spirituality*

1. Introduction

America and almost all products of human civilization evolved in this geographical area are brought together by groups of people moving to this newly founded land. People living in America, apart from the small numbers of Indian tribal communities, were transported from Europe, Africa, and the rest of the world (Johnson 1997: 11-12; Kaus 2017: 2). The English language as the national and official means of communication was brought by the British colonists. The hamburger, an American type of fast food, was inspired by the steak recipe brought by Jewish immigrants from Hamburg, Germany (Rubel 2018: 5 Kaus 2017: 20; Smith 2012: 322). The Jazz, a world phenomenon, born in New Orleans and flourished in Chicago and New York in the 1920s was brought by the slaves from Africa – for example, the distinct beats, tones, and improvisations, were borrowed from their religious rituals (Cayou 2012: 8).

The question of who discovered America has been extensively discussed and brings up numerous perplexing facts and myths. Including the most renowned and well-accepted discovery in the academic world: by Christopher Columbus (Morison 1978: 400; Johnson 1997: 15; Toth 2017: 22). It is believed that several ships had docked on its shores before Columbus' fleet, namely Arab, Chinese, and Viking ships (Gavin 2002: 333; Starr 2013; Toth 2017: 23).

Given the aforementioned data, can we now decide and have our say about who discovered the continent of America? Who found the civilization of America? Did the Arabs, the Chinese, or the Norsemen give birth to a new nation? Or did the Spaniards? Historical manuscripts show that none of those navigators moved, settled, and built a new nation in America. The Arabs only passed by to continue their journey, the Chinese did not leave any records of settlement, Eriksson stayed for about ten years, and Columbus came to colonize the Native Americans for their resources that included gold and spices, back and forth from Spain (Morison 1978:

352; Gavin 2002: 443; Johnson 1997: 11). A great migration of British Puritans to America took place between 1620-1640. The political, social, and religious conditions in England were hard for the adherents to Calvinism-Protestantism, so they decided to sail the Atlantic Ocean one way and settled in America forever, in pursuit of the freedom to practice their religious belief and build a new nation. The first ship that sailed to America in 1620 was *Mayflower*, led by a priest named William Bradford, and the second exodus was eleven ships led by John Winthrop, under the flag of *Arbella* in 1630 (Johnson 1997: 27; Johnson 1997: 34).

John Winthrop was the leader of the voyage; he was later to become the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Bremer 2005 passim; Johnson 1997: 29). Onboard the *Arbella*, Winthrop delivered a sermon to his Puritan fellows, encouraging them to help each other to unite despite all the differences, for one reason, i.e. that of building a new nation in a new land. The sermon is entitled *A Model of Christian Charity*, and is famous for a phrase found in its concluding part that wrapped up the whole topic of the sermon: *City upon a Hill*, which originates from a biblical verse “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14). Through this sermon, Winthrop intended to advise the future colonists of the Massachusetts Bay Colony that their community should be like a City upon a Hill, watched by all the eyes of the world and attracting Europe’s attention (Johnson 1997: 30). These spectators were observing whether the group could conquer the wilderness and gain success in that most unlikely place. If they failed to keep this covenant with God, they deserved nothing but punishment from Him (Bremer 2005: 300; Brauch 1998: 343).

2. Puritanism and the Puritans

Hulse (2000: 4) viewed the Puritans as people with profound theological vision and comprehension who wish that the knowledge to glorify God fulfills the world like the water covers the ocean. Kang (2009: 148) saw Puritanism as a movement that emerged inside the Church of England in the second half of the 1500s seeking to purify the Church by establishing a middle course between the ideas of the Protestant reformers and the Roman Catholicism. However, Puritans at some point were stereotyped as attempting to revolt against the government as well as the church and were perceived as a separatist movement. We are not supposed to strictly limit the Puritans to radical Protestant nonconformists, we need to see them in a much broader definition, as individuals distinguished by characteristics that transcend their political, ecclesiastical, and religious matters (Gleason, Kopic 2004: 17; Nuttall 1992: 9).

The English Reformation that took place in the 16th century was the outset provoking the rise of the Puritan movement. This series of events that broke away the Church of England from the authority of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church was also seen as the impact of the European Protestant Reformation, voiced by Martin Luther in Germany. Despite the wave of Protestantism affecting all areas of Europe, the process of reformation in England was, however, not entirely successful, as churches of England were still adhering to Roman Catholic values, and churches held the power to rule the state.

Subsequently, a handful of priests and monks who kept up the reformed Christianity of Luther promoted the purification of the English Church from its Catholic feudalistic practices. They believed that the church should live a modest life, religious services should be done as a charity, and rituals and church

documents should not be commercialized. Besides, luxurious artifacts should not decorate the sacred place where the mighty name of God is glorified, as those golden statues of angels and saints, velvet curtains, and engraved pulpits could hinder the nakedness of worshipers in front of their God. In responding to the “Reformation of the Church of England”, the Puritans were divided into those showing radical frontal reaction and those who were calm, soft, and diplomatic (Nuttall 1992: 9).

The group who viewed the English Church to have been severely corrupted by worldly affairs believed that there was no way to negotiate, only separation and building their church was the way out of this complication. This group made their way to America on *Mayflower* to establish Plymouth Plantation Colony led by, among others, William Bradford in 1620. Another wave of this group sailed the Atlantic Ocean on *Arbella*, led by a priest and heir of a very wealthy British merchant, John Winthrop. After they were appointed by King Charles I to migrate to the New World and plant a colony in New England (Brauch 1998: 346).

3. “A city upon a hill” as a staple dream of America

America has evolved from an unknown periphery into a world power in a relatively short period – it is no more than 387 years since the time of John Winthrop. We can see that America is now a powerful country, its development has spanned to multiple spheres of life – economy, military, arts, education, and so forth.

Winthrop believed that the *City upon a Hill*, as a super condition, could not be realized unless his community complied with their covenants with God. The puritans’ migration to the New World did not take place because they felt like joining the venture, because they were squeezed by the political and economic condition of England, or because the departure of the fleets coincided with their readiness to hop on them; it was a conviction of faith that their names were prepared by God on the long list of the predestination scenario for hegira to the new Canaan called America.

3.1. Kindness and charity

John Winthrop believed that the voyage and the hegira he was doing along with hundreds of people were predestined by God; he invited his fellow Puritans to be in subjection to God, to submit to Him all the worrying preconceptions of the new world that were yet to come. Sharing kindness and charity would help them form their means of survival, in order to cope with all the novelties they would soon encounter in the new world (Bremer 2005: 95; Johnson 1997: 22).

The exodus was not the only one designed by God, the different social strata in human life were also well written in His scenario, not without reason. This issue was highlighted at the beginning of Winthrop’s sermon, provoking the audience’s thirst for equality; Winthrop invited them to be in subjugation to the roles God had envisioned for them. Why “in all times some must be rich, some must be poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in subjection?” (Winthrop 1630). Why did He not create mankind with equal luxuries? Lives could be easier if no one was in need of anything, conflicts could be reduced if the humans did not fight over money, crimes and theft would be unnecessary if they could afford the cost of their needs. God is All-knowing, All-merciful, and Almighty, it is His wish to make lives complex or simple, and He could make all

mankind wealthy if he liked, but He designed the lives in such a way that everybody should act their given role properly.

3.1.1. Humans are created equal

Winthrop presented the reasons: God created different social strata because He wanted to see harmony, kindness, and charity among His people, as only in a mold of variety could those characteristics occur and be practiced. The glory of His wisdom is when all of His diverse people share kindness with each other and display charity to each other (Winthrop 1630).

God feels more honoured and glad to hand his gifts to the poor through the rich rather than give them by His hand, He manifests His spirit for the rich to show their “love, mercy, gentleness, and temperance” (idem), and for the poor to show their “faith, patience, obedience” (idem), so that the rich and powerful ones will not “eat up the poor” (idem) and the poor will not be presented as the “despised rise up against their superiors and shake off their yoke” (idem). God created humans as social creatures, their ability to think, talk, and develop indicates they cannot live without others. As in all sense of the universe, to survive and continue their lives, God gave eagles sharp beaks and claws, insects the ability to camouflage, octopus the ability to spread black ink, lizards that of cutting their tails, and humans the ability to communicate and socialize. Through communication and socializing, if necessary, the rich ask the poor for help and the poor receive bonuses from the rich and *vice-versa*. Thus a fisherman may ask a carpenter to help him build a fishing boat, a teacher may ask a fisherman to help him catch fish, a carpenter may ask a teacher to help him teach his children, and so forth. Men surely “have need of others” (idem), for their capability is limited to the world of their faculty, “from hence they might be all knit more nearly together in the bonds of brotherly affection” (idem).

3.1.2. The examination of justice and mercy

To create a stable society in the colony, not only justice was needed, but mercy was also essential. People should show mercy and exercise justice one towards another. Winthrop (1630) pointed out that “There are two rules whereby we are to walk one towards another: justice and mercy”. When one violated a law, or a system of rules composed and agreed upon by all parties within the Puritan community in order to regulate behaviour, to show respect to each other and create equality among its members, justice had to be served for the sake of security and stability. However, before imposing justice (it was not a priority to the Puritans in establishing the new colony), mercy had to be taken first into consideration, and thus reduce law violations (Winthrop 1630).

The above-mentioned rules were regulated by two laws: the law of nature and the law of grace, or (otherwise called) of moral or Gospel. The law of nature stipulated that “you should love your neighbor as yourself”, which corresponds to a verse in Mathew, 5: 43 and 19: 19. Precepts of morality are grounded upon respect; one should behave kindly to others, in the same manner as one wishes to be treated. This law is needed to “omit the rule of justice as not properly belonging to this purpose” (Winthrop 1630).

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. (Matthew 7.12)

3.1.3. Be merciful in giving, lending, and forgiving

In addressing which acts of mercy should be applied in society, Winthrop used the popular question and answer technique, with several objections in between, to stimulate the audience's attention. Mercy should be acted upon in three different ways: giving, lending, and forgiving, an idea which he supported with excerpts from the Holy Bible.

A question arose regarding the extent to which a man should give a hand to his friends in need. For *giving*, Winthrop referred to ordinary and extraordinary circumstances - when one is in an ordinary circumstance, one should share with the needy friends what was given by God out of his abundance, and when one is in an extraordinary circumstance, one should give even more. A person in the audience objected to this tenet because he was responsible for providing for his family and would be worse than an infidel, should he was not able to fulfill the needs of his family. Winthrop elaborates that one should care about one's friend as much as one cares about oneself, without neglecting one's primary obligation to make a living for one's family. When one gives to the needy, God would return it multiple times more in the future. Another act of mercy is *lending*. A question arose about the condition on which one should lend money to one's needy brother. Winthrop explained that one should observe one's needy brother and attempt to evaluate whether or not he had sufficient resources to return the debt. If he did, he could lend him professionally and commercially, but if he did not, he must give as much as was needed, not as much as was asked for. Furthermore, Winthrop suggested that even if one saw there was a chance of never getting the money back, the needy brother should be the target of mercy:

If any of thy brethren be poor, ...thou shalt lend him sufficient for his need.
(Deuteronomy 15.7)

The last act of mercy is *forgiving*. How should it be done? Whether one lends money in a professional manner or because the needy man is the object of one's mercy, when he is not able to return the money, one must forgive:

Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye the same to them also.
(Matthew, 7:22)

Finally, a question arose on how to keep the new vulnerable community united, moving towards glory and avoiding peril. Winthrop's answer covered the three previous points, with more emphasis on the care for others - more attention should be given to others' lives than to one's personal life, as was done by the traditional churches and all the honorable Christian martyrs back then at the time of persecution in England.

3.2. Love as the bond of perfection

Given the tenets on how to live together through kindness, charity, and acts of mercy, in accordance with the laws of God, Winthrop, in the next passage, attempted a deeper explanation of the core motivation of the acts of mercy, which was affection or love. Love spurred the Puritans to commit acts of mercy, love grounded the acts of mercy as much as struggle grounded victory, love was given

to the acts of mercy as much as the soul was given to the body, love strengthened the Puritans to love others as much as they love themselves, love changed their mind from individualism to communalism, from keeping their private belongings to a willingness to share, from being greedy to being generous.

Love, based on the biblical teaching, is a *bond of perfection*, it is a ligament that unites all parts into one body so that it makes the work perfect. A body consists of parts, each part has its own works and duties which cannot be performed by other parts (this idea is in line with Corinthians 12:12-26). The mouth is essential for consuming food, the lungs are essential for aspirating oxygen, eyes are essential for vision, the stomach is essential for digesting food, the heart is essential to push blood to the veins of the whole body – they cannot swap one duty for another, but they cooperate and affect each other, so that they reach their utmost goal which is the ideal way of living, “because it makes each part so contiguous to others as thereby they do mutually participate with each other, both in strength and infirmity, in pleasure and pain” (Winthrop 1630).

Winthrop (1630) then concludes by stating that “Love among Christians is a real thing, not imagery”, it has been there and must be there forever as a prerequisite to the existence of Christianity. “This love is as absolutely necessary to the being of the body of Christ” as muscles, bones, and organs are to the being of the body, “this love is a divine, spiritual nature free, active, strong, courageous, permanent”, pure, honest, persistent, constructive not destructive, making the Christian brotherhood close to the resemblance of God’s virtues, and “it rests in the love and welfare of its beloved” (idem) oriented to the being of others, care for others, cherishing the surrounding people to create a strong community, “till Christ be formed in them and they in Him” (idem) together knit by this bond of love.

3.3. Communalism

Another survival mode in establishing the new colony taught by Winthrop was the spirit of communalism. As the biblical terminology *Body of Christ* suggested, the Christian brotherhood was as perfect as an interconnected physical body – a private matter means community’s matter and the corruption of a personal matter may harm that of the community. Each party within the community has its own use and function, analogous to the organs of the human body. Illness in one part of a body if it is ignored could severely harm the other parts and later cause a serious corruption of all the body system functions. The rehabilitation of private problems was as much needed by the community as that by personals. Thus, community’s matter is above personal one.

The Puritans wanted their community in the New World to be a perfect community, established on the basis of what they viewed as the purest Christian values. This beaconing community was created for the European societies/world to look up to, to see how a nation should be built, and what prosperity should be based on. All the formalities, superiorities, social segregation, and other traditions typical of England were washed ashore by the new system under the tenet of “all mankind was born equal” (Winthrop 1630). Though hierarchy was important for the social arrangements within the Puritan community, its members were more egalitarian than the social system in England. One of the radical shifts made by the Puritan community was connected to their emphasis on the power of local congregations, unlike the English tradition that positioned the King as the supreme power of both Church and State.

Another implementation of communalism by Winthrop and his Puritan fellows was started by Winthrop himself turning his function as governor into a yearly elected position. The venture migrating to America was initially a company, a joint company called “Massachusetts Bay Company” that established a new settlement under the charter of the British authority. Winthrop, as one of the prominent figures among the Puritans and coming from a rich and well-educated family, was elected by the rest of the members as their leader to lead the company in sailing the Atlantic Ocean and later in settling in America. Considering that Winthrop once owned a whole autonomous village and had the most eligibilities in leading the company, if it was not for the strong spirit of Puritanism, the normal sense would have been for him to hold the position forever. However, Winthrop turned it into a yearly elected position, thus giving equal opportunities to the rest of the community.

The message of communalism was also present in the final part of the sermon, which is the most popular and summarizes the whole structure of the sermon. Winthrop analyzed the struggle they would soon face in America as well as the venture in crossing the ocean:

now the only way to avoid this shipwreck, and to provide to our posterity, is to follow the course of Micah, to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God. For this end, we must be knit together in this work as one man. (Winthrop 1630)

The only means of survival to avoid the collapse of the new vulnerable community, and also to sustain their venture for their posterity, was to follow the paths of Micah. Micah, a minor prophet of 8th century BC, with a story documented in the Old Testament, conveys the hope of salvation to his people on the Day of Judgment:

We must delight in each other, make other’s condition our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, our community as members of the same body. (Winthrop 1630)

Gale (2007) noted that, in approaching the notion of communalism, Winthrop went through love rather than equality or fairness. Winthrop asserted that “we must bear one another’s burdens, we must not look only on our own things, but also on the things of our brethren” (Winthrop 1630). For him, Puritan’s ideals of love, unity, and charity reflect the principles of communalism.

3.4. American Exceptionalism

Lipset (1996: 749) stated that American Exceptionalism is among the great ideas in founding America. In other words, the historical foundation of America is inherently different from the foundation of any other nation. As the first new nation, America developed “Americanism” – a unique ideology based on egalitarianism, liberty, republicanism, individualism, democracy, and fittingly *laissez-faire* economy; this ideology is often called “American Exceptionalism”. Americans have the mission to introduce and promote their way of governance: government of the people, by the people, for the people and it “shall not perish

from the earth” (Winthrop 1630), and that the history of America and its vocation makes it superior to other nations.

Through the popular question and answer technique, Winthrop (1630) emphasized the importance of the social cohesion in the colony in New England, “that every man affords his help to another in every want or distress”, and the love between each other and for God, because “love is the bond of perfection”. Furthermore, he claims that they, as a chosen people in the New World, must resemble God as “He loves his elect because they are like Himself”; the Puritans must always try to “resemble the virtues of our heavenly father” (idem) in order to receive His reward — thus they will be an example for the people in the present and a role model for their posterity.

The Puritans believed that they had a covenant with God, they had been chosen by God to provide a model for the other nations on Earth. John Winthrop’s metaphor for his community as a “City upon a Hill” means that they had to live in a more perfect condition than they did in England, they had knit together in brotherly affection to serve as a model for the rest of the world to look up to, because “the eyes of all people are upon us [them]” (Winthrop 1630), to see if they survived in the most unexpected place. Complying with the covenant of God was the way to make Him present in their venture; if they dealt falsely with their God, “and so caused Him to withdraw His present help” (Winthrop 1630), the world would humiliate them. Because of this metaphor, John Winthrop is called the father of American exceptionalism.

4. Conclusion

The sermon “A Model of Christian Charity”, one of the most renowned speeches by the founding fathers of America, is among those that brought about the creation of American institutions, in other words, it laid the groundwork for the founding of the new nation and shaped its identity. The sermon delivers messages of kindness, charity, mercy, love, and social cohesion to be utilized by Winthrop’s fellow travellers, the future settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, as their survival guides in the harshness of American nature. Other than that, the sermon pioneered the idea of American exceptionalism, i.e. the ideology proclaiming America as exceptional, in comparison to the other countries, a new nation of its kind, a nation that represented a government of the people, by the people, and for the people; the history and mission of America are distinctive from those of other states. The phrase “City upon a Hill”, mentioned in the concluding paragraph of the sermon, has become the hallmark of American culture. The Puritan community expelled from England worked hard and banded together in the “body of Christ” to show the world how they could build a prosperous nation in the most unlikely place.

Taken from the Bible, the phrase “A City upon a Hill” has been the timeless spirit of America. Many American leaders have used it to admonish the American people and encourage them to return to the spirit of the first settlers. This hallmark of American culture was initially related to religious matters, but its influence extended to political, social, and economic issues. Amongst the notable American leaders to mention the “City upon a Hill” are John F. Kennedy in his speech to the General Court of Commonwealth Massachusetts on January 9, 1961, stating that his endeavour to form a new government was guided by the standards of John Winthrop, that the eyes of the world (at his time) were watching America, thus the

new government in every branch, at every level should like as a "City upon a Hill", bearing great trust and great responsibilities (Savage 2015: 38); President Ronald Reagan referred to the same image in his election eve speech in 1980 and his farewell speech in 1989, believing that the spirit of 1980 America was in every bit committed to the vision of the "City upon a Hill"; American people were not segregated by colour, ethnicity, or religion – they all shared their fate leaving their history behind, proud of what they had at hand, and optimistic for their future in the New World (Calabresi 2006: 1415; Kiewe, Houck 1991: 126). President George W. Bush implied the message of the "City upon a Hill" in a 2005 speech (Pont 2008: 132); Barack Obama made references to the phrase in his commencement address on June 2, 2006 (Obama 2006), and 2012 Republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney, in response to Donald Trump's campaign, cautioned that Trump's quality would reduce the shine of the "City upon a Hill" (Romney 2016).

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**BLACK CHURCHES
AND AFRICAN AMERICAN SOCIAL ACTIVISM.
THE ‘OPIATE VIEW’ AND THE ‘INSPIRATION VIEW’ OF BLACK
RELIGION IN THE SELECTED LITERATURE**

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***Abstract:** The article analyses the evolution of the academic debate on the role of the Black Church and Black religion in encouraging or undercutting the political and social activism of African Americans. By reviewing the most important literature on the subject in the context of the so-called ‘opiate’ and ‘inspiration’ view, it will be possible to present the dominating trends and shifts in the debate in particular periods of time.*

***Keywords:** African Americans, Black churches, Black Church studies, Black Lives Matter, socio-political activism*

1. Introduction

African American social activism has recently gained much publicity through #Black Lives Matter (BLM), a new socio-political movement created in 2013. Although it is sometimes referred to as the new Civil Rights Movement (CRM), it did not gain as much support from Black churches as the CRM itself. Nor does it have a representative of Black clergy, such as Rev. Martin Luther King, in its leadership. While some Black clergy supported the new movement (Francis 2015: 145-148), others spoke strongly against it, seeing it as too aggressive, disruptive and militant (Reynolds 2015; Jennings 2015) as well as too leftist, too secular, or even “unchristian” (due to its stress on sexual minorities and women’s rights) (Lee 2016; Oppenheimer 2016). And although the acceptance for the movement grew over time (Cohn, Quealy 2020), also among Black churches, some of them are still not ready to grant their full support (Wang 2020; Ross 2020; Bomberger 2020). What is more, the BLM leaders are distrustful of many Black churches, seen as too conformist and too passive in their approach to African American problems in the USA. Young members of the movement are also critical of many representatives of the Black clergy, considered to be over-satisfied with the privileged position they gained in the 1960s, or sometimes even corrupted, as well as too focused on the ‘respectability’ policy or, in other cases, on Biblical literalism, which makes them and the members of their congregations detached from the earthly issues (Francis 2015: 50-51; 52-63).

The debate on whether Black churches encourage or undercut motivation in order to undertake political and social actions is not new. And although since the 1950s and 1960s the dominating popular image of the Black Church has been strongly related to its social activism in the civil rights era, there are in fact at least two conflicting views of the role of Black religion that have been reappearing over

the years in the academic literature on the subject. Some authors have argued that religion gives African Americans comfort by promising them a better afterlife, but it discourages their political and social activity to improve their situation in this life. Other scholars have maintained that religious involvement among Black Americans inspires socio-political involvement. These views have been often labelled as the ‘opiate view’ and the ‘inspiration view’ (Corbett, Mitchell-Corbett 1999: 313).

The aim of this article is to analyse the evolution of the academic debate on the role of the Black Church and Black religion in the context of the ‘opiate’ and ‘inspiration’ view. By reviewing the most important literature on the subject, it will be possible to present the dominating trends and shifts in the debate in particular periods of time. Knowing the history of this debate is especially important in the light of the contemporary discussion on the Black churches’ role in the BLM movement.

2. Definitions

It is often stressed that the Black Church played a unique role in Black American history, being a centre of Black culture, identity and a source of leadership. Therefore, it is important to precisely define such terms as ‘Black Church’, ‘Black churches’ and ‘Black religion’. It is also worth explaining that there is a debate among scholars whether to capitalize the term ‘Black’. In this text I follow the decision of the authors of *Black Church Studies. An Introduction*, who capitalize the word as “a means of moving beyond skin colour towards a notion of shared history, cultural heritage, and group identity” (Floyd-Thomas et al. 2007: xxvi).

The term ‘Black Church’ evolved from the phrase ‘the Negro Church’, which was also the title of the pioneering sociological study by W.E.B. Du Bois (1903). It is usually used to denote “the collective reality of black Christianity across denomination lines” (Pinn 2002: ix). It is “a kind of sociological and theological shorthand reference to the pluralism of black Christian churches in the United States” (Lincoln, Mamiya 1990: 1), and according to a narrow definition, it refers only to seven historically Black Protestant denominations. I will use it in the broader sense.

The term ‘Black churches’, on the other hand, is used to describe local Black Protestant churches within a particular denomination (Pinn 2002: ix.). The term includes all churches that currently or historically have ministered to predominantly Black congregations (some of them belonging to historically Black denominations and some to predominantly white denominations). Both terms, ‘Black Church’ and ‘Black churches’ will be used, depending on the context.

Black religion will be understood as a form of Christianity (in different theological variations) with certain African American cultural elements (non-Christian faiths professed by African American will not be the subject of this study). It is important to remember that at first ‘white religion’ (understood mostly as Protestant Christianity) was culturally distant to the enslaved Africans. Soon, however, they developed their own kind of Christianity, based in a large part on Evangelicalism – an emotional religious movement that stressed individual spiritual experience rather than hierarchies of the formal churches (Marsden 1990: 67). And although Black religion went through many general theological divisions, it did maintain certain differences, distinguishing it from ‘white’ Christianity

(including institutions, theologies, practices, rhetorical styles, music and values). Apart from segmentation into different denominations, it also experienced the most important split among American churches, connected to the so-called “fundamentalist/modernist controversy” at the turn of the 20th century, which resulted in the formation of two major branches of Protestant Christianity: the mainline/liberal one and the evangelical (in some cases fundamentalist) one.

3. The ‘opiate view’ and the ‘inspiration view’

The two conflicting views of Black religion overlap to a great extent with two sociological perspectives presented by Karl Marx and Max Weber, and discussed as keystones of the sociology of religion by Giddens (2006).

The ‘opiate view’ is based on the belief that the otherworldly focus of religion defers happiness and rewards to the afterlife and teaches the resigned acceptance of existing conditions of this life. It refers to the Marxian view of religion as the ‘opium of the people’, a conservative force that prevents social change and teaches non-resistance (Giddens 2006: 537). Its proponents hold that the Black Church has always majored in this otherworldly outlook and compensatory model.

Others stress instead that the Black Church has always embraced reformist-activist ethic, aimed at the transformation of earthly society (Baldwin 2003: 15). They prefer the ‘inspiration view’ of Black religion which is closely related to the ideas of Max Weber. It is largely based on his assumption that religion might be a radical force in society - a force for change. It concentrates on a this-worldly focus of religion that can lead to political and social action to improve this world. Since Weber’s research indicated that religiously inspired movements have, in fact, produced dramatic social transformations (e.g. Puritanism), the proponents of his social action theory see religion as a possibly motivating force (Giddens 2006: 537-540).

At the beginning of the 20th century, when Black religion first became a formal object of academic inquiry, the ‘opiate view’ dominated the scholastic debate. The early studies of Black religion were associated with ideas of African American social and moral uplift, economic advancement as well as protest. Most scholars saw the potential role of the Black Church in these processes, but they were critical of the Black clergy’s passivity and neglect for earthly issues. Therefore they considered Black religion as the ‘opiate’. Such conclusions dominated throughout the early and mid-20th century. This perspective, however, changed drastically after the 1960s. In fact, it seems that research on Black churches can be divided at least into two phases: before the civil rights era and thereafter. In the first phase, the focus was placed on social non-engagement or even passivity of Black churches, mainly in the period following the Reconstruction, including the early-20th century when the ‘ghetto church’ was seen as hindering Black assimilation and advancement. The second phase was dominated by topics related to churches’ activity in the CRM. After the civil rights era, scholars were interested mainly in the active role of the churches that supported Martin Luther King’s social activism. Additionally, they also decided to re-examine early Black churches in search for their social engagement and protest strategies – also in the Ante-bellum South (e.g. Albert J. Rabouteau 2001, 2004). Among them there were also Black Liberation theologians, including James Cone (1970) and Gayraud S. Wilmore (1998), who re-analysed the history of the Black Church, searching for its radicalism and this-worldly orientation.

It was not until the 1990s that scholars began to recognize that the Black Church could function as both accommodative and resistant simultaneously. The following examples of the most famous studies on the Black Church in different periods of time, illustrate the controversies among scholars concerning the two conflicting views.

3.1. The ‘opiate view’

The strongest statement on the ‘opiate view’ of the effects of religion on African American activism was expressed by E. Franklin Frazier in 1963. In the book based on his previous research, *The Negro Church in America*, the author claimed that the otherworldly focus of Black churches prevented Black population from taking political and social action in this world to improve their situation. Before he formulated his stark conclusion, however, earlier famous scholars also saw the overall function of Black religion and Black churches in a similar manner.

When W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) pointed out the centrality of the Black Church in the African American community, at the same time he criticized Black preachers (often concentrated on otherworldly matters) for not using their strong position in a more active way. Since then, several other analyses of the role of Black churches followed. Scholars of the first half of the 20th century, including Carter G. Woodson who wrote *The History of the Negro Church* (1921) as well as Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicolson, who published *The Negro’s Church* (1933), all expressed opinions close to the ‘opiate view’, while regarding Black religion as largely otherworldly-focused (Savage 2008: 33-57). Despite the fact that Du Bois, Woodson, and Mays with Nicolson did not agree on everything, they all believed in the centrality of Black churches to the institutional structures of African American communities. At the same time, however, they saw them as “too emotional in worship style and too focused on heaven and not enough on earth” (idem: 65). While noticing the socio-political potential of the Black Church leadership, they stressed that churches were “too small, too many, and too independent of any centralized authority, including any control over their growth and direction” (ibid.). This, according to them, resulted in the churches’ decline since Reconstruction and in their inability to meet the growing needs caused by war, migration, economic depression and Jim Crow. What is more, all of them blamed the weakness of the Black Church on the failings of its uneducated male ministers (idem: 66).

Elements of the ‘opiate view’ were also detectable in the works of Gunnar Myrdal (*An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 1944) as well as St. Clair Drake and Horace Clayton (*Black Metropolis a Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*, 1945)(Lincoln, Mamiya 1990: 11). According to them, since African Americans could not reach power and acclaim in the larger society, the Black Church offered them some institutional prestige as form of compensation, but such compensation might have deterred or discourage the struggle for a more significant social change (ibid.).

The 1963 statement by E. Franklin Frazier was the symbolic final point of the period in which the ‘opiate view’ unquestionably dominated. Importantly, not only did Frazier stress that the otherworldly focus of Black churches prevented Black population from taking socio-political actions, but also pointed out that the authoritarian control of the church over African Americans kept them from developing themselves and learning the democratic process. Additionally, Frazier

claimed that the Black Church and Black religion were responsible for the 'backwardness' of the American Blacks. In his view, both the Black Church and Black religion made African Americans subservient, meek and ignorant.

Most of the above-mentioned authors (who, with a significant exception of G. Myrdal, were Black intellectuals) tended to characterize Black churches as passive, priestly and accommodative. They were not only critical of the Black clergy, but especially also of the otherworldly focus of Black churches. In their opinion it was the main reason for the churches' accommodative attitude.

In the 1960s, the perspective changed drastically. The 'inspiration view' gained popularity, as most scholars paid attention to the role of the churches that were active in the CRM. There were, however, some exceptions to this rule.

The first significant research to test the 'opiate view' in the context of the civil rights era was Gary Marx's survey of over a thousand African Americans in urban areas, which was conducted in 1964. The results of the survey were published in 1967 and 1969 and concluded that the otherworldly orientation of Black churches was incompatible with social protest (Marx 1971: 150). Marx developed a measure of religiosity by combining items concerning religious orthodoxy, church attendance, and the subjective importance of religion. By asking respondents several questions about their attitudes toward civil rights demonstrations and their willingness to take part in such events, he measured civil rights militancy. His findings showed that African Americans who had higher religiosity were less militant in terms of civil rights (regardless of age, education or region).

That could be a simple proof of the 'opiate' function of Black religion. However, there were cases of highly religious Black citizens who were militant. Therefore, Marx decided to analyse the type of their religious orientations. This examination led him to the conclusion that an otherworldly religious orientation inhibited civil rights activism, while a this-worldly attitude increased it. What is very important, Gary Marx noted the two different orientations within the Black Church. As he pointed out, Christianity contains many themes, which if not contradictory, then at least in tension with one another – here lies the explanation of the religion's varied consequences for protest: acceptance for one's lot, and waiting for the afterlife rewards or realization of Judeo-Christian values in current life (as it was true for Martin Luther King Jr. and his followers) (idem: 158). What is more, according to him, otherworldly orientation was usually expressed by more fundamentalist branches of Christianity while the this-worldly focus was characteristic to traditional and mainline churches (idem: 151).

Although Gary Marx mentioned these theological differences within the Black Church, according to Lincoln and Mamiya, what he stressed the most was the inverse relationship between the intensity of religious belief and activism (Lincoln, Mamiya 1990: 197). Therefore, religion in this study was generally seen as an 'opiate' of the masses that tended to depress civil rights militancy. It is important to remember, however, about Marx's observation concerning the dual role of religion in African American protest.

Interestingly, Ronald L. Johnstone's (1971) research also indicated that the churches' theological orientation was extremely important in influencing the Black clergy's decision on whether to support King's movement or not. After analysing the Black clergy's attitudes toward civil disobedience, Johnstone created a typology that divided Black ministers into three categories: militants (organizers and activists who took part in the CRM demonstrations), traditionalists (who

wanted the church to focus on the gospel and stay out of politics), and moderates (“peacemakers” and gradualists, who were between the two other groups). According to the study results, militant preachers were not only younger, more educated, and of higher status, but also theologically liberal, serving within mainline Protestant denominations and big congregations. Traditionalists, on the other hand, apart from being older and less educated, were also more theologically conservative, often Pentecostal or from sect-like small congregations. They considered their task to be solely spiritual: preaching, converting, leading to heaven (Johnstone 1971: 277-282). Although Johnstone studied ministers only, the views of these ministers about political involvement can be reflected by their congregations. Therefore, the study seemed to have confirmed that religious commitment among Blacks in a church with an otherworldly focus might very well inhibit political involvement (Corbett, Mitchell-Corbett 1999: 315).

In the 1970s, Eugene Genovese, a scholar known for bringing a Marxist perspective to the study of power, class, and relations between planters and slaves in the South, also paid attention to the role of Black religion. In his book *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1976), not only did he argue that after 1830, southern Christianity became part of the social control of the slaves, but also that the slaves’ religion was not conducive to a revolutionary political tradition. Rather, it helped them survive and resist (Genovese 1976: 280). Although it might be considered as the expression of the ‘opiate view’, Lincoln, Mamiya – the proponents of the ‘inspiration view’ – refer to Genovese, emphasizing that Black survival in the total system of dehumanization and exclusion is by itself a significant political act (Lincoln, Mamiya 1990: 201).

Another famous study within the ‘opiate’ perspective was conducted by Stephen D. Johnson in 1986. He offered a thorough review of other major studies that attempted to replicate or re-analyse Gary Marx’s study. His research led him to two important conclusions. First of all, African Americans with no religious commitment had the highest civil activism. Secondly, high civil activism was also found among members of mainline Black churches that had a Social Gospel orientation (that is a this-worldly focus, with the roots in the Social Gospel movement that began within Protestantism in the late 19th century, and was a Christian ethical response to social problems). For conservative (mostly evangelical) churches, the story was much more complicated. In general, different churches (and ministers) often had contradictory views on political involvement, depending on theological orientation (Johnson 1986).

A more radical attachment to the ‘opiate view’ was presented by Adolph Reed (1986). Reaching back for the ‘opiate view’, Reed once more stressed the negative role of Black churches’ authoritarianism (following Frazier’s argument). He generally contested that instead of encouraging political mobilization, Black churches have been by nature anti-political and more likely to serve as a force of social control.

It is worth stressing that representatives of Black Liberation Theology (which emerged as an expression of Black consciousness and became a synthesis of Black Power and Black theology) also used the ‘opiate’ explanation for the non-engagement of some Black churches, despite the fact that, generally, they promoted the ‘inspiration view’. According to James H. Cone (1971: 342, 2018: 9), churches that accepted the otherworldly message of white Christianity, together with what he considered an oppressive, racially-biased theology of the white masters, were among the passive ones. And although Cone and other Black

Liberation theologians generally pointed to the inspiration function of Black religion in the Antebellum period, they criticized these Black churches that chose social un-engagement after the Civil War, especially if they were situated in the North (outside of Jim Crow laws). Cone (1971: 346-348) noted that especially in the early 20th century, when many of Black churches accepted the otherworldly orientation and protection from whites, they discouraged any political or social action. Another Black Liberation theologian, Gayraud S. Wilmore (qtd. in Lincoln, Mamiya 1990: 16), stressed that the Black Church had been simultaneously “the most reactionary” and “the most radical” institution.

3.2. The ‘inspiration view’

Scholars of the 1960s and 1970s inspired by Black churches’ social activism, exemplified by Martin Luther King Jr.’s engagement in the CRM, turned their attention to the prophetic, this-worldly, and resistant tradition of the Black Church (Kurosaki 2012). One of the first scholars who did this was James Cone, the founding father of Black Liberation Theology. As a theologian, however, he did not limit himself to re-analysing the history of the Black Church and searching for its radicalism. He also reinterpreted Christian theology, in an attempt to use it as a tool in the struggle against oppression and white supremacy (e.g.: *Black Theology and Black Power* 1997, *A Black Theology of Liberation* 1970, *God of the Oppressed* 1975). Therefore, his approach has been considered controversial. There were, however, numerous other scholars, not directly involved in theological struggles, who also conducted a great amount of research on the activity of the Black Church and the role of Black religion, applying the ‘inspiration view’.

One of the most famous and thorough research of the function of Black religion conducted in the post-civil rights era was the study of Hart M. Nelsen and Anne Kusener Nelsen’s (1975). The authors turned firmly in the direction of the ‘inspiration view’ to explain the behaviour of churches, especially during the CRM. In their book *Black Churches in the Sixties*, they also distinguished and critically evaluated several interpretative schemes and theoretical models in the work of other researchers, who were writing from the ‘opiate’ perspective. They did not agree with the previous research which insisted that religion was primarily a conservative force, with its otherworldly nature helping the Blacks to cope by encouraging them to wait for justice in heaven. The models they criticized included: the assimilation model, the isolation model and the compensatory model. They associated the first one with Franklin E. Frazier. It presented the Black Church as an obstacle to assimilation, due to its anti-intellectualism and authoritarianism. In the second model, the Black Church was characterized by ‘involuntary isolation’, caused by the predominantly lower statuses of members of the Black community. Isolation from public affairs and mass apathy were considered as results of racial segregation in ghettos. Anthony Orum and Charles Silberman, who researched these issues, viewed Black religion as primarily lower-class and otherworldly. The compensatory model, on the other hand, stressed the opportunities the churches gave to African Americans – but only within their own institutional boundaries. This model was associated with St. Clair Drake and Horace Clayton, as well as Gunnar Myrdal. The Nelsens did not agree with any of these models. They also criticized Gary Marx’s study for not paying enough attention to sectarianism, which, in their view, gave readers the impression that religion was generally inversely related to militancy. According to them, only sect-

like religious institutions can act as an 'opiate'. They reached their conclusions through the examination of the data derived from published surveys and from their own research in Kentucky. Their research was later largely referred to by Lincoln, Mamiya (1990: 11, 222).

In opposition to all these models, the Nelsen study offered a different one: the "ethnic community prophetic model". Not only did it emphasize the significance of the Black Church "as a base for building a sense of ethnic identity and a community of interest among its members", but additionally stressed the Church's potential to serve as a "prophet to a corrupt white Christian nation" (idem: 11). The example of the second function was, according to the Nelsens, demonstrated especially by the ministers involved in the CRM. Generally, by using statistical arguments, they rejected the image of the emotional, sectarian religion among African Americans, and emphasized the close ties between Black religion and protest.

The 'inspiration view' became increasingly influential in the 1980s. Scholars of this period, who were basically interested in Black churches civil rights activity, usually left out the topic of the churches' previous attitudes. In their analyses, they were also usually omitting the subject related to the churches that remained unengaged during the CRM. These researchers represented various disciplines, including history, political science, sociology, and theology. Some of the important analyses of the active role of Black churches were also presented by social movement scholars, who, inspired by the role of the Black Church in the CRM, decided to include religion in the social movement theories. Early social movement theory was influenced by structural functionalism, therefore religion was considered only an integrating and stabilizing force, supporting social cohesion rather than social change. It was sometimes mentioned in behavioural theories, but its anti-systemic force was noticed only in the context of cults or deviant belief systems. In general, social movement theories had neglected the religious factors. And yet religion turned out to play a key role in the developing and mobilizing tactics e.g. in the CRM. And although many authors stressed that most often religion was just one of the many factors that interact in order to produce and propel groups towards mobilization and action, they did agree that sometimes it might be a key element in the formation and mobilization of social movements – as religious ideologies can provide important resources for mobilization (Kirmani 2008: 38). Therefore, the resource mobilization theory was modified to include such possibility. Additionally, other theories were developed, including the models designed by Dough McAdam (1982) and Aldon Morris (1984).

In fact, McAdam and Morris provided two most famous studies discussing the importance of the Black Church as a part of the social movement. Instead of concentrating only on the role of national leaders (stressed by earlier research on CRM), both authors pointed to the role of local structures, including those created by Black churches. The political process model constructed by McAdam specifically stressed the significance of the Southern urban Black churches' networks in preparing the ground for the 'Black insurgency'. Although McAdam (1982: 90-92) described the reasons for the rural churches' non-involvement in the previous period of 1876-1930, neither he nor Morris paid attention to the internal conflicts concerning the militancy issue within Black churches during the civil rights era itself. Morris, for example, was criticized for not even noting "the large number - perhaps a majority - of southern black clergymen who did not become active in the civil rights movement or allow their churches to be used for civil

rights meetings” (Carson 1986: 620-621). Nevertheless, their works provided most influential analyses of the CRM and the active and mobilizing role of Black churches within the movement.

Another very important research that seemed to have confirmed the ‘inspiration’ function was conducted by Lincoln and Mamiya. It is interesting that not only did the authors refer to the past of the Black Church, but also to its role in the 1980s. Their study of 1,894 Black clergy in 1983 showed very high support for political involvement. According to the research results, 91 percent of the questioned clergy supported protest marches on civil issues and 92 percent said that churches should express their views on day-to-day social and political questions. According to Lincoln and Mamiya, African Americans do not participate in politics to a larger extent, not because of the ‘opiate’ function of their churches, but because they are alienated from the political system due to past frustrations (Corbett, Mitchell-Corbett 1999: 316).

It is important, however, that, apart from leaning towards the ‘inspiration view’, Lincoln, Mamiya also stressed that the Black Church could function as both accommodative and resistant simultaneously, rather than as a dichotomy. In their book *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (1990) that was based on their research, they created a dialectic model of the Black Church. Referring to the Nelsens’ work, they summarized all the earlier theoretical models characterizing Black churches as anti-intellectual, antidemocratic, apolitical, and otherworldly, and concluded that the otherworldly or compensatory view of the Black Church is over-simplistic and ahistorical, holding only aspects of truth, not the whole truth. Therefore, they decided that their theoretical scheme would be much closer to the Nelsens’ “ethnic community-prophetic model” (Lincoln, Mamiya 1990: 11-17). As an addition to the Nelsens’ perspective, however, they framed Black churches as institutions involved in a constant series of dialectical tensions.

They explained that the “dialectic holds polar opposites in tension, constantly shifting between the polarities in historical time” and stressed that “there is no Hegelian synthesis or ultimate resolution of the dialectic” (1990: 11). In their view, there are six main pairs of dialectically related polar opposites:

1) priestly and prophetic, where *priestly* represents activities concerned with the spiritual life, while the *prophetic* functions refer to involvement in political concerns and activities in the wider community;

2) otherworldly and this-worldly, where *otherworldly* represents a heaven-focused orientation and *this-worldly* represents an orientation focused on the affairs in this world;

3) universalism and particularism, where *universalism* represents a general Christian message and *particularism* represents Black consciousness emerging out of a past racial history that caused the separation of Black churches as ethnic institutions;

4) communal and ‘privatistic’, where *communal* represents churches involved in all aspects of the Black community’s life (including political, social, economic, educational) and ‘*privatistic*’ represents a narrow focus on the religious needs of the adherents;

5) charismatic and bureaucratic, where *charismatic* represents drawing more authority from the charisma and personality of preachers than in bureaucratic hierarchy; and

6) resistance and accommodation, where *resistance* represents affirming Black heritage, while *accommodation* represents being influenced by the norms and values of white society, as well as being a major cultural broker of these norms and “mediating institutions” (Lincoln, Mamiya 1990: 11-15, Barber 2015: 250).

According to the authors, their model allows one to see the dynamism of churches’ institutional response to certain social conditions at a particular time in history. It also helps to explain the plurality of views presented by various researchers, e.g. G. Wilmore’s conclusion that the Black Church is the “most radical” and the “most reactionary” Black institution, or Manning’s Marble political assessment of what has been called “the ambiguity of the Black Church” (Lincoln, Mamiya 1990: 16). It also allows readers to see the changes in the Black Church, which is not presented as a fixed entity.

Interestingly, Lincoln, Mamiya do not totally agree with the previously mentioned Aldon Morris, whose research indicates that the Black Church provided an “ideological framework, through which passive attitudes were transformed into a collective consciousness supportive of collective action” (qtd. in Lincoln, Mamiya 1990: 165). They rather recognize that the “Black Church was not unanimous in its affirmation of solidarity and social activism” (Lincoln, Mamiya 1990: 165). They do think, however, that the majority of the Black clergy was supportive of civil rights, and that “in dialectical fashion”, the Black Church became a beneficiary of the Black consciousness movement (ibid.).

Nevertheless, while Lincoln, Mamiya admit the existence of the dialectic tension between the this-worldly and the other-worldly orientations in the Black Church, they do not accept Gary Marx’s explanation that it was exactly the otherworldliness that prevented some churches and their members from participation in the CRM. They also think that Adolph Reed found the Black Church apolitical, because he accepted a narrow definition of “political”, while the notion of Black Church’s politics is beyond “electoral politics” and “protest politics” – in their view, it is community building and other empowering activities (idem: 199).

According to Lincoln and Mamiya, the lack of involvement on the part of some churches and their members was caused largely by previous disappointments, experience of betrayal, and fear (idem: 212). They think that practical reasons, such as alienation rooted in the distrust of a system that constantly failed and excluded African Americans, prevented them from participation in protests to a much higher extent than the otherworldliness of their churches (idem: 213). The authors specifically stress the exceptions to the otherworldliness thesis. They give the example of the Mason Temple that served as a meeting place during the strike in Memphis and a location of Martin Luther King Jr.’s famous last speech: “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop”, on April 3, 1968 - despite being Pentecostal (of evangelical and otherworldly orientation) (idem: 223).

In fact, in their view, Black churches actually help their members to overcome the African American alienation from electoral politics. What is more, for them otherworldliness does not have to be an ‘opiate’ – it can also be an inspiration. Referring to Genovese, who admitted that religion prevented the total dehumanization of slaves, they emphasize that otherworldly religions contributed to the survival of slaves, which, according to them, was already a political protest itself (idem: 201-202).

Although Lincoln and Mamiya’s dialectical model served as a paradigm shift from the prevailing dichotomous understanding of the Black Church, some

authors stress that the authors “simply stretch various dichotomies into a series of continuums” (Barber 2015: 250). Moreover, in these continuums, they usually situate themselves much more on one side of the opposite spectrums than on the other, remaining strongly attached to the ‘inspiration view’. Therefore, their research is usually classified within this perspective (Corbett, Mitchell-Corbett 1999: 315).

Since their famous research, there have been several studies that are also relevant for the many ideas constituting the ‘inspiration view’. For example, Wilcox and Gomez (1990) suggested that church attendance itself could expose congregants to the liberation themes, mould Black pride and identification, and enhance self-esteem, which in turn could provide the confidence needed for political involvement. Kellstedt and Noll (1990), Wilcox (1991) and Peterson (1992) indicated that African Americans with higher religious and church involvement had higher political participation. However, although the results of these studies leaned more toward the ‘inspiration view’ than toward the ‘opiate view’ of the role of Black religion and Black churches in fostering political involvement, in most of them there was also an indication (much stronger than in Lincoln and Mamiya’s study) that the otherworldly orientation of some theologies can undercut motivation to bring about changes in this world. For example, Wilcox and Gomez (1990) additionally found that (especially older and less-educated) Blacks with higher religious involvement were more likely to be satisfied with the status-quo (all these studies are discussed in Corbett and Mitchell-Corbett 1999: 316-317).

Newer research by Scott T. Fitzgerald and Ryan Spohn (2005), who studied the role of the church in determining protest among Black Americans revealed additional nuances. Some of the most interesting findings were that attending a church that exhibits a politicized church culture increases the likelihood of protest participation only for the respondents who do not have a college degree as well as for those who are not already members of organizations working to improve the status of black Americans (Fitzgerald, Spohn 2005: 1015).

Despite all the above mentioned nuances, until recently the majority of scholarship concentrated on the active role of the Black Church, especially in relation to the CRM. It was not until the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, that some authors stressed the divided nature of the Black Church – also in the civil rights era.

4. The complex nature of the Black Church

More contemporary models of the influence of African American religion usually capture and put more emphasis on the duality inherent in most religious traditions (Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011: 278). For example, in 1999 Fredrick Harris referenced this duality in describing how African American churches produce “oppositional group consciousness”. According to him, churches “provide African Americans with material resources and oppositional dispositions to challenge their marginality”, but at the same time they help their members “to develop positive orientations toward the civic order” (qtd. in Wald, Calhoun-Brown 2011: 278). Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer (2002) also described the complex nature of the Black Church that exhibited an accommodative stance by shielding Blacks from a racist society and simultaneously demonstrated a resistive stance by engaging in broader social change. Kendra H. Barber (2015: 251)

stresses that a very important theory since Lincoln and Mamiya's dialectical argument, is the dialogic model developed by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in 1993. Although it lacks the popularity and widespread adoption, unlike the previous models, it allows for an exploration of how there may be interaction between the polarities within the Black Church.

There has also been a shift in presenting the role of the Black Church during the mythologized civil rights era. Many authors strongly departed from the 'inspiration view' – also in the context of the CRM. They stressed that, although Black preachers were qualified to play an active role in the CRM (and a number of them did), others remained sceptical and unengaged (Raboteau 2001, Harvey 2005, 2011, 2016a, Harris 2001, Best 2006, Marable 2015, Martin 2018). In 2008, Barbara Savage noted that the mobilization of Black churches in the civil rights era mostly concerned those churches that were urban liberal Protestant and dedicated to the Social Gospel. Not only did she stress the divided nature of Black churches but also their long history of non-engagement and, what she called, an "unexpected" mobilization during the CRM (2008: 2). Other scholars also paid more attention to the theological divisions within the Black Church, returning to some observations of the proponents of the 'opiate view'. Raboteau (2001:114) noticed that it was mostly evangelical ministers who disagreed with Martin Luther King's philosophy of social activism, because "they believed that society could only be changed by converting individuals to obey God's commandments, not by mass political agitation". Lerone Martin (2018) analysed the arguments of Elder Michaux, an evangelical preacher who was the most vocal critic of King. According to Baldwin (2003: 15), the interrelationship between worldly and otherworldly concerns provides the best hint to understand the nature and levels of Black Church's social involvement. Generally, in most of the recent analyses, the influence of theological convictions (next to ideological and political ones) has been carefully observed.

One might argue that this could be considered a return to the 'opiate view', but contemporary researches put emphasis (much more than the early 20th-century scholars) on the divided and complicated nature of the Black Church. This was clearly highlighted in the debate initiated by Eddie S. Glaude Jr. in 2010. He provocatively entitled his article for the "Huffington Post" *The Black Church Is Dead*. Later he specified this statement by adding "The Black Church, as we've known it or imagined it, is dead" (2010). He meant that the idea of the Black Church as a "repository for the social and moral conscience of the nation has all but disappeared". He also implied that there was more of the prophetic voice and this-worldly focus in the Black Church of the past than there is today. He was criticized for his statement, despite the fact that he noted that Black churches "have always been complicated spaces" and pointed out that the traditional stories about them – "as necessarily prophetic and progressive institutions - run up against the reality", because "all too often" Black churches and their pastors "have been and continue to be quite conservative". In the general conclusion of the debate, Glaude agreed with Ronald B. Neal (2010), who stated that there was "a forty plus-year-old socially engineered belief" that Black Christianity is "fundamentally progressive and transformative", which is a "deceptive and mythical" view. Interestingly, Neal blamed theologians and academic elites of the post-civil rights era "for shaping and perpetuating a view of the Black Church as socially progressive and liberation oriented".

This debate indicates that contemporary scholars are more and more often ready to agree with Barbara Savage's (2008: 9) statement that "despite common usage, there is no such thing as the 'black church'" and that the term was "a political, intellectual, and theological construction that symbolizes unity and homogeneity while masking the enormous diversity and independence among African American religious institutions and believers". The 'opiate' or the 'inspiration' function of Black religion can therefore be observed independently in various Black churches, as well as in different variants.

5. Conclusion

The above analysis of the selected important literature on the subject proves that the 'opiate view' and the 'inspiration view' dominated in different periods of time. Yet, there were always some scholars who did not follow the general trend and worked on the more nuanced interpretations, testing unpopular models. It also reveals that it is crucial to appreciate the third new phase of the research on Black churches. Researchers of the 21st century, who stress the complex nature of Black churches and point to the difficulties in accepting only one of the conflicting views on the influence of Black religion on African American activism, have contributed greatly to the process, de-mythologizing the Black Church and Black religion, and thus to a better understanding of both phenomena.

It is also important to observe that the focus on the dual nature of religion and on its nuanced influence on social protest that is being stressed by contemporary Black Church scholars reflects a general trend among the sociologists of religion. They assert that the different views on the role of religion offered by the founding fathers of sociology can in fact complement each other. Marxian and Weberian views do not have to be contradictory. On the one hand, the Marxian notion that religion may have ideological implications and may serve to justify the *status quo* and certain interests has been proven in some historical instances. On the other hand, Weber's stress on the revolutionary impact of certain religious ideas, which can question and undermine pre-existing social orders (as it was the case during the CRM era) is somehow complementing this view, by showing that religion (or its specific interpretation) can be used in a social protest against unjust systems (more in: Giddens 2006: 530-582).

One should also remember that Weber (despite emphasizing the motivating role of religion) did agree that some religions may inhibit social change. As such, he considered especially the so called otherworldly oriented religions of the East. Thus the division into this-worldly and otherworldly religions was already present in Max Weber's original argument. He thought, however, that, as a 'salvation religion', "Christianity involves a constant struggle against sin, and hence can stimulate revolt against the existing order of things" (Giddens 2006: 540). But although he considered Christianity (and especially Protestantism) as this-worldly, it turned out that the evangelical branches of Protestant Christianity can actually provide very strong otherworldly interpretations that may inhibit social protest.

Yet, some research suggests that while otherworldliness in Black churches does not predict support for social protest or integrationist-oriented means to racial empowerment, it can still predict support for other forms of empowerment (mostly separationist) (Calhoun-Brown 1998: 427; 435-436). Therefore, it is crucial to remember that, according to a number of contemporary scholars, it is not religion itself, but the interpretation of theology within any religious tradition that

influences the churches' attitudes towards social activism. Different interpretations are possible due to the duality inherent in most of these traditions. A group of researchers of social mobilization theories found out that the way a religious community translates its core teachings into social practices, including social mobilization, depends on the interpretive power of both leaders and believers at the grassroots level (Brown et al. 2009: 1).

This observation is especially important in the discussion concerning the relation between Black churches and the BLM movement. Interestingly, although theological divisions influenced Black churches' initial attitudes toward BLM, with time there was a growing acceptance of the movement, even among some evangelical otherworldly-oriented churches. By the end of 2016, most of the progressive Social Gospel oriented Black clergy, as well as the proponents of Black Liberation Theology declared their full approval of BLM. At the same time, only some evangelical Black churches granted their support. By 2020, however, support or at least partial support became more common also among Black evangelicals. And although some have persisted in their harsh criticism of BLM until today (which also associated with the disagreements on LGBTQ and other progressive issues) (Bomberger 2020), there certainly is a shift in evangelical attitudes towards the protests. This leaves space for new research.

What is also important is that, unlike the CRM activist who accepted the religious leadership of the movement, the leaders of BLM are ready to accept only a supportive role of ministers and churches, and only of those who preach inclusion, justice, liberation, and peace. They also have other forums of mobilization – perhaps more effective than churches - mainly the social media. Therefore, churches must redefine their contemporary role. Christopher A. House (2018: 2) argues that currently even evangelical pastor T.D. Jakes is modelling “a new form of Black church leadership that is supportive of but not central to the BLM movement”. This indicates that scholars will have to search for new models outside of the old schemes in their future research.

