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Dilek Direnç

INTERACTIONS address
Ege University, Faculty of Letters,
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Prof. Dr. Şebnem Toplu: sebnemtoplu@hotmail.com

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

REVIEWS

Empire and Romance:
John Masters' *Nightrunners of Bengal*

M. Fikret Arargüç

Abstract: This article discusses the importance of romance in the fictional representations of the Indian Uprising in 1857 and the Raj, in general. The Uprising had a deep impact on the psyche of both the British and Indian writers; however, until the end of the Raj's rule, only British and Anglo-Indian romances comprised the (official) literary output of the event. Bearing this in mind and considering that the literary and ideological format of romance with its emphasis on wish-fulfilment had stimulated a widespread imperial utilization, and that these romances later turned into highly influential historical documents, I contend that the romance became the authoritative narrative of the discourse of British imperialism. Through the analysis of John Masters's *Nightrunners of Bengal*, this article seeks to display the significance of romance and its interrelation with imperialism even in a post-imperial(ist) romance and further attempts to construe Masters' post-imperial concern with the Uprising.

Keywords: John Masters, *Nightrunners of Bengal*, romance, imperial romance, imperialist fiction

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more!
Lord Alfred Tennyson

The British colonial encounter with India has at all times been a great inspiration for many English and Indian authors. Particularly the rebellious events in 1857, whose context and impact has always caused much debate and bitter controversy, have inspired a voluminous output of historical fiction. Even the naming of this "Uprising"[1] –the English call it the Great Mutiny or Sepoy Mutiny, whereas the Indians call it the First War of Liberation or Independence–becomes a question of viewpoints and suggests an ideological stance. The English naming reduces the tumultuous events in 1857 to small-scale militaristic disobedience and thus implies that the revolt was not the consequence of a general dissatisfaction with English rule. The Indian designation, on the contrary, indicates an organized and broad-based step towards their self-determination.

This polarization of opinion is also evident in the literary representations of the Uprising. It may be understandable that the Indian and English accounts contradict each

[1] "Uprising" will be used throughout the essay to define the events of 1857, as mutiny or war is already an interpretation.

other however, contradictions among the English works are more curious.[2] These texts also had political and cultural importance partly because they were the main and most referential sources for the English at home to form an opinion about India (Sharpe 61), and furthermore they helped to develop a British imperial identity (Booker 58) that aimed to assure the English of their superiority as a ruling race. Thus, the immense output of imperial romances with the Uprising theme in the second half of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth centuries should be seen as indicative of an imperialist literary trend; for instance, the historian Sir Charles Crostwaithe regarded the event as the "Epic of the Race" (in Morris and Winchester 191). Furthermore, taking into consideration that there was hardly any Indian historiographic writing about the Uprising before WWI[3], it stands to reason that the English representations before that date also evolved into historically important documents. Yet, ironically enough, almost all of these works are dominated by romance (Sharpe 99), a genre ruthlessly discredited chiefly because it is considered to be fantastic and essentially subjective (Beer 8).

This essay then seeks to determine the importance and some crucial functions of romance in imperial fiction by analyzing John Masters' debut work *Nightrunners of Bengal* (1951)[4] as a competent and representative example for that type. Moreover, since Masters' work was originally published in 1951, four years after India was granted its independence in 1947, it also seeks to construe the author's nearly 100-year-later, post-imperial concern with the Uprising.

In its most simple definition, romance can be defined as a narrative featuring adventures, heroic or stunning deeds, and love stories with a happy ending, all of which usually take place in a historical or imaginary setting. The proportion of these settings or themes within the narrative determines the type of the romance (historical, adventure, gothic, imperial, etc.). Due to its protean nature romance has resisted a unique and well-accepted definition. The origin of romance, as a descendant of the epic, goes back to medieval Europe. In due course, it has persistently revived and amalgamated with numerous other subgenres. As such, it has become, notwithstanding any metamorphosis, a very popular and bestselling form of literary writing today (Kaler 1).

Northrop Frye, in his intense study of romance, associates it with wish fulfilment of the "libido or desiring self" (193). Moreover, by claiming that "in every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some forms of romance, in which the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy" (186), he emphasises the suitability of romance to articulate power relations in different historical periods.

Similarly, Gillian Beer claims romance to be a very prominent literary form to express the utopian longings of the "collective subconscious" (58), partly because it can be easily cast in the "exact mould of an age's sensibility" (12). She explains this temporal

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[2] Edward Leckey's *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed* (1859), right after the Uprising, questions the reliability of eyewitness' accounts which nevertheless became historically important documents and inspired many fictions about the Uprising. Patrick Brantlinger names Edward Thompson's *The other Side of the Medal* (1925), similarly claiming that these unreliable accounts have created false images about India and its people.

[3] Besides Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's *The Indian War of Independence* (1909), there were hardly any Indian accounts about the Uprising and those available were banned until Independence.

[4] Hereafter referred to as *Nightrunners*.

malleability of romance with its preoccupation with the "fulfilment of desires" and further asserts that "romance gives repetitive form to the particular desires of a community and especially to those desires which cannot find controlled expression within a society" (13).

Ideology might be regarded as the reflection of organized individual/collective preferences and interests. Moreover, since interests always collide, the allegorical character of romance, where there is always a struggle between good and evil, provides a perfect frame to narrate the collision between ideologies/interests. In a similar way, Frederic Jameson also offers an ideological explanation for the continuous renewal of romance, which in many aspects overlaps with Beer's. By asserting that the popularity of romance comes from its ability to invoke "categories of Otherness" that can be easily modified to the preferences of different eras (131), he too considers romance as a literary means to satisfy collective desires. Moreover, by maintaining that a literary "genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message" and "immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right" (141), he puts an extra emphasis on the ideological impact, or in his words, the "political unconscious", present in the formal structure of the text (85).

In the light of these approaches, it can be claimed that the romance makes a perfect tool to mask domination and resistance in all forms of power relations, including imperialism. Imperialism through the process of "othering" reduces the imperialized to moral and racial inferiors and so acquires a moral license for their "imperialization" and even makes it an obligation. Similarly, the romance out of its melodramatic quality to handle any resistance to power as a simplistic confrontation between good and evil also provides the required legitimacy and the narrative frame for such relations. The power dynamic that the romance internalizes is even greater in the imperial romance. In other words, there is a(n) un/conscious interconnection between imperial discourse and romance where the latter becomes the narrative frame for representing the former's ideology and vice versa. John McClure in his *Late Imperial Romance* hints to a "symbiotic relation" between romance and imperialism, reciprocally providing "raw material" for each other (10). Parenthetically, McClure also regards imperialism, with its "civilizing" effects, as a threat for the diminishing of savage people, cultures and unexplored spaces that are so vital for the maintenance of heroic adventures narrated in this type of writing (McClure 10; Brantlinger 239).

India in all respects provided the quintessence of romance fiction; particularly the central romance's concern, which involves the hero's struggle to master his environment (Frye 33), could best be represented on the wild geography of India. Thus, imperial romances by emphasizing the torturing sun, droughts, epidemics, poisonous insects and wild animals produced a literary image of India as a dangerous and hostile realm that could serve as a natural arena to test the English/romance heroes' endurance. Such literary depictions in turn suggested the English presence on the subcontinent to be an act of self-commitment.

Actually, there were many reasons for the English to desire India, a fact that imperial fictions almost never suggest. For instance, though India was important for the English economy, which also can be deduced from the popular reference as the "Jewel in the Crown", imperial romances ignore this fact and primarily tell about the self-sacrificial acts of the English and the immeasurable benefits their presence had conferred upon the Indians. Such approaches unveil the complicity of interests that unites imperial romance with imperial discourse:

> Empire involved military conquest and rapacious economic exploitation, but it also involved the enactment of often idealistic although nonetheless authoritarian schemes of cultural domination. The goal of imperialist discourse is always to weld these seeming opposites together or to disguise their contradiction. (Brantlinger 34)

However, a major desire of India as a land of great opportunities is also often stressed in imperial romances, which at times served as literary propaganda in order to attract the English to imperial careers. Actually, the initial bond between England and India itself, which was established as a commercial relationship through the East India Company[5] at the beginnings of the seventeenth century proves to be a good theme for romance, since the attempt of some ambitious merchants to make trade resulted in an empire (Brantlinger 81). Besides, the romance of class mobility could find a perfect expression in India. Here and in the other colonies, in general, people of middle-class nonentity in England could percolate upwards for the very fact that they, regardless of their status at home, were above all the local castes. In Keith Booker's words, India was the place where "the British bourgeoisie [could] pretend to be aristocratic" (10). This privilege granted by race is also one of the reasons why, despite the many negative factors that made life unbearable on the subcontinent, the English were so reluctant to leave and preferred to stay there.

The very fact that India was split into hundreds of principalities and hosted a vast variety of races, castes and religious beliefs is another reason that made it an excellent setting for romance, which requires diversities of all kinds, in order to develop its narrative. Imperial romances notedly stress this diversity not only in order to exalt the hero's success in reconciling them, but also in order to create "terrains of otherness" that from a Western perspective appear primitive and irrational and thus need to be civilized. Accordingly, these romances accentuate local cultures and customs like Suttee[6], Thuggee[7], child-marriage and female infanticide, and as a result English rule becomes a moral duty that is associated with the suppression of "savage" customs in the name of civilization. Considering that the quest is the very element that gives the literary form to romance (Frye 187), this self-alleged mission in its literary dimension becomes the quest of the imperial romance hero.

Imperial romances often depict India as a wild and lawless country that throughout history witnessed many bloody wars. The choice of a time of conflict/chaos is also peculiar to romance, because according to McClure:

> [Romance] requires a world at war – starkly divided, partially wild and mysterious, dramatically dangerous – […] Without unordered spaces, or spaces disordered by war, it is impossible to stage the wanderings and disorientations, the quests and conquests and conversions, the ordeals and sacrifices and triumphs that are the stuff of romance. (2-3)

Obviously, one factor that complicated the acquisition of a national unity government in Indian history was the multiplicity in India's ethnic and cultural structure. Yet, considering the hundreds of native princes England itself had created, one could argue that English rule meant not to unite and rule but to divide and rule the people of India. Imperial fictions neglect possible misrule in India and rather articulate the socio-politic and

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[5] Hereafter referred to as EIC.

[6] The custom of Hindu widows' immolating themselves on their husbands' funeral.

[7] A cult of Hindu members who lived by highway murder and robbery; most often, killing in the name of the goddess Kali.

cultural circumstances or the "savage" nature of the Indians as an explanation for the turbulent history of India. Particularly, the brutal nature of the Uprising, though both sides were responsible for it, was claimed to be a proof for the necessity that Indians should be imperialized and, therefore, became a symbol of justification for English rule. By the way, it is interesting to note that during the Uprising, people from the various cultures, religions and casts of India were united for the first time in their history, to fight against their dominators.

In *Nightrunners,* Masters benefits from all the literary advantages that both, the romance as a genre and India as a country provide for his imperialist writing. Therefore, a summary of the plot would be useful for a better understanding of the text. *Nightrunners* is set at the eve of the Uprising in 1857 and its protagonist is Captain Rodney Savage, an English officer in the Bengal Native Infantry working for the East Indian Company. Rodney is a professional soldier who has respect for the sepoys[8] he commands and the Indians in general. He believes in English superiority, but nevertheless criticizes the ignorant attitudes of the Company and some of his own countrymen toward the Indians. Experiencing problems in his marriage, he comes closer and even has a sexual relation with Sumitra, an Indian Rani[9] who offers him a post in her army. The Rani later appears to be in a plot against the English, which begins with the rebellion of the sepoys. Rodney's wife is killed during the Uprising, from which he and his infant son, though wounded, manage to escape with the help of some Indians. While fleeing from the rebels and the Rani, they are cared for by Caroline Langford, with whom he later falls in love. Together they undergo many dangerous adventures before they are able to reach and inform a distant British army about the Uprising just in time. The British forces are able to suppress the revolt, the Rani dies, and Rodney and Caroline are united at the end of the work.

The narrative of *Nightrunners* starts in an imaginary town called Bhowani, but information is given that this place is located near Kishanpur, a real city in India. This setting is vital for the development of the plot because it is geographically very close to the two historically important states of Jhansi and Oudh. It is believed that a crucial factor that led to the Uprising was the annexation policy[10] of the EIC, according to which a principality was annexed if the prince died without leaving a legitimate male heir. Jhansi and Oudh were such places and interestingly, the insurrections first began in the annexed territories and that it was the native rulers of the un-annexed territories that remained loyal to the British (Mitchell 72).

Nightrunners provides its audience with detailed historical and official information about the general condition of India and the policies of the EIC. To place such details into the narrative is perceived by the reader as the verification of the work to be "the result of indefatigable scholarly research, and so – of course – true" (Hughes 18). Likewise, in the "Author's Note" to *Nightrunners*, Masters declares that his story is "drawn from local traditions, official reports and contemporary letters", a remark repeated in many English and Anglo-Indian fictions about the Uprising (Paxton 6). Moreover, he announces that his object in writing his work was to "make the fictional whole present a true perspective of fact". The author's claim to authenticity comes from his effort to make his fiction appear as a reliable source; indeed, reports, eyewitness accounts and journals without investigating their sources found their expression in the fictions and, as a result, they effectively

[8] Indian soldier serving under British command.
[9] An Indian princess, feminine of Rajah.
[10] The "Doctrine of Lapse" introduced by Lord Dalhousie.

transformed rumour into information (Sharpe 61). Helen Hughes claims that especially historical romances provide an optimal literary realm to make a perfect blend of realism and fantasy, because in these works

> [t]he "past" presented may be as imaginary as the forests of medieval romance, the detail selectively chosen and the interpretation subjective, but an impression of an accurate representation of a past reality, which led to the contemporary world of the reader through a sequence of cause and effect, is given by the use of period detail and reference to familiar historical issues. (1)

Beside the use of elements to authenticate its narrative, *Nightrunners* also contains mystical elements in order to attract the reader's attention. The title *Nightrunners of Bengal* evokes the old Indian prophecy that the Indian people, a hundred years after the battle of Plassey[11], will rise against the English and give an end to their rule over India. There was also a rumour about a signal for the rebellion that the British authorities did not take seriously. Accordingly, chapattis[12] being secretly passed from village to village by messengers at night would be a signal of warning and preparation for the people to be ready for a great and tumultuous event to happen[13]. The presence of such exotic elements adds to the "escape" value of romance. This is typical of romance, since it "instruct[s] us in our own world even while [it] allow[s] us to escape from it" (Beer 78).

The didactic emphasis of *Nightrunners*, had it been written before Independence would be on the control of information. Information, in the very sense that knowledge equals power, was vital for the continuation of imperial rule in India. This correlation conveys the moral of most imperial romances written during the Raj; they served as a means to instruct and propagate imperialist ideology and thus prepared their readers to imagine themselves as colonizers. G.A. Henty's *Rujjub the Juggler* (1893), Flora Annie Steel's *On the Face of the Waters* (1896) and particularly Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) were good examples for such writing.

Masters immigrated to America but it would be a bit of a stretch to claim that Masters were aiming to give his American readers advice for the future affairs of their country. *Nightrunners* was published at the same time in the USA and the UK. Works with an Indian setting featuring the Great Game, adventure, suspense or espionage themes were highly popular among English readers and *Nightrunners* despite its setting was also enjoyed by Masters' American readership so much that it became a bestseller. This happened mainly because in the Cold War era, Russia, a major actor in the Great Game which had been an important rival of the British Empire, had now become a major threat for America.

Masters asserts that he had tried to be for the American image of India what Kipling had been for the British (De Caro, Online). Therefore, as an imperialist, he might have aimed to rewrite and, if necessary, to recreate the history of the Uprising for the American imagination according to his own viewpoint and interest, just like the American writer in *To the Coral Strand* who tells Colonel Savage, probably Rodney's grandson, that he would

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[11] The Battle of Plassey in 1757 consolidates EIC power in India. From that foothold the Company began to govern India rather than simply to trade there.

[12] Unleavened flat bread in India.

[13] According to the myth, a messenger appeared, gave the chapatti to the headman of a village, and requested him to dispatch it onward to the next. The chapattis convey the date for the uprising: a chapatti is broken into five pieces, signifying the fifth month and another chapatti into 10 pieces, for the 10th day.

write about India and "[t]hen that will be the truth for everyone who reads it, which is going to be approximately fifty million people in the United States alone" (100).

It is hardly surprising that Masters as a retired officer from the British Army in India also chose a soldier for his main hero, who at times serves as his mouthpiece. However, the choice of a typical British officer of the nineteenth century colonial India as a central character also coincides with the romance characters in general, who in their "psychology and destiny, always represent social trends and historical forces" (Lukacs 33). Such characters provide their authors with a "perfect instrument of presenting the totality of certain transitional stages of history" (35). Nevertheless, in order to establish narrative plausibility and attain historical depth for their texts, especially historical romance writers also use historical personalities. However, such historical figures most commonly appear in the periphery rather than the centre of the action (Hughes 8-9), because they are too eminent to be altered and used as central characters in narratives that aim at historical verisimilitude. Therefore, it can be argued that fictions with central historical personalities almost always serve an ideological purpose. This purpose may aim at reshaping the historical figure in order to appeal to ideological sensibilities or eventually at obscuring facts about them. As Frye maintains,

> [t]he characterization of romance follows its general dialectic structure, which means that subtlety and complexity are not much favoured. Characters tend to be either for or against the quest. If they assist it they are idealized as simply gallant or pure; if they obstruct it they are idealized as simply villainous or cowardly. Hence every typical character in romance tends to have his moral opposite confronting him, like black and white pieces in a chess game. (Frye 195)

The Rani of Jhansi is an important historical figure during the Uprising and appears as the Rani of Kishanpur as a central character in *Nightrunners*. The Rani, also called Lakshmi Bai in Indian accounts, was the queen of Gwalior and through marriage she became the Rani of Jhansi. On the death of her husband, the EIC annexed this principality in 1854 on the argument that the Raja had not left an official male heir. Her fight against such injustices and the rule of the EIC in general made her a national heroine for the Indians but an enemy for the English. As a result, she became a subject to orientalist stereotyping in many imperial romances, which were responsible for the acquisition of a dubious recognition of her (Paxton 161).These fictions all again portray her as a cruel person who is involved in conspiracies against the English, and therefore, responsible for all the bloodshed that took place. *Nightrunners* also reveals Masters' endeavour to tarnish her reputation as a national heroine. From the following lines disclose that he even does not hesitate to relegate her to a kind of harlot:

> She lay on the cushions and smelled of musk; she crouched in a darkened temple room, the revellers came, slipped money to the priests, and went into the room; they fumbled at the femaleness of her. Twenty times between now and dawn–the hands, the seeking, the sweaty struggle; peasants hog-drunk and acrid from the plough, syphilitic officers of her army, strong coolies, fat merchants, sepoys. She lay there in the dark and wriggled. (150)

Romance in its initial form represents the ideals of patriarchal society, and particularly the imperial romance reinforces the view of the empire as a masculine enterprise, a world, as projected by imperialism, where gender roles were clearly defined.

In these romances, the romance heroine can only do secondary work like housekeeping or nursing (Hughes 14-5) and has to stay away from any contact with the Indian male. For example, when one of Masters' heroines, Caroline Langford, is among a crowd of Indians and watches a "holy man", the narrator immediately makes it public that "[a]n English girl had no business to involve herself with gurus and fakirs and the edges of magic" (14).

The imperial romance hero, on the contrary, appears in the centre of public activity and occasionally is even allowed to still his sexual drives. Imperial romances, of course, depict interracial sexual adventures as between the English male and the Indian female because the reverse was "unthinkable" and the few exceptions were commonly fictionalized according to the sexual violence of rape (Sharpe 155). Yet, even the sexual relation of the hero is formulated according to the codes of both romance and imperial discourse, which through their interplay try to preserve hierarchical structures. Consequently, the Indian female even in a sexual relationship is chosen from a high caste (Paxton 132), a Rani in Masters' work.

It should be noted that even occasional affairs were doomed in the empire because any relation with the Indian female was regarded as a threat of "going native". As a result, in these fictions the Indian lover has to be eliminated, which is the reason for her suicide in *Nightrunners*. The death of the Indian lover is correlated with the formulaic romance plot that:

> […] test[s] the ability of an interracial relation (always between an English man and Indian woman) to withstand the antagonisms of war. The Indian woman typically betrays her beloved otherwise if too good the novelist is forced to kill her so that the hero can be free to marry a true English woman. (Sharpe 99)

In view of the fact that in the imperial romance the male hero sets the tone of the book (Putney 100), it is hardly surprising that his love relations and therefore love itself becomes a constantly ab-used leitmotif whose allegorical implications often reveal the author's concealed attitude towards the subjects of the empire. Rodney has three relations with women – with his wife, Joanna, Sumitra the Rani, and Caroline.

Joanna represents those English who saw India only as a place that provided them with a certain status quo. According to *Nightrunners,* such people had transformed India into a palace in which they lived shut up with themselves (25). This seclusion is even felt more specifically when the narrator informs the reader that Joanna lived six years in India but only knew 20 Indian words and these only in the imperative mood (12). Additionally, expressions like "naked masses", "charlatans", "murderous little brutes", "masters of treachery", "ugly, black bastards" and "always lying superstitious Indians" used by such English characters throughout the work reveal the racial arrogance evident in the empire. Like the many other romances in which the hero has earlier committed his life's error by falling in love and marrying the wrong woman (Paxton 7), Rodney is not happy in his marriage and only seems to endure because of his infant son. Joanna is an egocentric and indifferent person and her love towards her husband is also questionable. She, despite Rodney's doubts, encourages him to accept Sumitra's offer to command her army, though she senses her affection towards him (95). Joanna is killed by the sepoys during the Uprising and, interestingly, all the other people she represents, that is to say, all those that appear indifferent towards India and the Indians are not allowed to survive in *Nightrunners*, either.

Rodney's second relationship is with Sumitra, who in order to make him command her army, seduces him (84). The narrator in long paragraphs tells about her seductiveness and portrays her as a kind of Lilith using the power of her femaleness. Such a depiction explains and somewhat excuses Rodney's following seduction. Indeed, Captain Savage cannot resist any longer and, literally, rapes Sumitra:

> She writhed in silence to break free, but he held her. With a desperate effort she jerked back an inch and tried to speak. Her breath heaved out in short gasps, and her eyes shone hugely luminous and black. Before she could say a word he slammed her back into his arms, closed her mouth with his tongue, and fought her to the cushions. (84)

Immediately after the sexual intercourse, the narrator interrupts the text and announces that Rodney had only felt sexual desire but not love for her (85), and in the following pages it is added that Rodney was haunted by a sense of guilt. Taking into consideration that on the allegorical level the Rani represents India and Rodney England then this affair can be interpreted as a literary revelation of Masters' uneasy conscience about the English presence in India. The Rani herself claims that she hates and loves Rodney (323), but there are things more important than love for her. She is a woman who does anything to achieve her aims, which can also be deduced from her self-portrayal while quarrelling with Caroline, her rival for the love of Rodney:

> Sumitra leaned back and smiled crookedly. 'I see. Something has made our little white miss a woman. You would kill for him now, and like it? Poor little thing. You have not the courage to fight for what you want. I have. I killed my husband for India; I pretended to be a whore for India, I lied, for India. I am an Indian first and woman afterwards. Poor little thing, just discovering you are a woman first-and nothing else. (229)

Crises–individual, cultural or social–are treated and solved on a psychological level in romances and find expression in the hero's quest for identity, which can only be solved by attaining personal fulfilment. Rodney feels himself alienated from Joanna and the Rani, their love and the allegorical worlds they represent, and thus, he has to regulate his relations in order to attain balance between his life and (L)love(s), which in turn will enable his emplacement into individual and social life. In this sense, *Nightrunners*, as typical of romances, also bears certain features of the Bildungsroman, in which there is the progress of the individual toward self-understanding. If the quest is the very element that gives the literary form to romance and if a happy ending is a "has to be" in this form (Beer 20) because it indicates that the contrasting elements in the romance are fused and reconciled (Barlowe and Krentz 20), then the quest's solution becomes inevitable. Out of such a narrative logic, Joanna and Sumitra have to die so as to make the union of Rodney and Caroline possible. Rodney suffers from a mental collapse when Joanna is killed by the sepoys whom he trusted so much. Because of the temporary insane hatred he feels towards all Indians, he becomes a psychopath who is motivated even to kill innocent Indians. Hence, only with the love of Caroline he will be able to recover his true identity, reflecting the ideology of romance that love is capable of solving all problems (Dixon 3).

As a typical feature of the romance, Caroline and Rodney at first dislike each other, but during the Uprising they escape together from the "conspirators" and come closer. The injured hero and the caring female is a strikingly frequent motif in the romance (Hughes 15) and Caroline serves as a kind of carer for him and his son. This narrative depiction supports

the ideology of patriarchal and imperial society because its overall effect reinforces "a view of society as centred around a particular image of the family, a society made safe by the government of its natural leaders" (Hughes 15).

Considering that the "romance is the only genre that by definition centres on feelings and relationships" (Putney 100), it is hardly surprising that "love", as mentioned before, is relevant to all imperial relationships throughout Master's work. Rodney, typical of the sacrificial romance hero, regards the imperial relationship as a kind of love in which the English "give all they have" to the Indians and "don't keep accounts" (*Nightrunners* 26). The Indians, on the other hand, are depicted as yearning for English rule.

> It is like this, sahib. Here we do not care who rules us as long as he rules well. [...] We would like best to be left in peace, but that is not possible, because the world is full of tigers and we are poor starving goats. Someone must protect us and give us peace.' The twins snorted in unison at the bannia's description of himself as a starving goat. The talkative one continued in his vile accent. 'Someone's got to do it, and we pray it'll be the English. (250-51)

When in addition to these over-romanticized requests the narrator in *Nightrunners* interferes and makes it public that without the presence of an Englishman nothing could be done (63), English rule is transformed into a moral obligation that echoes Kipling's view of imperialism as the "white man's burden".

However, in India and in the other colonies there was a strict race and class distinction and the colonizers had built up their own world and avoided any meaningful contact in terms of private relation with the ruled. It has to be noted that Masters' protagonists appear to be free of racial prejudice but not of racial pride; however, they are aware of the existence of such prejudice in their community. Thus again, in order to achieve a historical verisimilitude, some of Masters' minor characters reveal the racial arrogance that was dominantly felt in the nineteenth century British India. Captain Savage offers the objectification of Masters' ideal British officer, and as such, he is against both; a too distant as well as too intimate relation with the Indians. According to him, the English should keep a distance appropriate to a ruler or in his words; they should act "within the agreed, unspoken limits" (*Nightrunners* 62). Captain Savage's emphasis on a more professional bond between the English and the Indians emphasizes the importance of interracial understanding or to be more precise the importance of knowledge about the "other" in colonial relations, which he thinks the EIC had ignored. Therefore, he draws attention to the presence of double standard practices in the EIC's administration as follows:

> There are not two standards, for us, for the English – only one. We must keep our standard, or go home. We must not, as we do now, permit untouchability and forbid suttee, abolish tyranny in one state and leave it in another, have our right hand Eastern and our left hand Western. It is not that India is wicked; she has her own ways. If we rule we must rule as Indians – or we must make the Indians English. (*Nightrunners* 161)

This approach seems to be a remorseful criticism of English rule in India. Nevertheless, in fact, it appears to be a strategy of Masters–and also of many other imperial romance writers–to seize on the company as a scapegoat. From the narrative, it is implied that the company's misguided representatives were only merchants and this assertion in a way excuses their malpractice in ruling to be the result of lack in experience and thus

transforms the EIC into a scapegoat on which the guilt of English misrule can be imputed. On the other hand, Rodney's suggestion to rule the Indians as Indians also becomes extremely ironic when considering that his ideal officer's name is "Savage".

Savagery and brutality were important keywords in the fictions that appeared immediately after the Uprising. These works "were virtually unanimous in their expressions of moral outrage against Indian violence" (Booker 112). Masters' post-imperial work also deals with the sensational representation of physical punishment which makes it "a continuation of the 19th century tradition of imperial romance" (108). *Nightrunners,* by articulating the Indians' predilection for cruelty and the atrocities committed by them during the Uprising, aims at achieving a legal explanation for the spectacular physical punishments exercised by the English in response to the events. Accordingly, the narrator tells in detail that during the revolt the sepoys raped women, killed little children by dashing them against walls or trees, and bayoneted or burnt everyone they came across (*Nightrunners* 202-3); on the contrary, the English response to this brutality in the aftermath is implied to be a necessary force, which had been exercised on the criminals and never on civilians. The English response is transformed into a basic right of human beings: a struggle for survival and existence. Brantlinger considers such depictions as a moral allegory, so according to him:

> [s]uch an allegorization had the double advantage of transferring guilt for violence and rapacity from the home government or the British people as a whole to aggressive individuals acting at the periphery, and then from these individuals to the peoples they conquered. Of course it also turned violence and rapacity into virtues, treating acts of aggression as acts of necessity and self-defence. (81)

Nightrunners intensely reflects its author's first-hand military experience, especially in that it questions relationships in terms of honour and loyalty. Captain Savage is depicted as an officer who trusts and shows respect and affection for his Indian soldiers. Consequently, he refuses the possibility that the sepoys could rise against English authority because, according to Rodney, a soldier's word is his honour:

> He was not asking them to be loyal to the British, or to the enemies of the British, but to hold faith with themselves who were simple men and had sworn an oath and under it had taken the Company's arms. This was not the General's Almighty, nor the shade of Napoleon, but love which spoke. (*Nightrunners* 303)

Masters dedicated *Nightrunners* to the "Sepoy of India", who ironically had a crucial role in the outbreak of the Uprising as well as in its suppression. Immediately, with such proclamations, an image of treachery is forced into the reader's mind that is even more intensified when villagers claim that they had heard that "the Sepoy betrayed their salt and murdered many English everywhere, shamefully killing women and children" (*Nightrunners* 250). In addition, when two Indian soldiers tell Rodney that the Uprising was"madness" and the rebels "mad dogs" (203), it is clear that we are confronted with the literary phenomenon that Astrid Erll regards as the literary strategy to "hegemonise" the British approach to the Uprising by creating a "counter-memory" (170). Accordingly, such approaches enabled the writer to represent the Uprising as only a mutiny that did not find support from both the right-minded sepoys and the civilians; it implied that the Indian rebels had neither a logical strategy nor a reasonable cause to revolt; and further, it provided the legitimacy of violence in the British response in the aftermath (Erll 170).

Any distinction between friend and enemy is blurred when in addition to the sepoy, a "holy" man named the Silver Guru among the conspirators, appears to be Rodney's own countryman. Loyalty and treachery become more indistinguishable and it is implied that no one should be trusted in imperial affairs. However, magically, the guru turns out to be of Irish origin. This device of disguise is conventional of the romance and it is intended for narrative suspense. Furthermore, by invoking one of the oldest enemies of British imperialism, Masters raises and much more intensifies the constantly asked question of the protagonist of imperial fiction: "Who is my enemy?" (Paxton 146). The answer is provided by the stereotypical character classification of the romance as "good" or "evil", which is determined according to the figure's stance to the quest (Frye 195). In the case of *Nightrunners,* it is intensified by imperialism's projection that the good were those who favoured the British rule and the evil ones were those who were against it.

To sum up, romance and particularly the imperial romance provides a generic link between politics and fiction which is the reason for its popularity in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, a period of ideological conflicts. The romance voices ideologies, but it also serves to express individual needs of its writer. As a result, many imperial romances display their writers' own truth and often function as literary expressions of their dissatisfaction and hopes about their own time, which vindicates Hughes claim that the romance "does address particular issues relevant to the period in which it is written" (144).

Nightrunners as a much later example of imperial romance is a composite of many romance types and other genres. Masters deliberately uses all the properties of these literatures so as to project his political view and, at the same time, to arrive at a personal psychological resolution. Considering that the autobiographical protagonist's obsessive quest for identity triggered by a sense of loss and need for emplacement was also experienced by Masters in India after the Independence. Moreover, considering that the work reveals clear signs of the writer's frustration with the handing over of India, one can assert that the psychological resolution seemingly provided to the writer by *Nightrunners* is a reacquisition of India and the empire through literature. There is always a psychological level in the romance in that it does not construe but only mirror the nature of the writer's psyche. *Nightrunners* was published in 1951, meaning that it began to be written right after the Independence. Masters intentionally (ab)uses the chaotic nature of revolt to describe an unordered space which he then associates with the Indian attempt to rule themselves. All this can be regarded as Masters' romantic endeavour or in the words of Narayanan, a "neo-imperialistic fantasy" which aims at exploring the possibilities of an Indian recall of their former English rulers (28). At the same time, this also reflects the well-used feature of the romance by Masters –an element of prophecy that "remakes the world in the image of desire" (Beer 79). In other words, Masters out of his imperialist pride cannot face the naked reality of Independence and thus he sardonically tries to impose his personal opinion on his readers: what India should expect from an ambiguous future without English rule is only *chaos*.

Published on the eve of the Cold War era, *Nightrunners* due to its theme of adventure, suspense and espionage was enthusiastically received by the American readers. The time of publication also suggests a time when decolonization was of vital global significance and for that reason Masters employs the romance to "exonerate" British imperialism or, at least, to skive its rough image. Masters states in his autobiographical work *Pilgrim Son: A Personal Odyssey* that his intention in writing *Nightrunners* was not to write about "the evils of colonialism" but "the inherent melancholy of power" (181). Then,

written from a post-colonial perspective and imbued with autobiographic features, *Nightrunners* should be seen as the author's attempt to seek reconciliation with his past and also as an apologia for "unpleasant" governance, rather than a condemnation of the British imperialist enterprise itself.

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Özet

John Masters'ın *Nightrunners of Bengal* Adlı Eserinde İmparatorluk ve Romans

Bu makale 1857 Hindistan Ayaklanması ve genel olarak Raj dönemi edebi yansımalarında romansın önemini tartışır. Bu ayaklanma hem İngiliz hem de Hint yazarları derinden etkilemiş olsa da Raj döneminin bitimine kadar olaylar (resmi) edebiyata yalnızca İngiliz ve Anglo-Hint romanslarıyla yansıtılmıştır. Bütün bu bilgiler ışığında, bu makale, romansın düş-gerçekleştirme olanağı tanıyan edebi ve ideolojik yapısından kaynaklı yaygın emperyalist kullanımını ve bu romansların daha sonra oldukça etkili tarihi belgelere dönüştüğünü göz önünde tutarak romansın İngiliz emperyalist söyleminin resmi anlatı biçimlerinden biri olduğunu ileri sürer. Romansın önemini ve emperyalizmle olan ilişkisini John Masters'ın post-emperyalist bir romansı olan *Nightrunners of Bengal*'ı inceleyerek göstermeye çalışan makalede yazarın 1857 Ayaklanmasına duyduğu post-emperyalist ilginin de yorumlanması amaçlanır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: John Masters, *Nightrunners of Bengal*, romans, emperyal(ist) romans

Occidental Time, Oriental Space:
Daniel Defoe's *Continuation of Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*

Gönül Bakay

Abstract: *Letters writ by a Turkish Spy* was an eight volume collection of articles presumably written by a Turkish spy named Mahmut. The first volume was written by Giovanni Marana, the rest by prominent English authors. In 1718, Defoe wrote *The Continuation of Letters writ by a Turkish Spy*, putting himself in the place of a Muslim spy who assumed the identity of a Christian monk. This multidimensional identity of Mahmut allows Defoe to criticize the various social, political and religious issues he observed in the West, especially in England and France, freely. The narrow mindedness of the Westerners who criticized everyone and everything unlike themselves is one of the main issues Defoe criticizes. He also calls into question the behaviour of the kings such as the French king who had more confidence in the priest than the sword.

Keywords: Orient, Occident, identity, space, politics, religion

> Traditional historiography assumes that thought can perform cross-sections upon time, arresting its flow without too much difficulty, its analysis thus tend to fragment and segment temporality. In the history of space as such, on the other hand, the historical and diachronic realms and the generative past are forever leaving their inscriptions upon the writing table, so to speak, of space. (Lefebre 110)

> To write is to enter into the affirmation of the solitude in which fascination threatens. It is to pass from the first to the third person, so that what happens to me, happens to no one, is anonymous, in so far it concerns me, repeats itself in an infinite dispersal. (Blanchot 33)

Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy is an eight-volume collection of articles presumably written by an Ottoman spy named Mahmut. The first volume of this work, published in Italian in Paris in 1684, was written by a Genoese political refugee, Giovanni Paolo Marana (1642-1693). The rest of the volumes have been attributed to several English authors, among which Dr. Robert Midgley and William Bradshaw can be named. The famous English novelist Daniel Defoe wrote *A Continuation of the Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* in 1718. In this book, Defoe puts himself in the place of a Muslim spy who assumes the identity of a Christian monk. Mahmut's multidimensional identity enables Defoe to make critical comments about the various social, political, religious issues in France and England. Challenging mainstream Orientalist attitudes towards the East, Defoe criticizes the political and religious attitudes of Christians using the perspective of the Turkish spy. Hence, Defoe crosses from the Occidental to an Oriental space to criticize the Europeans. Reading the book, one even comes to feel that "Defoe almost single handedly defies all the stereotypes about the Orient by focusing on a nearly utopic example of the Ottomans to such an extent that the Turkish Empire seems to be the model for the Enlightenment not only for Britain, but also for the rest of Europe" (Akman 3). Hence, Defoe's artistic manipulations of space and identity enable him to introduce significant shifts in paradigm and to broaden his

readers' horizons. Reversal of the gaze entails a subversion of deep-rooted mental frameworks that had hitherto governed mainstream perceptions. As a result, the interpretive agency of the first-person narrator blurs the line between "us" and "them", making it possible for the readers to have a more balanced and nuanced perspective on themselves as well as others.

In his construction of Mahmut's character, Defoe makes extensive use of his journalism that endowed him with extensive knowledge about current events. On the other hand, it is also possible to observe in the book, traces of Defoe's own experiences as a spy. Robert Harley, the head of the Tory party, who headed Queen Anne's government made Defoe a spy and forced him to gather information on his political opponents. Defoe, a Tory spy, was a Whig at heart. After Queen Anne's death, the Tory party's fortunes declined. This put Defoe in a difficult position. Lord Chief Parker released Defoe from imprisonment and made him a spy for George I. Hence, Defoe became a saboteur of anti government Tory paper, a weekly journal. In 1716 he started publishing his monthly journal *Mecurius Politicus*.

Defoe was writing this book at a time when England as well as the rest of Europe was undergoing a scientific and philosophical upheaval which produced new concepts with regard to time and place. Lock, Leibnitz, Kant and Newton's groundbreaking ideas and theories influenced the age. Locke, for instance, argued that "in the absence of certainty, probable knowledge is adequate to our needs in this life" (in Backscheider 16). Newton, on the other hand, believed in absolute motions and claimed that positions in absolute time and space could be discovered. He was more explicit about absolute space than about absolute time. Criticizing Newton, Leibnitz claimed that there is no time and space as ontological primitives; even relative time and space are not metaphysical realities; "[s]pace and time do not depend upon the actuality of things but only upon their possibility; and without an actual world, space and time would be only ideas in God's mind" (Blanchot 122-23).

In England, the eighteenth century was a period of civil calm, economic well-being and political stability. The prevailing spirit of optimism was enhanced by increasing faith in the rational capacities of men in keeping with the general intellectual climate of the Enlightenment. As the world's most powerful colonial and trading nation, England underwent important changes in the social structure of society. As a result of the movement from the countryside to the cities, England became more industrialized. Rise of the middle classes brought about new elements of commercial and business organization. Influenced by such profound changes in social structure, eighteenth century novel dealt imaginatively with a world of actual human experience and took individual experience as its most important concern. Rising middle classes were deeply interested in new knowledge and literary representations of a changing social reality. Therefore, concern with poise, balance, clarity and coherence due in part to the rationalist tendencies of the age on the part of the new reading public, led to the popularity of the kind of prose that was urban and speech-based.

Daniel Defoe's writing resonated with the spirit of the times and appealed to a widening reading audience whose main attribute was a burning desire to obtain more knowledge about the world and the people that lived in it. Such strong enthusiasm for diverse kinds of knowledge also led to the emergence of new genres as well as more experimental undertakings within the existing generic conventions. Shifting paradigms inevitably paved the way for alternative depictions of foreign cultures that called into question strongly held beliefs; for instance, "in the eighteenth century there developed an alternative view of the Orient which emerged alongside the dominant one […] Montagu

innovated a paradigm of similarity in difference" (Melman 79). In keeping with this idea, Defoe believed that dismissing the Orient as "the other" was wrong. In fact, in his view, similarities could be observed between the countries, even civilizations, that were traditionally held to be so different. He was subsequently critical of parochial-mindedness that hindered inter-civilizational exchanges and impeded progress.

In *A Continuation of the Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, Defoe uses one of the most familiar Oriental voices in the eighteenth century prose; "that of the male reverse or pseudo-traveler, a fictional traveler who travels from east to west and writes of his experiences" (Ballester 145). This is a strategic maneuver that enables the writer to comment liberally on the deficiencies of the west using an outsider's agency. Yet, the book does not simply comprise observations about Europe since the Turkish spy reveals all kinds of information about his home culture in addition to several comparative comments turning the book into a cross-cultural space. Ultimately, the use of a fictional traveler from the Orient manifests the writer's desire to rise above the limitations of his particular situatedness and step into someone else's shoes:

> The Oriental gesture of the observer and the desire to alienate oneself from one's own community, to imagine Europe and European community through an Oriental point of view became an illuminating gesture which decentered the dominant concept. This gesture took one's national identity as something detachable; as something one can step out of and view with foreign eyes. Such a transformation communicated a desire to negotiate with and acknowledge the usefulness of oriental perspective and culture. (Baktır 200)

By enacting a cross-cultural encounter within the scope of the book, then, Defoe invites his readers to open their minds and see the world from an alternative perspective. One could perhaps argue that Defoe perceives this movement as a potentially liberating as well as an enriching one.

Written against this background of rapid change in the intellectual and social realm, Defoe's work is an example of crossing boundaries of time and space. As Backscheider observes, "[w]hat better model could be provided of the multi-directional passage of fiction – whether novel or romance, satire or epistle across the continent and through mechanism of transmission that involved exchanges between an observer who had experienced Ottoman cosmopolitanism and also French and implicitly English provincialism" (59). The Turkish spy that Defoe writes about is Mahmut and the book contains letters that he wrote from Paris to Istanbul (1637-1682). In order to move around easily, he assumes the identity of Titus, the Moldavian. Mahmut is in love with Daria, a Greek matron, who is married to someone else. There is the possibility that in the tale, under the disguise of love and domestic news, the letters might contain important political news. As Mahmut observes: "a letter of an ordinary style, of domestic affairs, of love and compliments, may contain secrets of the greatest importance" (80-1). Apart from conveying important information, the letter sequences in the book deliver important insights into the dynamics of the gaze as much as the objects described.

As Backsheider observes, "[t]he chronotope of the spy carries over as the appropriate organizing principle of a fiction of global relevance with various paratactical elements" (63). In a sense, Defoe crosses time and space to show the similarities between people belonging to different nations. At the same time, the creation of his spy character enables him to criticize the weaknesses of his own country and people. It is significant that Defoe's Mahmut is a far cry from typical Turkish characters that were in circulation at the

time Defoe was writing. Mahmut is a middle-aged gentleman of letters who is also a scholar of sciences. Moreover, he is knowledgeable in several branches of the humanities and is capable of making nuanced and accurate observations about the political, religious, cultural, and social circumstances of many European countries, particularly England and France. These are not the kinds of blanket statements one might expect to find in a text that reverses the Orientalist gaze by employing an oriental narrator; rather, Mahmut's intellectual approach, especially his Cartesian rationalism, is manifested in each and every detail he narrates. As a seemingly reliable observer who benefits from the vantage point of an outsider, Mahmut is able to point to several defects in the Western societies he travels to and imparts valuable advice. All in all, Mahmut is an Occidentalist who is actively engaged in the production of knowledge about the West using his travels in Europe also as an opportunity to re-evaluate his home culture.

To begin with, Mahmut is keenly aware of the rigid mental frameworks through which the Europeans assess and judge others. Mahmut's informed statements about this issue allows Defoe to draw attention to the narrow-mindedness of Europeans who are inclined to condemn people who have different outlooks compared to their own instead of trying to understand their point of view:

> The Nazarens (Christians, Europeans) are the most addicted to Fiction and Forgery of any people that I ever met with. It is a received custom among them, that whenever they have to do with any sector opinion of people, differing from their own, the first thing they do is to represent them, as monstrous and unnatural, either in Person or in Principle, or perhaps in both dressing them up in ridiculous shapes and imposing a thousand stories, about them, upon the credulity and the ignorance of the vulgar, that may entertain prejudices and […] against the persons and principles they profess. (9, 83)

These observations aptly convey the general tendency of Europeans to dismiss and demonize what they perceive to be different and alien to their convictions and practices. Rather than trying to understand "others" on their own terms, Europeans tend to demonize them by inventing fabulations that are more imaginary, and therefore of their own making, than real.

One of the major issues that Defoe tackles in his book is the Christian practices of religion. In an interesting reversal of roles, we have Defoe criticizing a number of Christian practices from an Orientalist perspective, rather than the considerably more common example of the Orientalist narrator dismissing Islam and Muslims. Rather than seeing Christianity as a monolithic entity, after the practice of Orientalists commenting on Islam, Mahmut draws attention to the differences among different denominations of Protestant Christianity such as Calvinists and Lutherans as well as to the clashes among these denominations and to the consequent bloodshed in Britain and the rest of Europe. Having done that, Mahmut goes on to suggest that peace, tolerance and understanding are essential if a harmonious consensus is to be reached for a better society. It is also significant that Mahmut does not simply depict these religious problems, but also addresses them with contrasting examples from his own land.

Mahmut's lengthy meditations on religious institutions bring to mind the importance of religious spaces and how state power influences the creation of these spaces. As Henri Lefebre observes,

> [t]he act of creation is in fact, a process. For it to occur, it is necessary (and this necessity is precisely what has to be explained), for the society's practical capabilities and sovereign powers to have at their disposal special places: religious and political sites. In the case of pre-capitalist societies, more readily comprehensible to anthropology, ethnology and sociology than to political economy, such sites are needed for symbolic sexual unions and murders as places where the principle of fertility may undergo renewal and where fathers, chiefs, kings, priests and sometimes gods may be put to death. (34)

Mahmut is keenly aware of the contested status of these religious and political spaces that are shaped and reshaped by people in power. In this sense, he draws attention to the abuse of power by the state and kings and discusses at some length how they use this power to turn spaces of peace to spaces of violence. Henri Lefebre maintains:

> For power has no code. State has control of all existing codes. It may on occasion invent new codes and impose them, but it is not itself bound by them, and can shift from one to another at will. The state manipulates codes. Power never allows itself to be confined within a single logic. Power has only strategies–and their complexity is in proportion to power's resources. (162)

Mahmut also criticizes the hypocrisy and cruelty he witnesses in some Christian practices. The French king is his main target here. Mahmut questions his cruelty and asks how a king who appears to be such a devout person can also perform such merciless actions. How could he allow Christians to destroy holy places, mosques and the castle of Heidelberg? The King of France was at war with the king of another Christian country for two years and with his orders, the soldiers set fire to five places on the border and one in the center, hence everything connects (29). After ordering many crimes to be committed, the king of France sets a day aside for thanksgiving to celebrate the ravishing of women, the mothers of men and burning places (29). Mahmut quotes a poem supposedly composed by those that suffered:

> Hypocrites, leave off your pranks,
> To murder men and give God thanks:
> Forbear, for shame proceed no further
> For God accepts no Thanks for murther. (29)

Another thing Mahmut criticizes is the worship of false relics. He comments that Christians everywhere worship relics in the churches, "they are the bones of a Saint, whereas most probably they are the bones of a dog or the bones of an infamous creature broken on the Wheel" (3). He states that many infamous deeds are performed under the name of religion. The tale of a merchant going bankrupt is a good example. He circulates the rumor in town that his brother living in Goa has sent him a letter stating that the most precious relics of St. Thomas were found in the convent of friars called the Jacobins (34). Finding the friars of the town eager to purchase this relic and ready to pay six thousand crowns for it, he goes this time to Marseilles where the Bishop of the place is ready to offer him twenty thousand crowns for the relic. Then he prepares a relic himself, for a very small amount of money making sure that it looks as if it dates from 230 A.D. Mahmut adds: "although the real relics of Christ is known to be at St. Sophia it seems people claim that the relics are everywhere" (37). He even mentions that the king of France wears these relics

around his neck all the time while "venerable Murat […] need[s] no relics around [his] neck, when people come to pilgrimage from all over the earth" (37). He observes, "[w]e the true believers, Musulmans, believe that their whole system of this part of the doctrine of Nazarens is a delusion, and a mere invention of their dervishes" (38). In a letter written to Reis Efendi, the secretary of state, he continues his comments about the Christians and points out, "[s]uch is the falsehood that reigns among these pretenders to uprightness that they report everything their own way and just as they would have it be" (92).

In contrast with conservative Orientalists who view the East as backward and inferior to the West with regard to achievements in arts, culture and science, Defoe draws attention to the positive and superior characteristics of the East using the agency of Mahmut who dwells at some length on the progressive research of the Orientals, in the field of science, astronomy and the arts. In his words,

> In study they outdid Nature, they reached into her very bowels and disclosed her most concealed parts, they mastered all kinds of Astronomical, Mathematical, Anatomical and Astrological knowledge […]. From them the World of knowledge, all liberal arts, all studies of science began with them; they were the men who gave names to the stars, discovered the motions of the heavenly bodies and which is yet a more sublime study, found out the influences of the planetary and how the heavenly bodies govern this Globe, and reign in all the particular classes of vegetative, sensitive and rational life. (127-28)

Mahmut's words serve as a necessary corrective to the negative, and often hostile, ideas about the Orient that had been circulating in Europe for centuries. Shaped by fear as much as prejudice and ignorance, such negative perceptions were informed by an image of the Orient as a realm of darkness where ignorant savages lived and fought without making any contributions in the fields of science, arts or the humanities. Dismissed in such derogatory terms, the Orientals were perceived as frozen in time and space and only good at activities that entail bloodshed.

The Turkish spy also stresses the excellent military values of the Oriental countries. Giving examples from the Arabian countries, he states,

> [a]s the wars of the Arabians are a story filled with infinite variety and that Nation had been for many ages the bereft, the most aspiring to, and best fitted for glorious action, of any people in the world: the Arts and sciences, and all sorts of learning flourished in the Arabian kingdoms, even before the rest of the world had either learned the methods of instruction or had any sense of the blessing of it. (127)

In addition to their apparent military zeal and heroism, the Orientals "are the people for the generous principles, the fortitude and the gallantry of true heroes fit to undertake things more than humans, and yet capable of everything they undertook" (127).

Mahmut's balanced rather than partisan attitude towards Christian and Moslem countries alike leads one to consider him a reliable narrator whose observations have credulity and verisimilitude. He points out that "the king of France is devoured in imagination; but he always extricates himself by the admirable Vivacity of his councils" (189). He mocks the French King saying he has "more confidence in the priest than the sword" (96). Although the spy criticizes the French in many respects, his open admiration for their various characteristics makes his criticism more solid and believable;

> But to give them their due, The French, when any prisoners of quality fall into their hands, they know how to treat him. When the prince of Withenberg was taken prisoner by a leutenant of horse, they did not use any violance on him. They returned him his sword and pistols. They held the point of the Sword and the muzzles of the pistols towards himself, which was the custom in the field. (215)

When the Prince was in Strasbourg for some time, the king sent him an invitation to come to Paris, ordered all the governors of town to receive him as a prince; to show him all the military honour and let him visit the fortifications and beat the drums as he passed. Moreover, "[t]he king presented him with his Picture set with diamonds with a very fine Jewel, told him he was sorry for his ransom" (261).

On the other hand, Mahmut compliments the Agha of the janissaries, saying that "cruelty is not in thy nature, happy will be those who falling to your generous hands who knowest as well how to be merciful to the miserable as terrible to the desperate" (217). As this was completely in contrast to the accepted characteristics of the Janisseries as cruel, bloodthirsty and without mercy, these words can be accepted as a careful, and tactful criticism directed at the Agha of the Janissaries without offence. He adds "I must confess this courtious usage of prisoners is a generous practice and very consistent with the fiercist and most vigorous methods of making war. It always "has this effect to the advantage of those that practice it to advantage. That is a debt which some time or other comes to be paid to advantage" (217).

Mahmut announces that something that had never happened in the land of the Musulmans took place in England, "[t]here has been a conspiracy to assasinate the new king of England. I say amongst the Musulmans no such ting is heard of. It is below the dignity of Man as Man to kill by treason, nor can the religious principles of those who believe the rewards of Paradise or the torment of the Fire permit them to think of such practices" (227). It is scarce to be thought of without horror and execration that men should stoop to murder the man they cannot conquer. Whenever there is a fight "it is always attempted honorably, by war and the aim of battle; as open enemies ought to deal with one another, leaving the sword to decide, and God to direct as best pleases him" (228). He draws attention to the fact that these people call themselves worthy Christians and the King of France the most Christian king and yet they are not afraid of blackening their name with such behavior. He adds that what need do we have for wars if Kings can justify themselves to kill one another by murder and assassination? He observes: "it is enough to revenge the injuries done by the hands of villains and assassins and we may leave the kings of the earth to kill one another without engaging armies of innocent people in the quarrel" (230).

As I have suggested earlier, the spy not only criticizes the French in his letter to the chief Engineer Ali Baba, but also praises the excellent soldiership of the French and some admirable qualities of the French king. He asserts that the king takes very good care of the lands he conquers, restoring the destroyed places better than ever. He says the French king has Money and spends it wisely, making the towns he has conquered stronger than before. He finds the Ottoman Empire deficient in such practice. However, he continues his praise of the Ottoman emperor saying that it must be due to the negligence of the Viziers, not due to any negligence on the part of the Emperor, "[p]lease take this hint from me, for I am only anxious for the glory of our invincible Lord Ahmet, Emperor of the world" (235). He adds, "Why is not Belgrade which is new fallen into the hands of thy lord, why I say is not made the most invincible place on earth? Had the French King possessed this land, he would long ago have brought the Sauve to have entirely surrounded the town" (236).

The spy continues his praise of the French King saying that he never leaves ports of importance unattended. Whenever he conquers a port, he always fortifies it against foreign invasions. He adds that Ottoman Empire should not neglect to do likewise. If there is a lack here it must be due to the neglect of the viziers. He continues his praise of the French soldiers saying that when they attacked the town they could also arrive in town dry-footed. Ports of importance such as Nice, Villa France, were all attacked and conquered by the French. When an assault by the French is announced, "[i]n ten days after the first alarm, they found the Fench whose motions are swifter than any nation, were actually in the field with 60000 men" (240).

Besides many critical comments and observations, the book includes major events taking place at that time such as earthquakes. One earthquake took place in the town of Valtoline in the year 1660. Another terrible earthquake was felt in the city of Messina in Sicily. Except Messina, all Sicily was destroyed. Mahmut makes a point of letting his reader know that the wicked priests know how to use even the most catastrophic of events for their own benefit by circulating a story that Virgin Mary had appeared to a girl of nine years old and revealed to her that Messina is under her protection and will not be destroyed during the earthquake. It seems that after this event, they decked her image in the Churches with jewelry and flowers. Mahmut is very explicit about what he thinks about this matter saying "allow me to express my abhorrence of such execrable idolatry" (265). He stresses that Mary is the mother of Christ but even the prophet did not endow her with supernatural qualities (265). He then begs Muhammed to fill all the Musulmans with just contempt for idolatry.

In a letter written to Mustafa Osman, a dervish of Adrionaple, Mahmut writes about the idolatry of the Nazarens, saying "the thing I am going to relate to you will challenge all the blindest age of paganism in the world. The Nazarens are the most superstitious nation in the world" (286). They hold a piece of sacred bread saying: "this piece of bread is turned by the crossings and mutterings of words which they use over into the substance the very, Bones, Blood and flesh of the son of Mary, who they worship and call their saviour" (286). When a man steals a golden vessel in which they keep the supposedly sacred relics, the town Gates are immediately closed, the man is caught and killed after much torture. In a letter to an Egyptian, Mahmut brings up the same subject and tells him that although he has been dealing with sorcery and magic arts for thirty years, he would not have heard something like this. As another example of false belief, sorcery magic, he tells the story of a man who claims he has a miraculous Rod in his hand with which he can detect the fraud, lying and evil in the world.

Taken as a whole, Mahmut's observations about Christian practices reinforce the idea that Christianity has been corrupted and the true message of Jesus has been lost, so much so that "their religion is one of the greatest pieces of confusion and Buffoonery on Earth" (289). It is possible to suggest that Mahmut's opinions on this matter strongly echo those of Defoe who had many misgivings about the ways in which Christianity was widely practiced. Also important, in this regard, is the fact that Mahmut is careful to present Islam as a continuation of the Biblical tradition. He highlights that Muslims also believe in Jesus as a prophet and that Islam conceives of Jesus in relation to the Judeo-Christian culture. Thus, he openly challenges Orientalist narratives that depict Islam as a pagan religion, and Mohammad as the ultimate anti-Christ. Mahmut's references to Moses and his many letters to his Jewish friends in Constantinople also illustrate his tolerance of and respect for all these religions, which seems to be clearly missing in the hostile religious atmosphere of most of Europe in the period.

In conclusion, writing at a time when the whole concept of time and place were questioned, Defoe figuratively crosses the boundaries of time and space in order to create a work that allows him to simultaneously criticize the East and the West. In doing so, Defoe seems to be particularly well aware of Orientalist depictions of the East that he is consciously writing against. Casting aside essentialist conceptions of the East that underlie Orientalist mental frameworks, Defoe invents a narrative agency that comes across as a considerably more objective and disinterested observer. The spy Mahmut's journey becomes an opportunity for Defoe not only to realize the follies of his own society, but also to learn about certain aspects of Oriental identity. Disguised as a Turkish spy, masquerading as a Moldavian priest, Defoe takes a spatial trip that enables him to make satirical remarks about his own native land.

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Özet

Daniel Defoe'nun *Continuation of Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy* Adlı Eserinde Batılı Zaman ve Doğulu Mekan

Bir Türk Casusunun Yazdığı Mektuplar Mahmut isminde bir Türk casusunun yazdığı sanılan sekiz ciltlik makaleler koleksiyonudur. İlk cilt Giovanni Marana, diğer ciltler de başka önemli İngiliz yazarlar tarafından yazılmıştır. 1718 yılında Daniel Defoe *Bir Türk Casusunun Yazdığı Mektuplar'ın Devamı*'nı yazmıştır. Defoe, bu kitapta kendini bir keşişin kimliğine bürünen bir Türk casusunun yerine koymuştur. Mahmut'un çok yönlü kimliği Defoe'ya Batı'da, özellikle Fransa ve İngiltere'de gözlemlediği sosyal, siyasi ve dini meseleleri rahatça eleştirme fırsatı verir. Dargörüşlü batılıların kendilerine benzemeyen herkesi ve her şeyi eleştirmeleri Defoe'nun eleştirdiği en önemli noktalardan biridir. Defoe,

aynı zamanda, kılıçtan çok din adamına güvenen Fransız kralı gibi kralların davranışlarını da sorgular.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Doğu, Batı, kimlik, uzam, politika, din

D. H. Lawrence and Sicily

Carla Comellini

Abstract: D.H. Lawrence, who spent two years in Sicily, has always been fascinated by the island. The image of Sicily recurs in D.H. Lawrence's entire production, either directly cited or indirectly suggested. If images, such as the volcanoes, the mythical Sicilian monsters, "Scylla and Charybdis", and the references to the Myth of Pluto and Persephone (which took place in Enna as told in his poem "Purple Anemones") evoke Sicily elusively, the island is also described in the richness of its nature, with figs, grapes, pomegranates, peaches, almond trees, purple anemones, hibiscus and salvia flourishing everywhere. Sicily represents also the interaction between humanity and nature, that feeling of wonder and mystery inborn in primitive people and, consequently, in their religions and rituals, as D.H. Lawrence masterly recreates in the poem "Bare Almond-Trees", written in Sicily. In "Peace", another poem written in Taormina, he uses the eruptive lava of Etna as an expression of change and transformation, thereby elusively suggesting the process of self-renewal leading to fulfilment. In the poem, he brilliantly compares the constant, although long, transformation of everything in life, with the image of lava whose meaning is reinforced and multiplied by a subtle comparison with a snake, one of the best emblems of transformation. Moreover, his novella *Sun* deals with the flourishing Mediterranean landscape of Sicily, with Etna in the distance, and the memory of the Sicules, the archaic inhabitants of the island; it alludes to the healing properties of the area, as well. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that D.H. Lawrence translated into English several works by the Sicilian Giovanni Verga: from *Mastro Don Gesualdo* (1923) to *Cavalleria Rusticana and Other Stories* (1928).

Keywords: myth, poetry, prose, Sicily, landscape, twentieth century

D. H. Lawrence has always been fascinated by Italy and, in particular, by Sicily; and his visits, concerning different Italian places in three different periods,[1] involve also his desire of penetrating into Italy, as he says in *Sea and Sardinia*, his travel book dealing with Sicily and Sardinia:

[1] His first visit in the north of Italy (1912-1914) is reported in *Twilight in Italy* (1916); the second one (1919-1922) in Sicily (in Fontana Vecchia, near Taormina with visits to Messina, Syracuse, Catania and Palermo) and with a tour of Sardinia described in *Sea and Sardinia* (1921), is completed by his visits to Florence, Picinisco and Capri; the third one (1925-1929) is mostly in Florence with a tour to the Etruscan area (April 1927) which is depicted in *Etruscan Places,* published posthumously in 1932. Although these works can be defined as Italian travel books because of the descriptions of the landscape, the environment, the food, the Italian people and their artistic expressions, they are more than just travel books, or a series of essays both on his personal impact with Italy and on his process of self-discovery: they express the interaction of D. H. Lawrence's sensibility with Italy, with the places and modes of life he encountered, and especially with Sicily, Sardinia and the ancient Etruscan civilization.