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PSEUDONYMITY: VICTORIAN WOMEN AUTHORS' RECOGNITION STRATEGY

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***Abstract:** This essay presents the female authors of the Victorian era and the male pen names they adopted, arguing that it was a strategic move which favoured their acceptance by the general public. This pseudo-identity played a significant role in defining the changing reality, and in contributing to the success of feminism as a social change in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.*

***Keywords:** feminist writing, male pseudonyms, positive distinctiveness, social identity theory, Victorian literature, Victorian women*

1. Introduction

The factors influencing the success of feminist ideology are diverse. The introduction of feminism as a concept during the Victorian era resulted in revolutionary shifts in thinking due to literature. Since women during the Victorian era were not heard and struggled to voice their opinions and concerns, they sought a variety of platforms and domains to find self-expression. Literature was one of the most effective media for a number of reasons. Firstly, womankind's anxious pondering over their feminine essence and role in society could be heard by the intellectual masses. Secondly, art enabled the expression of dangerous topics metaphorically, offering a soothing way of taking on the controversial aspects of the rising struggle as well as helping to prevent social expulsion.

Novels have always been vehicles for social change. Many social theorists, literary critics and researchers have described the relationship between literature and society as symbiotic (Paliță 2012: 2-9). Not only does reality shape fiction, but the latter serves as a trigger to change the readers' minds and create a new social system. According to Rockwell (1974: 112),

the novel... is concerned with social reality in a special sense. It describes and defines norms and values, and presents its characters as actors in the demonstration of them.

In the social climate of the time leading to Victorian feminism, authors were male and they depicted naivety, acceptance, patience, tolerance, subordination, and lack of intellect as inseparable characteristics of a nineteenth-century respectable woman. A notable English author of this era, Charles Dickens, for example, was one of the central figures in British literature encouraging women to act as weak, innocent, and vulnerable persons. Dorrit, for instance, one of his heroines, is described as a “little, quiet, fragile figure ... that her young life has been one of active resignation, goodness, and noble service” (Dickens 1953: 86).

Progressive female authors of the nineteenth century sought to raise social awareness and consciousness about the suffering of voiceless women, by penning

literature with strong female characters that embodied the rejection of the perfect submissive woman. Through writing, imaginary scenarios supporting a woman's importance would serve as a bridge between literature and reality and, ultimately, convince society of the sensibility of the feminist quest. In their novels, female authors attempted to "demonstrate woman's proper sphere and remake woman's image in the face of dominant ideology" (Dutta 1991: 2311-2312).

Novelists like Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, George Sand, and Louisa May Alcott (as there are commonly known in modern days), created fundamentally different, independent, female protagonists, who fought fiercely for their identity, autonomy, rights, and power. This in itself was an act of rebellion against the female standard, as women were not allowed to publish. While male authors were accustomed to publishing for money, prestige, and popularity, this was not possible for female authors, who were forced to publish anonymously or under a male pen name. It is through their progressive literature under these male pen names that Victorian women attained a strategically significant distinctiveness, and women's push for change was adopted by the masses.

Throughout the late 19th century, as Gaye Tuchman and Nina E. Fortin (1984: 73) posit, men edged women out by writing novels extensively even on "female turf" or "empty field" and successfully invaded women's epistemological ground. They further explain that men received far more acceptance than women even on women's issues (idem: 74). This numerical dominance, as they call it, was both in writing and systematic criticism of literature, creating a monopoly in the production of literary discourses.

The observation is taken further by George Eliot, as J. Russell Perkin (1992: 27) notes: men hijacked women's spheres, created generic boundaries and dichotomies and deemed women's literary endeavours as "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists". Through their writing, women could not gain acceptance as much as they did by adopting male pen names. So, concealing their identity and going out in the garb of a man's name came as a compulsive strategy for Victorian women writers in order to be liked by society.

Various studies discuss the pseudonymity of Victorian women and its consequences for the women's literary advancements and acceptance. But a systematic understanding of pseudonymity vis-à-vis the social identity theory, specifically the attainment of positive distinctiveness, had not been in place. The adoption of pseudonyms by female authors can be viewed through the gendered perspective of social identity theory and thus one can understand how Victorian women achieved positive distinctiveness by enshrouding themselves in a masculine identity and working against it. This broadened the delimitations of acceptance boundaries and helped them attain societal transformation. Though this came at the cost of the attainment of a pseudo-ontological status through penning their literatures with male pseudonyms, the teleological repercussions on society were remarkable.

2. Societal pressure, ideal woman, and the junctures of self and social identity in Victorian society and literature

Based on Victorian gender ideology, a woman's identity was defined solely by her roles as wife and mother; she was deprived of any individuality and opportunity to make a personal contribution to the world: this problematization entails the women's challenging journey from restriction towards freedom. She is

not an artist or scientist with personal interests, but a devoted, submissive, unquestioning spouse and mother, whose only contribution is in the form of unconditional love. The ideal Victorian woman is famously depicted in *The Angel in the House* published by Coventry Patmore, a Victorian English poet, who describes his wife as the ideal devoted housewife and therefore worthy of his admiration (Patmore 1885: 151-170). This example of ideal woman stirred many writers, such as Virginia Woolf, who further described the notion of the ideal wife as:

intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed daily. If there was a chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught, she sat in it ... Above all, she was pure. (Woolf 1966: 285)

A Victorian woman was taught that to be the opposite of man, by rejecting values like will, control, and ambition, was a virtue, and this ideology was intensively promoted by both government and the church. Surrendering matters external to the household to the control of the dominating males in her life, including her father, her husband, and God was taught to be the only righteous path to a better self, despite women not being afforded the luxury of defining a sense of self at all. Although many women could find enough courage to oppose social norms, most were reluctant to oppose God's will and religious doctrines, which left them sceptical, and in constant, internal struggle against their own spiritual beliefs.

Domestic dedication was preached as a sign of devotion to family. Cruea (2005: 192-194) states that a woman prioritizing her intellectual quest over domestic chores was labelled a "fallen woman." A perfect Victorian woman had few choices but all of them led to domestic dependency. However, the expression "perfect woman" is not as dangerous as "true woman", a term widely used during that period to describe a woman of the purest virtue, who upholds this value above everything else in her home. Many women could cope with not being perfect and not ever achieving perfection, but few could ever imagine distancing themselves from the truth. According to Cruea (*idem*: 188),

In a rapidly changing world where men were charged with the task of creating and expanding an industrialized civilization from a wilderness, a True Woman was expected to serve as the protectress of religion and civilized society.

Despite being considered the protector and promoter of spiritual upbringing and humble civilization, a Victorian woman was expected to accept her vulnerable state and man's absolute and unquestionable status as protector when it came to worldly threats i.e. threats outside the home (*idem*: 200). The externality would not only refer to the trade of lands, but also communicating with the external world that came in many shapes and forms. A woman was expected to demonstrate interests only in family and household-related affairs. Art and science were spheres for male minds only, while maternity and domesticity were the fields women had to associate themselves with. The opportunities and resources in education for Victorian women were so scarce that many women found self-education to be the only reasonable way to combat academic darkness. Education and intellectual improvement, however, required a flow of thoughts and exchange of ideas, which was limited for Victorian women for several reasons. One reason was that women who yearned for mental stimulation and wanted to share intellectual interests with

their fellow women often failed to find the same desire and goals in these women, as many had either given up the struggle to rise above traditional conventions, or had never manifested a wish to focus on aspects other than household chores and being supportive wives. Victorian women also failed to find a common ground with men, since the latter were either too sceptical to ever allocate time to listen to a woman and take her words and ideas seriously, or cultural constraints prevented both from socializing. Particularly young ladies were not allowed to have long conversations with other young men, or such an interaction was strictly supervised, and rule-breaking would often mean earning oneself a bad reputation. According to Davidoff (1973: 24),

An unmarried woman under thirty could not go anywhere or be in a room even in her own house with an unrelated man unless accompanied by a married gentlewoman or a servant.

For a Victorian woman, a bad reputation meant decreased chances of marriage, which worsened women's cultural and intellectual survival.

2.1. The New Woman, the “Woman Question”, and feminism

The term “feminism” stems from the French word “féminisme”, introduced in 1808 by an audacious French thinker named Charles Fourier (Offen 1988: 45). The concept comprises social, economic, cultural, and political aspects, when it comes to achieving and maintaining equal rights for women and men. While the notion of feminism emerged during the Victorian era – characterized by the Industrial Revolution, and the rebellion of women in England against gender imbalance and oppression in the mid-1850s – society used the term frequently and boldly only after the 1970s (Caine 1992: 128-129). According to Botting (2016: 70-82) women during the Victorian era were inspired by a few books written during the late 18th century, such as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, published in 1792. Since publishing works as a woman was not allowed at the time, Wollstonecraft was forced to publish her first book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, anonymously. It was well-received by the public and her publisher allowed her to publish *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* under her own name, with Wollstonecraft eventually earning the reputation of a revolutionary figure in the early feminist days (idem: 80-97). This era was also responsible for the works of Jane Austen, published anonymously or with the specification *By a Lady*. According to Anderson (2018: 145-146) she used her fiction to effectively deconstruct reality by muting the masculine-dominant voice and magnifying female authority. In *Pride and Prejudice*, published in 1813, Elizabeth, the heroine of the novel, refuses to marry for the sake of financial support and material safety. Elizabeth's quick wit, sharp tongue and social skills are atypical of that of a traditional woman of the time, and, at the beginning, she shows little patience and tolerance for male arrogance and self-entitlement. She does not shy away from taming the arrogant male protagonist, who eventually appreciates her feminine strength and falls madly in love with her. As the hero overcomes his pride and the heroine overcomes her prejudice, Victorian readers learn that a successful relationship requires mutual compromise and sacrifice, not only by women but also by men (Anderson 2018: 126-150).

During this time in Britain, the “Woman Question,” an intellectual debate used by theorists for woman-focused social change that started in the 1400s, gained much momentum as an ideological value during the late Victorian period (Botting 2016: 70-82). Wollstonecraft was a key promoter of the “Woman Question”. The concept took many forms and was correlated with a number of notions, such as “feminism” throughout the nineteenth century, and the “New woman” at the end of that century. The “*New woman*” was proposed by Sarah Grand, an Irish feminist writer, who introduced the concept in her 1894 essay *The New Aspect of the Woman Question*. According to Liggins (2007: 218-220), the “New woman” refused to play the traditional roles of a woman and prioritized her independence and career-related issues and achievements over marriage and family values.

In literature, the “New Woman” is educated, intellectual, logical, critical, sexual, and conscious of her rights. She is neither a puppet nor a helpless victim of a despotically patriarchal society.

While the “Woman Question” debated the Victorian core values and principles with regard to the fundamental roles of Western women in developed and industrialized societies, literature published by female authors of the time were able to present the “New Woman” through writing. These concepts ultimately led to the victory of philosophy of feminism in the literary context.

2.2. Male pseudonyms, female protagonists and literature

Female authors had to cope with the reality of not being taken seriously or of being viewed sceptically in the Victorian era. The daily obstacles and challenges they faced included their diverse domestic responsibilities that were expected to be taken on by them: taking care of the family and running the household (Curelar 2016: 142-149). It was only after this was accomplished each day that a female writer could face challenges such as seeking inspiration. Then, she had to constantly strive to have her work published and considered consequential. Women were met with perpetual rejection by editors and publishers whose conventional world was strictly male-dominated. As such, many female authors chose to adopt male pen names in order to get published and have the chance of a more widespread readership.

The Brontë sisters: Charlotte, Emily, and Anne, all used male pen names with the same last name, which allowed them to publish their very progressive novels with themes not typically attributed to a woman’s scope. Charlotte Brontë adopted the name “Currer Bell” as her male pseudonym and wrote novels with heroines who represented “the vision of an oppressed... female figure trapped in the structures of a patriarchal society” (Dutta 1991: 2313-2316). Her novel *Jane Eyre* aimed to show that a woman may have an adventurous spirit, a sensitive mind, and vital power, while still insisting on her liberty. While Victorian society expected women to exchange their feminine freedom for the security offered by men, the protagonist Eyre refuses to surrender to the elite that trades principles and values. According to Moers (1972: 18), Brontë uses Eyre to display “resentment toward a society that has scorned her while maintaining a detachment toward humanity as a whole.”

Emily Brontë, published her masterpiece *Wuthering Heights* under her chosen male pen name “Ellis Bell”. The novel discloses a striking contrast between two female characters. Readers find themselves attracted to headstrong, wild, rebellious, and straightforward Catherine, who is the antithesis of Isabella:

a traditional, kind-hearted, and submissive woman. By rebelling against her father and husband, Catherine “resists the authority of a patriarchal institution and to surpass it to realize her own individual validation” (Zhao 2011: 27). She displays an unquenchable sexual desire, which is not on par with her husband’s passive nature. Such desire is presented as a danger in the novel, ultimately resulting in Catherine’s death. Thus, in *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë reverses the accepted characteristics of gender, giving readers an opportunity to witness an atypical Victorian tragedy, in which a woman, conscious of her sexuality, is not a winner.

The third sister in the Brontë literary family, Anne Brontë, adopted the pen name “Acton Bell” when publishing *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. While not as well-known as her sisters, her works contributed to the feminist landscape by creating a female lead who leaves her abusive, alcoholic husband and eventually falls in love with a good-natured, sensitive man, depicting the husband as an antagonist and one to be feared, not tolerated.

George Eliot is undoubtedly a better-known name than Mary Ann Evans in the literary world. It was her pen name that gave much desired creative freedom to Evans. Victorian women were forced to view their home as a refuge from the ‘dangerous’ external world, even if it implied coexistence with an unloving spouse. However, in Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, the female protagonist Helen runs away from her abusive, alcoholic, and unfaithful husband in order to raise her son in a normative environment. While Eliot challenged the conventional role for women by writing and publishing a novel, feminist critics have criticized Eliot’s female characters, accusing her of not sharing this same freedom from convention with her female protagonists. As stated by Zelda Austen (1976: 551), “the particular anger against George Eliot rises from her failure to allow this freedom for her heroines even though she achieved it for herself.”

While these examples display a strong out-pouring of feminist literature in Victorian England, this was not the only country with progressive female authors using male pen names to voice the conceptualizations of the Woman Question. In France, Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin created strong female protagonists under the now-famous pen name “George Sand”. Her early works featured unhappily married women who went outside their marriage to find love, and she continued to write progressive novels throughout her life, much in parallel with the progressive way she lived her own life (Buhle 1998: 180-181).

In the United States of America, Louisa May Alcott, known under her male pen name A. M. Barnard, said: “I like to help women help themselves, as that is, in my opinion, the best way to settle the Woman Question. Whatever we can do and do well we have a right to, and I don't think anyone will deny us” (Lewis 2019: 1). This is also the manner in which she portrayed all the characters in her book *Little Women*. The family consists of a mainly absent father and male figures, which does not prevent the women with strong self-reliance from finding happiness. According to Elbert (1987: 76), Alcott “began to realize that women who lacked a voice in community government were powerless to extend their spheres of activity beyond the household.”

3. Pseudonymity and the social identity theory

The use of male pen names by Victorian women authors can be viewed in tandem with social identity theory (SIT) in a limited and gendered scope of their sociological presentation.

Trepte (2006: 256) states that SIT assumes that one part of the self [of an individual] is defined by our belonging to social groups". People always differentiate other people and things by grouping them into neat definable categories. They tend to register themselves in one group and display a shared identity with the rest of the members of that group. According to the social identity theory, the people in the opposite group have to be clearly demarcated, so that the delineation can fuel their stable self-esteem (idem). The authors further explain:

To enhance their self-esteem, people want to develop a positive social identity [...] SIT assumes that we show all kinds of "group" behaviour, such as solidarity, within our groups and discrimination against out-groups as a part of social identity processes [...]

Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg (1998: 25) suggest that the 'low-status' groups (Victorian women) can adopt social creativity strategies in order to improve their self-image through the positive social identity of their members. Victorian women authors too resorted to the strategy of penning literature under male pseudonyms as such a social creativity strategy. According to Tajfel and Turner categorization (qtd. in Abrams, Hogg 1998: 2), Victorian women authors fall under the "in-group" category, while all males circumscribing the authors, belong to the "out-group" category. In theory, the resistance of the in-group against the out-group generally entails demarcating the out-group with classificatory tropes (here "male literature" and "lady fiction") against all odds. But since the male dominant ideology had perpetrated ascendancy through the same modus operandi for hundreds of years, Victorian women authors had to come up with a different strategy: penning literature under a male pseudonym, in order to overcome the problem of rejection by society.

3.1. Attainment of positive distinctiveness through pseudonymity as strategically pertinent to new women's identity

Deeply concerned with and interested in women's rights, Virginia Woolf can be taken as one of the prominent writers who developed and boosted the ideas of female identity and "new woman." By using stream-of-consciousness as a new literary device, Woolf put a voice to women's intellectual explorations. However, though British society had become accustomed to female writers adopting male identity, it was not yet ready to welcome *Orlando*, a novel where the book's namesake, transforms himself into Lady Orlando. This bold literary move stirred controversy. According to Hastings (2008: 31),

Woolf slowly acclimates her reader to the notion of sex and gender being disengaged from each other and ultimately replaced with an androgynous personhood that comfortably pulls from all realms of personal attributes.

The infusion of works by early writers publishing under male pen names and that by subsequent writers ensured a gradual, safe, and strategic transformation of the public psyche, thus creating a higher degree of acceptance in the society. The publication of progressive literature by feminist authors under male pen names enabled them to attain positive distinctiveness through temporary abandonment of self-identity, and allowed the evolution of the "New Woman" to become more

normalized through public acquiescence. The acceptance gradually eradicated the long-held gender-dichotomized literary categories and this allowed female authors in the late nineteenth century to publish works in their own name, defending the concept of “New Woman,” ultimately leading to the development of Modernist literature.

4. Conclusion

Literature played a central role in the revolutionary process of feminist triumph. During a time when women were oppressed not only by the societal norms favouring patriarchy, but also by the church dictating inner ethical values, with neither a social life as an active doer, nor an internal existence as a passive-yet-free thinker and questioner, female feminist authors fought for Victorian feminism ideals with the help of male pen names that allowed them to attain positive self-distinctiveness in order to have their ideas published and then taken seriously by the masses. Authors like Austen, Wollstonecraft, the Brontë sisters, Eliot, Sand, and Alcott used their pen to propagate feminine power and rights, introducing strong-minded, independent, female characters to the Victorian public, and inspiring women to rethink traditional, limiting beliefs about how a woman should behave and exist in society. Their novels were powerful means of publicizing existing controversial problems in Victorian society, and of providing the female community with the most fundamental platform that would enable safe self-expression, and would lead to the emergence of the New Woman, who was no longer afraid to voice her worldview.

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*THE BEAUTY OF MEDUSA –
PARADOXES OF CULTURE*

KEN LOACH'S FAIR SHARE OF HOME AND FAMILY ISSUES FROM *CATHY COME HOME* AND *THE ANGELS' SHARE* TO *SORRY, WE MISSED YOU*

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Abstract: 84-year old Ken Loach is known today as one of the best British social realist film directors. In this essay, I shall try to prove that there is some stubborn consistency in his oeuvre, in the representation of the disenfranchised and basic social issues (like health, home and family) and their emotional strain on families as well as in the criticism of the Establishment for unemployment, poverty, sickness or addictions, from *Cathy Come Home* (1966) to his last film, *Sorry, we missed you* (2019). In the past few years, Ken Loach seems to have lost the optimism still present in *The Angels' Share* (2012).

Keywords: family, home, hope, Ken Loach, representation, social realism

1. Introduction

Ken Loach was born in Nuneaton, England in 1936. After studying law at Oxford where he was president of the Dramatic Society, he worked in theatre and then in 1963 moved into television with the BBC (Shail 2002: 137). Loach, who is known today as one of the best British social realist film directors, has sustained a commitment to representing the disenfranchised and exploring controversial social, historical and political issues all through his career (Stollery 2001: 202). According to the IMDb (Internet Movie Database), Loach has never “succumbed to the siren call of Hollywood” and it is impossible to imagine his particular brand of British socialist realism translating well to that context.

While studying law at St. Peter's College, Oxford, partly because of his working-class parents' expectations, Loach was more interested in history, art and theatre, performing with a touring repertory company (Cooke 2005: 64). This led to television, where in alliance with producer Tony Garnett he produced a series of docudramas, most notably *Cathy Come Home* (1966), whose impact was so massive that it led directly to a change in the homeless laws (Ryan – Porton 1998: 22).

Loach is famous for location shooting and working with unknown, semi-, or nonprofessional actors. He uses various techniques to generate remarkably ‘authentic’ performances (Ryan, Porton 1998: 23). These include casting people with similar life experiences to their characters, working in a range of dialects and languages, and capturing genuine surprise by revealing only part of the script to actors as shooting progresses (Hayward 2004: 6). This realist project also involves experiments with different narrative forms in order to dramatise conflicting political discourses and examine the typical consequences for groups and individuals of complex social determinants (Stollery 2001: 202).

In his films, Loach focuses on the impact of the growing financial and social divide and its emotional strain on families. Ken Loach's themes seemingly focus on very simple, every day issues like home and family, which he manages against social pressures from unemployment, low wages, poverty, homelessness, lack of health insurance or a social net, drug, alcohol or other addictions, crime and punishment.

As, according to Samantha Lay (2002: 67), social problem films are more preoccupied with content issues than with the film style, more with the message than the medium, my essay focuses mostly on the message of the Loach films. It will discuss the representation of British working class home and family issues in Loach's films and will examine how far the situation has (or has not) changed since the mid 1960s (since *Cathy Come Home*) to 2019 (*Sorry, we missed you*), when and how it affected Loach's view and hope for a better future. Accordingly, this essay excludes highlighting or analysing films set outside Great Britain, addressing migration and racial issues, or foreign and international affairs, an equally important concern for Loach and his scriptwriters in *Fatherland* (1986), *Hidden Agenda* (1990), *Land and Freedom* (1995), *Carla's Song* (1996) *Bread and Roses* (2000), *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004), *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006), *A Free World* (2009), *Route Irish* (2010) and *Jimmy's Hall* (2014).

2. "Home, Sweet Home" from *Cathy Come Home* (1966) to *The Angels' Share* (2012)

Loach started his career with directing films for the BBC television Wednesday Play series in 1964 (Cooke 2005: 66). Acclaim for Wednesday Plays and *Cathy Come Home* (1966) opened the door for Loach to feature films (Mello 2009: 176). During his theatrical and television training, Loach understood the importance of writers, and this resulted in his collaboration with various writer talents including Jim Allen, Nell Dunn and Trevor Griffiths and most recently with Paul Laverty (Shail 2002: 138). The British Kitchen Sink and New Wave were to be influential in television drama and film in the coming decades. They left a legacy which was kept alive by TV in the 1960s and 70s, re-emerging in some films produced by Channel 4 in the 1980s and 1990s (Hallam and Marshment 2000: 51).

After the success of *Cathy Come Home*, watched by about 12 million people, roughly a quarter of the British population at the time, the feature debut of Loach was *Poor Cow* (1967) (Shail 2002: 138). *Poor Cow* followed a single mum's housing and family struggles on the fringes of London. Carol White portrays a young working-class woman in the world of the 1960s permissive attitudes and economic necessity. According to Jacob Leigh (2002: 48), it bristles with stylistic eclecticism and Brechtian playfulness, combining location shooting, intertitles, handheld camera for a bungled robbery, and protagonist Joy's voice-over, revealed at the end as part of a documentary-style interview.

Kes (1969), more stylistically consistent than *Poor Cow*, has proved to be one the finest films in Loach's oeuvre over time. The central tension of *Kes* is between imagination and social constraint. Billy, the protagonist of *Kes*, a lonely working class boy, finds happiness and liberation through discovering and training a kestrel, *Kes*. According to Stollery (2001: 203), Chris Menges' cinematography in the semi-rural setting of *Kes* employs diffuse lighting rather than highlighting particular characters; slightly distanced camera placement and simple panning

movements allow actors relative freedom of movement, recalling François Truffaut's films and Tony Richardson's *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962).

Kes may be the finest, however *Family Life* (1971) may be the most challenging film of Loach's early period. It extends aspects of *Kes*' observational style into a dissection of power and authority (Leigh 2002: 118). *Family Life*, influenced by countercultural psychiatrist R. D. Laing's theories, tells the story of Janice, an unemployed nineteen-year-old, living at home with her parents. While her younger sister, Barbara is married and upwardly mobile, the protagonist Janice is a disappointment to her parents, and their well-intentioned criticisms are a feature of her family life. When she falls pregnant, the subsequent 'voluntary' abortion precipitates her mental decline, and, instead of finding a job and financial and social independence, she is stuck with her family and, with their help, enters the orbit of institutional psychiatry (Leigh 2002: 119).

The drama of *Family Life* arises from competing discourses: the legacy of 1960s permissiveness, consequent tensions within a respectable, sexually conservative working-class family, and debates between liberals and conservative psychiatrists (Stollery 2001: 203). The film develops a systematic critical analysis of the formation and possible treatment of the illness. Creswell and Karimova (2017: 20) state that Loach presents what Erving Goffman (1961) called "the moral career of the mental patient" in both positive and negative ways. The message of *Family Life*, according to Papadopoulos (1999: 27), is basically that, since life in our society is repressive and exploiting, mental illness is one more form of protest which deserves our sympathy and solidarity. The psychiatric treatment of mental illnesses is also seen as a part of the brainwashing and mind-dulling apparatus of modern capitalism

Family Life was the least commercially successful and the most controversial of Loach's early films (Creswell, Karimova 2017: 20). These films and the depressed state of 1970s British film production prevented Loach from making another feature for nearly a decade. He therefore returned to television drama with the four part series, symbolically titled *Days of Hope* (1975), exploring the years leading to the 1926 General Strike (Hayward 2004: 133). Loach attempted to intervene directly into the ongoing political struggles through television documentaries on trade unions and the 1984-85 miners' strike, but nervous broadcasters blocked or delayed their transmission (Leigh 2004: 122). In the 1970s and 1980s, Loach's films were poorly distributed and his TV work in some cases were never broadcast (Leigh 2004: 122). The fourteen years of Tory rule had been disastrous for the British film industry, which no longer existed as something separate from television. Still, according to Robert Murphy (1992), a number of remarkable films emerged "out of the debris".

Rather than looking back with nostalgia to the golden age before Mrs Thatcher came to power, Loach "mellowed" into a humanist solidarity with the victims of what they saw as an increasingly unjust society (Murphy 1992). Loach made two low-budget feature films in the eighties – *Looks and Smiles* (1981) and *Fatherland* (1986) – but spent more of his time and energy directing television documentaries, not all of which (his series on trade union leadership, for example) were actually shown (Hayward 2004: 158). In *Looks and Smiles*, young adult Mick is on the dole, but has a supportive family, unlike his girlfriend Caren, whose parents have split up. Caren relies on Mick's love alone, who should thus choose between poverty with Caren or an army career on his best friend's recommendation.

It is interesting to see that, while earlier the problem the protagonist faces is the near certainty of a working life down the pit, in Thatcher's Britain the question is whether he will find a job at all.

In the 1990s, Loach made a spectacular comeback with a series of award-winning films firmly establishing him in the pantheon of great European directors. His films have always been more popular in mainland Europe than in his native country or the US (Leigh 2004: 32). *Hidden Agenda* (1990) won the Special Jury Prize at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival, *Riff-Raff* (1991) won the Felix award for Best European Film of 1992, while *Raining Stones* (1993) won the Cannes Special Jury Prize for 1993 (IMDb).

While in the 1990s the British film industry produced a number of blockbuster heritage films (like *Elizabeth*, 1998, dir. Shekhar Kapur) and urban fairy tales (Murphy 1990: 357-358), like *Four weddings and a Funeral* (1994, director Mike Newell) to provide audiences with escapism through cultural heritage and romance, Loach kept directing films including *Riff-Raff*, *Raining Stones*, *Ladybird*, *Ladybird* and *My Name is Joe* highlighting basic social problems, like the right for a decent home, family and living, a fresh start, and the growing social gap as the legacy of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative rule (1979-1990). In the 1990s, Loach was lucky to find sympathetic producers Sally Hibbin and Rebecca O'Brien, and consolidated a regular production team including designer Martin Johnson, cinematographer Barry Ackroyd, and editor Jonathon Morris (Stollery 2001: 203). The appeal of these films by Loach in the 1990s partly derives from blending social and political concerns with comic and romantic plotlines and using established actors, like Peter Mullan.

Riff-Raff (1991), originally with the working title *The Estate*, the story of Stevie, a construction worker, and his girlfriend, an unemployed pop singer, serves to show the living conditions of the British working class, though, as the title implies, these are not the strongly unionised, articulate, organised workers like in *The Big Flame* (1969) and *The Rank and File* (1971). (IMDb) Hayward (2004: 215) argues that *Riff-Raff* shows the underclass, casual labourers working in unsafe conditions, hired and fired, and Loach addresses here the theme of the need to fight back, not to be destroyed by the system.

David Harvey (1989: 230) emphasizes the role of the environment in constructing forms of consciousness that facilitate the reproduction of social relations produced by capitalism. In Ricardo Andrés Guzmán's (2012: 107) interpretation, the built environment is itself a cultural product into which are inscribed the various social and economic relations constitutive of it. Loach's next film, *Raining Stones* (1993), explores the effect of poverty on the family in comic mode. Unemployed Mancunian protagonist Bob's intention to buy his daughter a Communion dress propels him through poorly paid casual work, petty crime, and indebtedness to a brutal loan shark (Hayward 2004: 216). The observational style locates these experiences as everyday social processes, but humour and narrative surprises arise from individual, spontaneous reactions rather than collective, organised acts of resistance (IMDb).

Loach's next film, *Ladybird*, *Ladybird* (1994) is based upon the true story of Maggie, whose children are repeatedly taken into care by social services. The film is about Maggie's fight to keep her family together despite social pressures. Hayward (2004: 216) claims that Crissy Rock's compelling performance in close and medium shots brings us nearer to the action than in most of Loach's films. According to Stollery (2001: 204), extensive flashbacks outline Maggie's personal history of abuse, institutional regulation, and incredible endurance.

Loach returns to working-class Glasgow in *My Name is Joe* (1998) bringing together unemployed, recovering alcoholic Joe, and health visitor Sarah. According to George McKnight (1997: 84), the focus on Sarah's work enables a more nuanced representation of social services than in *Ladybird, Ladybird*. The predetermined deterioration of their relationship arises from Joe's lack of options in an environment governed by a black economy of drugs and debts. Joe's loyalty to two young drug users undermines his attempts to improve his own life (IMDb).

We might claim that the common denominator in the above films and one of the strongest mission statements of Loach is that everyone has the right for a home and a family. These are preconditions of life (mental and physical health) and love. Consequently, this essay focuses on the continuity and consistency with which Loach fights for these basic human rights. One of the key concerns in his films is to highlight the unkept promise of the post-war British Establishment to provide affordable homes for the working class, where working young people might move away from their parents, children could be decently raised, so as not to be taken into custody by the social services either in the 1960s (*Cathy Come Home*), or 30 years later, in the 1990s (*Ladybird, Ladybird*).

The decline of the heavy industries, therefore job losses, poverty and debt coupled with the lack of adequate welfare measures resulted in the gradual post war decline of the working class and it had a deep impact on working class families. Rising property prices made the majority of British town accommodations unaffordable even for families where both men and women were at work; when children were born, the family met a number of difficulties – from losing the mother as a breadwinner for several years, to being directly evicted from lodgings by hostile owners, like in *Cathy Come Home*. In 1991, in *Riff Raff*, Loach addresses the issue of building homes and finding a home and love, while in 1992, in *Raining Stone*, the focus is on poverty's effect on children in a family. In 1998, in *My Name is Joe*, both the protagonist Joe and his younger friends are unemployed and either alcohol or drugs ruin them and their families.

3. Shifts in Tone in Ken Loach's Films: from *The Angels's Share* (2012) to *Sorry, We Missed You* (2019)

55 years after the end of World War II, in the early 21st century Loach still needed to address family and housing problems. In *Sweet Sixteen* (2002) Liam tries but fails to get a real home for his imprisoned Mum, soon to be set free. Liam wants to get his mother back into the family by detaching her from her drug-addict and trafficking boyfriend, and also to reunite his Mum with his disillusioned, young, single-mum sister. The paradox is that Liam raises money for their new home by selling drugs (Hayward 2004: 255). Similarly to Robbie in *The Angels' Share* (2012), Liam uses his only option, that of selling drugs illegally in order to achieve his goal, but while Liam fails, the story of Robbie has a fairly happy (but also open) ending.

In *Looking for Eric* (2009), the protagonist, Eric, the postman, who after his second wife's death cares for his troublesome stepsons, is lonely and understood only by his friends and his football idol, Eric Cantona, with whom he starts an imagined dialogue to improve his life and get back his first wife. *The Angels' Share* juvenile delinquent protagonist, Robbie, wants to get a chance, a fresh start and a new home for his new family with Leone and their newborn son, instead of going to prison or sofa-hopping at friends' places. At the same time, in *I, Daniel*

Blake (2016), neither Daniel's most basic health needs, nor the feeding of unemployed Katie and her child are met by society, while in the last film directed by Loach, *Sorry, we missed you* (2019), the protagonist Ricky Turner and his wife work day and night to support themselves and their two children. Ricky finally enters the promising, but in reality highly exploitative gig economy, with idealistic expectations to save up for their own home, which they had lost in the 2008 crisis.

We can clearly observe shifts in tone in the Loach films in the last decade. We can see some signs of hope in both *Looking for Eric* (2009), where Eric the postman receives some external help both from his friends and Cantona, and in *The Angels' Share* (2012), where Robbie gets help from Harry and the "angels". In 2013, ageing Loach shows some signs of hope by highlighting the value of friends and community. Hope is combined with retrospection and nostalgia in *The Spirit of '45* (2013), a documentary film, which sets an example of how the spirit of unity, which buoyed Britain during the war years, carried through to create a vision of a fairer, united society (IMDb).

In the past five years, however, Loach shows more anger and disillusionment than hope in his films. In *I, Daniel Blake* (2016), the protagonist, Daniel, a 59-year-old carpenter, after having suffered a heart-attack, must fight the bureaucratic forces of the system in order to receive Employment and Support Allowance to survive. In his troubles, Daniel finds a new friend, Katie, a single mum, who literally fights poverty and humiliation in food banks to feed herself and her child (IMDb). In his last film, *Sorry We Missed You* (2019), Loach seems to have lost hope completely: Ricky is trapped in the vicious circle of the modern-day gig economy form of labour exploitation, of debts and humiliations, and also fails as a husband and a father (IMDb).

How does *The Angels' Share* in 2012 represent then the last ray of hope? Mainly by portraying a new couple (Robbie and Leone) overcoming their social differences for the sake of their love and newborn son. To achieve this despite poverty (when their son is born they don't have a place to stay until they get one from Leone's relative) and Leone's father's hostility, they need to be supported by friends, find mentors like Harry to provide a social net and community, and to learn new skills, like whisky tasting. In addition, new institutions run by social workers and psychologists like *Talk after serious crime* might be useful to help both the victim's family and Robbie and Leone to turn a new leaf by sincere remorse, apology, and taking responsibility. The institution of community payback might also help to give Robbie a chance instead of imprisonment. It might look morally dubious that Robbie and his pals steal whisky from the rich, redistributing wealth as a post-modern Robin Hood, but again no legal alternative is left.

This film raises the question whether there is a new chance for Robbie and Leone, despite the deep social divide reflected in the son's namegiving: the father-in-law wants his own name, Vincent, to be inherited by his grandson, according to tradition, while Robbie wants his son's name to be Luke (a Biblical name), to reflect a new beginning. Robbie, who has just avoided prison and sofa-hopping, finally gets a decent job and a home with his new family from "the angels". While Joe in *My name is Joe* in 1998 cannot break out of his working class environment and vicious circle of alcohol and drugs and cannot have a peaceful relationship with Sarah, whom Joe cannot but fail, Robbie can turn over a new leaf, with external help and "with the angels' share".

According to one of the best-known film critics, Roger Ebert (2012), Loach's realism always carries a distinct sense of humor, volatility and in this hyper-

capitalist new century, a socialist passion for The People. In his review on *The Angels' Share*, Ebert praises Ken Loach, then aged 76 (in 2012), the most down-to-earth of kitchen-sink realists, for his playful, celebratory mood, offering an affectionate, grandfatherly view of jobless young people struggling to get by. Ebert (ibid.) claims that

it's a thrill watching 20-something Robbie operate smoothly among middle-aged, upper crust whisky connoisseurs as his planned heist morphs into a grand swindle. He's a quick study, poring over guidebooks when alone. This little guy, Robbie, whose potential father-in-law calls him a "waste of space", is as much of a man as the burly, seasoned whiskey merchants he dupes and does business with.

4. Conclusion

Hill (1997: 165) quotes Loach stating in the documentary *Carry on Ken* that

politics determines how you photograph people. For example, if you put a wide-angle lens on and shine a light on somebody, right flat on their face and shoot them close up, you turn them into an object, which seems to me quite a right-wing thing to do. If you put on a tighter lens and sit further back, and light them in a friendly way, you identify with them. You share their feelings.

This is what we can see in *The Angels' Share*. Peter Bradshaw in *The Guardian* (2012, May 31) also agrees that *The Angels' Share* is a warm, funny and good-natured film, it is an unfashionably uncynical and unironic kind of comedy. Bradshaw calls *The Angels' Share* a companion piece to Loach's *Sweet Sixteen* (2002) or even his early classic *Kes* (1969) and argues that it is Loach's most relaxed and successful film. Loach is intrigued that some whisky evaporates in the cask: the so-called "angels' share". In *The Angels' Share*, Loach also highlights class divide, among others things, by pointing out the difference between drinking and tasting.

In the film, whisky works as a metaphor at several levels, as metaphors, according to Hill (2011: 128), represent the figurative means for conveying contradiction, "insofar as its modus operandi is the juxtaposition of logically incompatible elements into a newly constituted symbol or sign". Whisky is not even known by the working class, it is beyond their reach, still the angels give them a two percent share, which is still enough for Robbie and his friends to start a new life and to thank Harry for his good will.

Comparing *The Angels' Share* with *Kes* (1969), Bradshaw (2012) argues that there seems to be some progress, according to the Ken Loach films. In 1969, in *Kes*, there seemed to be no way out for Billy. However, though *The Angels' Share* is under no illusions about long-term youth unemployment in 2012, it still finds some light. Bradshaw (ibid.) also wonders if Loach may not be so optimistic but may only be experimenting with a lighter way of addressing the old age social issue. Robbie and his mates are no angels, still the film finds a way of giving them something that real life can't or won't: a chance. The lead song is "I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)" by The Proclaimers' duo from their 1988 album to symbolise "Live 8: The Long Walk to Justice", when an estimated three billion people came together in the fight against extreme poverty on 2 July 2005.

In his *The New York Times* film review (11 April 2013), film critic Stephen Holden is sceptical about the hope and escape offered in *The Angels' Share*; he

writes that the movie, with a screenplay by Loach's longtime collaborator Paul Laverty, "*imagines* (italics mine) that possession of a talented nose for those scents could be a key to escaping Glasgow's violent underclass". The word "imagine" might reflect Holden's skepticism and be closer to reality.

Papadopoulos (1999: 27) called Loach a radical film-maker whose themes express his uncompromising political stand against the capitalist system and the reformist 'Left'. It is beyond doubt that Loach has been a clear, unflinching voice in British cinema. His films address concerns of ordinary people struggling within an iniquitous economic system in a manner which is engaging and full of empathy. Naturalistic observation adds a raw power to his political cinema drawing the viewer in. In Loach's filmmaking the personal truly is the political (Shail 2002: 139).

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SILENT MEDUSA?

EN-GENDERING KNOWLEDGE IN THE WEST: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: *This paper uses a recent retelling of the Medusa myth, Proper Job Theatre Company’s 2017 stage play Medusa (text Helen Mort; director James Beale), in order to broach the epistemic condition of western knowledge about women, garnered mostly from male-authored sources. Drawing on feminist theory by Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Michèle Le Doeuff and Teresa de Lauretis, I examine one instance of the en-gendering of the silence–speech continuum in western culture, alongside strategies of mis/representation and/or obliteration of agency, visible as well as invisible (both the strategies and the agency). The case of Medusa suggests how patriarchy has imag(in)ed women’s voices and constructed their self-image (alongside their physical image). One crucial implication of such other-construal is knowledge – knowledge of self, of the other, and of the world, a triad investigated by Sandra Jovchelovitch (2007) – and thus the epistemic scaffold of western thinking.*

Keywords: *epistemic en-gendering, gaze, Greek mythology, Medusa, Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Proper Job Theatre Company’s Medusa*

1. Introduction

“She was beautiful”, Poseidon utters in slow cadences. “Beautiful” cues precipitate typewriting (in the trial proceedings), which continues throughout the next line: “In real life I don’t talk to women much...”. The disclaimer sounds from another world both acoustically (suave voice) and argumentatively (non sequitur). A girl’s laughing-sobbing voice intrudes between the former and the next, overlapping, lines: “A...” – “Nobody watches what...” – “He can’t see...”. Male and female voices irrupt from nowhere and dissolve into each other, challenging audibility and intelligibility:

POSEIDON. You know...

MAN. I give up...

POSEIDON. ...in real life...

POSEIDON. (*Electronically-enhanced voice*) She...

POSEIDON. ...I don’t...

POSEIDON. (*Electronically-enhanced voice*) ... was...

POSEIDON. ...talk to women much...

POSEIDON. ...her hands down the side...

MEDUSA. (*Faint voice, covered by male voices, growing gradually louder to cover everyone else’s.*) ...once he was there... “Don’t be startled...” (*Faint unintelligible male voices.*) ...saying: “What are you doing here so late?” He tells me not to look at him: “Don’t look at me!” (*Male echo: “Don’t look at me!”*) I can’t look because he’s holding the back of my hair... Once a finger down my jawline, very gently, he says that again... (*Male echo: “Don’t look at me!”*) “Don’t look at me!” That’s the end of it. (*A loud screeching noise camouflages a girl’s terrified scream.*) But it isn’t the end. (*Medusa 2017, 1:26-minute trailer, 00:13-00:59*)

Thus *sounds* the 1:26-minute trailer for the northern England tour, in the autumn of 2017, of *Medusa*. A stage play produced by Proper Job Theatre Company, Huddersfield (henceforth PJTC), in partnership with Square Chapel Centre for the Arts, Halifax, West Yorkshire, *Medusa* is the second part in PJTC's *Monster Trilogy*. Title, trilogy, and company name are the trailer's only production metadata.

Quite appositely, considering the ancient myth's concern with lethal gaze, eye-hurting light effects flicker on the tour trailer's black screen. Images of the Medusa head – the *gorgoneion* – and the ominous typing “come close”/“come closer” or “don't look at me” flash on and off against recurrent screeching, fizzing and other noises that hurt the ear. Notwithstanding, the *Medusa* trailer capitalises on aurality to the detriment of visuality. Interspersed with inarticulate sounds and loud sound effects, its interweaving narrative threads are never assigned visually to the characters. Thus, the tour trailer challenges its viewers, on *watching voices* that narrate vague bits and pieces, to tease out, painstakingly, whom they belong to and what they are talking about – to make sense of the story.

Character name assignment in my (at times possibly inaccurate) transcript of the 1:26-minute trailer is retrospective and intertextual. All I know about PJTC's *Medusa* (2017), written by poet Helen Mort and directed by James Beale, derives from the trailers, a rehearsed reading, and online reviews. I learned about the performance in January 2018, too late to watch it.

Not truly knowing *Medusa*, yet discussing it, furnishes me a cognitive parable with epistemic and metaepistemic ramifications. What do we know about Medusa and from where? We never pause to consider the issue. My main point is nevertheless different. The ancient myth and its modern retellings enable us to “discern [...] whose voices have been audible, and whose muffled, in the articulations” not of “prevailing theories” (Code 1998: 204), but, I argue, of the prevailing gender-related imaginary, more resilient than context-specific theories. By “showing whose experiences count” (ibid.) *systematically* (I must insist), *Medusa* accounts may suggest “how epistemic authority is established and withheld” (ibid.) and how knowledge systems are en-gendered. I use Teresa de Lauretis's (1987) concept, *en-gender*, to address the generation of ideas and knowledge (about identity, the world, etc) along gender lines, rather than gender-neutrally.

2. PJTC's *Medusa*

Reviews of *Medusa* (all from 2017) commend Mort's poetic diction, the play's topicality (Cherriman), Tim Cunningham's haunting music (Darlington; Smallwood) and Medusa's singing (Beggs; Jepson). Nonetheless, many also fault *Medusa* for its “disjointed narrative structure” (“*Medusa: Topical and Ambitious*”), particularly the episodic, confusing Act 2 (Beggs; Darlington; Jepson), if undoubtedly thematic (Cherriman; Galloway-Place; “*Medusa: Topical and Ambitious*”).

I cannot address such objections. Yet, isn't coherence or clarity itself part of the teleological myth undergirding the hegemony's need for uniformity and predictability to preserve the status quo? Arguably, teleology drives what Hélène Cixous names *écriture masculine*: grounded in the libidinal economy of the “centralized body” (1976: 889), phallogocentrism is imperialistic, homogenising and repressive of women (idem: 879). The challenge I have set for myself is to use

a play I have never watched or read, to ground an argument about the patriarchal en-gendering of voice and epistemic legitimacy.

A “modern dystopian version of the Greek myth” (Jepson 2017), PJTC’s *Medusa* “blends song and projected visuals, acting, music and poetry” (Cherriman 2017). Not only an ancient myth – familiar from the fragmented Perseus and Medusa story in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* – and contemporary life come into dialogue; so do American “religious fundamentalism” and “a fractured technological society with rape culture at its core” (Cherriman 2017). Furthermore, some of the five actors – two women and three men – double the roles: Gemma Hunt, Athena and Sylvia; Brendan Weakliam, Mercury and Alexander (Sylvia’s husband). Metatheatrically, such doubling suggests role interchangeability of seemingly incommensurate subject positions, godly and human or victimising and victimised.

Act 1 shows Elizabeth Harborne’s thirteen-year-old Medusa raped at a party by Rick Ferguson’s Poseidon, a “white, middle-aged, middle-class”, “most detestable stage villain” (Cherriman 2017). His “aggrandised sense of entitlement to his own despicable actions” (idem) transpires in the trial scene. Medusa’s testimony recounts the rape, complete in performance with a graphic medical examination. Poseidon lamely justifies himself: “he was ‘seduced’ by Medusa” and “begged ‘forgiveness’” (Smallwood 2017). The proceedings actually put Medusa on trial (Stott 2017), with the spectators ‘absorbed’ inside the dramatic world as jurors who (vicariously) acquit Poseidon. Unsurprisingly, the trial scene epitomises the production’s “hefty dose of social commentary” (Jepson 2017; see also Vicky G-P 2017) on the collusion of civil society and the law in perpetuating injustice. Poseidon’s sardonic laugh during the testimony is, therefore, not only *his* signature, but – synecdochically – the *patriarchy’s*.

Act 2 reveals Medusa’s “‘monster’ side” (Smallwood 2017). Medusa revenges herself by “tricking clients into prostitution” (idem), which the script explores alongside evangelisation and bigotry. Tim Cunningham’s Perseus, “an evangelical Texan, steeped in the ‘thou shalt not’ teachings of the Bible and afraid of his own human weakness” (Beggs 2017), lambasts women as seductresses: “We are not free men when we live as slaves to desire, slaves to the malign influence of the sex we have called fair” (*Medusa* 2017, 0.49-minute Lowry trailer, 00:10-00:19). Perseus deplores the self-disempowerment of mankind (*sic*) through lust: men no longer live as independent subjects. Yet, such socially constructed options depend on the *performativity of gender* (Butler 1999: 141-190). Perseus’s is standard misogyny as vented in discursive practices from the Genesis “account of Adam and Eve to internet pornography and adult channels in the 21st century” (Smallwood 2017). One of Medusa’s seduction targets is Alexander, whom Medusa “entices back to her with a virtual reality headset”; he is caught by his wife, Sylvia, watching pornography and soon “meets his stony demise for his ill treatment of women” (Stott 2017). The other men too get engrossed in watching Medusa on VR headsets: *virtual* pornography suggests that *virtually* all women can engage in it – to corrupt all mankind (*sic*), Perseus would say. The remedy Perseus devises, pre-scripted and prescribed as it is by patriarchal tradition petrified (sanctified?) in myth, is to decapitate Medusa. Nonetheless, by “focusing more on the men, especially Perseus, than [on] Medusa herself”, Act 2 intimates that “a woman’s account is largely ignored”, whilst female characters are stereotyped as either “a mother or a whore” (Jepson 2017). Yet, in this respect alone, the two acts appear interchangeable: they show that patriarchy’s self-styled righteousness stands on the murky ground of abusing, discrediting, and silencing women.

What do the trailers suggest about *Medusa*? “Don’t look at me” becomes the leitmotif of the 1:26-minute trailer. Not the actors’ bodies or faces, but a fragmented female face projection, Medusa’s (and subsequently ancient *gorgoneia*), with eyes enhanced in a green light, provides the visual cue for line fragments interweaving against a black background and ear-hurting electronic sounds. The 3:11-minute trailer focuses on Harborne’s face and eyes; whilst other characters’ images appear occasionally, her face becomes the default background to other male and female voices.

The 3:11-minute trailer begs attention for conjoining visuality with fizzing sounds. Its nerve-racking soundscape-cum-visual ordeal evokes the Gorgon name, which originates from *gorgos*, “grim, fierce, terrible” (Liddell, Scott 1996, γοργός), with the Sanskrit stem *garḡ*, “to roar or shriek” (Mack 2002: 599, n. 5). First, we see a triangle formed of the men standing on wire boxes, facing the audience, VR headsets on. Their narrative strands intertwine. Poseidon shares his trial testimony: “You know, in real life I don’t talk to women much” (00:07-00:11); Alexander outlines his matrimonial infidelity: “I need her to want me as much as I do” (00:17-00:19); Perseus vents his evangelical bigotry. Alexander’s narrative provides the first instance in a trailer when a male character’s delivery has loud fizzing interferences – and also juxtaposes analogue images with live stream – before dissolving into other characters’ lines. As Alexander starts singing against the other men’s indistinguishable line fragments, the image dissolves to Medusa’s pixelated face, which introduces the performance stream:

MEDUSA. Then he’s behind me... Poseidon... his naked torso while he... (*Choral “he”. Medusa’s voice briefly overlaps with Poseidon’s as her performance stream dissolves into his.*)

POSEIDON. I fought with my eyes... or just was the colour of a letter, an in-vi-tation, you could say (*laughs*)... I asked her name. I told her she was beau-ti-ful. What’s wrong with telling a woman that? (*Male singing, “Don’t look at me...”*, repeated chorally as the scene dissolves into another Medusa stream.) (*Medusa 2017, 3:11-minute trailer, 00:26-00:51*)

What follows are lines delivered against a choral “He”, with Medusa’s face close-up; at times, pixelated green eye images flicker. Tears in her eyes, Medusa recounts that she expected her sisters to search for her and that the identity of her rapist was confusing: “If he is the god of the sea, why are his hands so dry?” Her account is punctuated by the voices of Poseidon, Perseus, Alexander and Sylvia, whose overlapping half-lines depict abusive sexual relations. The next scene features only Alexander, VR headset on, engrossed in virtual pornography, with occasional voice intrusions by Perseus. A progressively more excited Alexander gasps: “Yes, show me! Show me how much you want me.” Digits start running over his VR headset and upper torso, first horizontally, right to left (from spectatorial position), as when reading, then also diagonally, enveloping him, meandering snake-like – Medusa is embracing him, faster and faster as he speaks. Only Sylvia’s crescendo scream, “Alex! What are you doing?!” can turn Alex’s goggled head towards her. In the next live stream, Medusa herself is on trial. To the jurors’ consternation, Medusa insists that she “never punished the men who didn’t deserve it!” Under the cross-fire of male and female juror voices, Medusa states that she has punished “Those who hurt us”, rephrased, at a male juror’s insistence, as “Those who hurt *me*.” To his observation that under the circumstances she “must call it revenge”, Medusa retorts, faintly smiling, “I’m fair

and just.” Henceforth, when Medusa speaks, the actress’ image is juxtaposed with tiny projections of Medusa’s full or half-face, in green light, but not terrifying. Serene, with an air of naturalness, Medusa admits: “I’ve punished them.” She laughs as a dead man’s head projection flickers on the screen. The male juror’s correction, “You punished *him!*”, drives Medusa into a crying fit; she protests: “I never touched them.” The male juror’s observation, “You can look, but you can’t touch”, heard against multiplied green projections of Medusa’s left face, concludes the trailer.

Programmatically concerned with story-(re)telling, PJTC’s *Medusa* ambitiously declares:

We are going to tell a story,
 one that is not often told;
 the story of a woman who exacts her revenge on the men that destroyed her
 and the gods that cursed her.
 We are going to tell the story of Medusa... the truth. (PJTC, *Medusa* 2017)

WHO knows *the truth* – this is another (not simply evangelical) story. Yet, WHO *sees* ‘reality’ and *may speak* about it as ‘the truth’ is a signal concern both of Mort’s play and of western culture. Giving a voice to Medusa may be a truth of another nature than simply laying claims to *the truth*. It may be the socio-political truth of speech entitlement, of legitimate story-telling about oneself, the other and the world: a *truth regime*, with its exclusivist rules (Foucault 1980: 131). It may, moreover, be the truth, I submit, of a crucial epistemic and social displacement en-gendered in western culture: that of *voice* by *sight*. Men speak, know and see/spectate; their visible phallicity spells self-entitlement, Freud suggests. Disempowered, women should remain silent, St Paul decrees (1 Cor 14.34-35; 1 Tim 11-14); their speech is derided (Cixous 1981: 49), and they are reified as mere image to be (lecherously) looked at to testify to male integrity (Mulvey 1999: 836-838).

3. Medusa the monster? The underside of myth

Whilst, historically, women have been disempowered and rendered the object of the masculine gaze, Medusa embodies, paradoxically, a woman’s powerful agentive gaze. Cautionary accounts typically stigmatise her gaze as evil and many also show Medusa decapitated by Perseus. Iconography notwithstanding, whose is the deadly gaze?

The *Iliad* (5.849-850, 11.39-40, 11.423-424) and the *Odyssey* (11.634) include the earliest textual mention of Medusa as a terrifying head – the Gorgon always already decapitated. Subsequent texts feature the *gorgoneion* (Hesiod, *Shield* 216-237; Herodotus 2.91; Pausanias 1.21.3, 1.24.7, 5.10.4, 5.12.4, 8.47.5) – the head *representation* – with its petrifying powers (Pausanias 9.34.2), and conflate the Medusa and Perseus myths (Pausanias 1.22.7, 1.23.7, 2.27.2, 3.17.3, 3.18.11, 5.18.5). Hesiod’s *Theogony* (2006: 276) first gives her both a full body and the name Medusa, i.e., ruler-cum-protectress – for Μέδουσα is the present participle of μέδω, to “protect, rule over” (Liddell, Scott 1996, μέδω) – in a story entwined with Perseus’s. While Hesiod’s Gorgons may (not) be monsters, considering the ambiguous beginning of the next story, Echidna’s, in two of Pindar’s (1997) *Pythian* odes (*Pythian* 10.46-48; *Pythian* 12.11-18), the “beautiful-cheeked” Medusa (*Pythian* 12.16) has serpent locks and petrifying powers.

[Pseudo-] Apollodorus's (1921) *Library*, in the canonical version of the Medusa and Perseus story (2.4.1–5), renders Medusa unambiguously monstrous. Able to petrify anyone who beholds them (2.4.2), [Pseudo-]Apollodorus's Gorgons have "heads twined about with the scales of dragons, and great tusks like swine's, and brazen hands, and golden wings, by which they flew" (2.4.2), but no snaky hair. Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 4.793-801) solves the monster/woman and hideous/beautiful equivocation by describing Medusa's metamorphosis from a beautiful woman to a terrifying serpent-locked monster. Raped by Neptune in Minerva's temple, whose priestess she is, Medusa is cursed by the goddess for temple desecration. Mort may have found Ovid's story particularly congenial to re-presenting the contemporary incrimination of the rape victim.

Two ancient Greek texts challenge this misogynous depiction of Medusa. Diodorus Siculus's *Library of History* and, possibly inspired by it, Pausanias's *Description of Greece* depict the Gorgons as truly alien to patriarchal Greece. Medusa, the Libyan queen, valiantly fights Perseus's invading army until treacherously "assassinated by night" (Pausanias 2.21.5; cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.784-785). The Gorgons and Amazons of Libya are two of the "races" of "warlike" women "greatly admired for their manly vigour" and "distinguished for [their] valour" (Diodorus Siculus 1967: 247, 249, 3.52.4). Perseus subdued the Gorgons twice, the second time "when Medusa was queen over them" (idem: 3.55.3); subsequently Heracles "entirely destroyed" both races and became the civilising hero of sovereign patriarchy (idem: 3.55.3).