> Whenever one is in Italy, either one is conscious of the present, or of the Medieval influences, or of the far, mysterious gods of the early Mediterranean. Proserpine, or Pan, or even the strange "shrouded gods" of the Etruscans. (123)

Thus, Lawrence declares in *Sea and Sardinia*: "[T]o go to Italy and to penetrate into Italy [was] like a most fascinating act of self-discovery" and he felt "like a restored Osiris" (123).

Among the several places, which are transcribed not only in his travel books, but also in some of his narrative and poems, Sicily has an important role; first of all, because Lawrence lived in Sicily and precisely in Fontana Vecchia, a small village on the beaches, near Taormina, from November 1919 to February 1922. In that period, he also visited several Sicilian towns, such as Messina, Syracuse, Catania and Palermo. Sicily appealed very much to Lawrence not only because of the myth, which seems to be inborn in the island, but also because of the beauty of the landscape and of the people, not to mention the influence of the Sicilian writer Giovanni Verga. Impressed by Verga's literary production, Lawrence translated into English the following books by Verga: *Mastro-Don Gesualdo* (1923), *Little Novels of Sicily* (*Novelle Rusticane*, 1925), and *Cavalleria Rusticana and Other Stories* (1928). As a matter of fact, Verga's influence is suggested by Lawrence's story "The Fox",[2] revised after his immersion in the translation of Verga's "La Lupa", a novella in *Little Novels of Sicily*. Moreover, to testify his strong connection with Verga, Lawrence even named his house in Fontana Vecchia, "La Casa del nespolo", or "The Medlar Tree House" in the English translation (Comellini 2009b).

Among Lawrence's works with a Sicilian setting, it is worth remembering some poems of the collection *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923), the novella *Sun,* and the first part of his travel book, *Sea and Sardinia*.[3] Moreover, it must be said that the image of Sicily recurs in Lawrence's entire literary production, although it is often indirectly suggested, such as in the images of the volcanoes, echoes of that Mount Etna where the God Vulcan was supposed to live, or in the recurring mythical monsters of Sicily, "Scylla and Charybdis"–cited in the novel *Kangaroo*–or in the pervasive references to the Myth of Pluto and Persephone, which seems to have taken place in Sicily (Sagar 32), as told in Lawrence's poem "Purple Anemones", collected in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*.

Lawrence opens his travel book, *Sea and Sardinia,* with an image of Sicily that expresses both his fascination and his intriguingly deep bounds. "Sicily"–as he says–is "so pleasant: the sunny Ionian sea, the changing jewel of Calabria […] then Etna, that wicked witch, resting her thick white snow under heaven and slowly, slowly rolling her orange-coloured smoke" (1). Then, Lawrence describes not only the gorgeous Sicilian landscape, but also towns such as Messina, Catania, Syracuse, Palermo, Trapani, and "the windy Egades" (33). Moreover, in the opening pages of *Sea and Sardinia* there is a small passage that–just by itself–can evoke the natural beauty of Sicily: "Scent of mimosa, and then of jasmine . . . [The] garden with your olives and your wine, your medlars and mulberries and many almond trees, your steep terraces ledged high up above the sea […] big eucalyptus tree over the stream" (5).

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[2] On the novella "The Fox" and the gender debate, see the critical approach of Helen Baron.

[3] It is worth noting that, although *The Lost Girl* (1920), which deals with Picinisco, can be defined as an Italian novel, it was written in Fontana Vecchia, during Lawrence's sojourn in Sicily, while the novella, *Sun* (1926), set in Sicily, was composed later on the memory of the old days in Fontana Vecchia.

Even the description of Messina reinforces the picture of Sicily already painted, thanks to references to "the thick lemon groves", or to "Lemon trees", or to "The solid forests of not very tall Lemon trees [that] lie between the steep mountains and the sea, on the strip of plain" (8). However, Lawrence does not forget to inform his readers that Messina was "earthquake-shatterd" (8). He also adds that Messina, being located "between the volcanoes Etna and Stromboli" had "known the death-agony's terror" (10).

In his description of Palermo, Lawrence not only deals with the details of streets such as Via Marqueda and the Corso, and the Quattro Canti across (17-8), but also with some people who look "like the last sprout of some Norman Blood" (17), not to mention his reference to food: "raw ham, boiled ham, chicken in aspic, chicken vol-au-vents, sweet curds, curd cheese, rustic cheese-cake, smoked sausages, beautiful fresh mortadella, huge Mediterranean red lobsters, and those lobsters without claws" (20). As he exclaims this food is "So good! So good!" (20).

Perhaps the most intriguing description is that of the town of Trapani, which is–as Lawrence writes–"the western port of Sicily, under the western sun" (33), with the islands of the Egades group in the distance. Thanks to his great sensibility, he can feel how "terrible and dramatic" is the "sunset in the African sea" (42) just outside the harbour of Trapani. Then, above Trapani, there is Erice, "Eryx, looking west, into Africa's sunset" (34), that "Mount Eryx" that "is the Etna of the west", as Lawrence writes. He adds: "to men it must have had a magic almost greater that Etna. Watching Africa!" (33). Then, going towards Marsala–as Lawrence reports–"there is a whole legion of windmills, and Don Quixote would have gone off his head […] And perhaps one catches a glitter of white salt-heaps. For these are the great salt-lagoons which made Trapani rich" (36). Again, Lawrence shows his great sensibility and great capacity of penetrating the spirit of the places in describing the western part of Sicily; in fact, he picks up not only the beauty of the place, but also its main characteristics, connected to history, archaeology, geographical position, and commerce.

In *Sea and Sardinia*, Lawrence even cites historical figures, such as Garibaldi. As Lawrence writes, Garibaldi "wanted to be a hero and a dictator of free Sicily" (9). Lawrence's attention to the history of Sicily is pointed out by his references to the presence of so many different people conquering the island and living in it for centuries but ending to be conquered back. Furthermore, it was because of Etna or as he says:

> How many men, how many races, has Etna put to flight? It was she who broke the quick of the Greek soul. And after the Greeks, [Etna] gave the Romans, the Normans, the Arabs, the Spaniards, the French, the Italians, even the English, she gave them all their inspired hour and broke their souls. (2)

In Sicily, Lawrence's fascination was certainly created not only by Etna, with its mythical implications, but also by the visual image of the *Earth Mother* as the Goddess of corn, represented in the sculpture of *The Seated Demeter* or *Core,* in the archaeological Museum that he visited in Syracuse. Thus, the triple Mediterranean Goddess, which has been constantly proposed and re-proposed, for the following centuries, in the Italian works of art, becomes one of the main themes in D. H. Lawrence's books as well as in his collection of poems, *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923), not to mention his paintings (Comellini 2008). It is not surprising, then, that in *Sea and Sardinia* Lawrence cites the "Venus of the aborigines [who] is older [than] the Greek Aphrodite" (34); she is "the woman-goddess", that "smiling Astarte", that "*Erycina ridens*" who–as Lawerence

remarks–is "the world mystery" and who is "laughing" "at the centre of an ancient, quite-lost world" (34). Lawrence insists that the Goddess, the "Eryx Astrate […] the *Ericina ridens* must have been, in her prehistoric dark smiling, watching the fearful sunsets beyond the Egades" (42), from Erice.

Then, it is easy to share Lawrence's opinion that Sicily seems to preserve its past and to preserve the unknown, the mystery of the Mediterranean Mother Earth and Moon Goddess, and to keep Pan alive (Comellini 1997); and, consequently, all the symbolic, correlated meanings that always appealed to Lawrence: the phallus consciousness, the senses over the mind, the instinct over rationality.[4]

Lawrence's first perception of the Sicilians corresponds to a vision strictly rooted in a complete communion of humanity with nature, as in archaic times when Gods were linked to the vegetative process of renewal. During his visits, Lawrence perceived a lively atmosphere, with music, dancing and wine, which seemed to be reminiscent of the pristine Mother and Moon Goddess as well as of the Gods Pan/Bacchus/Dionysus, traditionally considered the Gods of wine, of fertility, and sexual energy (Comellini 2009). At the time of his visits to Sicily, these legacies of the pristine Gods were in part still traceable and visible. In "Purple Anemones", a poem written in Taormina and collected in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (63-5), Lawrence describes Sicily as a land imbued with mythological references.

In *Sea and Sardinia*, the Sicilians seem to incarnate a sort of reborn Pan, or Dionysus. Lawrence even compares the Sicilians with the Neapolitans when he compares Catania and Naples, two towns in the "proximity of a volcano" (7); and on the sea: two towns where–as he writes–"the men are hugely fat, with great macaroni paunches, [and] are expansive" (7). He affirms that "the Sicilians are even more wildly exuberant and fat and all over one another than the Neapolitans" (7-8). In fact, Lawrence's description, in *Sea and Sardinia*, the Sicilians look like this:

> They are lively, they throw their arms round one another's necks, they all but kiss […] That is how they are. Each one thinks he is as handsome as Adonis and as "fetching" as Don Juan […] And that also is how they are. So terribly physically all over one another […] They catch each other under the chin, with a tender caress of the hand, and they smile with sunny melting tenderness into each other's face. (9)

The Sicilians, described "as handsome as Adonis", or as some reborn "Don Juan", seem to manifest and share the carnal and sexual energy usually connected to the ancient Gods, Pan and Dionysus. Moreover, with their physical contact, the Sicilians seem to simultaneously express the individual and collective touch in a metaphorical reference to the universal, cosmic touch. The Sicilian attitude of "fetching", which was shared by almost all the Italian men at the time of Lawrence's visits, recalls Lawrence's essay, "Man is a Hunter". In the essay, the natural, vital, or lively characteristics of the Italians are seen as an expression of the pervasive permanence of the Mediterranean Myth. The double-meaning of "Man is a hunter!–*L' uomo è cacciatore*" (219)–simultaneously suggests the ancient rituals of hunting–"The game! La caccia!" (219)–and the idea of virility and sexual energy, which are symbolized by Pan. As D.H. Lawrence himself explains, in Italy the sentence

[4] On the topic, or on "the carnal knowledge" in Lawrence's fiction, see also: M. Ragachewskaya.

"Man is a hunter! *l'uomo è cacciatore*" alludes both to the "game" of hunting and to the "game" of sexuality (219).

Undoubtedly, Lawrence's sojourn in Sicily, an island so imbued with mythical hints, confirmed his belief that the Myth of Pluto and Persephone was born in Sicily and, precisely, in Enna, as he narrates in the poem "Purple Anemones". In the poem, written in Taormina, he rewrites, or "revises" the Myth of Pluto and Persephone, as if it had taken place "in Sicily, on the meadows of Enna" (64). In the poem, Lawrence alludes to Pluto, who was "Proserpine's master", as "the dark one" (63), as well as to Persephone, Proserpine and Ceres. As he says in "Purple Anemones": "[I]n Sicily, on the meadows of Enna,/She thought she had left him;/But opened around her purple anemones,/ Caverns,/Little hells of colour, caves of darkness,/Hell, risen in pursuit of her; royal, sumptuous/Pit-falls" (64).

Moreover, in several poems of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, Sicily is described in the richness of its nature, with figs, grapes, pomegranates, peaches, almond trees, orange trees, purple anemones, hibiscus and salvia flourishing everywhere. In other poems of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, Sicily is recurrently cited: it is "Syracuse", with "the pomegranate-trees in flower" (13), to offer the background in the poem "Pomegranate", while, in another poem, "Medlars and Sorb-Apples" (22), "Syracuse" is indirectly mentioned through the image of the "Syracusan Muscat/ wine/Or vulgar marsala" (22). In the same poem, it is through the double-meaning reference that the word "Marsala" can evoke both the Sicilian town, where Garibaldi had landed, and the homonymous liquor. Moreover, Sicily is indirectly cited with the reference to "the Sicilian townlets skirting Etna" (70) in "Hibiscus and Salvia Flowers", a poem written in Taormina.

Again, it is around "Etna" in "Sicily, [in a] December's Sicily in a mass of rain" (51) that one can perceive and re-experience the interaction between humanity and nature, that feeling of wonder and mystery that was inborn in primitive people and, consequently, in their religions and rituals: all this is masterly recreated by Lawrence in the poem "Bare Almond-Trees", written in Taormina.[5] It is worth adding–just to underline how much, for D.H. Lawrence, the Mediterranean Myth is visible in Sicily–that the almond-trees were strictly related–as Graves writes–to "the white Goddess Artemis [who was] identified with the nymph Phyllis who was metamorphosed into an almond tree" (340).

Moreover, it is in Sicily and precisely in Fontana Vecchia, near Taormina (where D.H. Lawrence spent almost two years) that the Volcano Etna is a pervasive presence, because–according to the myth–it is there that the God Vulcan used to live. In "Peace", another poem written in Taormina, Lawrence uses the eruptive lava of Etna as an expression of change and transformation, thereby elusively suggesting the process of self-renewal leading to fulfilment. In the poem, it is thanks to the underlining meaning of lava that he can show that everything in life is in constant, although long, transformation:

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[5] D. H. Lawrence, "Bare Almond-Trees": "Wet almond-trees, in the rain, /[...] Out of the deep, soft fledge of Sicilian winter-green, [...] /What are you doing in the December rain?
Have you a strange electric sensitiveness in your steel tips?
Do you feel the air for electric influences
Like some strange magnetic apparatus?
Do you take in messages, in some strange code,
From heaven's wolfish, wandering electricity, that prowls so
[...] constantly round Etna?
[...] Sicily, December's Sicily in a mass of rain" (50-1).

Brilliant, intolerable lava,
Brilliant as a powerful burning-glass,
Walking like a royal snake down the mountain towards the sea. (658)

As Lawrence reveals in the poem "Peace", lava can only symbolize an endless process of change, a process that is remarked upon not only thanks to the allusive comparison of lava with a snake–one of the best emblems of transformation–but also thanks to the changes of lava that transforms itself from a "brilliant, burning" and "white-hot" lava into a "Grey-black rock" (658).

Lava is part of the earth just like any snake, or to use Lawrence's words in *Sun*: "the snake was part of the place" in Sicily (287). One could also add that in the volcanic area of Taormina, where D. H. Lawrence had lived, lava is part of the place like any other flowers, or trees, or like the "Sicilian Cyclamens" of the homonymous poem, written in Taormina. In the poem, the Sicilian cyclamens are strictly connected to earth, "Drawn out of earth […] stone-engendered", as "ecstatic fore-runner[s]", and are an expression of a primeval world, a world so old that only the "far-off Mediterranean mornings, when our world began" (668) can re-evoke associations. Similarly, a fig-tree flourishes from a nude rock, as specified in "Bare Fig-Trees", another poem written in Taormina: the fig-tree is "like a rock living, flourishing from the rock in a mysterious arrogance" (668),[6] and seems to be carrying the knowledge of the past, the burden of mystery, and to preserve it. Moreover, by "laugh[ing] at Time" (668), all such symbolism can transmit it endlessly.[7]

This idea of continuity expressed by the elements of nature, such as cyclamens and fig-trees, is reinforced by the imagery in "Almond Blossom", a poem written in Fontana Vecchia. This inextricable link is manifested by the strength of the almond-trees; not weaker than that of the eruptive lava of the poem "Peace", the strength of the almond-trees emerges as a "supreme annunciation to the world", with "insuperable, subtly-smiling assurance" (680). This subtle smile, which can be perceived as an untouchable, but pervasive presence in "Almond Blossom", seems to be reminiscent both of the smile connected to the fig-trees of the previously cited poem and of the laugh of the *Ericina ridens* and, consequently, to reinforce the correlated reference to the mystery of life. It is a smile that alludes to the endless cycle of life through a constant renewal, where the new is simply a transformation of the old, a process visible in Sicily thanks to the volcano and its lava. This renewing of life, or the mystery of creation is in line with the primitive religions and with the archaic vegetative myths (Comellini 1997). In the archaic, vegetative myths of "Almond Blossom", "the tree [,] being life-divine/ Fearing nothing" (684) represents the mystery of creation, or of the perennial renewal of life: it is the mystery that is inborn in nature itself and that is particularly visible in Sicily. The poem suggests "something" as a mysterious entity, "something [that] must be reassuring to the almond, in the evening star, and the snow-wind […] /So that the faith in his heart smiles again" (682). Then, it is not by chance that Lawrence refers to mythical elements such as "the evening star", connected to

[6] Fig symbolism and vegetative symbols are strictly linked to the White Goddess (Graves 253, 257).

[7] D.H. Lawrence, "Bare Fig-Trees": "And laugh at Time, and laugh at dull Eternity/And make a joke/That has kept so many secrets up its sleeve/And has been laughing through so many ages/At man and his uncomfortablenesses/And his attempt to assure himself that what is so is not so/Up its sleeve" (668).

the Goddess, and "Sirius" (682). [8] In "Almond Blossom" Sirius is alluded to as "the dog-star" and Etna is evoked as "the snow-wind" (682), while Lawrence significantly asks for a gift of everlasting life: "[G]ive me the tree of life in blossom" (682).

This perennial cycle of life is particularly visible in Sicily, where the transformation of everything is manifested by lava that, at the end of a long process, becomes one of the best fertilizers of the land. The same long process is retraceable in those old objects that were first transformed into iron and that, later, after centuries, became assimilated as part of the almond-trees, or inborn in them, as is revealed in "Almond Blossom", where the almond-trees are described as "enveloped in iron against the exile, against the ages" (682). The poem thoroughly explains this process of change, this endless transformation of elements.[9] Thus, it is not surprising that just in Taormina "On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking" (127), Lawrence ended up by writing his poem entitled "Snake", when he had the chance to meet a reptilian creature, that snake he had already compared to lava in the poem "Peace". The snake is described by Lawrence as "a king in exile uncrowned in the Underworld" (131). As Sagar says, the snake, which can renew "itself by sloughing its skin, suggests the annual renewal of the earth itself" (1999, 22): "[It] was sacred to Dionysus and to Asclepius, both Gods of healing and renewal" (24). Thus, it is associated to Pan, a God who, as a fertility symbol, suggests the eternal struggle for life.[10] Moreover, the divine mythical characteristics of the snake are also connected to the legend of Zeus. Sagar writes,

> Lawrence would have known the version of the birth of Dionysus in which Zeus in the form of a snake fertilized the virgin Persephone in Sicily. She gave birth to Zagreus, the horned god. But Zagreus is Zeus in his underworld aspect, continually giving birth to himself, as snakes were believed to do. This primal rape, from which came all birds, beasts and flowers, took place in Sicily. (32)

Once more, Lawrence alludes to the beliefs of archaic people that resound as an echo in Sicily. The snake, with all its metaphorical references (Sagar 32), "was part" of Sicily, as Lawrence declares in the novella *Sun*. It is Sicily, precisely a place facing the sea in Fontana Vecchia, near Taormina, that offers the setting for the novella *Sun*. *Sun* (1926) was composed by Lawrence on the memory of the old days spent in Fontana Vecchia, as is subtlety suggested by the Sicilian peasant of the story, who seems to recall the Sicilian mule-driver who–as legend reported (Di Giacomo 121)–caused the betrayal of Frieda, D.H. Lawrence's wife. This Sicilian place is described as warm and hot and not only in its landscape with "the bluest seas", with a richness of wine and olive trees, "groves of lemon" and with the view of the volcano in the distance, but also in its historical roots even older than the Greeks' arrival in Sicily:

> Even she had a house above the bluest seas, with a vast garden, or vineyard, all wines and olives, dropping steeply in terrace after terrace […] and the garden full of secret places, deep groves of lemon […] and hidden, pure green reservoirs of

[8] "The evening star" and "Sirius" as the dog-star, are connected to *The White Goddess* (Graves 53, 58).

[9] D.H. Lawrence, "Almond Blossom": "This [Sicily] is the ancient southern earth whence the vases/were baked, amphoras, craters [...] Bristling now with the iron of almond-trees/Iron, but unforgotten,/Iron, dawn-hearted,/Ever-beating dawn-heart, enveloped in iron against the exile,/against the ages" (682).

[10] "On Lawrence's poem "Snake", see also the interesting article by K. Cushman.

> water; then a spring issuing out of a little cavern, where the old Sicules had drunk before the Greeks came […] There was the scent of mimosa, and beyond the snow of the volcano. (741)

From this description, it is easy to recognize not only the flourishing Mediterranean landscape, but also the Sicilian land, as the hints both to the volcano Etna and to the pristine people, the Sicules, who had inhabited this part of the island, clarify. Moreover in *Sun*, the beauty of fertile Sicily is remarked by references to the hot weather and the landscape, so deeply imbued with colours (*pink*, *mauve*, *blue*) and rich in corn:

> The end of February was suddenly very hot. Almond blossom was falling like pink snow, in the touch of the smallest breeze. The mauve, silky little anemones were out, the asphodel tall in bud, and the sea was corn-flower blue. (747)

In the novella, the relationship of the heroine–the woman who had landed in Sicily–to the Sun is stronger than any other links that the woman has: it is stronger than her ties with her husband and her son. This relationship between the woman and the Sun in hot Sicily ends up by representing a sacral marriage. As we note, in the novella: "[T]he sun k*new* her, in the cosmic carnal sense of the word" (744). At the very end–as Lawrence lets us perceive–the woman seems to be ambiguously attracted both by the Sun and by a Sicilian peasant who seems to recall the supposed, clandestine lover of Frieda, Lawrence's wife, in the days spent in Fontana Vecchia.

Not so differently from Frieda, the woman of the novella, confused by these new subtle feelings, ends up not only worshipping but also becoming part of the Sun, creating a direct and complete connection with the universe, and the Sun.[11] Moreover, in the last lines of the novella, there is a mythical image offered by the "Almond blossom falling like pink snow" and the "mauve, silky little anemones" (747) that are both emblems of the Goddess, as already suggested in "Purple Anemones". However, this indirect allusion is reinforced by another mythical reference to Perseus, the son of Zeus, who freed Andromeda; this reference offers an underlying comparison between Andromeda and the American woman who had landed in Sicily.

Thus, Lawrence's sojourn in Sicily can be defined as a significant contribution to his whole literary canon, not only because of the artistic and archaeological importance of Sicily (Katz-Roi) or because of the descriptions of the landscape, of the food,[12] and of the inhabitants of the island, not only because it represents a form of spiritual quest, but also because of the Mediterranean myth, so strictly preserved in Sicily at the time of his visit (1919-1922). In fact, the Mediterranean myth constitutes not only the metaphorical structure by which most of his works are sustained, but also Lawrence's indirect message to

[11] D. H. Lawrence, *Sun*: "Something deep inside her unfolded and relaxed, and she was given to a cosmic influence. By some mysterious will inside her, deeper than her known consciousness and her known will, she was put into connection with the sun, and the stream of the sun flowed through her, round her womb". (746)

[12] On the topic of food, see: Comellini, "*The Rainbow* and the Metaphor of Food" (2010). In this critical approach, the symbolic function played by food not only underlines "the novel's Englishness", but also "a connection between food and cannibalism and traces the destructive effects of the relationship between Ursula and Skrebensky in terms of a symbolic cannibalism which sees a reversal of gender roles" (D'Agnillo 13).

humanity: the only possible future can be rooted on that natural vitality and spirituality that the old Sicilians, the Etruscans and all the archaic Mediterranean people, possessed.

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Özet

D. H. Lawrence ve Sicilya

Sicilya'da iki yıl geçirmiş olan D. H Lawrence'ı bu ada her zaman büyülemiştir. Bu büyülenme öncelikli olarak Syracuse'da Arkeoloji Müzesinde gördüğü, Sicilya ve Sardunya'dan bahsettiği *Sea and Sardinia* adlı eserinde söylediği üzere genellikle Pan ve Diyonisos'la bağdaştırılan cinsel enerjiyi dışavuran, Sicilyalıların tanımıyla "Adonis kadar yakışıklı" olan "The seated Demeter or Core" heykelinden kaynaklanır. Sicilya imgesi doğrudan anlatılmış olsun veya olmasın, D. H Lawrance'ın tüm yapıtlarında yinelenir. Volkanları, "Scylla ve Charybdis" gibi mitolojik Sicilya yaratıkları, Pluto ve Persephone mitine yapılan referanslar gizliden gizliye Sicilya'yı çağrıştırır ve ada doğası tüm zenginliğiyle etrafı süsleyen incir ağaçları, üzümler, nar ve şeftali ağaçları, badem ağaçları, mor anemonlar, hibisküs ve salvialar ile betimlenir. Sicilya aynı zamanda insanlıkla doğa arasındaki etkileşimi D. H Lawrence'ın Sicilya'da yazdığı "Bare Almond Trees" adlı şiirinde de ustaca canlandırdığı gibi ilkel insanda doğuştan bıulunan ve sonuç olarak dinde ve ritüellerde yerini alan mucize ve gizem duygunu temsil eder.

Anahtar Sözcükler: mit, şiir, düzyazı, Sicilya, peyzaj, yirminci yüzyıl

"Forc'd to Expose to the Public View": Interrogating Authorial Agency in the Case of Judith Man's *Epitome of the History of the Faire Argenis and Polyarchus* (1640)

Catherine Coussens

Abstract: Judith Man's English translation of Nicolas Coeffeteau's French version of John Barclay's famous Latin romance, *Argenis*, complicates the feminist critical project of attributing transgressive forms of agency to early modern women writers who saw their work into print. Man's text represents a simplification of Barclay's complex narrative, appearing to erase its political agenda in favour of a more conventionally feminine focus on love and marriage. Moreover, rather than representing resistance to patriarchal ideology, the project appears to have been driven, appropriated and published by Man's immediate familial circle in a bid to bind its interests to those of the court, as the tensions that would lead ultimately to civil war in 1642 began to mount. Both the publication date and the emphasis on loyalty to the monarch situate the work within the context of King Charles I's attempts to subdue the Scottish rebellion. While critics have interpreted Man's narrative focus on love and marriage rather than political intrigue as an expression of her gendered position in early modern society, the overall aims of the text can also be associated with Caroline social and political values, which emphasised the centrality of love and loyalty in both the public and private spheres. The circumstances of the text's publication appear to qualify Man's personal agency, suggesting the deliberate deployment by more powerful "others" of a female voice to stress the commitment of the Caroline regime to an orderly, hierarchical regime based on affective bonds and commitment to paternalistic systems of government. However, although Man's subsequent history and literary career is lost to us, her comments on the emergent tradition of female authorship, and deliberate attempt to place herself within it, suggest that she hoped to be recognised alongside predecessors such as Mary Sidney and Mary Wroth. Man's translation simplifies the original narrative, focusing intensively on the themes of love and marriage rather than politics.

Keywords: agency, translation, female authorship, political romance, Caroline political ethos, Sir Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford

Judith Man was one of the relatively few female authors to publish their work before the English civil wars. The appearance in print in 1640 of her simplified English translation of Nicolas Coeffeteau's already abbreviated French version of John Barclay's politically ambiguous neo-Latin romance, *Argenis* (1620), has meant that she has been studied alongside the even fewer women authors to engage with the popular tradition of secular courtly romance. Earlier examples include Margaret Tyler, who published an English translation of part of a Peninsular romance, *A Mirror of Princely Deeds and Knighthood* (1578), and Lady Mary Wroth, whose *Urania* (1621) represents a deliberate engagement with the famous romance composed by her uncle, Philip Sidney (*The Countesse of Pembroke's Arcadia*, begun c. 1579). In her prefatory address to the reader, Man acknowledges her indebtedness to Wroth, Mary Sidney (Philip Sidney's sister, also a poet and translator), and "many of my sexe who have traced me the way" (A7). Despite situating

her work within a burgeoning tradition of women's writing, however, Man complicates the notion of agency as it is generally applied to female authorship, since the publication of the text appears to have been strategic, and initiated by Man's own family circle.

Man cites her willing subordination to multiple layers of authority (to her family, social superiors and patrons, the monarchy, and to both Coeffeteau and Barclay as master author-authorities) in order to introduce her project and request the reader's approval. Deploying the conventional "modesty topos" to play down both the political aspects of the text and her own possible transgressiveness in engaging with it, Man describes how her enterprise was initiated by her personal satisfaction in reading and translating: "My humour inclining to Melancholy, induces me sometimes, to seek in my Closet for some diversion, in the reading of Bookes [...] suteable to a Gentlewoman of my quality, and of eighteene yeeres of age" (A4v). She suggests that she has translated the work to improve her French, and "for my own particular satisfaction, having no other design than to warm my self therewith", going on to defend her entry into print as an expression of obedience alone: "I could not make this Work so secretly, but that those who watch over my actions, & endeavour my diversions, had notice thereof. [...] But only have I done it by mere obedience and duty" (A4r-v). In claiming that the exercise was a "Christmas diversion" which she was "in a manner forc'd to expose [...] to the publike view" (A7r) Man emphasises that the work was driven and eventually appropriated by those in authority over her. In her address to the general reader Man emphasises her reluctance to challenge male literary and scholarly authority: "I pray thee to excuse the faults, if there be any, and remember, that women (for the most part) are unacquainted with the studie of Sciences; and by that meanes, may sooner erre" (A7v). Nevertheless, her playful request that the reader allow "Argenis the precedency. [...] in the Frontispice of this Booke", a comment on her dedication of the book to Anne Wentworth, daughter of the powerful courtier and politician, Thomas Wentworth, and her strategic identification of Anne with Princess Argenis as a model of female virtue and nobility, announce the feminocentric aspects of her text.

Laurie Humphrey Newcomb has observed that whilst throughout the early modern period romance literature was increasingly read in order to study moral and political examples, "[e]ducated men pretended to consign romance to women, displacing ambivalence about a genre long on appeal but short on cultural sanction" on to female consumers (121). Translation itself was also traditionally feminised: both the practice of translation, and translated works themselves, as imperfect reflections of the original text. As Sherry Simon has said, in traditional conceptions of translation:

> [t]he hierarchical authority of the original over the reproduction is linked with imagery of masculine and feminine; the original is considered the strong generative male, the translation the weaker and derivative female [...] the language used to describe translating dips liberally into the vocabulary of sexism, drawing on images of dominance and inferiority [...]. (xi)

Recent theorists, however, have reformulated translation as a "textually dynamic enterprise: a textual mode affected by ideological imperatives as much as any other" (Ellis and Oakley-Brown 2). Since the historical and cultural situation of a translated text may be just as important as the original text itself, for "translation", therefore, should be substituted the notion of "a regulated transformation of one by another, of one text by another" (Ellis and Oakley-Brown 1-2). Moreover, feminist scholars have cited Man's text as evidence that

women's reading and translating of romance enabled them to negotiate their way into political discourse: "Translation for women was a kind of compromise, an avenue in which they could speak in the public arena without bringing upon themselves injunctions to silence and chastity" (Zurcher xii).

The following paper will explore the specific political and social contexts of Man's publication to consider what function such a work might have fulfilled, or been expected to fulfil, in 1640. I will examine the implications of Man's text for female authorship and cultural identity. The *Epitome* was the only published text by Judith Man. Like many early modern women she has been virtually lost to history. Perhaps she died before completing more projects, or married and devoted herself to private, familial literary activities: there is no way of knowing unless more evidence is discovered. The publication of this text, however, represents a conflation of several literary and cultural drives: the emergence of the female author into print; the deployment of literature (particularly romance, but also including poetry, masque, theatre, and conduct literature) to convey Stuart ideology (and the conspicuousness of women within this movement); and the personal and community-based nature of many literary projects (both male and female). While the first may allow for proto-feminist transgressions of gender norms, the second and third provide ample space for women's participation in cultural and literary hegemonic discourses. While romance as a genre emphatically challenged the boundaries of gendered behaviour, in the end it stimulated readers via imaginative pleasure, rather than initiating radical change. Conduct literature and court propaganda also reinforced established political values, codes of behaviour, and class and gender identities. Finally, Man's work represents the central importance of social and familial networks of dependence, protection and loyalty in the seventeenth century. Man's loyalty to Wentworth, one of Charles I's most controversial advisors, is deeply rooted in the patronage tradition, which emphasises reciprocal favours.