Furthermore, the presence of alternative versions in (Pseudo-)Apollodorus and Pausanias indicates, I contend, the Medusa tradition's horizon of expectation – and fault lines. (Pseudo-)Apollodorus *downplays* the alternative, which depicts Medusa as a woman as beautiful as Athena, beheaded therefore "for Athena's sake" (2.4.3). Pausanias deems the alternative account *untrustworthy*: Procles, who draws on hearsay, proclaims his version "more plausible" (Pausanias 2.21.6) than Pausanias's, which avowedly "omit[s] the miraculous, but give[s] the rational parts of the story" (idem: 2.21.5).

Pindar's monster's 'anomaly', on the one hand, and Diodorus Siculus's and Pausanias's royal Medusa, on the other, have epistemic implications (Ciobanu 2019: 22, 24-26). Medusa's earliest representations as a monster indicate men's *monsterisation* of women to legitimate patriarchal inequity. My contention reworks Cohen's (1999: 34) definition of *monsterisation*: to rationalise conquest, the conqueror misrepresents the aboriginals as primitive, subhuman and/or monstrous and dangerous. The patriarchal myth of masculine pre-eminence rests on the deliberate misrepresentation of women as dangerous, treacherous and anti-civilisational (de Beauvoir 1953: 15-24; Dexter 2010: 25-6; Decker 2016: 748); in Medusa's case, it also obliterates the memory of her sovereign power that her name encapsulates.

Yet, Medusa, I suggest, also stands for *the muted other's voice* of the reputedly terrifying Gorgon/woman – yet another face of representation. Doubly silenced through un-/mis-representation in reporting by male authors (see Ardener 1975; Cixous 1976: 877-878; Anzaldúa 1987: 83-86; hooks 1989: 7-9; Spivak 1988; Jovchelovitch 2007), in a classic instance of *transvestite ventriloquism* (Harvey 1992), Medusa nevertheless regains her voice to tell the story of women's voices under patriarchy. In claiming this, I beg to differ from the standard account of Medusa (and her snakes) as simply the monstrous source of horrifying sounds, as in Hesiod, Pindar and Euripides (Mack 2002: 599, note 5) or in the PJTC 1:26-

minute *Medusa* trailer. Rather, as in the latter's court scene, I associate Medusa with a woman's newly regained voice, if only indirectly, through discourses that seek to un-silence her and make her talk back (bell hooks's phrase) on behalf of suppressed women.

4. Women as the philosophical unthought

The appropriation of Medusa's powerful gaze by the masculine hegemony to endorse its exclusivist pursuits (Mack 2002: 571-598), whilst monstrosifying her agency, illustrates, I submit, the *philosophical unthought* theorised by Michèle le Doeuff. Although traditionally repudiated by philosophical metadiscourse (Le Doeuff 2002: 6), thought in images – the metaphorical imagery of philosophical texts – crucially “copes with problems posed by the theoretical enterprise itself” and thereby “occupies the place of theory's impossible” (idem: 5). Such imagery often features domestic chores as the philosopher's self-priming for his (*sic*) task.

The Medusa myth invites reflection on and enforces the *normative gaze* (Mack 2002: 596; note 51), including Perseus's/man's self-recognition, in the shield's Lacanian mirror, as the “fully constituted subject of patriarchal power” (ibid.). As Kristeva (2012: 30-33) rightly argues, the myth also testifies to the human – allegedly naturally masculine – work of reflection/speculation and artistic/discursive representation. To see is to understand and acquire knowledge (idem: 33), if safe to one's male person and caste: to conquer and destroy.

Luce Irigaray (1985b: 171) has unravelled the West's “hom(m)o-sexual monopoly”, which “*reduces all others to the economy of the Same*” (idem: 74, original emphasis). In such a representational economy, “[o]thers ... will always already have been in the service of the same, of the presuppositions of the same logos, without changing or prejudicing its character as discourse” (Irigaray 1985a: 135; see also 144-145). By extrapolation, women exist not (in) themselves, but as mis/representations by men – fully tamed through (meta)cognitive decapitation – hence also as men's tool for artistic and philosophical (self-)illumination, i.e., for specular and speculative reflection. Medusa/Woman has to be a monster for Perseus/Man to be (self-)enabled to legitimately decapitate her in order to secure men's sovereignty.

5. Having the last laugh/word?

This is how PJTC's rapist speaks in self-defence in the dock:

POSEIDON. I'm a considerate man (*faint smile*), can't you tell (*broader smile, almost a faint laugh*)? I wouldn't want to do anything without per-mis-sion. (*Medusa* 2017, 0.49-minute Lowry trailer, 00:02-00:09)

POSEIDON. She moved her hands (*gestures*) down the side of her hips..., down the side of her thighs. Like this... (*Demonstration close-up. Almost laughing.*) Have you ever seen a woman do that, uh? (*Laughs.*) I asked her name. I told her she was beautiful. What's wrong with asking women that? And then... (*Laughs.*) I... (*Makes to sit down, partially turning away from the public, then confronts them.*) You don't want me to tell you what happened next! (*Laughs whilst sitting down.*) Do you? (*Medusa* 2017, Rehearsed reading, 01:35-02:19)

Poseidon exculpates himself and nearly winks at the spectators. His rhetorical questions, in the rehearsed reading, invite their complicity to rape, thus conceivably clearing the rapist of any blame. Yet “Do you?” alludes to the

audience's familiarity with rape – a grim horizon of expectation – from films, pornography and the news. Poseidon's laughter, expressive of power-over disguised as innocent *what's wrong with it, everyone does so*, becomes a mortifying reminder that patriarchy's ventriloquism of women, after suppressing their speech and sovereignty, works hand-in-hand with everyone's "docilisation" into gender roles.

Erstwhile the *object* of rape, Mort's Medusa becomes the *subject* who seduces. The earliest scene of the rehearsed reading (00:20-00:50) shows the three men (seated on chairs), wearing VR headsets, and talking about their experience of pornography:

POSEIDON. Or... it's like watching through a door... like she's been bathing...
 PERSEUS. She knows we're here. She already knows who we are. (*Medusa* 2017, Rehearsed reading, 00:26-00:34)

The lines echo the Susannah and the elders biblical story, used by western painters to represent female nudity and foreshadow rape. The story legitimates religiously men's libidinal voyeurism and misrepresentation of women as sex object.

VR headset on, Alexander describes his erotic VR experience: "I'm in the car. I'm naked. I'm in the city at night. I think it's Athens" (*Medusa* 2017, 0.49-minute Lowry trailer, 00:27-00:34). The 3:11-minute trailer shows Alexander consuming his VR affair with Medusa when Sylvia catches him. To what extent Medusa exerts her sovereign (subject) rights in this game of seduction, or rather becomes the object in patriarchy's pornography game remains indeterminate.

Mort's temptress-Medusa is but the newest scion of a venerable patriarchal tradition of reading prostitution into the mortal Gorgon's rape. From Heraclitus the Paradoxographer's *On Unbelievable Tales* (Stern 1996: 25) to medieval and Renaissance allegorizations of Medusa (qtd. in Deacy et al. 2016: 828), Perseus vanquishing Medusa translated as reason overcoming lust. Does that tradition include philosophising on men's own harlotry (and bigotry) in having instituted prostitution as *the other's* – woman's – (exclusive) trade?

Mort empowers her Medusa along the lines suggested by Cixous in the opening paragraph of "The Laugh of the Medusa":

I shall speak about women's writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement. (Cixous 1976: 875, original emphasis)

Disentitled from (self-)knowing and (self-)speaking/writing, from being cognitive agents, women are also self-alienated as embodied individuals. The body, deemed female, has been reviled by the Church Fathers and philosophers alike as a thing of shame, guilty pleasure, immanence and/or non-philosophical pursuits. Yet, Cixous continues,

as there are no grounds for establishing a discourse, but rather an arid millennial ground to break, what I say has at least two sides and two aims: to break up, to destroy; and to foresee the unforeseeable, to project. (ibid.)

This is conceivably what Mort's/PJTC's play does. *Medusa* breaks the enforced silence, or rather the mystifying discourse about the Gorgon at the same time as it also projects another face of the 'monster', a soft core also capable of *singing*.

Cixous obsesses about women's expression through singing in both "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976) (original French title "Le Rire de la Méduse", 1975) and "Castration or Decapitation" (1981) (original French title "Le Sexe ou la tête?" 1976). In the former, song becomes the privileged, overflowing form of women's expression, which, alongside writing and speaking, "bring[s] out something new" (Cixous 1976: 876; see also 881-882). Not so in the latter text: women "always inhabit the place of silence, or at most make it echo with their singing. And neither is to their benefit, for they remain outside knowledge" (Cixous 1981: 49).

PJTC's Medusa sings before her decapitation:

MEDUSA. (*Sings*.) I'm sorry for brushing your hand in the streets,
I'm sorry for letting our eyes meet
And for the night that you came to me.
I'm sorry for that night. (*Medusa* 2017, Rehearsed reading, 04:49-05:16)

Does Medusa's swan-song point to female self-empowerment?

6. Conclusion

Do modern re-presentations of Medusa explore the underside of the myth to un-/recover women's voice and knowledge, or rather the underside of entitlement to legitimate speaking and knowledge-production? Can they reveal what has "remain[ed] 'encoded within our consciousness'" from Graeco-Roman mythology's patriarchal images of women, which "continue[s] to oppress" women (Bowers 1990: 217)? Can modern re-presentations undo the effects of a centuries-old tradition of ventriloquist representation of women, especially of images of dangerous, indeed hubristic, women, duly punished by the Olympian gods, by patriarchy writ large and deified? Such "transvestite ventriloquism" (Harvey 1992) is but an instance of Irigaray's "hom(m)o-sexual monopoly".

Can one carve out a standing point outside patriarchal representation, outside the Symbolic, from where to survey the mythological imaginary to retrieve the 'real' Medusa, Arachne, Philomela, Echo or Salmacis? PJTC's *Medusa* might indicate that such a standing point is elusive, yet worth seeking.

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AESTHETICISM AND ART NOUVEAU IN OSCAR WILDE'S *SALOMÉ*

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Abstract: *Focusing on Oscar Wilde's play Salomé, the paper aims to discuss and analyse the literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and its connection to the artistic tendencies of the period. Wilde wrote the play in 1893, at the very start of the period in art known as Art Nouveau, characterized by the extensive use of symbols and sinuous line as means of expression and artistic delving into the realm of the unconscious. The paper takes on Salomé as a paradigm of symbolist and aesthetic literature and examines how the symbols and literary devices in the play create a language that reflects the "new vocabulary" of Art Nouveau, contained, among other places, in Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations featured in the first English edition of Salomé in 1894.*

Keywords: *aestheticism, Art Nouveau, symbolism, stylistics*

1. Introduction. The literature of the late 19th and early 20th century as the context for Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*

When trying to situate Wilde in English and world literature, there is little or no room for disputing the fact that Wilde was the leading figure of English aestheticism, a movement that promoted art made for its own sake, with the artist as the creator and revealer of beauty. Beauty that has no educative or useful purpose was seen as the ultimate goal set before the artist. The creation of art was not to have didactic, social or moral pretensions; it "need only fulfill possibilities of beauty inherent in any art form" and as such produce effect, mood or a sensation in the consumer (Quintus 1980: 560). "Vice and virtue are to the artist material for an art", asserts Wilde in the Preface to his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, stating thus that artist's sole obligation is to conform to the aesthetic norms, regardless of the social or ethical implications that their work of art may have. In the same preface, Wilde labels any kind of "ethical sympathy" as "an unpardonable mannerism of style", and the only acceptable classification of literature are the books that are "well written, or badly written." A well written book can express anything, and for those who find "beautiful meanings" in "beautiful things" that may at the same time be blasphemous, decadent or immoral, "there is hope" (Wilde 1994: 5).

In short, at the end of the nineteenth century, French and English aesthetes wanted to see art removed from the production of critical meaning. It is interesting to note that, although denying the socio-political aspect, it was precisely this aspect that brought about the rise of modernism and Aestheticism as one of its movements. Art for art's sake, as a change in the literary canon at the end of the nineteenth century, came about as a result of weariness with obsolescent realist conventions. The prose of realism reflected and reinforced the strongly held beliefs of Victorian society, and, in its effort to defy them, aestheticism as part of

modernism focused solely on “the free expression of the imagination” (Quintus 1980: 561). In his paper “The Moral Implications of Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism”, however, calling attention to Albert Guérard’s study *Art for Art's Sake*, Quintus deems it to be “perhaps the only major study devoted to the subject” (idem: 559). In his study, Guérard contends that the principles underlying art for art’s sake “can never be completely accepted or exercised”, as they would inevitably “separate art from thought”, noting that literature is “the least amenable to such a goal” (ibid.). Quintus quotes R. V. Johnson, who, in his essay on aestheticism, says that “it does not follow... that the work of art may not embody and communicate insight into life” (ibid.). According to Quintus, it is especially Wilde’s work that, despite the flamboyant denial, cannot be observed without taking into account its moral aspect. In *Intentions*, Wilde also stresses the importance of a work of art being able to show the “true ethical import” of the facts of life:

But the artist, who accepts the facts of life, and yet transforms them into shapes of beauty, and makes them vehicles of pity or of awe, and shows their colour-element, and their wonder, and their true ethical import also, and builds out of them a world more real than reality itself, and of loftier and more noble import – who shall set limits to him? (Wilde 2018: 88)

It appears that, according to Wilde, any kind of “ethical sympathy”, an interference of moral principles and prejudices of the given social context in the creation of a work of art, discourages its “true ethical import” ever to show. In order for it to show, the artist must accept the facts of life and transform them into art (“into shapes of beauty”) in the way that makes them “vehicles of pity or of awe”. Only that way will “their colour-element, and their wonder, and their true ethical import” manifest. The “colour” and the “wonder” come from the transformation of bare facts into art – into something higher. In *Intentions*, Wilde also mentions the “higher ethics” that he links closely to Sin as “an essential element of progress”, insisting that “(w)ithout it the world would stagnate, or grow old, or become colourless” (idem: 60). Such statements added to the general perception of the literature of Aestheticism as immoral and irreverent. However we may argue that by Sin, Wilde meant the “curiosity” that he mentions further in the text, and by that, the curiosity for forms of life that can be transfigured into colourful and wondrous art.

All of the above resonates profoundly in Wilde’s *Salomé*, a play that can be seen as the literary embodiment of the English aesthetes’ artistic ideals and the source of the Victorians’ utmost consternation, its main protagonist being one of the most notorious Biblical female characters. Originally written in French at the beginning of the last decade of the 19th century during Wilde’s stay in Paris, the play’s London première was banned due to the then forbidden depiction of biblical characters on stage. The play was perceived as “an arrangement in blood and ferocity, morbid, bizarre, repulsive [...]” (quoting *The Times*, Donohue 1997: 123), but part of *Salomé*’s infamy lies in Aubrey Beardsley’s Art Nouveau illustrations featured in the first English edition of the play in 1894.

2. The art of the late 19th and early 20th century as the context for artistic and stylistic analysis of Oscar Wilde’s *Salomé*

Art Nouveau is the movement that appeared during the flourishing of historicism as an instrument of the newly rich bourgeois class endeavouring to

establish their place in the social hierarchy. Similarly, the artists of the Art Nouveau movement sought creative freedom for themselves and liberation from the strict rules of historicism and the art academies. They made use of new materials and technological advances, placing themselves with the new bourgeois class at the centre of the art revolution, which included everything from painting, sculpture, architecture, and applied arts to literature, music and dance (Sikošek 2018: 9).

The name and specific characteristics of the art movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries varied from country to country: Jugendstil in Germany, Vienna Secession in Austria, Art Nouveau in France and Belgium etc., but everywhere “like any art style, it expressed an attitude towards life” (Hofstätter 1983: 7). In that sense, Escritt (2013: 7) points out that “[i]f Art Nouveau saw itself as a reaction against an aesthetically corrupt century, it was also a product of it”. Unlike the continental countries, where Art Nouveau appeared abruptly “as a concrete expression of social conscience”, and as the artistic revolution overthrowing “the lingering romantic tradition of the nineteenth century” (Lenning 1951: 3), the new art in England had slowly taken shape since 1848 through the ideals of The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Aesthetic Movement, and Symbolist Movement. Fascinated with the nature and freed from the pressure of the traditional canon, artists sought inspiration in pre-Renaissance art, Japanese graphics, folk art such as wood engraving and embroidery, as well as medieval architecture. In this paper, the name Art Nouveau will be used, bearing in mind the fact that it is used in the publications and official documents of UNESCO. The line became the main means of expression in the fine and applied arts, as opposed to the strictness of a clearly prescribed structure in the arts of previous centuries. The line liberated the artists, allowed them greater creativity and expressiveness.

Aubrey Beardsley is the most significant representative of Art Nouveau in England, and his importance for *Salomé* lies in Oscar Wilde’s choice of Beardsley as the illustrator of the English edition of the play. He was a pioneer of the new movement who “invented a new vocabulary of sinuous line and sly eroticism” (Allen 2020). Wilde’s dedication clearly illustrates how similarly they responded to the challenges of Victorian society with rebellion: “For Aubrey – for the only artist who, beside myself, knows what the dance of the seven veils is, and can see that invisible dance. Oscar” (Gertner Zatlín 2016). Beardsley died young of tuberculosis, and Sikošek compares the shortness of his life to the shortness of the Art Nouveau movement, in the sense that they came to prominence abruptly, lasted briefly, but left an indelible mark and paved the way to what we now know as Modern Art (Sikošek 2018: 9). Beardsley’s illustrations in *Salomé* state clearly the belief of the artists of the period in interdisciplinary artistic collaboration “as another milestone in the symbolist attempt to forge a new language” (Gerould 2009: 84). The concept of various arts working together in unity was strongly upheld by the Symbolists, and they “sought to bring about such a fusion of the arts by pursuing dual or multiple vocations and by collaborating with other artists” (ibid.). However, the idea of the fusion, in this case, of art and literature becomes even more exciting when observing how the text of *Salomé* assumes an organic, sinuous form that stems from the interplay of symbols, tropes and figures, which will be further discussed in chapters three and four.

3. Symbolism in *Salomé*

The use of symbols in literature can be seen as yet another manner in which literature distances itself from realistic representation. In the “Introduction” to *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, Arthur Symons (1908: 2) cites Comte Goblet d'Alviella who says that a symbol “might be defined as a representation which does not aim at being a reproduction”. When contemplating the emergence of symbolism in the nineteenth century, Symons sees it as appearing after the era of “the re-arrangement of material things”, after which “comes the turn of the soul”, and the literature that springs out is one “in which the visible world is no longer a reality, and the unseen world no longer a dream” (idem: 4). Such literature was reactionary towards the absence of the spiritual in literature. However, Oscar Wilde cautions those eager to delve into symbol and meaning, contending, in his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, that those who go beneath the surface must be aware of the danger it involves.

Salomé is regarded as Wilde’s “most self-consciously symbolist and aesthetic play” (Russ 2011: 37), even as the only fully symbolist work at the British fin de siècle (Denisoff 2007: 40). From the first sentences of the play, the reader is drawn into the hypnotic and ominous atmosphere of Herod’s palace. *Salomé* takes place at a time which represents the decline of Roman civilization and, in the context of the art of decadence to which it belongs, it indicates the decline of the established political and social system of the nineteenth century. To the aristocracy of the late nineteenth century, the new social tendencies might have appeared as alarming as to the tetrarch Herod Antipas and his entourage: the aristocracy is being stripped off its impregnable position of power whereas the bourgeoisie (the *nouveau riche*) is finding its place in high society, economically and politically as well as through art (Art Nouveau). In “Decadence and Aestheticism”, Denisoff underlines that the play’s “androgynous characters, sexual violence and setting in a decadent kingdom [...] affirm the work’s position within the decadent tradition” (ibid.). The social changes towards the end of the nineteenth century brought about the sexual liberation of women, who, according to Marshall, became sexually articulate as never before. It is in the choice and examination of a mythic figure such as *Salomé*, alongside late-Victorian men and women, that Marshall (2007: 6-7) sees a consuming interest in “questions of sex and its articulation, its political realisation, and its communal implications”.

One of the most striking symbols that we encounter in *Salomé* is the moon. J. C. Cooper’s *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols* explains the moon as generally perceived as the symbol of female power, of the intuitive, the irrational and the subjective (Kuper 1986: 104, the Serbo-Croatian edition). The personal pronoun used in the text for the moon is *she*, and at the very beginning of the play, the moon is compared to “a woman rising from a tomb”, as if “she was looking for dead things” (Wilde 1996: 1). Female power as well as sexual power is traditionally linked to the dark side of nature, which is also something that J. C. Cooper states in his above-mentioned work. The moon’s presence in the darkness of the night, in which a princess will ask for the head of a saint, is further intensified by the words denoting lightness and fadedness: *Salomé* is *pale*, her *feet are of silver*, she has *little white doves for feet*, her *little white hands are fluttering like doves [...] they are like white butterflies*, she is like a *silver flower* etc. When the young Syrian and Herodias’ page talk about her, the image of *Salomé*’s paleness is effected in a triple gradation: “She is like *the shadow of a white rose* in

a mirror of silver” (idem: 2). However, the Art Nouveau imagery also recognizes the moon and paleness as the symbols of chastity, which might introduce some confusion as regards the already mentioned understanding of the moon as the symbol of the female sexual power. There is a lot in Art Nouveau that relies on the suggestiveness of symbols, which gives rise to complexity in a literary or art piece. One of the examples in Art Nouveau is the delicateness of the portrayal of women that appear both innocent and sexual, and it is interesting to note this duality in Salomé. She perceives both the moon and Jokanaan’s character as something inherently chaste – speaking of them, she speaks of herself. It is only after the fearful and prejudiced rejection Salomé suffers on the part of Jokanaan that she becomes ruthless in her feelings and actions.

In the case of Salomé’s character, female sexual articulation is strongly linked to what we might call a highly personal reason, which modernism in general favours over cultural norms. When Herod reacts to Salomé’s demand for Jokanaan’s head as her mother’s scheme, and disparages Salomé for being Herodias’s pawn, Salomé replies “It is not my mother’s voice that I heed”, and then she asserts: “It is for mine own pleasure that I ask the head of Jokanaan in a silver charger” (idem: 29). In her review of Petra Dierkes-Thrun’s work *Salomé’s Modernity* and its unceasing influence on modernist and postmodernist art, Ellis Hanson (2012: 490) says that this pronouncement of Salomé’s “may well be Wilde’s most original contribution to the aesthetics of transgression”. By transgression, we here understand an aberration from traditional norms, a departure that implies a search, through psychological insight, for a truth existing beyond these norms.

The departure from the social canon in everyday life corresponded to the distancing from realistic representation in literature, which takes us to the beginning of this chapter and the emphasis on symbols as conveyers of the “higher order of the spirit”, beyond the material world (Gerould 2009: 80). The art and literature of decadence and aestheticism yearned for the disruption of old structures so that they could construct new, intricate forms by an elaborate interweaving of symbols and thus create a new, ordered universe. In that sense, the artists of this era, which was “the first manifestation of modernism that challenged modernity” (ibid.), never strived for the destruction of past forms *per se*, but for “a reclamation of large bodies of secret knowledge and reconciliation of older, forgotten wisdom with the latest perceptions and insights” (idem: 81). As Gerould puts it, the Symbolists “reinterpreted myths eclectically and subjectively and created new mythologies that were intensely personal, subjective, and mysterious. Alive and contemporary, myth became an embodiment of wisdom and prophecy for the present age as bearers of secret meaning” (idem: 82).

4. The organic line of Art Nouveau in the text of *Salomé*

A stylistic analysis of *Salomé* is profoundly linked to the symbolism of the play. In *Symbolist Legacy*, Gerould (2009: 80) points out that symbolist work was essentially seeking “reconnections with ‘lost’ pasts rich in associations, analogies, and resonances”. What is modern about the symbolist vision is not a mimetic representation of the contemporary world, but the “apprehension of underlying patterns beneath the surface” (idem: 81). The building of atmosphere in *Salomé* is executed to a large extent through comparisons and repetitions, and it is the resonances of these inner patterns that produce the gradation of the atmosphere of

ill omens and death. The comparisons and repetitions lead to a regularity of rhythm, creating a linguistic expression that suits the emotional tone of the play. The regularity does not suggest monotony, but the uncontrollable force of the irrational and the unconscious that will realize itself into a tragic outcome. Although a drama play, the force of rhythmic workings in *Salomé* reminds us of some of those in poetry; in his essay “Oscar Wilde’s Poetry as Art History”, Roditi (1946: 323) deems Wilde’s *Salomé* “a play written in elaborately ornate prose, as a poem, a drama in lyrical prose” and all his later works “the sensuous and elaborately fin-de-siècle arabesques” (idem: 324), which is a clear allusion to the art of Art Nouveau. Roditi sees simplicity in Wilde’s work and his diction

purged of much of the florid descriptiveness and rich vocabulary of the earlier poems, allow[ing] each word of common conversation, clear and vivid again, loaded with thought or emotion, to transcend, in the strict economy of rhythm and syntax, its usually blurred or vague meaning. (idem: 328-329)

In the art and literature that no longer strive for realistic representation, clarity, in Roditi’s view, is attained through “the strict economy of rhythm and syntax”. Such economy produced a form capable of what Gerould calls “spiritual immersion”. If, according to the symbolists, “[t]he deep structure of the human mind corresponds to the deep structure of the universe” (Gerould 2009: 81), the language also required structures whose combination of words, sentences, and paragraphs as rhythmic units, in combination with symbols, provided associations for archetypal themes. Spiritual immersion was not possible with mimetic representation, and new modernist mythologies were in fact the new archetypal models. As new mythologies were “intensely personal, subjective, and mysterious”, they were also “alive and contemporary” (idem: 82), as this was the only way to convey the truths that were new and relevant to the age, but still deeply mythical.

The motives of nature were profusely used in Art Nouveau iconography. Defying mimetic imitation, the long, sinuous line of Art Nouveau found its full realisation in plant and animal patterns, in which it ruled all other elements, such as form, texture, space, and colour. The line could be “elegant and graceful or infused with a powerfully rhythmic and whiplike force” (Encyclopaedia Britannica: Internet), permeating the piece of art (and literature, if we remember the Symbolists’ belief in the fusion of arts and Roditi’s understanding of Wilde’s work as deeply connected to Art Nouveau) in such a manner as to create continuity and the connection between structure and ornament. In such a way, the meaning emanating from the underlying patterns beneath the surface that Gerould talks about was produced. The text of *Salomé* brims with comparisons, the majority of which have the images of nature as their elements. The play opens with as many as seven comparisons connected to the moon in only four dialogue exchanges that the young Syrian and Herodias’ page have (two by the young Syrian and two by Herodias’ page); the already mentioned comparison “She is like the shadow of a white rose in a mirror of silver” contains a flower. The Princess’s white hands are compared to doves and butterflies, whereas she compares Jokanaan’s eyes to “the black caverns of Egypt in which the dragons make their lairs”, “the black lakes troubled by fantastic moons” (Wilde 1996: 10), his body to “the lilies of a field that the mower hath never mowed”, “snows that lie on the mountains of Judea” (idem: 11), but also to “a plastered wall, where vipers have crawled”, his hair to “clusters

of grapes that hang from the vine-trees of Edom in the land of Edomites” (idem: 12), etc. The comparisons, often contained in repetitive patterns throughout the play, evoke vividly the staple images of the Art Nouveau style.

The repetitions come in various forms. To name just a few, the subtle persuasion that Salomé uses in her communication with the young Syrian is effected by means of anaphoric repetition: “*Thou wilt do this thing for me*, wilt thou not, Narraboth? *Thou wilt do this thing for me*. I have ever been kind to thee. *Thou wilt do it for me*” (idem: 8). This part of the play is an example of anaphora that extends to repetitions of not only neighbouring sentences, but also consecutive lines spoken by Salomé; namely, while persuading the young Syrian to bring out the prophet so that she can look at him, in their dialogue exchange Salomé begins all three consecutive addresses to the young Syrian by saying: “*Thou wilt do this thing for me*”, until the young Syrian finally concedes. The famous lines *I will kiss thy mouth*, *Jokanaan* and *Suffer me to kiss thy mouth* are repeated by Salomé as many as nine times. Alongside anaphora, the play also exhibits a similar device which is epiphoric repetition, a repetition of a sequence of words at the end of the clauses that follow one another, as well as repetitions of entire sentences uttered by the same person. When Jokanaan starts insulting Herodias, Salomé understands who he is talking about and reacts:

Salomé: *It is of my mother that he is speaking.*

The young Syrian: Oh no, Princess.

Salomé: Yes; *it is of my mother that he is speaking.* (idem: 9)

The repetitions in the text of the play entail the use of the diacope device, with intervening words or groups of words between the repeated phrases or clauses so as to enhance the emotion. Speaking of his infatuation with Salomé, Herod admits: “*Thy beauty has troubled me. Thy beauty has grievously troubled me*, and I have looked at thee overmuch”, or when he says: “Salomé, thou knowest my *white peacocks, my beautiful white peacocks*” (idem: 27) Intense effect is created as well by what we might call the examples of reverse anadiplosis; instead of having a sentence in which the second clause begins with the same word or group of words which mark the end of the previous clause, the repeating word or a group of words is distributed at the beginning of the first clause and the end of the second clause. When Herod becomes afraid of Salomé’s demand, she reminds him: “*You have sworn an oath*, Herod. Forget not that *you have sworn an oath*” (idem: 29). One of the striking examples is the distribution of one of the most significant adjectives in the play, the adjective *pale*: “How *pale* the Princess is! Never have I seen her so *pale*” (idem: 2), a sentence uttered by the young Syrian. Aside from the repetition of the adjective *pale* in the succeeding sentences, the rhythmic pattern of the entire play is intensified by the repetition of the exact combination of these two sentences further in the text.

Perhaps the most striking rhythmic quality of the play lies in the fact that repetitions do not work solely within succeeding sentences or paragraphs, but throughout the whole text; namely, words and phrases that we find in one segment reoccur, at a regular or irregular pace, in other segments of the play. The rhythmic line formed by their reoccurrences and permeating the text bears closeness to the organic line of the Art Nouveau style. *Salomé*’s short, seemingly flat sentences (especially pronounced in the French original, while the English translation has some archaic lexis and tone) combine together to bring forth the hypnotically mysterious tale of the infamous princess.

5. Conclusion

Although seen as an ultimate aesthetic and symbolic work that renounces social critique and didactic intentions, it can be said that *Salomé* is a vivid example of Wilde's vision of art as a transformative force that still shows "true ethical import". *Salomé* is most often seen as a fin-de-siècle tackling of post-Victorian female liberation and predatory feminine sexuality as a consequence, without much attention being paid to the fact that, apart from Jokanaan, this story has another victim – Salomé herself. Without any explicit pretensions of social engagement and moral thought (and language), in *Salomé*, Wilde also manages to tell the story of a maiden turned monster, a young virgin whose beauty, familial ties and social status make her a victim of sexual objectification and emotional rejection, with a tragic end. Wilde's language in the play, the interweaving of symbols, tropes and figures, is an exemplary stylistic fusion of literature and art of the period, turning the text of *Salomé* into an organic Art Nouveau whole.

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LAWS OF ATTRACTION: LANGUAGE AND/AS MAGIC IN *OTHELLO* AND *THE ENCHANTRESS OF FLORENCE*

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Abstract: *The present study aims to offer a comparative reading of Shakespeare's "Othello" and Rushdie's "The Enchantress of Florence". Although perhaps not discernible at a first glance, the Jacobean play and the contemporary novel share some significant parallels. Much of what constitutes the substance of these two canonical texts derives from the art of story-telling and its potentially lethal effects on both unwary listeners and the story-tellers themselves. The theoretical framework will be Renee Girard's concept of "mimetic desire", shown as constructed via language and its potential for magic.*

Keywords: *attraction, gender, language, mimetic desire, magic*

1. Introduction

Arguably, the piecing together of Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* and Rushdie's novel *The Moor's Last Sigh* has become a commonplace, an inescapable topic of cohesions that has constituted a point of attraction for Shakespearean and post-colonial critics alike. There are numerous ways in which these two classic texts may be read as literary counterparts; as Wood (1995) poetically summarizes it in his review of Rushdie's novel, "the defeated farewell of the last Moorish ruler in Spain" can also be read as "Othello's last gasp of jealousy and violence". The enthralling, yet virtual space of spinning-a-tale comes to resemble the cauldron of magicians who, on demand, may conjure heroics, epic journeys, and fascinating love-stories. As Rushdie's Akbar muses: "[...] witchcraft requires no potion, familiar spirits or magic wands. Language upon a silvered tongue affords enchantment enough" (Rushdie 2008: 93). However, while elevating and liberating, language and its use/abuse/misuse also dangerously conspire against the frail existence of the body and its identity. To substantiate this claim, in the present reading, Shakespeare's Othello and his murdered wife will be shown as linguistic subjects alternatively sharing the elusive substance of Rushdie's Akbar and Enchantress; on the other hand, Iago's manipulative games find a worthy counterpart in those of the Mogor del'Amore.

As Loomba (1998: 153) suggests, should critics not fail to recognize the many Shakespearean echoes, allusions, and intertextual layers in Rushdie, they should also not expect to encounter a complete rewriting of any one play in one novel or short story, as is the case with many postcolonial authors. Rather, in Ganapathy-Dore's (2009: 11) words, they may discover a "piecemeal rewriting", "[...] inflected in various modes – quotations, allusions, parody, recasting of characters, irradiation of metaphors, [...] the intertwining of supratextual topics, such as the history of colonial encounters and infratextual elements such as music and language which set up a common horizon of understanding". Rushdie's choice to revive *Othello* in *The Moor's Last Sigh* is a well-informed one, since he is

famously interested in catering for the literary tastes of a contemporary audience, well-versed in multi-cultural readings. As his protagonist confesses:

Thanks to my unusual, and (by conventional standards) hopelessly inadequate education, I had become a kind of information magpie, gathering to myself all kinds of shiny scraps of fat and hokum and books and art history and politics and music and film, and developing too a certain skill in manipulating and arranging these pitiful shards so that they glittered, and caught the light. Fool's gold or priceless nuggets mined from my singular childhood's rich bohemian seam? I leave it to others to decide. (Rushdie 1995: 240)

This is a clear confession and a guideline for the deciphering of his works that Rushdie shares with his readers. It is also an authorial strategy devised to elevate the readers' sympathy, noticeably borrowed from Shakespeare himself. For Rushdie, although the acknowledged master of bits and pieces, like Shakespeare, mentally bows to his readers and almost beseeches mercy of verdict when it comes to attributing literary (and not only) value to his works. This comes naturally to a man of "hopelessly inadequate education" or, for that matter, to "shadows" that "have offended" but are willing "to mend". (Shakespeare 1980a: V.1.413-419)

With such considerations in mind, this paper aims to reveal the parallels between *Othello* and *The Enchantress of Florence* at the level of characters and plot, with a special emphasis on language and/as magic. Although the texts feature both female and male characters, equally shaped by desire, language, and magic, I shall only focus on the female characters. Nevertheless, as there is no clear distinction between male and female viewed from my chosen conceptualizations, the female characters and the male ones are woven in a tapestry of interactions marking such delimitations both impossible and redundant. As previously stated, my aim is not to read Rushdie's novel as a rewriting of *Othello*; this would stretch even the otherwise extremely flexible limits of literary fluellenism too far and would expose my argument to what Shakespeare himself parodied in *Henry V* (see Act IV, scene 7). Instead, what this essay will do is to establish the different modalities in which the two texts are engaged in a fruitful dialogue of correspondences, parallels, and similarities, but also differences. Since Rushdie's tale is a convoluted one, travelling swiftly between literal and psychological geographies, not supportive of the possibility of delineating a clear one-to-one correspondence with the Shakespearean text, my attempt at establishing the said parallels will, *sine qua non*, perform circular movements of recognition and re-appropriation. Thus, I aim to demonstrate how the characters of play and novel take turns in extending their domination over such a structure, and share complex, interlocking identities; as a theoretical framework, I will use René Girard's theory of mimetic desire, with its derivatives of envy and scapegoat mechanism.

2. The workings of mimetic desire(s) in Shakespeare and Salman Rushdie

The main claim that Girard (1965) makes in his *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* is that there is very little autonomy in our experiencing of desire, and that we generally desire what has already been desired/experienced by others. These others fulfill the function of mediators or models, which can be internal or external, according to our social and temporal proximity to them. For example, Amadis de Gaula is to Don Quijote an external mediator (idem: 2), whereas when subject and

mediator are at the same level, the mediator becomes an obstacle and a rival whose value increases, as the rivalry grows deeper, as in the case of Mr. de Rênal and Valenod in Stendhal's *The Red and The Black* (idem: 6). The rapport between the subject and the object is not a direct one and there is always a triangular connection of subject, model, and object. This non-linear rapport dictates a peculiar substitution of the object by the mediator, so that the real target becomes in fact the model/mediator:

The triangle is not *Gestalt*. The real structures are intersubjective. They cannot be localized anywhere; the triangle has no reality whatsoever; it is a systematic metaphor, systematically pursued. Because changes in size and shape do not destroy the identity of this figure [...] the diversity as well as the unity of the works can be simultaneously illustrated. The purpose and limitations of this structural geometry may become clearer through a reference to “structural models”. The triangle is a model of sorts, or rather a whole family of models. But these models are not “mechanical” like those of Claude Lévi-Strauss. They always allude to the mystery, transparent yet opaque, of human relations (Girard 1965: 2)

Furthermore, Girard (1965: 64) characterizes “desire” as having a “metaphysical sense” which, when it transcends the simple need or appetite, becomes the “desire to be Another” (idem: 83), and thus come to embody the aspiration, the dream of completeness ascribed to the intermediary. Object, subject, and moderator can change their roles; they can overlap and distort the triangle structure in the process. Moreover, as Girard (1986) points out, the concept of desire as desire created, or mimetic desire, stays the same, modifiable at any given moment into *envy* resolved through the scapegoat mechanism. In my two chosen texts, Desdemona, Othello, and Iago and their partial counterparts, Qara Köz, Akbar, and Mogor dell'Amor alternately share the roles of subjects, objects, and mediators. For example, Desdemona may be read as the object of desire for Othello and Iago, but Othello himself is the link between Desdemona and Iago and can thus represent the object of desire of both. Qara Köz is desire constructed for Akbar by the Mogor dell'Amor's skillful tale, but at a closer look one can also argue that the Mogor and Akbar come to signify each other's desire, while Qara Köz is the moderator.

The Enchantress of Florence, Rushdie's admittedly most researched novel, is an enthralling mix of history, fantasy, fable, and magic. It joins the court of Emperor Akbar to Renaissance Florence in Europe, in a West-East common exploration of the issues of identity and assimilation/acculturation. Although not a didactic novel (Rushdie 2008 b), it effectively consecrates storytelling and magic as overwhelming forces that have always shaped the essence of humanity. The novel is initiated with the visit of a European to Akbar's court, who claims he is a long-lost relative of the Emperor, born of a Mughal princess, who, by fortunes of war, was displaced from India, and eventually fell in love with an Italian connected to the Turks and the city of Florence. The lost princess then continued her journey westwards, to America; there, together with her companions (a servant girl, who is almost her double, called Mirror, and Ago Vespucci, an aging Florentine besotted with her) lived her last years in safe anonymity. In a 2008 YouTube interview, Rushdie confessed that he had intended the novel to be a “simple historical romance”, the story “about a lost Mughal princess, captured, passed around like a parcel”, and her many adventures along the way. Nevertheless, dissatisfied with the simplicity of the plot, he added to it the layer of mystery about the male descendant

of the enigmatic princess, who does not possess any proof of his true origins; all he has is a story which he needs to sell if he is ever to reclaim his rightful place at the court of Akbar. Thereafter, the mystery tale wraps itself around what was intended to be the original plot and creates a finely interweaved structure covering the lives of inhabitants of important Eastern and Western political and cultural centres in the sixteenth century.

My comparison of *Othello* and *The Enchantress of Florence* will discuss the female characters and the different ways in which they are subjected to mimetic desire, while becoming themselves objects of desire through the mediation of others. In so doing, I will reclaim their central role and differ from Ursula Le Guinn's (2003) assessment:

This brilliant, fascinating, generous novel swarms with gorgeous young women both historical and imagined, beautiful queens and irresistible enchantresses, along with some whores and a few quarrelsome old wives - all stock figures, females perceived solely in relation to the male. Women are never treated unkindly by the author, but they have no autonomous being. The Enchantress herself, who turns everyone into puppets of her will, has no personality at all, and exists - literally - by pleasing men. Akbar calls her a "woman who had forged her own life, beyond convention, by the force of her will alone, a woman like a king". But in fact she does nothing but sell herself to the highest bidder, and her power is an illusion permitted by him.

Le Guinn's difficulty in surpassing the grotesque imagery of chess playing in the form of *human pachisi* is of course, justified; this is, indeed, a striking metaphor of the will of the master who (mis)treats his (female) subjects as inanimate pieces on the game board. Nevertheless, Rushdie's narrative deviates from this formula of subjugation on various levels, as some resilient female characters will proceed to break the gender-bondage and reclaim authority and power. As I have argued elsewhere (Răducanu 2014: 129-151), this is a strategy of which Rushdie is quite fond. Consequently, a Rushdie-inspired perspective onto the Shakespearean play, or a literary game of reading Rushdie into Shakespeare suggests that, at the core of both novella and play, Qara Kōz as the "the enchantress of Florence" and Desdemona as "the enchanted of Venice" attempt to shape their own destiny, albeit at significant costs. Although the Shakespearean heroine pays the heftiest price for her transgressions, while Rushdie's Qara Kōz surpasses incredible odds, and remains alive (in spite of the obscure circumstances), they both exercise their free will, while engaging with male characters in a confrontation of wills, and through a questionable display of dissimulation and vanity. At times, such inclinations towards dissimulation and vanity exhaust the otherwise endless possibilities of the 'reality' of language as everyday reliable occurrence and extend towards the infinitely richer paths of magic.

Women's *sexual* choices, in both literary works, are what move the plot forward. In Shakespeare's play, Iago's informing Brabantio about Desdemona's horrendous social and personal *faux pas* in choosing Othello to bed her (although he is her lawful husband) is the Cassandra-like announcement of a later doom to befall most characters. The first stone in the foundation of the Shakespearean tragedy is laid by Iago, the master storyteller, who thus proceeds to weave his intricate web of truths and fabrications. The "old black ram" that "is tuppung your white ewe" (Shakespeare 1980b: I.1.91-92) are the famous code-names for the characters involved in a tragic love and sex story. Desdemona, the unconventional

Venetian aristocrat is thus introduced to us as a breaker of the boundaries of respectability by her choice of a spouse, the outsider, the Other in terms of race, appearance and possibly, beliefs.

In *The Enchantress of Florence* Qara Köz, although surrendered as spoils of war to the Uzbeks by her own brother, Babar decides not to return to her home when the Shah of Persia wins over her captors. Henceforth, she starts weaving for herself a tale of rejection of the female gender-based ordinary and predictable existence, and forges the individual destiny of a rare female explorer of both foreign spaces and male psycho-geographies. She becomes, via her adventurous life of perils, dangers, and sufferings, the very opposite of Queen Jodha, Akbar's imagined wife, who lives in the palace and cannot exist outside it. Her name becomes synonymous with "journey", as opposed to the "anti-journey" represented by Queen Jodha. For her act of rebellion and disobedience, translated as a decision to continue her life among strangers and captors, Babar disowns the enchantress, his stray sister. Significantly, the enchantress' story of a refusal of conformity is told by Mogor dell'Amor, her self-proclaimed descendant and, in the present reading, comparable to Shakespeare's Iago, in view of their shared ability to spin a tale. Qara Köz's banishment from her own kind, performed by her very brother, is a gesture of disparaged male pride, analogous to Brabantio's, the offended Shakespearean father who, surpassed by the extraordinary choice of his daughter, sees her as "abus'd, stol'n from me, and corrupted" (Shakespeare 1980 b: I.3.59-60) and decides to seal his rapport with her, with an ominous warning to her husband: "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee" (I.3.293-295).

Arguably, the most significant parallel bond between Desdemona and Qara Köz lies in their common fascination with foreign males' authority and power, both in terms of linguistic skills and military prowess. The Shakespearean heroine, in her own father's words, "a maiden never bold" (Shakespeare 1989b: 1.3.95) is *enchanted* by Othello's prestige as a warrior, but also by his former tales of incredible adventures and strange encounters. She replaces his "visage" with his "mind", a process of substitution facilitated by the authority of the language he used to narrate the story of his tumultuous life. Desdemona is moved by stories that are "strange", "passing strange", "pitiful", "wondrous pitiful" (I.3.159-161), this crescendo of attributes leading to her passionately claiming that "she wish'd/That heaven had made her such a man" (I.3.164). For Desdemona, therefore, Othello embodies adventure, freedom, fascination with the unknown and its dangerous realms and beings. What she experiences is also metaphysical desire, turned into "the desire to be Another" (Girard 1965: 83), because as she falls prey to Othello's tales of wonders, she aims to become him, to reach completeness through him, the mediator who will become the object of her desires. On the other hand, as Othello will later on clarify the story of the origin of love and longing for the benefit of the Florentine aristocracy, Desdemona is not alone in her awe of the Moor's deeds. Paradoxically, her desire mediator is Brabantio, her parent. It is he, as the father and the symbol of patriarchal authority who, according to Othello, "loved me, oft' invited me... these things to hear" (I.3.149-150). Albeit with no intention, Brabantio is the culprit in this game of attraction, its very mediator, since he facilitated his daughter's desire for Othello, a carnal desire induced by the "discourse" that she was willing to "devour" (I.3.174). After falling in love with her future husband, charmed by his wondrous tales, and encouraged by her father's approval, Desdemona aims to acquire the same skill with language. This is most

obvious in the scene where Cassio requests of her to be his intercessor for Othello's favour. Her reply is indicative of her newly-found power: "My lord shall never rest; I'll watch him tame and talk him out of patience; His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift; I'll intermingle everything he does, With Cassio's suit." (III.3.22-26). This constitutes a significant moment in the power/desire dynamics of the play, in that it appears to be "the first indication in the play that Othello may be losing his own power, that if his ability to govern his wife depends on her enraptured silence, he has lost the domestic battle before it begins" (Pryse 1976: 467). It also marks the beginning of Desdemona's gradual process of disenchantment from the web of attraction and desire, achieved through her newly accumulated mastery over the power of words, which she seems to have been able to 'steal' from her husband. Desdemona may not have a sword, but she has a tongue, and she begs Cassio to remain "Why, stay, and hear me speak" (III.3.31), perhaps not thinking it to Cassio's advantage, but rather to increase the size of her audience. Like the men in the play, she is proud of commanding within her own sphere.

Desdemona's thirst for real-life adventures, which in the Shakespearean play is left unfulfilled (unless we count her very short marriage to a man unlike any other), is uncannily picked up by Qara Köz from Rushdie's text, who actually experiences what Desdemona could only experience through Othello, as internal mediator/model. Another parallel can be traced here, between the pair Desdemona/Othello and Qara Köz. The Rushdian heroine's story of survival among foreign peoples and nations, her captivity narrative turned triumphant is both an actualization of Desdemona's dreams of impossible quest *and* the reverberation of Othello's perilous journeys and adventures. In the dialogue between the play and the novel, the Moor's "Disastrous chances,/ Of moving accidents by flood and field,/ Of hair-breadth scapes i'th' imminent deadly/ breach," the surpassed danger "of being taken by the insolent foe/ And sold to slavery" (I.3.135-139) are a convincing equivalent for the enchantress to be handed over by her own brother, and become the lover of the Shah of Persia (her previous lover's foe), and finally the uncrowned queen of Argalia's heart, yet another victor over her previous lover. At least temporarily, through mere will power, both Othello and the enchantress survive to either tell their tale or have their tale told, thus escaping the destiny of fatalities of history, as mere pawns in the hands of their captors and foes.

The enchantress of Florence unlearns the victim-behaviour; unable to completely subtract herself from the process of commodification, she instead chooses her own buyer in the person of the highest bidder. Similarly to Mogor dell'Amor, her self-proclaimed descendant, she acquires assertiveness not just for survival, but for dominance and control. Thus, she comes to preside over the perennial game of the two opposing genders and *sells herself*, only after performing a careful selection of potential sexual partners, via their achievements as warriors. From the Uzbek Lord, to the Shah of Persia, and finally to the greatest love of her life, Argalia, the Florentine who re-fashioned himself as the Head of Janissaries in the Ottoman Court, the Enchantress marches like a victorious general in the age-old gender-confrontation, empowered by her Mughal blood:

They were not the victims of history but its makers. Her brother and his son and his son after him. What a kingdom they would establish, the glory of the world. She willed it, foresaw it into being by the ferocity of her need. And she would do the

same, against impossible odds in this alien world she would make her own kingdom, for, she, too, was born to rule. She was a Mughal woman and as fearsome as any man. Her will was equal to the task. (Rushdie 2008a: 324)

Qara Kōz's mimetic desire for survival, transformed into domination and control, is therefore induced by the male members of her family, in a manner similar to Brabantio's facilitating, albeit unwillingly, his own daughter's embracing the possibility of an adventurous destiny of/in Othello. Remarkably, although both Qara Kōz and Desdemona may refer to male models as inspirers and inducers of desire, they are subjected to a complex process which appears to automatically engender the disregard of the model's role. As subjects, they attempt to instantaneously seclude themselves from the truth of their own mimetism. Qara Kōz decides to abandon her family, her warrior male relatives, while Desdemona effortlessly severs the daughter-father ties. However, by the voluntary seclusion from the certainty of their own mimic abilities, they paradoxically become even more entrenched into the mimetic structure that is responsible for their actions.

The presence of magic objects in the play and the novel also supports this line of thought, since both female characters are affected by mimetic desire mediated by their male counterparts, *through* magic. Although so far I have discussed mimetic desire only in terms of the two female characters' dreamed of/experienced adventures, as well as their fascination with surpassing their male models in the ability to spin-a-tale and rule the world, the intervention of magic and magic objects extends it to the realm of feelings, emotions, as well as exceptional power over others. In Shakespeare's play, the handkerchief that Othello (Desdemona's both object/mediator of desire) gives her is claimed to be a token of absolute supremacy over the loved ones. Its loss signifies the obliteration of the said power and consequently, by breaking the chain of mimetic desire, its very death. The much discussed handkerchief has ambiguous origins, since in one passage Othello's mother got it from an Egyptian charmer (III.4.57-58), and from his father in another passage (V.2.223-24). Thus, desire mediated by another (or something other) rarely follows a straight line toward the object. On the contrary, it displays a devious trajectory, with many meanders. While apparently necessary, these meanders, as stages towards the goal, nevertheless will only result in the opposite effect. Regardless of its origins, the handkerchief, in its capacity to signify the "blurring of subject and object" is readable as a sample of what "Lévy-Bruhl called *participation mystique*" similar to the belief in a "bush-soul", "incarnate in a wild animal or a tree, with which he is connected by kind of psychic identity" (Fike 2009: 100). Jung discusses the importance of ceremony, which in this case refers to "the ritual transfer from mother to son to wife" (*ibid.*); in my present reading, something else is implied in Othello's obsession with the missing handkerchief that had been handed down to him, namely his fear that its loss would kill *his* desire for Desdemona, as well as *her* power over him. Thus the multifaceted Othello – as object of Desdemona's desire here, as well as the one who must continue to desire her – is shown as marked by the possibility of having his function erased via the loss of the magic object which, along with the equally magic power of language, installed him as the object of desire in the first place. The erotic power of women is shown as the occult power of women, even if the trigger of power is mimetic desire.

This is even more obvious in Rushdie's novel, a text even richer in a similar emphasis on magic and connection between magic and erotic/mimetic desire. Even

before Qara Köz reveals herself to the Florentine authorities, her presence as object of people's longings is anticipated by various magic objects which create her aura of wonder and enchantment and, in the present reading, serve to magnify and disperse mimetic desire. Thus, we learn that the Medici family is in the possession of a magic mirror supposedly able to "reveal to the reigning Duke the image of the most desirable woman in the known world" (Rushdie 2008a: 336), and that even before the enchantress arrives in Florence, she has already become a centre of attraction. When Akbar is told the story of his long-lost aunt by the Mogor del'Amore (the mediator of his desire), he orders the court painter Dashwanth to paint the details of the story of the enchanted princess. His command mirrors that of the Duke of Medici, who had asked for the same, but had failed to obtain it, due to the painter's inability to capture the ethereal beauty. Dashwanth, at Akbar's court, complies, but he draws her as "Lady Black Eyes", an adolescent girl believed to possess superhuman powers (Rushdie 2008a: 152). Rushdie's narrative thus provides an even more interesting way of reading and amplifying mimetic desire, since Dashwanth's mysterious disappearance is clarified by his being discovered as part of his own canvas. This conclusive conjunction between the creator and his art signifies the supreme achievement of mimetic desire in terms of magic and language.

The Enchantress' surviving skills are either elevated by men to saintly virtues or abundantly vilified. In Florence, at first, Qara Köz is re-named "The Dark Lady" and becomes an inspiration for poets, artists and sculptors (idem: 347), Pope Leo X speculates to Duke Giuliano about the possibility of her "being the Church's newest saint" (idem: 350), and then "reports of her miracles began" (ibid.):

Many of those who saw her walking the streets claimed to have heard, playing all around her, the crystal music of the spheres. Others swore that they had seen a halo of light around her head, bright enough to be visible even in the hot glare of the day. Barren women came up to Qara Köz and asked her to touch their bellies, and then told the world that they had conceived children that very night. The blind saw, the lame walked; only an actual resurrection from the dead was missing from the account of her magical deeds (Rushdie 2008a: 351).

Nevertheless, Qara Köz's magic aura gradually deteriorates, those who almost sanctified her, are all too ready to vilify her, deny her absolute power and render her as the incarnation of devils; thus, she stops being the epitome of all men's and women's desire (idem: 341, 343) and becomes instead the disruptive presence of the menacing "Saracen whore" (idem: 356), in the heart of the West. This is a de-sanctification process similar to Desdemona's 'fall from grace' in the eyes of her jealous husband, who notices harshly, after accusing her of being a whore, that:

Her name, that was as fresh
As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black
As mine own face. (Shakespeare 1980b: III.3.441-443).

3. Conclusion

At the heart of the play and the novel alike lie the arts of story-telling, magic performing and dissimulation carried on by trickster-like characters. Othello, Iago, Desdemona, Akbar, Mogor dell'Amore, the Qara Köz (aka the Enchantress of

Florence) both submit to the hegemonies of language and magic, and control them. Hence, they are, at the same time, caught in the web of make-belief and incessantly spin tales to capture their counterparts' desire. In this marvellously lethal game of wording, there are no winners and no losers, unless we, as spectators and readers decide to break the fourth wall and join the congregation of shadows. In their extreme desirability as well as the strength of their own epic desire for adventure and experienced carnality, Desedmona and Qara Köz are situated at the very core of the play and the novel, which may be read as an ode to stunning female beauty as well as a reminder of its perils. One moment conquering heroines, who have captured the hearts of their partners and of all those who come near them, the next, scapegoats, hags, whores, ugly old monsters, Desdemona and Qara Köz are usurped by the very legend of extreme desirability that announces and sustains their presence in the text.

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FOLKLORE AND VODOO IN ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S *THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD*

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Abstract *Zora Neale Hurston's best-known novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937), has become a major part of the African American as well as the American literary canon, though it had not always received a large readership. As a trained ethnologist (B.A., Columbia University, 1928), Hurston had conducted field work in the Southern states of the U.S. as well as in the Bahamas, Jamaica and Haiti, and published in scholarly journals as well as one book of collected folklore, Mules and Men (1935) before Their Eyes Were Watching God was written and published. This contribution attempts to show the impact and influence her cultural anthropology field work exerted on the novel.*

Keywords: *African American literature, ethnology, folklore, voodoo, Zora Neale Hurston*

1. Introduction: biography and works

Known best as the author of the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), the African-American author Zora Neale Hurston started her professional career as an anthropologist. Hurston's parents and grandparents had worked on cotton plantations in Alabama, and all four of her grandparents were born into slavery. Born in 1891 in Notasulga, Alabama, Zora Neale Hurston was raised in Eatonville, Florida, the sixth of eleven children, and Eatonville was the home base of her early field work in Southern African American ethnology. Hurston's father, John Hurston, was a Baptist minister, a tenant farmer, who served as mayor of Eatonville from 1914-1916; as a prominent member of this African-American community in Central Florida, he figures as a domineering character in two novels, the aforementioned *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as well as *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), her first novel. Hurston's father seemed to have embodied what W.E.B. Du Bois (1989: 155) underscored in the chapter entitled "Of the Faith of the Fathers" in *The Souls of Black Folk* as "the most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil. A leader, a politician, an orator, a 'boss', an intriguer, an idealist", as well as a Baptist preacher. John Hurston's father was a white man who never acknowledged his paternity, and he was nicknamed "dat yaller bastard" by his mother-in-law and others in the Notasulga society (Hurston 1991: 8) and included in the opening of *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1990a: 3).

Hurston's mother, Lucy Potts Hurston, was supportive of young Zora, helping her with her school-work and arranging for others to help when the lessons became too advanced for her. She pushed Zora and her siblings to be ambitious. However, Hurston's mother died in 1904, when Zora was thirteen, and her father's quick remarriage with Mattie Moge, a disagreeable woman only six years older than Hurston, led to demoralizing personal conflicts, ultimately resulting in Zora leaving grammar school prematurely. Hurston spent the next years away from

home, mostly cooking in kitchens while attending school. She did not graduate from high school until she was in her late twenties.

Hurston initially attended the historically black institute of higher education, Howard University in Washington D.C., before transferring in 1925 with a scholarship to attend Barnard College, the women's college at Columbia University. She was financially supported to attend the elite female school by Annie Nathan Meyer, the founder of Barnard. Hurston majored in anthropology under Melville Herskovits, Ruth Benedict and Franz Boas, among the renowned scholars in this field at the time. "Papa Franz", as she called the eminent German Jewish scholar, "imbued Hurston with his ideas about cultural relativism, a theory that lifted anthropology from the racial constraints of nineteenth-century evolution theory and placed equal value on all cultures" (Bordelon 1999: 10). Boas emphasized exacting field work methods and even after Hurston graduated with a B.A. in 1928 (Hemenway 1977: 21), Boas continued supporting her by helping her to win a fellowship from Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, to study folklore and voodoo practices with Marie Laveau in New Orleans and later in Florida, from 1928 to 1930 (Lawless 2013: 159).

Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was written while she conducted fieldwork in Haiti in 1936, and the masterpiece was completed in just seven weeks, from November to December. Awarded a second Guggenheim Fellowship, Hurston spent six months in Jamaica in 1936 and a further eleven months in 1937-8 in Haiti. Her research resulted in the study *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (1938). This work, written concurrently with *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), offered, along with her earlier book on folklore, *Mules and Men* (1935), new information and interpretations of the mores of rural blacks in Florida, Jamaica and Haiti. This paper sets out to review some specific anthropological influences evident in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

A short recapitulation about Hurston's activities after the thirties may be necessary to complete this brief portrayal. Required to receive government welfare when she returned from Haiti, Hurston served in the Roosevelt Administration's program for, among others, poor writers and artists during the Great Depression, called WPA (Works Progress Administration), in Florida. In her late forties and fifties, she worked as a librarian and teacher, and in her sixties as a cleaning woman. At this point, Hurston's works were largely out of print and ignored (Hurston 1999: 139-145). In 1960, aged 69, she died impoverished. In the early 1970s her novels and short stories experienced a revival. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and a few stories by Hurston are today the focus of considerable research and are read and taught extensively at U.S. high schools and in English departments at universities around the world.

The central locality of most of Hurston's stories and first two novels is Eatonville, Florida. In her first book of folklore, entitled *Mules and Men* Hurston collected tales and other folklore of the denizens of this all-black central Florida town. The residents never traveled far from Eatonville and consequently did not know much of Florida beyond nearby Jacksonville. The township of Eatonville still is an all-black, incorporated town, which had been established by Samuel Eaton of Hartford, Connecticut for freed slaves, after the Civil War; its geographical isolation allowed for the maintenance of the oral tradition expressed in Hurston's collected tales that reveal rural black Americans' world outlook. Since it was the same town Hurston had grown up in, she knew some of the inhabitants contributing to *Mules and Men* from her childhood.

The tales in the first anthropological study, *Mules and Men*, offer, as Boas writes in its Preface, “the Negro’s reaction to every day events, to his emotional life, his humor and passions [...] the peculiar amalgamation of African and European tradition which is so important for understanding historically the character of American Negro life” (Boas 1978: x). Many facets of these tales and the people who told them to Hurston became models for her fictional characters and helped form the rather sophisticated, modernist narrative devices in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

2. Folk tales and the female voice

Since the tales of *Mules and Men* are not collected from faceless informants, but from individuals whose lives are briefly introduced to the reader, Hurston displays rural black life more realistically in her fiction, when integrating these individuals in some measure into her fiction. While doing field work for this book, Hurston met a woman in January, 1928 in Polk County, Florida, at a saw mill camp. This woman, called “Big Sweet” in her community, had physical power, emotional strength and tenderness, prototypical attributes of the main character called “Janie” in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. “Big Sweet” contributed two tales included in *Mules and Men*, but neither tale offers any particular female view of the Eatonville society. Cheryl Wall (1993: 88) has noted that, although many tales exist about women told by men (many “virulently anti-female”), almost no tales are told by women from the female point of view.

This fact stands in stark contrast to the woman’s voice which is the great central point for Hurston’s novel. Hurston wished in her novel to give a voice to the women in this world of rural blacks, which was missing in her field work observations. The plot is framed as a story Janie Crawford Killicks Starks Woods tells to another woman, well out of hearing-range of any man; her friend Pheobe consoles with Janie after she returns from a hurricane, the death of her husband and a court trial. On the other hand, in ways similar to the female blacks of Eatonville represented in *Mules and Men*, Janie is insulted and humiliated by her husband. Ironically, as a light-skinned black, Janie is admired when, beaten by her husband, her eye bruises to a noticeably darker color. “It aroused a sort of envy in both men and women.” The community’s black men regard this bruise as something erotic as well as the silence in which Janie took the beating (Hurston 1978b: 218-219). Elaine Lawless (2013: 164) elucidates that Hurston “was often writing about intraracial politics and gender politics”, which is evident in this scene of the novel. Her third husband, Vergible Woods or Tea Cake, cheats on her, and after many of these various humiliations, Janie makes little to no comment and therefore remains without a protesting voice. When she is beaten, she does not yell, but only cries to herself, another aspect greatly admired by the novel’s black male characters. On occasion, Janie spoke out, for instance, when she confronts her second husband, Jody Starks, near his death, as he can no longer physically abuse her anymore.

The fact that Janie rarely confronts her husband in these encounters reflects Hurston’s anthropological observations of the paternalistic male/female relationships in Eatonville whereby the husband’s “[b]eing able to whip her assured him in possession” (Hurston 1978b: 218). This behaviour is noted in the folklore included in *Mules and Men*. In one tale, violence in domestic relationships receives an anodyne “folk explanation.” Told by a black Eatonville woman named

Mathilda Moseley, this tale is one of the few told with a female voice which addresses a number of gender distinctions. I have summarized this tale's plot below:

Men and women were originally of the same strength. Man and woman fought but since neither was any stronger than the other, fighting was minimal and respect and equality pervaded. One day, man went to God up in heaven and said, "Ah ast you please to give me mo' strength than dat woman you give me, so Ah kin make her mind. Ah know you don't want to be always comin' down way past de moon and stars to be straightenin' her out and its got to be done." So God gave him more strength. Then man went down, bragged to his woman about his new strength and immediately went about beating her up. No matter what she did, there was no chance for the woman. He beat her viciously. Then woman went to heaven and complained to God, asking why He gave man more strength and not woman. "You ain't never ast me for mo' power," replied God. Woman asked for just the same strength that He gave man. God said no. Woman was real mad and went straight to the devil. The devil made woman get three keys from God which hung on the wall of heaven. Woman went to heaven, received these keys and returned to the devil. The devil showed woman how to be powerful with them: the first key was to the kitchen, the second key was to the bedroom, and the last key was to the cradle (where the children were). Man does not want to be shut out of any of these three rooms. The Devil advised woman to keep these doors locked until man used his strength for woman's benefit and woman's desires. Additionally, the devil tells woman not to talk about these keys and her new power. Woman expressed gratitude to the devil: "If it wasn't for you, Lawd knows whut us po' women folks would do." This tale ends with distinctions between the voice of man and woman: "And dat's why de man makes and de woman takes. You men is still braggin' 'bout yo' strength and de women is sittin' on de keys and lettin' you blow off till she git ready to put de bridle on you" (Hurston 1978a: 33-38).

Pragmatically, this tale may be viewed as an instrument to indicate to women their power and thus aid them to survive, just as African-American tales generally serve the function of facilitating black expression of hostility towards society and its rulers (Blassingame 1979: 114-115, 127-130), including "Ole Massa" stories and trickster animal tales, in which weaker or smaller animals outwit the more powerful animal. This tale allows the woman to be self-effacing and poke fun at herself while expressing hostility to her man, a similar feature also reflected in Janie, the narrator of the framed plot within *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. While this tale concerns wife-beating, it also offers an explanation why, under such humiliating circumstances, the female protagonist in the novel would keep silent, remaining voiceless while nevertheless preserving a few areas of power which men could not control.

Janie's voiceless 'submissiveness' might be interpreted in light of traditional mores in black culture. Generally speaking, in African-American communities, eloquent 'talkers' ostensibly hold power. The oral endowment of African-Americans developed over centuries in an overwhelmingly illiterate culture during slavery, where folktales and music invoked African heritage as well as substantial entertainment. Hurston's own father, a moving and domineering speaker, held his powerful positions such as community church preacher and mayor, in many ways echoed in the character Joe Starks, Janie's powerful, bragging husband in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* or the main protagonist John Pearson in *Jonah's Gourd Vine*. Thus, these unpublished details of the oral arguments made by Robert Stepto

at an MLA conference and referenced by Mary Helen Washington that Janie's silence (rather than a verbal confrontation) indicates that Janie had not found her voice and thereby, for all intents and purposes, remains a weak character, a statement argued down by Alice Walker (Washington 1998: xi-xiii, and Washington 1993: 98-101).

Throughout her lifetime, Hurston (2000) called for equal rights for women, and wrote about the oppression of women in the rural southern U.S., Jamaica, and Haiti (Hurston 1990b: 16-18, 57-62). Indeed, the title of *Mules and Men* refers to a tale about women as 'mules'. Yet she does not permit her views on women's rights to interfere with an authentic representation of Janie's voicelessness in her novel. As the infuriated Alice Walker pointed out at the December 1979 MLA Conference debate on Janie finding her voice (as a response to Stepto), "women did not have to speak when men thought they should [...] they would choose when and where they wish to speak because, while many women *had* found their voices, they also knew when it was better not to use it" (Washington 1998: xi, italics in original). Another critic asseverates this idea more succinctly: "Where Janie yearns, Zora was probably driven; where Janie submits, Zora would undoubtedly have rebelled" (Williams 1978: x).

Most critics today view Janie as expressing at the novel's end the collective, communal (black woman's) voice rather than an individual one. Her voice is regarded as a sort of collective spirit of the essential female African-American oral tradition. The plot of this novel centers around Janie, who not only tells Pheobe, a younger married black woman from town, of her life and pursuit of romantic love, but who also imparts wisdom gathered from her forty years of experience. The novel is a revelation - not only Janie's life story, but her love guidance to Pheobe, the embodiment of the African-American female community at large.

3. Elements of voodoo in the novel

Hurston's research in Voodoo also is reflected in her fiction. Since her composition of the novel took place concurrently with her field work in 1936, which particularly accentuated the Voodoo practices in Haiti, some aspects of Voodoo are more than tangential to Hurston's classic novel. However, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* should not be read as a Voodoo novel *per se*. The setting is imbued into the culture of Protestant Eatonville, while only a few Voodoo elements may be detected.

Critics have wrestled with many qualities of Janie, who develops in many respects from a vulnerable, diffident teenage girl, directed into obeying her conservative and religious grandmother, into a strong woman deliberately doing what she desires, in spite of the pressure originating from society gossip, in the relentless pursuit of romantic love. As a virgin teenager, one spring she witnesses:

a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from the root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. Then Janie felt a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid. (Hurston 1978b: 24)

This event marks a vital stage in Janie's youth: she wishes to discover her love, her own part of nature which was apparent "for all other creatures except herself"

(Hurston 1978b: 24). This sexual awakening arises in the spring season as Janie observes nature in the act of creation. In the scrupulously researched chapter on Voodoo in her Haitian section of *Tell My Horse*, Hurston emphasizes the primal feature of natural sexual creation as the very foundation of Voodoo. Through her mentor in Port-au-Prince, Hurston describes how she came to understand creation of life. Voodoo is

the old, old mysticism of the world in African terms. Voodoo is a religion of creation and life... worship of the sun, the water and other natural forces... “What is the truth?” Dr. Holly asked me, and knowing that I could not answer him he answered himself through a Voodoo ceremony in which the Mambo, that is the priestess, richly dressed is asked this question ritualistically. She replies by throwing back her veil and revealing her sex organs. The ceremony means that this is the infinite, the ultimate truth. There is no mystery beyond the mysterious source of life. (Hurston 1990b: 113)

To the Haitians, the ‘mystery of life’ does not transcend sexual creation, and this creation is evident in nature as in man. The influence of nature on Janie’s sexual awakening at the opening of the novel definitely reflects an organic response practitioners of Voodoo embrace in the natural mystery of sexuality. Janie responds to nature near the opening of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in much the same way as the Haitians Hurston studied. As with the folklore in *Mules and Men*, although Voodoo is not explicitly practiced by any of the main characters in the novel, in their mores, medicine, and funerals, the African American community members described in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* reflect some similarities to practitioners of Voodoo in Haiti. For example, Hurston’s characters culturally respond to time only through biological cycles and seasons. Yet the Seminoles are much more closely connected to the changes and dangers of nature: “she went home by herself one afternoon when she saw a band of Seminoles passing by. The men walking in front and the laden, stolid women following them like burros... this was a large party” (1978b: 228); after two more sizable groups of Seminoles pass, she learns that they were heading towards high ground since a hurricane was on its way, thoroughly aware as these Native Americans were due to their closeness to nature. Yet Janie and Tea Cake stayed, thinking “Indians are dumb anyhow, always were [...] Still a blue sky and fair weather” (1978b: 229). Repeatedly warned of the dangers, the notion of a hurricane really being dangerous still did not occur to them even with many animals acting strangely, and as a consequence, Janie and Tea Cake nearly drowned in the subsequent flooding of the lowlands. Hurston fictionalized the San Felipe – Okeechobee Florida Hurricane of 1928, which killed approximately 3000 people. It remains to this day the second deadliest hurricane in U.S. history, and three quarters of the dead were African Americans (Manzella 2018: 57-58).

Hurston frames the narration for Pheobe’s imminent experience to appear real because she initiates her narrative with the familiar reality of bourgeois life: a home, a worried grandmother, a first romance, a matched-up and conventional, loveless marriage to an acceptable man arranged by the parental authority figure. This life moves modestly forward, except that, occasionally, a voice from nature intrudes, such as the “dust-bearing bee sink[ing] into the sanctum of a bloom” (1978b: 24), reminding Janie of her primal quest for romantic love. This repetitive return to nature in the narrative by Janie echoes Lawrence Buell’s conception in *The Environmental Imagination* (1996: 64), referring specifically to *négritude*,

as “a traditional, holistic, non-metropolitan, nature-attuned myth of Africanity [and a] reaction to and critique of a more urbanized, ‘artificial’ European order.”

Another example of Hurston importing anthropological elements into her novel is the Voodoo funeral rituals. In *Tell My Horse*, Hurston recounts the death and Catholic funeral of a goat, which is so essential to the Voodoo of a mambo in strengthening her powers of conjurement. The funeral is presented as lamentable and embarrassing to the Catholic priest who performed the funeral. The goat had been deliberately killed in order that the mambo could marry; the act of killing the goat Hurston found especially vexatious. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a similar funeral, though with a decisively Protestant touch, takes place for a mule (an animal used extensively on Southern plantations), whose owner was the comic butt of many town jokes and extensive gossiping: the mule represented a slave and its black owner is fabricated as a cruel slave master. At variance with the Haitian scene, the mule died a natural death. However, both animals were treated with veneration and buried with much religious pomp and circumstance. Both the goat in Haiti and the mule in Florida were buried in Voodoo fashion: upside down with all four legs pointed straight towards heaven. The animals in death were buried with formal performances of rituals commanding respect, because the particular animals were viewed as essential in their respective community’s world outlook. In Haiti, the goat had an essential role in the Voodoo rituals and appeared to effect a most powerful force, both political and military. The mule in the African American community, on the other hand, was a point of sidesplitting humor and gossip in the comical commentary about the mundane existence of poor black individuals in a small town in the South. In both cases, the animal’s afterlife is referred to.

In the anthropological study *Tell My Horse* (Hurston 1990b), the goat’s funeral is described with some derision and shown to be part of a larger, tragic mistake. In the novel, however, Hurston makes the animal funeral scene in her novel a very funny one:

Out in the swamp they made great ceremony over the mule. Starks started off with a great eulogy on our departed citizen, our most distinguished citizen and the grief he left behind him... He spoke of the joys of mule-heaven to which the dear brother had departed this valley of sorrow; the mule-angels flying around; the miles of green corn and cool water... and most glorious of all, *No* ... plow lines and halters to come in and corrupt. Up there, mules-angels would have people to ride on, [and the mule] would see the devil plowing Matt Bonner all day long in the hell-hot sun and laying the raw hide to his back. (1978b: 97)

As in the tales collected by Hurston in *Mules and Men*, the mule is a representation or metaphor for the labourer, with multiple similarities to the African-American field slave plowing a master’s field without compensation or respect. For Hurston, the mule also signifies the plight of women, for in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Nanny, Janie’s grandmother, proclaims: “De nigger woman is de Mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see” (1978b: 29). This echoes a passage in *Tell My Horse* where Hurston proclaims that if a Haitian woman is not wealthy or set up well by her family,

she had better pray to the Lord to turn her into a donkey and be done with the thing. It is assumed that God made poor black females for beasts of burden, and nobody is going to interfere with providence... It is just considered down there that God made two kinds of donkeys, one kind that can talk. (1990b: 58)

Near the opening of the novel, Hurston's grandmother, Nanny, arranged for Janie Crawford to marry a man named Logan Killicks, more than twice her age, so that Janie would not become yet another "mule uh de world" to be exploited like the majority of black women. Killicks owns 60 acres of land and a house with no mortgage. Nanny figures Janie would not be a metaphorical mule with a church-going man of property. As one scholar points out, "It is significant that as she leaves the marriage, Janie was about to become Killick's third mule, to be put behind a plow" (DuPlessis 2011: 97).

The reward for the animal is heaven, and the "slave master" black mule owner's retribution is brutal suffering in hell, painted like unending field work on a slave plantation. Mocking everything about human death rituals, the mule manifests an African-American interpretation of the slave's fate and mediates between the old disharmonies of Biblical heavenly justice and America's earthly injustice. This novel thus has a crowd of people performing a parody of the human funeral practice for a mule which resembles part of the Haitian Voodoo animal funeral that Hurston relates in her anthropological study.

Another aspect of Voodoo in the novel concerns medicine, but it receives a more hostile representation. When the health of the once boastful Joe Starks begins to fail, he turns to a root-doctor, for people in the community believe that Janie may have put a curse on her husband. His health turns for the worse immediately after Janie remarks before all the townsmen in their community store that her husband can no longer perform his role sexually, and their quarrel results in marital separation with Joe's public humiliation. The formerly strong leader is revealed to be sexually feeble and thus vulnerable to comic gossip within the community, and his health deteriorates rapidly as a consequence. As he falls politically, socially, and medically into decline, Joe feels deeply his interior crudities, dubitations and materialistic gripes, which he expresses to his wife. Janie visits her husband when she learns of his deteriorating health and the inadequate diet he gets from a new cook. Voodoo medicine described in *Tell My Horse* receives no support or confidence in Hurston's novel. On the contrary, in the deaths of Janie's two husbands, traditional medical doctors arrive too late to save their patients. In Joe Starks' case, the root-doctor deviated attention from a real kidney ailment to Janie's alleged curse thereby eliminating any chance for well-timed medical intervention. Even though Hurston (1990b: 27) describes a Jamaican medicine man's cure for kidney ailments in *Tell My Horse*, this medical folklore receives only derision in Hurston's novel. This may be due to the deaths of a Jamaican girl and the intentional poisoning of a few Haitians at the hands of "medicine men" Hurston recounts in *Tell My Horse* (1990b: 27-29, 184-196).

4. Conclusion

What, to some extent, makes *Their Eyes Were Watching God* amazingly original lies in Hurston's restless effort to make the Neo-African religion and those non-European, African mores, so quickly disappearing in the former slave communities of poor blacks, an essential part of her narration. Moreover, some aspects of Hurston's novel are anthropology fictionalized, and that anthropology is not limited to black folklore within the United States, but encompasses ethnographic studies in non-English speaking countries in the African diaspora, thereby endeavouring to avoid a mere localized, English-speaking African American experience. As Lynda Hill (1996: 181) points out, "*Their Eyes* contains

the stuff of which folklore is made, while the storytelling situations in the book are representations of folklife”. In her fiction, Hurston provided the genuine values of the subjects she researched, even when she does not have Janie assume those views herself. Indeed, she is an outsider, isolated from the bourgeois Eatonville community. Additionally, Hurston deviated from her ethnographic studies when giving the strong narrative voice to this fictional rural woman in a southern black community in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Hurston certainly felt that her unique exposure to what was in the 1930s a largely unreported world offered much material for a novelist, and she took full advantage of her personal experiences along with some observations while conducting anthropological field work to create one of the finest American novels of the twentieth century.

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**“I CANNOT WANT A MUSE, WHO WRITE TO YOU”:
THE MULTIPLICITY OF RHETORICAL STYLES IN BEHN’S
THE UNFORTUNATE BRIDE: OR, THE BLIND LADY A BEAUTY.
A NOVEL**

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***Abstract:** This paper demonstrates that *The Unfortunate Bride: or, The Blind Lady a Beauty. A Novel (1698)* reflects a shift from the romance tradition towards the more ‘realistic’ genre of the novel, tracing this change through the work’s stylistic features. Classical rhetoric theory will be applied for the identification of rhetorical styles, in order to achieve a detailed analysis on the linguistic level. It starts from the premise proposed by Michael McKeon that the novel developed in a dialectical relationship with the romance genre, arising from a profound epistemological crisis that occurred towards the end of the 17th century. These observations are presented as an example of the gradual metamorphosis toward the rise of the new genre, while the contemporary scientific context, which Rose Zimbardo (1998) has termed “Zero Point”, will also be considered as a point of departure. First, the textual elements that contribute to the sublime style of the writing and enhance the complexity of the narrative will be cited and catalogued. Next, a rhetorical underpinning will be offered for Ian Watt’s influential concept of “formal realism”, which is identifiable in the text.*

***Keywords:** Aphra Behn, styles, rhetorics, novelistic realism, short fiction*

1. Introduction

This essay aims to illustrate the employment of a multiplicity of stylistic modes in *The Unfortunate Bride* (1698) by Aphra Behn. The conclusion reached is that the story contains more than two rhetorical styles, exemplifying what Ross Ballaster (2017: 386) conceptualises as “linguistic facility”, when she is describing her estimation of Aphra Behn (1640-1689) as “the most consistently intelligent writer to experiment with the varieties of fictional voice and style [...]”.

In order to achieve this, a methodology is proposed as a means to confront and transcend the ‘novel-romance’ distinction. A detailed analysis based on classical rhetoric theory of styles will be performed on the linguistic and rhetorical levels. The blend of styles evident within the narrative reflects this period of transition and development in the English literature, from the Restoration to the 18th century and the birth of the modern novel. The editor of the novel, Samuel Briscoe (Behn 1995c: 321), who is named on the cover, states in his dedication to Richard Norton that the edition is a posthumous publication, referring to “[...] my presumption in prefixing your name [Richard Norton] to a posthumous piece of hers [Behn’s]”.

The Unfortunate Bride was printed posthumously, but not published in 1698 along with *The Unfortunate Happy Lady* and *The Dumb Virgin*, which were

published in 1700 in *Histories, Novels and Translations, Written by the Most Ingenious Aphra Behn*. Moreover, this book included the pieces *The Wandering Beauty* and *The Unhappy Mistake*. It may be that *Histories, Novels, and Translations* was produced as a companion volume to the fourth edition of *All the Histories and Novels*, published twice in 1696 – with third and fourth editions in 1698 and 1700, respectively (O'Donnell 2004: xxii). Huntington Library (San Marino, California) holds a copy of the story, though they have no other similar titles. The title pages of their copy date from 1698 and 1700. O'Donnell (2016: 165-170) considers it an “ideal” copy, since no other one has been located.

Janet Todd (1995: ix-x, 1996: 317) questions the authorship of several posthumously published stories under the name of Aphra Behn, as do Germaine Greer (1995a: 196, 1995b: 33-47) and Leah Orr (2013: 30). Ross Ballaster (2017: 386) doubts the “provenance” of the nine short fiction tales which “followed after her [Behn’s] death”. Maureen Bell (2020: 284) infers that “[...] the main charge against Briscoe: [is] that of unscrupulous [...]”, adding that “[t]ogether, Briscoe and Gildon [another editor] are accused of attributing to Behn works they knew full well were not by her. Their principal offence is in constructing for profit a fictional oeuvre fraught [...] with numerous problems of attribution”. Today, the field of computational stylistics is able to shed light on this issue, as we eagerly look forward to the first volume of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Aphra Behn* in the coming months, whose general editors are Claire Bowditch, Mel Evans, Elaine Hobby, and Gillian Wright. *The Unfortunate Bride* will appear in volume VII of the edition, and the work itself is co-edited by Leah Orr and Paul Salzman. I consider that *The Unfortunate Bride* is not by Aphra Behn, although it was published and circulated under her name for a very long time. It should be borne in mind that a literary work’s association with the name of Aphra Behn entailed, at the end of the 17th century, its correlation with a successfully published female author. Aphra Behn is considered England’s first professional woman writer, notable for her varied, wide-ranging literary career, including numerous plays, a good number of poems, ground-breaking translations from French, as well as pieces of short fiction, like *The History of the Nun* (1689).

The present paper draws on the argument by Michael McKeon (1987: 37-23) that connects “the questions of truth” with the “destabilisation of generic categories” “occasioned by the challenge presented by ‘naïve empiricism’ to ‘romance idealism’”. McKeon refers to the capacity of the 18th century novel to mediate the interrelated epistemological and ideological “contradictions of the early modern age” (Hudson 2017: 330) and studies the “epistemological crisis” in the emergence of the new genre (McKeon 2005: 70-71).

My contention is therefore that *The Unfortunate Bride* reflects the gradual shift from romance literature towards the novelistic genre, in alignment with the cultural transition that occurred during the Restoration. Rose Zimbaro (1998: 39-42) explains this as “the aesthetics and discourse of the ‘Zero Point’ journey from the Restoration to the eighteenth century,” entailing the collapse of an epistemology under the weight of questions it has itself raised. *The Unfortunate Bride* presents a shift from linguistic complexity to “simple pattern” and “a movement from romance to novelistic principles of topical, domestic, bourgeois frames of reference” (Pearson 2004: 189). In this respect, it places Behn at the forefront of a cultural innovation. Considering these claims, this assertion will be made through an examination of the function of classical rhetoric in Behn’s innovatory practice and the application and function of various literary devices.

Jacqueline Pearson derives the term “simple pattern” from Jane Spencer (2000: 126). The idea of a change from “novelistic principles” towards new “frames of references” is taken up by Helen Hackett (2000: 188). Pearson makes particular reference to another story, “Memoirs of the Court of the King of Bantam” (1697) (Behn 1995a: 271-291) and part of the “Advertisement to the Reader”, most likely written by Charles Gidon, which notes the novelty of this writing style: “The Stile [sic] of the Court of the King of Bantam, being so different from Mrs. Behn’s usual way of Writing, [...]” (Behn 1995a: 272).

Rose Zimbaro (1998: 2) compares “two dominant competing discourses [...] at a period of radical epistemological break”, which she names “Restoration Zero Point”. “This is a period which, by the simultaneous operation of its constructive and deconstructive thrusts, can be understood epistemologically as two periods – one looking backwards to Renaissance models, the other looking forward to eighteenth-century Enlightenment models” (ibid.). She applies her theory to *Oroonoko* (1688), observing: “the novel reveals two important changes that occurred in the movement from seventeenth – to eighteenth-century practice: its combination of the old ‘discourse of patterning’ and the new analytico-referential ‘discourse of modernism’ (Reiss 1982: 50) with its ‘naturalizing’ of experience by creating interiority in character and realism in setting” (Zimbaro 2014: 39). She even postulates that “Behn’s novel [*Oroonoko*] can be used to demonstrate [...] a key transition in poetic mimesis, marking the transformation of a closed classical form – the romance or the prose epic – into the first novel in English” (ibid.).

2. Mapping the plot

The Unfortunate Bride: Or The Blind Lady a Beauty. A Novel has three settings (Staffordshire – mentioned in passing at the start of the tale, and then London and Cambridge) and six characters: Frankwit and Wildvill (two friends who grow up together in Staffordshire), Belvira (who is sent to London when her mother dies), Celesia, Moorea, and the narrator (“I”, 333). Frankwit and Belvira, enamoured of each other since childhood, confess their love and Belvira asks her cousin Celesia (daughter of a Turkish merchant, who is blind) whether she should consummate their love in order to keep her beloved forever. Celesia recommends a spiritual or Platonic love, as opposed to a carnal one, in order to perpetuate happiness, with the dialogue delving into concepts such as how to nourish love, the definition of pleasure, the definition of “Women enjoy’d” (328) and expectation, everything being expressed with a striking series of metaphors and similes.

Frankwit must travel to Cambridgeshire to collect a pending debt, “a small concern as yet unmortgaged [...] a brace of thousand pounds” (329). He plans to use the money for his wedding to Belvira, with all the pageantry that their mutual love deserves, with their separation paining the lovers greatly. The same summer night on which Frankwit arrives from London to Cambridge, he writes a poem to his beloved, thus compensating for the “dull prose company of his servant” (ibid.), whose verses sprouted “as naturally and anartificially, as his love or his breath” (ibid.). Belvira, who “resolved not to be at all behind hand with him” (330), writes another letter/poem to her beloved. The harmony of this plot is shattered by two key developments: first, when Moorea, a widow who is staying in the same house as Frankwit, falls in love with him and gets her maid to steal the letter from Frankwit’s pocket; and, second, when Frankwit contracts a “violent fever” (332). Moorea then steals and hides the letters that Belvira sends him, and sends a misleading letter to Belvira convincing her that her lover is dead.

Meanwhile, Wildvill visits Belvira and asks her about her friend Frankwit. She responds that a black lady has bewitched him. Wildvill, consequently, concludes that Frankwit has given up Belvira's *purity* for the *blackness* of the widow Moorea. Wildvill courts Belvira who, convinced of Frankwit's death, accepts him.

After the wedding of Wildvill and Belvira has been held, Frankwit returns to London and arrives at what is, presumably, Belvira's house, where he is flabbergasted to find that his beloved has married his best friend. Frankwit draws his sword, ready to kill himself in front of his beloved, but Belvira, thinking that she is seeing Frankwit's ghost, screams and faints. Frankwit takes her in his arms to revive her. Wildvill, searching for his bride, and surprised by her screams, finds her in Frankwit's arms. He then accuses his friend Frankwit of being a traitor. Wildvill draws his sword, snapping at Frankwit: "have you kept that Strumpet all this while [...], and now think fit to put your damn'd cast Mistress upon me" (334). A tragic ending unwinds: Wildvill slashes Belvira's arm with his sword by mistake, leaving her mortally wounded. Frankwit reacts by stabbing Wildvill – all due to a "misunderstanding" (334). Wildvill dies. A fading Belvira asks Frankwit to marry her friend Celesia in her memory, joining the hands of Celesia and Frankwit before she expires. He fulfils his promise a few months after the burial.

3. The theory of styles: a rhetorical foundation

This investigation, which goes beyond an exploration of the parodic use of romance language, is based on a rhetorical foundation of the multiplicity of styles that coexist within the text. It demonstrates that the story reflects a shift from the tradition of the romance towards the more 'realistic' genre of the novel, a shift that can be traced through the writer's employment of determined stylistic features. A parodic use of 'romance language' has been identified in many early novels. It is a hallmark of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, as well as of several English texts of the quixotic tradition, such as Charlotte Lennox' (2006) *The Female Quixote*. Satire on romance is almost as old as romance itself. *Don Quixote* is only the most obvious example. In *The Female Quixote* (1752), Charlotte Lennox depicts the protagonist Arabella as acting in a quixotic, irrational manner, caused by having read the many books she had collected in her bedroom, a "great Store of Romances. [...] The surprising Adventures with which they were filled, proved a most pleasing Entertainment to a young Lady, who was wholly secluded from the World" (Lennox 2006: 19), but it corrupts her judgement and frequently imperils her. Jonathan Swift (1985: 91), in the fifth chapter of Gulliver's voyage to Lilliput, has the protagonist urinating on "The Empress's apartment", to put out the fire set by "a Maid of Honour, who fell asleep while she was reading a romance."

The different styles outlined within classical rhetoric theory permit the definition of two types of discourse and the application of these definitions to the work in question. According to Aristotle (1990: 115) in *Peri lexeōs*, the correct *elocutio* depends on the qualities of each character, that is, a particular character must be accompanied by an appropriate manner of speaking. Cicero's *De Oratore* offers an interesting taxonomy of styles: "iudico formam summissi oratoris" (1967: 28). He states that "Tertius est ille amplus, copiosus, grauis, ornatus" (idem: 38). Cicero presents the functions of the orator as given by Aristotle (*muovere, conciliare, docere*), as well as the three styles as defined by Theophrastus (*sublimis, mediocris, tenuis*) (Douglas 1957: 18-20). These styles are outlined by

classical tradition through the writers cited above, as well as by others, such as Demetrius of Phalerum (*On Style*) and Longinus, whose influence on the literary territory of England during the time of Aphra Behn was considerable (Leitch 2018: 145).

Indeed, the influence of Cassius Longinus' *Treatise on the Sublime* on the English authors at the end of the 17th century is evident from the fact that it was edited in 1636 by G. Langbain and translated into English in 1680 by J. Pemberton, and again anonymously in 1698 (Kilburn 1912: 3). The first English translation, carried out by John Hall, dates from 1562. The influence of Longinus' work, as well as that of Boileau, is evident on contemporary critics, such as John Dryden (Habib 2005: 284-298). Longinus distinguishes between artificiality – which he considers to be of little value - and simplicity, which he deems more powerful than the bombastic style (section IX). He cites Homer as the epitome of this sublime style of writing.

The following excerpt, from a poem by George Granville (Baron Lansdowne), entitled “Essay upon Unnatural Flights in Poetry”, reveals the clear delineation between styles in the time of Aphra Behn. It describes the attributes of the natural (or plain) style in contrast to elements typical of the “unnatural” style, such as metaphor, hyperbole and excessive ornamentation in general:

Words are the paint by which their thoughts are shown,
And Nature is their Object to be drawn;
The written picture we applaud or blame.
But as the just proportions are the same,
Who driven with ungovernable fire,
Or void of art, beyond these bonds aspire,
Gigantic forms and monstrous Births alone,
Produce, which Nature shock'd disdains to own;
By true reflection I would see my face;
Thy bring the fool a magnifying Glass?
But poetry in fiction takes delight,
And mounting up in figures out of sight.
Leaves Truth behind in her audacious flight;
Fables and Metaphors that always lie.
And rash Hyperboles, that soar so high.
And every Ornament of Verse, must die. (Granville 1701: 312-313)

In 1668, John Dryden wrote in “An Essay on Dramatic Poesy” that the role of the poet is to “affect the soul, and excite the passions” in order to elicit “admiration” (Dryden 1961: 113). In so doing, he advocated the use of the elevated style. In “An Essay on Criticism” published in 1711, Alexander Pope described the importance of the organic unity maintained between style and subject matter. In line 365, he argues that “The Sound must seem an Echo to the Sense” (Pope 1968: 155).

It may be concluded from the above treatises and theories that elevated style is characterized primarily by the presentation of images, be it through metaphor, simile, personification, comparison or hyperbole (Demetrius 1902: 110-114), among other devices and tropes. Elevated style therefore requires a degree of engagement from the reader in decoding imagery and rhetorical devices. Its objective is to elevate thought (*dianoia*), subject matter (*pragmata*), diction (*lexis*) and composition (*18lynthesis*) (García 1996: 12).

Plain style, on the other hand, aims to explore subjects with clarity, applying a standard use of language that is easily and immediately comprehensible. It avoids the oblique or unusual use of language as well as stylistic devices such as metaphor. The plain style makes use of the short form (*kommata*) and of aphorism (Demetrius 1902: 159), avoiding lengthy phrases in favour of brevity: “Long members must be particularly avoided in composition of this type [in the plain style]. Length always tends to elevation” (idem: 165). The plain style rejects idiosyncrasy in favour of clarity, employing – among other devices – the repetition of words and phrases: “[f]or the sake of clearness, the same thing must often be said twice over” (idem: 161). It makes use of various forms of repetition, such as *epanalepsis*: “[c]lear writing should also shun ambiguities and make use of the figure termed ‘epanalepsis’. *Epanalepsis* is the repetition of the same particle in the course of a long sustained outburst” (ibid.).

4. The sublime style: “the dull prose”

The use of the sublime style is evident in the tropes applied by the unknown author of this short fiction. Such stylistic features – including, but not limited to – metaphor, metonymy, and comparison, embellish the text and increase its complexity through the rhetorical elaboration of the content.

Metaphors “provide a mapping across two concepts, one of which contains features that are mapped onto corresponding features of the other concept” (Adamson 2019: 54). Some examples from *The Unfortunate Bride* are: “As every other Nymph admired him [...]” (325), where the noun refers to women in general while also characterising the protagonist Belvira; and “[...] with all the Wings of Love [...]” (326), indicating the superlative nature of love. Love is also depicted through an imagery of fire in various phrases: “[...] their Flames now joyed, grew more and more [...]” (ibid.). Another example is the propensity towards circumlocution with regard to sexual relationships or the consummation of love: “[...] therefore he sollicits with more impatience, the consumation of their joys [...]” (327). The phrase “Phrebus rushes radiant, and unsullied into a gilded Cloud” (329) employs images of light in order to reflect the joy that Belvira experiences on seeing Frankwit. References to the blindness of Ceesia provide a broad semantic field (“blind”, “view”, “gazed” and “eyes”), such as the metaphor “if your night had such Stars” (328), which simultaneously illustrates the character's lack of sight and her remarkable beauty. These metaphors develop a semantic field of passion, desire, pleasure and romantic love.

The use of metonymy also requires a degree of interpretation on the part of the reader: “a meto-nymical expression (or metonym) uses one aspect of a conceptual domain to stand for another aspect within the same domain” (Adamson 2019: 77). Some examples are: “[...] every Virgin that had Eyes, knew too she had a Heart” (325), where “Heart” represents feelings; or “the fresh spring of young virginity [...]” (326), where “Spring” signifies youth and evokes the nature of the person to whom it refers. Another example is “Tears for his loss as might in the least quench the Fires, which he received from his Belvira's Eyes” (ibid.), where “Fire” indicates passion, forming part of a cause-effect relationship between both elements. In “[...] he fancied little of Heaven dwelt in his yellow Angels” (327), the noun “Heaven” is used to signify a place of peace and joy, while “yellow angels” refers to the happy inhabitants of such a place. Another notable example of metonymy is to be found in the following extract: “We are a sort of airy Clouds,

whose lightning flash out one way, and the Thunder another” (ibid.). Here, the phrase “airy Clouds” represents women in general, while the attributes of “lightning” and “Thunder” reveal certain specific qualities typical of their sex.

Comparisons are yet another characteristic of this sublime language whose correct interpretation requires a degree of collaboration on the part of the receiver, since the qualities of a certain term “is like or resembles” (Adamson 2019: 54) another. One example is “We are all like perfumes” (327), a simile that refers to the qualities of women as perceived by Belvira. Later we find “Pleasure is but a Dream” (328), a sentence that, by means of a complement, emphatically underscores the ephemeral nature of pleasure. We later find the simile “[You are] Like the Angelick off-spring of the skies” (330), which Frankwit uses to describe Belvira.

Other devices appear in the text, such as adjectivisation and the use of superlatives, which emphasise a situation or a specific attribute of a character, as in the following: “Wildvill was of the richest Family, but Frankwit of the noblest” (325). Examples of comparatives of superiority include “Frankwit for a much softer beauty” (ibid.) and “Belvira now grown fit for riper joys” (326), which contribute to the elevated style of the discourse. Other comparative phrases are “With a motion as unconstrained as his body” (325), “As naturally and unartificially, as his love or his breath” (329), “Given her clear sight as perfect as thy own” (331) and “So fast as I shall wait in readiness to pay them” (329), whereby an adjective or an adverb is employed to produce the desired effect. Other phrases are constructed around a noun or pronoun, as in “Like the ravished Prophet, I saw his Deity” (326), “I have though his Estate like his passion, was a sort of a Pontick Ocean” (327), “Both might go like the martyrs for their flames immediately to Heaven” (ibid.), “Ah! My dear Belvira, I replied, that one, like Manna, has the taste of all” (ibid.).

Lastly, there are examples of hypothetical comparisons (Sweet 1892: 149), modulated through conjunctions, as in: “so contradictory are we to ourselves, as if the Deity had made us with a seeming reluctancy to his own designs” (327); “her eyes flow'd more bright with the lustrous beams, as if they were to shine out” (331); “the Knight soon marry'd her, as if there were not hell enough in Matrimony” (ibid.); “from their Childhood they felt mutual Love, as if their Eyes at their first meeting had struck out such glances as had kindled into am'rous flame” (326), and “he fancied little of Heaven dwelt in his yellow Angels, but let them fly away as it were on their own Golden wings” (327).

The imagery and the expressions used point to the strong influence of the Romance genre and of chivalric language. This is evident in the phrase “he was Conqueror, and therefore felt a triumph in her yielding” (326), as well as in references to high society such as “Frankwit and Wildvill were two young Gentlemen” (325), “but Frankwit [was] of the noblest [family]” (ibid.). This is also revealed through the hyperbolic description of beauty and other positive attributes: “Wildvill was admired for outward qualifications, as strength, and manly proportions” (ibid.). Other terms belonging to the semantic field of nobility and sublimity are “Virgin”, “goodness” (ibid.) and “beauteous Image” (326). Another example of chivalric language is found in Frankwit's response to Celesia, which includes a notable use of lexical elements of the elevated style: “[...] a charming blindness, reply'd Frankwit and the fancy of your sight excels the certainty of ours” [...] “you, fair Maid, require not Eyes to conquer, if your night has such Stars, what Sunshine would your day of sight have, if ever you should see?” (328).

In many cases, the author generates a lexical field of mythology typical of the Renaissance, which therefore requires a certain understanding of classical culture in order to be fully comprehended. References to classical divinities include the description of Celesia as “another Off-spring of bright Venus” (ibid.), Celesia’s response “that Cupid [...] I am afraid has shot me” (ibid.) and the following reference to Frankwit: “therefore, finding his Pegasus was no way tir’d with his land travel, takes a short journey thro the air, and writes as follows” (329). The description of Frankwit’s passion is filled with mythological and classical rhetorical elements (Apollo, springs, Helicon and Parnassus) applied through hyperbolic language. The love between Belvira and Frankwit is also elevated through the use of a rhetorical style loaded with ornate expressions such as “the fire of love”, “wings of love deployed”, “Hades would ignite Hymenaeus”, “nations”, “little sky with its golden angels”, “like Manna”, “Sun of Love”, “Phoebus”, “a great many soft Vows, and Promises of an inviolable Faith”.

It should be added that the ending is not less rhetorical but differently rhetorical. There may be no more references to mythological gods, but ghosts and devils are repeatedly invoked: “she took him for the Ghost of Frankwit; he looked so pale, [...] and like a Ghost indeed, [...]. At last, he draws his Sword, designing there to fall upon it in her Presence; she then imagining it his Ghost too sure, and come to kill her, shrieks out and Swoons” (333-4). The mode shifts from amorous romance to a more Gothic mode.

5. The plain style: “naturally and unartificially”

The subtitle of the story is “A Novel”, indicating the author’s awareness of the innovative nature of the text from the outset. Samuel Briscoe’s dedication of this posthumous publication to Richard Norton points to this same fact, noting also the significance of the novel’s realism, when he says of Aphra Behn “and in none of her Performances has she shew’d so great a Mastery as in her Novels, where Nature always prevails; and if they are not true, they are so like it, that they do the business every jot as well” (Briscoe 1995: 323).

The plain style is associated both linguistically and rhetorically with “formal realism”. In the words of Ian Watt (1974: 23), it is a “primary convention” whereby “the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under the obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned”. According to Watt, these realistic features and aspects of individualism appear clearly in certain later texts (for example in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*); however, in this tale, examples of these novelistic features also appear, lending weight to the argument that her writing was an early advance towards the development of the novel.

On two occasions the narrator declares “’tis the humour of our Sex” (327), an expression of realism which points to the female experience and tendencies in matters of love. The statement is an example of aphorism: a brief, clear statement. In one case it is completed by a final clause (“’tis the Humour of our Sex, to deny most eagerly those Grants to Lovers”); in the other it appears by way of a clarifying comment (“as ’tis the Humour of our Sex” (332)).

When Frankwit explains that he must travel to Cambridge on a business matter, the plain style emerges once more through his direct speech, on both the semantic and the syntactic levels: “I must retire into Cambridgeshire, where I have a small concern as yet unmortgaged” (329). His reference to commerce reflects the

capitalist, mercantile society of the time, his objective being to conclude certain transactions valuing a thousand pounds, a sum that he hopes will allow them to celebrate their wedding appropriately. Economic, commercial, and patrimonial matters are also represented in the story through the reference to the inheritance which Celesia received from her father, a Turkish merchant: “Fifty thousand Pound in Money, and some Estate in Land” (327). The narrator also cites the inheritance which Moorea had received from her husband. It is striking that the reference to financial matters is articulated through the plain rhetorical style.

When Frankwit arrives in Cambridge, he decides to write to his beloved in verse rather than in prose, which he succeeds in doing naturally and without much affectation although with a sublime imagery. The very act of letter writing within the fictional discourse introduces a new modality, a new vehicle of expression, denoting intimacy and clarity. The description offered by the omniscient voice of the narrator emphasises the contrast between the elevated and the plain styles: “he thought fit to refresh himself by writing some few Lines to his belov’d Belvira; for a little Verse after the dull Prose Company of his Servant” (329). The distinction is further stressed by means of the descriptive complement “was as great an Ease to him, (from whom it flow’d as naturally and unartificially, as his Love or his Breath) as a Pace or Hand-gallop, after a hard, uncouth, and rugged Trot” (ibid.).

The Unfortunate Bride emphasises the fusion of styles and the contrast between fiction in prose and in verse. For example, when Belvira decides to respond to the letter from Frankwit in a way that shows her ability to match Frankwit’s verse, writing: “[Belvira] resolv’d not to be at all behind-hand with him, and so writ as follows”, she mentions explicitly “I find, methinks, in Verse some Pleasure too, / I cannot want a Muse, who write to you” (330), which I interpret as an explicit claim for plainness. Before including Belvira’s response, the narrator notes the positive reaction to Frankwit’s decision to write in verse: “[Belvira was] wonderfully pleas’d with his Humour of writing Verse” (ibid.).

The transition from prose to verse is striking, and may be considered a third style of discourse in the narrative, a ‘middle ground’ between the two styles, since it has the structure and artificial rhyming devices of an elevated style, but lacks literary devices such as exuberant imagery. In general, the letter uses a plain linguistic style; it is intimate and familiar, employing a simple and clear semantics. The two letters included in the story generate a direct use of language, establishing a semantic wordplay in the use of first- and second-person singular pronouns: “You knew my soul [...] / I told it all [...]” (in Frankwit’s letter), “You knew before [...] / I find, methinks [...]”. The first letter includes a considerable amount of lexical repetition and lots of triplets, with the subject pronoun or possessive adjective of the second person singular appearing eight times, while those of the first person singular (“I”, “my”) appear ten times. In Belvira’s letter to Frankwit, which contains fewer triplets, the subject pronoun or possessive adjective of the second person singular (“you”, “your”) are repeated nine times, while those of the first person singular appear ten times. With regard to imagery, it is interesting to note that exuberant mythological language and symbolism do not appear in either of the letters.

The letters contain a striking amount of repetition. In Frankwit’s letter, the verb “knew” is repeated twice in the first line, while the adjective “charming” is repeated in line 8. An example of *epixeusis* (Puttenham 2007: 285, Leech 1969: 73) is observed in the reiteration of the lexical root, with “heavenly” and “heavens” appearing in lines 8 and 14, and later “heaven” and “heavens” appearing in line 17.

The repetition of “Short” at the beginning of lines 24 and 25 is yet another example, while the triple *epixeusis* of “fly”, “flight” and “flew” in the penultimate line is further emphasised by the earlier appearance of the verb “fly” in line 23.

In Belvira’s letter, the noun “Love” is repeated in lines 1 and 4; the verb “return” is repeated in line 8; the lexical root of “charm” appears four times (in the salutation and again in lines 8, 10 and 12); lastly, the adverb “gladly” appears twice in the final section of the poem, in lines 17 and 18. Many of these reiterations are examples of *epanalepsis* (Puttenham 2007: 284, Leech 1969: 82), a rhetorical device that enhances the clarity of the discourse.

The description of Moorea is another clear display of the plain semantic style, characterised by the use of short phrases intended to ensure intelligibility. The narrator describes her as a “Blackamoor Lady, then a Widower” (331), lodging in the house of Frankwit’s cousin, where Frankwit is also staying. Moorea is the archetypal devil woman, repeatedly identified with evil and corruption. She is defined principally by the inheritance she received from her late husband (six thousand pounds per annum) and by the “foul play” (333) that she engages in. Her depiction intertwines her dark physical appearance with her devious nature to the point that the two are inextricably linked: “The same Blackmoor Devil” (332). In direct contrast to Belvira’s idealized and virtuous love for Frankwit, Moorea appears in the narrative as an antagonist. The love she seeks is purely carnal, a satiation of sexual desire. This is paralleled on the semantic level, where Belvira’s idealised and sublime language is set in contrast to the plain, brief linguistic style that the narrator employs with regard to Belvira. Moorea tries to steal Frankwit’s letters in order to win him through “foul play” (333), as the narrator eventually discovers.

In the final section of the narrative, another character emerges who expresses herself with clarity and directness: the narrator herself who, being an acquaintance of Moorea, discovers the “bundle of Papers which she had gathered up, as I suppose, to burn, since now they grew but useless, she having no further hopes of him” (333). The narrator discovers Moorea’s deception upon finding the letters, a series of lies that the antagonist had hoped would help her achieve her objectives. It is the narrator who communicates to Belvira that Frankwit is still alive, after Moorea had falsely made her believe he had died by means of a forged letter: “[...] in point of justice I was bound, and sent them [the bundle of papers] to Belvira by that night’s Post; so that they came to her hands soon after the minute of her Marriage” (ibid.). Not only is Moorea’s character diabolic, her name itself is semantically associated with blackness.

The *dispositio* by which the author presents the two linguistic choices is of great importance. The sublime style prevails in the first half of the *The Unfortunate Bride*, whereas the second part of the narration is predominantly characterised by a less sublime discourse. The inclusion of the letter-poems and the arrival of Moorea mark the turning-point for this transition, as well as being the embodiment of an unartificial style; although the writing of letters in verse form is by its very nature artificial in style.

6. The mixture of styles as a reflection of the epistemological crisis and a shift towards the novelistic genre

An abundance of mythological references and ornate stylistic adornments characterising the elevated rhetorical tradition eventually gave way to a new period in English literature marked by narrative realism; nevertheless, it was not a sudden

shift. The romance style arguably endured in writers such as Manley, Haywood and Behn, as well as in *The Unfortunate Bride*. The verse sections embedded in the narrative may be interpreted as a still more plain and intimate communicative style, arguably even a third type of discourse consisting of letters made of poetry.

The primacy of facts, narrated in a plain style, reflects the emerging philosophical empiricism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the tenets of natural philosophy, and the scientific approach of the Royal Society, “England’s first organization devoted to the advancement of science and Baconian experimentation” (Herman 2011: 245-246), as typified by its motto, ‘*nullius in verba*’. Al Coppola (2016: 3) claims that “when Charles II chartered the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge in 1662, he institutionalized natural philosophy and gave it unprecedented visibility and status [...] experimental science was erected as a key pillar of support for the stable, harmonious civil society”). In *History of the Royal Society*, Thomas Sprat (1667: 40) argues for the rejection of all superfluity in writing, proposing that clarity and brevity are the key to good expression: “Whereas the intention of ours, being not the Artifice of Words, but a bare knowledge of things; [...] without any ornament of Eloquence”. The following year, John Wilkins (1668: 411) made a case for the simple, unadorned style in *An Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language*, arguing “they [the Qualifications desirable in a Language] should be plain and facil to be taught and learnt”.

John Locke (2009: 106) presents a similar argument in *Of the Abuse of Words*, citing the need “to do it with as much ease and quickness, as is possible; and [...] to convey the knowledge of things”. The unartificial and empirical style is related to the observational method and inductive inquiry devised by Bacon in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605). This is supported by the scientific method, which was presented eighteen years later, in the foundational text of the new science *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* (1623). In 1689, John Locke (2000: 67) wrote in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that ideas are derived from experience and that they must be clearly expressed:

Besides the imperfection that is naturally in language, and the obscurity and confusion that is so hard to be avoided in the use of words, there are several wilful faults and neglects, which men are guilty of, in this way of communication, whereby they render these things less clear and distinct in their signification, than naturally they need to be. (Locke 2000: 67)

Other similar postulates are to be found dating from the middle of the same century, such as Thomas Hobbes’ *Answer to Davenant’s Preface to Bondibert* (1650). Thomas Blount’s *The Academy of Eloquence*, which has much of Bacon’s scientific approach, proposes four elements that all good writing must possess: brevity, perspicuity, ingenuity and decorum (Hernández, García 2009: 448).

The intellectual and linguistic *debate* I find in *The Unfortunate Bride* keeps pace with the emergence of modern philosophy, of “modern world, and with a new science based on experimentation”. Stephen Greenblatt (2011: 20-22) proposes this idea in his book on the transition towards modernity. Paul Hazard (2013: 8-10) had explored this topic half a century earlier. Opposing the absolutes of the old tradition, the new mode of writing lies in certainty and accuracy, in line with empiricism. Both the style (*verba*) and the subject matter (*res*) re-materialise and re-naturalise the fictional universe. Just as scientific understanding is built on

evidence, natural style originates from human experiences. It can be concluded thus far that *The Unfortunate Bride* paves the way for a new form of literary fiction, reflecting the author's inclination for a transparent style in consonance with the emergent epistemology of the period. Belvira herself says it: "I cannot want a Muse, who write to you" (330).

7. Conclusion

The sublime style is reflected in the imagery of a text, recreated through metaphor, metonymy, simile and comparison. In the present text, these are employed to illustrate the idealization of friendship and romantic love through metaphysical and mythological imagery. The ornate rhetoric is supported by the use of chivalric language and devices that complement the aforementioned tropes, generating an elevated semantic style. In contrast, the plain style is employed for straightforward communication between the protagonist lovers by way of letters, with economic and mercantile references as well as physical love being the predominant subject matter. The use of verse raises further questions as to genre and vehicles of expression, serving as contrast to the fictional prose.

The Unfortunate Bride contains a multiplicity of styles: one plain and another more sublime; of themselves, these alternative styles succinctly reflect the metamorphosis occurring in English literature at that time. This narrative is a tale divided between two literary traditions, modelled on the co-existence of at least two distinct styles, of two different plot lines, two sets of literary images and two discrete groups of characters. The parodic intentionality of the work, achieved through the exaggeration of the characters' features and emotions, contrasts strongly with the inclusion of elements that disrupt the traditional romance style of bombastic and hyperbolic rhetoric. Within the text, realism and clarity stand in opposition to elevated language and superlative imagery. Such intentional parody also erupts in a clash between tradition and modernity. The unknown author of this tale developed a range of comparisons in order to define the tradition that she herself helped to demystify, while, at the same time, conceiving powerful metaphors to describe a new style that was emerging in the 1680s, heralding the coming of a more realistic form narrative: the English novel.