The late twentieth-century project of identifying works by early women writers and restoring them to the literary canon was frequently driven by readings that focused on their internal opposition to dominant patriarchal conventions and discourses, what Patricia Demers has described as "the dialectics of negation and resistance" (11). Major studies of early modern women's deployment of or location within "oppositional discourse" include Barbara Lewalski's *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (1998), which argued that women authors not only resisted patriarchal norms but also rewrote the discourse in strikingly oppositional terms, Elizabeth Harvey's *Ventriloquised Voices* (1992), which "attended to the male appropriation of female voice as a strategy for both silencing and disrupting" women's interventions into literary history (Demers 11), and Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), which uncovered a tradition of female authorship based on unity of interests. Marilyn Williamson (1990) and Janet Clare (1996) have both focused on women's intrinsic transgressiveness in committing their work to print: according to Clare, "[t]he writings of women, whether religious, popular, humanist or courtly, had in the mid sixteenth to early seventeenth century at least one common aspect: women writers represented in their work an alternative culture which ran alongside the dominant culture and in writing as some did with a view to publication, they were transgressing boundaries" (1).

However, what Demers has termed the "recovery-discovery" project has now shifted towards a more detailed focus on early modern women writers' roles in, and engagement with, the social, familial, literary and political communities within which they operated. Most of the women who published their work in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries identified their authorial enterprises with the specific interests of these communities, rather

than those of women as a whole. Publication of a text could also represent diverse interests: the author's and his or her own personal, cultural, political or religious community; the patron/s to whom the text was addressed; the monarchy or government, and the booksellers, who frequently selected and promoted a specific type of text. Like male authors, women were not in complete charge of every aspect of their works' publication, dissemination, and reception. As Demers has said, this brings into focus multiple, interrelating "questions about modes of production, intended audience, and female subjectivity" rather than "oppositionalism and static binaries of gender and power" (11-2). Increasingly, female-authored texts are being analysed within an awareness of the ways in which "women's social value was constructed in the literary-discursive order of early modern culture [...] and the specific market conditions for the production, distribution and consumption of print and writing" (Demers 12).[1] The printed text becomes, therefore, a "culturally negotiated artefact" rather than subversive expression of resistance (Demers 11). These perspectives complicate the conception of "agency" as defined by second-wave feminists, as a form of conscious opposition to male-dominated cultural production, in favour of an acceptance of a finally unstable and incoherent multiplicity of discourses and impulses which may counter or contradict one another. The publication of female-authored texts could be seen as less an act of female rebellion against male domination than a product of contemporary circumstances and events, and in the case of Judith Man, a gendered, multi-authored expression of cultural, political or social allegiance.

Barclay's romance was highly popular in early seventeenth-century England. Soon after its publication James I commissioned a translation by Ben Jonson which was registered in 1623, but then destroyed in a fire (Riley and Huber 31). Two major English translations were published in the 1620s, the first by Kingesmill Long (1625) and the second by Sir Robert Le Grys (1628).[2] Le Grys's version was commissioned by Charles I during the controversy over the Petition of Right in 1628, in which Parliament attempted to limit the powers of the monarchy (Zurcher x).

Judith Man's text was advertised as having been translated first from Latin into French by Nicolas Coeffeteau, Bishop of Marseilles, and subsequently from French into English "by a young Gentlewoman".[3] Man's publisher, Henry Seile, had published the previous two translations of Barclay's *Argenis*. In his address to the reader Seile states: "I hold it for a favour [...] to see my Shop adorned with this little Volume, which comes from the hands of one of the most Vertuous, and Comeliest Gentlewomen of this Countrey, and which belies not her birth, which is truely Noble."

Man's text can also be considered within a burgeoning literary trend towards abbreviated versions of aristocratic romances, demonstrating the emergence of a new audience for printed texts containing an accessible political message. The project anticipates later printed enterprises undertaken by genteel young women, such as Anna Weamys's *Continuation of Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia* (1651), which also adapts

[1] For close attention to these issues see Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Cornell UP, 1993).

[2] Both contained verse translations by Thomas May, who also published a translation of Barclay's *The Mirrour of Mindes*, *or, Barclays Icon animorum* in 1630.

[3] Coeffeteau and Barclay were both close friends of Peirescius, who supervised the publication of *Argenis* after Barclay's death. Coeffeteau's version simplifies Barclay's text, removing most of the political discourses. Zurcher suggests that Coeffeteau may have sought to popularize Barclay's work out of loyalty to a friend (xi).

aristocratic narrative into an accessible and abbreviated form while bearing an underlying political message.[4] Kim Walker has described the *Argenis* as having "much in common with the popular tragicomedies of the early seventeenth century, with its focus less on martial exploits and chivalric adventure than on courtly lovemaking" (49). However, Barclay's connections with the Stuart kings, the fact that *Argenis* has been read as a manifesto for absolutist monarchy, and its resonance in England in 1640, politicise Man's text.

John Barclay was born in France in 1582, a Roman Catholic of French and Scottish parentage. His father, the author William Barclay (1546-1608), had migrated to France from Scotland during Elizabeth I's reign. On the accession of James I in 1603 father and son travelled to England in the hope of exploiting their Scottish connections to gain the new king's favour. John Barclay remained in England for more than ten years, employed as a gentleman of the king's bedchamber and diplomat (Zurcher x). He composed a number of political treatises designed to attract James's attention, but despite winning the king's approval he failed to achieve substantial rewards, and left England for Rome in 1616. He later returned to France, where he composed the *Argenis* in retirement, completing it just before his death in 1621 (Stephen and Lee, *Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. 3, 162-64).

Barclay's writings have a markedly royalist bent. His *Satyricon* satirised both Jesuits ("Acignii") and puritans ("Catharinus"), and his satires and political treatises privileged monarchic over papal authority. Barclay's political philosophy was inspired by that of his father, whose works he edited after his death.[5] William Barclay's *De Regno et Regali Potestate*; *About the Powers of Authority and Royalty* (1600) was a defence of the rights of kings, dedicated to Henry IV of France, and written in part to counter the anti-monarchist views of other writers, particularly those of the Scottish humanist and Calvinist, George Buchanan.[6] William Barclay designated the term "Monarchomach/Monarchomaque" to those who fought against kings, specifically the late sixteenth-century French Huguenots who opposed absolute monarchy; however, the term came to be associated with anti-royalists in general.[7] John Barclay's writings continued the political controversies his father

[4] Patrick Colborn Cullen, ed., 1994. Aspects of Weamys' text (such as her choice of the genre of courtly romance, and the prefatory verses by James Howell and other royalists) suggest a similar project: deploying a female-authored text to express a communal political engagement.

[5] *Satyricon* is partly based on William Barclay's life. William Barclay's *De Potestate Papae* argued against the Pope's authority over kings, and was published in 1609 with a preface by John Barclay. James approved of William Barclay's royalist views, but would not agree to advance him unless he renounced his Catholicism. Back in France in 1604 Barclay dedicated another work, the *Pandects*, to James. He intended to write a book about James, but never completed it.

[6] George Buchanan, *A Dialogue Concerning the Rights of the Crown in Scotland* (published 1579).

[7] Barclay argued that the "monarchomachs" deliberately aimed to undermine the king's government in order to attack the powerful Roman Catholic Church. Monarchomachs argued for the legitimacy of tyrannicide, and sought a form of "popular monarchy" or "popular sovereignty" representing a contract between the monarch and his people (see Mason and Smith 2004).

had initiated with both Roman Catholics and Protestants who challenged the rights of the monarchy.[8]

Salzman has suggested that King James I's personal interest in *Argenis* in the early 1620s is "indicative of the new respect gained by romance" (151); however, Barclay's royalism was obviously a major factor in winning the king's approval. Barclay's romance, set in the recent past (the sixteenth century) but alluding to the recent present (the early seventeenth century), deals with the religious and political upheavals in France during the reigns of Henri III and IV, specifically the wars of religion, but also contains veiled allusions to Jacobean court scandals, and to James I's efforts to control puritan and Roman Catholic factions in England.[9] The text was read as a roman a clef (by 1640 various keys to the text were in circulation in England) (Riley and Huber 45).[10] However, Salzman argues that *Argenis* should more properly be identified as "political-allegorical": the characters were designed to be interpreted as "royal types" in European history, representing different qualities and styles of rule (151). In these terms, Meleander could be identified with weakness, complacency and inconsistency, and both Poliarchus and Archombrotus with loyalty, courage, military skill and wise counsel. Lycogenes and Radirobanes were associated with ambition, cruelty and pride. In rebelling against the monarchy Lycogenes may also stand for the threat of civil war.[11] Argenis is associated with virtue and constancy, and can also be seen as "a proto-Marianne, symbol of state power" (Riley and Huber 46). The association of Queen Hyanisbe (associated with Queen Elizabeth I) with "regal strength combined with feminine weakness" may have been designed to flatter James (Salzman 151-52).[12] According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the text as a whole had the moral agenda of "admonish[ing] princes" and politicians, "denounc[ing] political faction and conspiracy" and "demonstrate[ing] how an orderly and strong government could overcome these" (Stephen and Lee, Vol. 3, 162-4). The didactic purpose was "to set

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[8] For example, John Barclay, *Replique au sieur Coeffeteau, sur sa response a l'advertissement du roy aux princes & potentates de la Chrestiente* (1610).

[9] The narrative alludes to the court scandal surrounding the alleged poisoning of Thomas Overbury by James's favourite, Robert Carr, and his lover, Frances Howard, Countess of Essex, and the "Gunpowder plot": the Roman Catholic conspiracy to blow up the king and Parliament in 1605.

[10] Sicilia stands for France, and Mauritania England; the Huguenots become the "Hyperephanians" and Calvin or "Caluinus" was anagrammed as "Usinulca"; Meleander, king of Sicily, was interpreted as Henry III of France, who was murdered in 1589; Argenis, his daughter, can be associated with "the place next to the king", whose throne is sought by three rivals: Henry of Navarre (later Henry IV), his brother, Alencon, and Henri de Guise, leader of the Catholic league and opponent of Henry III, who is identified with Argenis' evil suitor, Lycogenes (from "lyco" or wolf and "genes" or born); Poliarchus and Archombrotus were thought to be modelled on the skilful warrior, Henry IV, King of Navarre, opponent of the Catholic league; Poliarchus' family with the Bourbon dynasty; the ruthless Radirobanes was identified as Philip II of Spain, and Queen Hyanisbe with Queen Elizabeth I of England. Radirobanes' invasion of Mauritania alludes to Philip of Spain's invasion of Elizabethan England in 1588 (Riley and Huber 46-8).

[11] Riley and Huber point out that the keys to some editions identify Lycogenes as "duces belli civilis–leader of civil war" (48).

[12] Salzman suggests that the dialogue between Hyanisbe and Poliarchus on the need to gain Parliament's agreement to raise levies, in which Poliarchus convinces the queen that this is a mistake, was deliberately designed to please James (152).

forth a Royall institution both of a King and his Kingdome, by Examples, and Precepts" (Long 1636, 8). Barclay's focus on monarchic absolutism gained a new resonance during the reign of Charles I (from 1625), when disputes between the king and Parliament concerning the king's right to raise levies, and the Scots' refusal to accept the new prayer book intensified.[13]

The fact that Man composed her translation in France suggests that she had been brought into contact with the romance there, as part of her study of French. Man's translation appears to represent a "feminine" text, in its simplification of Barclay's complex political allegory and concentration on the love affair between Argenis and Poliarchus. Unlike Long's translation, Man's text did not contain a key.[14] The "wooing" plot presents a competition between the good and bad suitors to win the hand in marriage of Princess Argenis. Archombrotus is finally revealed to be Argenis's long-lost brother, leaving the way clear for Poliarchus to marry her, and restoring a male successor to the Sicilian throne. The long-delayed marriage between Argenis and Poliarchus represents the union of the crowns of Sicily and Mauritania and an end to the conflict between them, while the evil rebel and potential usurper are erased from the political field. In Man's text Meleander is a benign but ineffectual king who fails to deal harshly enough with the rebels who threaten his throne, while Poliarchus is a steadfast and fearless warrior and sensible advisor who leads the king's forces in crushing the rebellion, and then advises Meleander against making peace with such untrustworthy subjects. When he is attacked by a party of the rebels travelling as ambassadors to Meleander's court, Poliarchus overcomes them again. However, the survivors report him to the king for assaulting their peaceful embassy, and insist that he is prosecuted. Meleander is unwilling to comply, but:

> the conjurors faction, was so puissant, in Court, that, at last, it obtained that Poliarchus, should be condemned, and to be destined, to serve for a sacrifice, unto the Kings enemies' fury, who in defending of him, might have caused a suspicion, amongst those diffident spirits that He had done nothing, but by His authority. (22-3)

Meleander therefore orders Poliarchus's arrest and prepares to sacrifice him to the rebels, but the intervention of Archombrotus, with the help of a virtuous lady, Timoclea, saves him.

According to Salzman, Man erases some of the sexual-political resonance of the text to focus on the potential for the heroine to regenerate and re-order the kingdom through her loyalty and subordination to male monarchic power, rather than her own ingenuity, which is stressed in Barclay's original. Man's Argenis is defined within conventionally feminine terms as a pattern of nobility, physical beauty and virtue, and she functions mainly as the means by which masculine monarchic authority is first challenged and then recovered. She is temporarily disobedient to her father, but this disobedience finally functions to restore the status quo. The overall aim of the narrative is to rehabilitate legitimate male, monarchic authority, rather than challenge it. Man's celebratory treatment of the conclusion to the romance, in which Argenis's marriage to Poliarchus is achieved when she is excluded from the succession by the return of a long-lost male heir, enables her to circumvent the problem of female rule (Salzman 151-52). Man's text, therefore, assertively promotes the patriarchal values then shaping English political and social culture, but with a concentrated focus on

[13] For a detailed discussion see Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles* (2000).
[14] Keys also appeared in the two major English translations (Salzman 150).

woman's capacity to mediate between flawed patriarchal rule and the rebellious subjects it spawns. This idea emerged as a significant aspect of royalist culture immediately before the civil war, when King Charles's loyal but disaffected subjects urged his queen, Henrietta Maria, to mediate between the king and his rebellious subjects in Scotland in 1640. The poet and courtier, William Davenant, for example, addressed a poem to Henrietta Maria requesting that she intervene between the king and his Scottish subjects, using her feminine influence to "new-form the Crown" until she has "wrought it to a yieldingness/That shows it fine but makes it not weigh less" (in Manning 52-4).

Salzman has compared Man's translation with the better-known version by Long, in which Meleander and Argenis are more sharply contrasted. The king is naïve and too easily influenced by wicked counsellors ("not observing the times and dispositions of men [he] putteth such confidence in others, that he thinketh by his own goodness, all men to stand so affected to him"), while Argenis is politically sophisticated ("skilled in the useful political art of pleasing people through careful contrivance [...] she did distribute her smiles, looks, and graces so cunningly, that the people, taken with her courtesy, shouted for joy") (Long 5, 125; Salzman 151). In Man's translation, Argenis tends to be depicted as a reflection and enhancement of the king's own status, and an object, rather than subject, of ambition and desire. Meleander believes "that this young Sun should be the ornament of his Crown, the prop of his State, the delight of his Life, and the consolation of his Old age", while Argenis "sees Her self to be the subject of a furious and bloody war" (3). Moreover, Man's Argenis is politically unsophisticated, spontaneous, and innocent, rather than "cunning" and politically-aware.

Kim Walker has both emphasised Man's identification of her work as a form of virtuous domestic industry and suggested that her primary focus on the marriage-plot, with the hope she expresses that an eligible, princely match will be found for her dedicatee, Anne Wentworth, represents an advertisement of her own marriageable status. Therefore, the primary theme and aim of the text is marriage (both Anne's and her own): "Man's skill becomes the ornament of a marriageable young woman with birth, beauty, and good breeding, so that her own availability as a commodity functions to support the marketing of the text" (51). Walker's analysis, however, emphasises Man's self-effacing authorial strategy without attending to the specific context of the publication. Rather than erasing politics in favour of a celebration of courtly love and marriage, the text appears to me to support the values, aims and discourses of the Caroline court alongside those of her family's patron, a loyal servant of the king whose methods and philosophy were more cynical and less idealistic than Charles'. In Barclay's original, the king is described by Poliarchus as a ruler

> who does not observe the times and dispositions of men, but puts the confidence in others that he believes they should rightly give to him because of his virtues, and I think he has been sick of too much happiness. For in the beginning of his reign, when he found all things in peace, he openly gave reign to his pleasures, harmless ones indeed. [...] which yet did betray his easy nature, slow to revenge injuries with fitting justice [...] he made friends rashly and loved them violently. (Riley and Huber, Vol. 1, 111)

Man's depiction of the Sicilian court, on the other hand, reflects the topos of the "halcyon reign" found in numerous poetic celebrations of the 1630s: Meleander is an innocent, who "seeing himself adored by His Subjects, who tasted with an extraordinary delight, the mildness of His government, thought to be arrived at the height of His glory"

(2).[15] Barclay's foolish and selfish Meleander is therefore transformed into a type of Charles, an idealistic victim of evil counsellors and rebels rather than architect of his own misfortune, and it is Poliarchus and Archombrotus, rather than Argenis, who are associated with political astuteness and wise counsel.

Man's focus on the marriage plot as a means of fostering unity and strengthening the kingdom also accords with the paternal and fraternal basis of Caroline government. As R. Malcolm Smuts has emphasised: "[Charles] believed his dominions were held together by the paternalistic influence of major landed families over the localities, and the personal ties of loyalty and obligation that connected those families to himself" (39). The king demonstrated his belief in the personal and dynastic basis of good government by arranging the marriages of his most powerful subjects (38). Charles' inner circle also placed great emphasis on order, ceremony and hierarchy in order to maintain harmony, and the ritual of marriage was an essential aspect of this: celebrations of the fruitful marriage of Charles and his French Catholic queen, Henrietta Maria, dominated Caroline paintings, poetry, masques and drama (38).[16] The culture shaped by the court "represented Charles's rule as a system of affective bonds, cemented through social rituals and sensual activities like feasting and dancing, from the court downwards to the villages" (Smuts 39). Since public institutions had not yet been separated from the domestic affairs of the court and other great households, government authority was conceived as a system of affective bonds, rooted in the subjects' regard for the person of the king, and the importance of networks of friendship and alliances united the landed elite to a culture dedicated to ideals of personal loyalty and service (Smuts 39).

Smuts has also emphasised that love served as a central metaphor for Charles' government, as a method of regulating passions and appetites:

> Love arises from basic physical sensations but produces more complex responses, ranging from selfless devotion to jealousy and anger. It lies at the core of the human family, as an erotic bond between husbands and wives and an asexual attachment between parents and children. If the family is the basic political form, as Aristotle has argued, love must therefore be humanity's most fundamental political instinct. For all these reasons love became an apt metaphor for the sentient desires and emotional forces activating social and political life, while virtuous love, represented above all by royal monogamy, stood for a well-ordered polity. (Smuts 38)

Nicolas Coeffeteau's discourse on human emotions, *A Table of Human Passions*, an English translation of which appeared in 1630, engaged with this theme:

> Human love is a motion which should follow the motions of reason, and which being guided by the light of the soul should only embrace the true good, to make it perfect: for containing himself within these bounds, it should no more be a violent and

[15] See, for example, Corns. ed. *The Royal Image* (1999).

[16] For example, in paintings of the royal family by the court painter, Van Dyck, and in simple illustrated printed pamphlets, such as *The True Effigies of our most Illustrious Soveraigne Lord, King Charles … Queene Mary, with the rest of the Royall Progenie* (London, 1641). See also Caroline Hibbard, "Henrietta Maria in the 1630s" (2006).

> furious passion, which fill the world daily with so many miseries by her exorbitant and strange disorders. (99-100)[17]

Man's concentrated focus on the importance of constant (but gentle, rather than turbulent) love therefore binds her text to the aims and values of the Caroline government. Her emphatic expression of allegiance to the family of Sir Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford and Deputy, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and one of Charles's least popular and most feared advisors, also demonstrates the potency of the Caroline cult of loyalty and order. The Wentworth family crest is prominently displayed on the title page, and the dedicatory address to Anne Wentworth's provides the only biographical data available to identify Judith Man."[18] According to C. V. Wedgwood, Peter Man was Wentworth's family lawyer, who continued to work closely with him during the 1620s, and was also Wentworth's friend and advisor (29). Since Man died in the 1630s, Judith Man could have been his granddaughter or another relative. Judith Man may have acted as a gentlewoman attendant, or governess, within the family. According to Zurcher she was a member of the household in 1639, while Wentworth was living in Dublin (xiii). However, Man states in her preface that she was in France with her parents when she translated Coeffeteau's work.

In her address to Anne, Man celebrates Wentworth as an ideal governor, politician and father, and his household as a "school" where she has acquired the skills and insights needed for her enterprise:

> I am Yours, (since You gave me the liberty, to call My self so, when I had the Honour to be admitted into the House of my Lord Your Father, where my Parents did introduce me, & where I have profited near You and my Lady Arabella Your Sister, as in a School of Virtue) whence it follows, that I only give You that which is Yours, being found in me. (sig. A2v)

Anne is figured as reader, subject and patron of the text- a mirror of its heroine: "I have thought, reading this History, that I have seen your true Portraiture in the person of this Fair Lady" (sig. A3r). Anne is also praised for her feminine obedience to the tenets of patriarchy: "You are resolved, to be conformable unto the Will of God, and of my Lord Your Father" (sig. A3v).

Man's allusion to Wentworth's recently conferred earldom associates his daughter with the royal authority to which her father was deeply committed: Anne is "truly worthy to bear the Pearled Crown, wherewith my Lord your Father hath been Honoured, without asking or intercession; but by the Kings only Will, who gave it Him for His eminent Virtue and good Services" (sig. A3v). Through manipulating the trope of "crowning", with its biblical, as well as temporal resonance, Man appropriates the symbolic authority of royalty for her own work, binding herself, her project, and its dedicatee to the policies of

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[17] Edward Grimeston's English translation of this work was also dedicated to the king's inner circle, in this case the Marquis of Buckingham: Grimeston emphasised the importance of "teaching all Manly and Lordly government of those inward passions and perturbations that are evermore excited by outward pleasures" (1630).

[18] Bell et al tentatively identified Judith Man as a daughter of William Man, of Lyndsell, Essex, and granddaughter of John Man, Warden of Merton College Oxford, citing Harleian Society, vol. 13, but admitting that "there is very little evidence to place her" (132). A firmer identification emerges in the papers of the Wentworth family: "Man described himself in 1619 as 'having been servante and solicitor many yeres' to Sir William and Sir Thomas Wentworth" (P.R.O. St. Ch. 8/261/9, no. 27; Cooper 1).

absolutism increasingly associated with both the Stuart reign and the Strafford administration in Ireland.

While he had begun his career as one of the king's most vocal critics in Parliament, during the middle phase of Charles I's Personal Rule (his suspension of Parliament between 1628 and 1639) Wentworth dedicated himself to the king's service. By the end of the decade Wentworth had become one of the monarchy's most trusted advisors. Like Laud, he was bitterly hated by those who opposed the king's policies. As Lord Deputy of Ireland, placed there by Charles in 1632 to represent his authority and oversee his reforming, homogenizing and colonizing policies in that country, Wentworth attempted to mirror the king's paternal and authoritarian style of rule, describing his policy of upholding and enforcing the king's authority, and ruthlessness in following it through, as "Thorough". He deliberately established his court in Dublin as a parallel to the English court at Whitehall. The writer and career-courtier, James Howell, described Wentworth's court in a letter to a friend:

> Here is a most splendid court kept at the castle, and except that of the viceroy of Naples I have not seen the like in Christendom, and in one point of grandeur the Lord Deputy here goes beyond him, for he can confer honours and dub knights, which that viceroy cannot, or any other I know of. Traffic increaseth here wonderfully, with all kinds of bravery and buildings. (Howell 1, 281)

Like Charles I, Wentworth commissioned a portrait of himself from the Caroline court painter, Van Dyck, based on the well-known portrait of King Charles V of Spain with a hound painted by Titian. The enormous painting (it was nearly eight feet high) was exhibited in the semi-public but courtly space of the Bear Gallery at Whitehall in London and was designed to commemorate Wentworth's appointment as Lord Deputy General of Ireland in January 1632 (Millar 56).[19] In deliberately advertising her connection with the Wentworths, Man clearly aimed to enhance the status of her own family, as well as herself.

This agenda is also suggested by the fact that Wentworth was regarded as a model for the aspiring gentleman. In 1631 Richard Braithwait had dedicated his conduct manual, *The English Gentleman*, to Wentworth, then a rising star at court. Braithwait personifies his book as an upper servant offered into Wentworth's service to assist him in all his enterprises. The second edition of 1633 was again dedicated to Wentworth, who had by then transferred his household to Dublin. According to Braithwait, although far from the court in London, Wentworth continued to function as a model of virtue which as "the greatest Signal and Symbol of Gentry: is rather expressed by goodness of Person, than greatness of Place" (preface, A1r). This emphasis on personal qualities rather than rank is present in both the 1631 and the 1633 editions of the *Gentleman*: Wentworth was not high-born; his second marriage to Arabella Hollis had raised him socially, but it was his political work that had established his value for the king. In Braithwait's text, therefore, Wentworth's rise functions as a sign of the possibility of upward social mobility through uncompromising loyalty to the king.

While Wentworth provided an important model for the aspiring gentleman of the 1630s, his female relatives inspired a parallel conduct manual for ladies: Braithwait's

[19] Wentworth also had his children painted by Van Dyck during the 1630s, presumably to emphasize his courtly aspirations and parallels with the familial iconography associated with the royal family (Millar 75-6).

second edition of *The English Gentleman* is bound with *The English Gentlewoman*, dedicated to Arabella Wentworth, Wentworth's second wife. As the "gentleman" had been offered into Thomas Wentworth's service the "gentlewoman" was offered into the service of Arabella, "Her whose true love to virtue hath highly ennobled herself, renowned herself, renowned her sex, honoured her house" (2-3v).[20] This elegant bid for patronage reflects the structures that underlay the early modern household: one of the main routes to social advancement for lower ranks of gentlemen and gentlewomen was entry into a noble household (Girouard 16-8). Since Man was probably introduced into the Wentworth household in this capacity, her work can also be regarded as engaging with these works. Braithwait's address to the reader asserts that the "gentleman" should ensure that his family or household be seen as an "Academy, wherein all sacred and moral knowledge is to be taught" (A1r-v), a sentiment which, as we have seen, is echoed in Man's dedication to his daughter.

Wentworth had been seeking an earldom as a reward for his service to the king since 1636. He was eventually created Earl of Strafford after assisting Charles to fight the Scots Covenanters in August 1639. Although Man's translation must have been completed prior to Wentworth's elevation to the peerage in January 1640, it was entered into the Stationers' Register very soon afterwards (on 10 February). Wentworth then received the Order of the Garter and was promoted to the position of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He returned to England on the convening of the Short Parliament in April 1640 to take command of the king's army against the Scots in August, a campaign which ended in stalemate. The king summoned Wentworth back to London at the convening of the Long Parliament in November 1640; Wentworth was arrested by Parliament, and subsequently executed by attainder, with the coerced complicity of the king, in May 1641. During his own trial in 1649, King Charles I identified his betrayal of Wentworth as the moral crime for which God had decided he should be punished.

Man's praise for Wentworth through an address to her daughter demonstrates her desire to acquire his support for her work (a direct address to Wentworth would have been regarded as improper for a young, unmarried girl). Moreover, since her book was published during the conflicts between the king and the Scottish Presbyterians, she is also likely to have been aware of the parallels between the loyal but unbending warrior, Poliarchus, the ideal counsellor, Archombrotus, and her family's patron. In her text, Man emphasises Poliarchus's distrust of former rebels' new declarations of loyalty to Meleander. Wentworth advised the king against trusting the formerly factious puritans who pledged their support for the king in the Scottish wars, regarding their love for Charles as fragile (Smuts 40). Wentworth's commitment to "force" rather than the gentler value of "love" also characterised his attitude towards the Scottish rebels. He urged the king to fight aggressively and punish the rebels harshly, in defiance of those who argued that this would damage the king's bond of love with his subjects (Smuts 40). When the Long Parliament convened in November 1640, Wentworth was reviled as an arbiter of monarchic tyranny, even by some of the king's supporters. However, earlier that year the second Scottish War represented the height of his influence with the king. Judith Man's use of Wentworth's recently conferred title in her address to Anne is therefore highly significant: Man's

[20] After Strafford's fall in 1641 Braithwait's "Gentleman" and "Gentlewoman" were offered into the service of Philip, Earl of Pembroke, and his then wife, Anne. Braithwait's choice of Pembroke as a potential patron represented another strategic career move: Pembroke was an early supporter of Parliament who was later to play a prominent role in the civil wars.

family's decision to publish a statement of their connection to the family at this time might also represent an expression of support for Wentworth in the face of an increasingly divided court.

Some features of Barclay's story give it an ironic resonance in 1640. Meleander's betrayal of his loyal servant, Poliarchus, closely resembles Charles's surrender of Wentworth to the Long Parliament in 1641: Meleander's weakness and gullibility, combined with the malignant influence of his evil councillors, lead him to sacrifice a hero who has dedicated himself to supporting the rights of the Crown. After his execution Wentworth was regarded by some as a royalist martyr. In 1641, Lettice, Viscountess Falkland, sent Lady Lucy Hastings an account of Wentworth's self-sacrifice and pious preparations for death:

> I have sent you that of his that is nearest truth, his speech upon the scaffold and his letter to the King. Those that are most unwilling to look upon anything in him but his crimes do not deny his dying with as much courage as he could have about him in his greatest prosperity. (Bickley 2, 82).[21]

The poet, Richard Fanshawe's note to his elegy, "On the Earl of Strafford's Trial", also cites "the Earl's pathetical Letter to the King, which is to be seen in print, wherein he begs of his Majesty, to pass the Bill for his death, to quiet the Kingdoms" (Wilcher 64).

Wentworth's execution inspired a flood of pamphlet responses in which he was commonly depicted as the worst of the king's "evil counselors", as "subtle as Lewis the eleventh, libidinous as Tiberius, cruel as Nero, covetous as rich Cressius, as terrible as Phalris and mischievous as Sejanus" (*A Declaration* 3). The author of a complaint against the anti-Wentworth literature printed in 1641 (probably John Birkinhead) complained that more than three hundred pamphlets had presented false accounts of the Earl of Strafford's life, trial and death (*The Poets* [sic] *Knavery Discouered*, A2v).[22] The virulence of these public responses to Wentworth's fall and death demonstrate the symbolic role (as scapegoat) he came to play in the early stages of the conflicts leading to civil war. The publication of Man's text may therefore have had an additional agenda of rehabilitating Wentworth's reputation within the emergent public sphere.