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YEARS OF THE PLAGUE. A REREADING OF PHILIP ROTH'S *NEMESIS*

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Abstract: *Philip Roth's exit from the literary scene occurred in 2010, with the publication of Nemesis, a novel that stands apart in the writer's oeuvre. This final book explores a dramatic moment in 20th century American history – the poliomyelitis epidemic that claimed the lives of thousands of children in two deadly waves, in 1916 and 1952. Roth recontextualizes this dramatic event by integrating it into the Second World War period, in 1944, and focuses on the tragic destiny of Bucky Cantor, a sports teacher doomed to play a significant role in this unusual context. I shall focus on the metamorphosis of Roth's central death theme, interpret Cantor's role as tragic hero and propose a rereading of the novel that integrates the current moment – the COVID19 epidemic.*

Keywords: *collective death, ethnic conflict, illness, Jewishness, poliomyelitis, World War II*

1. Introduction

Although death has been a major trope in Philip Roth's oeuvre since the beginning of his literary career, its meaning was confined in the realm of individual experience. His later novels mark an opening towards the demise of others as an allegory of one's own mortality – *Everyman*, *Dying Animal* and *Exit Ghost* project a complex philosophy of death as a subjective experience the protagonist must face. Roth's final novel, *Nemesis*, rearranges this theme in a new framework, that of collective tragedy, filtered by a single consciousness, that of Bucky Cantor, himself a modern version of *Everyman*, the protagonist of Roth's homonymous novel. A collective process leaving indelible marks on society and public consciousness – the poliomyelitis epidemic of 1944 (that, in reality, happened in 1916 and 1952) is a rather unusual issue for an author whose predilect themes concern the inner life, sexuality and historical tragedies of his characters. However, an equally relevant interest that Roth frequently manifested is in the mythology of his childhood, his native Newark, and the Jewish neighborhood of Weequahic, a minor universe reflecting ethnic and political aspects challenging minorities in post-war America.

I shall explore the meaning of Cantor's life-changing experience as a tragic hero of the polio epidemic, while at the same time proposing a rereading of a plague novel in a pandemic context, that of the present COVID19 global health crisis. The collective aspect of the novel, focusing on communities, relationships, family ties and ethnic adversities is a rather familiar trait of Roth's fiction, present in novels such as *American Pastoral* (1997) and *The Plot Against America* (2004). Illness and physical suffering, on the other hand, reflect the author's long-lasting preoccupation with the biological life, the body and its precariousness in the aging process. In *Nemesis*, illness is life-threatening, may induce permanent paralysis and

predominantly affects children and the young. In 2013, The Library of America published four novels written by Philip Roth under the title *Nemeses: Everyman, Indignation, The Humbling* and *Nemesis*. At the time, Roth was the only living American author who had his work published in a definitive edition by The Library of America. The volume reunites these works under the sign of fatal circumstances, historical and individual, shaping the fate of the protagonists. *Nemesis*, more than the others, gathers, in a dense narrative of pain, grief and disbelief, the multi-leveled effects of a disease that had made countless victims until 1953, when Jonas Salk developed the formalin inactivated polio vaccine. Later, other versions become available – in 1956 Albert Sabin developed a vaccine using a live-attenuated polio virus.

2. The allegories of a killer

In an interview from 2010, published online, when he announced his retirement, Philip Roth commented on the creative process that led to his writing *Nemesis*: "I began [writing] as I sometimes do with a book [by jotting down] on a yellow legal pad all of the historical events that I've lived through that I've not dealt with in fiction," Roth explains. "When I came to polio, it was a great revelation to me. I never thought of it before as a subject. And then I remembered how frightening it was and how deadly it was and I thought, 'OK, try to write a book about polio'" (Gross 2010). The writer's primary intention was, therefore, to revive a historical event that he had witnessed and, as he had previously done in other novels, fictionalize and integrate it into his own mythology of 20th century America. His strategy of promoting a protagonist, structured as a tragic hero that takes upon himself the misfortunes of an entire community, results in an alert and dramatic unfolding of events, culminating, much like in classical tragedy, with the revelation of the hero's truth, leading to disastrous consequences. In terms of tragedy, it is of paramount importance to identify the protagonist's hubris, as the notion quantifies his relation to others and the world.

Bucky Cantor, who is a physical education teacher, is a protective figure for the children attending the playground he supervises. His savior complex proves destructive, leading to uncontrollable consequences. An orphan whose mother died in childbirth, Cantor tries to control the collective destiny of the children under his care, questioning divine intervention and communal action. Roth shaped his protagonist with great tragic heroes in mind, whose moments of anagnorisis (understood as revelation and essential discovery) brought great suffering, mutilation and symbolic death. When he discovers that he has been the spreader of the polio virus, infecting and endangering the children he was supposed to protect, Bucky punishes himself, ending his engagement to Marcia and retreating from social life. The individual tragedy of Bucky Cantor is a condensed version of the collective trauma of the poliomyelitis epidemic, placed by Roth in 1944, one of the most dramatic years of World War II. This connection heightens the inner tension of the novel, as the epidemic that claimed the lives of thousands of children is allegorically reimaged as a process alluding to the Holocaust. In order to amplify its severity and impact upon humanity, "Roth fantasizes a polio epidemic to coincide with World War II" (Budick 2014: 2). Bucky's poor eyesight, a clear allusion to Oedipus' blindness to his own tragic fate was the reason he was rejected by the US Army when he wanted to enroll as a volunteer to fight against Nazi Germany. Except for one, Bucky's friends, young men of the same age, have just

come through the landing in Normandy alive and unharmed. For Eugene Cantor, the Jewish young man unfit for draft (Jewishness itself being, traditionally, for centuries, in the past, a reason for exclusion), the war on the front becomes a domestic war targeting an invisible, ubiquitous enemy. In a comprehensive study on aspects of the self in Philip Roth's *Nemesis*, Victoria Aarons (2013: 55) argued that the writer intended to give the story a universal meaning by relying on structures of "mythic time and place as well, out of real time" By superimposing historical facts on a fictional frame, Roth created "a hybrid of realism" (Kaminsky 2014: 113).

Two articles published earlier in 2020 question the remarkable similarities between the imaginary plot in *Nemesis* and the health crisis caused by the SARS-COV2 virus – Richard Brody's *The Eerie Familiarities of 'Nemesis'*, Philip Roth's *Novel of a Polio Epidemic* in *The New Yorker* and Samuel G. Freedman's *Philip Roth's Epidemic and Ours* in *The Washington Post*. Both were published in April 2020, during the first wave of the COVID 19 pandemic, when little was known about the disease, the mortality rate was soaring in Europe and the prospect of a vaccine was disarmingly distant in the future. Public life was brutally halted with worldwide lockdowns, masks covered faces to protect people against a virus that randomly attacked individuals of all ages, the daily news heightened collective anxiety to an unprecedented level. Human interaction changed under the pressure of social distancing, suspicions against otherness and difference reignited latent controversies. Public health policies and restrictions were often based on political calculation, with electoral campaigns using the pandemic in opportunistic ways. In the reality of 2020 and in Roth's fictional narrative, human bonds weaken, since social distancing was firmly recommended as a means to control the spread of the virus. As any major crisis does, the polio epidemic put an enormous strain on societal dynamics, worsening ethnic asperities, paving the way to abuse and marginalization. Many passages in Roth's novel strangely anticipate the gloom of the COVID 19 pandemic, describing the fear and helplessness of a fight with an unpredictable enemy:

He could hear a siren in the distance. He heard sirens off and on, day and night now. They were not the air-raid sirens - those went off only once a week, at noon on Saturdays, and they did not induce fear so much as provide solace by proclaiming the city ready for anything. These were the sirens of ambulances going to get polio victims and transport them to the hospital, sirens stridently screaming, "Out of the way - a life is at stake!" Several city hospitals had recently run out of iron lungs, and patients in need of them were being taken to Belleville, Kearny, and Elizabeth until a new shipment of the respirator tanks reached Newark. (Roth 2010: 50)

There were numerous poliomyelitis outbreaks in the United States, starting in 1894, when the state of Vermont was the scene of a dreadful epidemic. That summer, 130 children were paralyzed and 13 of them died. The disease swept across New York in 1916, when the death toll reached 6000, and 27000 people were paralyzed (Williams 2013: 2), generating one of the cruelest epidemics in 20th century America. Smaller outbreaks occurred yearly until the next episode, in 1952. Medical records do not go so far back in history in order to reveal humanity's first encounter with the poliovirus. It seems that the pathogen has been present in human communities since their early days, but it only caused massive damage in modern times. Although there is no clear explanation why polio seemed to unleash its deadly force predominantly in the summer (hence the "polio season",

although outbreaks lasted until winter in numerous occasions), the ability of the virus to cause massive epidemics has a clear explanation. Unlike SARS-COV2, which is a new virus in humans, the polio virus has accompanied our species for millennia, being transmitted via the fecal-oral route. Apparently a cleaner living environment seems beneficial, as modern times facilitated better housing conditions. In fact, a lack of contact between humans and the virus in early childhood is dangerous. Immunity is gained in infancy by contracting the virus while having protection from the mother through breast milk. In modern urban environments, where feces are automatically disposed of and clear health guidelines are closely followed, humans are susceptible to disease precisely because their immune system has never encountered the virus before.

Once ingested along with fecal particles, the polio virus in most cases stays in the small intestine of the host. This leads to a milder form of disease, similar to intestinal flu, with pain and fever as common symptoms. It is estimated that 90 per cent of infected individuals who contract the virus from contaminated water or soil fall into this category. In medical terms, this type of polio is called “inapparent polio” (Wilson 2009: 2), since the virus does not migrate outside the digestive tract. When it does, it migrates to the central nervous system and attacks it. The World Health Organization estimates that one in two hundred cases is affected neurologically. The virus targets a part of the spinal cord where the anterior horn cells are, their role being to mediate the connection between various muscles and the brain. Although it is still unclear how exactly the virus leaves the digestive system to reach the spinal cord, it is certain that once it reaches the anterior horn cells, the inflammation damages them, leading to permanent paralysis in various muscles and parts of the body. The most dangerous situation occurs when the affected muscles are involved in the breathing process. Unless connected to an iron lung, the patient dies, unable to breathe. The massive, strange machine that saved lives during past polio outbreaks by using negative pressure to move the diaphragm and the muscles of the thoracic cavity is outdated today, although a few people still use it. These patients spent almost their entire lives in the tank of an obsolete mechanical respirator, as they were diagnosed in childhood. In a strange twist of fate, the COVID 19 health crisis led to a dramatic decrease in available ventilators, as the number of patients who needed help to breathe increased daily. To prevent a dangerous shortage, British engineers decided to remake the machine (Szondy 2020), as if to connect, in an arch over time, a past epidemic to a present pandemic.

Although it caused enormous damage throughout the world, poliomyelitis had a great impact on American life in the first half of the 20th century. David M. Oshinsky, the author of a book telling the “American story” of polio, describes the desperate efforts of both authorities and the public to control the epidemic while too little was known about the ways the virus spread and attacked. Individual and collective efforts were made to halt infections, while cities and everyday life were literally paralyzed by the virulent malady:

Already fearful of a disease whose victims ranged from anonymous children to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Americans were primed to see polio as an indigenous plague with an indigenous solution—a problem to be solved, like so many others, through a combination of ingenuity, voluntarism, determination, and money. One of the most common mantras of the post–World War II era, repeated by fund raisers, politicians, advertisers, and journalists, was the bold (and ultimately) truthful, promise, ‘we will conquer polio’. (Oshinsky 2005: 4)

3. Reloading classical tragedy in Newark

Roth focused on the social reality, namely that, although it also affected many adults, polio is fundamentally a childhood affliction. “Infantile paralysis”, as it came to be known and feared, is an important element in Roth’s imaginary equation of the tragic human condition. Bucky Cantor, a free-thinking teacher of sports takes on the mission to defend the children under his supervision at a playground against a virus that either renders one disabled or dead. However, at one point, rather unexpectedly, he leaves Newark to join the staff of a summer camp in the Poconos. His fight against polio blinds him: persuaded by his fiancée Marcia, he decides to leave a place where the epidemic rages for a remote camp in the mountains, unaware that he may be the carrier of the deadly pathogen. Bucky’s crisis begins with the first significant choice he has to make – leave Newark for the mountains, flee the city where “his” children were dying. A decisive moment occurs one day at the playground, when Bucky talks to the children about the disease. This closeness prompts him to acknowledge the full meaning of the epidemic:

They’re all kids, and polio is going after kids, and it will sweep through this place and destroy them all ... — in the end it’s going to get every last child. The neighborhood is doomed. Not one of the children will survive intact, if they survive at all. (Roth 2010: 114-15)

Kenny Blumenfeld, one of the playground boys Bucky was fond of, becomes a revelatory agent that day, as he accurately expresses the paradox defining the normative attitude towards the disease and its spreaders. Initially Kenny cries, scared and confused that his friends were sick or dying. The boy’s emotional reaction is counterbalanced by an explosive fit of rage, when Kenny sees Horace, the mentally challenged local vagabond. Suddenly he loses his temper and blames him of spreading illness and death. In an unusually aggressive manner, the otherwise mature Kenny points out that Horace’s clothes are soiled and his hands are stained with feces, this offensive sight being unbearable:

He’s got shit all over his underwear! He’s got shit all over his hands! He doesn’t wash and he isn’t clean, and then he wants us to take his hand, and shake his hand, and that’s how he’s spreading polio. (Roth 2010: 199)

When Bucky Cantor tries to restore Horace’s dignity by shaking his hand and having a short dialogue with him, he may have simultaneously contracted the disease. This encounter is not without significance, it could be interpreted that the two men are “both ultimately aligned through unluck and bodily affliction” (Newton 2016: 134). Roth uses Horace’s dirty, socially reprehensible hands as an allegory of Bucky’s fate turning tragic. It was, most probably, his kindness and consideration towards the marginals that contributed to his downfall. At this point, Roth’s protagonist resembles another significant character, Seymour “Swede” Levov of *American Pastoral*. Nathan Zuckerman’s childhood hero, a sports legend adored by all, born in a Jewish family owning a prosperous business, is a man who wants nothing more than a simple life, a family, and a home. As his teenage daughter befriends dubious radicals, his peaceful life is forever derailed - she places a bomb at the local post office, killing the doctor; Swede’s entire life is marked by the absurd choices and inhumane actions of his well-loved child, raised

in a happy family by adoring parents. It is in *American Pastoral* that Roth deplors man's insurmountable inability to prepare for tragedy and overcome it:

But who is set up for the impossible that is going to happen? Who is set up for tragedy and the incomprehensibility of suffering? Nobody. The tragedy of the man not set up for tragedy – that is every man's tragedy. (Roth 1997: 86)

In a seminal review of Philip Roth's novel, published in *The New York Review of Books* in 2010, J. M. Coetzee dissects the major aspects of *Nemesis* as a modern tragedy. Nemesis, the goddess of revenge and universal moral balance, acts punitively when mortals seem too happy, too successful or manifest any kind of excess. Coetzee implies that Bucky, too, was one of the chosen ones due to his privileges:

There is a Greek-chorus way of reading the story of Bucky Cantor too. He was happy and healthy, he had a fulfilling job, he was in love with a beautiful girl, he had a 4-F exemption; when the plague struck the city (the plague of polio, the plague of paranoia) he was not cowed but battled against it; whereupon Nemesis took aim at him; and look at him now! (Coetzee 2010: 13)

This reading insists to integrate Roth's protagonist in the matrix of Greek tragedy, therefore amplifying some aspects while obliterating others. The essential element that defines and shapes Bucky's life is that he is an orphan. He takes on a parental role with the playground children in order to reestablish order in the chaos caused by his mother's death. He is, indeed, excessive, but not in happiness and good fortune – it is his care for the children and his community that prevails over any other private matter. Despite his attachment to a public cause, Bucky decides to flee the city when the epidemic seems out of control. He acts against his better judgment when he decides to leave Newark behind and join Marcia at the Indian Hill camp. Coetzee points out that this uncharacteristic decision changes his fate, as tragic heroes always make a wrong choice that leads to disaster, without anticipating the effects of an apparently insignificant decision. Unable to detach himself from the troubles at home, Bucky is ridden with guilt and angry at God's indifference to the suffering and death of innocent children. Symbolically, instead of being close to Marcia and of distancing himself from the developments at home, the young man feels trapped and useless. He has a violent fight with his fiancée, and, during a phone call with his grandmother, he realizes the catastrophic proportions of the situation. One evening he spends time with Donald Kaplow, his younger colleague at the camp, helping him to perfect his dives in the pool. A few days later, Donald develops paralysis symptoms and is diagnosed with polio; Cantor, asymptomatic at that moment, is tested and found to be positive. A few days later, he, too, develops symptoms.

Roth orchestrates the narratorial game of *Nemesis* with great subtlety, as only near the end of the novel do readers realize who tells the story of Bucky's defeat. It is one of the playground boys who speaks, years after the events. Arnold Mesnikoff, a polio victim and survivor, seems to remember Bucky's glory days with nostalgic reverence:

he was, to all of us boys, the most exemplary and revered authority we knew, a young man of convictions, easygoing, kind, fairminded, thoughtful, stable, gentle, vigorous, muscular – a comrade and leader both. (Roth 2010: 444)

Mysteriously possessing detailed information about Bucky's inner life and relationships (as Coetzee notes, the former student even knows intimate details about Marcia's breasts, weaving them into the narrative stream), Roth firmly proposes Arnold as a credible narrator. The role of this character is to denounce Bucky's decision to retreat from all forms of social life, in an abstract self-mutilation, as punishment for inadvertently spreading the virus that crippled children in the camp. Although affected by paralysis, Arnie refuses to see in his affliction anything more than bad luck:

That the polio epidemic among the children of the Weequahic section and the children of Camp Indian Hill was a tragedy, he could not accept. He has to convert tragedy into guilt. He has to find a necessity for what happens. There is an epidemic and he needs a reason for it. He has to ask why. Why? Why? That it is pointless, contingent, preposterous, and tragic will not satisfy him. That it is a proliferating virus will not satisfy him. Instead he looks desperately for a deeper cause, this martyr, this maniac of the why, and the why is either in God or in himself or, mystically, mysteriously, in their dreadful joining together as the sole destroyer. I have to say that however much I might sympathize with the amassing of woes that had blighted his life, this is nothing more than stupid hubris, not the hubris of will or desire but the hubris of fantastical, childish religious interpretation. (Roth 2010: 265)

As Patrick Reilly (2015: 3) observes, “the metaphysics of plague” involves transcending to a higher level of perception, where the meaning of facts and events is revealed only if interpreted outside historical, contextual confinements. This meaning is articulated collectively, as epidemics are powerful factors, excavating and recirculating stereotypes, conflicts and incongruences. Coetzee quotes just two of the most influential writings on epidemics – Albert Camus' *The Plague* and Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*. Both authors question the impact of such a crisis upon social ties, Camus insisting on the political allegory of contagion. Coetzee reshapes Defoe's observations on the effects of the 1665 bubonic plague on life in London:

superstitious attention to signs and symptoms; vulnerability to rumor; the stigmatization and isolation (quarantining) of suspect families and groups; the scapegoating of the poor and the homeless; the extermination of whole classes of suddenly abhorred animals (dogs, cats, pigs); the fragmenting of the city into healthy and sick zones, with aggressive policing of boundaries; flight from the diseased center, never mind that contagion might thereby be spread far and wide; and rampant mistrust of all by all, amounting to a general collapse of social bonds. (Coetzee 2010: 12)

Returning to the present, these reactions have been observed especially during the initial months of the COVID 19 pandemic, when scientists and medical professionals had very limited information concerning the manifestations of the virus in humans.

Stigmatization is common during epidemics, and, as Inbar Kaminsky (2014: 110) noted, in Roth's novel, “the plague of anti-Semitism” is just as active as polio. As the epidemic unfolds in unpredictable patterns, the Jewish and the Italian neighborhood (both inhabited by minorities) turn against each other:

Since so far their neighborhood had reported the most cases of polio in the city and ours had reported none, it was believed that, true to their word, the Italians had driven across town that afternoon intending to infect the Jews with polio and that they had succeeded. (Roth 2010: 18-19)

The aggressive young Italians go to Bucky Cantor's playground to "spread some polio" (Roth 2010: 14) and they start spitting on the concrete. This is yet another moment (along with Cantor shaking Horace's hand) that could have contributed to the expansion of the epidemic, although Roth does not insist on either as source of contamination. Jews are subject to discrimination, too, and O'Hara, another playground employee, calls Bucky "Cancer" instead of Cantor and makes some antisemitic remarks as the teacher prepares to leave: "You Jewish boys got all the answers. No, you're not stupid - but neither is O'Gara, Cancer" (idem: 138-139).

Later, while at Indian Hill, Bucky is called by his grandmother at home and hears that, once again, Jews are blamed for all the ills happening in the world:

The anti-Semites are saying that it's because they're Jews that polio spreads there. Because of all the Jews - that's why Weequahic is the center of the paralysis and why the Jews should be isolated. Some of them sound as if they think the best way to get rid of the polio epidemic would be to burn down Weequahic with all the Jews in it. (Roth 2010: 193)

This is a clear allusion to the monstrous materialization of anti-Semitic hatred in the programmatic extermination of Jews during the Holocaust, one of the most inhumane acts in modern history, occurring in Europe in the same interval as Roth's reimaged American polio plague. The writer historicizes antisemitism as a horrendous plague that makes as many victims as an epidemic. This was also Albert Camus' intention in *The Plague*.

4. Conclusion

Philip Roth's last novel has the unusual quality of speaking to our present through the fictional past it creates. Its tragic hero, bearing a strong resemblance to the heroes of the classical age punished by fate for their excess (of beauty, good fortune or political prowess), embodies human condition itself in times of grief and vulnerability. Being with others, caring, trying to help can have, in the abnormal circumstances of an epidemic, the contrary effect. Trying to escape fate means, in a tragic framework, fulfilling it, step by step. Beyond the individual level of the protagonist, the collective trauma deeply damages the social fabric, amplifying its conflicts and shortcomings. A universal story of illness, loss and death, *Nemesis* has the visionary quality of a quintessential narrative investigating the ultimate confrontation of humanity with a plague that could, at least symbolically, compromise its future by affecting and killing the young. An optimistic reading could find in this story of the scourge of polio a message of hope – as we are faced with a deadly pandemic at the moment, we must know that science will provide us with ways of prevention and, like many other lethal diseases that have been virtually eradicated, this one will become as rare as them.

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JEFFERSONIAN WHITMAN: THE IMPACT OF JEFFERSON ON WHITMAN

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Abstract: *As regards the relation between Whitman and U.S. presidency, the critical studies center on the relation between Whitman and Lincoln. The process of Whitman's commitment to the Democratic Party and his alienation from it, and of becoming the self-anointed inheritor of Jeffersonian republicanism plays a key role in the formation of political and poetical Whitman. Faced with the disunion of the U.S., Whitman had recourse to the ideal of the Founding Fathers. Whitman's poetry is the mediation between Jeffersonian republicanism and Whitman's America, and between politics and poetics.*

Keywords: *Democratic Party, republicanism, the Declaration of Independence, Wilmot proviso*

1. Introduction

In a conversation with Horace Traubel, who was with Whitman in Camden, Whitman agreed that Jefferson is “among the greatest of the great,” adding, “Yes, greatest of the great: that names him: it belongs to him: he is entitled to it” (Traubel 1961: 229). Yet, Whitman, as a poet, demurred: the worship of a great hero is the typical characteristic of the poetry of the Old World. In the deathbed edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman (1891-2: 391) refers to Jefferson only once: in *Election Day, November, 1884*, he said, “These stormy gusts and winds waft precious ships, / Swell'd Washington's, Jefferson's, Lincoln's sails.” In this way, Jefferson's influence on poems of Whitman, however large it may be, is not in the forefront, but in the background. Whitman's references to Jefferson were made in his prose, especially before 1855, when Whitman had not fully established his own voice.

As regards the relation between Whitman and the U.S. presidents, research has been done almost exclusively on the relation between Whitman and Lincoln, who were coeval and to whom Whitman, in *Leaves of Glass*, dedicated a chapter entitled *Memories of President Lincoln*. For instance, Shira Wolosky (2007: 373), in *Walt Whitman: the office of the poet*, remarked “The President Whitman has been most closely associated with is Lincoln.”

Thus the link between Jefferson's ideas about government and Whitman's ideas about poetry remains unexplored. Jefferson is a politician and Whitman a poet, but both share the same theoretical background – faith in ordinary people – from which they developed their ideas. In this essay, I would like to show how influential Jefferson was on Whitman and put Jefferson's influence into perspective.

2. The interactive system of Whitman's poetry and of Jefferson's politics

In the beginning, both Jefferson and Whitman spoke outside of an institutional framework; the spirit of Whitman, an obscure New Yorker, in his

assumption of the role of national bard, is like that of Jefferson, an unknown Virginian at the time, in seeking to persuade George III to change his attitude towards the American colonies in *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*. (Jefferson 1977: 1-21).

Also we can draw a parallel between the situation of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Alien and Sedition Acts in that, by both laws, individual freedom was trampled on. Referring to the situation before what is known as the Revolution of 1800, when Jefferson defeated John Adams in the elections, Whitman (1920a: 8), calling Jefferson “the Columbus of our political faith”, said that, although “Leading Republicans were at that time taunted and hooted at in the streets” (ibid.), they gained the final victory:

We stand here the inheritors of their principles and opposed to the same foe the foe of equal rights. Democracy must conquer again as it did then and more certainly than it did then. We think so from two simple facts. One is that the great body of workingmen are more powerful and more enlightened now than they were in those days. The other is, that there is a mighty and restless energy throughout the length and breadth of this nation, for going onward to the very verge with our experiment of popular freedom. (Whitman 1920a: 8-9)

Though this was written in 1847, before the (new) Fugitive Slave Law, Whitman’s passion for popular freedom, inherited from Jefferson, unmistakably prodded him into a similar resistance action of self-publishing *Leaves of Grass*. It can be added that he thought that his resistance action was supported by his belief in the ‘more enlightened’ people.

About the principles of his poems, Whitman, in his own criticism of *Leaves of Grass* (1855), said:

The style of these poems, therefore, is simply their own style, new-born and red. Nature may have given the hint to the author of the *Leaves of Grass*, but there exists no book or fragment of a book, which can have given the hint to them. (1855b)

This mindset is the mirror of that of Founding Fathers; when they formulated their ideas, Jefferson stated that

We had no occasion to search into musty records, to hunt up royal parchments, or to investigate the laws and institutions of a semi-barbarous ancestry. We appealed to those of nature, and found them engraved on our hearts. (1977: 578)

Needless to say, it is better to take both remarks with a grain of salt, but the same essence runs through them: the emphasis on the independence from the past. Yet, most importantly, Jefferson’s idea about the relationship between the form of government and people corresponds to Whitman’s about the form and the content of his poems. For Jefferson, “Government had to be tailored to fit the character of a people rather than any universal theory of man” (Steele 2012: 107). Whitman, also influenced by Emerson, wrote poems reflecting the idea that thought should be placed above form. In other words, just as the relationship between Jefferson’s people and government is interactive, the relationship between Whitman’s content and form is also reciprocal; the primacy of people over government in Jefferson’s political philosophy corresponds to the primacy of content over form in Whitman’s poetry.

About their view of the ordinary people, there also are intimate resemblances. Most famously, Whitman, in his preface to *Leaves of Grass* (1855), remarked:

Other states indicate themselves in their deputies... but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors... but always most in the common people. (1855a: 4)

Jefferson, who was proud of the American character and spirit and compared them with those of the Europeans, said:

In science, *the mass of the people* is *two centuries behind ours*; their literati, half a dozen years before us. (1977: 391, emphasis mine)

Here, two comparisons are made. As regards the “literati,” those of Europe are “half a dozen years” ahead of those in America, but “the mass of the people” existing in Europe is “two centuries behind” that existing in America.”

Furthermore, interestingly, in his manuscript entitled *The English Masses*, Whitman points out that

In regard to intelligence, education, knowledge, *the masses of the people*, in comparison with the masses of the U.S. are at least *two hundred years behind us*. (1984b: 391, emphasis mine)

Coincidence? Probably not. Some commentators quote this saying of Whitman’s, but none refer to Jefferson’s influence. This instance shows both that Whitman had a firm grasp of Jefferson’s writing and that its impact on Whitman was insufficiently recognized.

I shall move on to the topic of putting the ordinary people at the center in literature. Before Whitman, however laudable people may have been, there was a conventional cultural barrier against the idea. It is one thing to say that common people are praiseworthy; it is quite another to make them the subject matter of literature. For example, Tocqueville, prominent in his understanding of American society at the time, viewed them as an unpoetical subject, saying “In democratic communities, where men are all insignificant and very much alike, [...] The poets of democratic ages can never, therefore, take any man in particular as the subject of a piece” (1835, 1840: 551); instead of such men, “the nation itself invites the exercise of his (poet’s) powers.” (idem: 552)

However, both America as a whole and individual people can become the subject matter of poetry. Here likeness, seen by Tocqueville as a fixed state, can also be seen as a process or experience, namely interchangeability between one state and another. Somkin (1967: 106) points out that “Eli Whitney’s interchangeability of parts extended equally to the plantation and the legislature. Fatal as it might be to the genius of art, it was the genuine reflection of a republic that was becoming a democracy.” Unlike that of the Old World, the social structure in America at the time was not rigid, based on class, birth, and so on. It had a social fluidity, and this is what democracy is all about. By the old criterion, ordinary people might not appear to be a subject challenging enough to hone poets’ creativity, but by the criterion of the New World this was possible. Whitman said, in his defense of *Leaves of Grass*, that

We have had man indoors and under artificial relations – man in war, in love (both the natural, universal elements of human lives) – man in courts, bowers, castles, parlors [...] but never before have we had man in the open air, his attitude adjusted to the seasons and as one might describe it, adjusted to the sun by day and the stars by night. (1984a: 264)

He asserts that ordinary people should be the subject matter of the poetry of the New World. In so doing, his goal is to create literature devoid of any trace of the Old World, because it is when such literature becomes the foundation of people's virtue and morals that the shift from the Old World to the New World would be completed.

Democracy can never prove itself beyond cavil, until it founders and luxuriantly grows its own forms of arts, [...] displacing all that exists, or that has been produced anywhere in the past, under opposite influences. (Whitman 1871: 5)

Whitman, as a poet, was sensitive to the nature of literature and could see what Jefferson had not seen. In his eyes, the context of the Old World literature was feudalistic, and to get rid of its possible negative influence on democracy, he thought that there was a need to create a new literature, outside such a context. Such literary works are superior to those made in other ways, Whitman asserts:

As the attributes of the poets of the kosmos concentrate [sic] in the real body and soul and in the pleasure of things, they possess the superiority of genuineness over all fiction and romance [...] (1855a: 12)

The attainment of a literature unique to America is the progress in the American experiment. Such literature could solve the predicament of Jefferson's admitted backwardness of literature in America, which is seen in his comparison between the 'literati' of the Old World and the New World, and enables the U.S. to gain cultural independence from Europe. In the absence of such literature, while emphasizing the importance of the practice of virtue when he recommended a book list, Jefferson was forced to pick up the literature of the Old World

I answer, every thing is useful which contributes to fix us in the principles and practice of virtue. When any signal [sic] act of charity or of gratitude, for instance, is presented either to our sight or imagination, we are deeply impressed with it's [sic] beauty and feel a strong desire in ourselves of doing charitable and grateful acts also. [...] Now every emotion of this kind is an exercise of our virtuous dispositions; and dispositions of the mind, like limbs of the body, acquire strength by exercise. But exercise produces habit; and in the instance of which we speak, the exercise being of the moral feelings, produces a habit of thinking and acting virtuously. [...] I appeal to every reader of feeling and sentiment whether the fictitious murder of Duncan by Macbeth in Shakespeare does not excite in him as great horror of villainy, as the real one of Henry IV by Ravaillac as related by Davila? (Jefferson 1977: 349, 350)

This was written in 1771, before the American Revolution, thus it stands to reason that Jefferson quoted the works of Shakespeare for the practice of virtue, because at the time there was no concept of "American Literature." Yet, considering Jefferson's (and Whitman's) emphasis on the uniqueness of American experience (Steele 2012: 124, 132- 133, Erkkila 1989: 11), the exercise of virtue by

reading the literature of the Old World appears unsatisfactory to Whitman, who saw its possible anti-democratic bearing. Whitman sought to replace the literature of the Old World with a distinctive American literature and hoped that American virtues could be expressed and experienced in the American literature:

Books are to be called for, and supplied, on the assumption that the process of reading is not a half-sleep, but, in highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast's struggle; that the reader is to do something for himself, must do on the alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay – the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or frame work. Not the book needs so much to be the complete thing, but the reader of the book does. That were to make a nation of supple and athletic minds, well-trained, intuitive, used to depend on themselves, and not on a few coteries of writers. (1871: 76)

Like Jefferson, Whitman emphasizes the idea of voluntary exercise in reading. Now with Whitman's poetry, Americans can exercise American virtues in American literature. In section 2 of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman details this exercise:

Have you practiced so long to learn to read?
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun ... there are millions of suns left,
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand ... nor look through the
eyes of the dead ... nor feed on the spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself. (1855a: 18)

In his reconstructing the experience of reading on a new basis, Whitman challenges the authority of the Old World and urges readers to unlearn what they had been taught. Compared with Jefferson's exercise of virtue, Whitman's exercise is a great leap forward, where self-enlightenment and self-empowerment result from the above-mentioned relationship between literature and democracy, which affect and reflect each other.

3. Jefferson's party, Jefferson's proviso

The Wilmot Proviso aimed to ban slavery on the land acquired as a result of the Mexican War, an amendment attached to a bill appropriating money to be used in negotiating a Treaty with Mexico (Whitman 1920a: 182). With the passage of time, the Wilmot Proviso led to the escalation of the antagonism between North and South, and, although it was eventually rejected, its rejection, and the political developments accompanying it, broke the two party system and the equilibrium under the Missouri compromise, leading to the Nebraska Kansas Act, the Fugitive Slave Law, and eventually the Civil War.

Whitman viewed the Wilmot Proviso as being of vital interest, and said that:

We believe the Brooklyn Eagle was the very first Democratic paper which alluded to this subject in a decisive manner, expressing the conviction that it is the duty of its party to take an unalterable stand against the allowance of slavery in any new territory, under any circumstances, or in any way. (1920a: 197)

This view of the anti-extension of slavery derives from two major reasons: one owing to the workingmen's perspective and the other owing to the conflict between the extension of slavery and the ideal of the Founding Fathers. As for the first reason, Whitman (1920a: 208) asserts that if slavery were extended to a new territory, "the interests of the few thousand rich, 'polished', and aristocratic owners of slaves at the South" would be promoted at the cost of "*the grand body of white workingmen, the millions of mechanics, farmers, and operatives of our country*" (original emphasis). In his opinion, slavery degrades the labour of those white workingmen, and thus shuts them out from the territory (idem: 205-206) This incompatibility between the slave-labour and the free-labour led Whitman to assert that the new territory should be free.

As regards the second reason, Whitman sought to prevent the further degradation of the American soil by the extension of slavery, which, for him, was against the spirit of the Founding Fathers. According to Jefferson's original draft of *the Declaration of Independence*, the introduction of slavery in America by the King and the Parliament of Great Britain was one of the proofs of their tyranny against America (Becker 1958: 147) and extending the slavery now into the new territory meant that the Americans themselves were doing what they had rejected on their Independence (Whitman 1920a: 224-225).

Within Democratic Party, the Wilmot Proviso drove a wedge between those for it and those against it, and, despite Whitman's campaign, through his articles in the *Eagle*, it was rejected. In view of Whitman's calling the Wilmot Proviso the "Jeffersonian Proviso," (idem: 222), 'anti-Wilmot' meant to him 'anti-Jefferson'. It can be easily inferred that his feeling of despondency, amounting to a feeling of betrayal, was huge, considering the faith he had had in the Democratic Party; by now Jefferson's party was gone. Eventually, in the turmoil of the political confusion leading to the Civil War, Whitman (1928: 104) went so far as to say, "Are not political parties about played out? I say they are, all round. America has outgrown parties; henceforth it is too large, and they too small. [...] I place no reliance upon any old party, nor upon any new party."

After the rejection of the Wilmot proviso, Whitman started to distance himself from the Democratic Party and self-anointed himself the authentic inheritor of Jeffersonian republicanism. At the time, Whitman (1920a: xvi) was the editor of *The Brooklyn Eagle*, a political organ, the local mouth-piece of the Democratic-Republican Party. He was also secretary of the local Democratic-Republican General Committee (idem: xix). Whitman was forced to leave his position, over his support for the Wilmot proviso, as the publisher of the *Eagle*, also a treasurer of the Committee, was against it (idem: 179).

In light of Whitman's above-mentioned commitment to the Democratic Party, it can be inferred that his perspectives underwent a significant shift, a shift from within the institutional framework to outside of it. His journey on the "open road" began; "Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road, /Healthy, free, the world before me, /The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose" (1980: 136). The same thing came to look completely different. Gradually, a noxious weed turned into *Leaves of Grass*. Walter Whitman's reaction to the "Jeffersonian proviso" was the first step to his becoming *Walt* Whitman.

Whitman (1920a: 218) had viewed the Democratic Party as a party of Jefferson's doctrine, and in this sense, he identified himself with the Democratic Party. His sense of belonging to it occupied the center of his identity. In his mind, democracy and the Democratic Party were separate, but united entities; he said,

“*true liberty could not long exist in this country without our party.*” (1920b: 40, original emphasis). From the bottom of his heart, Whitman believed in democracy and the Democratic Party:

The Democracy of this country never can be overthrown. The true Democratic spirit is endued with immortal life and strength. [...] Nor can the Democratic Party become essentially corrupt, either. For true Democracy has within itself a perpetual spring of health and purity. In its very nature it is at war with all selfishness and wickedness. (1920a: 6-7)

Without Jefferson’s party, he may have felt like being left holding the bag in furthering the Republican experiment. In so doing, Whitman faced the need to reconstruct his identity and his relation with democracy. As Erkkila (1989: 19) points out, Whitman viewed the Declaration of Independence as the origin of Republican virtues. Together with the Constitution, it served as a guiding principle of the U.S., and thus relates closely to the people’s distinctive American experience.

4. Jefferson’s substitution of pursuit of happiness for property in the Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence is one of the most influential documents in the world. Its exegesis abounds, and the main focus is on Jefferson’s substitution, as an Inalienable Right, of the “pursuit of happiness” for “property,” which Parrington (1927-30: 344) calls “a revolutionary shift”. At Jefferson’s time, the canonical list of rights, the ‘Lockean triad’ (Wills 1979: 299), was “life, liberty, and property”; yet, Jefferson refused to follow suit.

I argue that there are two main objectives of *the Declaration of Independence*: an international objective – to persuade the world about the rightness of the American Revolution (Becker 1958: 7) – and a domestic one – to chart a course for the future. In other words, there are two elements in it: one with the emphasis on gaining independence and another with the emphasis on embarking on the American Experiment. I also argue that Jefferson’s substitution of “pursuit of happiness” for “property” relates to the American Experiment.

Before the American Experiment, the republican experiments such as the seventeenth-century English experiment ended in failure (Wood 1993: 121) because of the lack of “civic virtue” (Yazawa 2000: 427). A “new” moral was necessary for the American Experiment to succeed. By substituting “pursuit of happiness” for “property”, Jefferson sought to go beyond the Lockean idea of a society centered on “property”.

According to Garry Wills (1979: 229-283), both the exclusion of ‘property’ and the inclusion of the ‘pursuit of happiness’ derive from Jefferson’s exposure to the Scottish Enlightenment, especially the moral sense thinkers represented by Francis Hutcheson. Hutcheson’s theory of moral sense is at the heart of the Scottish moral philosophy. The theory asserts that all human beings are innately equipped with a “moral sense” – like the five senses – which tells right from wrong, leading to decoupling this capability from reason (Yarbrough 1988: 27-29). The theory goes a long way to generating a new possibility of harmonizing the selfish and social nature of human in “the enlightened form of self-interest” (Yarbrough 2000: 71), which is crystallized into the social bond by benevolence.

Scottish moral philosophy occupies the center of Jefferson's framework of political philosophy (Wills 1979: 255). In light of the past failure of the republican experiments, Jefferson's application of the Moral philosophy to the Political philosophy could become the turning point of the republican experiment of self-government. The moral sense theory lends a solid foundation to Jefferson's faith in the capacity of the ordinary people to self-govern, so far considered impossible because of their supposed inability to tell right from wrong – a line of thought which was the main rationale of the rule of a few experts, like Plato in his *Republic* (Cappon 1988: 432-433).

Nevertheless, at Whitman's time, the spirit of *the Declaration of Independence* – the harmony between the private and the public realms made possible by virtues and affectionate ties – was in tatters, because of the degeneration of people and government. Whitman, in his poetry, sought to restore the spirit by forefronting this harmony and save the nation from disunion.

5. Conclusion

Whitman and Jefferson shared their faith in ordinary people, and the parallel between them is best revealed in their interactive systems: Jefferson in politics, between government and people, and Whitman in poetics, between form and content. The process of Whitman's commitment to the Democratic Party and his alienation from it, his becoming the self-anointed inheritor of Jeffersonian republicanism played a key role in the formation of political and poetical Whitman. *Leaves of Grass* (1855) is Whitman's mediation between the original Founding spirit and the America of his time, and also between politics and poetics. In light of this, the study of Whitman's works, with an eye on Jefferson's influence, deepens our appreciation of them.

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*SOWING THE WIND,
REAPING THE WHIRLWIND*

**FEAR, SEXUALITY, AND LIBERATION:
PURSUIT OF THE SUBLIME
IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S *MISTRESS OF SPICES***

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***Abstract:** The paper explores the diasporic quest of fear, sexuality, and liberation under the renegotiation of the sublime experience. To evince the tumultuous integration of Indians into transnational communities, the realisation of sublime experiences is to be traced through Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel *Mistress of Spices* (1997). The process of struggle, abandonment and eventual transcendence from traditional models will be compared against the framework of a hostile and abject mythical environment. Propositions of Edmund Burke, Bharata, and Bonnie Mann will be referred to in the pursuit of the sublime.*

***Keywords:** diaspora, Indian aesthetics, Indian American literature, sublime*

1. Introduction

... a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose light is the dwelling of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things ...

William Wordsworth,
*Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,
on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798*

The sublime is a liminal state in between the planes of self-determination and preservation, which ensues at the borders of sensory and rational grasp, pushing one to the limits of one's own imagination. The description of natural environs in William Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* - the vastness of the "wild secluded scene" is replaced by the image of stone etched cityscapes, and our expectations regarding the sublime experience have evolved from the invocation of "eminence and excellence" (Velde 2010: 218) to wretched and miserable, edged with the sublime (Kristeva and Roudiez 1982: 11). Gillian Pierce (2012: 1) questions the relevance of the pursuit of the sublime experience "[g]iven the magnitude of the problems confronting us today in the political, financial, and economic spheres", and also how this dynamic experience attempts, in "confronting and trying, to make sense of that which lies beyond the horizon of his or her comprehension."

The aim of this article is twofold: firstly, to read the elements of fear, sexuality and liberation in respect to three categorical approaches to the aesthetics of the sublime by emphasizing the differences in diasporic experiences of the Indo-

American communities, and secondly, to see beyond the quasi-mythical paradigm of the novel and trace the sublime as a trope advancing diasporic power. Thenceforth, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's triad of cross-cultural context, the myth and the obvious metamorphosis recreates the ideas of acculturation and showcases the significance of traditions through spices in their diasporic existence as travellers, explorers, and settlers and also creates a tumultuous setting, convenient for tracing the sublime.

According to Gillian Pierce (2012: 1), the fragmented urbanised living conditions of the modern-day world alienates a person and invests into the feelings of perplexity, depthlessness, loss, and anxiety - this feeling of anxiety expresses an "underlying nightmare state of the world." Even in the displaced existence, the individual desires for a utopic corner amid the hustles of the street grows and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Mistress of Spices* (1997) provides it.

Divakaruni was born and brought up in Kolkata, India, and arrived on the American shores to pursue her career as a poet and writer. She earned her MA at Wright State University and a PhD at the University of California-Berkeley. The author is known for her meticulous exploration of the immigrant experience, mainly that of South Asian women. Her collections of poetry include *Black Candle: Poems about Women from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh* (1991) and *Leaving Yuba City* (1997), which won the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Prize and the Gerbode Foundation Award.

In the novel *Mistress of Spices*, Tilo, the protagonist, is the owner of a spice store in Oakland, California. On a superficial level, she deals in Indian Spices, but she also aids her customers to relieve their stress and influences their thoughts and decisions through the guidance of her spices. In the realm of spices, every soul possesses a spice of their own, and Tilo's job is to connect with the innermost secrets of a person. But she cannot touch another person or step out of the store. Even though she interacts with so many people within the premises of her store, she is only intrigued by one, Raven, and breaks her "boundaries" for a chance at life with him. Divakaruni weaves in a forbidden love story against the backdrop of sorcery and mystique and calls upon the conflict between desire and duty, the conflict that has been interfering with an Indian woman's individual development for centuries.

Tilo's use of spices in accordance with *ayurveda*, the ancient herbal medical therapy, helps her to bond with the elemental and organic forces of the human body. Here, in this novel, she represents cosmic energy and divine strength, like the *devas* (gods), only to be anguished by the interplay of inner conflicts and doubts regarding self-preservation throughout the novel. The novel presents possibilities of human identity expansion and the evolution of the self from the state of disintegration towards the path of eternal sublime. The supernatural elements of this novel are demystified in order to showcase the ethno-communal clashes of Indian diasporic society against the backdrop of the American dream and to "evaluate the autonomy against the arbitrary powers of religion and rituals" (Singh 2019: 305).

2. Fear and the sublime: Edmund Burke on obscurity and power

In the aesthetics of the sublime, fear is an artful simulation of what is crude, incoherent, nerve-wracking, and intractable in life (Oates 1998: 176) and sets the stage for authentic experiences through its evolutionary and socio-political

associations, as Edmund Burke (2014: 96) has already observed: “No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear”. This feeling of fear can be further manifested through the act of transubstantiation – the transformation of something alien and unhinged into the substance within (Furrow 2016: 18). The process of transubstantiation may occur through our primary senses, through sight, touch, smell, sound, and taste. Burke also insists on the argument that our “knowledge of the world is derived entirely from the evidence of the senses: what we can see, taste, touch, and smell” (Shaw 2006: 49). Burke concedes that the sensory apparatus influences ideas and the knowledge of one’s judgment, whether appealing or not, and that it is the product of individual physical experience, within a certain social and cultural framework.

The overall sensory consumption of outside experiences would explain the anchoring of our sense of identity, belonging, and hope. The spices in the novel, beyond the veil of magical workings, enable the presence of fear in us through ‘astonishment’ and ‘obscurity’ (Burke 2014: 48), while establishing the rule of the unknown over the senses. For example, in the introductory chapter (*Turmeric*), turmeric is depicted as pure and divine, whereas *Red Chilli* is dangerous and the cleanser of evil, while *Sesame* is the holy nurturer. The crowning mountain or the vast ocean should invoke the feeling of terror through contemplation of something so magnanimous (idem: 59) and create a feeling of exaltation. In the novel, the combination of thirteen principal spices creates a quasi-mystical ambience, appealing to the awe and the power of the sublime.

Tilo’s power is reminiscent of Longinus’s triad for the invocation of the sublime (Shaw 2006: 17) – the passion, the compelling idea, and the elevated language. The spices distinctively urge Tilo, and, the readers, to heed their whispers and prophecies. The attraction of power becomes irresistible, the spices become sublime. The argument is “God is no longer required to guarantee the authenticity of our experience” (idem: 49), but power is. Tilo and the working of her spices lean more on the abjection of fear and darkness, the vacuity, and the perturbative silence. “Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime” (Burke 2014: 58).

Tilo feared the frailty of humans and the more she was getting attracted to Raven, an American man, to explore her femininity, the more she was losing touch with the godly powers. The voice of the first mother was telling her to abstain from the curiosity for the uncommon and the obscure of the human self and kept constantly reminding her of the “mistresses’ foremost duty.” Tilo’s recollection of the first mother’s silence to her question of what happens when the mistress “uses her power for herself, when she breaks the age-old rules” (Divakaruni 1997: 6) ignites the sense of the sublime, the fearful consequences and the image of the “universe of death” (Burke 2014: 74), if the spices don’t keep everyone from harm.

The spices take on the role of the sages to provide the mistress with the power of vision, only to help others, but not herself – “A mistress must carve her own wanting out of her chest, must fill the hollow left behind with the needs of those she serves” (Divakaruni 1997: 71). They bind her soul under perpetual slavery to the occult practices, trying to keep her body and mind untainted by desire. But even though the sublime experience revolves around the realm of human emotions, it is not quite human. The subsequent dualism or polarity may be the core of the sublime experience. The relationship between Tilo and her spices is

the source of the power tension that is beyond the understanding of the shop's other customers, but like Tilo, they are seduced by this tension, as they are too bound to the perpetual slavery of desires due to elemental obscurity. The realm of the spices represents the world of pure and intellectual ideas, the divine intervention in our needs for wisdom, justice, and goodness. The frail power of the humans, on the one hand, represents the idea of beauty and, on the other, the power of the spices remains omnipresent, uniform, distinguished, and therefore sublime.

3. Sexuality and the sublime: rasa and the performance of the body

Jayshree Singh (2019: 304) points out that the “The doctrine of renunciation is an austere measure, which is symbolically expected from Tilo as the mistress of spices to be practiced so that the purity and piety for Indian Spices may be retained by the performer, who is basically a human.” Tilo with her spices ascends as the primary performer under the alias of personified characters, and on this stage of diasporic self, conjures up the image of kinship among men and women through the senses. This stage depends upon the distinction of ‘natya’ (meaning performance) and ‘natakya’ (meaning dramatization of the performance).

The word ‘natya’ should be distinguished from the word ‘natakya’, which is, of course, not often done, as they are taken as sharing similar meanings, both words being derived from the root word ‘Nat’ (skill), but their terminations are added differently to denote two different concepts. The word ‘natya’ means the action or performance of the actor, who is concerned with the staging of a drama and is dependent on it. The relationship between the ‘natya’ and ‘natakya’ is further manifested through three stages of the artist's evolution: 1) the states of the artist's mind, 2) their objectified expression, and 3) the appreciation of the appreciator mind-states (Barlingay 2007: 107-108). These three stages of the artist's mind is manifested through eight permanent components, called ‘Sthayi Bhavas’. These are ‘Rati’ or pleasure, ‘Hasya’ or laughter, ‘Soka’ or grief, ‘Krodha’ or anger, ‘Utsaha’ or enthusiasm, ‘Bhaya’ or fear, ‘Jugupsa’ or aversion and ‘Vismaya’ or wonder (idem: 155).

The artist's (Tilo's) exploration of these ‘sthai bhavas’ or elements of the mind revolve around the idea of sin - in this case, the sin is to touch another skin, thus losing the powers granted by the spices. Divakaruni's portrayal of the sexual tension among Tilo, Raven, and the spices heightens the dramatic arrangements needed for the performance. The relationship between the performer, the performance, and the interpretation of the performance resembles the process in the artist's mind, which correlates with Tilo's acting as the performer, courtesan to her spices, just like in the scriptures “...when Brahma made Tilottama to be chief dancer in Indra's court, he warned her never to give her love to man – only to the dance.” (Divakaruni 1997: 48). The transitive properties of *rasa* may also conjure the idea of sexual fluidity both in terms of Tilo and her relationship with her spices (spiritual, connected to the mind) and her relationship with Raven (physical, connected to the body). The fluidity of her identity is the core premise of the novel, revolving around the relationship between the *bhavas* and the self.

Concurring with Bharata, *rasa* comes from the combination of *vibhāvas* (forerunners, sources or causes), *anubhāvas* (impacts or consequences that develop in reaction to the predecessors or causes) and *vyabhicāribhāvas* (going through short lived states that stir one's temperament) – within a fraction of seconds one forgets one's own self and submerges within the world of the craftsmanship to

embrace a feeling that is far removed from human lives (Barlingay 2007: 35). Tilo, through her conversations with the spices, submerges within the same world of craftsmanship where nothing else exists other than herself and her spices. She invokes a kind of otherworldliness inside of her spice store to intensify the gap between her world and the world that Divakaruni wants her to be in. Through her diasporic appropriation, rejection, dismissal, reconceptualization and the gradual acceptance (Patnaik 2016: 47) of her powers granted by the spices, her devotion to the divinity hints at sexual connotations throughout the novel. The spices also grant her enchanting beauty to appear luscious and the power of seduction is not wasted on her. The spices appeal to her senses, heighten her sexual prowess as she calls out to them:

In my hand, a nugget of asafoetida. A crash in the other room, like something breaking. Or is it the night throwing itself against the store's windowpanes? ... and fame, away from Venus's seductions. Baleful yellow asafoetida to leach away softness and leave a man all sinew and bone. (Divakaruni 1997: 76)

The patriarchal and heteronormative foundations of the term "diaspora" are evident in Stefan Helmreich's observations of its etymological roots, and the male-male transgenerational cultural valency keeps the core of the patriarchal portrayal of transnational communities intact in the practices of diasporic communities; the word diaspora unvaryingly displaces and ignores female diasporic subjects (Gopinath 2005: 5). Helmreich (1992: 249) states that

The original meaning of diaspora summons up the image of scattered seeds and ... The word "sperm" is metaphorically linked to diaspora ... Diaspora, in its traditional sense, thus refers us to a system of kinship reckoned through men and suggests the questions of legitimacy in paternity that patriarchy generates.

Most of Divakaruni's protagonists, however, share a distant, almost negative emotional relationship with their fathers. This emotional distance tends to create a complex with the patriarch and affects the quality of the marital relationship. In *Bengali Woman*, Manisha Roy comments on the tolerance, control, and the absenteeism of emotionally damaged characteristic of the father-daughter relationship in a Bengali family:

The daughter must also obey the father and father figures who give her instruction... Every girl in her father's home should be treated as Uma, soon to leave for her husband's home. (Roy 1975: 157)

In the novel analysed here, Tilo goes into a constructive discussion with Geeta's grandfather, whose desire is to see his only granddaughter, to be married to a Bengali man, settled as a housewife and start a family. To him, the lifestyle of a *firingi* (a slang word for white people), living outside the parental discipline, working late at night and mingling with foreigners etc. are despicable. The grandfather embodies the repressed sexuality, whereas Tilo tries to instil in him the necessity to change according to contemporary customs, to see Geeta not as a woman that would belong to Bengali men through generations; however, this is all in vain, as the grandfather cannot see past the traditions of a Bengali man, as he says, "America, we're still Bengalis no? And girls and boys are still girls and boys, ghee, and a lighted match, put them together and soon or late there is going to be

fire.” (Divakaruni 1997: 88). This also puts Tilo’s public and private representation in the novel in contrast. Her own dilemmas regarding loyalty and love are in flux, as she tries to break free from the oppression of the spices, at least for a day, and engage in frivolousness and sin, to let Raven “carve out roads... the dizzying odour of rajanigandha, the wild tuberose, flower of the bridal night” (idem: 307). The players (artists and the audience), in this case, Tilo and the readers, experience the staged mediated reality, the divine intervention in desires and the dynamic relation to the sublime within the context of the novel, a participatory art.

4. Liberation and the sublime: the gendered struggle and resistance

In her work *Women’s Liberation and the Sublime Feminism: Postmodernism, Environment studies in Feminist Philosophy* (2006), Bonnie Mann talks about the relationship between feminism and the sublime. She focuses on the Kantian approach to aesthetic judgment, which means to judge an object not based on its ability to appeal to our senses and away from the logically predetermined notions. According to Kant (see Doran 2015: 17) an object can be beautiful due to standing out amid similar looking objects, but on an aesthetical level – the object should be judged on the markings of singularity.

Tilo’s self-enclosed “universe becomes a kind of no place, a world-alienated space without place, and thinking is set adrift from the physical places... Yet the terror that accompanies our desperation is paired with a kind of frenetic exhilaration and celebrated in the contemporary notion of the sublime” (Mann 2006: 1). The experience of terror or exhilaration that transpires anonymously in Tilo provides the silent justification for her breaking away from the hegemony of the spices.

I move as through deep water, I who have waited all my life – though I see it only now-for this brief moment blossoming like fireworks in a midnight sky. My whole body trembles, desire and fear, because it is not for Raven alone I am doing this but for myself also. And yet. (Divakaruni 1997: 297)

Mann (2006: 3) argues that the sublime takes different forms and exists in all distinctiveness, as these forms can be realised through our moment by moment dependence on and struggle for sustenance. Divakaruni’s need to experience the sublime on the balance of nostalgia and the uncommon is exposed through Tilo, who struggles to sustain her sanity amidst the tension between the spices and Raven. Both represent power and control in her life and choosing either is not synonymous with freedom. The conditions of life as a mistress of spices have created profound disorientation in her relationships to other people and to the natural world – the common experience of everyday life. Fredric Jameson (1991: 410) describes this displacement in relation to others when he argues that, under the conditions of what we now call globalization, there is a disjunction between phenomenological experience and material conditions. Tilo experiences “a growing contradiction between lived experience and structure, or between a phenomenological description of the life of an individual” (ibid.). And this gap can only be rendered null through the *shampathi*’s fire, her act of self-immolation. Even though Tilo burns herself in the pyre, in the end her spices release her from the magical illusion they kept her in and bless her with the gift of choice in exchange for her powers.

You who have followed me through my up-and-down life, I leave you with one last question: The grace of the world taken or given back, is there any accounting for it. 'I Maya,' I whisper. 'I Maya thank you.' The jewel eyes blink their acceptance. Then sun struggles through a rent in the smoke and they are gone. But not gone too, inside my heart (Divakaruni 1997: 388)

In the end, Tilo was not punished by the spices, but was accepted as a "Mistress who readied... mind to suffer..." (Divakaruni 1997: 305). Divakaruni wishes to evince the power of recreation of our own nook of the sublime experiences, through worldly struggles and through the severance of different ties and of repression of politics, economics, and our environment. Tilo, who was bestowed with the powers to maintain order "onto chaotic and limitless nature, becomes undermined from within" (Zimna 2012: 108).

5. Conclusion

Chasing the sublime is a battle between the different planes of human consciousness, and the battle evokes the subject's altercation with danger and risk from a calculative distance provided by the rational mind. The sublime, like a performance, transports one onto another level of experience, reflects the unacceptable and makes sense of something that overpowers the senses. Through her character, Tilo, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, oscillates between opposite experiences – truth and myth, physical and spiritual. Tilo, the mistress or the courtesan of the spices, implicates the experience of grandeur or exaltation and overwhelms the readers with her diversity of presence, attaining a higher level of consciousness through the combination of reason and vulnerability. Tilo's metamorphosis turns into the sublime experience, through her moment by moment sustenance and the melting away of the unreal that so marks her "displacement into the magical world of the text" (Mann 2006: 1). Her confrontation with the consequences, with her spices, with her desires and, ultimately, with herself evokes the height of sublimity, as she goes through the process of pain, pleasure, and eventually, transcendence. The spices, the fire and *maya*, the salvation – represent for Divakaruni the ultimate triangle in pursuing the sublime experience in this clustered, ghetto world.

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‘BRUTALIZED’ BLACK MASCULINITY: THE PERFORMANCE OF INTERSECTIONALITY IN ANN PETRY’S *THE NARROWS*

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Abstract: *The paper approaches black masculinity according to Crenshaw’s intersectionality model in Ann Petry’s novel, *The Narrows* (1953). I argue that Link Williams, the male protagonist of the novel, is a ‘brutalized’ black masculinity on the personal and structural levels. Despite the structural dynamics of race, gender, and class which work against him, Link’s belief in his capacity and his sense of independence exacerbate his struggle to legitimize his masculinity in accomplishing a life with his white lover (white femininity).*

Keywords: *African American fiction, Ann Petry, intersectionality, masculinity studies*

1. Introduction

In providing an account of the history of hierarchies of race and gender in America, bell hooks (1982) tackles a number of fundamental issues related to racism and feminism, such as the status of white women in the patriarchal American society that is described as “both racially and sexually imperialistic.” “In such a society, the woman who is seen as inferior because of her sex can be also seen as superior because of her race, even in relationship to men of another race.” (Hooks 1982: 141) In order to skip the patriarchy and feel she is the one in power, the white woman turns to what can grant her this privilege: the race. She shifts from her gender that oppresses her to her race that makes her superior to men of a different color. hooks’s adequate reading of the psyche of white women interested in black men is applicable to Ann Petry’s depiction of the same subject matter in her novel, *The Narrows*. Published in 1953, Petry’s novel is about an interracial couple set in Connecticut in 1950s. Camilla Treadway Sheffield, only heir to the Treadway estate, married to Captain Bunny Sheffield and working as a fashion reporter, is a white woman who introduces herself as Camilo Williams to Lincoln Williams. The latter is the twenty-six-year-old black man known as Link, a major in history, but working in “The Last Chance”, a bar in The Narrows, the fictional black section of the town of Monmouth.

This study is an investigation of Link and Camilo’s unfolding relationship, with a focus on how black masculinity is constructed in relation to white femininity in the novel. Framed by Crenshaw’s (1989) model of intersectionality, the paper argues that the categories of race and gender, perpetuated by class, are the major forces in shaping black masculinity based on certain dynamics of their intersection. The main question addressed by this essay is the construction of Link as an example of ‘brutalized’ black masculinity on two levels: personal and structural. On a personal level, Link believes in his capacity per se to accomplish a stable life with his white lover, despite all the odds. On a structural level, the struggle between black masculinity and white femininity accentuates the disparity between the two, entailed in the categories of race, gender, and class. Through references to

Michael Kimmel's 1996 and 2005 studies of manhood in the United States and R. W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, the shaping of Link as a black masculinity is elaborated in parallel with (a white) femininity.

2. Intersectionality as a possible model to study black masculinity

The different categories of race, gender, and class are to be applied to Link's character according to an intersectionality approach. Intersectionality as a term was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a black feminist, as an attempt to showcase the failure of the American laws in acknowledging the rights of black women in the US courts, due to racism and sexism. This term can be described as an umbrella term for hierarchies, axes of differentiation, axes of oppression, social structures, and normativities, as Crenshaw insisted on the necessity of race and sexism as intersectional and not isolated factors working against black women. Following the strategies maintained and deployed in this model, it seeks to narrow down the analysis to a particular set of intersections aiming to highlight marginalized or neglected groups from the various dimensions of a society, namely race, gender, and class (Crenshaw 1989: 139).

In her "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew" study, Crenshaw (1997: 247) argues that black women are subjected to violence in America, based on their vulnerability to "the structural, political and representational dynamics of both race and gender subordination." She highlights class, along with sexual orientation, age, and even one's looks, among other categories that the concept of intersectionality addresses. While structural intersectionality is a reference to the ways black women are located at the intersection of gender and race, making their experience of domestic violence different from that of white women, political intersectionality is the way both politics of antiracism and feminism functions mutually to marginalize the issue of violence against black women. Representational intersectionality refers to the ways "readily available" images of race and gender provide a stereotypical understanding of black women in the American culture and "create counternarratives" that work against their claims and "render" violence. In addition to this, these concepts are flexible and the last two can be included as elements of the first one (idem: 249-253). Crenshaw concludes her study by implying that these three dynamics can impact not only black women, but black men too and that black women should "develop" their "sensibility" of these dynamics to an "empowerment" to defy issues like patriarchy in America (idem: 263).

Based on this stance, intersectionality can be extended as an efficient model to the performance of black masculinity in certain contexts. Link is to be viewed in the wider scope of being a black man in a white supremacist society in order to investigate the ways his masculinity is shaped and periled by the forces of the three dynamics of an intersection of race, gender, and class. Link is to be approached as an embodiment of black masculinity in the 1950s, mainly according to the lenses of an intersectionality model analysis. Link's contributions to this process on an individual level are also essential to this analysis, from the same intersectional perspective.

2.1. Link as an example of 'brutalized' black masculinity

From the beginning of the novel, Petry suggests that Link and men of his generation are different from the previous generations of black men. It is confirmed

that he, as the other men of his time, is ‘brutalized’ by ‘something’, in the words of Abbie Crunch, his adoptive mother.

She supposed the young colored men of Link’s generation couldn’t have manners like Mr. Powther’s, though she didn’t know why. Wars and atom bombs and the fact that there was so much hate in the world might have something to do with it. There were times when she had thought that rudeness was a characteristic of Link’s; that other young men had a natural courtesy he would never have. Then she would see or hear something in The Narrows that suggested all these young men were alike—something had brutalized them. But what? (Petry 1999: 13)

Abbie, however, is not sure about the exact reason(s) behind this process of brutalization, as she herself ends her contemplation on Link and other men’s nature by asking what that ‘something’ could be. Is it war or atom bombs or hate that have led Link not to be a man of manners and gentility, like Mr. Powther, Abbie’s tenant, married to Mamie? This question at the start of the novel is significant on two levels: Petry provocatively inclines the readers to follow the assumption that this ‘something’ requires careful scrutiny and, on a linguistic level, that this ‘something’ is a multilayered factor, not easily grasped in one comprehensible word. ‘Something’ is a referent to all the factors mentioned in this paragraph, but it exceeds that in Link’s case. For Link, this ‘something’ is all that is mentioned, but it is also on the two levels of generality (the structural intersection of race, gender, and class) and individuality.

On an individual basis, Link Williams is an Apollo-like figure. He is attractive, with straight hair, very smooth skin and marked facial features. He is well-built, has a pleasant-sounding muscular voice and has a good sense of humour, which makes him pleasant to be around. In the words of his adoptive mother, he is too good-looking and his manners do not match his good looks. This emphasis on Link’s looks from the start of the novel indicates that his looks could work against him and not be in his favour. The intersection of his good looks with his race is seen to be the problem: he is too good-looking to be born black or maybe to survive as a black man. On top of that, Abbie presumes that Link is not the conventional type of black man. He does not conform to the set of manners and roles that men of his age should follow typically. He has a sense of self-autonomy that scares her; he does not seem to be aware that being black and handsome in a white dominant world requires a certain set of behaviour. Barry (1999: 150) suggests that “Link is inconsistent with white people’s expectations, a black man with pride, too beautiful to live, able to look with pity on a cuckolded husband. He is sacrificed by those in power in order that they might suit their own convenience.”

The belief that Link has in himself comes from several factors. Bill Hod and Week Knees, the owner, and the chef of “The Last Chance” respectively, influence Link’s rearing noticeably. When Abbie is in mourning over the death of her husband, she forgets about Link for almost six months, and the 8-year-old Link moves to live with Bill and Week Knees during this period. They mark a dramatic shift from Abbie’s conservative methods of bringing Link up. They even give the boy a nickname, Sonny, to which he starts to reply spontaneously. Weak Knees and Bill Hood re-educate Link on the subject of race, which is a basic component in the shaping of his character as a man. In contrast to Abbie’s education on the subject, both convince him cordially to attach positive attributes to blackness:

Ebony was the best wood, the hardest wood; it was black. Virginia ham was the best ham. It was black on the outside. Tuxedos and tail coats were black and they were a man's finest, most expensive clothes. You had to use pepper to make most meats and vegetables fit to eat. The most flavorsome pepper was black. The best caviar was black. The rarest jewels were black: black opals, black pearls... They taught him that he can laugh at a white person too. (Petry 1999: 145)

They help him to feel less guilty about his blackness and reconcile with all the extreme ideas Abbie instilled in his mind. Link learns from the two men to no longer answer for the entire race whenever he commits a mistake. Under the influence of Abbie, Link was burdened by his race and had to always double his effort not to let 'The Race' down and be better than the white people. It can even be seen that Abbie tried to push Link to adopt the same white lifestyle she herself had always adopted - a black woman, but white in all her manners. Abbie's rearing comes from her perspectives of black patriarchy and masculinity in relation to black femininity: she is an elderly black woman who instills in him ideas that are valid for her generation, not for Link's. That is to say, she attempts to pass on her attitude about what a man should be, from the point of view of an oppressed and persecuted black femininity, on the levels of sexism and racism in the 1950s American society. She is not necessarily fully aware of her oppressed status, as she tries to bring Link up according to a rigid set of American family values.

In her essay, "It is all in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race and Nation", Patricia H. Collins (1998) challenges the oppressive systems constructed by the American family and transforms them by following the same logic of oppression those systems adopt. She (1998: 78) states that "Family language also shapes everyday interactions: African-American strangers often refer to one another as 'brother' and 'sister'; some Black men refer to each other as 'bloods'. In hip-hop culture, 'homies' are Black males from one's neighborhood, or home community." This is the same strategy that Bill Hod and Weak Knees adopt with Link, in helping him to get released from the constraints of the family values he acquired from Abbie. They start with the power of black language, which is clear in the way they rename him: Link, a shortening of Lincoln – he was named after the American President – becomes Sonny; and they teach him more about the black vernacular. This, as Collins (ibid.) stresses, is a 'political framework' in which the whites are excluded and it works as a 'rhetoric' that "finds a home in what many African-Americans consider to be the most radical of Black political theories."

His preoccupation with the idea of race is what leads Link to be interested in the history of race in high school and to choose it as his major at college. Link's perspective on the history of race, shared by Petry, is that it is of key significance in understanding one's self. Link's interest in history as an adolescent helps to "resolve his confusion about his Black identity" and to help him find out about his origins, as McDowell (1980: 138) argues in her article "The Narrows: A Fuller View of Petry". She states that understanding the history of slavery, for example, provides the "Blacks with a key to their own history and identity". Link repeatedly self-identifies with the oppressed, the enslaved, throughout history as an attempt to achieve "spiritual liberation."

Link has all the qualities for making his dreams come true: he is smart, educated, and even kind, but he carries the curse of colour. A colour that is the key reason behind his brutalisation and that he either stresses out or entirely forgets about in conducting the pursuit of his life. It is, then, more than 'double-

consciousness', to quote Du Bois (1903: 2), who argued that black people are internally conflicted in the way they observe themselves through the eyes of a racist white society; this leads to their failure to grasp the sense of their lives as black men in a white world. Link seems to accept and embrace his colour as part of his identity and eventually overcomes the sense of double-consciousness that hinders the way of black people in accomplishing themselves. It is, rather, his belief that he can achieve his dreams, mainly the dream of having a life with his white lover, Camilo.

2.2. Link (black masculinity) vs. Camilo (white femininity)

In his introduction entitled "Invisible Men" to his book *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities*, Michael Kimmel (2005: 5) argues that men in the United States had no history before the second wave of feminism, as they were the "invisible gender" and that only women had gender. Man was always the standard of the difference in the social relations between the two sexes. He stresses the significance of power relations between the two genders and among men themselves. Masculinity is to be studied in relation to femininity to make the men aware of the centrality of gender in their lives and to question the power they have over women. Similarly, "among the central mechanism of power in society" is "the power some men hold over other men" (Kimmel 2005: 6). He defines men's power over women in terms of men's accessibility to resources in a society; however, men's power over other men is the distribution of the resources among men based on the categories of race, class and sexual orientation. He, thus, refers to Connell's study of the concept of "hegemonic masculinity". The term is of an essential role in masculinity studies, as it functions to theorise gender relations among men and clarifies the way masculinities add to the legitimization of order effectively. Hegemony, thus, refers to the maintenance of power in certain categories of masculinities, based on class, race, and sexuality. The intersection of these categories takes place on the political level. According to this model, there is a clear hierarchy between men, based on various aspects: a white middle-class heterosexual man is superior to a black lower-class homosexual one (Connell 2005: xviii). In this respect, Link, as a black man in the American society of the 1950s, is seen to legitimise his manhood in conflict with both a hegemonic masculinity (white middle or upper class masculinity) and his power over other women (a white femininity).

During his first meeting with Camilo in *The Narrows*, Link is confused to see a white woman with a fancy car in a black neighborhood late at night and questions her intentions. They meet when Camilo, who is being followed by Cat Jamie, the creepy crippled black man on the cart, runs into Link and asks him for help, while he is standing on the river bank in front of his house. When she runs into his arms, he sarcastically recalls all the negative stereotypes white women attach to black men, such as that of rape. He contemplates on the idea that she must be scared of being raped by him as "I am colored and it's written in the cards that colored men live for the sole purpose of raping white women, especially young beautiful white women who are on the loose." (Petry 1999: 79) Then, he amuses himself further at the idea of her screaming while being scared and "on the loose", but he questions her being "on the loose". This implies that, despite their being in a black vicinity and all alone, Link is not quite sure of Camilo's vulnerable position. This is due to the representational intersectionality dynamics of race and gender

between the two: on the one hand, Link is stereotyped as all black men raping white women; on the other, white women are superior to men of a different race. Additionally, hooks's (1982) reading of interracial relationships, referred to at the beginning of this study, is valid for deciphering the black masculinity vs. white femininity tensions between Link and Camilo. In their patriarchal society, Link is superior because of his gender, while Camilo has the upper hand because of her race. In this sense, race is a robust indicator of Link's inferiority in this unequal relationship. Link's presupposition about Camilo being in a position of power does not come only from her whiteness, she is also from an upper class and has a strong personality.

Camilo and Link, during their evolving relationship, almost forget about their different racial backgrounds, until some tension is added to the scene. The night Abbie finds Camilo sleeping in Link's room and kicks her out of the house, Camilo, a woman of no resources at that very moment, reacts to this act by swearing outrageously at Link and referring to his colour: "you black bastard" (Petry 1999: 257). Sexism plays a pivotal role in this incident: it places Link in a higher position than her, as she is a married woman whose reputation is at a stake. Her fury leads her not only to insult Link, but even to seek help from the police. Camilo's fascination with Link's colour is the main reason why she is attracted to him; being with Links puts an end to her curiosity about the black people. During their intimate moments, she caresses his skin and tells him that it is the most beautiful skin. "I remember the first time I saw a colored woman. When I was a little girl. I wondered if the color would wash off, and then I wondered if she was that color all over. Or was it just the face and hands" (idem: 263). Link's colour serves as site for both her seduction and power. The point here is that Camilo is typically white in her way of dealing with their entire love affair. In several situations, Link asks Camilo to drive her car (his request sounds almost like an order) and does not approve when Camilo acts like an executive during their car trips to New York. He also refuses that Camilo should pay for everything during their dates. This implies that class disparity plays an important role in their relationship and that Link's inferiority is the outcome of his race, strengthened by his lack of sufficient income, an indicator of his lower class.

Michael Kimmel (1996: 4) refers to a conversation between a white woman and a black woman mentioning what they see when they look in the mirror. While the white woman says she sees a woman and the black woman says she sees a black woman, Kimmel very interestingly says "Well", I said, "when I look in the mirror, I see a human being. I am universally generalizable. As a middle-class white man, I have no class, no race, no gender. I am the generic person!" All these sites of privilege work to the advantage of the white people, who do not need to remind the others about them. Problematic as the issues of race, class, and gender may be, due to their invisibility to the privileged ones, the intersectionality model for studying black masculinities can mark out these invisible categories of race, class, and gender and the way they intersect on a structural level, forming an area of deprivation and oppression.

In this respect, Link's gender works in his favour, as he is in a patriarchal society, but not his race. Race outweighs gender in the conduct of his relationship with Camilo and marks him more underprivileged than her:

Yeah. Until I found out I was just one of a collection. Back in the eighteenth century I would have been a silver-collar boy. Did you ever hear about them? The highborn

ladies of the court collected monkeys and peacocks and little blackamoors for pets. Slender young dark brown boys done up in silk with turbans wrapped around their heads and silver collars around their necks, and the name of the lady to whom they belonged was engraved on the silver collar. They were supposed to be pets like the peacocks and the monkeys, but in the old oil paintings, the lady's delicate white hand always fondled the silkclad shoulder of the silver-collar boy. So you knew they were something more useful, more serviceable ... (Petry 1999: 315)

After finding out about Camilo's true identity, Link cannot stand the idea of being possessed by her or being her toy boy. His male subjectivity is endangered with her; Link cannot let go of what he believes makes him the man he wants to be, his self-esteem and pride. She is a white woman who acts superiorly to him. Link refuses Camilo, as he finds it his duty not to let down the race issue this time – he believes an unequal relationship with a white woman is an affront to his race. His moral responsibility towards his race hinders his way of going any further with Camilo, as she is a married woman. Being a major in the History of Slavery at college is another important phase of Link's life. It enables him to read his love relation in a wider context; it is an unequal relationship, whose traces go back to the very beginning of black enslavement. Link cannot accept being the modern, the 1950s version of the 'young dark boys' at any rate. In this respect, he represents a positive version of black masculinity; despite the many obstacles in his life and his naivety in believing that his love can break all boundaries, he has a sense of awareness towards his race.

Unable to stand the discomfort of being rejected by a black man, Camilo accuses him of rape, at the same spot they first met. After she is pushed away by Link, she screams and hits him, to which he reacts similarly. They catch the attention of two policemen and of Jubine, a white photographer and apparently Link's friend. He is known to be hunting for any incident in The Narrows. "Jubine... He rumpled the mongrel tabloid newspaper between his hands, tossed it out of the car window. Jubine had tried the case, handed in a verdict, with his goddamn pictures. He'd made the Treadway girl look like a whore and made the nigger look like Apollo." (Petry 1999: 365) What triggers more anger in the white people when seeing the tabloid, including Camilo's husband and mother, is the way the photo is taken: Link is idealized as a handsome Greek Apollo and Camilo is shamed as a prostitute.

Camilo's husband suffers a psychological breakdown when he finds out about his wife's affair with a black man. Since he is unable to bear the situation of being cuckolded by a black man, he does not seem to be satisfied with murdering him only. By making a reference to the "rope", after Link is shot by Camilo's husband, Petry portrays the scenario of lynching metaphorically. Elaborating such a theme by an extended metaphor, Petry goes beyond the bitter reality of such criminal commitment and signifies its social and psychological motives. The castrated body of the black male symbolises normality and the punishment of forbidden desires and taboos. It does not only prevent the threat represented by black men for the white; the over-determination of white men to apply this kind of punishment indicates their troubled psychology, blinded by scenarios of black men sleeping with their wives. They cannot stand the notion that the black male is of a higher sexual aptitude and that he is more desirable than they are (Wiegman 1995: 82).

Camilo's husband is not the only version of hegemonic masculinity Link struggles against in his life. As a 12-year-old boy, Link works in the house of the Valkills and is used by Mr. Valkill, a white pervert, to satisfy his desires. Through his experience of molestation, Link becomes conscious that his blackness is seen by the white as related to erotic visions and that his masculinity is a subject of racist prediction in the eyes of the whites. When Link is asked to wear a Japanese Kimono for a tea party, Mr. Valkill's hidden instincts are revealed firstly in language, when he says, "how attractive a Japanese Kimono can be." (Petry 1999: 392) Then, when he tries to touch Link, Link flees and decides never to come back again. Link's refusal certifies his objection to the manipulation by the white race and it is also a rejection of the "hegemonic domestication" of black men in 1950s. Furthermore, the image of Link wearing a Kimono is a reference to feminizing the potent black masculinity by the bohemian white perverts, as Schmidt (2007: 149-171) suggests.

The homoeroticism in the character of Link takes a dangerous form, since he is subservient in an act of perversion which could have affected his sexuality for good. Being advised by both Bill Hod and Weak Knees to always protect himself, especially when surrounded by white men, Link refuses this act of molestation. What Mr. Valkill does to Link is related to both the traditional stereotyping of black men and the danger of white men domesticising black men. Link escapes both, but he remains vulnerable in some other ways. His struggle to legitimise his masculinity in the face of other white hegemonic masculinities is aggravated by his interracial affair with Camilo and results in his brutal murder.

3. Conclusion

Petry's *The Narrows* reflects a relatively positive image of black masculinity. Link is presented as struggling with two major forces compromising his masculinity: white femininity and hegemony. Petry works against the representational dynamics of intersectionality of race and gender as Link is seen refusing to be "Stevedores. Prizefighters. Big-muscled chauffeurs" (Petry 1999: 316) in his interracial love relationship with Camilo. He rejects any of these negative typecasting of black manhood and cannot jeopardise his manhood. He cannot accept the idea of being manipulated by Camilo and stands up for himself and his manhood. Link's personal deficiencies along with the exterior forces in a world dominated by white ideology are the reasons behind his downfall. As an individual, Link is a dedicated lover, dwelling in a sort of ideal world. "Sometimes I look at my own movies", he says. (idem: 145) Link truly believes he can integrate in the two worlds – of the Blacks and the Whites, and his own name can be read as a tag name in this context, which comes out at the expense of his unfortunate adjustment.

The very forces that shape his masculinity are, at the same time, the core reason behind his catastrophe when faced with other forms of hegemonic masculinity. In a broader sense, black masculinity in the 1950s as represented by Petry is shaped by the intersecting force of the categories of race, gender, and class, on the different structural, political, and representational levels, working against black men. The intersection of these categories strips them of their autonomy and oppresses them to a great extent. They are not only frustrated black men, but even violated, as it can be seen in Link's case. Link and other men of his generation are, therefore, 'brutalized' not in the sense that they brutalise others, but they are rather the object of brutalisation by other superior forms of masculinity.

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NARRATIVES OF SURVIVAL: INVISIBLE OPPRESSION AND RETALIATION IN JOYCE CAROL OATES'

MARYA: A LIFE

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Abstract: *Joyce Carol Oates, a postmodern American woman writer, has been featuring the narratives of survival in her works. In Marya: A Life, she attunes the void experienced by humans, and scrutinizes how survival is ensued from the remnants of disquietude. Marya, the protagonist, is as an archetype of the postmodern survivor, living in fragments. The novel discloses the post-traumatic phase of Marya's life. It presents the invisible oppression and the tangential thoughts that condition her to behave submissively. This article attempts to study how the fragmentation facilitates her survival and how the retention of violence reinforces the efficacy of life.*

Keywords: *survival narrative, invisible oppression, fragmentation, gruesome reality, hyperreality, memory*

1. Introduction

Postmodern fiction is a critique of the social ethos of the era marked by postmodern reflexivity. Emerged in the middle of the twentieth century, it can be viewed as the aesthetic representation of heterogeneous modes of writing affected by language. The arcane vocabularies and the metafictional loops of postmodern fiction have redefined the concept of text and the fiction drives the readers into a labyrinth that replicates the real world. Postmodern writers often deconstruct and parody the reticent and tumultuous minds of individuals constricted by inner conflicts. The presumptions about existence and survival are actualized with the furtive plots of postmodern fictions. As a result, some of the characters evolve into adherents of actualism. They feel entangled and fragmented, and they are unable to cope with the implausible fictional world. They are enmeshed in cultural inconsistencies and undergo the harrowing reality passively. The characters in the contrived plots often encounter cognitive complexities. The victimization of characters enkindles eruptive emotions that connect the readers with them. Such characters reorient the concept of survival in the twentieth century. The precepts of postmodernism epitomize the aphorism that survival in literature acculturated to the diversified experiences of the readers, identifying and associating them all as survivors, irrespective of time, place, and culture. As a consequence, the postmodern characters become a homogenous group with a multitudinous array of episodes in life.

Seemingly, American postmodern writers have produced a myriad of quintessential characters. Cathy Caruth (1996: 63), in her work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, points out: “[...] the history of the

traumatized individual is nothing other than the determined repetition of the event of destruction.” The individual stories of the postmodern characters are shaped by the disrupted social institutions and the continuing effect of violence in their life. The interpretations of the perplexing psychological implications and the cultural changes have exposed the repercussions on the American families with an acute sense of loss and nostalgia. The writers enter a kind of psychological space to depict the convoluted adversity of the characters with dramatic acumen. Further, they provide intellectual cues for instigating relief. What individuates the characters is their idiosyncratic adroitness of stratifying the events of life to procure stability while encountering psychologically isomorphic situations. Herbert Spencer (Online), advocating Darwin’s theory of evolution, stipulates certain impairments as the cause of the deterioration of harmony within individuals. Nature provides the evolving creatures with the prowess to fit in the sphere of existence, like instincts, adaptation, surviving calamitous events and so on. When they fail to initialize their abilities to withstand catastrophe, some are temporarily weakened, whereas some get destroyed and remain with debris for the rest of their lives.

Joyce Carol Oates, a prolific contemporary American writer, encapsulates the disquieting experiences and the after-effects of abuse and victimization of characters in her works. The threat of ubiquitous violence is her concern. Her protagonists lead a violently contorted life right from their childhood and are often in a state of emotional aloofness. The interminable and invisible oppression and violence make them “...complete innocents who suffer trauma that casts a pall over the rest of their lives” (Horeck 2010: 26). *Marya: A Life* accentuates the dearth of parental care and the continued existence of violence that enfeebles Marya and thrusts her into darkness. The gruesome reality and the intrusive feelings numb her senses. The vague anxiety and indifference caused by unseen forces are ineffable. Oates investigates the conventional American propositions about family, motherhood, gender, and even, with a twinge, God.

Evidently, Oates’ novel is a metamorphic appropriation of the demise of familial harmony. The discursive ambiguity that runs through the novel foregrounds the issues on gender, concepts of self and the representation of body. The nostalgia and frustration expressed in the novel replicates our mundane existence. This article aims to portray Marya as a postmodern survivor, whose self is fragmented and whose survival is sought from the wreckage of violence and victimization. It would probe into the politics of representation that diminishes the act of violence and intensifies the aesthetics of aftermath. Further, it elucidates on how postmodern characters feel encumbered by the appalling reality and their ineptitude to control their minds.

2. Survival in a postmodern context

The aesthetics of postmodernism is both contested and glorified by its fragmentary narratives. It is concerned with destabilizing the rationality that leads to the exploration of psychological aberrations and the transmutation of the perception of the world. The characters in postmodern fictions reflect the experiences and memories of common readers and serve as their confidants. They make an inquiry into the representation of history and culture. On this account, the postmodern characters render the essential insights into the conceptualization of challenging culture, diverging psychological demarcations and prospects of

survival. Precisely, they grant access to the intricacies of life, familiarizing the readers with their ability to surmount their fragile nature and predispositions.

In addition, postmodern women writers show unflinching determination in tracing the life of women characters. Their characters engage in a kind of collective struggle and often leave the readers puzzled. Though they instill hope among women readers, they lacerate the power structure, power relationships and the politics of representation. Their survival in a malignant environment is attributed to their unflinching dynamism effectuated by the ordeals and the accidents of life. They have been paragons of survivors, because survival, to them, is not merely the consistency in existence after victimization, but an aspiration to transcend from being a victim. They are tactical and resist the frameworks of power politics in the society. Margaret Atwood (Online), prolific Canadian writer, has been exploring the victimization of women in her works, in which the characters hardly have an identity worth calling their own. In her work, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, Atwood groups all women under four rudimentary victim positions. Women, according to her: (i) deny that they are victims (ii) see victimization as something intrinsic and inescapable (iii) acknowledge but repudiate their victimization (iv) become a creative non-victim.

In this article, an attempt is made to delineate Marya, the central character of *Marya: A Life*, as a prototype of Oatsian characters, who accepts her victimization as an ineradicable hostility that the 1980s American postmodern society exerted on women. But, Oates presents, in the words of Marilyn C. Wesley (1993: 144), "...the classic dilemma of colloquial expression: you can't live with it, and you can't live without it." Marya oscillates between the second and third positions propounded by Atwood. Oates deals with the disagreement between continuance and curtailment of victimization, and the conflict between the public and the private self.

3. Discerning violence in *Marya: A Life*

The novel *Marya: A Life* is a bildungsroman about an eight year old girl, Marya Knauer, who hails from a blue-collar family. The plot begins with the saddening news about the death of Marya's father, Mr. Knauer – a miner. Her mother, Vera Knauer, announces the news derisively, and she is a typical Oatsian insensitive mother. Even as a child, Marya learns how to conceal all her natural instincts. She overcomes the sullenness of her father's mysterious death and copes with her mother's erratic mood swings. She develops fortitude and remembers her mother's words often: "DON'T YOU START crying," Marya's mother warned her. "Once you get started, you won't be able to stop" (Oates 1986: 6). When she moves to live with her uncle's family after the disappearance of her mother, the warning of her cousin, Lee, becomes a scheme for her survival throughout her life: "Don't you tell anybody, you know what's good for you" (idem: 25). He deters her from being buoyant. She is pummeled by him sexually for years. This drives her into a labyrinth from which she never escapes. She is reminded of Lee and the horrific event when she sees a passerby resembling him. Oates highlights the idealized roles of men and women as stigmatized by the society: the male expresses anger, hostility, derision and mockery; a female rarely does.

Apparently, Oates depicts her female characters who concur with the prevalent perception that a woman will inevitably be used by men. As John Gardner (1987: 99) remarks, "She can write persuasively of out-of-the-body

experiences because she believes in them.” When Marya comes to know about the death of Ethel Meunzer, one of her schoolmates, she discusses it with her teacher and her Aunt, Wilma. Both these women seem pitiless and Marya, who discerns of Ethel’s terrified sobs before her death, “...can’t cry at home, they’ve taught her not to” (Oates 1986: 28). These women are essentially postmodern antagonists who restrain violence and strong emotions from damaging them. Mary Allen substantiates the views of such women as “The sexual act is not necessarily repulsive, but frequently women feel nothing” (idem: 64). But, Marya, a post-modern protagonist, is caught between the tension of people who epitomize the desensitized familial and societal relationships.

Subsequently Marya mechanizes her feelings and becomes unresponsive to stimuli. Her robust characterization as a victim of violence, a trauma survivor and a woman of refinement, evokes certain impulses that tag Oates as essentially a realist. What Marya, as a school girl, faces makes her realize that inflictions are indispensable and she diligently suspends herself from reality temporarily. It prepares her to confront the events of the rest of her life. She shows great interest in literature at school and her writings are appreciated. Mr. Schwilk, her teacher, is the first to acknowledge, what he calls, her “*feverish* imagination” and her “knotty little stories” that marked Marya’s “unusual gift for words” (idem: 66). But he too rejects her story that it was “about a girl Annie who was threatened with strangling by a male cousin if she “told” on him” (idem: 65). Marya feels annoyed about the reality where the traumatic emotions of a woman are not allowed to be expressed, even in the form of writing. Marya fears the school gossip and feels sympathetic when she, along with other school children, teases Mr. Schwilk. She does that to escape the school gossip, but she is bewildered when he delivers a passionate lecture on suicide. It makes Marya drift into a state of oblivion and she ponders on the mysterious death of her father. Her cognizance of violence happening around her makes her insensate, and when the news of Mr. Schwilk’s death arrives, she concludes her views about him saying “things happened to Mr. Schwilk because he couldn’t stop them from happening” (idem: 52).

Memories debilitate Marya and she feels entrapped by the intense remembrance. “Marya prayed not to think impure thoughts or to wish improper wishes; if, when saying rosary, she began to pray mechanically, her imagination running wild, she forced herself to go back to the beginning and start again” (idem: 84). It is in ordinariness and inadequacy that Marya becomes aware that the “mediation between the world and the self appears no longer possible; there is only surrender and recoil” (Hassan 1961: 12). Her mother’s separation dejects her and disorients her perceptions of ‘self’ – “The very question of “self” intrigued her” (Oates 1986: 320). When she becomes a successful writer, an independent woman, she frequently thinks about her mother – “Poor Vera Sanjek. Poor Vera Knauer. Was she alive or dead?” (ibid.). She persists with a hope that her reunion with her unworthy and unnatural mother would change her life.

Evidently Marya is the microcosm of women who stifle through their grievances, because they are haunted by torments and fears, especially of men. “Existence”, as Oates declares in the novel, “for some of us is fundamentally embarrassing” (326). Marya finds no comfort even in the fraternity of women. She is annoyed when she falls into the trap of Vera Knauer’s, her mother’s reminiscence. This trap makes her conscious of her appearance and her body. Wilma, her aunty, is insensitive to Marya’s feelings and often besmirches Vera Knauer. Though Marya intends to be independent, she is agonized by the memory

of “her dead father, her lost mother, and Everard and Wilma as well – weren’t they lost too...” (Oates 1986: 128). She, entangled in the ferments of family, decides to leave Innisfail. She wishes to remain obscure in a place “Where she could begin again, give birth to herself” (idem: 117).

Accordingly, the Maynard house, where she meets Imogene Skillman and Phyllis, enables her to develop a sense of sarcasm and cunning wit that she thinks would protect her. Although she befriends both Imogene and Phyllis, their friendship ends with “puzzling abruptness” (idem: 174). When she learns that Phyllis has not even mentioned Marya’s name to her family, she feels disappointed. She was not happy with the pretentious Imogene either. Though she feels sabotaged, her perseverance grows steadily. In this way, the novel discloses the detrimental space in which Marya oscillates between her devastating experiences and her intense passion to be a self-assertive young woman.

Besides, Marya makes no attempt to distinguish the men she meets in her life and becomes vigilant of their protocol. Men either entangle her memories (her father, Mr. Schwilk, Father Shearing, Maximilian Fein, and Eric Nicholas) or make her feel incredulous and frightened (Lee, Emmett, a gang of molesters, and Sylvester). Sylvester, the janitor, stirs an unusual fear in her. At the New Hampshire College, Marya begins to feel a victim again with his “...other strategies of harassment as well, none quite so subtle” and ponders over the question “...why me, why *me*? – why me at this time in my life?” (Oates 1986: 256). The conflicts that Marya faces strengthen her and she creates a ‘self’ that remains unaffected by the inflictions. She hides and denies her ‘real self’ that meets with abuse and humiliation.

This is how Marya, like any other postmodern protagonist, enters into the fragmentation process. The disintegrated and ‘divided self’ becomes, as Patricia Waugh (2013: 11) points out, “the vehicle for the expression of any contemporary experience and in particular, the experience of women”. Even her family name, as Josephene Kealey (2015: 5) states, is gnomic – “Oates exposes the dynamic between one ‘knowing’ another – the knower – and the state of being known – ‘know her’ – as an aggressive relationship where the known person is turned into the subject of the knowing self.” She thinks of her profitless past and creates a ‘self’ that is genderless and this is reflected as follows: “She had learned to think of herself as genderless, just as knowledge itself was genderless; just as the scholarly life was genderless” (Oates 1986: 203). Marya manipulates the enmeshing situations and violence, and she learns to devise her own series of devious strategies to tackle them.

4. The survival strategy in *Marya: A Life*

Oates’ allegiance to the vision of life has made her redefine the emptiness felt by Marya, a trauma survivor, in the novel. Caruth contends that

[...] trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival. It is only by recognizing traumatic experiences as a paradoxical relation between destructiveness and survival that we can also recognize the legacy of incomprehensibility at the heart of catastrophic experience. (Caruth 1996: 58)

Oates’ depiction of Marya can be studied in parallel with Immanuel Kant’s philosophy (Simenas, online) of invisible oppression and autonomy. Oates objectifies

Marya's encounters with people in a virulent environment and strengthens her views on the power politics in relationships, which coalesces with Kant's political system. She extends her concerns about establishing a unanimous rectitude that would not presume the responsibilities and characteristics of women. She also suggests that the invisible oppressions are to be conquered by using discretion.

In the novel, Marya divides her 'self' and always imagines the abuse to be happening to the 'other.' Denial of being a victim and dissociation from the traumatic events are the defense mechanisms used by her. It is reflected in the novel as: "Marya knew how to go into stone; how to shut her mind off, to see nothing without closing her eyes" (Oates 1986: 17). Marya avoids being specifically female. When Lee abuses her, she looks at the cracked windshield in "cobweb-like pattern", "A labyrinth" (idem: 19), and is careful not to provoke his anger. She detests showing herself to be feeble and, when a group of high school boys molest her during the going-away party, she protests with "Kicks and Kicks, wild, frantic, still not screaming, not screaming aloud" (idem: 141). All her defense mechanisms are, as Nolen-Hoeksema and Hilgard (2014: 4) state, "the immediate reactions to frustrations."

Apparently, all the abuses and humiliations make her drift into hypnotic focus. She is intensely absorbed in other thoughts while she is being exploited by others, and she pays less attention to the actual consciousness. Dissociation as a defense mechanism deprives her of emotional experiences that are intense and disturbing. Further, it drives Marya into a postmodern hyperreality. Tim Woods (2010: 27) says that "Hyperreality is the state where the distinction between objects and their representations are dissolved, and one is left with only simulacra." The viability of the representations of systems like body, mind, family, relationships and gender enters a discursive pattern, and it interrogates the ontological formulae that form the basis of such institutions.

Marya's attempt to adopt Catholicism can be seen as a strategy that helps her differentiate life as grace and life as curse. She believes, as an adolescent, that God "saw directly into the heart and soul" (Oates 1986: 81) and never judged anyone crudely. Her unwavering interest in writing and the Catholic spirit enable her to help Father Shearing. She wanted to "... kneel before him, and press her warm face against his hands, and surrender everything in her of pride, rage, deep unhappiness... everything that was *Marya*, and consequently damned" (idem: 89). Her digression from trauma and ingress into Catholicism and writing habit marks a kind of dissociation from the neurosis caused by the inflictions. Such dissociation reformulates Marya's identity. However, she feels distorted by the influence of the contrasting consciousness and memories. Later, she contemplates on Nietzsche's aphorism that "*Terrible experiences give one cause to speculate whether the one who experiences them may not be something terrible*" (idem: 247) and enters an optimistic phase.

Consequently, Marya becomes inscrutable and denies access to the 'real' Marya. "She could be not-there yet fully present to the others." (27) She develops a "meek, docile, shrewd" (26) self that remains inviolable. She was admired because she was rarely susceptible to tears. Marya's friendship with Imogene and her secretive affair with Maximilian Fein instills in her a fear of being discovered. Imogene comments on Marya's cautiousness to remain covert, as "*You can't be cracked open, can you? a nut that can't be cracked*" (195). Later in the novel, Fein tries to traverse? Marya's mind and instincts, but fails. He asks her "Why are you so secretive?" and declares her to be "a hard woman" (233).

Further, Marya detests marital commitments and stays away from Emmett Schroeder, whom she loved deeply. “Marya noted his air of authority” (115) and intends to be alone without being judged by others. Oates’ slant on the politics of representation is effective when she portrays Marya to be a meek young girl who understands the politics of power relationships. This is when Oates’ feminist realism comes to surface. Marya slips away from the hold of men – she is either afraid of them or of the institutions (family and marriage) that frighten her – and develops her instinctual strategies to become what she wanted. Her affairs with Maximilian Fein and Nicholas Eric are destroyed by fate. But she remains unaffected, because she had declared herself “inviolable – autonomous – entirely self-sufficient” (226). This embodies the immanent postmodern preoccupation with the notion of transcendence and the politics of body. Marya believes that the marital institution will permit others to locate her ‘hidden self.’ Her perception of virginity explicates the power struggle that was prevalent in 1980s America, where a woman was always judged by the roles she accepted and was engaged in. She breaks up with Emmett to go to university. Further, even after the incest with Fein, “She supposed she had remained a virgin so long because she hadn’t exactly believed in other people – in men. In what they might bring to her that she didn’t already possess, in the most secret inchoate depths of her being” (227)

Another strategy used by Marya to cope with the confrontations is writing. “Writing is a form of therapy; sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose or paint, can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human condition”, records Graham Greene (2011: 9) in his preface to *Ways of Escape*. When Marya begins to write, she realizes that, as Paul Valéry posits, “There is no thinking man, however shrewd or learned he may be, who can hope to dominate this anxiety, to escape from this impression of darkness” (Valéry 1922: 23). She inadvertently presents in her composition writings at school the story of her father’s death and the pervert behaviours of her cousin Lee. The annual award that she wins for her poetry boosts her spirit and creates a sense of excitement in her. Marya’s enthusiasm for literature and writing eases her survival and she resolutely believes that though inflictions are ineluctable, they can be extenuated. She dissociates her life from her career, and “A writer’s authentic self, she thought, lay in his writing and not in his life; it was the landscape of the imagination that endured, that really real” (Oates 1986: 147). But she faces the dilemma of being a total stranger whenever she signs her name – *Marya Knauer* (idem: 173). Becoming a writer does not gratify her, rather she feels further distanced from reality. Asta Balčiūnaitė (2010: 2), in her doctoral dissertation, acknowledges Joanne V. Creighton’s observation that “if Oates’ depiction of psychological and environmental limitations placed her within the tradition of American Naturalism, so her visionary perspective in the same works counters this tradition.” It is in this regard that the novel projects Marya as a woman who transcends the state of being a victim. The letter from her mother, towards the end of the novel, creates a frightening curiosity in her. She fears writing a reply, and writing as a strategy for escape fails with the defiant mixture of emotions. But, Oates ends the plot by creating a new hope, of which Marya is not sure – “Marya, this is going to cut your life into two” (Oates 1986: 338).

Oates, through Marya, underlines the predicaments that transform women, taking into account social institutions like family, education, marriage, and career. Her exploration of female characters provides insight into the “...politics of rape and the formation of female subjectivity” (Horeck 2010: 36). She, as a pragmatic writer, produces incessant echoes of the complexity persistent in American society.

As a result, her postmodern fictions are diverse in style, and they parody the American dreams of harmony and establishment of human will. Nevertheless, her realistic plots categorize her, in the words of Creighton (1992), as a “post-modern romantic.” Thus the novel features the narrative of survival brilliantly. Further, it foregrounds adaptation as the pivotal element in the victim-survival schema. Oates, as a perspicacious writer, sketches Marya as the champion of the Darwinian dictum – the survival of the fittest. Her adaptation is succored by the need to maintain her mental stability, life, social group and familial kinship.

5. Conclusion

Though Oates places Marya in a blue collar family, marking a sense of autobiography, the content (the experiences and actions) is not from Oates’ life. The plot of the novel is a part of Oates’ nostalgia of her childhood experiences. The landscape and characters are idealized, depending on the requirement of the plot, which has traces of the stories she listened to as a child. Marya, who becomes an admired writer, may be seen as the exalted image of Oates. She is a reflection of the women who revive themselves even after being in the grasp of depression and pangs of grief. Oates’ has sketched Marya as a tribute to such women. She writes in her epigraph to the novel, quoting William James: “My first act of freedom will be to believe in freedom”. Marya, an exemplum of the statement, rediscovers the lost ‘self’ and her dispositions determine the kind of life she leads. She becomes the exponent of the mid-twentieth century women who often felt entrapped and enervated by the hyperreal situations. Oates’ narrative is agonizing, because it surfaces the haunting fears of women. Hers is a pragmatic portrayal and her work is permeated by the irreconcilable restlessness and tranquility. Oates’ concepts of sexual repression reflect Flannery O’Connor’s corporeality that outlines not only the psychological upheaval of characters, but also the socio-historic records of human nature. O’Connor’s influence on Oates registers the relentless efforts of women writers, whose unassailable works are evidences of the subverted culture and the society that debases women’s position in it.

Moreover, Oates breaks open the dominant and submissive roles and the victim positions idealized and channelized in the society. She also illustrates the importance of uplifting the damaged self. She investigates the issues inherent in the American culture and society. Her main concern remains that “the tragedies that befall girls and women are not just down to the so-called passivity or masochism of individuals but of the culture that colludes in their systemic victimization” (Horeck 2010: 36). The novel exposes the after-abuse remnants and instigates the readers, especially the women victims, to be spirited and work for their survival and status in an abominable society. In this way, the novel reflects the dysfunctional and isomorphic situations that are transforming human life and, as Waugh (2013: 83) states, “what happens next?” is subordinate to the question “why did it happen?”

Distinctly, trauma in the postmodern context divulges the unpreparedness of the human being and the breach of trust. “...[T]hreat”, Caruth (1996: 62) says, “is recognized as such by the mind *one moment too late*.” Thus, the traumatic event becomes a memory, and to elude this memory, the survivors of trauma adhere to conscious reality diverging from their past life to the present. Reading between the lines takes us to a propaedeutic analysis of the references we use for interpreting the finesse of the writer. The catastrophic moment in Oates’ writing is the “one that exists in an uncanny liminal space between life and death, reality and imagination, film and real life, and it is shot through with unbearable pathos” (Horeck 2010: 37).

It is highly impossible to get through an insentient environment, but it is facile to look for identifiable referents in narratives that act as cues in resolving issues.

Prominently, as Brenda Daly (1995: 92) suggests, “Oates depicts women who bear witness against violence and, in the act of narration, acquire power as agents of change.” Further, it is evident that any constituent of a narrative has its own mantle in the social construction of reality. Adaptation and survival, after the gruesome events, are the inevitable eventualities. In her writings, Oates reveals how the subjects, often thought to be trifles, have the ability to construe the reality of the empirical world which is perceived to be chaotic, with the inability of human beings to identify the referential truthfulness.

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STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE REPRESENTATION IN *AND THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED* BY KHALED HOSSEINI

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Abstract: *The paper explores structural violence as represented in Khaled Hosseini's And the Mountains Echoed (2013). Its author looks at the structural violence representation, exploring the narratological approach, Conviction Narrative Theory, for that purpose. Johan Galtung's theory of the violence triangle will be applied in order to see how violence is narrated in a structural form.*

Keywords: *structural violence, narrative, narratology, representation*

1. Introduction

And the Mountains Echoed (2013) is the third published novel by Khaled Hosseini. In it, the author goes into the depth of family structure, connecting it to the society, culture, and political system. The novel is the story of two siblings, Abdullah and Pari, who have been separated from each other since their childhood, as Pari was given for adoption to a wealthy family, because her own family could not look after her due to poverty. Pari leaves Afghanistan due to the insecurity and the problems in the country and settles in France, where she becomes a successful writer, while Abdullah flees the country to the USA and starts running a restaurant with his family. They find each other after a long time, but Abdullah is ill and cannot remember anything about the past. Family ties are among the main issues which the novel explores. Violence is also a primary issue, like in Hosseini's previous novels, but different types of violence are represented here. There is violence related to the state and other groups of people, but social/structural and cultural violence is more evident in this novel, as it starts with giving away a child for adoption due to poverty.

Drawing on the "universal signifiers of myth and symbol" states Hosseini's effectiveness as a storyteller (Hore 2013: online). The author uses fantasy as a myth at the beginning of this novel, a technique not used in his previous novels. On the other hand, according to Helen Brown (2013: online), Hosseini has listened to his critics: his first two novels had been criticised because they ended unrealistically; in this novel, he sums up his work more neatly. Its end is more peaceful, while the previous novels contain more violence. However, the first novel's ending is less violent and could be considered very similar to his third novel.

In this novel, Hosseini continues keeping the family stories as the central point of his narration. He presents violence as he did in his previous works, but in a different manner. This time, he focuses more on the structure of family relations and the circumstances influencing it. Hosseini says in an interview: "My new novel is a multi-generational family story as well, this time revolving around brothers and sisters, and how they love, wound, betray, honor, and sacrifice for each other"

(Driscoll 2012: online). The social structure directly influences the siblings' relationship, as Pari is separated from her brother. The way society is structured violates the right of the siblings to grow together and this is related to the wealth distribution within the same group of people of one country, Afghanistan: some become poor to the extent that they cannot look after their own children, while others are rich and can adopt the children of those who are less fortunate. Hosseini examines the influence of such violence on the family formations in the absence of justice. There are still other issues and types of violence present in the novel, such as invasion, terrorism, and war. However, family and the committed violence against family structure remain the central issues of the novel.

Johan Galtung's structural violence, identified in his violence triangle theory, will be used as a theoretical background to look at the violence represented in the novel; I shall explore how violence starts and the reasons that make it occur. Galtung (1969: 171) defines structural violence as a global unfairness and as the conflict between various groups and structures, which can be social, economic, religious, racial, or gender; he makes his argument clearer by giving an example: "Thus, when one husband beats his wife, there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance, there is structural violence."

Trauma is widely used in this novel, as the author aims to show the reader what trauma does to the people staying in, fleeing, and returning to Afghanistan (Linklater 2013: online). Marcela Valdes (2013: online) criticises the novel and says that it is a work dealing with many emotional aspects, such as honesty, loneliness, beauty, and poverty and that it is a novel of "the transformation of emotions into physical ailments." The theme of sacrifice as a reason for global unfairness and structural violence remains the most touching for the reader. The narrator states that "A finger had to be cut, to save the hand" (Hosseini 2013: 14). There is always something to be done unwillingly to let the others or a more significant part survive; in this example, cutting a finger is one of the violent actions to be committed in order to prevent a more striking act of violence, like losing a hand.

The narration model used in the novel is the Conviction Narrative Theory (CNT), which allows the narrator to experience and judge. According to Baxtin (qtd. in Tjupa 2014: online), "Conviction" focuses on "a definite set of values ... Only one voice sounds in it ... It exists in the ready-made, stably differentiated and evaluated world". The narrator evaluates and assesses the situations and also decides on the moral attitudes of the characters. CNT is a narrative model focusing on the opinions of the narrator rather than narrating the knowledge alone. Baxtin (idem) names this "evaluative outsidership" that does not presuppose omniscience, but the narrator has a broader conceptual horizon than a participant in the story. In such narratives, reliability is questionable, and the reader sees the judgments of the narrator clearly.

2. Structural violence in *And the Mountains Echoed*

Structural violence is the primary type of violence used in *And the Mountains Echoed*. The narrator sometimes creates structural violence by using his interpretation of the existing knowledge about events. It is the narrator who discriminates against the genders by assigning specific tasks to each. Thus, Pari's father has no problem changing his daughter's diapers and waking up at night to

take care of her, but it is the narrator who thinks that “it wasn’t Father’s job to do – he was a man and, besides, he was always too exhausted from work” (Hosseini 2013: 35). Using the word “man” is labeling a gender with specific tasks and replacing these tasks represents a non-acceptable situation. “Man” is used as a metaphor for a group of people who are superior to others by not being assigned tasks which are typical for people considered to be lower in status. The narrator makes the judgment, although it is mentioned that Parwana, the mother, is pregnant and has other duties at home to deal with, including looking after her elder son; gender is highlighted to show the task divisions.

This is how the tasks are divided and gender roles seen in the country (Evason 2016: online). It is taboo or unacceptable for an Afghan man to change a diaper, while in a Western context, it would be nothing unusual, and the narrator would not make it an issue. A child belongs to both parents, and they both are responsible for him; it is their right and decision to divide the tasks among themselves. But when these tasks are divided by social and cultural norms, this compromises the privacy of the individuals. It does not matter if the man accepts to undertake the task; there is always some interference from the others, who comment on the action which is against their social and cultural codes (Cooke 1996: 15).

In the Afghan society, stalking is another issue. Women are stalked and gazed at in almost all societies, but in some countries, the situation is more serious, as the woman is blamed for being gazed at and stalked. In conservative countries like Afghanistan or Iraq, which the researcher of this article is familiar with, a woman is the guilty part if she gazes at a man; the last person to be blamed is the gazer. The reason is that she reveals her appearance to a man who is legally or religiously not bound to her or is not a close relative, like father, brother, husband, or son. To the best of my knowledge, there are neither religious rules, nor social norms by which men should abide and which should forbid them to gaze at women. However, many sayings ask the women to cover themselves, so as not to give men any excuse to gaze at them. Men would look at a woman, and might always find a reason for their actions. An example may be found in the novel:

In every corridor Parwana would see men’s eyes snapping to attention when Masooma passed by. She saw their efforts to behave matter-of-factly, but their gazes lingered, helpless to tear away. If Masooma glanced in their direction, they looked idiotically privileged. They imagined they had shared a moment with her. (Hosseini 2013: 71)

The male characters who are the gazers enjoy stalking Masooma. It is the female character who should not even look in their direction, or she would be victimized even more, as the men would think that she was doing it for their benefit, as a sign of desire. Women are expected to be extra cautious in a culture like this, as this is the only way to be protected from men who are the dominant group in society. The men are more privileged, and their desires have more chances to be met, sometimes forcefully, without a female’s consent. Women are not happy about being gazed at, especially by men. This is the opposite of the stereotypes about women feeling precious, valuable, and pretty when gazed at by males, at least in masculine societies.

Class division is a significant issue in many developing countries, and Afghanistan is one of them. The marriage institution can be affected by such social structures. The main classification of individuals groups them as either honorable

or dishonorable. Honour is defined on the basis of a female character's past life, while the male honour is not at risk, even if he had many known sexual affairs before. The female is supposed to be chaste and pure and to have a relationship only after marriage with her husband. If a female's past relationships become known, her life would be at risk, and the least that might happen is that she will have a bad reputation, and she would be the last person to be chosen for marriage. In the past, there was even a regulation required a virginity test for women before accepting them, but then it was stopped, following the international and Afghan advocacies (in D'Costa 2016: 418).