In conclusion, when Judith Man says that she acted out of obedience to her family in publishing the text, she means exactly that. This does not undermine her achievement, but it does shed useful light on some of the political and literary activities of the period immediately preceding the outbreak of civil war, as well as demonstrating early seventeenth-century political actors' readiness to deploy female voices- a key factor in later civil war propaganda. Her text demonstrates the way in which translations could become sites of "transformation": the French religious and political struggles of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are transformed into those of the Stuart monarchies in seventeenth-century England, where puritans and disaffected Roman Catholics were regarded as factious rebels. The Counter-Reformation agenda of Nicolas Coeffeteau is also transformed into a Protestant agenda: Man tells her dedicatee that she is superior to Argenis

[21] Cary refers to the letter in which Strafford released the king from his promise to protect him (dated 4 May 1641). Sir Edward Dering also wrote to his wife: "There are six severall copies of Strafford's speeches, none very right" (Larkin 47).

[22] For a discussion of public responses to Strafford's fall and death, see Kilburn and Milton, 1996.

in one thing, her knowledge of the "true" religion. Finally, the text deliberately transfers the symbolic authority of the king to Wentworth's household, allying herself, her family and her source text with Wentworth's controversial and uncompromising political stance. While she frames her work within a conventional statement of obedience, loyalty and dependence, on her parents, her patron's family, and the monarchy, Man's valorisation of Poliarchus's ruthless pursuit of justice and unshakeable loyalty expresses her support for Wentworth, and his dedication to what he perceived as the king's interests. However, Man's translation must also be placed (as she herself suggests) within an emergent tradition of female authorship. The gendered aspects of her translation (a concentration on Argenis's role as mediator between monarch and people, rehabilitating and regenerating monarchic authority and social order through love, marriage, and obedience, rather than rebellion and assertion of personal power) demonstrate Man's conception of the specific nature and value of women's roles within the Caroline cultural ethos. Man's erasure of her heroine's transgressive qualities, and her own assertions of obedience to patriarchal authority, therefore, reinforce her royalist agenda, but do not negate her literary achievement.

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Özet

"Kamuya Teşhire Zorlanmak": Judith Man'ın *Epitome of the History of the Faire Argenis and Polyarchus* (1640) Vakasında Edebi Yetkinliğin Sorgulanması

John Barclay'in meşhur Latince romansı *Argenis*'in Nicolas Coeffeteau tarfından hazırlanmış Fransızca versiyonunun Judith Man'a ait İngilizce çevirisi, Barclay'in zorlu anlatımının basitleştirilmesini ve politik içeriğinin daha kadınsı bir bakış açısıyla aşk ve evlilik üzerine yoğunlaşmasını temsil eder. Dahası, ataerkil ideolojiye karşı çıkıştan ziyade, projenin Man'ın yakın aile çevresinin saraya ve kralın en güçlü danışmanlarından, Sir

Thomas Wentwoorth'le çıkar birliği arzusuyla basıldığı anlaşılmaktadır. Man'ın anlatımının politik entrikalardan ziyade aşk ve evliliğe odaklanmış olması eleştirmenlerce onun erken modern toplumdaki toplumsal cinsiyet konumunun ifadesi olarak yorumlanırken, bu temalar onun eserini Karolin (Stuart) rejiminin ahlaki değerleriyle ilintilendirmektedir. Yani Man'ın öyküsü ve edebi kariyeri bizim için yitik olsa da, eserlerini Mary Sidney ve Mary Wroth gibi ardıllarınınkiyle kıyasladığımızda; Man süregelen kadın yazarlık geleneği içinde kabul edilme arzusunun üzerinde durmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Judith Man, çeviri, kadın yazarlık, politik romans, Karolin politik değerleri, Sir Thomas Wentworth, Strafford Kontu

Reconceptualizing the Second-Generation Diasporic Subjectivity Through Gogol: A Reappraisal of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*"

Delphine Munos

Abstract: While Jhumpa Lahiri's work might be thought of as one of the most emblematic instances of the popularity of today's Indian-American diasporic literature, its hyper-visibility coincides with an odd form of critical invisibility. Indeed, the vast majority of critical interventions on Lahiri's three books takes as its premise that view that cultural assimilation and hybridity are still valid notions to investigate narratives focusing on members of the second generation, even as these offspring of migrants can be seen to derive their "Indianness" from their parents only. This essay takes its cue from Vijay Mishra's understanding of the diasporic subjectivity in terms of an impossible mourning, and hinges on the hypothesis that what is passed on from one generation to the next organizes itself less around positive, than negative, entities–i.e. the gap, the absent, the unsaid. My aim is to examine how, through *The Namesake*'s protagonist, Lahiri redefines the notions of belonging and arrival as regards the Indian-American second generation not in terms of cultural assimilation –which would hardly make sense for characters who were born in the U.S. in the first place– but in terms of a re-symbolization of the gaps in the parents' migrant narratives.

Keywords: Jhumpa Lahiri, diasporic subjectivity, Indian-American second generation, migrant narratives

Engaging with Jhumpa Lahiri's three books–*Interpreters of Maladies* (1999), *The Namesake* (2003), and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008)–is not as straightforward as one might think. This is not only because Lahiri's work is categorized as belonging to the much idealized and equally demonized category of the "new" Indian diaspora,[1] one that seems to have effortlessly produced one best-seller after the other over the last past decade, causing critics such as Amitava Kumar to sarcastically wonder "what's so hot about Indian writing?" (80). Nor is it because the sudden canonization of her work, following on Lahiri having been awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2000, ushered her overnight into the apparently irreconcilable position of an "ethnic" mainstream figure, thus inviting inevitable sarcasm about the "not too spicy"[2] character of her Indian-American narratives of cultural and psychological disorientation. Rather, the difficulty in writing about Lahiri lies in the fact that her hyper-visibility, her having been promoted to the status of celebrity author so soon, has wrapped her work in an odd form of paradoxical *in*visibility, as if close analyses of her novel and two collection of short stories had been rendered instantly irrelevant by the mass of presuppositions relating to her second-generation Indian-American hyphenated cultural identity. By and large, Lahiri's work appears to be buried alive beneath the apparently

[1] The phrase "'new' Indian diaspora" will be defined shortly after.

[2] This is an allusion to the title of an essay by Lavina Dhingra Shankar, "Not Too Spicy: Exotic Mistresses of Cultural Translation in the Fiction of Chitra Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri".

unmovable stone of "hybridity talk", or alternatively, beneath the never-possible mandate of being "Indian enough", even as it primordially deals with the second-generation Indian-American experience. Only Julia Leyda refreshingly begins her 2010 interview with Lahiri by insisting on the decisive role played by marketers, readers and reviewers in shaping, sometimes in disfiguring, the image of writers and their works. Leyda's introductory remarks include the paradox that "much of the marketing and reviewing of Lahiri's books, along with books by writers born in India, depicts her work as mysterious and sensual, even when the writing itself does not seem to fit such characterization" (2).

Taking as its premise the suggestion that what is passed on from one generation to the next organizes itself less around positive, than negative entities–i.e. the gap, the absent, the unsaid–this article sets out to examine how, in *The Namesake*, Lahiri may well redefine the notions of belonging and arrival as regards the Indian-American second generation not in terms of cultural assimilation–which would hardly make sense for characters who were born in the U.S. in the first place–but in terms of a re-symbolization of the gaps in the parents' migrant narratives. My overall aim here is to propose an alternative reading of *The Namesake*, one that presents Gogol, the second-generation protagonist of Lahiri's 2003 novel, as being haunted by his own belatedness in relation to the first generation's experience. In the first part of this essay, I will highlight some of the blind spots that can be seen to be intrinsic to today's critical reception of Lahiri's books, notably by elaborating on the ways in which an overemphasis on "culture" and ethnic questions might obstruct the perception of crucial aspects of her work. Before doing so, however, I want to situate my attempt to emphasize the importance of the negative in Lahiri's 2003 novel in relation to Vijay Mishra's critical output.

Any analysis of the negative and of its importance as far as diasporic literature is concerned cannot ignore Mishra's groundbreaking work. Mishra's *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora* has indeed constituted a major influence in my determination to re-read *The Namesake* at a slight angle from any American or Indian "cultural" perspective. As will become clear further, I tend to find many points (or rather omissions) in Mishra's reading of Lahiri's novel debatable, so my indebtedness to his critical output does not stem from his insights into Lahiri *per se*. Rather, what has fascinated me in Mishra's study is that he invokes the concept of the imaginary in his assessment of the Indian diaspora and its literature, which opens up a space for discussing the decisive role that spaces of unconsciousness may play in many literary renderings of the diasporic experience, as well as in migrants' and descendants of migrants' self-representations. As Mishra reminds us, Jacques Lacan links the imaginary to the (unavoidable) residual primary narcissism that is initially brought into play by the mirror phase, a stage through which the infant starts constituting an ego by identifying with his/her image in the mirror (and more often than not by seeing him/herself magnified in his/her mother's eyes). Lacan makes it clear that, even though the infant comes to evolve a subjectivity of his/her own, the primary narcissism linked to the mirror phase "lives on," as it were, in his/her unconscious. In other words, the specular, ego-building, investment of the mother of primary narcissism by the infant (later the adult) is never completely over and done with. If it is true, moreover, that the mother of primary narcissism is generally thought of as taking on a variety of forms, among which the motherland, Mishra's revaluation of the concept of the imaginary has tremendous implications in a diasporic context. In such context, the absence of the motherland can indeed be seen to re-activate a play of idealization and specular identification with this ever-lost symbol of origin. Drawing on James Clifford's oft-mentioned opening up, in 1994, of the word diaspora in order to characterize the lives of "any group living in

displacement" (in Mishra 13), Mishra understands the diasporic imaginary as pertinent to "any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or through self-evident or implied political coercion, as a group that lives in displacement" (14).

Mishra's pinpointing of the fact that Žižek defines the imaginary with regard to the question one should *really* pose the hysteric–not "what is his/her object of desire?" but "where does he/she desire from? –allows me to remark that, throughout Mishra's book, the Indian diaspora is represented as desiring "from" the original or ancestral homeland, or better, "from" an absence, even in those cases of generations who had no first-hand experience of migration as they were born in the new land. Mishra's unprecedented move is indeed linked to his understanding of the diasporic imaginary as being informed by an impossible mourning for the Indian motherland. Invoking trauma studies and psychoanalytic theories of mourning (mainly those of Freud), Mishra compares the loss of India with a never-healing wound which is unconsciously passed on from generation to generation until all forms of reminiscence about the initial departure is extinguished, or alternatively, until it gets reintegrated into the migrants' (or into the descendants of migrants') psyches through multiple processes of (re)symbolization. As Makarand Paranjape remarks in his laudatory review of the book, the theoretical crux of Mishra's study indicates a shift in his earlier position. Mishra's 2007 sombre reappraisal of the diasporic subjectivity operates a drastic corrective to his previous "celebratory Rushdie-like" stance that helped constructing "migrancy as the defining condition of late capitalism [which is] typical of the (post-) modern condition itself" (Paranjape 183) –a problematic idea which still holds sway today.

One of the main implications of Mishra's perception of the diasporic imaginary as melancholically fixated on an absence elevated to the status of an unparalleled ideal, is that it leads us to think of diaspora "in terms of negation" (Mishra 16), indeed in terms of losses wholly or partially withdrawn from consciousness. On the other hand, one of the main objections as regards the pertinence of applying Mishra's theory of the diasporic imaginary to Lahiri's work concerns the critic's implicit reluctance to extend this concept from the Indian plantation-diaspora to what he calls the "new" Indian diaspora, which also happens to be the diaspora at stake throughout Lahiri's work. For Mishra, the "new" Indian diaspora relates to the late modern or late capitalist Indian diaspora which has entered "metropolitan centres of Empire or other white settler countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA as part of a post-1960s pattern of global migration" (3). A "purist" (Paranjape 184), as Paranjape calls him, Mishra is determined–quite understandably in many ways– not to put the "old" and "new" Indian diasporas on a par, which leads him to call into question the appropriateness of labelling "diasporic" those who consider their dislocation exclusively in gleeful, positive terms. While his reservations concerning the widely hospitable character of the term diaspora still leave enough room for including some members of the "new" Indian diaspora of global capital, Mishra's relying on trauma studies so as to investigate the maintenance of a specific diasporic imaginary through the generations is, by and large, old diaspora-specific. Thus Mishra locates the moment of transgenerational trauma as regards the descendants of the Indian plantation-diaspora in the atrocious nineteenth-century journey across the black waters,[3] "in the space of the ships, the

[3] Indenture took place as a direct consequence of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833. The system of indentured labour indeed provided a cheap workforce in the colonial plantation economies of the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, South and Southeast Asia, Africa and

passage and the barracks" (Mishra 12). Remarking that the exact timing of the historical moment of trauma is less important than its after-effects in the restructuring of the psyche, Mishra suggests that absence has become, for the traumatized subject, a negative-turned-positive category which imprints its blank hallmark on the melancholic creation of an "India-within". For the critic, "the moment of 'rupture' is transformed into a trauma around an absence which, because it cannot be fully symbolized, becomes part of the fantasy itself" (Mishra 16).

At the risk of appearing to denaturalize Mishra, I would like to import some of his insights into my considerations of the Indian-American second-generation diasporic imaginary as portrayed by Lahiri in *The Namesake*. This is not to dispute that the legacies of the "old" and "new" Indian diasporas bear little resemblance to one another.[4] Still, while much critical attention has been paid to the class-streamed form of migration inherent in the "new" Indian diaspora, the fact that voluntary migration applies *only* to the male body of this affluent diaspora (at least for those patterns of migrations taking place in the late 1960s and the 1970s, which form the background of Lahiri's work), has been virtually ignored.[5] What is more, although Susan Koshy aptly remarks that "[Lahiri] is careful to distinguish between the chosen migrations of some of their male characters and the involuntary journeys of the wives who follow them after their marriages are arranged" (596), the ways in which such lopsided parental severing from India might later impact on the second generation's own sense of arrival in the land of their birth remains, thus far, a neglected issue. Only Mary Mathew astutely remarks that, "symbolically incarcerated" as they are by "the compelling need to be homemakers", mothers in diasporic fiction often "resort to modes of escapism that in turn trigger male anxiety and eventually victimize the children" (217-18). As for the growing youth of the second generation,

> [they] construct the homeland [i.e. India] as a series of absences and negations, analogous to E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India,* which sees India mainly in terms of its absences […]. To the uninitiated second generation, the objective correlative of India is the baffling emptiness of the mysterious caves, or as Sara Suleri has argued, "the essence of India represented by mysterious inner spaces which can be described but not interpreted", let alone assimilated. (Mathew 218)

Certainly Mrs Sen, the eponymous protagonist of a short story included in *Interpreter of Maladies*, stands as the most emblematic of those first-generation female characters who unenthusiastically trailed after their husbands from India to the U.S. on a

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the Pacific. This scheme lasted roughly from 1830 to 1916, a period at the end of which indentured labourers generally got stranded in their new locations. See for instance the chapter "The Age of Colonial Capital" in *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora*. ed. Brij V. Lal.

[4] Parvati Raghuram and Ajaya Kumar Sahoo interestingly point out that what makes the new Indian diaspora "new" is not the sites of arrival but the conditions of mobility. Thus countries such as New Zealand for instance are a "destination for both old Fijian diaporics and new (often skilled) migrants directly from India" (10).

[5] It must be noted that sociologist studies have done a better job, thus far, of comparing diasporas rather then understanding them as a monolith. With respect to the gendered aspects of transnational migration, see for instance Evangelia Tastsoglou & Alexandra Dobrowolsky. eds. *Women, Migration and Citizenship: Making Local, National and Transnational Connection*, and Parvati Raghuram, Ajaya Kumar Sahoo, Brij Maharaj & Dave Sangha. eds. *Tracing an Indian Diaspora*.

dependent visa, only to fall prey, upon arrival, to ever-aggravating forms of alienation and isolation when it became clear that they would never acclimatize themselves to their new surroundings, and what is more, that their personal world might have shut down for good on the very day when they left India.[6] In the title story of *Unaccustomed Earth*, even voluntary migration takes on disturbing contours when looked at from the (male) vantage point of old age. Thus Ruma's father, a first-generation Indian-American migrant who was recently widowed, does not allow himself to give much thought to the prospect of moving in with his daughter in her new Seattle house, fixated as he is on the fact that he had once turned his back on his own parents by settling in America. A sense of inexpressible guilt, of a futility beyond repair, now colours his Indian-American success story as he retrospectively understands the price one has to pay for achieving upward mobility through migration: "In the name of ambition and accomplishment, none of which mattered anymore, he had forsaken them" (*Unaccustomed Earth* 51).

In *The Namesake*, Lahiri also draws attention to the quite different ways in which migration impacts on either side of the gender barrier, while adding a transgenerational twist. Starting her story of second-generation disorientation with the very birth of its protagonist, Gogol, filtered through his mother, Lahiri implies that, for their parents, the offspring of migrants are bound to incarnate, albeit unwittingly, the living signifiers of an arrival in the U.S. which belatedly seals the irremediable character of the departure from India. Significantly, in the first chapter of *The Namesake*, immigrant motherhood is presented not as a means towards better integration into the new land–which it will become, eventually– but, first and foremost, as a source of renewed anxiety, or better as a merciless eye-opener on the unforeseen consequences of having relocated so far away from the homeland. Already "terrified" at the thought of "rais[ing] a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare" (*The Namesake* 6), Ashima significantly reacts to her first-born's coming-into-the-world not with joy, but with (misplaced?) commiseration. As if projecting onto Gogol her own sense that, "without a single grandparent or parent or uncle or aunt at her side, the baby's birth […] feels somehow haphazard, only half true", Ashima "pit[ies]" her son because "she has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived" (24-5).

That Gogol's birth starts giving solid form to the necessity, for Ashima, of mourning the homeland and of acknowledging the grim reality of the "here and now" some eighteen months after her physical arrival in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is also apparent in the ways in which her Indian watch, "a bon voyage gift from her parents" (*The Namesake* 4), is at last perceived by her to produce "American seconds" (4) at those moments when she times her contractions, now part and parcel as she is of "the hospital's accelerated day" (5). In fact, it takes more than just Gogol's coming-into-the-world to make Ashima renounce the suspended temporality of a departure that remains partially unclaimed, in Cathy Caruth's sense,[7] because the losses provoked by migration are still insufficiently acknowledged, let alone symbolized and mourned. The suggestion that migration is as much about negotiating new cultural identities as about knowing how to inhabit loss–even knowing how to lose

[6] Significantly, Mrs Sen repeatedly plays a tape on which her mother recorded soon-to-be-outdated mundane information about Calcutta pertaining to the day where her daughter left the homeland. The implication is that Mrs Sen has stayed psychically stuck on that day; see Jhumpa Lahiri, "Mrs Sen's" in *Interpreter of Maladies*.

[7] I here refer to the title of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience*, in which she takes up the peculiar "living-on" of traumatic experiences that are left psychically unprocessed.

what is half-lost already–is eloquently emphasized, for instance, by V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*. In this novel, Naipaul's protagonist only seems to truly "arrive" in England on the occasion of the death of his sister Sati[8] back in the homeland, indeed more than twenty years after his first journey between Trinidad and London–the journey which has remained, over the years, the "fracturing one" (172). Only when real death "fit[s] a real grief where melancholy ha[s] created a vacancy" (387), as he suggestively puts it, does the first-person narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* finally manage to put an end to "the distortion of [his] personality that had begun on the very day [he] had left home" (172), indeed to reconcile his different personas for the purposes of renewed artistic creation.

In *The Namesake*, the ways in which the death of Ashima's father similarly marks a point of no return from whence the irreversibility of the departure from India retroactively takes on flesh, as it were, is represented through the set of expensive gifts for her family that Gogol's mother accidentally leaves behind in the train, caught as she is in sleepy reveries about her imminent first journey back to Calcutta. First perceived by Ashima as a "small miracle" which causes her to "feel connected to Cambridge in a way she has not previously thought possible, affiliated with its exceptions as well as its rules" (42-3), the unexpected resurfacing of the forgotten items via the MBTA lost and found anticipates too closely on the shocking news of her father's death back in Calcutta not to be retrospectively tainted by it. Ashima's deferred feeling of connection to Cambridge thus comes at a price, or better, with an awakening of sorts. Her gesture of abandoning in another train, as she is fully conscious and "wide awake" (46) this time, the same expensive gifts for her father that she had once involuntarily left behind, does not only operate as an acknowledgement of her father's absence from the world. More generally, this gesture also bears witness to her recognizing the impossibility of reclaiming all that what was once forsaken, even unwittingly so, through the waking dream of migration.

If, on the one hand, Ashima's gesture consecrates the irreversibility of departure, on the other it signals the possibility of "true" arrival, notwithstanding subsequent travels back-and-forth between India and the U.S. Thus the narrative directly moves from Ashima's mourning ritual on the train, at the end of Chapter 2, to the Gangulis' acquisition of their own house in the suburbs of a university town outside Boston, at the very beginning of Chapter 3, which suggests a causal link between processes of mourning and re-rooting. The fact that Ashima will come to qualify the house on Pemberton Road as "not fully […] home" but "home nevertheless" (280) at the end of *The Namesake* is not my main concern here. What interests me is that Lahiri's novel resolutely positions Ashima's accession to mourning, through her father's death, in the intermediary period between the birth of her son and that of her daughter. To put it differently, Ashima's belated accession to mourning connects Sonia's birth, unlike that of Gogol, with the possibility of symbolizing what was

[8] The fact that V.S. Naipaul dedicates his book "in loving memory of [his] brother", the writer Shiva Naipaul, superimposes an area of darkness, as it were, upon the first-person narrator's claim that his encounter with real grief, and the end of his melancholic disposition, takes place in the wake of his sister's death. A comparison between the first page of the book, which mentions the date of Shiva Naipaul's death (1985), with its last page, which situates the writing of the novel between October 1984 and April 1986, makes it clear that the death of V.S. Naipaul's brother has in fact occurred in the very midst of the writing stage of *The Enigma of Arrival*, though not a word is mentioned in the narrative about this loss. This "detail" passes ironic comment on the apparent resolution of grief depicted towards the end of the novel. See V.S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival*.

left "back there", thus indicating some sort of different lineage between the protagonist and his sister. This casts a new light on the riddle of the difference between Gogol and Sonia, whose comparative ease of identity mocks her brother's obsession with a name which "manages […] to distress him physically, like the scratchy tag of a shirt he has been forced permanently to wear" (76). To the extent that Sonia's birth follows on Ashima's psychic arrival, as it were, it is hardly surprising that, unlike her brother whose name "resists mutation" (76), she shall be granted a name which progressively changes from Sonali into Sonu, Sona and then Sonia and which, through its potential Russian, European and South American connotations, "makes her a citizen of the world" (62). Arguably, Sonia's fluidity of second-generation Indian-American identity needs to be understood not only in terms of the Gangulis' evolving of a new set of values to live by in the U.S. ever since the birth of their son, as I have argued elsewhere (cf. Munos), but also in terms of the end of a latency period within which Ashima was unable to objectify, let alone mourn, the string of unsymbolized losses inherent in the experience of migrancy. So it is hardly sufficient to look at second-generation notions of belonging and arrival in terms of a negotiation between *positive* cultural entities such as India and the U.S. If that were the case, this would leave totally out of sight, for instance, the second-generation experience of being born from mothers who thought, at least during the time of acclimatization to their new surroundings, that they belonged *elsewhere*, thus unwittingly projecting an image of motherhood (and by extension, of origins) deeply informed, even animated, by a form of *absence*. Drawing on psychoanalyst Donald W. Winnicott's research on the "negative side of relationships", André Green writes, with respect to children who were raised in their first years by permanently absentminded parents, that "the gap is the only real thing" (274). And indeed, it is striking that the realness of the gap represents an elusive yet characteristic feature around which, even well into adulthood, most of Lahiri's second-generation characters still organize their lives, for better or worse.

In fact, even a cursory look at Lahiri's 2008 collection of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*, reveals that the maternal enigma of domestic fortitude, muffled resentment against their husbands, and melancholic absence-in-presence pervades many a short story in which second-generation members of the Indian diaspora retrace, or simply allude to, their childhood. Implicitly or explicitly, Lahiri's texts recurrently locate second-generation childhood experiences in the fraught years of the late 1960s and early 1970s–a time when the after-effects of the 1965 amendments to the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act had yet to give relative visibility and stability to the South Asian presence in the States.[9] Thus the opening of *The Namesake* saddles Gogol's birth with a date, 1968, which in itself imprints a paradoxical hallmark of the "not-yet-come" on the protagonist's coming-into-the-world. Likewise, the fact that most of the stories in *Unaccustomed Earth* situate the upbringing of their second-generation characters at a time of both communal and maternal un-arrival, as it were, traces an alternative genealogy wherein the figure of the

[9] Pierre Gottschlich points out that while the first phase of Indian settlement in the U.S. dates back to the nineteenth century, the Indian-American community ceased to exist after War World 2, owing to "tightened emigration legislation, displacements and voluntary return migration to India" (156). Allowing access to highly trained and educated Asian professionals, the 1965 amendments to the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act initiated drastic changes in American demographics. As a direct result of these amendments, with respect to Indian emigration only, "almost a hundred thousand engineers, physicians, scientists, professors, teachers, and their dependants had entered the U.S. by 1975" (Jensen 280).

void, as well as that of the melancholically-absented mother, are fearfully intuited (and equally resisted) as some of the closest points one can get to the origin. When re-reading Lahiri's work from the particular vantage point of *Unaccustomed Earth*, moreover, two additional questions present themselves while seeming to have never been properly answered: why do most of her high-achieving, urban, generally upper middle-class second-generation characters–those "exemplary representative[s] of the Asian children of post-1965 immigrants of professional background who have been lovingly and anxiously fantasized into existence over the past several decades" (Song 355), as Min Hyoung Song ironically categorizes Gogol–inhabit modalities of dying with such a remarkable consistency? And why do these human prototypes of perfect normalcy in terms of U.S. mainstream identity–who, though not white, "might as well be" (Song 354) –unfailingly obsess over some obsolete quest for origins that goes back to the pre-generational moment of departure? Strikingly in such context, Sudha, in "Only Goodness", figures her parents' separation from India as an "ailment that ebb[s] and flow[s] like a cancer" (*Unaccustomed Earth* 138). In her 2010 interview with Julia Leyda, Lahiri expressed the peculiarities of her second-generation experience not in cultural terms, but in terms of a feeling, that of an "abyss very close" (in Leyda 13). This has further encouraged me to think of diasporic transmissions–perhaps like most transmissions–as that which is organized around the unsaid, the unrepresentable, the gap, the emptiness, all of which is framed by ambivalence and desire.

In what follows, commenting on the blind spots of *The Namesake*'s critical reception will allow me to clarify my stance. At this stage, however, it is first necessary to differentiate my own probing into Lahiri's representation of the second-generation diasporic subjectivity, from Mishra's understanding of the diasporic imaginary as informed by some "phantom loss," which he associates with the loss of the Indian motherland. Indeed, in the case of those members of the diaspora who have had no first-hand experience of migration, Mishra's concept of a "phantom loss" is ultimately problematic. As far as second-generation characters such as Hema and Kaushik,[10] Gogol and his London-born wife, Moushumi, for instance, are concerned, one is consistently tempted to ask: what phantom loss? And what motherland? At a 2009 conference entitled "India and the Indian Diasporic Imagination",[11] a middle-aged female participant raised an indignant, self-proclaimed Indian, voice, as regards the very possibility that second-generation members of the Indian diaspora might participate in the mourning of any Indian motherland at all: "But they weren't born there in the first place!"

In the face of the irrefutable, down-to-earth solidity of such an argument, turning to Mishra's momentous 2007 study of the literature of the Indian diaspora, though informed by his inspired resolve "to explore the idea of 'writing diaspora' in an analogy with writing trauma or writing mourning" (Mishra 117), proved of little help. However far-reaching Mishra's intentions might seem, the enormity of the task he had set himself could not prevent him from limiting his study to a selected set of texts, the pride of place going to authors answering to his own personal interest for the history of indenture. Far from excluding authors belonging to the "new" Indian diaspora, Mishra includes Lahiri, too, in

[10] Hema and Kaushik are the eponymous U.S.-born Indian-American protagonists of Lahiri's 2008 trilogy, which forms Part 2 of *Unaccustomed Earth*.

[11] This conference was held in Montpellier in April 2009 under the aegis of the CERPAC, Paul Valery University Montpellier 3, France, with Dr Rita Christian and Dr Judith Misrahi-Barak as convenors.

his wide-ranging corpus, but his otherwise valuable reading of *The Namesake* along intertextual links with Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat"–the same text whose reading keeps Gogol's father's awake during his life-changing train crash in Lahiri's novel–falls short of capturing the haunted transgenerational dynamics of the novel.

Perhaps Mishra simplifies matters a little too much by all-too-hastily deciding *not* to include Gogol and his sister Sonia among the (un)happy few caught in the dynamics of a departure that continually travels towards meaning. Notwithstanding the fact that Lahiri's book primordially centres on Gogol's tortuous route from childhood to early adulthood, for Mishra, the "hyphen as a sign as much of trauma as of creative reconstruction of a new, hybrid, empowering self, is to be located not in the American-born Gogol and Sonia, but in their parents, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli" (193). Unsurprisingly given the unapologetic first-generation orientation of his reading, Mishra ends up invoking the figure of "the diaspora that returns, and haunts" in relation to Ashima's final decision to fulfil a promise she had made in the past to return to Calcutta. Mishra views Ashima's promise as a "ghostly reminder" that "disembodies her" (195) because, by envisaging to spend six months of the year in India and the other half-year in the U.S., "she will be without borders, without a home of her own" (in Mishra 195).

The same problematic gesture of construing mourning as crucial to the diasporic subjectivity and, at the same time, of making this supposedly key theme disappear through the loophole by conveniently reinterpreting Lahiri's text as mainly concerned with the first generation, is apparent in Deepika Bahri's essay on Mira Nair's film adaptation of *The Namesake*. Much like Mishra who posits the dialectics of melancholia and mourning in the introduction of his book as the theoretical crux of his readings, Bahri starts her article in *Film Quarterly* with reckoning that the central theme of *The Namesake* is mourning "for the loss of loved ones, for a home, a way of life, connection to parents or children". In fact, she even extends the relevance of such thematic nexus to the loss of "one's own self" (Bahri 10), as if suggesting that, in spite of his U.S. birth, Gogol's imaginary affliction by his original self, "the one that should have been" (*The Namesake* 96), also grants him access to some form of mourning. The protagonist, no less, in Lahiri's book, Gogol is reduced to a guest appearance in Bahri's critical intervention on Nair's *The Namesake*. This demotion may be a result of Bahri's over-identification with Ashima's and Ashoke's migrant experiences (she is herself a U.S.-based scholar who was raised in Calcutta and she readily confides that Nair's movie is "almost too palpably resonant for a South Asian immigrant like [her]" (Bahri 10)). Alternatively, Bahri's downgrading of Gogol to a mere guest appearance may also be because, by giving more visibility to Gogol's parents than they are granted in the book, Nair's adaptation already prepares the way for such first-generation re-appropriation. In any case, Bahri's essay evacuates the very possibility that *The Namesake* might refer to anything *other* than the first-generation trials of transcontinental immigration. Ironically, she appears quite generous in pointing out that *The Namesake* is "in the end no more [her] story than that of other, non-South Asian immigrants in the audience" (Bahri 10), but the inclusive nature of her remark significantly stops short of reaching out to *desi* characters such as Gogol who, by virtue of their birth in the U.S., certainly fail to qualify as fully-fledged immigrants. Significantly, Bahri praises Nair's skill at playing with Ashoke's and Ashima's bilingualism, as well as the filmmaker's resolve to translate into Bengali some of the dialogues which originally take place in English in Lahiri's book. It may come as no surprise, then, Bahri's final move is to celebrate Nair's (Punjabi-born) sensibility to the emotional hues conveyed by the sudden shifts from

English to Bengali as paradoxical evidence that "the translation can be more faithful to our experience than the original" (Bahri 13).

Strikingly in this context, Bahri eludes the fact that, by moving its temporality ahead by more than a decade, Nair's movie does not prove particularly faithful to the historical context of Lahiri's book. The implications of such disruption are not insignificant, however. By recasting Ashoke's and Ashima's first encounter in Calcutta against a backdrop of pro-Communist demonstrations to which neither of them is shown to take part, Nair associates the forming of the couple in 1977[12] with the sweeping victory of the Left Front in West Bengal. Such historic transportation certainly anchors Gogol's parents' union within a politically-loaded Indian context, but by the same token it resolutely ignores the strong assimilative U.S. background of the book, one that is directly related, as already noted, to the opening of the U.S. borders to Asian migrants in the wake of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. Consequently, in Nair's version, Gogol comes into the world *circa* 1980 while, in Lahiri's story, Gogol's birth in 1968 clearly rivets him to the Indian-American communal desert of the late 1960s. In other words, Nair's version obfuscates that Gogol's birth in 1968 destines him to incarnate one of those "children of 1965" (cf. Song), indeed one of those offspring of migrants whose accumulated "cultural capital" directly follows from their fathers having been "a product of state engineering through immigration controls and of the beneficence of more socialized systems of education in South Asia" (Prashad viii), in Vijay Prashad's unblinking words. Can it be that Nair's resolve to re-politicize Lahiri's book along Indian lines, as well as to educate her predominantly Western audience to the leftist political leanings of Calcutta, gets in the way of her allowing access to the full meaning and generational complexities of Gogol's conflict with his name? Can it be that Bahri's determination to laud Nair's biased version of *The Namesake* as "more faithful to *our* experience than the original" betrays a form of unacknowledged consensus that second-generation stories of disorientation do not deserve the same kind of attention as those of their elders? To put it differently, can it be that the first-generation migrant experience is deemed so unique and irreplaceable that it perpetually dominates and displaces the story of those who can only be called "migrants by affiliation" (Dutt-Ballerstadt 54)? Should we not see in this critical trend an echo of what the *The Namesake* is *really* about: a reluctance or an impossibility, for characters such as Gogol, to authorize themselves a place in the world–in psychoanalytic terms, to enter the Symbolic–to the extent that the traumatic and unsymbolized aspects intuited in their parents' experience of migration recast them as bearers of a supposedly higher knowledge?

Not content to spend "half the time in interviews trying to explain to people that [she is] not from India" (in Leyda 9), Lahiri has her own ironic way of suggesting the extent to which first-generation re-appropriations of the second-generation odd narratives of arrival-without-arrival can be, at times, stifling and oppressive. In a short text published after she was granted the Pulitzer Prize for *Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri relates a rather surreal phone conversation with her parents in which she was made to justify her eligibility for the American award. In Lahiri's mothers' eyes, *Interpreter of Maladies* was not about "American life", as required by the eligibility rules for the Pulitzer, but about "people like herself and [her daughter]"–by which Lahiri's mother meant Indians *tout court*. Lahiri then humorously concludes: "I suppose I should be grateful that my mother wasn't on the Pulitzer committee" (Lahiri 2000).

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[12] In Mira Nair's *The Namesake*, the caption "Calcutta 1977" indeed appears on the screen as Ashima unsuspectingly gets home to a bride viewing instigated by her parents.

In all fairness to Lahiri's mother, *Interpreter of Maladies* navigates an uneasy border between stories set in India and in the U.S., and between first–and second-generation vantage points, which made it easier for "people who were born there" either to oversimplify things by hailing Lahiri as one of them, or at the opposite end, to take her to task for her characteristically second-generation "tunnel vision" (cf. Lahiri 2000) of India. This is not the case for *The Namesake*, which centres, as against Mishra, Nair and Bahri's consecration of Nair's interpretation of Lahiri's novel, on Gogol's Indian-American coming-of-age. So, Harish Trivedi's resolve to test Lahiri's novel against the criteria that it should accurately convey the "alien experience of the migrant" (41) seems even more problematic than Mishra's, Nair's and Bahri's analogous tendencies to simply *ignore* the second-generation orientation of the book. Heavily relying on bibliographical details that invite all-too-easy parallels between Gogol's conflicting relationship with "a pet name turned good name" (*The Namesake* 78) and Lahiri's own negotiations, in real life, with a pet name turned insidiously public after a U.S. primary school teacher preferred Jhumpa over her "good name", Trivedi tartly claims that "Lahiri is […] catharting in art her own private embarrassment and unhappiness at her parents having named her 'Jhumpa' informally […] whereas her former name was the sonorous mouthful 'Nilanjana Sudeshna'" (40). As if taking it upon himself to somewhat improve Lahiri's text, Trivedi then points out that the author's choice of going for "the distinctly fanciful and thoroughly un-Bengali pet-name Gogol" in the case of her fictional protagonist proves to be "too clever by half", because "what could have been potentially developed as a migrant's shame arising from retaining a home-grown cultural practice now hinges on just individual idiosyncrasy" (41). Needless to say, Trivedi's sympathy is with Nair's version:

> Mira Nair's film does the right thing by comparatively downplaying the "namesake" business, for it is obvious that the novelist needs to be rescued from an autobiographical obsession which she has not been quite able to subsume or transform into art. (41)

Obviously, the suggestion that the unlocalizable character of Gogol's name allows Lahiri to develop a story which is intentionally *not* about any "migrant's shame" (nor for that matter, about any migrant son's shame), is not even envisaged here. Trivedi's expectations about what Lahiri's novel *should be* apparently obscure the fact that, as David H. Lynn suggests, "it is not being Indian that is the problem. 'Gogol' is a burden precisely because it's *not* Indian" (164). And we may add: "Gogol" is a burden because it is neither Indian nor American, nor in fact truly Russian. In my reading, the "namesake business", as Trivedi calls this, hinges less on Gogol's embattled self-identification with any positive entities, than with negative ones. In fact, Lahiri's narrative cannot spell out more plainly the fact that, for its protagonist, "Gogol" unbecomingly carries the marks of his filiation with a void:

> The writer he is named after–Gogol isn't his first name. […] Not only does Gogol Ganguli have a pet name turned good name, but a last name turned first name. […] No one he knows in the world, in Russia or India or America or anywhere, shares his name. (*The Namesake* 78)

Re-reading *The Namesake* at a slight angle from any American or Indian cultural agenda, it becomes striking that, like most of the stories in *Unaccustomed Earth*, Lahiri's novel problematizes what could be called the genealogy of the unsymbolizable, whether

this unsymbolizable takes its roots in the parents' unattended grief for the homeland, or in their inescapable encounter with "the Real"[13] of a departure that has yet to find the modes of its symbolization. The son of the all-too-optimistically-named Ashoke and Ashima–respectively "he who transcends grief" and "she who is limitless, without borders" (*The Namesake* 26)–Gogol is ironically positioned at the crossroads between these two brands of unsymbolizable. As is made clear at the beginning of the book, the name "Gogol" irremediably links up Lahiri's protagonist with a traumatic event in his father's life, a train wreck of which he is one of the only survivors thanks to his having stayed awake at night by reading Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat". To the best of my knowledge, no critical attention has been paid to the ways in which this accident ties up the notion of departure, first with a death to rightful forms of filiation, and second, with a parturition as yet unmediated by the Symbolic.

Because of this accident, Ashoke indeed never completes the journey which he embarked on so that could claim his "positive" (in the sense of material and lawful) inheritance, that is, the books that his paternal grandfather had collected over a lifetime in the hope that he could pass them on to his grandson. What happens instead is that the train wreck irremediably reroutes Ashoke's fate by causing him to literally absorb his travel companion's advice that he should go abroad and "see as much of the world as [he] can" (16) before it is too late, to the detriment of his grandfather's motto, which was appropriated by Ashoke and opposed to Ghosh at the beginning of their journey, that books allow one "to travel without moving an inch" (16). It is hardly a coincidence that the carrier of the message which is about to save Ashoke's life in some measure, yet at the same time throw him out of symbolic orbit forever, should bear the name of Ghosh. There is indeed something godlike in the ways in which, unbeknown to Ashoke who cannot feel the lower half of his body in the wake of the catastrophe, Ghosh's mangled limbs find themselves "draped over his legs" (18), as if they could protect Ashoke against physical death while alluding to some sort of biological *and* spiritual mash-up between the two men. Significantly, Ashoke will spend the silent hours of his recovery period often thinking of Ghosh, invoking the memory of the dead so as to better transform a desire to *walk again* into a desire to *walk away*, "as far as he could from the place in which he was born and in which he had nearly died" (20). The fact that leaving the homeland represents, for Ashoke, a means of conjuring away the shock of having once experienced–too closely–the possibility of another form of departure revises Freud's narrative of railway collision as the paradigmatic traumatic experience, as explored for instance in *Moses and Monotheism* and in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (Freud 2001, 12; Freud 1939, 109). Being carried away from the train debris on a stretcher, and what is more, having stayed wide awake at the moment of impact, Ashoke neither incarnates the prototypical traumatized subject who disconnects from the unbearable reality of massive death by taking refuge in numbness, nor the one who "gets away […], apparently unharmed, [from] the spot where has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision" (Freud 1939, 109), in Freud's well-known words. Nevertheless, in archetypic traumatic fashion, it is by relying on zones of unconsciousness that Ashoke will, at least on the surface, come to terms with his

[13] In Elizabeth Wright's understanding of Jacques Lacan, the Real is "the given field of brute existence over which the Imaginary and Symbolic range in their rival attempts to control: one can say that it is that to which all reference and action have relevance, but which can only be handled through signifying practices" (Wright 102). Tony Myers defines the Real, after Slavoj Žižek, as "the world before it is carved up by language" (Myers 25).

unbearable tryst with death. True to the meaning of his name, Ashoke will indeed "[transcend] grief" (*The Namesake* 26), but only through converting, thanks to the space of unawareness materialized by the unacknowledged protective presence of Ghosh's mangled limbs– or rather, thanks to the dreamy space of idealization that his accidental incorporation of Ghosh's frustrated desire to live abroad retrospectively opens up for him–a narrative of "departure-as-death" into a narrative of "departure-as-leaving," and ultimately, into a narrative of "departure-as-rebirth".

Keeping the narrative of "departure-as-death" safely encrypted in that of "departure-as-rebirth", Ashoke will come to believe, despite his persisting limp and life-long compulsion to check his body to ascertain that he is still alive–in particular to "[press] his ribs to make sure they are solid" (*The Namesake* 21)–that "he was born twice in India, and then a third time, in America" (21). But it appears nevertheless that the ugly counterpart of the narrative of "departure-as-rebirth" is left suspended in the air, or rather, to play on homophones, suspended in the heir. So, it is unsurprising that, as he is told the (necessarily expunged) story behind his name,[14] Gogol does not quite buy his father's words of reassurance, with the consequence that, far from reminding him of that fateful night, the name "Gogol" reminds him instead of "everything that followed" (124). And for good reason: with "one hand going to his ribs, a habitual gesture that has baffled Gogol until now" (124), the father silently indulges in his checking ritual, which signifies a quite different story from the one that is being simultaneously delivered by speech. The implication is that, even reduced to a haunting presence, a compulsive gesture, the narrative of "departure-as-death" has lost none of its momentum. Despite Ashoke's best efforts, the scene in which Gogol learns the story behind his name consecrates him not as a bearer of a brand-new future exonerated from the soiling trace of death (i.e. the bearer of "everything that followed"), but rather as a witness to, a receptacle as well as a potential deliverer of, the untold first-generation story of migration and its "wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality that is not otherwise available", in Caruth's words about trauma (4). Maurice Maeterlinck writes that "nothingness […] is but a negative infinity, a sort of infinity of darkness opposed to that which our intelligence strives to enlighten, or rather it is but a child-name or nickname which our mind has bestowed upon that which it has not attempted to embrace" (ch. XI). So perhaps "Gogol" is itself a nickname for Ashoke's erection of an inner vault (an "infinity of darkness") around the narrative of "departure-as-death", at this moment when he thought that he could somewhat resolve his tryst with death by re-birthing himself through the words of the aptly-named Ghosh. To put it differently, Gogol's problem with his name might well point to his intuition that he was made the bearer of the unsymbolizable of the other.

For Gogol, envisaging a future less encumbered by the ghosts of the past would mean opening his father's inner vault and excavating the narrative of "departure-as-death" beneath the grand first-generation narrative of "departure-as-rebirth". Of course, this is exactly what starts taking place in the novel's very last pages, as a thirty-three-year-old

[14] In Nair's interpretation of *The Namesake*, Ashoke reveals the reason behind his son's name during a strategic father-to-son interlude taking place as Gogol brings his WASP girlfriend home for the first time. This cultural subtext is significantly absent in Lahiri's book, in which it takes only a delayed train, while Ashoke is anxiously waiting for his son at the station, to make him explain to Gogol the reason behind his name. Again, my impression is that Nair's film is pushing an Indian cultural agenda too hard, which hardly does justice to the full complexity of Lahiri's novel.

Gogol salvages a fourteenth birthday gift from Ashoke, his late father, in the symbolic space of his old childhood room. At last, Gogol starts reading "The Overcoat" by Nikolai Gogol, the story by the Russian author after whom his father had named him, which is also the very book whose reading prevented Ashoke from fully escaping the consciousness of his destiny-altering train crash. The implication is that Gogol's final turn to the "The Overcoat" symbolizes the passing-on of an alternative, coat-like protective (because infinitely reworkable) narrative of origin. This alternative narrative is rooted, not in an illusionary fusion and never-possible uninterrupted contact with the Indian parental world, but in the accidental and the possibility of reinterpreting one's fate through "early messages of the other" (Jean Laplanche) in all senses. The very stuff of inheritance in *The Namesake*, the negativity inherent in Gogol's incorporation of the unsymbolizable of the other may thus well be that which frames, too, the possibility of a new generational arrival.

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Özet

Gogol'a Göre İkinci Nesil Diyasporik Öznelliğin Kavramlaştırılması: Jhumpa Lahiri'nin *The Namesake* Adlı Eserinin Yeniden Değerlendirilmesi

Günümüz popular Hint-Amerikan diyaspora edebiyatının en sembolik örneklerinden sayılan Jhumpa Lahiri'nin eserlerinin fazlasıyla göz önünde oluşu, sıradışı bir eleştirel görünmezlik yöntemi ile örtüşmektedir. Aslında Lahiri'nin üç kitabı üzerine getirilen eleştirilerin büyük bir kısmı kültürel asimilasyon ve melezliğin hala ikinci nesil bireylerin anlatıları üzerinde geçerli kavramlar olduğu üzerinedir. Hatta bu göçmen çocukların "Hintliliklerini" yalnızca ebeveynlerinden sağlayabilecekleri söylenebilir. Bu makale Vijay Mishra'nın diyasporik öznelliğinin, imkansız bir matem bağlamında ve bir nesilden diğer nesile aktarılan olguların boşluk, var olmayan ve söylenmeyen gibi olumlu değil olumsuz

özelliklerle düzenlendiği varsayımına dayanır. Bu makalenin amacı Lahiri'nin *The Namesake*'inin kahramanı aracılığıyla ait olma ve geri gelme gibi kavramları Hintli-Amerikalı ikinci neslin kültürel asimilasyon bakımından değil de (Amerika'da doğmuş karakterler için anlamsız olacağı için) ebeveynlerinin göçmenlik anlatılarının içindeki boşlukların tekrar anlamlandırılması için nasıl yarattığını anlatmaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Jhumpa Lahiri, diyasporik öznellik, Hintli-Amerikalı ikinci kuşak, göç anlatıları

Negotiating Power: Authority and the Author in Chaucer's Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*

Huriye Reis

Abstract: Chaucer's Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* introduces negotiations of power in relation to the individual author's freedom to choose his subject matter and its treatment. The poem summons not only the God of Love and the representative of his discourse of true love, Alceste, but also the queen of England as the ultimate judges of the poet's submission to the dominant ideas about love and its representations in literary texts. It thus presents the particular attempts power makes as a regulating and patrolling force in the production of discourse through literature. The narrator's abortive attempt to defend his authorial choices against the accusations of the God of Love and his subsequent sentence to write legends of good women illustrate the medieval writer's relationship with the hegemonic power. The trial thus questions the position of the author as an important instrument of the dominant discourse. This article offers a reading of the idea of author and his allegiances in the *Prologue to the Legend of Good Women* according to Foucault's theory of discourse and power/knowledge and argues that the Prologue is instructive of the relationship between the dominant literary authority and the author. In this context, the *Prologue* presents the potential ways authors are involved in the production and subversion of discourses.

Keywords: Chaucer, Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, dominant discourse, Foucault, power/knowledge

Chaucer's Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* is a text engaged specifically with power relations and the relevance of the exercise of power to poetic creativity. It is anchored deeply in issues concerning the possible powers of negotiation available to an author in relation to authoritative impositions and constraints on his authorial activities. The poem emphasises the role of power in the literary productions of the author through establishing a frame of power with several references to power relations and illustrates the relationship between the authority and the author through the God of Love's charges against the narrator in the Prologue that he is a subversive author and that he attempts, through his works, to undermine Love's discourse. The Prologue thus allows an examination of the definitions of the author and the author's position in relation to the authorities with claims on his writing. Accordingly, this article focuses on the issue of power that dominates the poetics of the Prologue and argues that the attempts at regulating and limiting the autonomy of the individual author in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* can be considered as a problem of discourse and representation in the context of what Foucault calls power/knowledge.

In the Prologue, the narrator is challenged by the God of Love as he is discovered admiring the Daisy/Alceste, simultaneously the narrator's love and the symbol of true love. The God of Love is angry with the narrator because he thinks that the narrator has authored books defaming women and thus causing men to distrust women, which eventually created a kind of anti-love discourse. Accordingly, the God of Love positions the narrator as a foe

in open conflict with his doctrine that love should be served through works indisputably supportive of women's fidelity, hence, of love. Particular objection of the God of Love to the narrator is that the narrator considers serving love a folly. He blames the narrator of ignorance and irreverence; the narrator is not really a good lover himself and he further alienates any potential lover through his translations and works which tell of the wrongs of the lovers:

> "Yt were better worthy, trewely,
> A worm to neghen ner my flour than thow."
> "And why, sire," quod I, "and yt lyke yow?"
> "For thow," quod he, "art therto nothing able.
> Yt is my relyke, digne and delytable,
> And thow my foo, and al my folk werreyest,
> And of myn olde servauntes thow mysseyest,
> And hynderest hem, with thy translacioun,
> And lettest folk from hire devocioun
> To serve me, and holdest it folye
> To serve Love" (317-27)

In other words, the God of Love's primary concern is the author's impact as a maker of discourses when he antagonises the narrator and categorises him as a powerful enemy. Foucault argues that discourse is functional in producing knowledge and naturalising the truth. Knowledge is produced through discourse and it is closely linked with power:

> Power produces knowledge [...] power and knowledge directly imply one another. There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations. (Foucault 1975, 27*)*

Thus, power/knowledge presents itself as the authority which governs the truth and by this token it has the power to make itself true. As Hall explains, all knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, "becomes true" (49). According to Foucault, knowledge can be used "to regulate the conduct of others," and as such it "entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice" (1975, 27). For the maintenance of power it is essential that truths are constructed, sustained and reproduced. "Truth" therefore, "isn't outside power". "It is produced", as the narrator's penance in the Prologue shows, "only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint" (Foucault 1980, 131). It can be observed that in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women,* the God of Love stands as a firm protector of "his own regime of truth" and he expects the narrator to reproduce "its general politics of truth", that is, "the type of discourse which he accepts" and wants to guarantee to function as true (Foucault 1980, 131).

Despite its "absolutist poetics" (Wallace 337), however, in addition to the control and regulation that it exercises, we can observe in the Prologue that power is also productive. As Foucault states, power "doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no [...] it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse" (1980, 131). As stated, the God of Love has claims on the author's particular subject matter and representations of women in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* according to which the narrator as an oppositional force needs to be eliminated for the God of Love to maintain his power and authority. However, the God of Love also demands

further production in order to naturalise and establish his own versions of the truth. As will be explained below, although Alceste argues that the narrator in effect has no definable authority over his literary productions, the narrator as an author is severely criticised and his viewpoint is denied relevance, and, consequently, he is sentenced to writing a legend of good women to make amends for his alleged antifeminist contributions. (480-91)

Indeed, the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* makes several claims about the author and his controversial allegiances (Kiser 28; Rowe 16). In the Prologue, Chaucer continues his interest in the author and his relationship with the authority observable in his earlier dream poems. As Edwards argues, in Chaucer's dream poems, "imagining and talking about poetry" often take place in a frame of power exacting or demanding service to its principles of writing (1989, 15). Accordingly, the self-definition Chaucer pursues as part of the poetics of the dream poems persistently, repositions the author in relation not only to the objectives of his literary production (which the narrator defines as to write books based on his reading of others' books), but also in accordance with the assessment of these objectives by the authorities. Indeed, the *House of Fame* and the *Parliament of Fowles* present the narrator criticised and consequently helped by his dream authorities, the eagle and Scipio respectively, so that he can find matter to write better poems (HF 605-98; PF 160-8).[1] Robert Worth Frank states, in the Prologue, "Chaucer goes on to what here really concerns him: his career as a writer and the kind of material he wishes to be free to work on" (27). Percival argues, "the main end in the *Legend* is the further exploration of the techniques and responsibilities of 'poetic feigning'" (147). Percival states that Chaucer insistently implicates the poetical with the political (96). The centrality of the struggle between the dominant power and the author to the poetics of the Prologue has also been noted by Robert Edwards who argues that in the Prologue there takes place "Chaucer's unavoidable confrontation with power and the pressures of his age" (2006, 60), since, in the Prologue, "the erotic is [...] the political and the political operates through poetic representation" (61). Similarly, Hanrahan considers the conflation of the erotic with the political in Cupid's charge of heresy and apostasy (229-40) as fundamental to the poetics of the Prologue. It is possible to see in the Prologue, as Fumo suggests, "Foucault's insight concerning the relationship among the author function, transgressive discourse and the prospect of punishment" (157).[2]

Hence, recognised as a text produced by Chaucer to make amends for his retelling of the story of Troilus and Criseyde in which Criseyde is presented as an emblem of women's lack of truth, (Fumo 157-58) the Prologue, in fact, presents a noticeable focus on relations of power between authority and the author. Indeed, the Prologue creates a context of power and subjection through several references which can be considered as suggestive for the eventual confrontation between the narrator and the authority as represented by the God of Love. For instance, it is part of the power structure of the poem that the books are invested with the authority of transmitting the truth. The narrator's opening remarks giving full credence to the books somewhat mimic the submission to power demanded from the narrator in the trial secene. The narrator acknowledges the old books as the source of

[1] References to Chaucer are from the *Riverside Chaucer*. ed. Larry D Benson, 1987. Unless otherwise stated I cite the F Prologue throughout for references to the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* and indicate the G Prologue when I cite from it.

[2] Fumo's argument develops along different lines. Fumo's contention is that the Prologue, along with the Retraction, expresses "conceptions of authorship–human and divine– [...] that foreground the issue of authorial responsibility in the context of God's judgment" (159).

knowledge significantly because there is no evidence contrary to the truths books verify (17-28). Similarly, in the dream, the dream figures generate alternatively wilful subjection and fear. The dreamer declares himself as an absolute servant of the daisy. A significant submission can be observed in the narrator's declaration that, like fingers on a harp, it is the "dayesye" that gives him "vois" (90-3) as she also chooses and dictates "My word" and "my werk" (89). The narrator's submission is one of willing self-erasure and voluntary obedience when he beseeches the daisy to "Be ye my gide and lady sovereyne!" (94). Although the narrator declares himself ready to follow the lady/daisy, the implications of such devotion are reminded to him by the God of Love whom the narrator perceives as a "mighty" god (230). The God of Love, in turn, is envisaged as a frightening authority figure who looks at the narrator "sternely" and "his loking dooth myn herte colde" (239-40). This figure goes on to re-position the narrator/author. In the first place, the narrator is ordered to move away from "myn oune floure" (316), as he is a heretic and worse than a worm (318, 330). The God himself reinforces his claim to power when he antagonises the narrator as his foe who is guilty of "heresy", for promoting truths which are "ayeins my lawe" (330).

An additional frame of power is provided by Alceste's inscription of the God of Love as an absolute authority. The God of Love's authoritative status is endorsed frequently when Alceste refers to him either as "god" (342, 348), "lord" or the "king" (373, 376). Alceste's eventual reprisal of the narrator, too, strengthens the view of the God of Love as indisputable absolute authority. Alceste reminds the narrator, rather aggressively, that "Love ne wol nat countrepleted be/ In ryght ne wrong; and lerne that at me!/Thow hast thy grace, and hold the ryght therto" (476-78) and defines the narrator's creative activity as "thy trespas" which requires penance (479-80). When the narrator is eventually allowed to speak his case and when he stands his ground about transmitting "what so myn auctour mente" (470-74) Alceste denies him the right to defend himself. Instead, he is required of full obedience according to the rules determined by the God of Love which, clearly, subjugate Alceste herself. Alceste instructs the narrator that the God of Love is the absolute authority and will tolerate no objections: "For Love ne wol nat countrepleted be/In ryght ne wrong; and lerne that at me!". It is evident that Alceste expects this paradigm of subjection to be observed at all costs. The authorities in the poem, the God of Love, Alceste herself and the Queen of England mentioned in the concluding lines of the poem (496-97), are thus defined accordingly.

When we turn to the trial of the narrator in the light of this frame of power, it needs to be noted that power relations which dominate the trial allow the presentation of the circumstances of literary production in the Middle Ages. Alceste introduces the narrator as a translator/transmitter of what the old clerks have said, for instance, although he is not wise enough to distinguish the bad from the good (362-65) or that he might have been ordered to produce the texts in question (366-67). Further, as Percival suggests, Alceste's defense is functional in identifying some main positions available to Chaucer as a medieval author. Firstly, the author is chiefly a translator, and is not responsible for the texts' offensive meanings. The author is also positioned in the poem as an advisor to the prince. He is further inscribed as "a poet of fine feeling" (145).

These implications notwithstanding, in fact, Alceste's attempts at excusing the narrator's impact as an author of the poems under attack endorse the position the narrator is expected to occupy as an author in service of the dominant ideology. When considered in the context of the conflict generated on account of power/knowledge, Alceste's defense is not a defense (Astell 110), but can be considered as an attempt to dilute the implications of the God of Love's recognition of the narrator as a powerful subject who rejects his

subjection through works of opposition to the dominant ideology. It is clear that Alceste's conception of the author is significantly resistant to autonomy and insists on a politics of domination and subjection. Her pleas for leniency from the God of Love and the possible causes she suggests for the narrator's alleged offense are important in this sense. None of her explanations give the narrator the power over his productions as their author; on the contrary, her apology insists that the narrator/author has no actual power or control over the texts he uses as his material for literary production. As such her defense is further debilitating and it adds little to the author's autonomy. That is, Alceste's defense proposes erasure of authorial responsibility: "And eke, peraunter, for this man ys nyce, /He myghte doon yt, gessyng no malice" (362-63). Alceste's denial of necessary intelligence to the narrator further negates the validity of his means of literary production. Alceste recognises the use of "auctores" to be fundamental to the narrator's creativity but reverses the potential power implications in the narrator's ability to choose by suggesting that the narrator has no sense of distinguishing his source texts: "But for he useth thynges for to make; /Hym rekketh nought of what matere he take" (364-65).

The other reason Alceste suggests for the narrator's trespassing further undermines the author's power over his material as Alceste claims that "Or him was boden maken thilke tweye/Of som persone, and durste yt nat withseye" (366-67), Alceste thus is instrumental in establishing the unswerving loyalty an author is expected to demonstrate and perform as an agent of the dominant discourse. She further aligns the narrator's works and the consequent effect they produce with a counter-discourse that exists but is, it is implicated, rather to be silenced by the followers of Love. She argues that, above all, the narrator has already repented what offense he might have caused (68-72). Clearly, Alceste insists on alienating the narrator's will as an author in his productions. Hence, her words firmly locate the narrator in a context of power where the author is entirely ripped off the right to exercise any choice. Making meaning according to the will of the authorities is precisely what the narrator will be directed to do at the end of his trial, too. Alceste's mention of the authorities as guiding and regulating the narrator's literary activities carries more weight when considered in this context. Alceste's intercession thus lays bare some fundamental constraints on the author, as it nevertheless subscribes to the view that the narrator is instrumental in the dissemination of anti-love discourses. Alceste endorses this view and demands recognition of the narrator as a servant of the dominant ideology albeit he is a servant who needs reforming:

> Or him repenteth outrely of this.
> He ne hath nat doon so grevously amys
> To translaten that olde clerkes writen,
> As thogh that he of malice wolde enditen,
> Despit of love, and had himself yt wrought.
> This shoolde a ryghtwis lord have in his thoght. (368-73)

In a trial concerning the construction of power/knowledge, it is clear how destructive such a representation is to the status of the author. The author is reduced and minimised and the potential power his representations are claimed to have is transferred to other sources. Alceste's defense, thus, can be considered a part of the defense of the power/knowledge against potential detractors. It also furthers the implications of the context of power that dominates the narrator's trial. Alceste attests to the power relations and the subjection of the author to power with regard to literary production. As Cherniss

states in a different context, "Alceste is an aspect of what Cupid represents" (195) in that she endorses the God of Love's view of true love and the right way of serving love and confirms the God of Love's contention that the narrator as author fails to perform accordingly. Alceste's subsequent appeal to the God of Love so that the narrator can be spared as an author develops the idea through a metaphor of subjection and possession, too. The offending author is the God of Love's "lige man", and thus "his tresour and his golde in cofre" (379-80) that he can use to further the dominant truths (See Strohm 95-120). The author is ultimately claimed by the power as someone to be used for the production of the dominant discourse. Accordingly, the author does not emerge, from Alceste's rather lenghty explanation, as a subversive figure.