The men talk behind Nila's back when she marries Mr. Wahdati, and it is said that the marriage was not approved by his family because:

it was well known in Kabul that she had no *nang* and *namoos*, no honor, and that though she was only twenty she had already been "ridden all over town" like Mr. Wahdati's car. Worst of all, he said, not only had she made no attempt to deny these allegations, she wrote poems about them. (Hosseini 2013: 93)

She was just seen in a stranger's car, which is enough for society to talk about her as a dishonoured person. Having no "nang," "namoos" and "honor" are metaphors about a female character; the narrator explicitly uses these words in the local Afghan language to indicate a conservative society. No one names the male character, the car driver; the ride in a stranger's car becomes a problem only for the female person, which influences her future and marriage life. The virginity of a woman is the proof not only of her own honour, but of her family's honour as well; if she loses her virginity before marriage, the whole family will be disgraced, and this may end up with the woman's murder in the name of the family honour (Moorst et al. 2012: 94).

Nila is seen as unacceptable by society due to her behaviour, which now everybody knows about and is no longer a secret. She takes a further step by publishing poems about what she did. It would be better if she denied her feelings and lied about her past actions, while writing poems about her "crime" is considered even worse. The most barbaric comment in the group is "one of the men remarked that in his village they would have slit her throat by now" (Hosseini 2013: 93). This shows that Afghanistan's villages can be worse places than cities for women, as they may pay with their own lives for something the society does not accept. It is not surprising that no punishment is mentioned for a man who would do the same; moreover, his poems might probably be praised, and he would be considered a successful, romantic poet, who expresses his emotions. In most parts of Afghanistan, a woman can be beaten or even killed by her brother/s and father, if she is found to write poetry, especially love poems, as they can be the proof of a relationship. Girls in Kabul have more freedom than in other parts of Afghanistan, and writing poetry is tolerated (Griswold 2012: online). Kabul is said to be the city with the most freedom for women, but even in this city it is dangerous for a woman to be a poet (Doucet 2013). Storytelling is a way for Afghan women to express themselves and overcome gender-based violence (Mannella et al. 2018: 97). Gender discrimination is made more evident in the novel through the words uttered by those in a dominant position and the society's decision-makers. It is worth mentioning that the behaviour of Afghan "man," "men," and "male" cannot be generalized, and it is not my purpose to do so here. There are men thinking differently, such as Mr. Wahdati, who hears all the

rumours about Nila and although he does not have the approval of his family, he still gets married to Nila.

Religious discrimination is another theme connected to structural violence. Islam is the main religion of the majority of the people in Afghanistan. In the novel, most of the characters are Muslims, at least by birth if not by belief, but the religious differences do not come into evidence. In other words, Islam is the dominating religion of most of the characters, but their religion and beliefs are not taken into account. There is a conversation between a traveler and Mullah Shekib, stating the religious discrimination based on an individual's belief:

Now, one day a traveler was passing through, and, of course, he sat with Mullah Shekib for a meal that evening, as is custom. The traveler heard this story and he thought about it, and then he said, 'But, Mullah Sahib, with all due respect, I met a Jew once and I swear his palms bore the very same lines. How do you explain it?' And Mullah said, 'Then the Jew was a Muslim at heart.' (Hosseini 2013: 98)

According to Mullah's beliefs, the palm of a Jew's hand is different from that of a Muslim's. The biological division is introduced to differentiate between people because of their religious beliefs, although religion has nothing to do with someone's physical appearance, except for some physical traits, such as growing a beard as a religious practice. The palm is an "innovation" in the Mullah's mind, while there is no truth in this belief. There is an image about Jews in the mind of the Mullah's followers; the image is a manifestation of the existence of structural violence formulated by a community leader. When he is confronted, he continues by stating that the Jew has followed the Islamic religion from the heart. The issue is that his evidence is weak. The traveler would not be able to argue more, as he would be accused of confronting the religion itself, as the Mullah has a higher power status. In religious communities, religious people have more power, and they should be listened to; if not, those who confront them can be accused of being against the religion.

Race as a source of structural violence is not absent in this novel. A Hazara woman is identified by her appearance, by her face. Thus, Nabi, the driver, describes the woman who came to do the laundry at Mr. Wahdati's house: "there was a jowly-faced Hazara woman" (Hosseini 2013: 100). He does not talk about the cleaning lady negatively, but he cannot refrain from identifying her by her looks and by mentioning that she is a Hazara, a minority group in Afghanistan. The Hazara people are seen as immigrants coming from other countries. Being identified as a Hazara is a form of discrimination. The narrator mentions her ethnicity in order to bring up the Hazara issue as a minority suffering in the country.

The conflict over the land continues, as power decides on who rules the land. Naturally, the parties who gain control following war and conflicts are those who start controlling everything. They legalize deeds while the legal system is in their favour, as they bribe or influence the system. Thus Adel, a boy, has a father, a general, who has controlled the lands belonging to others, but Adel does not know this and considers him a hero in the society:

This was my family's tree. This was my family's land. It's been ours for generations. Your father built his mansion on our land. While we were in Pakistan during the war." He pointed to the orchards. "These? They used to be people's

homes. But your father had them bulldozed to the ground. Just like he brought down the house where my father was born, where he was raised.” Adel blinked. (Hosseini 2013: 305)

Adel is told by his father, the guards, and his mother that his father is a great commander and works all the time for society’s happiness and well-being. But Adel’s father becomes a powerful man, builds himself a mansion, and starts to acquire factories and other businesses to produce drugs. All his fortune is illegitimate, and he builds his mansion on the land of other people, who had to flee the country because of the war. Adel does not know all this until he is told about the grim reality by a stranger, Gholam, who becomes his friend.

Gholam’s father, who is one of the victims, as his land was taken forcefully, tries to solve the issue through negotiations, but he is not allowed even to go close to the authorities:

“You lied to him,” Adel said.

“It’s part of what I’m paid to do: protect your father from buzzards.” (Hosseini 2013: 284)

The guard does not let him go close to the person who has taken the property of someone with less power. Although he is a victim, now he is a “buzzard”, just because he seeks his rights. Such persons are identified as “buzzards”, which is a bird symbolizing death and destruction. The class with less power is structurally violated just because there is a more powerful group and there is no fairness in their relations. The only left option is going to court; after many hearings, the judge announces that all the legal documents of the land burned in a mysterious fire, and there will be no more proceedings, as there is no legal proof that the land belongs to Gholam’s father. The man believes that the judge has been bribed, as he sees a gold watch on the latter’s wrist during the last hearing, when the decision was announced. The gold watch points to the existence of bribery and unfairness.

The man tries all the possible legal methods to get back his ownership rights over his land, but he fails. The final solution which he is left with is a violent action against the powerful authority, but this turns against him as well:

Former Commander Escapes Assassination Attempt. Adel reads the story in his father’s study, on his father’s computer. The story described the attack as “vicious” and the assailant as a former refugee with “suspected ties to the Taliban.” Midway through the article, Adel’s father was quoted as saying that he had feared for the safety of his family. (Hosseini 2013: 313)

The man is identified now as a “terrorist”, while his attack consisted only in stoning the Former Commander’s house, as he was left with no other option. The power makes the Former Commander a victim and a hero, while the former refugee, who is just looking for his rights, becomes a terrorist. No one hears from him again, and he becomes one of the many victims of the unfair class and power division.

In the societies where polygamy is found, structural violence among the same man’s wives seldom occurs. Jealousy and sharing are the main reasons for the hatred between the females. Sometimes the children become the victims, as they have to take sides, but that is not necessarily the case all the time:

Adel's mother had delicate hands and feet, a small upturned nose, and a pretty face like an actress from one of Kabir's Bollywood films. She was lean, agile, and young – she had been only fourteen when she'd married Baba Jan. Adel had another, older mother too, and three older half brothers, but Baba Jan had put them up in the east, in Jalalabad, and Adel saw them only once a month or so when Baba Jan took him there to visit. Unlike his mother and stepmother, who disliked each other, Adel and his half brothers got along fine. (Hosseini 2013: 286)

The wives' attractiveness and age decide on their power status in such a situation, as they become more desired by the husband. The husband holds the absolute power, and a large part of it is transferred to the most desired wife. It is in a man's power to marry a woman who looks "like an actress", while having another wife and children. The more exciting part is the woman's age, who is only fourteen, while the man is two or three times older than her or even older. However, the children are not part of this conflict between the women. Polygamy is not acceptable to a Westerner, but it is expected in other cultural, religious, and social environments. As polygamy and marriage underage is not an issue in the novel, we can look at the conflict between two women as structural violence, because it is the power distribution that creates unfairness. The power comes from the man, which makes a female feel superior to another just because of the sexual desire of the male character. The narrator presents the story without making any comments, and this makes the story more reliable.

"Othering" is another form of structural violence; people are divided according to their lifestyle and to being citizens or residents of Afghanistan or France. This illustrates the existence of global inequity. An interview given by Nila Wahdati to a journalist refers to it:

NW: He was the best king they ever had. I find the remark of interest for its choice of pronoun.

EB: "They"? You don't consider yourself Afghan?

NW: Let's say I've divorced myself from my more troublesome half.

EB: I'm curious as to why that is.

NW: If he had succeeded, meaning King Amanullah, I might have answered your question differently. (Hosseini 2013: 205)

The word "they" denotes the "othering", and Nila does not want to be considered as one of them, as she sees them as the "troublesome" part of the world. Her "half" indicates the deep division of the societies and the people. The word "divorced" suggests an actual distance between the two groups of people named by the writer: the troublesome and un-troublesome people. While the people of the developed countries are un-troublesome, as they have a higher standard of living, the developing countries' people are troublesome, due to their living conditions. Nila sees King Amanullah's failure to modernize Afghanistan as a reason for the structural violence that leads to global unfairness, which makes the country less developed, while its people feel that their ties to their own country are troublesome.

3. Conclusion

Structural violence in Johan Galtung's sense is clearly present in Khaled Hosseini's *And the Mountains Echoed*. It reveals the global unfairness and injustice existing among various Afghans who are supposed to have the same rights. By

using it, the author allows the reader to witness the suffering of people. Discrimination and injustice vary in groups with different ethnicity, religion, gender, and economy. Power distribution triggered by such causes is the origin of discrimination that leads to structural violence.

Structural violence occurs on a broad scale; in other words, it is the main issue that lies at the root of more significant problems. Identifying it is essential when it comes to conflict resolution and peace building. The novel gives the reader an opportunity to learn about the situation and life in Afghanistan. This can lead to future campaigns of strangers to the country, who may want to advocate for human rights. The narrator is not only an omniscient person seeing everything, but the novel also contains opinions about the incidents expressed by others. As a result, the reader witnesses events, but there are also explanations and analyses of the incidents making the narrative less reliable. The novel is a fictional work, but it can also be seen as an informative piece of writing that gives readers a chance to learn about life in that country. It portrays an image of the cultural differences between Afghan and Western societies.

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THE STUDY OF DISSIDENCE AS PRESENTED IN *THE BIRTHDAY PARTY* BY HAROLD PINTER

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Abstract: *In any specific era, the dominant forces are trying to impose their power over the reactionary forces. Texts can be considered sites for studying such struggles between different forces. The Birthday Party is a play in which some resistance against the dominant ideology occurs. The protagonist of the play can be considered a dissident voice. He is the only character in the play whose actions and behaviour are not the usual ones. An ex-pianist, he acts like the artists who do not comply with the society's norms. The paper deals with the way he challenges the dominant ideology and power.*

Keywords: *dissidence, dominant ideology, power, resistance*

1. Introduction

Post-war conditions have been the cause of many writings about the impact of wars on people's lives. One of the important literary movements flourishing from this condition is the Theatre of the Absurd. This movement is famous for its language use, which is not usual (Brockett and Hildy 1991; Carter and McRae 2001). The Theatre of the Absurd emphasizes the absurdity and meaninglessness of life. It uses everyday conversation to emphasize the idea that there are many misunderstandings in every human interaction. Harold Pinter is one of the pioneers of the Theatre of the Absurd, who writes about unknown menaces, domination struggles, family conflicts, and psychological problems (Esslin 1970, 1982; Gale 1977). Marinela Saraci (2013: 388) studies the absurdist features in Pinter's works, and believes that "Harold Pinter's plays reveal our state of isolation, alienation, nothingness, and meaninglessness". These states are the results of communication failure among characters in Pinter's literary writings.

Literary texts are studied as autonomous entities by some literary scholars, while other scholars are interested in the relationships of literary writings to other disciplines. Some critics regard texts independently and scrutinize them as complete in themselves. There are also many critics that relate texts to external events. These critical approaches evaluate literary writings taking into account the historical background, social atmosphere, political preferences, and also the writers' biographies. There have been many debates over the impact of literature on society and of society on literature. Since a writer lives in and writes for society, one can state that examining literary works can result in finding the norms and regulations of that society. It can also lead to finding abnormal and resisting activities expressed in the texts.

2. Reading literary texts

Foucault discusses how texts function within power relations, and explains the concept of subjectivity in texts in works like *Discipline and Punish* (1987), 'The Subject and Power' (1982), and 'The Order of Discourse' (1981). He argues that there are always disputes over producing meaning and controlling it in the reception of texts. Foucault's writings have resulted in scrutinizing the impact and role of literature in history, and critics have studied the role of literature in constructing a society's sense of itself, based on Foucault's theories. In his book *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1984) attempts to show how literary productions circulate in a given society and era in order to construct and shape the power relations. Researchers can explore the relationship between literature and many topics, such as colonialism, racism, gender oppression, and slavery, by using some strategies, and by some theoretical assumptions which are available in Foucault's works. Following his theories, one can investigate literature participation in producing the dominant ideological assumptions of time, and highlight power relations represented in literary texts.

Literary productions that may be read as entertainments, as character studies, or as complex formal linguistic structures, can also be read for the comprehension of cultural manifestations and mediations of power relations. Literary works are not only useful in locating the specific political position of a text, but also in formulating the ways and means by which literature is complicit in the operations of power. Every work is the product of cultural, social, and political forces, not solely the product of an author's mind. Therefore, texts reflect and engage in producing the overall values and ideologies of their time.

Researchers can study the possibilities for subversion and containment in every literary work. One can acquire knowledge of how resistance is treated in society by studying resistance presented in literary writings. Literature can show us how the dominant power manages and handles resistance and deviation. However, there are also literary texts that articulate opposing and dissenting ideas. Readers can find other patterns of behaviour and sets of ideas, different from those the dominant power offers, by studying such literary passages.

3. Discourse and discursive formation

The circulation and distribution of literary works emphasize the importance of inclusion and exclusion. Foucault (1981) discusses the subject of exclusion and inclusion in 'The Order of Discourse'. He does not consider discourse as a set of expressions that are unified and coherent, but he views discourse as existing due to complicated practices that struggle to put it in circulation, and other practices that struggle to separate it from other discourses (Foucault 1981: 67-73).

There are some procedures that control, select, and organize the distribution of specific discourses. They are there to avoid coincidence in the discourse distribution. Foucault (1981) describes the procedures that constrain discourse and lead to the production of discourse. There are three external exclusions among these procedures; taboo, the distinction between mad and sane, and the distinction between true and false. Taboo is seen as a form of prohibition, since it makes it difficult to speak about certain subjects and matters, and constrains how those subjects are discussed. The distinction between sane and mad is another feature of discursive formation, so the speech of people who are considered insane is not

included in any discourse. The third exclusionary practice is the distinction between true and false. The truth is not self-evident and self-sufficient (idem). Foucault (1977: 111-113) argues that truth is something that is supported by all kinds of practices, procedures, and institutions in an article entitled 'Power and Knowledge'. All institutions try to exclude statements that they consider to be false, and they circulate those which they label as true. An individual who wants to speak about some matters should consider some regulations, rules, and procedures. Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1987: 38) states that "Whenever one can describe, between numbers of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statements, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity, we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation". All societies have procedures whereby the production of the discourses is formed, organized, selected, controlled, and redistributed according to Foucault's theories. The purpose of process control is to protect the dominant ideology from the risks and dangers of counter-discourses.

4. Ideology

Althusser (1971) believes that the ruling class ideas are imposed both using force, and also through the imposition of these ideas on those ruled. He states that the classes of society are kept as much by a consensus which is produced ideologically by what he calls Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), as well as by repression through Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) (Althusser 1971: 127-140). Althusser defines ideology as "a representation of imaginary relationship of individual to their real condition of existence" (idem: 109). He believes that ideology is the distortion of reality. The list of ISAs is varied and expanded. It ranges from schools, universities to clinics and health centres. Through different institutes, the appropriations of particular discourses and utterances are made natural. These institutes create the dominant ideology's favourite discipline in society.

Discipline includes a concern with control that individuals internalize. It includes the ideas of keeping the time, controlling one's desires, and directing desires and hopes. Disciplinary pressure creates all of these constraints, and they are all actions that make the individual subject to some procedures. These procedures come from outside, but they produce subservient individuals. The dominant ideology dictates these procedures. The norms and regulations created in this way are not recognized as originating from institutions or other organizations outside of the individuals' thoughts. Indeed, these practices seem so natural that people find it hard to think of living without this continuous checking of opposites and whims. This sort of internalization of norms and regulations is the main factor in dictating the ideas and views of the dominant ideology on individuals.

Ideology is viewed to be a constituent part of society according to Louis Althusser (1970: 144-146). He mentions that an ideology exists because of the practices managed by institutions. It is an ideology that shapes the individual's consciousness. He also believes that each individual's understanding of experience is created by ideology (idem: 212). People engage in shaping conditions, but they do not realize their relationship with the real conditions except through ideology. Every individual is aware of the power of the dominant ideology, and is familiar with its principles and codes.

In *Language, Semantics, and Ideology*, Michel Pecheux (1983) defines ideology in new ways. He is interested in developing a theory that allows resistance and dissidence against the dominant ideology's discursive formations. He explains the religious ideology and states that it aims at considering people as God's subjects. However, he shows that even in religious ideology, some do not comply with the ideology's codes and norms. Pecheux (1983: 156-159) believes that there are three kinds of subjects. The 'good subject' is a person who accepts the position imposed by the dominant mode. The subject recognizes the true self by the dictated images. The second one is the 'bad subject', who rejects the identity given by the dominant discourse and tries to create a counter-identification. The third subject is an individual who tries to find disidentification. According to Pecheux (1983: 165), the possibility of resistance cannot be denied, because there are always some individuals who not only question the common sense and ideological discourses, but also bring about new ideas and beliefs, different from the dominant ones. These individuals try to resist and subvert the dominant ideology.

5. Resistance against the dominant ideology

5.1. Dissidence and subversion

Alan Sinfield (1992) is interested in how dominated groups resist the pressure of the dominant one. He discusses how texts can be analysed to highlight the dissident voices, and argues that the operation of dissidence connects to the dominant structure. Dissidence tries "to invoke those structures to oppose them, and therefore can always, ipso facto, be discovered reinscribing that which it proposes to critic. 'Power relations are always two-way; that is to say, however subordinate an actor may be in a social relationship, the very fact of involvement in that relationship gives him or her a certain amount of power over the other', Anthony Giddens observes." (Sinfield 1992: 47). This matter gives subordinates or minorities a chance to resist the dominant group and articulate their counter-discourse. According to Sinfield, in some points, the dominant discourse loses power, while the subordinate one gains it (ibid.); this opens the door for minorities to express their values and attitudes. Discourse analysis reveals how social conflicts are used to fix the desired meanings, and how this is done to make the fixation of meaning seem natural. The dominant discourse tries to dictate its favourite meaning so that people internalize the propagation of this meaning. However, driving meaning out of any context depends on many criteria, therefore, it is impossible to think of a fixed meaning being extracted. Many factors influence the production of meaning, such as time, education, social and political background, and many other elements. These various factors open the door to changes and avoid the fixation of meaning. Sinfield shows that meaning cannot be derived just out of the text "[n]or, independently of context, can anything be said to be safely contained. This prospect scandalizes literary criticism because it means that meaning is not adequately deducible from the text-on-the-page. The text is always a site of cultural context, but it is never a self-sufficient one" (1992: 49). Texts are not independent entities; they are related to the social and cultural milieu of their production and the social and cultural backgrounds of their readers. Therefore, their meanings cannot be considered fixed and permanent.

Alan Sinfield (1992) chooses the term dissidence. He believes that dissidence implies achievement and defines it as “refusal of an aspect of dominant, without prejudging an outcome” (1992: 49). This definition opens the door to think about resisting the dominant discourse, and creates space to look for deviations and challenges to the dominant ideology/power.

Writers are not separated from the societies, and they recognize the existence of power and power relations in their communities. Moreover, as their works are written for their societies and as they want the acceptance of their works, they should follow the discursive formations of the societies. This acceptance does not mean that writers are entirely under the control of power, and that their writings articulate just the dominant powers’ ideas and opinions. There is also the concept of producing meaning out of any text. Jonathan Dollimore (1985) believes that it is not possible for a dominant power to control all discourses and declare them subversive. In *Political Shakespeare*, he states that nothing is inherently subversive. In his opinion, subversive acts are dependent on articulation, context, and reception. He writes that “the mere thinking of a radical is not what makes it subversive: typically, it is the context of its articulation: to whom, how many, and in what circumstances; one might go further and suggest that not only does the idea have to be conveyed, it has also actually to be used to refuse authority or be seen by authority as capable and likely of being so used” (Dollimore 1985: 13). An idea cannot be considered subversive before it is articulated or received.

5.2. Stanley’s resistance against the dominant ideology

Stanley, the protagonist in *The Birthday Party* (Pinter 1959), is the most individualistic person of the play. The first feature which makes him differ from other characters is his sense of humour and his capacity to make witty remarks, evident from the beginning of act I; Meg puts the cornflakes before him during breakfast, and he complains that the milk is sour, is dissatisfied with the tea, and asks Meg whether nobody has ever told her that a tea-pot should be warmed before the tea is poured into it. He then complains about the boarding-house and his own room, which are messy and unclean; “look, why do not you get this place cleared up? It’s a pigsty. And another thing, what about my room? It needs sweeping. It needs papering. I need a new room” (14). In connection with his sense of humour, one can say that he tends to be cynical in his witty remarks. He seems to make all these remarks in order to tease Meg rather than to express his annoyance. From the beginning lines of the text, it is clear that Stanley is not an ordinary man like other characters. His discipline and code of behaviour differ significantly from those of the other characters.

Discipline is a way of controlling what is accepted by every individual in a society. It focuses on the time, bodily functions, desires, wishes, and feelings of the members of society. These factors and how they are imposed upon people create a disciplinary pressure, and aim to produce obedient subjects. Petey and Meg are the characters that have internalized such discipline. They act according to society’s discipline, they engage in ordinary conversations, work and make their own living: Meg runs the boarding-house, and Petey is a chair attendant, and both of their jobs provide services for other citizens. These characters act following the society’s norms and codes of behaviour, are obedient citizens who have accepted the dominant ideology’s code of behaviour and are subservient individuals.

Stanley, the lodger of this boarding-house, differs significantly from his hosts. He is an ex-pianist, as he mentions in the text. His piano-playing can be considered to represent a threat to the status-quo. The first reason is that this is not something that can be done equally well by anyone, as it requires unique talent and attitude. The second reason is that it requires a different set of goals than those held by ordinary working men. The prescribed goals must be held by ordinary working men in order for society to be normal and without any deviation. His piano-playing sets Stanley apart from his fellowmen, and his sensitivity has made him a particular person who does not do anything and is not productive at all. Acting in this way, he may gain followers, and this would threaten the status-quo. Stanley deviates from the standard norms, but society requires a normal attitude from all its members. He is idle and has been in the boarding house for a while, wasting his time. All of his actions are in accordance with the definition of a bad subject. He is not an obedient individual, and does not conform to the norms and regulations of society. His memories of the concert emphasize his deviation, as he mentions that the concert was cancelled for no reason. The dominant ideology does not tolerate such behaviour, because it may weaken its dominant discourse.

Stanley's way of living challenges the prevalent ideas and opinions spread by the dominant discourse in society. His deviation can be seen clearly from the list of crimes that Goldberg and McCann accuse him of committing. They are mostly anti-social: he has terrible table manners, commits murder, and refuses to marry. These deviations are expressed in Stanley's interrogation by Goldberg and McCann:

GOLDBERG: Why are you wasting everybody's time, Webber? Why are you getting in everybody's way?

STANLEY: Me? What are you?

GOLDBERG: I'm telling you, Webber. You're a Washout. Why are you getting on everybody's wick? Why are you driving that old lady off her conk?

McCANN: He likes to do it!

GOLDBERG: Why do you behave so badly, Webber? Why do you force that old man out to play chess?

STANLEY: Me?

GOLDBERG: Why do you treat that young lady like a leper? She is not the leper, Webber! (43)

McCann and Goldberg ask many questions, a lot of them irrelevant or even contradictory, and do not allow Stanley even to answer them. It is like a formal interrogation, where Stanley is the criminal. Stanley is accused of doing anti-social acts and deeds, which show his resistance against the dominant ideology.

5.3. Ideological forces expressed in *The Birthday Party*

Every person internally knows the consequences and outcomes of his/her own actions or speeches. Stanley is an artist who is against the dominant ideology, but one can perceive from the beginning of the play that he is aware he is not entirely safe even in this remote place. E. T. Kirby (1978: 158) discusses Stanley's anxiety and states that:

When Stanley is told that two men are coming to the boarding house he at first shows agitation and suspicion suggestive of paranoia. Then, strangely, he is positive

they are not coming. "Why didn't they come last night if they were coming? ... Forget all about it? It's a false alarm. A false alarm". This can only be understood within his own frame of reference. Like the patient cited, he had lain awake all "last night", daydreaming as he says, which we can take to mean participating in a paranoid fantasy. There was apparently no "reference" to the men in his fantasy so it is only "a false alarm".

From his feeling of apprehension on hearing from Meg about the two visitors, it can be understood that he is afraid of the possibility that somebody might come to harm him. His talk of a van and a wheel-barrow seems to be a projection of his fear that somebody will come to find and seize him. It can be inferred from this talk that he is trying to scare Meg, who has informed him about the two visitors and thus has disturbed his tranquillity; but it is even more possible that he is cognizant of a danger to his own security, and that he speaks of the van and the wheel-barrow in connection with his own possible separation from this place. When he speaks with Meg about a concert which he was to give, but which did not materialize on account of the hostility of some people towards him, his prediction of danger in the present is confirmed. He tells Meg that he has been offered an excellent job with a touring concert party. This sentence is a clue that he is in some danger, and he would like to go away from this place. His subsequent questions about the two visitors further strengthen the impression that he feels some danger to himself. At the end of Act I, when he suddenly beats the drum wildly and violently, it is evident that he is in a mood of desperation, rage, and anxiety. Perhaps, this mood has been increased by the arrival of the two unknown men at the boarding house and by the hint of menace which they seem to have caused in his mind. These happenings may signify that Stanley knows that he is watched from the outside.

One of the watching structures that have been discussed by many theorists studying Foucault's (1987) work is the Panopticon, which he discusses in *Discipline and Punish*. The panopticon is a specific building, and a system of control, which is explained by Jeremy Bentham – an English philosopher, jurist, and social reformer. It is a method of placing individuals in particular positions in a building so that they can all be seen without the observer being seen. The panoptic mechanism is built in such a way that it makes it possible to watch them permanently and recognize them quickly. Each individual is imprisoned in a cell, where he can be seen by the supervisor through the front window. The communication with companions is prevented by the side walls. He is being watched, but he cannot see outside; he cannot participate in any communication. Stanley Webber is aware that he is seen from the outside, and that they will come one day to make him return to some usual way of life. Stanley always feels the existence of a supervisor, and he knows that it is inevitable that he will be forced to change his unique lifestyle. This feeling is the reason for his fear when the two strangers come to the boarding house. It is a boarding-house on the beach, and it is expected that it would be visited by travellers and lodgers. It is a place where one can find accommodation and rest, but Stanley loses his temper when he is informed about these two men. Bartens (2001: 148) states that

For Foucault these new sciences- which included psychiatry, criminology, medicine, and (human) biology- are deeply repressive. They have created general norms and standards that fail to recognize and to do justice to the differences between the characters and experiences of individuals and groups of individuals and between

places where they happen to live. The new human sciences have turned out to be straitjackets that, strangely enough, we would seem glad to put on.

It means that these new sciences can impose more obligations upon individuals. Individuals internalize their assumptions, and this is a controlling device for power. In *The Birthday Party*, Goldberg and McCann state that Stanley suffers from a mental breakdown and needs treatment. In another section of this drama, they address Stanley in the following way:

GOLDBERG: You look anaemic.
 MCCANN: Rheumatic.
 GOLDBERG: Myopic.
 MCCANN: Epileptic (76)

One can infer from this conversation that power wants to control individuals by assigning some abnormalities to them in order to convince them that they need treatment. As they are not normal, they require surveillance. This interrogation is planned in such a way that it forces Stanley to believe in the existence of his own abnormalities. These two visitors can be viewed as agents of power trying to make Stanley an obedient subject. Goldberg and McCann have more than just one name. Goldberg is called Nat, but he is called Simey by his mother and wife, and Benny by his father (*The Birthday Party* 43, 59, 76, 78). It can be inferred that he has several faces and roles in society. McCann is called Dermot and Seamus (72, 78). These two are the ones whose identity is not apparent; Stanley, Meg, Petey (Meg's husband), and Lulu are characters that have only one name. Goldberg and McCann's various names can be interpreted as the sign of the presence of dominant power agents in all aspects of people's lives. Each individual can feel the presence of these forces in various aspects of life. Andreas Fischer (1979: 490-495) compares and contrasts the play with a poem written by Harold Pinter. He tries to discover the identity of Goldberg and McCann by adding evidence from the poem to the play. He believes that these two exist just in Stanley's mind: they are the repressed thoughts that come to the surface during the birthday party. If this assumption is to be considered correct, it also emphasizes the notion that these two, Goldberg and McCann, can be considered as disciplines and codes imposed upon Stanley by the dominant ideology. They can be viewed as the embodiment of the effect of the dominant mode on Stanley's mind and thoughts. Their presence reinforces the idea of the surveillance of individuals by the dominant power.

Besides what Stanley does against the standard way of behaving, some other deeds emphasize his being a dissenting voice. Lulu, the next-door neighbour, asks him to have a wash and shave, which he refuses. After that, she offers to go out with him and have sandwiches together, which he also refuses. Every regular member of society cares about appearance, and tries to be good looking. Pinter presents Stanley completely differently: he never minds his appearance. Moreover, every man of Stanley's age would accept the lady's request to have a walk and spend some time together, but Stanley is not interested in passing the time with the lady.

The climax of Stanley's confrontation with Lulu occurs during the birthday party. The party is held to celebrate Stanley's birthday, but he denies that that day is his birthday. Lights go off during the party, and when McCann finds his torch and lights the room, Goldberg and McCann see Stanley on the table, trying to rape Lulu. Considering Stanley's first rejection of Lulu, this act seems more abnormal and dissenting. It is the worst act done by Stanley, because after this scene,

Goldberg and McCann take him out of boarding-house to an unknown place. Trying to rape someone is undoubtedly against the dominant way of behaving in any society. The main character's way of lovemaking is also a form of dissent and shows resistance against the dominant ideology.

5.4. The outcome of Stanley's resistance

Goldberg and McCann are the two men whose presence in the story is felt before their actual physical presence. Audiences are informed about their coming by Petey. There is nothing unusual about this announcement, but Stanley becomes worried and irritated when he hears that these two are coming. It becomes more or less evident that Stanley is leading a bohemian existence in this boarding-house, where he seems to have taken refuge, and where he has separated himself from the society, as it is a place that is far away from the people who know him. As a result, nobody expects him to contribute his share to the work of society. He enjoys his lifestyle and is not a useful member of society. Learning that two visitors are coming and will stay in the same boarding-house, he becomes anxious, and begins to ask Meg all sorts of questions as to who those two men are and why they are coming. It is clear that these two men pose a threat to Stanley's peace of mind and his sense of security. The two men can be viewed as agents of the dominant ideology, which cannot stand that an artist should consider himself a privileged person that can escape his social responsibilities. An artist who breaks away from society and begins to lead a life of his own becomes a potential threat to society. Such an artist can gain followers who might also revolt against the current modes of social life and the prevailing morals and manners. Such an artist can therefore become a subversive voice who resists the dominant way of life. Society is intolerant of dissidents, and would like to force dissenting voices to become obedient subjects. There are some who have internalized the rules and regulations of society and behave according to them. A dissenting artist in society can make its obedient subjects aware of other possible ways of living, which can replace those favoured by the dominant ideology. Therefore, there should be some individuals who are able to turn nonconformist people into obedient subjects.

There is some confirmation of the view that Goldberg and McCann could be considered as agents of the dominant ideology. Goldberg has a firm belief in traditional social values. He speaks of a generous uncle, a man of the old school, respected by the whole community, who used to take him out to various places; those were the golden days for him. Later in the play, Goldberg speaks of a girl with whom he used to go for walks every Friday. He says that he never took any liberties with that girl, because the young men in those days knew the meaning of respect. This shows that Goldberg as a young man believed in the orthodox ways, and was not like the modern young men, who are eager to seduce their sweethearts as soon as they can. He is an obedient subject, who does whatever society expects from him. Michael W. Kaufman (1973: 173) mentions the role of Goldberg as an obedient subject, pointing out that

That Goldberg has a respected position and several good names, that he can define himself according to the shifting functional role of family, organization, and profession indicates the multiple frames-of-reference necessary to play the game of human identity. Most important, Goldberg's self-assurance provides a valuable contrast to Stanley's mordant fears about himself, throwing into high relief the anxious predicament of the individual who attempts to exist outside the pale of society's organizing rituals.

If Stanley is the break-away artist, and the two visitors are representatives of the dominant ideology, a conflict is inevitable; it begins as soon as Stanley comes into contact with them. At the opening of Act II, McCann and Stanley talk with each other in an unfriendly manner. While McCann seems to be polite to Stanley, Stanley is blunt with him. Stanley would not like to attend the birthday party which is to be held that night in his honour. He disagrees with McCann that the invitation is an honour to McCann. When Stanley wants to go out, McCann does not let him, and a little later, Goldberg joins them. Stanley now tries to get rid of these two men by pretending to be the manager of this boarding-house. He tells them that they should leave the place, because there is no room available for them and the room has been given to them by mistake.

This conflict between the artist and the agents of society takes a more severe form when Goldberg and McCann start their interrogation, bringing all kinds of charges and accusations against Stanley. They use abusive language in their confrontation with Stanley, and there is some power struggle in their communication. They have a special position in the manifestation of the power relations: Goldberg and McCann are speaking from a position of dominance, while Stanley is the weaker part. Some of the questions are irrelevant and meaningless, but there are some questions that have a bearing on the relationship between an artist and society:

Why did you leave the organization?
 Why did you betray us?
 Why did you come to this place?
 Do you recognize an external force? (43)

These questions are an indictment of the artist who refuses to perform his social duties and responsibilities. The interrogation imposes too much stress on Stanley, and he is hardly able to speak. The two persecutors are happy to see that Stanley is terrified. The artist is in a state of depression, and he realizes the hostility of society towards himself and society's relentless pursuit of him. Little by little, Stanley is moving to the outcome of his subversion.

Wolfreys (2001: 172) discusses the consequences of subversions in *Introducing Literary Theory* in the following way:

In raging from the history of western imperialism and the ideological discourses of gender oppression, New Historicism teaches students that resistance plays clumsily and helplessly into the hands of existing power relationships, which struggle is merely the most visible sign of co-option, and that power seeps into every facet of routine daily life.

What Harold Pinter's text reveals can be viewed as the seeping of power into Stanley's daily life. His way of living is not favoured by the dominant power, therefore, he had to be brought back into the ordinary way of living. Society expects every individual to be productive and contribute his share to it. Stanley is against all its rules and regulations, and he is not acting by following them. In the most crucial conflict of the play, McCann takes Stanley's glasses and breaks them. Glasses can be considered to be a symbol of someone's worldview. Stanley's glasses are broken in order to force him to look at the world through the lenses which the dominant ideology desires.

6. Conclusion

At the end of the play, Stanley is completely changed. He is clean-shaven; wears new clothes and a white collar. He differs significantly from what the audiences knew about him. Stanley is even unable to speak. He can utter just some vague words. The catalogue of rewards offered to Stanley for his rehabilitation reflects the socially desired goals and prizes for good behaviour. Tables will be reserved for him; he will benefit from discounts, and so on. Goldberg and McCann are the representatives of the repressive society; Goldberg stands for family, school, and social relationships, while McCann stands for religious and political interests. These two men force Stanley to go with them. At the end of their job, Petey produced a remarkable and important sentence: “Stan, don’t let them tell you what to do” (80). Stanley resists society in *The Birthday Party*, but in the end is forced to return to the ordinary way of life. Pinter’s text brings forth a character that tries to act differently and is eager to show deviation from the dominant mode. The existence of such a dissident voice may weaken the pillars of the dominant power. It cannot be guaranteed that the audiences watching this play or the readers reading it will remain in their prescribed positions and will not try to change some internalized norms and regulations.

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THE DISUNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE LIMINALITY OF MEMORY IN PAUL AUSTER'S *4321*

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Abstract: *4321* has become Auster's most vocal narrative on political awareness so far. The novel dwells on how individuals see and experience cyclicity and the liminality of memory. The present paper examines Auster's take on what he so bluntly terms the "Disunited States of America".

Keywords: liminality, memory, narrative politics, racism

1. Introduction

4321 is a colossal novel about both the small and the big things in life. Of nearly 900 pages, it engulfs the reader into Archie Ferguson's vibrant life, to which the author juxtaposes the American history of the 1950s and most of the 1960s. Apart from being structured as a narrative of the coming of age, the novel presents a modern surrealist America, one that is simultaneously old and new, thus proving, once more, that history repeats itself cyclically.

By means of four parallel voices of one Archie Ferguson, Auster ponders on the instability of his country and the world at large. Written in 2017, this novel could not be more poignant and relevant than it is today. As we are living in a powerful, charged, and unique moment in history, afflicted by the pandemic and social unrest, being alone and not distracted has been a bliss in disguise. The feeling one experiences is unifying and has been pulling people together. For the past months, we have had the luxury of time in order to consider life, while the world simply stopped. Consequently, we are living through history. We are finally able to feel gratitude in solitude; to check our perspective and reflect on the past as well as the future and what we want it to look like. As a result, more and more people have learned how to channel their anger and are checking privilege, while trying to find ways to dismantle systemic racism and false representation.

For Auster, representation has always been a key element of his narratives and *4321* makes no exception. With each new page, he puts forward narratives that portray his characters as the most common of human beings. People whose journey in life is dictated by their desire to discover the meaning of life itself. For them, it all begins with asking the right question – what if? What if one had chosen to take the left turn instead of the right one? What if the Vietnam War had not taken place? What if president Kennedy had not been killed? What if Obama were still president and Trump had not been elected? In this sense, Auster plays upon the idea of a reverse engineering, that can, in the end, explain why humanity is here today, dealing with this mess.

In doing so, the author is delving into gray, liminal and boundary areas. To this point, all four of his Fergusons never surpass the first 20 years of their lives. No matter what choices they make, all of them are bound to mess up, to disappoint, to lose the battle with chance and life. Hence, Auster's Fergusons succeed

“to combine the strange with the familiar [...] to observe the world as closely as the most dedicated realist and yet to create a way of seeing the world through a different, slightly distorting lens.” (Seaman 2016) This is what makes Auster’s narrative so refreshing.

In its purest form, *4321* is a rags to riches story, one in which nickels, dimes and words change the course of a world that allows fake news to support false systems. The very first lines of the novel underscore this idea, as Ferguson’s grandfather’s story starts with a false name; a new name with a good American ring to it – because otherwise America would have not really accepted him. Being tricked by memory and fate, Ferguson’s grandfather takes up a name that should help him rapidly integrate in the American culture, yet even so, he quickly becomes disappointed and struggles with what being American means. The falsity of the American dream and the encounter with the illusion America stands for are henceforth depicted by means of an anecdote. According to Ferguson’s grandfather, in his first days on American soil, he encountered a merchant who was selling the most appetizing red apples he had ever seen in his life. So, with the pennies left in his pocket, Ferguson’s grandfather bought one apple and bite into it with pleasure, only to discover that it was a tasteless Jersey tomato.

This short story is just one of the many Auster employs in his novel to emphasize the discrepancies between reality and myth. Moreover, his characters’ perception of the two converge, irrespective of their age, which points out that lived experiences and representations are a communal transfer undergone by means of collective memory, passing from individual to individual. The stories Ferguson’s grandfather left behind prepare Ferguson for his journey into the unknown; in the same manner, his memory of these stories allows him to recognize the cyclicity of experiences as well as their absurdity. In other words, experiences and memories pass from one generation to another in order to help individuals work through temporalities that subvert one another or reemerge with a certain frequency. According to Jaques (1982: 214), “different forms of temporality [represent] processes that organize experience” and make it comprehensible. In this sense, what stands out, in all the temporalities of Auster’s four narratives, is the experience his characters have of the distortion that America and its politics have been going through in the past decades. As a result, the Fergusons’ stories are made up of “cyclical, social issues that become rites of passage” (Arnold van Gennepe, 1960: 41). These in turn are meant to “guide, control and regulate changes in any type of individual or group” (ibid.). Unfortunately, in the case of Auster’s characters, they are bound to depict the opposite, namely the chaos, misunderstanding, and complete corruption of America. Consequently, the Fergusons’ experiences of what it means to be American are the caricature of today’s social issues. For example, Ferguson number two, a Jewish boy in America, is brutally made aware of the differences between being an American and an alien, when children at school mock him for celebrating Thanksgiving:

Until that moment, it had never occurred to him that he might not be an American, or, more precisely, that his way of being an American was any less authentic than [...] the other boys were American, but that was what his friend seemed to be asserting: that there was a difference between them, an elusive, indefinable quality that had to do with black-hatted English ancestors and the length of time spent on this side of the ocean and the money to live in four-story townhouses on the Upper East Side that made some families more American than others, and in the end the difference was so great that less American families could barely be considered American at all. (Auster 2017: 188)

In the end, the child is made to understand that ancestry and money are what gives one status in America. This contravenes the romantic vision he had acquired from his immigrant parents and puts him at odds with his own identity. To notice that, in this matter, collective memory is influenced by the social environment and it builds Ferguson's individual reality. The latter is then mirrored in the child's understanding of his environment and the world he lives in. Furthermore, to emphasize this fierce reality, the author puts forth a chiaroscuro portrait of men in a world bound to be eternally structured like Dante's inferno:

Ferguson saw the situation as a series of concentric circles. The outer circle was the war and all that went with it [...] The second circle represented America, the two hundred million on the home front [...] The third circle was New York, which was almost identical to the second circle but more intimate, more vivid [...] The fourth circle was Columbia, Ferguson's temporary abode, the close-to-hand little world that surrounded him and his fellow students, the encompassing ground of an institution no longer walled off from the big world outside it, for the walls had come down and the outside was now indistinguishable from the inside. The fifth circle was the individual, each individual person in any one of the four other circles [...] Five realms, five separate realities, but each one was connected to the others, which meant that when something happened in the outer circle (the war), its effects could be felt throughout America, New York, Columbia, and every last dot in the inner circle of private, individual lives. (Auster 2017: 632-633)

2. Collective memory

Paul Auster's work permeates a constant attentiveness to the complexity that memory engenders in the creation of individual realities. A connoisseur of the ways in which memory is conditioned by the social structures of perception and interpretation, the author employs it to better understand "how through memory, a person is one, and without it, there is no more I, or at least a continuous I, no more present, no more future?" (Joubert 1983: 64). Memory becomes thus a means by which Auster's four Fergusons experience life with all the heart brakes, miseries, and truly unforeseen schemes the unknown can lash out.

The author engages in the classic philosophical tradition of Plato and Aristotle, based on *eikon*, i.e. images, and the words that explain these images in order to activate his characters' memories of both present and forgotten social issues. That is why, all four main characters of *4321* are either aspiring politicians, journalists, or renowned writers, whose main utensils are words through which they become masters of images, opinions, and illusions. Moreover, not undermining the turn of the century's belief that collective memory is, to some extent, linked to racial memory, Auster chooses to make his characters focus on political, iconic, and historical moments that have impacted all races and religions in America. Thus, he breaches the collective unconsciousness of a nation largely made up of immigrants. Consequently, his narratives are built up upon multiple layers of instinctive and potential reactions of individuals, with mixt heritage to the outside social world.

In close relation to Auster's approach of collective memory in *4321*, stands Maurice Halbwachs' belief that memory is the key to understanding the human mind. His most known oeuvre, *The Social Frameworks of Memory* (1925), and the posthumous work entitled *On Collective Memory* (1992) ponder on the fact that "Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and

time” (Halbwachs 1992: 22). Auster’s four Fergusons are representatives of these groups, since their identities are shaped and their comprehension of the world at large is manipulated by the social context. As a child, Ferguson’s point of view is shaped by his family, relatives, and close friendships. When in his teens, books, television, journals and school give him an idea of what the world has in store for him. And then, once in his twenties, Ferguson’s mind is already ripe enough to understand that all the above are steps in creating his own perception and opinion about transitory, yet cyclical temporalities. Unfortunately, with this realization comes the end of the characters.

Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory draws attention to the fact that, without the anchor of the present, individual or collective history loses continuity and becomes fragmented individual memories, to the point of forgetfulness. Hence, Auster’s main characters’ disappearance from the narrative. This underlines the fact that there is no such thing as a strictly individual memory, and that memories are inevitably rooted in the social. What one reads, is told, or what one sees form the essence of one’s comprehension of contextual instances. Which means that collective memory is a social construct and every memory is linked to another individual’s recollection of the same situation. Collective memory becomes thus a web of knowledge that allows individuals to travel back and forth between similar temporal instances in order to make sense of the present reality.

With Auster’s Fergusons, this can be noticed when all four of them discuss political issues related to racism, meritocracy or equality of changes. Every depiction brings to light similarities with past events in American history. This is because “the past is not really preserved in the individual memory. Fragments persist there, but not complete recollections. What makes them true memories are collective representations” (Erll 2008: 390). Auster’s *4321* does not fall short of those. From soldiers returning home with PTSD after the Vietnam war, to the assassination of President Kennedy or the violence against Afro-Americans, Auster makes a point of creating a panoply of temporalities that continuously foreshadow the present.

It then follows that memory is plural and the collective representations forming it are markers of diversity that engender a collective self-image. Collective memory can be, in this matter, a regulatory element that forces individuals to define themselves through an inclusion-exclusion dichotomy, “We are this” versus “That is our opposite” (Assmann 1995: 130) The latter is constantly highlighted by Auster throughout his narratives, especially in relation to financial status or race. In any of the four temporalities Auster puts forth, Ferguson comes to realize that America is, among many other things, the land of discrepancies and that no words can right this wrong. Nonetheless, he always tries. Ferguson the child, starts writing a daily newspaper for school, in which he talks about the events touching his community. Similarly, the other Fergusons partake in crayoning reality by means of words. One even succeeds in becoming a famous writer by putting together a novel of anecdotes and memories, a book about “three other versions of himself [...] a book about four identical but different people with the same name: Ferguson.” (Auster 2017: 862)

Usually, American memory is founded on the themes of endurance and renewal. As such, for a long period of time, it united plural memories into one dominant collective memory that allowed difference and variety to coexist for the greater good. Still, in the past decades, this pattern has proved illusory and the collective, cultural memory of the United States of America has become

unsustainable. The American memory's set markers of differentiation that sustained the inclusion and proliferation of individuality into the collective are now the very ones that destroy it. The fixed points in the past that used to make up a data base of collective individualities to sustain American collective memory are breaking apart and changing significance to the point that America is crossing into the Dark Ages again. Accordingly, as Aleida Assmann (2014) so bluntly puts it, "Those who cannot remember their past are condemned to relive it." The result: a leap in time; one that brings into focus America's once marginal issues.

3. The liminality of memory

Henceforth, the center is just an illusion, whereas the peripheral becomes the focal point. Auster manages thus to transform an otherwise two-dimensional narrative into one that stresses illusions, deceptions, and ambiguities. So, the lines between temporalities are blurred. To this extent, *4321* can be read as a continuous narrative that moves back and forth in Ferguson's life, or as four separate stories of four different characters that just happen to have the same name. The novel is no easy reading and, for some, it can be tricky to navigate Auster's long Proustian sentences. Some parts of the novel resemble a stream of consciousness the owner of which cannot be clearly pin pointed. Nevertheless, I would venture to say that these are the instances in which Auster connects with the readers and manages to present his opinions with regards to the unstable state of America's future.

In addition to this, in many ways, the concept of liminality is the center to Auster's construction of meaning and it is, as we have seen, more often than not, connected to memory. By means of *4321*, Auster succeeds in underlining how liminal and transitory our very own existence and memory are, as they reactivate only when violence, trauma, and the inevitability of death are involved. Hence, the many references to the Vietnam war, personal loss and the uprising that the author himself has been witness to over the course of his life.

Since this novel has seen the light of day, and more so with the beginning of this year, 2020, America has had its history unfold under its eyes as anti-racism, anti-sexual and anti-Trump administration riots have surged with a power greater than ever before. As such, old conflicts, such as the Vietnam one, or, the more recent Iraq war, have moved closer to home. The battles are yet again on the streets of New York, New Jersey, and all the other big cities in America, just as they were back in the 60s. People, everywhere, are openly uniting their voices to depict the injustice of a democracy that resembles nothing of the sort. Accordingly, we can notice that Auster's novel reflects reality, namely that the boundaries have changed once more, so that now "the real and the imagined are identical". (Auster 2017: 283) Thus, we can state that liminality marks the back and forth movement of time and contours memories that eventually become stories – from the real to the imagined and back again.

In Turner's (2001: 46) view, liminality is "a transitional phase characterized, among others, by humility, heteronomy, self-effacement, divesting oneself of one's possessions, sexual continence, accepting of pain and suffering, etc.". There is no doubt that all four of Auster's Fergusons dwell on these preoccupations, since they are the representations of children, journalists, writers, queers, and fighters for freedom. What is more, in their consideration of these various boundaries, they stand for the check and balance system that seems to have been completely forgotten and dismantled in today's America: "Priggish, sanctimonious Ferguson.

Ferguson the enemy of upper-middle-class customs and manners, the know-it-all scourge who looked down upon the new American breed of status seekers and conspicuous consumers – the boy who wanted out.” (Auster 2017: 234)

Clearly, Auster’s choice of liminal characters is not made by mistake, since such individuals offer a particular perspective on the world at large and are more susceptible and sensitive to change. Their attitude, just as Auster’s narratives ascertain, is mutable, flexible and thought-provoking. As a result, *4321*’s narratives give alternatives to reenacted pasts that are palpable to the readers, since they are real in the present-day. Noticeably enough, liminality helps Auster to blend temporalities and memories, so that he may create a “plausible implausibility” (Auster 2017: 596), in which the reader cannot distinguish between past, present, and future. He contributes thus to the creation of anchors of memory that link time-lines as well as personal and communal, political events.

On this, Auster overlaps his fascination with the intimate and the shared. He talks about love, hate, and death and mocks all in the face of what is to come for the future generations. As such, his characters come out from the fringes, as ordinary people who resemble ghosts, because they do not stand out. In his novels, so far, the liminal is understood as a non-space, one that stresses solitude and anonymity by evening out differences between individuals. It comes to life only when the characters inside it act and react to the center. This seldom happens, as they would rather remain shadows and become part of the spectacle they observe. *4321* breaks this pattern and all four Fergusons try to make the liminal central by means of their words. The space of the page becomes an illusion that draws in broken individuals, only to mislead them into finding their individuality split and recreated at will. A mix of races and beliefs; a joke of the universe:

A young man is suddenly torn into three young men, each one identical to the others but each with a different name [...] to have a name forced on you because someone’s bureaucratic error [...] A Russian Jew transformed into a Scottish Presbyterian with fifteen strokes from another man’s pen. (Auster 2017: 861)

In this sense, Auster’s narratives display the failure to reach maturity; accordingly, all four of his main characters’ attempts to understand reality are marked by the burden of representation. They are uneasy and desperately try to find the absolute truth. The past replicates itself into the present and the characters’ representation of reality is rendered into nothingness. Moreover, their memories are corrupted by the collective ones, so their lives become meaningless. To this effect, their stories are the purest representation of liminality.

4. Conclusion

“Let the facts speak for themselves” (Auster 2017: 512) is one of Auster’s Fergusons’ wishes. To that effect, the author tackles iconic moments in the American history and imbues them with subjective and intellectual logic that denotes a profound disillusion with what America has come to see in recent years, namely, “civil disobedience, nonviolent resistance to the violence of unjust laws [...] Klan-run state governments and [...] the world was about to blow apart again” (idem: 457). Auster’s broken temporalities and liminal characters allow him to approach taboo subjects of national importance that stress the meaning of memory in rendering recurrent realities. In addition, Auster has repeatedly stated his belief

that, unfortunately, for many Americans who “dream of a color-blind America in which blacks and whites stood together, [this] was no more than wishful thinking” (idem: 309) that ended with the Trump administration. All these issues are addressed in *4321* with tact and humour, just as his readers would expect the author to do. The rhythm of the novel propels and amplifies the depth of Auster’s ideas as it commits to, at times, one page long Proustian lines, that mark the plurality of voices and temporalities employed. And then, while Auster ponders on how every new election campaign is similar to the one before it and on whether America will remain disunited or it will unite to reunite the world, one of his female characters, this time, rips to shreds his childlike faith and brings us all back to reality by stating: “a rich Jewish family and a struggling black family united forever in the Disunited States of America – Ha!” (Auster 2017: 722) Nonetheless, hope is the last to die, so Auster keeps hard at it, as the novel ends with the memory of Gerald Ford and Nelson Rockefeller, who were the only two men to hold office without being elected by the people. The latter “was married to a woman named Happy.” (idem: 866) It would seem that Auster tends to believe that leaving everything to chance is the proper answer to all of our problems and the key to our happiness. Maybe the universe does know best.

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LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF HOME, BELONGING AND UNBELONGING IN AMAMANDA ADICHIE'S 'MIGRANT BILDUNGSROMAN', *AMERICANAH*

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Abstract: *By drawing on recent critical debates on home and identity, the aim of this article is to explore literary representations of the various facets of what it means to feel 'at home' – or, not to feel at home, for that matter – in a place, whether it be in one's place of origin or an adopted country of residence. The focus of my investigation will be one of the most representative novels on this topic, Americanah (2013), by award-winning Nigerian-American writer, Amamanda Ngozi Adichie. A prominent exemplar of diasporic literature that grapples with the complexities of belonging, unbelonging, and change, the novel shows that 'home' is never an uncomplicated matter. I argue that Adichie's mastery relies in refraining from either romanticising or lamenting homeland and/or life abroad: the writer's authorial position is, simultaneously, that of an 'insider looking out' and that of an 'outsider looking in'.*

Keywords: *Adichie's Americanah, home and belonging, insider-outsider 'quest', 'migrant bildungsroman', nostalgia demystified, transculturalism and 'double vision'*

1. Introduction: contextual definitions of home

Conventionally, the notion of home refers to a place of birth or a particular location that has profoundly moulded one's sense of self and belonging. Later in life, such a perception of home tends to be invested with an aura of nostalgia and be seen as emotional refuge and symbol of stability in a turbulent world.

Conventional perceptions of home have been under insistent critical scrutiny in the last two decades, particularly in the wake of massive globalization social mobility. Rosemary Marangoly George (1996: 12), for example, who has examined the concept as reflected in Anglophone literature, likens the critical investigation of belonging to "pulling the rug from under a comfortable and singular understanding of home". A similar view is held by Edward Said, the Palestinian critic and public intellectual, who has navigated between many homes/ countries of residence in his illustrious career, and who has famously said that places which "enclose us within the safety of familiar territory can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity" (Said 2000: 147). The view of home seen beyond the binary of 'home and away' has also been echoed by Jopi Nyman (2009: 147), for whom "home is not necessarily a stable issue or a merely positive and empowering site".

Changes in the social perception of home and belonging have been largely influenced by the rise in mass migration across the world, a phenomenon that has thrown millions into states of emotional instability, turbulence, and homelessness – whether physical or emotional – as Nikos Papastergiadis (2000) has pointed out

in his tellingly titled *The Turbulence of Migration*. Migrational flows have had an enormous and unsettling impact on people's "established notions of [home and] belonging" (idem: 2), and not only for those who have left their familiar places of habitation. People who stay behind are also affected by the waves of change and mobility in the form of "circulation of symbols" (idem: 15) and intercultural practices across the globe. A similar view to Papastergiadis's is also held by Caren Kaplan (1996: 7): "there is no possibility of staying at home in the conventional sense – that is, the world has changed to the point that those [clear-cut] domestic, national, or marked spaces no longer exist".