It must be noted that Alceste's defense emphasises also the reasons for the legitimacy of the subjection of the author the Prologue dramatises. By foregrounding the possible causes of the narrator's alleged offense, Alceste shifts the God of Love's gaze from the effects of the problematic works to the conditions of their production. Moreover, her explanations focus on the author more than the discourse he constructs through his works. Whereas, for the God of Love, the author fails in his subjection to the dominant power particularly because of his choices and the consequent representations. According to the God of Love, the narrator has chosen *Romance of the Rose* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, texts which represent women as unfaithful, from among many other texts in order to undermine men's trust in women:

> Thou maist yt not denye,
> For in pleyn text, withouten nede of glose,
> Thou hast translated the Romaunce of the Rose,
> That is an heresye ayeins my lawe,
> And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe;
> And of Creseyde thou hast seyd as the lyste,
> That maketh men to wommen lasse to triste. (327-33)

The claim that the narrator's representations of women as unfaithful is deliberate is more overt in the G Prologue, where the God of Love challenges the narrator about his choices and attempts to redirect him to books that the narrator seems to have overlooked or has decided not to use in writing about women: "Why noldest thow as wel [han] seyd goodnesse/Of wemen, as thou hast seyd wikednesse?/Was there no good matere in in thy mynde,/Ne in alle thy bokes ne coudest thow nat fynde/Som story of wemen that were goode and trewe?" (268-72). Clearly, the possibility of different representations is negated by the God of Love's insistence that the choices open to the narrator for the representation of women are not to be reckoned with. The God of Love in a way confirms the possible existence of conflicting representations of women in books when he directs the narrator to certain books rather than the others for a more acceptable representation of women, however, he is not willing to allow the author to exercise a choice or freedom of subject matter. On the contrary, the God of Love dictates to the narrator the choices acceptable to the dominant power (273-77), which illustrates the point that it is through available choices that the author is subjected to the "regulation and disciplining of practice" for the constitution of the dominant knowledge.

It seems, thus, that the narrator's representations of women in love create a context of domination and is saturated with implications of power and subjection. We can observe that the narrator is flatly and firmly recognised as an author who defies the God of Love and his doctrine of true love. The God of Love complains, "And thow [...] al my folk

werreyest, /And of myn olde servauntes thow mysseyest". Instead of serving the God of Love, it appears that the narrator adopts an antagonistic position, as he further accuses the narrator of "And lettest folk from hire devocioun/To serve me, and holdest it folye /To serve Love". Moreover, the God of Love's reaction to the works of the narrator shows that the ultimate objectives to be realised through literature are clearly contestual. As stated above, the narrator eventually prepares to do as he is told and contextualises the legends as productions of an order for the correct representations of women, but it is instructive that his submission to the power/knowledge follows only after defending his position as an author. While the author stands as condemned in the court of love as the translator into English of material which dishonours women (Percival 147), we observe a manifestation of the conflict between power/knowledge and its agents. It is in this context that the God's possessive protection of the "truth" of women illustrates, as Foucault states that "truth is not outside power [...] And it induces regular effects of power" (1975, 131).

The regulation of the author's practice is finalised when the narrator is assigned the certain corrective task to mend his ways. The conclusion reached by the narrator's authoritative critics in the text is that he will

> [...] no more agilten in this wyse,
> But he shal maken, as you wol devyse,
> Of wommen trewe in lovyng al hire lyve,
> Wherso ye wol, of mayden or of wyve,
> And forthren yow as much as he mysseyde
> Or in the Rose or elles in Creseyde. (436-41)

Alceste reassures the God of Love that the narrator will promise that he will no longer offend in this way but will write, as the God of Love demands, of women true in loving all their lives be they unmarried women or wives, and will promote love as much as he missaid it so far in the *Rose* or in *Troilus and Criseyde.* Clearly, the imposition of the topic and its proper treatment suggests that the author is expected to produce at command and Alceste's intercession forces upon the narrator a regimented and restricted representation of women. The narrator is silenced and sentenced to "Speke wel of love; this penance yive I thee" (491). Moreover, he is given precise instructions about how to produce the commissioned legends (565-77). It is true that we sense a strong readiness to write the legends right away: "And with that word my bokes gan I take, /And ryght thus on my Legende gan I make" (578-79). In other words, it must be noted that the narrator's redirected poetic activity is prompted through imposition not consent. Even when the assigned work is done, the controlling strategy is at work. When the book is finished it is to be presented to the Queen (496-97). Neither Queen Anne nor Richard II feature in the poem as figures of authority. However, the allegory of the poem identifies Richard II with Cupid, and Queen Anne is known to have commissioned the poems (Hieatt 85). As Wallace suggests, perhaps "[t]here is no need to assume, with Lydgate, that Chaucer wrote this poem expressly 'at request of the queen'" (365). But even if there is no historical accuracy to the reference to the queen in the poem, it is clear that, given the perennial tendency to control the poet in the Prologue, there is further significance to this reference. Queen Anne is added to the strictures of power in the poem to underline the extent of the regulatory power for literary production. Moreover, if we follow the allegorical association argued to exist between Alceste/Daisy and the Queen Anne (Moore 488-89; Fisher 77), it seems that the actual circumstances of the production of this poem were highly political. Chaucer

might have felt, as has been argued, the pressure of the royal patrons (Coleman 104-23), and that might be one important angle to the centrality of power and authority in the poem. Implications of politics and patronage only reinforce the view of the poem as a poem of power relations. What is important in this context specifically is the poem's employment of a strategy to foreground power and to build the power relations into the subject of the poem. As stated, beginning a poem as an imposition inevitably compromises the position and the power of the author in relation to his poem. Accordingly, Alceste's intercession followed by instructions that the finished poem should be presented to the queen can only suggest that the queen figure is invoked for the reinforcement of the regulatory power.

On the other hand, despite this sentence, we have no real consensus in the Prologue reached as a result of the negotiation of the power except for the recognition of the author's role in the production of truth/knowledge. It has been shown that the legends themselves illustrate various ways the author can deal with such regulation of his creative activity, as the following legends subvert the claims made by the God of Love about disciplining the poet according to the dominant discourse.[3] It is instructive, moreover, that the exercise of power by the God of Love assumes the subjection of the narrator as an author to his definition of literature. The main idea propounded by the God of Love, in this context, is that the narrator as a subject, to borrow Hall's phrases he uses in a different context, "may produce particular texts but [he is] operating within the limits of *episteme, the discursive formation, the regime of truth,* of a particular period and culture" (55). Accordingly, as the narrator is produced as subject within the discourse he should be subjected to the discourse which produced him. Significantly, the narrator possesses not only the full responsibility of representing the lovers unfavourably (through his translations) and causing loss of faith in the truth of Love but also has claims to the power of doing so. By defining the narrator as "my foo", the God of Love accords him almost an equal status with regard to power/knowledge he himself represents, or at least recognises him as potentially powerful enough to undermine the dominant power he holds. The negotiation between the power/knowledge and the author about the limits and powers of authorship, in an ironic way, establishes the author as capable of challenging power/knowledge. Such a paradigm of legitimation works rather directly to produce a context of negotiation. It redefines what the God of Love considers disruptive and damaging for his dominant ideology of love. The recognition of the author as an important maker of discourses increases his importance which is harshly depleted by the God of Love. As Obermeier suggests, the Prologue presents an author who submits to judgment of an authority but he also "subverts that submission into another license to write as he pleases" (201). Thus, in its dramatisation of the role "medieval religio-political establishment" plays in the understanding and censoring of the "creative art of a writer" (Obermeier 195), the Prologue "is an ironic microcosmic rendition of the dilemma the medieval author faces" (Obermeier 201).

In conclusion, it can be stated that although the Prologue leaves us with an author who is subjected to correction and is disciplined about the right way of producing the right discourse, I would argue, however, that in this poem, the presence of the power strictures also points to the author's interpretation of the impositions of power. The discourse supported by the God of Love not only promotes a particular knowledge about love but also is potentially functional in making it difficult to talk or write about love in an oppositional

[3] A representative view of the legends is that of Edwards who suggests that the legends are "narratives of ambivalence and heightened contradiction" (2006, 81), which largely subverts the God of Love's project of the truth of women. See also Ames, "The Feminist Connections", 72.

manner. Still, the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* places the author in a power context in which literature is identified as a discursive practice, and the author as a powerful agent in the construction of discourses not necessarily agreed upon by all involved. It is possible that the poem underlines a Foucaldian sense of power as an alternative but not as the best alternative to be considered in the reproduction of literary texts by a medieval author. Chaucer, in fact, stresses the importance of the negotiation rather than the imposition of power in his dramatisation of the conflict between the narrator as an author and the God of Love and Alceste as his readers. Clearly, the objections voiced by the God of Love and supported by Alceste can be considered as forms of reading with claims to legitimacy in this context.

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Özet

Güç Pazarlığı: Chaucer'ın *Legend of Good Women* Adlı Eserinin Prolog'unda Otorite ve Yazar

Chaucer'ın *Legend of Good Women* adlı eserinin Prolog'u (*İyi Kadınlar Destanı Prologu*) yazarın istediği konuyu seçip istediği şekilde yazma konusunda egemen güçlerle arasında geçen güç/iktidar pazarlık ve değerlendirmelerinin vurgulandığı bir eserdir. Bu eser hem aşk tanrısını ve aşk tanrısının aşkta doğruluk söylemini temsil eden Alceste'yi hem de o zamanın kraliçesi Kraliçe Anne'i yazarın egemen söylem doğrultusunda yazıp yazmadığına karar veren ve yazarı bu bağlamda eleştiren yetkilerle donatır. Bu bağlamda Prolog, iktidarı edebiyat yoluyla söylem yaratma konusunda baskı ve düzenleme yapabilen bir güç olarak sunar. Anlatıcının Aşk Tanrısının *Gülün Romansı* ve *Troilus ve Criseyde* gibi hikayeleri istediği gibi tercüme edip yazarak kadınları yanlış temsil ettiği suçlamalarına itirazının sonuçsuz kalması ve sonunda bu hatasını telafi etmek için *İyi Kadınlar Destanı*'nı yazmaya mahkum edilmesi Ortaçağ yazarının egemen söylemle olan ilişkisini gösteren ve yazarın egemen söylem aracı olarak konumunu sorgulayan bir durumdur. Bu makale Chaucer'ın *İyi Kadınlar Destanı* Prolog'unda yazar tanımı ve yazarın iktidar karşısındaki konumunu Foucault'nun söylem ve iktidar/bilgi teorileri kapsamında inceler ve Prolog'un egemen edebiyat söylemi karşısında yazarın konumunu ve bu bağlamda yazarın söylem oluşturma ve egemen söyleme karşı çıkma sürecindeki yerini gösterdiğini tartışır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Chaucer, Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, İyi Kadınlar Destanı, Foucault, iktidar/bilgi, egemen söylem

Women Writers and Rewriting Epic as a Female Genre

Tülin Ece Tosun

Abstract: Arising from the earliest form of oral literary tradition, epics are important as they were maintained and retold over many generations. They are retold by nations or cultures because they convey and question the accepted values and traditions from one generation to another. In addition, epics provide information about a community or culture in which they originate. This information generally relates to religion, weapons and war, warriors, gender roles, social values, legends, glorious deeds of warriors, and moral standards. If the subjects of the epics are the wars and warriors, and if men and kings dominate the battlefields, then where do the women stand in these epics? For the reasons stated above, starting from the mid-twentieth century, definitions of epic as a male genre urged women writers to turn back to these canons and re-examine them in terms of socially constructed gender roles. Within the framework presented above, the purpose of this study is to analyze both *Helen in Egypt* by H.D and how women are represented as sexual beings, submissive house keepers, and war objects in epics.

Keywords: epic, women writers, gender, epic hero

Arma virumque cano, "Wars and a man I sing" (47) opens the very first line of Virgil's *Aeneid,* explaining the dimensions of heroic epic. If the subjects of the epics are the wars and warriors, and if men and kings dominate the battlefields, then where are the women? Where do women stand in these epics and classical myths? Could they be thought of as heroic figures? If "an epic poem is by common consent a narrative of some length and deals with events that have a certain grandeur and importance and come from a life of action, especially of violent action such as war" (Bowra 1), women were decentralized and isolated from the battlefields and public spheres that are dominated by men. Women in the epics were sentenced to be "keepers of men's households, active causes of wars, sexual objects and sacrificial victims" (Foley 106), which made women to occupy passive roles. Helen, Briseis, and Andromache in *The Iliad*, the Harlot in the epic of *Gilgamesh*, and Circe in *The Odysseus,* are examples of women's depictions as housekeepers, causes of war, and sexual objects in epics.

For the reasons stated above, starting from the mid-twnetieth century, women writers from diverse cultural backgrounds revisited classical mythology to question the roles of women. The women writers also turned back to older canonical epics, as well. Definitions of epic as a male genre urged women writers to turn back to these canons and re-examine them in terms of socially constructed gender roles. Within the framework presented above, the purpose of this study is to analyze both *Helen in Egypt* by H.D and how women are represented as sexual beings, submissive house keepers, and war objects in epics. Before explaining H.D and her revisionary work *Helen in Egypt*, I will give a description of epic and why it is considered as a male genre, as well as discussing how women are represented in wars and epics and how they suffer as war victims.

Defining Epic and Epic Hero

The literary tradition starts with oral poetry, so the importance of the oral tradition in literature is remarkable. Pre-literate civilizations do not have written literatures; they have oral traditions such as epic, folk tales, legends, and myths. As Minna Skafte Jensen states, "[r]ight through antiquity literature was oral. Poems were song, speeches delivered and stories told" (45). Hence, it can be asserted that oral tradition designates pre-literate societies. In *Homer and the Oral Tradition*, G. S. Kirk gives a brief explanation of how oral poetry came into being: "social, material and political factors could coalesce in the development of separate cultures to produce for a time aristocratic and militaristic societies of remarkable consistency. An important by-product of these societies was the oral poetry (or prose saga) through which their memory had survived" (845). Thus, through oral tradition, pre-literate civilizations transmit their beliefs, cultural traditions, shared memories and emotions from one generation to another.

Oral epic is the result of the wonders of human beings, states Jensen, because they want to learn what happens and why. Thus, beliefs and historical and cultural traditions were transmitted from one generation to another through oral poetry, which was believed to be sung by male singers (bards). These bards generally performed in the halls in front of audiences who were also believed to be males. Jensen posits, "[w]hen attending the epic, the audience members feel that their own world is a continuation of their ancestors, and that they contribute to keeping the heroes alive by hearing of their great deeds" (48). Andrew Dalby claims that these singers had to choose a plot for their songs, and what is more, both the singer and the audience had to be familiar with what was sung in the story. In the oral tradition, singers chose wars as a plot, because wars were known very well both by bards and by audience because "what is not accepted by the audience", asserts Jensen, "will disappear from the tradition. In the case of epic, normally the story is known to the audience already, and they will accept only what they feel to be correct" (48). Thus, bards chose war stories because these stories praised the manly deeds, as manly deeds were at the heart of heroism. A. M. Keith points out that "from Homer to Claudian, classical Greek and Latin epic poetry was composed by men, consumed largely by men, and centrally concerned with men" (1). If manly deeds, legends, and heroic behaviors, which were the subjects of long narrative epic poems, were made famous by bards, then what other subjects for epics could there be? Even, in *The Iliad*, in Book 9, Achilles is seen with his lyre "singing the famous deeds of fighting heroes" (9. 224-28). "Fame of men necessarily means heroic poetry, an oral epic", says Bryan Hainsworth (14). Thus, it can be asserted that epic, as a form of oral tradition, can be considered as an important genre for literary tradition since it was concerned with manly deeds, because heroism and heroes are at the very center of epic tradition.

Arising from the earliest form of oral literary tradition, epics are important as they have been maintained and retold over many generations. They are retold by nations or cultures because they convey and question the accepted values and traditions from one generation to another. In addition, epics provide information about a community or culture in which they originate. This information generally relates to religion, weapons and war, warriors, gender roles, social values, legends, glorious deeds of warriors, and moral standards. John Jump states that "European literature begins with the Homeric epic" (9), because epics, which began as a form of oral poetry, started to be written down after Homer. Subsequent authors have made use of the epic genre in order to express themselves through some universal concepts such as the values of societies, religion, and wars. From

Homer to Virgil, from Statius to Milton, epic has been an important genre for almost all cultures. What, then, is epic and how is it distinguished from other genres and why is it considered as a male genre?

Epics can be defined as long narrative poems concentrating either on a hero such as Achilles, Beowulf, Gilgamesh, Aeneas, or on a civilization like Rome or Christendom. M.H Abrams defines epic as "a long narrative poem on a great and serious subject, told in an elevated style, and centered on a heroic figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation or the human race" (51). On the other hand, Theodore Steinberg depicts epic as "a narrative that focuses simultaneously on the lives of its characters and on a pivotal moment in the history of a community, whether that community be a nation or a people or the whole of humanity" (29). Steinberg points out that this "pivotal moment" (29) can be "the founding of a civilization, the collapse of a civilization, or any other major event, such as an invasion or another sort of threat" (29). Founding or defending city-states, invading, rebelling, facing life and death, and fighting for honor are all manly deeds and related to masculinity. Taking these "pivotal moments" into consideration, epic can be seen as a masculine genre. That explains why from the Turkic *Manas* to the Mongolian *Gesar*, from the Sumerian *Gilgamesh* to the Greek *Iliad*, the focus of the epic genre has always been on the heroic figure who is masculine, dominant, and a powerful warrior in society such as Gilgamesh, Achilles, Hector, Beowulf, and Aeneas.

Representation of Women in Epic

You do not teach women in epic; you teach women in tragedy. There are no women in epics.
(Keith 132)

If epics are about battlefields and war as aforementioned, if war is identified with men, if men are identified with the public sphere, and if the public sphere is dominated by males, then epic can be seen as the masculine genre which excludes females. Epic poetry, "in dealing with war, is poetry of the public sphere", claims Adeline Johns-Putra (41). For instance, *The Iliad* is about war and heroism, *The Aeneid* is about the quest of an epic hero, and *Gilgamesh* is about the deeds of Gilgamesh. Overall, these describe heroic deeds and glorifications of fighting which can be considered as the heart of the epic genre. Thus, being excluded from public spheres, women are trapped in their houses in stereotypical roles because helmets, swords, blood, death, and bravery, which represent masculinity, are off-limits to females. Adeline Johns-Putra asserts that "there is an explicit relationship between the virtuous waiting woman at home and the fighting warrior on the battlefield" (46). The reason why women are absent from epics is due to their exclusion from the public sphere, in other words, due to the polarization of spheres.

In the early epics, there is a separation between the domestic and the public, between war and peace, and between man and woman. Women are identified with peace and passivity in their domestic spheres, whereas men are identified with war and activity in battlefields. *The Iliad* not only implies the complete story of the Trojan War from its beginning to the fall of Troy, but it also tells women's sufferings through this bloody war. For example in *The Iliad*, in Book 6, there is a scene between Andromache and Hector, where Andromache represents home, motherhood, peace and the domestic sphere. Unlike Andromache, Hector represents war, power, patriarchy, and the public sphere. During their conversation, Andromache tries to convince Hector by stating that all she needs is a family and what she wants is peace with her husband and son. As Steinberg points, Andromache

"weeps and pleads with him to stop putting himself in so much danger" (35). She asks Hector to keep the troops in the city walls where he can focus on the weakest point from where the most powerful attacks appear. Steinberg posits that Andromache's plan would save the city and the troops. She tries to convince Hector, as she knows that if Hector dies, her life as a widow will be hellish in the society which does not value woman, but sees her as a mere object. Adeline Johns-Putra asserts that "the woman as warrior's wife is a short step away from becoming either a warrior's widow or the enemy's victim" (36). In "Tales of War and Tears of Women" (1982), Nancy Huston states that

> there is parallelism between "the representation of women's bereavement and of women's victimization for each of [the]female character has two possible pretexts for weeping: either the infringement of her physical integrity–paradigmatically, she can be raped by the Enemy–or else bereavement, in the event that her Hero is killed in the battlefield. (275).

In that fashion, Andromache is a typical domestic woman who wants to protect her domestic area and who will be happy with her family:

> Reckless one,
> my Hector-your own fiery courage will destroy you!
> Have you no pity for him, our helpless son? Or me,
> and the destiny that weighs me down, your widow, now so soon…
> You Hector-you are my father now, my noble mother,
> a brother too, and you are my husband, young and warm and strong!
> Pity me, please!
> Take your stand on the rampart here,
> before you orphan your son and make your wife a widow. (*Iliad* 6. 482-85, 509-12)

This speech by Andromache is also a kind of lament, expressing her fear for their family. As a domestic woman, she fears the destructive force of the war. Because Hector and their son are her only wealth; her family is the only thing she possesses in the world. Adeline Johns-Putra states that "[w]omen's potential dislike for war, combined with the goodness and love that she offers, posit her as a dangerous temptation away from war" (61). Andromache's hatred for war is combined with her love, emotions, and domestic values.

As a woman, all she has is her family and her privacy. She is the arbiter in her private area as she is only closely involved with decisions there. That is why she wants to protect the order in her privacy and the family life. However, she is dependent on Hector – the master of her house–and therefore, she does not want to be a widow who will be kept as a slave or a war prize if the city of Troy falls. Steinberg asserts that "[t]he *Iliad* is more than simply a poem that describes the horrors of war. It explores the behavior of extraordinary human beings, male and female, in a world that is characterized by this war" (32). The *Iliad* shows and illustrates what it means to be a woman in a society where war exists. Because of her place in this manly world, Andromache fears the results of manly deeds or military prowess; she fears male brutality and male bloodthirstiness.

Andromache represents the typical "virtuous waiting woman at home who is waiting for the fighting warrior on the battlefield" (Johns-Putra 46). In *Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and the Epic*, Mihoko Suzuki states, "The *Iliad* does indeed conceive of gender roles and spheres as distinct and separate, encoding women as Other, and

assigning to women the negative pole of any number of binary oppositions" (5). However, unlike his wife, Hector is a typical epic hero who is brave, ready to die for his people, wife, sisters, and brothers. He is the representative of the Trojan people and he is the leader of the Trojan army who is commanding, fighting, and conquering. He wants Andromache to witness his bravery and glorious triumph, which are important for a man even if his bravery results in death. Death is also a glory for Hector. However, at the same time, Hector knows what kind of results war will bring to women:

> No, no,
> let the earth come piling over my dead body
> before I hear your cries, I hear you dragged away. (*Iliad* 6. 554-56)

Hector knows that the women of Troy should be protected as they cannot defend themselves. That is why Hector prefers dying instead of seeing Andromache becoming a war victim or a war widow. Sharon MacDonald remarks, "[i]n a world in which gender is a principal articulator of the social order, and in which it is men who wage war, women may take on a particular objectified importance as 'the protected', or even as the custodians of the social values that the men are fighting for" (15). Hector knows that if Troy falls, a tragic end awaits "the protected" ones (MacDonald 15) who are the women of Troy, including Andromache. The situation of women in Troy, or in epics, exposes the male-dominated society and its destructive effects on women and their privacy. Andromache gives conventional speeches about family issues, and she is portrayed as a typical wife, mother and widow. Her speeches are lamentations for the destructive results that war brings to her and her family. Thus, the *Iliad,* known as "the greatest story of men in battle" (Johnston 11), turns into a tragedy for the women of Troy. Women's tragedy is represented through their lamentations. When Hector dies, we hear Andromache's, Helen's and Hecuba's lamentations for him. When Hecuba sees Hector's dead body, she wails:

> O my child-my desolation! How can I go on living?
> What agonies must I suffer now, now you are dead and gone
> You were my pride throughout the city night and day—
> a blessing to us all, the men and women of Troy:
> throughout the city they saluted you like a god.
> You, you were their greatest glory while you lived—
> now death and fate have seized you, dragged you down! (*Iliad* 22. 507-13)

Hecuba's lamentation is the reflection of her grief as a mother; however, she glorifies Hector as a hero, as well. Andromache, who gave an earlier emotional speech–when Hector was alive–repeats her hatred against war and its destructive force once more. Nonetheless, she is a widow now. Her previous fear now comes true:

> Now you go down
> To the House of Death, the dark depths of the earth,
> and leave me here to waste away in grief, a widow
> lost in the royal halls-and the boy only a baby,
> the son we bore together, you and I so doomed.
> Hector, what help are you to him, now you are dead?—
> what help is he to you? (*Iliad* 22. 565-71)

Andromache has two lamentations in the *Iliad*; the first lament is seen when Hector is alive. This lamentation reflects her fear for her child and for herself as a woman. However, in the lament cited above, she suffers as a widow and an orphan's mother. Each woman in the epic "composes a new lament", says Dalby (143). This is true in terms of Hecuba, Andromache and Helen, each of whom expresses her own grief differently as she occupies a different role in Hector's life. However, at one point, they all praise Hector and his heroic deeds. Helen's lamentation is different in that she praises Hector's gentility:

> Hector! Dearest to me of all my husband's brothers—
> My husband, Paris, magnificent as a god…
> yet never once did I hear from you a taunt, an insult.
> But if someone else in the royal halls would curse me,
> One of your brothers or sisters or brothers' wives
> Trailing their long robes, even your own mother—
> not your father, always kind as my own father—
> why, you'd restrain them with words, Hector,
> you'd win them to my side…
> you with your gentle temper, all your gentle words. (*Iliad* 24. 895-908)

Helen's lamentation is also a summary of the destructive force of war because like Andromache, says Suzuki, "Helen properly belongs to the domestic world of peace which the warriors have left behind" (19), and because there is nobody left behind to protect Helen, she laments. In the *Iliad*, women's lamentation has another significance. They do not only lament their dead sons, husbands, brothers, and fathers, but they also lament their own situations. For example, in book 19, when Patroclus dies, Briseis and other women lament both Patroclus and "in reality they lament for their own misfortunes" (Beye 21) as widows, war prizes and war captives.

Rowan Beye underlines women's situation in epic by asserting that "Andromache has no personality in the *Iliad*, nor do any of the other women" (150) as they are not allowed to enter battleground and fight. For instance, "Briseis", says Gilbert Murray, "does not even have a proper name. The word Briseis is only an adjective derived from the town of Brisa or Bresa in Lesbos. She is 'the girl' from Bresa" (111). That depiction clarifies the women and their situation in a male-dominated society very well. They even do not have names in the societies they live in. She is only identified with the city she belongs to. As the main subject of the epic, as Homer states in Book I, is "the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus/and its devastation" (*Iliad* I. 1-2), women and their sufferings as war prizes or objects are another important subject in the epic. Besides Achilleus' hatred, the Greeks and the Trojans fight for the possession of Helen, while Achilleus and Agamemnon "find themselves divided over another woman, the slave girl Briseis" (Suzuki 22). Briseis is another female figure in the *Iliad* representing the misfortune women have to endure during wartime. She is the war prize of Achilles; however, she is taken away by Agamemnon to *honor* his bed. She represents property for Agamemnon and Achilles. They argue over her possession because possession represents power. As a woman, she has no right to speak; she has no free will to chose whom she wants, she is muted and silenced. Men are the decision makers, and she is merely a war prize. However, when Agamemnon tries to convince Achilles to reenter the war, he is willing to give Briseis back to Achilles. What is more, to persuade Achilles, he offers many women other than Briseis as gifts:

> Seven women I'll give him, flawless, skilled in crafts,

> Women of Lesbos – the ones I chose, my privilege,
> that day he captured the Lesbos citadel himself:
> they outclassed the tribes of women in their beauty.
> These I will give, and along with them will go
> The one I took away at first, Briseus' daughter,
> And I will swear a solemn, binding oath in the bargain:
> I never mounted her bed, never once made love with her–
> The natural thing for mankind, men and women joined.
> Now all these gifts will be handed him at once. (*Iliad* 9. 153-62)

Agamemnon's offer is not limited to the number of women stated above. He also states that Achilles can pick out twenty Trojan women when they take Troy. "Women are seen as an object of desire and less valuable than men", asserts Suziki (5). Then, Suziki continues by saying that being a woman in any kind of the society is "the stereotypical victim's sign" (Horkheimer-Adorno 50). In the *Iliad*, whereas male warriors are the powerful and dominant majority, women are the subordinated and the victimized minority as war prizes, captives, and sex objects.

Rewriting Epic as a Female Genre

Epic poetry, dealing with war and heroic deeds, is considered to be the most gender based of all literary genres because of both its subject matter and form so that epic and masculinity seem to be contiguous. In "Drawing the Lines–Gender, Peace and War: An Introduction", Sharon MacDonald asserts that "[i]n the structural network of concepts which underlies the imagery of gender, peace and war, there is a collocation of 'femininity', 'peace', and 'passivity', which is opposed in a delicate balance to a set comprising 'masculinity', 'war' and 'activity'' (20-1). Johns-Putra claims that "not only is the epic a poem of the very public action of war, but war is the special province of men" (41). In subject matter, epic glorifies the heroic deeds of men while confirming the controlling moral, religious, and cultural values of the writer's community. In his essay "Muses with Pens", Bernard Schweizer asserts that "the printing and circulation of epics have been controlled by male entrepreneurs and patriarchal authorities. All of these could be taken as an indication that women and epic are mutually exclusive terms" (1). Mikhail Bakhtin explains that "the world of the epic is the national heroic past: it is a world [...] of fathers and of founders of families" (13). A widely used textbook, *Literature and Gender,* states:

> Language creates "gender". It assumes that men are stronger and firmer, women lighter and weaker. Similar assumptions have influenced the use, or non-use, of certain GENRES (classifications) of poetry by women. The term EPIC, for instance, refers to very long poems describing violent action and to certain heroic and aesthetic values associated with epic poetry. Though scholars have seriously suggested that Homer was a woman, no famous Western epic is normally attributed to a female author. (Goodman 44)

About the "authorship" issue, Jeremy Downes writes in *The Female Homer: An Exploration of Women's Epic Poetry* (2010), "authorship is a notion that only gradually develops after the invention of writing, and our first named women poet–actually our first named poet of any gender–is closely associated with our first women's epic, *The Descent of*

Inanna.[1] The Sumerian *The Descent of Inanna to the Underworld* is dated between 1900 and 1600 BCE and is an early anonymous text" (38). Downes claims that there are a few reasons to examine *Inanna* as a woman's epic: "the centrality of women's experience and women's identity formation to the text; the crucial role played by the romantic relation with Dumuzi; the importance of the female scribe in the *The Descent of Inanna;* and almost as significant, the way the story of Inanna resonates for contemporary women readers" (38). Women's writing epic starts with Hilda Doolittle (known as H.D). Her *Helen in Egypt*, an epic length poem, is an examination of male-centered epic poetry through the feminist perspective. Thus, H.D's epic length poem subverts the *Iliad* and the Helen of Troy myth and retells the whole story from Helen's perspective. Why H.D's *Helen in Egypt* is considered as an epic? It is considered as an epic since it focuses on"a pivotal moment in the history of a community, whether that community be a nation or a people or the whole of humanity" (Steinberg 29). Making the silent speak is the "pivotal moment" for H.D's female characters (Steinberg 29). By giving voice to female characters, who were silent, muted, excluded and ignored both from battlefields, male centered society and epic tradition, H.D have liberated women. Her female characters are not muted, ignored or excluded from either society and public space, but they are given voice to express themselves and their experiences, which is their "pivotal moments" (Steinberg 29).

In her groundbreaking "The Laugh of the Medusa", Helen Cixous claims that "woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as their bodies–for the same reasons, for the same law, with the same fatal goal [...]. It is time to liberate the New Woman from the Old by coming to know her" (1). This new woman rebels against the male-centered tradition and male-constructed society, which mute, silent and ignored her. New woman is now expresses herself, her experiences, her desires, her success from her point of view. The New Woman does not need anybody to write and tell her story because she is the narrator of herself. She is liberated from the constraints of patriarchal society and this is her and all the women's pivotal moment.