2. Adichie's transnational identity and fictional world: Nigerian and/or 'Americanah'?

A leading novelist and public figure of Nigerian extraction, currently residing in the United States, Adichie's own biography embodies the challenges facing people with dual sets of national loyalty, including dilemmas around notions of home, belonging and unbelonging. Adichie's literary career has been influenced by her own disorientating experience of growing up during the political turbulence of post-independent Nigeria, and later, by her decision to leave the country in pursuit of a literary career abroad. While her earlier works (*Purple Hibiscus*, 2004, and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, 2006) are mainly inward-looking – with a focus on the political and social turmoil in her home-country, post-independent and military-ruled Nigeria – in her more recent fiction, Adichie marks a radically new, outward-looking shift towards representations of migration and displacement, in the wake of profound disillusionment with post-independence circumstances in her home country. Thus, the short-story collection, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), and the novel, *Americanah* (2013) are invested in exploring the trials and tribulations of people on the move.

Americanah zooms into the lives of the protagonists who, having left Nigeria in search of opportunities elsewhere, now struggle to get a foothold in the new world of their aspiration, while eventually contemplating a permanent return to homeland. Located partly in military-ruled Nigeria of the 1990s, and partly abroad (in the United States and the United Kingdom), the novel offers powerful and starkly contrasting representations of the migrant experience. Based on a flashback technique, the novel juxtaposes perspectives of time (past vs narrative present) and space (across three countries), thus suggesting the protagonists' disorientating feelings of inner fragmentation and fractured identities. The novel traces the journeys of a young couple, Ifemelu, and her lover, Obinze: it is a story of separate emigration, to the United States and the United Kingdom, respectively (with the proviso that the writer dedicates significantly more narrative space to the female protagonist's US trajectory) and eventual reunification in the home country after more than a decade-long stay abroad. This novel offers an unusual ending, compared with the more recent fictionalisations of migration, as Adichie has her protagonists return home permanently.

'Americanah' is the tongue-in-cheek nickname bestowed upon all returnees from the US, most of whom are perceived as having acquired affectations of American accents and mannerisms: the novel's title thus being suggestive of identity shifts that make readjustment to the old homeland more cumbersome. At the same time, the nickname 'Americanah' points to the locals' own unease in relating to the returnees: once fully integrated in Nigeria as 'insiders', these

co-nationals are now perceived as ‘insider-*outsiders*’ to a country they have grown estranged from. Critics have gleaned connections between Adichie’s own immigrant experience of living and working in the US and the female protagonist’s, Ifemelu’s, convoluted trajectory. Even though the writer has not returned to Nigeria for good, she travels frequently between the two countries, and it can be therefore surmised that her first-hand experience of deracination and ‘double vision’ has put its imprint on her more recent works, including the novel, *Americanah*. As critic Elena Murphy (2017: 95) points out, “Adichie’s work has been greatly influenced by the experience that she has had [in America] as an ‘inhabitant of the periphery’”.

Adichie belongs to a younger generation of 21st century Nigerian writers, whom critic Maximilian Feldner (2019: 15) refers to as “the new African Diaspora”. This younger generation of Nigerian émigré writers – Seffi Atta, Ike Oguine, Chris Abani, Helon Habila, Jackie Kay, Noo Saro-Wiwa, to name but a few – have shown great flexibility in navigating between country of origin and adopted host country, “able to move freely between continents, which allows them to invest [themselves] in their African homelands” (idem: 17). While older generations of Nigerian writers were more inward-looking, and near-fully preoccupied with the parlous state of Nigeria after independence, the younger generation of writers, including Adichie as a prominent representative of her generation, have shown a growing interest in “nomadism, exile, displacement and deracination” (Adesanmi, Dunton 2005: 16).

The novel, *Americanah*, has been awarded the US National Book Critics Award and the PEN Pinter Prize, having prompted significant critical appraisal and debates. While Augustine Nwanyanwu (2017: 387) discusses displacement and its “traumatic effects on the emigrants’ lives and identities” in more general terms, Gikingiri Ndigirigi (2017) and Rose Sackeyfio (2017) foreground the concept of the migrant’s acquired ‘double vision’, a form of consciousness that facilitates the navigation between two different cultural universes. The race factor has certainly influenced a deepening of such double perspective on life, as Chinenye Amonyeze (2017: 1-9) has illustrated, based on an analysis of the bicultural migrant characters in *Americanah*: while adhering to the cultural norms of their host countries, Ifemelu and Obinze are determined not to give up aspects of their own identity and heritage.

Other critics have looked at the novel through the lenses of multilingualism and cultural translation. Elena Murphy (2017: 98), for example, examines instances of the protagonists’ code-switching and “constant movement between several languages and cultural backgrounds” as empowering for those who find themselves footloose in the world. Marlene Esplin (2018) goes one step further and offers insights into the complexities of cultural translation, which, she finds, are – paradoxically – both empowering and disempowering: to give but one example, while socially convenient to imitate the American accent, Ifemelu finds it equally debilitating, as it forces “a sublimation of self and one’s identity” (Esplin 2018: 80). Later on in the unfolding of the novel, as she grows in self-confidence, Ifemelu is able to let go of her fake/ borrowed American accent and mannerisms, her ‘*Americanah*’ persona.

The novel’s title, *Americanah*, then, points ironically and symbolically in the direction of the high cost of self-alienation. However, as Maximilian Feldner (2019) has pointed out, the novel departs from the typical migrant story trajectory as one-directional, that is, from home country to host country. Unlike most

migrant trajectories, this novel's protagonists are shown as unable to fully assimilate into their adopted host countries and as embroiled in the "tension of living abroad while being drawn back to Nigeria" (Feldner 2019: 2), only to end up back in Nigeria with many life lessons learned. This, then, is not a typical migration novel, and neither is it a typical bildungsroman, as Mary Androne (2017) has pointed out in her tellingly subtitled article, "*A Migrant Bildungsroman*" (emphasis added). As we accompany the protagonists on their soul-searchingly turbulent outward journey of emigration, we also become privy to their growth in maturity and world knowledge on their return journey to home country.

3. Outward-looking journey of exploration: the seduction of America

Set against the backdrop of political instability in post-independent Nigeria of the 1980s-90s, Adichie's novel, *Americanah*, is the story of young Ifemelu and Obinze, who desperately wish to leave Nigeria because of profound disillusionment with the political state of affairs (military rule, corruption in high office, failures in service delivery, country-wide strikes). As Feldner (2019: 16) also appraises the situation in the country, it was economic 'push factors', as well as an overall sentiment of "insecurity and instability that caused many to seek better conditions and political freedoms abroad". The burden of choicelessness makes both Ifemelu and Obinze feel at a loose end in a country that has ceased to offer them a sense of direction, purpose, and belongingness. Feeling lost and utterly dispirited in the wake of endless nationwide university strikes and power outages, Ifemelu becomes chronically "spiritless, and felt everything curdled in lethargy. Life had become a turgid and suspended film" (Adichie 2013: 91).

Adichie's mastery in employing weather metaphors is worth noting here, as they are suggestive of the overall atmosphere in the country: it is the dry season and its accompanying cool wind blowing from the Sahara, the 'harmattan' – with its "veil of haze [and] raging, its mercurial presence [...] the afternoons ashen with heat and the nights unknown" (93) – that symbolically points to social turbulence, political instability and generalised fear. Feeling emotionally 'homeless' in their own country, Ifemelu and Obinze are trying to cope with their profound disillusionment and despair, often in maladaptive ways. She hides her real feelings behind an "image" of brash aloofness, "a carapace" (60) that only aggravates self-alienation. He indulges in fantasizing about escaping to the United States; obsessed with the history, culture and literature of America, Obinze is "too besotted with America [and convinced that] America is the future" (70); "his mind is no longer here" (234), as his mother gently admonishes him, to even envision a life for himself and Ifemelu in Nigeria.

Like many of their generation, they have been seduced by the allure of the West, and "conditioned from birth to look towards somewhere else" (277). Feeling emotionally uneasy and stagnant, restless and dislocated, they embark on a desperate quest for another place to call 'home'. She leaves for the United States on a bursary, he is less fortunate; not able to get an American visa, he tries his luck on a tourist visa in Britain, only to end up as an illegal immigrant and be eventually deported. Obinze's is the story of a shattered emigration dream, and Adichie does not dedicate too much narrative space to its pursuit.

The novel centres mainly on the female protagonist, on Ifemelu's quest for 'somewhere else' in America, and hers is the long odyssey of a successful migrant, the 'Americanah' of the title. However, the initial seduction, the "frisson of

expectation, an eagerness to discover America” (Adichie 2013: 106) in the country of “choice and certainty” (276) is frustrated by the hard facts of emigration. Her American dream is deferred by the reality of another kind of alienation. As it happens, her earlier sense of emotional rootlessness in Nigeria has been replaced by an acute sense of physical loss: loss of home and of familiar ground, geographically, culturally, and emotionally. For, as Tzipi Weiss and Roni Berger (2008: 93) put it, migration always “involves multiple losses of familiarity with physical and cultural environment, economic and social status and resources, language and identity”.

Added to the initial unease of joblessness and financial insecurity, she also feels linguistically and culturally alienated, as she struggles to come to terms with daily habits that are so unfamiliar to her: “She was standing at the *periphery of her own life*, sharing a fridge and a toilet with people she did not know [people with whom she shared a] *shallow intimacy*” (Adichie 2013: 128; emphases added). Having escaped the discriminations imposed by the Nigerian military dictatorship, Ifemelu is now shocked to experience a hitherto unknown form of exclusion: that of being treated as a feared ‘other’, a stranger inhabiting “the liminal position of the migrant” (Nyman 2009: 23). Initially, she finds it difficult to meaningfully connect to people, because of “slippery layers of meaning that eluded her” (Adichie 2013: 131), which forced her into constantly translating across language and cultural barriers. There was a sense that people would “never be fully knowable to her” (207), or that she would be “expected to feel what she did not know how to feel” (314).

Ifemelu comes to experience first-hand what, in migrant literature, is referred to as living in a state of psychological in-betweenness, a ‘hybrid’ state of mind, a ‘contact zone’ in which the influences of “disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (Pratt 2007: 4). She gradually learns how to live and function in this twilight zone by re-framing her experience, via “cultural translation” (Steiner 2009: 12); she also learns how to, literally, switch codes between languages/accents, American and Nigerian. In her conversations, she incorporates Nigerian slang into standard English and learns to operate in a “transcultural form of English” (Murphy 2017: 99). Although partly liberating, such code-switching comes at an emotional cost, as a feeling of fractured identification.

Added to this overall sense of self-alienation, is the factor of race. While race had been a non-issue for her in her African home country, once in America, Ifemelu is forced to take cognizance of “the new reality of blackness” (Sackeyfio: 2017: 213) in a predominantly white society. She learns that – as Taiwo (2003: 42) would put it – her “otherwise complex, multi-dimensional, and rich human identity became completely reduced to a simple, one-dimensional, and impoverished non-human identity”. The most obvious expression of such reductive experience is the highly politicized nature of hair texture as a marker of social and racial differentiation. After several unsuccessful job interviews, Ifemelu is advised by a career counsellor to “straighten [her] hair. Nobody says this kind of stuff, but it matters. We want you to get the job” (Adichie 2013: 202). This piece of advice may have been well-meaning, but its effect on Ifemelu was emotionally crippling.

A marker of racial and social difference, Adichie’s insistence on Ifemelu’s hair is more than a metaphorical representation of racial difference and fear of otherness; in this novel, it also points to what Derald Sue et al. (2008: 329) refer to as “[racial] micro-aggression”, a term used in counselling psychology to refer to

either implicit or hidden, yet persistent “slights and indignities” (ibid.) targeted at vulnerable individuals perceived to be in a position of social dependency or inferiority. The implication with regards to Ifemelu’s Afro hair-do is that – unless she is prepared to have her hair straightened in order to fit into the mainstream white standards of physical appearance – she has fewer chances of fitting into American society and job markets. In one of the most touching scenes in this novel, Ifemelu decides to have her kinky hair straightened and flat-ironed so as to conform to received standards of professionalism, a process that leaves her deflated and alienated from her own sense of self:

Her hair was hanging down rather than standing up [...] straight and sleek [...] The verve was gone. She did not recognize herself. She left the salon almost mournfully [...] while the smell of burning, of something organic dying which should not have died, made her feel *a sense of loss*. (Adichie 2013: 203; emphasis added)

In the framework of the novel as a whole, the details of this scene acquire powerfully allegorical significance well beyond the matter of physical appearance. The emotional effect of hair straightening (one of the numerous, insidious micro-aggressions in the daily rounds) on Ifemelu’s self-esteem is an externalisation of “the price paid for assimilation through a devalued and eroded sense of identity” (Sackeyfio 2017: 226) and fractured identity, as she begins to see herself mostly “through the eyes of others” (idem: 227).

After a few years of painful adjustments to American rhythms and expectations, Ifemelu manages to settle down, to successfully hold journalistic jobs, as well as become involved in running a lifestyle blog. Her life seems to have found meaning and direction, yet she is plagued by an undercurrent feeling of insufficiency, which made her feel that she might never actually fully belong in America, that all her successes in the new world would be “permanently undermined by something left behind” (Said 2000: 137). In spite of a hard-earned Princeton fellowship and a meaningful relationship, she feels weighed down both physically and emotionally: “there was cement in her soul. It had been there for a while, an early disease of fatigue, a bleakness and borderlessness” (Adichie 2013: 6). Such increasingly repeated visitations of despondency and melancholia could not be wished away by reasoning alone, as they unearthed “amorphous longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living [all melding into] a piercing homesickness” (ibid.).

4. Return home journey as ‘Americanah’

In spite of her outward success, it is a dull and persistent longing for home that aggravates Ifemelu’s fractured sense of self, the “conscious doubling of her identity” (Sackeyfio 2017: 217), the acute awareness of falsehoods in her life – her eccentric “pitch of voice and a way of being that was not hers” (Adichie 2013: 175) – including her fake American accent and ‘relaxed’ hair. As the inner burden of such awareness intensifies, Ifemelu starts reclaiming her old self, her sense of authenticity: she stops faking accents and gestures that do not represent her, lets her hair revert to its natural shape and texture, and also joins an online “*hair* community” (209) that offers a platform for fellow immigrants struggling with similar issues. In fact, she becomes a main collaborator for and inspirational presence on the site.

Ifemelu's joining the online community marks a symbolic narrative shift. A turning point in her relationship with America, it signals a gradual emotional distancing from values she had aspired to before, but which, she now finds, had exacted too high an emotional price. By allowing her hair to revert to its natural form, "dense and spongy and glorious [...] she simply fell in love" (213) with it again. At first glance, one might feel puzzled by the significant narrative space dedicated to hair and feelings about one's hair in this novel of exploration, but I would hasten to say that Adichie's insistence on this issue prepares the reader for Ifemelu's apparently implausible decision of a permanent return to homeland after a successful dozen of years spent in America, the country of her aspiration.

Ifemelu's on-going quest for a place in which to feel at ease in the world continues in reverse direction. Having experienced the pain of being a stranger to herself in America, she decides to return to Nigeria, in the hope that she could heal her fractured relationship with her place of origin. As Annie Gagiano (2019: 270) put it in a tellingly titled article, "Recovering and 'recovering' from an African past", the fictional motif of return to homeland may be interpreted as a form of "re-inscription of an all but erased personal past, as recovery in a double sense: as retrieval of knowledge, and also as the healing of a psychic wound [in] search for closure". Much like the returnee trajectories analysed by Gagiano, Ifemelu's return to her home country offers her "an enabling or a deepening of self-awareness [meant to] determine the place of Africa in her own life and being" (idem: 272). However, as also illustrated in *Americanah*, a permanent homecoming after a long stay abroad can be deeply unsettling for returnees. As Nyman (2009: 37) states,

the migrant's return to the [nostalgically remembered] community is usually difficult, and the gap between dreams and reality may be realized in their impossibility to adapt to the changed conditions in the original home land.

Ifemelu's return to Nigeria is presented as a nuanced process of ever-deepening self-knowledge in the light of her painfully acquired knowledge and experience of social dynamics abroad. Comparative reflections between American and Nigerian values and worldviews take centre stage, with the protagonist engulfed in a process of profound adjustment and reconceptualisation of self in relation to place. To Adichie's credit, the homeland, Nigeria, is not presented in a romanticized fashion, and neither is the reunion with family and friends offered as some blandly heart-warming panacea to the returnee's feelings of disorientation and puzzlement. Rather, the challenge now is to reconfigure and reclaim one's lost place in a space abandoned through emigration. As pointed out by various critics of mobility studies, homecoming as existential quest needs to be looked at as "a complex and contested experience" (Stefansson 2004: 13) rather than as the culmination of a romanticized, nostalgically unreflected longing for the past. Or, as Laura Hammond (2004: 42) puts it, homecoming is "more a process of pragmatic homemaking than a return to something familiar".

Indeed, Ifemelu struggles to get reacquainted with her home country, which, during her long absence, has undergone substantial change. She now returns to a politically changed landscape, with the military rule having been replaced by a democratically elected government in 1999 (Feldner 2019: 5). Yet, in spite of major legislative changes, the government has done little to improve public services, while "the elite class of comprador businessmen and [high-ranking] officials [continued to enrich themselves] at the expense of Nigeria's poor majority" (Falola, Heaton 2008: 237).

So, it is through sheer determination and pragmatic involvement in the nitty gritty of the daily rounds that Ifemelu manages to get a foothold in the now “familiar and unfamiliar” (Adichie 2013: 438). The reader accompanies the female protagonist on her inner journey of rediscovery of ordinary life, as she goes through various stages of adjustment: from the initial shock of defamiliarisation and mild disappointment with people and places, to a gradual process of reintegration and renewed rootedness.

Ifemelu’s nostalgia for Nigeria while abroad undergoes a sobering shock upon her first day back in her home country, as she somehow expects to return to the circumstances of an earlier life. Confronted by the stark contrast between expectation and down-to-earth reality, she is left bewildered by numerous aspects of daily existence:

At first, Lagos assaulted her; the sun-dazed haste, the yellow buses full of squashed limbs, the sweating hawkers racing after cars [...] and the heaps of rubbish that rose on the roadsides like a taunt [...] the air was dense with exaggeration, conversations full of over-protestations [...] And so she had the dizzying sensation of falling, falling into the new person she had become, *falling into the strange familiar. Had it always been like that or had it changed so much in her absence?* (Adichie 2013: 385; emphasis added)

Ifemelu is taken aback by the defamiliarised recognition of smells, sights and sounds: the smell of perfume mixed with exhaust fumes and sweat, “the smell of Nigeria” (Adichie 2013: 386); the sight of “roads infested with potholes” and poorly planned houses (ibid.); the piercing “drone of generators” suggesting lengthy power outages (387). No longer sure what in these smells, sights and sounds was the old familiar and what was new in herself. She is also taken aback by the locals’ rather reserved welcome back, by a certain sarcastic and resentful undertone that she could pick up in their remarks. They kept referring to her as “Americanah” (385), a slightly insulting term “for people who, when they came back home, did irritating Americanized things like carry water bottles and complain about [trivia], that their cooks couldn’t make panini, etc” (MacFarquhar 2018). Although tossed out in passing, as forms of teasing, references to ‘Americanah’ are received by the returnees as cold and unfriendly. As Stefansson (2004: 15) also remarked, “one of the most unexpected and disillusioning aspects of homecoming is the cool welcome, if not downright hostility, that the home-comers often receive from the population that stayed behind in the homeland”.

There seems to be a degree of misalignment between the mutual expectations of locals and returnees, with prejudice on both sides. Not having experienced the emotional deprivations of living abroad – as well as not aware of the readjustment challenges that their co-nationals have to go through upon their return to a changed home land – many locals revert to rigid, impatient and mildly hostile positions vis-à-vis the home comers [“I don’t have energy for you, returnees” (Adichie 2013: 407), was how an old friend cut Ifemelu short in conversation, while mockingly, repeatedly referring to her as ‘Americanah’.] In their turn, many returnees all too easily parade certain habits acquired while abroad, including fake American accents and affectations. It becomes clear, therefore, that the novel’s title does not suggest any easy definitions and understandings of home and belonging, whether in one’s original home country or abroad. Rather, the slightly cynical undertone of ‘Americanah’ points to the unexpectedly “unsettling consequences” (Stefansson 2004: 10) of dislocation upon one’s return home, unsettling for both returnees and those who had stayed behind.

Fully aware of possible misunderstandings, Ifemelu was overcome by undefined emotions, ranging from nostalgia, to regret and disbelief – “It was melancholy, a beautiful sadness for the things she had missed [as] she looked unbelievably at herself. *She had done it. She had come back*” (Adichie 2013: 388; emphasis added). This is but the beginning of her home-coming journey as she started the integration process of the cosmopolitan experience acquired abroad. Adichie masterfully (through a blend of mild irony and humility) presents numerous instances of Ifemelu’s ‘double consciousness’ when confronted with fellow returnees, who inappropriately parade their American accents, intonations, and newly acquired, imported habits in the work place (402), or when they attend returnees’ meetings in the ‘Nigeropolitan Club’. While she understands their readjustment difficulties – the need to reach out for “the same references” (408) they had grown accustomed to in America – she is also impatient with “the righteousness in all their voices [...] They were the ‘sanctified’, the returnees, back home with an extra gleaming layer” of sophistication, but also with false modesty and constantly complaining about the wanting conditions back home: poor customer service, the dearth of vegetarian cuisine and air conditioning, gross parvenu habits, or the low-class appeal of local film production, Nollywood, etc. (407-410).

Caught in-between these two camps, and after resigning her journalistic job with a magazine, Ifemelu dedicates herself to starting her own blog, a lifestyle platform through which she attempts to complete her inner journey, by, literally and symbolically, entering into dialogue with people, locals and returnees, on issues that matter to her (420-425). Her writings touch on sensitive issues – home, identity and belonging – which she presents with a light touch and a dose of mild self-irony. In one posting, by addressing herself to fellow returnees, she says:

Lagos has never been, will never be, and has never aspired to be New York, or anywhere else for that matter [...] but we spend our time complaining about Nigeria, and even though our complaints may be legitimate – [if you do not like it], I imagine myself saying, ‘Go back to where you came from!’ [...] Nigeria is not a nation of people with food allergies, not a nation of picky eaters [...] It is a nation of people who eat beef and chicken and cow skin and intestines and dried fish in a single bowl of soup, and it is called ‘assorted’, and so get over yourselves and realize that the way of life here is just that, ‘assorted’! (Adichie 2013: 421)

As can be seen in the above quotation, the writer here records an instance of emotional recalibration – without simplifying identification with either returnees or locals, without sugar-coating the African quotidian, without scoring points or apportioning blame to anyone. It is an instance of what Annie Gagiano (2019: 273) has referred to as “‘affiliative critique’ [...] the kind of critical loyalty towards the African fatherland [...] as a type of principled ambiguity”, through which one can express both affection for, and sharp criticism towards, the realities of homeland.

5. Conclusion

This article has explored some of the complexities surrounding the concept of home and belonging, as illustrated in one of the most representative novels on this topic, Adichie’s *Americanah*. The novel challenges conventional definitions and understandings of home and away, belonging and unbelonging. It skillfully reveals that, even though materially or professionally successful, settling abroad

may never fill the amorphous sense of inner emptiness in the wake of emigration. By the same token, it also shows that a permanent return home is never as simple as one might imagine; that, in certain ways, the feeling of being ‘othered’ and misunderstood by one’s own countrymen – paradoxically – resembles, albeit to a lesser extent, the hesitatingly cool welcome extended to emigrants settling abroad. Feeling at ease in a place called ‘home’ – whether on one’s native soil, seeking refuge in another country, or upon a permanent return to birthplace – is never an uncomplicated matter, as it involves enhanced experiential knowledge, as well as self-scrutiny and a readiness to go through painfully destabilizing processes of demystification of received customs and worldviews.

If compared with other more recent return-home novels – for example, by Nigerian writers, Jackie Kay (*Red Dust Road*, 2010) and Noo Saro-Wiwa (*Looking for Transwonderland*, 2012); or by South African writers, Zoe Wicomb (*October*, 2014) and Michiel Heyns (*Lost Ground*, 2011), to name but a few – Adichie stands out in that she dares to imagine her protagonist’s *permanent*, rather than temporary, return to her African homeland. By doing so, Adichie has shown imaginative boldness, in a narrative form that is convincing. How does she achieve such credibility? Apart from its “fearless, gripping, at once darkly funny and tender” narrative texture (as per hard-copy blurb), it is by refraining from extreme positions, from either romanticising or lamenting homeland and/or life abroad. Instead, Adichie’s authorial position is neither ‘inside’ nor ‘outside’, but confidently anchored in the middle-ground occupied simultaneously by an ‘insider looking out’, and that of an ‘outsider looking in’.

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BOOK REVIEWS

SUSANA ONEGA, JEAN-MICHEL GANTEAU (Editors)
TRANSCENDING THE POSTMODERN:
THE SINGULAR RESPONSE OF LITERATURE TO THE
TRANSMODERN PARADIGM

New York and London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2020, 266pp.

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The book stands out as an unyielding and timely repositioning of paradigms in the domains of philosophy, aesthetics, literary criticism and cultural theory through the lens of contemporary literature in English. Its main argument is that “transmodernity”, a term borrowed by the Spanish philosopher Rosa María Rodríguez Magda and theorized especially in her seminal *Transmodernidad* (2011), though not a water-tight box *sensu stricto* mainly due to its fluidity and interconnectedness, is the new norm of our age when it comes to paradigm adherence. If all is said and done in postmodernism, and post-postmodernism is a vague and rather dismissive term, transmodernity focuses less on what comes next, since chronologies have been blurred in the accelerated 20th and 21st centuries, and more on what lies beyond.

Susana Onega is an internationally acclaimed scholar, professor at the University of Zaragoza, Spain, with important publications in the field of literary criticism and theory, including the well-known *Narratology. An Introduction* (Routledge, 1996). She has written books and articles on 20th century British writers, such as John Fowles, Peter Ackroyd and George Orwell and is the recipient of important national and international awards and honours. Jean-Michel Ganteau, professor of English studies at the University Paul Valéry-Montpellier, France, has edited and co-edited numerous volumes on contemporary British fiction and is the author of the acclaimed *The Ethics and Aesthetics of Vulnerability in Contemporary British Fiction* (Routledge, 2015).

The present volume is a logical continuation of the fruitful collaboration between Susana Onega and Jean-Michel Ganteau, who have co-authored several volumes and studies, examining aspects of ethics and experimentalism, trauma and romance, liminality, victimhood, vulnerability and marred heroism (such as *Trauma and Romance in Contemporary British Literature*, in the Routledge Studies in Contemporary Literature Series, 2013). The spark of inspiration ignited during two seminars convened by the editors, in 2016 and 2018, on the occasion of the thirteenth International Conference of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) in Galway, Ireland, and then, the fourteenth, in Brno, the Czech Republic.

The introductory section of the book includes an extensive review of all major works of the theorists who have investigated the same matter, collectively problematizing but calling it differently, which demonstrates its impact on many

layers of society. While Rodríguez Magda defines transmodernity dialectically as “the third totalizing synthesis of the modern thesis and the postmodern antithesis, incorporating elements of both, in the triad formed by Modernity, Postmodernity and Transmodernity” (2011: 2), arguing that it is, in essence, a “weak, diminished, light Modernity”, the editors of the present volume adopt a much more optimistic stance towards the new cultural shift.

The first part of the volume is dedicated to “The Poetics of Transmodernity” and includes three essays: Susana Onega’s “The Transmodern Poetics of David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*: Generic Hybridity, Narrative Embedding and Transindividuality”; Sara Villamarín-Freire’s “Transnational Latino/a Literature and the Transmodern Meta-narrative: An Alternative Reading of Junot Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*”; and Angelo Monaco’s “The Novel of Ideas at the Crossroads of Transmodernity: Tom McCarthy’s *Satin Island*.” The selected novels resonate with the paradigm under scrutiny and employ experimentation-based approaches to address visions of the fluid, interconnected, and unstable reality in the transmodern era.

Part II feeds on “Ethical Perceptions” and explores three novels that disregard boundaries in the essays by: Jean-Michel Ganteau (“Problematising the Transmodern: Jon McGregor’s *Ethics of Consideration*”; Matthias Stephan (“Using Transculturalism to Understand the Transmodern Paradigm: Representations of Identity in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*”); and Laura Colombino (“Transmodern Mythopoesis in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Buried Giant*”). As the title of the section announces, the novels in this section share their focus on ethical issues investigated in a transmodern key.

The novels examined in Part III, entitled “Migrancy and the Possibility of Reenchantment,” follow transmodernity’s horizontal organization and focus on the issue of transmodern possibility of overcoming class, racial, gender and ideological differences. This part includes two essays: Bárbara Arizti’s “A Transmodern Approach to Post-9/11 Australia: Richard Flanagan’s *The Unknown Terrorist* as a Narrative of the Limit”; and Merve Sarikaya-Sen’s “Diversity, Singularity, Reenchantment and Relationality in a Transmodern World: Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*.”

Part IV, “Perspectives on Biopolitics,” concludes the volume with two essays: Julia Kuznetski’s “Transcorporeality, Fluidity and Transanimality in Monique Roffey’s *Novel Archipelago*” and Jessica Aliaga-Lavrijsen’s “A Transmodern Approach to Biology in Naomi Mitchison’s *Memoirs of a Spacewoman*.” The authors delve into the idea of environmental vulnerability and how it affects embodiment, intelligibility, and human knowledge.

As the editors claim, the aim of the book was “to contribute to the elucidation and foregrounding of this paradigm shift” (2020: para. 2) – a tectonic rift of contemporary reasoning – by analyzing the way in which a host of writers coming from totally unrelated backgrounds of cultural identity felt the urge to address the same question: what comes next? Everything is interconnected and pervaded by the presence of everything else around, which resembles a young tree whose branches – postmodernity, postcolonialism, and transculturalism – intertwine and sprout in new directions. The main attribute of the paradigm shift currently in action is transcendence in the shape of past versus present, the impact of new technologies, multiculturalism/migration, vulnerability, interdependence, solidarity and ecology in the current globalized context. Susana Onega and Jean-Michel Ganteau consider that the complexity of this paradigm requires “a new

interpretive grid capable of articulating the spatio-temporal inter-connectedness of identity, history, memory and culture”.

Set out by envisaging transmodernity as an umbrella term on which to build their hypothesis that “contemporary narratives in English are responding to tensions at work in our globalised society by generating new stylistic, generic and/or modal forms that would correspond to a *transmodern* culture”(2020: para. 17), the ten chapters of the book succeed in producing a close view of how themes such as postcolonialism, subalternity, eco-criticism, feminist criticism, etc. fall into the transmodern pattern. One of the common features of the literary texts analysed in the volume was “a tension between contradicting forces” (2020: para. 20) manifested in a paradoxical love-hate relationship between humans and advanced tech, a fragile negotiation which blurs out race, ethnicity, or gender and elicits trans-interaction.

(**Note:** The version used for this review was *Transcending the Postmodern: The Singular Response of Literature to the Transmodern Paradigm*, New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2020, 266 pp. – Kindle Edition)

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Available: <https://escholarship.org/content/qt57c8s9gr/qt57c8s9gr.pdf>. [Accessed 2021, January 20].

CĂTĂLINA ILIESCU.

TRADUCEREA TEXTULUI DRAMATIC

(‘Translating the Dramatic Text’).

Iași: Institutul European, 2010, 174 p., ISBN: 978-973-611-641-4

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It is now commonly accepted that translation is an art involving the transfer of words, phrases, meanings and intentions from one language to another, while the translation of literary texts requires not just the translator’s profound knowledge of the source text’s culture and linguistic peculiarities, but also creativity and ingenuity. The translation of drama, as a special type of literary text, adds even more pressure and responsibility to the translator’s task, as the target text would not simply be read, but also performed on stage, and thus would need the audience to quickly decode the message and physically react to it (for instance, through laughter, applause, gasping, or silence).

It is in such a context that Cătălina Iliescu’s book should be read, as an exploratory study of the challenges raised by translating a dramatic text. Organized in five main chapters, preceded by an introduction and followed by conclusions, the book also includes an appendix – a questionnaire which the author briefly mentions to have used (pp.124-125) in order to test the audience’s perception of and validate some reactions to the linguistic and cultural meanings in the play titled *A treia țepă* (“*The Third Spike*”) by Romanian author Marin Sorescu, on the one hand, while on the other, to the subversiveness of several lines in the same text. The play is an inspired choice for illustration purposes, as it lends itself to numerous discussions based on the obvious versus the implied context, as well as on the linguistic choices made by Sorescu. Although, on the surface, the play deals with a key historical figure (Vlad the Impaler) in medieval times, it indirectly comments on the ethical crises, terror and restrictions of the communist regime in the 1980s Romania, which led to the play being censored after only a few performances. As a side note, it should also be mentioned that the play’s Spanish translation, *La tercera estaca*, was done by Cătălina Iliescu and published in 2018 under the auspices of the University of Alicante.

Combining Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory and Ernst Gutt’s model of relevance, Cătălina Iliescu proposes the concept of “relevant equivalence”, which she uses – together with interpretive resemblance and the observance of the relevance principle – to conduct a synchronic and diachronic study of two English translations of Marin Sorescu’s play (p. 8). It is noteworthy that, of the two translations Iliescu analysed, one was done by a Romanian translator (Andreea Gheorghîțoiu), while the other was carried out by an English translator (Dennis Deletant). Iliescu’s main purpose – as outlined in the Introduction (p. 8) – is to analyse the translated text as a finished product, belonging to a certain era and a certain socio-cultural framework, by taking into account the translation solutions alongside the perceptions and assumptions that influenced those solutions.

The first four chapters are theoretical in nature and represent the framework of the study, in which the author surveys various definitions of translation considered as a communicative act at the crossroads of several major approaches like semiology, pragmatics and cognitivism. Extensive attention is paid to the Relevance Theory, as a cognitive-pragmatic approach to communication proposed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in the mid-1980s and expanded by Ernst Gutt at the end of the twentieth century, according to which the relation between a source text and its translation is based on interpretive resemblance, rather than on equivalence (which the author highlights as a controversial, still widely-debated concept). In this context, Iliescu argues that the translator will try to find optimal relevance by employing different strategies in order to recreate the cognitive effects *intended* by the source text's author, but with the lowest possible processing (i.e. inferencing) effort on the part of the target addressee. It is also in these chapters that Iliescu clarifies such concepts as "context", "processing effort", "relevance", "relevance principle", "equivalence", and "poetic effects".

The fifth chapter is the most applied one, discussing in detail how the translation of Marin Sorescu's text works in agreement with the Relevance Theory. Proposing an analysis that moves away from a purely linguistic one, and consequently more stimulating and rewarding, Iliescu discusses the translator's communicative priorities, the (un)fulfilment of the audience's expectations and their reward through information and poetic effects, as well as the degree of compliance with the principle of relevance in the two translated versions. According to the "the relevant equivalence model", proposed by the author starting from Gutt's initial translation-as-process model, although the translators of the same text may have similar perceptions of the source text, their ways of rendering language structures in the target text may differ to a great extent, depending on the decisions the translators make; such decisions are, in turn, influenced not only by the constraints of the target language and culture, but also by certain impact factors in the actual production of the translated message (p.100). Iliescu goes on explaining that it is the relevance principle that determines a translator's choices, which are labelled as "rendition factors" or "rendition variables" and which further affect the production of the target text.

Passing quickly over differences in rendition and perception in cases where both translations stray from the source text or perceive differently the linguistic and cultural elements, Cătălina Iliescu focuses on the rendition differences in situations where the two translations are similar and "measurable" in terms of their interpretive resemblance (p. 115). She thus proposes to compare the two translated texts by measuring their degree of similarity at form and content level, their degree of compliance with the relevance principle, and finally, to draw conclusions about the relevant equivalence degree attainable, by taking into account the principles of adequacy (in relation to the source text), and of acceptability (in relation to the target reception situation).

The discrepancies in rendition are further divided into linguistic differences (e.g. idiomatic expressions, register issues, foreign words in Italian or Turkish, polysemantic and slang words) and cultural ones (e.g. irony, subversive elements, euphemisms, and Romanian folk rhymes). Drawing on the analysis, of which only a part is presented in extenso in this book (cf. p. 121), Iliescu reaches some rather surprising conclusions. Overall, she values the Romanian translator's work as more "relevantly equivalent" in terms of the cultural issues, more creative in general, with a more concrete, vivid and folk-inspired language, as well as more centred on

the adequacy principle (pp. 141-143). The author justifies this with the fact that Andreea Gheorghîtoiu was more familiar with the cultural, encyclopaedic knowledge about the source text, which allowed her to better render its linguistic subtleties and to create more culturally loaded inferences in the target audience. Contrastingly, Dennis Deletant's translation is deemed as more performance-based and sensitive to the spoken target language discourse, in addition to being more observant of the acceptability principle (pp. 142-143).

Although published more than a decade ago and written in Romanian (an English version would be welcome), and consequently addressing a smaller audience of specialists(-to-be), the book makes an interesting, complex reading, being useful especially to students training for a career in translation, but also to translators delving into the specificities of the dramatic discourse with its twofold purpose – reading as well as performance.

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NAJWA HAMAOU, DANIEL DEJICA (Guest editors)

***INTERPERSONAL AND INTER-LINGUISTIC
COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE.***

DIGITAL INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Essachess – Journal for Communication Studies,

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The accelerated progress registered in the sphere of computer science and other related disciplines during the past few decades has brought fundamental changes and additional dimensions to the frameworks for the functioning of interlingual communication and intercultural mediation. Digital skills – such as knowing how to operate devices, finding information and transmitting it to the others in an appropriate form, creating basic content, using the necessary software (i.e., translation memories, terminology and localization tools, grammar checkers, etc.), or practicing safety and privacy habits – are now recognized as essential components of the overall competence of the translators or of other types of interlingual and intercultural mediators.

The significant role played by technology in the sphere of translation and communication has created the need for research studies meant to reflect the manifestations of this phenomenon, as well as its possible implications for the future. Various translation scholars and specialists in interlingual communication have already materialized their interest in this topic (e.g. Chan Sin-wai 2015, Doherty 2016, Dejica, Hansen, Sandrini and Para 2016, etc.), but there still remains a lot to be discussed about this important, constantly developing area.

This is the context in which *Essachess – Journal for Communication Studies* published a special issue, whose topic is *Interpersonal and Inter-linguistic Communication in the Digital Age. Digital Inclusion and Accessibility*. The guest editors of this issue are dr. Najwa Hamaoui, Professor at Mons University, Belgium, and dr. Daniel Dejica, Professor at Politehnica University of Timișoara, Romania, specialists with vast research experience in the sphere of translation and intercultural mediation. As stated in the Introduction to the volume, its main purpose is to contribute to the existing endeavours in the field by offering the various readers, scholars, and professionals a series of novel approaches on interpersonal and inter-linguistic communication in our digital age, with a focus on digital inclusion and accessibility. In order to achieve this purpose, the two editors propose a collection of nine studies, which are divided into two main sections, entitled *Dossier* and *Varia*. Additionally, in its introductory part, this special issue includes an interview with Daniela Benito Ulibarri from CEDRES – Reception and support centre of the University of Mons for students with disabilities, who explains how inclusion can help by giving access to education to all people with special needs, as well as a conference-report by Coralie Vandevenne, the coordinator of the Accompaniment

and Leisure Services Department, Inclusion and quality of life cluster at “Oeuvre Fédérale Les Amis des Aveugles et Malvoyants”, who discusses the roles of persons accompanying people with disabilities and of audio-description in making information accessible to the population with special needs.

The *Dossier* section is a collection of five selected original papers, which provide in-depth analyses and perspectives on topics closely related to the idea of digital inclusion and accessibility. Thus, in *Respeaking: Technical, Professional, and Linguistic Aspects of Live Subtitling*, Carlo Eugeni proposes an analysis of respeaking, a fast-writing technique which is used to produce live subtitles more rapidly than with the standard keyboard, and which promotes social inclusion for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. The results of the qualitative and quantitative analysis performed by the author indicate that, due to human-machine interaction, universal accessibility is possible, starting from the standard notion of accessibility, traditionally oriented only towards people with special needs. Martin Will's contribution, *Computer Aided Interpreting for Conference Interpreters. Concepts, Content and Prospects*, aims at offering a coherent overview of the concept of “Computer Aided Interpreting” and uses a model workflow to demonstrate existing computer-based applications which can automate, to a great extent, an interpreting assignment. In *Context, Field and Landscape of Audiovisual Translation in the Arab World*, Muhammad Y. Gamal discusses the state of audiovisual translation in the Arab World, in a context that imposes the use of digital technologies, university training, and theoretical frameworks specific to this geocultural space. After examining the state of audiovisual studies in Arabic, the author invites scholars to focus a lot more on their own local environment. The main purpose of Elena Aleksandrova and Christos Stavrou's paper, *Audio Description Landscape in Russia and Greece*, is to provide an overview of audio studies in the two countries. More specifically, the authors analyze the new opportunities for providing media accessibility, such as mobile applications and voluntary projects, and present an example of a service which can be viewed as good practice, to be shared and spread across other countries – an application with audio descriptions of theatre plays, voiced by prominent actors and actresses. Finally, in *Inclusion and Linguistic Mediation: Contribution of New Information and Communication Technologies*, Haytham Safar, Andrea Gava and William Lambert discuss practices related to virtual technology tools employed by users with visual and hearing impairment, taking into consideration their sensitivity and civil rights.

The section called *Varia* contains four studies, which deal with the implications that the use of digital tools carries with regard to various socio-political issues.

In the first contribution of this section, *Can Self-Organized Criticality Theory help identify Political Mobilization on Social Media?*, Natalia Barabash and Dmitry Zhukov propose and test a tool for identifying groups that display a high level of political mobilization on social media, using data on activity in 200 Facebook groups in France and Germany. The declared objective of Hassan Atifi and Zeineb Touati's paper, *New Feminist Claims and Digital Media. Circumvention of Social and Religious Prohibitions in Tunisia and Morocco*, is to observe and describe devices, uses, and actors involved in the new online mobilization and activism media that benefit women in Tunisia and Morocco. Focusing on issues related to the presence of Tunisian and Moroccan women on social networks, the authors discuss the manner in which these digital tools help them make the claims of their new rights visible. In *Addictions and Problematic Behaviors Linked to*

Internet and Social Networks. Critical Synthesis of Research and New Perspectives, Didier Courbet, Marie-Pierre Fourquet-Courbet and Stéphane Amato offer a critical synthesis of major scientific research on the topic of addiction and other types of problematic behaviours associated with the use of the Internet, proposing, at the same time, a communicational approach linking production and uses of digital devices and contextualizing problematic behaviors related to the Internet. Starting from the need for a new theory of value, Eric Dacheux and Daniel Goujon's contribution, *A Communicative Theory of Economic Value: The Deliberative Approach*, puts forward a communicative theory of economic value in the normative framework of a democratic society. As the two researchers explain, this interdisciplinary approach makes it possible to go beyond the classical opposition between subjectivism and holism.

The volume deals with concepts of central importance in the contemporary sphere of communication, such as respeaking, live subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, Computer Aided Interpreting, audio description, audiovisual culture, digital humanities, audiovisual translation, linguistic mediation, or Internet addiction. By presenting new approaches and original research results, this special issue of *Essachess – Journal for Communication Studies* on digital inclusion and accessibility makes a useful contribution to the research in this field, and represents a valuable resource for scholars, students, professionals interested in translation and communication in the digital era.

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NICOLETTA VASTA, ANTHONY BALDRY (Editors)
***MULTILITERACY ADVANCES AND MULTIMODAL
CHALLENGES IN ELT ENVIRONMENTS***

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The volume consists of seven chapters, each an account of research efforts advocating for the redesign of the language teaching curriculum meant to better equip students and teachers to respond to the needs of the 21st century, when their competences should allow for an intersemiotic, multiliterate and multimodal decoding and understanding of different types of messages encoded with the help of digital resources. The volume comprises step-by-step illustrations of various instructional strategies used for the development of students' critical multiliteracy awareness, as well as specific details of digital-tool usage in multimodal reading and ascription of meaning. The clear descriptions of research findings target more than the curious minds of individual teachers concerned with new pedagogical views; they make a very strong case towards curriculum redesign in order to foster and support the development of such competences – as the editors, Nicoletta Vasta and Anthony Baldry, argue in the introduction to the volume.

In the first chapter, “Advances and Challenges in EFL Multiliteracy Environments”, Nicoletta Vasta presents the context for the emergence of the MACHETE project (an acronym of *Multiliteracy Advances and Challenges in Hypermedia English Teaching Environments*) and thoroughly justifies the need for adapting instructional strategies to better match the modern learner's needs for competence formation. From a pedagogical perspective, the project relies on the initiative of the New London Group, a set of scholars who coined the term “multiliteracy” in response to the increasing demand to re-design traditional literacy pedagogy, and who support the view that students need to be equipped to act as meaning makers in changing spaces and communities, able to cope with the diversity of communication channels and linguistic and cultural differences nowadays (Cope and Kalantzis 2000, 2009, 2015). Moreover, the chapter brings into discussion the focus on the need to develop such skills as echoed by multiple authors and documents including the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu). Vasta also discusses here the theoretical framework underlying the concept of multimodality, which lies at the intersection of the Hallidayan systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis (SF-MDA), of the applications of critical discourse analysis to multimodal studies (van Leeuwen 2008, O'Halloran et al. 2017) and of multimodal analysis for critical thinking (O'Halloran et al. 2017).

Vasta also proposes a model of instruction based on the processes for the extension of knowledge (formulated by Cope and Kalantzis 2009) to be used for the development of meaning-making practices, by progressing from an experiencing stage (exposure to different multimodal texts), through a conceptualising

stage (introduction of students to O'Halloran et al. and their Multimodal Analysis Lab software) and an analysing stage (cluster analysis, visual-verbal relationship analysis, logo-genetic patterns, metasemiotic awareness of discontinuous meaning-making paths), to finally reach the applying stage (where learners engage in collaborative tasks – like think aloud protocols, classroom discussions or collaborative content creation). The MACHETE project used a corpus of commercial and social advertising campaigns, from the US and the UK, paralleled by Italian advertisements, where possible, and selected on the basis of “whether and to what extent a given text features non-congruent verbal and/or visual realizations, culture-bound stereotypes and/or strong ideological bias – in short, whether it provides food for *critical* thought, preferably in an intercultural perspective” (p. 41).

The author further demonstrates how the analysis performed on different audio-visual resources can be carried out, highlighting important stages for the identification of community specific practices and their correspondence, or lack thereof, between the verbal and non-verbal elements, the exploration of cross-cultural differences in a multimodal representation of a universal experience, the integration of logo-genetic pathways, cluster hopping or scaffolding procedures, as well as the analysis of specific discourse practices of certain communities. Another important aspect in the development of critical multiliteracies that Vasta addresses is the empowerment of students as meaning-making agents, who can identify and strip out hidden, stereotyped ideologies, power asymmetries, representations of marginalisation or conformity to skewed views (p. 60). The reader is presented with a very thorough account of the students' guided efforts to identify such enclosed meanings in two specific advertisements, by taking into account the themes and patterns in the textual narrative, by following a close comparison of verbal and nonverbal elements in order to reveal inconsistencies, such as an “ideological tension between denotation and connotation” (p. 56), reflected for example in stereotyped representations of two cultural systems, the encoding of power asymmetries and marginalisation in spite of an apparent ‘caring’ claim. Vasta concludes this first chapter with a powerful assertion that such critical multimodal multiliteracy classroom practices are to pave the way toward the construction of a pedagogy concerned with “the role of multimodal discourse in social practice and social change” (p. 60).

Chapter two, “Developing Critical Multimodal Literacy in Secondary School Students” by Piergiorgio Trevisan and chapter three, “Learners' Multisemiotic Competence and Questionnaires: Their text analysis role in the MACHETE project” by Nickolas Komninos continue to present details of the implementation of the MACHETE project, which enables the development of students' multiliteracies, essential for handling the decoding of different co-existing discourses, communication channels or modes of representation.

Trevisan details the importance of teaching students to carefully analyse visual and verbal congruence and incongruence, by using various meaning-making strategies and tools, while at the same time introducing students to the identification of ideological biases. The project extended over two months, during which a number of secondary school students moved from determining difficulties in dealing with multimodal texts, undergoing multimodal literacy training through the use of *Multimodal Analysis Image*© software, to finally producing their own alternative texts, which eliminated some of the discrepancies detected earlier. Trevisan clearly presents some of the meaning making activities students

undertook, and proposes a particular multimodal toolkit – a set of specific questions for students to make use of along with the software, as they attempt to decode the various key elements and the overall textual organisation of an advertisement. Teachers are not only offered a detailed perspective of hands-on critical multimodal literacy development practices, but they are also able to reflect upon the proposed instructional stages suggested by the researchers (p. 80).

In chapter three, Komninos zooms in on the questionnaire used in the MACHETE project to determine students' ability to decode a multimodal advertising discourse, which later "led to the development of a skill-by-skill measurement tool" (p. 84), recording not just the initial state of the students' multisemiotic competence, but also reflecting the students' subsequent progress. A selection of questions and a limited number of student answers are presented in this chapter in more detail, in order to clarify the multifaceted tool used and the benefits of the superimposed analyses. Thus, the first question was helpful in the identification of the focal items in the advert, grouped by researchers into objects, processes, results, institutions and abstract properties, (the OPRIA analysis); the second question allowed for the identification of keywords and visual foci. The third question concentrated on the role of colours in social advertising and their interplay with other features in the construction of multimodal texts, while the last question looked at the relationship between image and words in visual texts at two distinct levels of analysis (a surface level – L1 and a deeper inference level – L2); this question also reflected how students link image and words (verbal linkage, noun linkage) in the overall interpretation of the multisemiotic text. The benefit of this questionnaire, both in the initial stage of the training, and as a monitoring tool, is evident in terms of the correct identification of barriers in meaning-making practice and of its possible replication in the classroom.

The chapter "Multimodal and Digital Literacies in the English Classroom: Interactive textbooks, open educational resources and a social platform" by Bessie Mitsikopoulou provides a detailed account of specific beneficial outcomes of the *Digital School Projects*, "two flagship nationwide projects" (p. 97), with significant roles to play in the integration of "digital technologies in Greek primary and secondary education" (ibid.), leading to the development of a national open access educational platform (containing interactive textbooks and national repositories) that assists both teachers and learners.

Starting with the development of interactive textbooks and the alignment of Open Educational Resources (OERs) with learning goals for each subject, and moving on to creating a whole database of OERs, the first project, *Digital School I*, has an impressive outcome: a set of more than 900 OERs, grouped together in repositories serving diverse functions (informative, instructional, experiential and exploratory) and providing digital content to be used as "digital enrichment" (p. 98) for several English-as-a-Foreign-Language textbooks for Gymnasium learners (grades 3-6).

The second project, *Digital School II*, produced a number of digital repositories which reflect Greece's focus on multimodal instruction and digital literacy development, in line with the new national *Integrated Foreign Languages Curriculum* of 2016. The purpose of the "Photodentro" repositories varies from collections to assist with digital education, learning objects, videos, user generated content, open educational practices, items of educational software to a thematic aggregator and the "e-me" educational social platform.

In this chapter, Mitsikopoulou illustrates the multitude of functions of the various products and the benefits of the wealth of tailored resources that are made available through the *dschool.edu.gr* portal, which bring about changes in the teaching landscape, by re-orienting it towards a combination of digital technologies and traditional resources to maximize learning outcomes.

The next chapter, “Developing Primary School Students’ Multimodal Literacy in Digital Environments”, by Styliani Karatza, brings into discussion the question of re-thinking curriculum design so that it better matches the nowadays’ needs of students, who have to be able to read and interpret multimodal texts in digital contexts and ultimately produce such multimodal texts. Karatza thus discusses the need for students in the foreign language classroom to be taught multimodal literacy so that they “be adequately equipped to navigate the multimodal digital landscape” (p. 112) as early as primary school.

The author skilfully argues the case of multimodal digital literacy development (MDL) through multimodal discourse analysis practice (MDA) on digital texts with a theoretical grounding at the intersection of the “pedagogy of multiliteracies suggested by the New London Group (1996)”, the framework of ‘Learning by Design’ (Cope and Kalantzis 2015) and the “Systemic Functional Approach to Teaching Multimodal Literacy” (Lim 2018) (p. 112-113). Under the teacher’s supervision and guidance, the students are expected to move through four stages of MDA development, from situated practice and overt instruction to critical framing and transformed practice. Moreover, in this chapter, Karatza points out to the inseparable nature of language teaching and multimodal literacy, since communication in the foreign language presupposes making use of meaning making resources and strategies.

She carefully documents the case of using an MDL syllabus with a group of eighteen 11-year-olds, moving across eight multimodal teaching foci and the corresponding activities, from meaning-making resource use, visual analysis, consolidation, taking a closer look at the multimodal ensemble, to revising metalanguage and completing a multimodal artefact. Karatza also validates the positive outcomes of such an instructional model from the perspective of the students, measured through pre- and post-instruction questionnaires, which reflect the students’ open attitudes towards an instructional design that is focused on multimodal literacy development in digital environments and the realisation of further benefits of a deeper understanding of a multimodal text.

The chapter “Multimodality of English as a School Subject: Mapping meanings about literacy discourses on students’ work in a museum and school project” by Sophia Diamantopoulou brings into discussion an interesting view on the ways of understanding different literacy practices and literacy events occurring in two distinct settings, the school and the art museum, in view of enhancing the process of meaning-making. The students’ output from the Tate Britain *Ideas Factory* project is closely analysed as a combination of literacy events and samples of discursive practices, which, from a multimodal literacy perspective, raise awareness both of the specificities of the contexts where they were produced and the otherwise unaccounted meanings enclosed.

The final chapter, “Multimodal Ecological Literacy: Animal and human interactions in the Animal Rescue genre”, by Anthony Baldry and Paul J. Thibault, Francesca Coccetta, Deidre Kantz and Davide Taibi, is organised as a collection of five analyses of distinct digital texts, subtypes of the *Animal Rescue* genre [original emphasis], which take a frame by frame look at specific sequences and effects, at

several multimodal meaning-making resources and the construction of multimodal corpora, all working toward the development of an ecological multimodal literacy.

Analysis A looks into the construction of some videos (news clips and documentaries) concerned with animal rescue, identifying and comparing their particular structures at four levels - microphasal, subphasal, macrophasal and metaphasal – with the help of the *OpenMWS* corpora analysis tools. Analysis B focuses on the “when not to intervene genre” and compares a mind map and a digital poster (both raising one’s awareness of the importance of non-intervention in specific animal rescue situations) through cluster analysis, via the *OpenMWS* platform. Starting with a discussion of the structural particularities of a specific subgenre and its textual levels, the analysis also comments on the reading pathways (including cluster hopping) for multimodal texts, or recurrent lexico-grammatical structures, clearly illustrating the potential of this type of analysis to facilitate further multimedial text analysis and text selection for second language training. Analysis C is concerned with animal and human interaction occurring in Public Information Films and belonging to the subgenre of mistreated animals. The proposed key-frame analysis involves the identification of interaction types within the two specific macrophases – raising awareness about the moral obligation to intervene, and requesting support for the efforts of SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). The SPCA advertisement videos examined here allowed for a specific multimedial analysis, with attention paid to their separate elements – oral discourse, sounds, written discourse and visual image, either considered separately or simultaneously. Analysis D proposes the simulation of a class project on the topic of animal rescue, using the *OpenMWS* interface and a proposed group study framework, which provides guidelines for a student-led selection of resources, annotation, creation of a searchable corpus, as well as for the comparative description of videos. The proposal of the authors is to consider the educational benefits of this type of distance learning pedagogical strategy for stimulating the students’ curiosity and enabling their empowerment, which is seen to potentially expand to various situated learning practices among students from different countries. Finally, analysis E proposes a phasal analysis framework, intended to develop a multimodal ecological literacy, “which is sensitive to the necessarily semiotic character of the relations of community and reciprocity that define and sustain ecosystems” (p. 198).

Thus, this last chapter is a group effort of professors from different universities in Italy, Greece, and Norway to provide examples of frameworks and tools to analyse sequences of videos and page-based documents, digital texts, belonging to an online corpus, so as to serve as a potential investigative toolkit for teachers, students and researchers to interpret the animal rescue genre and eventually lead to the development of an ecological multimodal literacy.

To conclude, the different chapters in this volume present a kaleidoscope of applied instructional strategies concerned with the development of students’ multiliteracies through critical multimodal analysis tools and digital technologies. The multiple research accounts highlight the educational value of implementing multimodal literacy practices in new interdisciplinary areas, while at the same time, they serve as instructional models that can be replicated and further developed to build a new pedagogical model, based on transformative English language teaching and learning practices.

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