H.D: Re-Naming Helen of Troy

let them sing Helena for a thousand years,
let them name and re-name Helen.
(H.D 109-10)

If rewriting is renaming, American writer H.D (Hilda Doolittle) is a prominent example of the twentieth century revisionist writing. Her groundbreaking epic length poem *Helen in Egypt* (1961) is the reformulation and subversion of Homeric epic *The Iliad* and of the Helen of Troy myth. Helen, seen as the scapegoat of the Trojan War, is given a new identity, story, and voice in H.D's work. As Susan Friedman puts it in her essay "Creating a Women's Mythology: H.D's *Helen in Egypt*", H.D's special contribution lies in the clarity with which she understood the need and process of transformation: the metamorphosis of woman as "other" to authentic selfhood (164). In H.D's poem, Helen transforms into a new woman who is in search of a voice and an identity. H.D's epic is a good example of the metamorphoses of stereotypical women roles. The basic mission of H.D's epic is to explore

[1] Enheduanna, daughter of sargon the Great (who ruled over Sumer and Akkad around 2300 BCE) wrote numerous hymns to the goddess of Inanna. Two of her hymns–hymns that she wrote for Inanna–are famous: *The Exaltation of Inanna* and *In-nin sa-gur-ra* (Downes 38-9).

how the Helen of Troy myth is created. As Rachel Connor states in *H.D and the Image,* "[i]n its continual return to the celebrated view of Helen on the ramparts, the poem exposes both the power of the scopic and the historical and cultural process through which the female body has been objectified" (71). H.D's poem represent Helen's endeavor to reclaim her identity.

Helen in Egypt is divided into three parts, each of which takes place in different places. Part I, "Pallinode", focuses on Helen who is alone in Egypt. She believes that Amen (or Zeus) brought her there. Her loneliness comes to an end with the emergence of Achilleus, who is shipwrecked. When Achilleus remembers Helen, he says:

> What sort of enchantment is this?
> What art will you wield with a fagot?
> Are you Hecate? Are you a witch? (16)

Later on Achilleus' hatred changes into love and he starts to question whether Helen was in Troy or in Egypt, whether she is guilty or innocent. Friedman says, "Helen treats Achilleus with great ambivalence because his questions destroy the peace of easy innocence" (169). She also fears losing her identity because of his questions and his "charm or enchantment is [...] so strong that she must fight for her identity, for Helena" (37). Achilleus then leaves Egypt and goes to island of Leuké. Thetis tells Helen to follow Achilleus; however, before going to the island Helen must discover who she is. The Pallinode, which begins with a statement that Helen has never been in Troy but in Egypt, ends by putting her into the repressed memory of the past.

Part II, "Leuké", shows Helen with her memories. Paris appears in her memories and they together experience again the Trojan War. Paris tells her that she died when Troy fell. Then, Helen leaves him. However, as Friedman posits, "[s]he is not ready to go to Achilleus because of the conflict between her dual selves: Helen Dendritis, the young Helen, who loved Paris, and the older Helen of Egypt" (170). In "Leuké" Helen is defined with different names by male characters. For example, Achilleus defines her as "Isis," "a vulture, a hieroglyph" (17). Theseus also has definitions of Helen, such as "Pallas" (159) and "Demeter" (151). By retelling Helen's story, H.D wants to liberate her from all these different identities that she does not belong to; she wants and needs to be herself because males around her have attributed all these different identities to Helen. And Helen, who is in search of her own identity, tries to break away from all these identities which are established by men. "As avatar of Aphrodite", Pallas, Isis, and Demeter, "the heroine must reconcile herself with the Helen of Troy she has forgotten she ever was" (Ostriker 20). H.D defines Helen's own identity by retelling her story, by liberating her from being a scapegoat. This is the "pivotal moment" for Helen and for all the women who are trapped in their homes and muted (Steinberg 29). Robert Hokanson claims that "among her multiple identities and voices–such as the heroic 'Helen of Sparta'" (176-77), and the lyric voice that "seems to speak for Helen", according to the prose (178-80)–Helen appears to consolidate her identity and to affirm her self-confidence at the close of "Leuké" and Helen refuses the "male reading of her" (336):

> but I would see further,
> I would renew the quest,
> [...]
> so I would read here
> in my crystal, the Writing. (205)

Part III, "Eidelon" is where Achilleus and Helen come together and have their child Euphorion. The focus of "Eidelon" is on Helen and her understanding of who she is; she overcomes the hatred of people, finds her identity, and finally becomes Helen. In Homer's epic, Helen becomes an object to be possessed by men. On the other hand, H.D's retelling of the myth acquits Helen from being the scapegoat. To explain Helen's quest for identity, H.D goes directly to the core of the "patriarchal mythology of woman's nature–woman as representation of the flesh who tempts mankind to evil and death through her sexuality" (Friedman 166). Thus, this stereotypical woman becomes the heart of the women's epic tradition which aims at a revision both of male-centered and male-dominated epics and the idea of womanhood. Friedman states that for H.D Helen represents all women who need to be liberated from being muted, scapegoated, and ignored. Friedman asserts that "re-visionist myth-making offers a rich source of personal and cultural transformations from a woman's perspective, it makes an important contribution to the female poetic tradition. Simultaneously, it helps to reshape the poetic tradition to which all groups, with their different historically determined experiences and perspective, contribute" (166). While representing all women for H.D, Helen starts to question what she represents for men. She thinks of herself as:

> Helena, Helen, Helen hated of all Greece (2)

Helen recognizes that this hatred is also expressed when others say:

> O Helen, Helen, Daemon that thou art,
> We will be done forever
> With this charm, this evil philter,
> This curse of Aphrodite (4)

Because of this established demonic image of Helen, H.D effectively writes an "apologia of Helen" (Friedman 166). H.D's epic starts with a *Pallinode*[2], which revises the established tradition by rewriting and renewing Helen's story. Book One of *Pallinode* opens with a prose paragraph. According to Friedman, in the prose passage that opens the epic, H.D reminds her readers of the precedents for revisionist myth-making in Greek literature itself:

> We all know the story of Helen of Troy but few of us followed her to Egypt. How did she get there? Stesichorus of Sicily in his Pallinode, was the first to tell us. Some centuries later, Euripides repeats the story. Stesichorus was said to have been struck blind because of his invective against Helen, but was restored to sight, when he reinstated her in his Pallinode. Euripides, notably in "The Trojan Women", reviles her, but he also is "restored to sight". The later, little understood Helen in Egypt, is again a Pallinode, a defense, explanation, or apology.
> According to the Pallinode, Helen was never in Troy. She had been transposed or translated from Greece into Egypt. Helen of Troy was a phantom, substituted for the real Helen, by jealous deities. The Greeks and the Trojans alike fought for an illusion. (1)

[2] A *Pallinode* is a poem of retraction, or as Friedman says "a literary song against, in Greece" (166).

In this Pallinode, rather than being represented as a scapegoat, H.D's Helen is presented as innocent. The real Helen is not in Greece but in Egypt, and Helen who is at Troy is only a representation or a phantom of the Helen in Egypt as the real Helen has never been to Greece:

> Helena, cursed of Greece,
> I have seen you upon the ramparts,
> No art is beneath your power,
> You stole the chosen, the flower
> Of all-time, of all history, my children, my legions;
> For you the ships burnt,
> O cursed, O envious Isis,
> You-you-a vulture, a hieroglyph;
>
> "Zeus be my witness", I said,
> "it was he, Amen dreamed of all this,
> phantasmagoria of Troy,
> it was dream and a phantasy" (16-7)

Helen expresses her own feelings, her own truths, which may be considered as "pivotal moments" (Steinberg 29). In male-centered texts, Helen is a woman who is accused of being the cause of the war. She is hated and not given a chance to express her own feelings, what she wants, or where she wants to be. She is an object to be possessed either by Menelaus or by Paris. She is the silent, muted and ignored women in male-centered epic; however, in those lines, H.D liberates Helen. Most importantly, Helen speaks and vindicates rights. Her claim that she has never been to Troy, is a vindication of her rights; she is not silent any more. She is strong enough to say that she was not in Troy, but in Egypt. According to Friedman "H.D understood that creation of selfhood for women involves not only a new expression of woman's experience, but also a transformation of the androcentric cultural tradition which has shaped and often thwarted that experience in the first place" (164). Thus, according to H.D, as Friedman puts it, the search for identity engages with the re-construction of substantial social and cultural traditions, which over-praise masculine word, and the recreation of a women's story through feminine perspective, which is devalued. This overvalued manly world and nonrecognized, devalued feminine world are outspokenly represented by Helen when she thinks of Achilleus:

> Does he dare remember
> The unreality of war
> In this enchanted place?
>
> His fortress and his tower
> And his throne
> Were built for man, alone;
>
> No echo or soft whisper
> In those halls,
> No iridescent sheen,
>
> No iris-flower

> No sweep of strings
> No answering laughter
> But the trumpet's call. (30-1).

In those lines, Helen, by displaying binary oppositions (war-flower, man-laughter) shows the polarization of public and private spheres. She underlines that war is males' domain as it is related to power, weapons, sword sounds, and fierceness, whereas music, beauty, joy, peace, and tenderness are subjects of femininity. This speech also shows that females are isolated from battlefields and all fields related to power and fierceness. In *H.D and the Image* (2004) Rachel Connor states:

> while H.D's evocation of voice in *Helen in Egypt* can be read as a site of resistance to masculinist power, she recognizes the limitations of that power, namely that it is firmly embedded in the scopic economy and within patriarchal discourse. The poem conveys a constant awareness that the acculturation of women is dependent on that patriarchal discourse and of the dangers of constructing 'a political erotics' reliant on the female body or on voice. (84).

While trying to find her own identity, Helen also explores how demonic war can be. Whereas men are proud of their bloody actions on the battlefields, Helen defines this bloody scene as demonic and destructive:

> The rasp of a several wheel
> Seemed to ring in the dark
> The spark of a sword
> On a shield,
> The whirr of an arrow,
> The crack of a broken lance,
> Then laughter mingled with fury
> As host encountered host (39)

Friedman claims that H.D is criticizing a "purely masculine world view as tyrannical and death-centered", a view in which women are presented as "spoils of war" and possessed as war prizes (173). How women suffer during warfare is the recurring theme in H.D's epic. For instance, Helen tells the stories of Cassandra, Briseis, Polyxena, and Iphigenia to explain women's sufferings. While telling the story of her niece Iphigenia[3], Helen understands the striking conflict between polarized spheres. When Agamemnon was on his way to Trojan War, Artemis stopped the wind in Aulis and as we hear from Helen:

> The ships shall never leave Aulis,
> Until a virgin is offered
> To Artemis. (87)

The virgin is Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, who is "summoned to Aulis, on the pretext of a marriage to Achilleus" (72). Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter in order to initiate Trojan War. Helen represents women, their powerlessness and their sufferings

[3] Iphigenia is the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, who is Helen's twin sister. Iphigenia is sacrificed by Agamemnon when he was on his way to Trojan war.

during warfare once more. To liberate women and herself from male-dominated and male-constructed social norms, Helen says:

> Let them sing Helena for a thousand years,
> Let them name and re-name Helen
> I can not endure the weight of eternity,
> They will never understand
> How, a second time, I am free (109-10)

Re-creating the myth of Helen, H.D liberates her from being the scapegoat of the Trojan War. Retelling the Trojan war from Helen's perspective, as Albert Gelpi states, H.D turns the male-centered war epic the *Iliad* into the women's "love lyric sustained at a peak of intensity for an epic's length, and the woman's myth it evolves posits the supremacy of the mother: Helen self-born in Thetis, Hilda self-born in Helen" (90).

By subverting the *Iliad* and retelling the Helen of Troy myth, H.D makes silence speak because the "hero herself is the writing" (Downes 282). She liberates Helen, on behalf of other women, from all identities and roles constructed by males. H.D's Helen is a new woman who is not a scapegoat and an object to be possessed. Ostriker says "*Helen in Egypt* is first of all personal, one woman's quest epitomizing the struggle of Everywoman" (22). Helen, representing everywoman, is a new woman who is in search of her own identity; she is not muted any more. She has a new vision and a new voice. Rewriting and retelling Helen's story is a "pivotal moment" in women's writing because making Helen speak means making all silent women speak both in literary tradition and in male-dominated society (Steinberg 29).

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Özet

Kadın Yazarlar ve Destanın Kadınlara Mahsus bir Edebi Tür Olarak Yeniden Yazımı

Sözlü edebiyat geleneği ile başlayıp, ilk olarak Homeros' un *İlyada* destanı ile yazıya geçen destan geleneği, gerek içeriği gerekse erkek karakterleri ön planda tutması nedeniyle erkek egemen bir tür olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Erkeklerin, savaşın ve kanlı savaş sahnelerinin ön planda olduğu destanlarda ve savaş alanlarında kadınlar ikinci plana itilmiş olup, seks objesi, günah keçisi, savaştan dönen kocasını bekleyen gözü yaşlı ev kadını olarak portre edilmişlerdir. Kadınların destanlarda bu şekilde portre edilmeleri ve ikincil plana atılmaları, kadın yazarları harekete geçirmiş ve destan geleneğine bambaşka bir gözle bakılmasını sağlamıştır. Kadın yazarlar, eski destanları yeniden ele alıp, kadın gözüyle, kadının bakış açısından yeniden okuyup yeniden yazmışlar ve destan türüne yeni bir boyut kazandırmışlardır. H.D'nin *Helen in Egypt* adlı eseri Homeros'un ünlü destanı *İlyada*'ya dünya edebiyatında yeni bir boyut getirmiştir; H.D olayları kadın gözüyle kadın perspektifinden yeniden yazıp yeniden anlatmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, destanların neden erkek egemen bir tür olarak ortaya çıktığını, kadınların nasıl ve ne gibi rollerde tasvir edildiklerini ve kadın yazarların erkek egemen destan türünü nasıl yeniden yazdıklarını göstermektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: destan, kadın yazarlar, toplumsal cinsiyet, epic kahraman

Becoming Working Class: Writing, Realism, and Radicalism in Alexander Saxton's *Grand Crossing*

Joel Wendland

Abstract: Despite his highly regarded career as an historian, Alexander Saxton's early efforts at writing fiction have gone largely ignored. Embedded within the realist movement in the 1930s and 1940s and affiliated with the Communist Party, Saxton produced three works of "proletarian fiction" between 1943 and 1958. This paper focuses on the first of those novels, *Grand Crossing*, a tale of the existential results of the social "crossing" of a scion of Northeastern elites into the world of Chicago's impoverished working class. Though much of the realist fiction of the period in which Saxton wrote has been widely dismissed as "flat" or as politically limited by generic constraints, an experimental reading using the notion of de-centered author and the self-conscious recognition of a crisis of representation demands further consideration.

Keywords: literature, working-class literature, Alexander Saxton, fiction, realism, U.S. literature

Class "Crossings"

Capitalism's crises create conditions for class defections, Marx and Engels famously write in the *Communist Manifesto*. "Just as [...] a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie", they explained in the heady days of 1848 in Europe, "so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat" (494). Whether or not it is *really* possible for the artist or intellectual born into wealth and privilege to become part of the working class or "the people", many of those who worked within the orbit of the Communist Party USA in the 1930s and 1940s saw this inter-class movement as a collectively self-imposed aesthetic intention and practical aim. In her seminal study of radical feminist (and communist) writers Meridel Le Sueur and Tillie Olsen, for example, the late scholar Constance Coiner remarks of the former that she struggled internally with this "problem" as it came to form the central creative dilemma of much of her work. "I do not care for the bourgeois individual that I am", Coiner quotes Le Sueur. "I have never cared for it" (93). It is this particular desire to become other that consumes the main protagonist in Alexander Saxton's first novel, *Grand Crossing* (1943). Traversing the geographical and social terrain of the Depression-era U.S., both Saxton the author and his fictional protagonist, Michael Reed, critically interrogate the sources of their economic and racial privilege, reject that privilege, and engage an existential drama centering on the performance of commitment to the revolutionary cause of "the people".

Symbolic "crossing" as suggested by the title of Saxton's novel, I will argue, signifies the imagined physical and ideological movement of an individual from one particular social position to another that he or she does not occupy "organically" due to privileged racial, class, gendered, or sexual subjectivities.[1] Historically some

[1] The term "organic" here relies on the sense of the term elaborated by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who emphasized the direct physical proximity of the "organic intellectual" to

representations of fictive social mobility were little more than temporary crossings in order to participate in mobilizing white supremacist, masculinist, heteronormative power (e.g. blackface performance [see Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*; Saxton, R*ise and Fall* 1990; Dunson, "Black Misrepresentations"]), but in Saxton's case–both his life and his fiction–the primary intention is an enactment of political commitment to the urgency of overturning existing social relations. By contrast to the conservatism of the former, the latter is a revolutionary gesture. The importance of this distinction cannot be underestimated, because a conflation of "crossing" into a single, negative political act of oppression, as argued, for example, by Coiner and Rabinowitz,[2] reductively subjects proponents of revolutionary crossings to ahistorical critique. The motivations for making such a "crossing", as has been pointed out by other scholars, is integral to understanding the large body of cultural production undertaken by radical writers, artists, filmmakers, and others in the 1930s and beyond.[3] Though distantly related to the "ghetto pastoral", or as Denning describes the contradictory mode of writing, "the yoking of naturalism and the pastoral" in novels where urban life is nostalgically simplified (230-31), Saxton's work should not be dismissed as this type of slumming voyeurism.[4] Its main thrust is self-representation of "crossing" and the possibility of an ongoing process of personal transformation. Thus, using a realist[5] technique and self-consciously recognizing its generic limits, Saxton's novel works to locate this personal identity crisis within a landscape of shifting social identities of gendered and racialized subjects in the U.S., highlighting the possibilities and limitations of the representation of human liberation and social revolution.

Saxton's class crossings began during his time at Harvard, which, like his fictional protagonist, he left to the chagrin of his parents. In 1939 he moved west, continued his studies at the University of Chicago, began his writing career (as a proletarian novelist), and also became politically active at the Hull House settlement. After school, Saxton applied his commitment to joining the working class by finding "various industrial jobs" from "railroad jobs, [a] furniture factory, [and] steel mills in South Chicago" until the onset of World War II saw his entry into military service (Saxton, Interview). Ultimately, Saxton joined the Communist Party sometime in this period, citing its reputation for involvement

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the production process (work) and the community of workers, her experience and knowledge of struggles and rigors of that class, and the pressing that experience into the service of promoting organized understandings and activities of exploitation (118-25).

[2] For a discussion of "crossing" as a defense and a point of creativity, see also Wald (1994, 152-61). For a discussion of "cross-dressing" as a strategy for producing a politically enabling "third space" or identity, see Glenn (47-71).

[3] See for example Mullen, who has developed the notion of "'popular front' anxiety" to describe a writers' alienation from his or her working-class subject (137; see also Wald 2000; Aaron; and Coiner 92-4 and 148-49).

[4] Denning's term refers to forms of fiction writing by white ethnic authors who felt estranged from both elite culture and their own working-class and cultural roots. Frederick C. Stern, whose 1980 article on the creative works of Saxton contains some inaccuracies, misreadings, and often some misleading stereotypes of communism and "proletarian" fiction, labels Saxton's work as voyeuristic.

[5] Though his study is a broad survey of African American art and literature, Morgan describes "social realist" cultural producers of the period in which Saxton wrote as self-conscious artists who attempted to represent a politically motivated version of the "real world" and its contradictions. Theirs was a deliberate effort to transform the consciousness of their audience toward collectively affecting social change that empowered the working class (1-42).

in working-class politics and as a main venue for radicalized youth to become politically active as his reasons (Saxton, "Reminiscences" xvi; Saxton, Interview).[6]

It was also in this period of his life that Saxton began to write *Grand Crossing*. In a later autobiographical essay, he "recall[ed] [*Grand Crossing*] with fondness because it is the only book [he] ever wrote that earned any money" ("Reminiscences" 90-1). My personal copy of the book, printed in 1943, was in its sixth edition and distributed through the Book Find Club, a small but financially successful book distributor modeled after the Book of the Month Club. Despite this minor financial success, Saxton never found himself within the leadership orbit close to the Communist Party's "cultural front" (Denning) situated around well-known magazines such as *New Masses* or the Party's organ *Daily Worker*. Occasionally, however, he asked some friends who were Party members to read his writing in progress. As he points out, "I was always working as an industrial worker who was also a writer" (Saxton, Interview), suggesting his limited influence upon or from the milieu of the Party's prodigious cultural arm.[7] This is not to imply that Saxton's distance from the cultural wing of the Party's work provides him with greater credibility or insight, or that he was not tremendously influenced by the development of theory and practice within the Party. He was a committed Party activist, but the difficulties of making a living as a writer and the exigency of work in various industrial jobs and the trade union movement linked his primary Party work to the latter rather than to the arena of cultural production. He did, however, befriend such leftist writers as William Schenk, Harvey O'Connor, and the gay African American novelist Willard Motley (Fleming 28-9).[8]

After his service in the U.S. Maritime Service in the war years, Saxton moved with his young family to California where he worked as a writing instructor, a screenwriter, and began to write his second novel *The Great Midland* ("Reminiscences" xxi; Interview). Struggling to make a living as a writer, Saxton found work as a carpenter to, as he put it, "earn his share, more or less, of [his] family's living expenses" (Interview). He also worked as a union activist and authored a pamphlet published by the Committee of Maritime Unions ("The CMU Looks Ahead"), a short-lived, left-led coalition of the West Coast maritime unions. In the 1940s and 1950s, Saxton campaigned for left-wing presidential candidate Henry Wallace, participated in cultural conferences and seminars on art and

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[6] Saxton said that he joined the Communist Party because he "believed America's brightest hope lay in industrial unionism, in getting beyond the political hodgepodge of the New Deal to a mass politics based on industrial labor, driving toward socialist democracy. The Communist Party seemed to me an intensely serious advocate of such politics" ("Reminiscences" xvi). In our 2000 interview at his home then located in Santa Rosa, California, he added that the Communist Party was the natural place for young people with liberal and left political affiliations.

[7] Roediger indicates that Saxton wrote at least once for the *Daily Worker*, the national daily published by the Communist Party (2002, 179). An excerpt from Saxton's second novel *The Great Midland* appeared in the Spring 1947 issue of the short-lived *Mainstream,* and an article discussing representations of working-class women in recent "proletarian" novels appeared in *Masses and Mainstream* (Reiner 1-10). Serving as the successor to the politically and financially beleaguered *New Masses*, *Mainstream* lasted a single year and was replaced by *Masses and Mainstream* in 1948.

[8] Motley, though described by his biographer Robert Fleming as under the tutelage of Saxton, likely had as much influence on Saxton as the other on him. Motley, using his popular success with the 1947 "crime" novel *Knock on Any Door*, who influenced his own publisher (Appleton-Century-Crofts) to get Saxton's second novel into print. In his diaries, Motley referred to his deep friendship with "Sandy", a reference to Saxton's nickname (Motley 164).

literature, and joined campaigns against U.S. militarism in Korea (California Labor School Flyer). Saxton left the Communist Party in 1958 and returned to college to finish his doctorate in history. He went on to write three seminal non-fiction books in his academic field and to be recognized as a distinguished historian on the faculty at UCLA in the latter decades of his professional career.[9]

Migrant narrative as problematic

Grand Crossing narrates the politicization of its main character Michael Reed. The novel works through various literary influences ranging from Steinbeck to Wright and moves across, if uneasily, the various sub-genres of radical literature described by Barbara Foley in her literary study of the period.[10] In addition to its setting in Chicago–both at the university and in the cities' impoverished immigrant neighborhoods–the novel offers a migrant narrative not unlike those encountered in John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*, William Attaway's *Blood on the Forge*, or Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Unlike those works, Saxton's work considers the problem of representation inherent in class "crossings" so significantly raised in feminist criticism offered by Paula Rabinowitz (1995, 45) and Constance Coiner (160ff) of the male-centered radical migrant narrative.[11]

A few years ago in a retrospective article, Saxton described his first novel as an existential drama. It narrates the coming to critical consciousness of the main protagonist to his social responsibility and commitment as a counter to the ideologically ordained individualism of U.S. society, and the culture of competition and acquisitiveness that characterize capitalism ("Representations" 90-2).[12] Saxton also writes in his introduction to the re-publication of his second novel, *The Great Midland*, his fiction generally grappled with the possibility that "every individual is responsible for the history of the human species" and that responsibility "entails the obligation to act on it" ("Introduction" xix). *Grand Crossing* is important because it raises the particularities of, or is "typical" of, the kinds of struggle over representations of working-class people and of becoming working class, or in the terms of the period, becoming part of the people that was integral to the cultural level of class struggle and struggles against oppression from the viewpoint of most "proletarian writers" of his time.

Within this context, the movement of middle-class writers, like Saxton, across the class lines of representation signified not only the shift in political outlook of the bourgeois

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[9] They are: *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (1971); *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (1990); *Religion and the Human Prospect* (2006).

[10] Foley calls those subgenres fictional autobiography, the proletarian *bildungsroman*, the proletarian social novel, and the collective novel (1993, 321-441).

[11] Feminist critics have been especially sensitive to this particular issue. For example Kessler-Harris and Lauter (xiii) suggest that female writers within the Communist Party's cultural orbit in the radical 1930s provided alternative narrations of class struggle to the "hitchhiking Wobbly style of Life" generated by many male writers of the period. Likewise, it seems, as Denning implies, the migrant narrative most often of masculine authorship maintains masculinist and sexualized orientations, often with underlying homoerotic themes (259-82). In another vein, Frederick C. Stern emphasizes the connection between migration and class "crossing" committed by middle-class writers such as Saxton (135-55).

[12] The term "critical consciousness" here relies on the description and definition developed by Victor Villanueva following the theory of radical pedagogist Paulo Freire (54).

toward sympathy with radical thinking but also presaged the struggle writers undertook to define the meaning of "popular front",[13] "the people", and the working class, including racially and nationally oppressed peoples. The problem of representation, as cultural historian Barbara Foley has noted, rather than one to avoid, embodied for many mid-century leftist writers the cultural level of class struggle and the omnipresence of class inequalities under capitalism (1993, 249-83). As Rabinowitz astutely observes about the possibilities inherent in middle-class originated sympathetic representations of working-class life and struggle, "[f]ailed resistance is not the same as no resistance" and, for her, failure is as much central to understanding the "1930s" as is the successes of its activists and writers (1996, 98). Following cultural historian Cary Nelson, I believe representation as a literary problematic must be considered dialectically and must be historicized. It is of supreme importance to "try to understand what [literature] meant to the people in their own time" in order to sustain a project of recovery while engaging the project of criticism (158-59). In a society where the typical middle-class goal is to strive upward, the attempt to identify "downward" is certainly worthy of some empathy by modern day critics with similar political commitments. The struggle to erode the perpetual gap between author and the object of representation, though certainly a "realist" project, was not only quite possibly the source of important cultural contributions but also was emblematic of the connection many leftist cultural producers had to a movement that sought to eliminate structurally enacted social inequalities and to imagine socialism–in fact, to erase the fountainhead of their own creativity.

What are usually depicted as clear-cut binaries between subject and object by contemporary scholars (even as they attempt to critique such binaries), for Saxton were not so clear. Constance Coiner, for example, in her book *Better Red*, writes that Tillie Olsen's poem "To the Women Up North" "foregrounds fundamental antithesis" of class and ethnicity, i.e. the central feature of the poem in Coiner's view is that it seems to set upper and lower class as opposites and white women and Chicanas as opposites (162). Likewise, Rabinowitz regards radical "bourgeois" intellectuals and their role in cultural production and critique as *opposed* to the working-class objects they represent in their analysis, critiques, or cultural work (1995, "Introduction"). For his part, Nelson suggests that oppositions are not the central feature of radical cultural production, but rather the main point is to mobilize collective political, not only artistic, intervention against inequalities and exploitation portrayed. Nelson implies that the whole point of Olsen's poem is not to create persistent antithesis, but to bring into alliance women from different "class" and "race" positions, especially over the issue of consumption and production in the public sphere (163). This latter criticism is the lens through which this article attempts a reading of Saxton's *Grand Crossing*,[14] focusing on the protagonist, Michael Reed, a Harvard student from a well-to-do East Coast academic family who moves from the echelons of class and

[13] This term refers to the time period between approximately 1935 and 1950 when various elements of the left (communists, labor unions, civic organizations, and liberals) generally agreed on the need for a broad multi-class alliance to oppose right-wing extremism, most prominently represented by the emergent fascist movements in Europe. It was book-ended by the Communist Party's sectarian "third period" during which centrist and liberal political forces were described as "social fascists" (up to 1935) and the fragmentation of the center-left popular front by McCarthyism beginning in 1948.

[14] In addition to *Grand Crossing*, Saxton published *The Great Midland* (1996 [1948]) and *Bright Web in the Darkness* (1998 [1958]).

racial privilege to self-described partisan for the people, and, in the process is transformed from writer "apart" to "executor and heir" of the people (409).

Gender and race encounters in the "crossing"

Grand Crossing is composed of four spatially and temporally disconnected parts. That is, each successive section opens in a new place and is separated by time and events that take place without narration except as vaguely remembered events on the part of the narrator and reader. This form gives the reader the impression of a natural progression of events in the novel, as if the events were really outside the control of the characters and the omniscient narrator. This structure does, however, require the active memory and participation of the reader and the active association of the various parts to the integrity of the story. For example, the reader needs the opening narrative of Reed as a tramp and his encounters with the unemployed, impoverished, and desperate workers who roam America's western countryside in order to understand the motives for his decision to leave his privileged life in the east. Even more interestingly, each part, until the final part, traverses deeper into the underbelly of the U.S. social geography. Not only does Michael move mentally and/or physically closer to the subaltern subject of his work, he moves steadily toward a comprehensive and dialectical understanding of the causes of and solutions to the social inequalities he enables us to witness.

Furthermore, with the astute observations on *heteroglossia* by Bakhtin in mind (264-65), it is important to recall that Saxton's text is made possible within the context of class and peoples' struggles for democracy, against fascism, for trade union rights, against racism, etc. Thus, though the form and content of the novel may work to center the narrator/author, a formal characteristic valorized by what Saxton labels as individualist, or bourgeois, literature, the connections the novel makes between itself and wider social developments compete constantly with this centeredness of the narrator/author.[15] This decentered structure enables a reading of the text that emphasizes the social, the collective potential human impact on and responsibility for the existing social formation and its motion, without excluding the possibility of human agency. This latter component is both central to and the most conflicted aspect of the novel.

The connection between individual and society stands out from the beginning. In Part I, Michael Reed, returning from his summer intern job as a "copy boy" at a Portland, Oregon newspaper, loses his luggage and his money and accepts the company of a Jewish University of Chicago student named Benjamin Baum as they "tramp" home across country. Freight hopping, doing temporary agricultural work, sleeping in the woods, and encountering, witnessing, and narrating the worst effects of the Depression period mark the journey home for Michael and Ben. In addition to leading Reed across the western plateaus, deserts, and mountain ranges, Ben is also, as Wald has characterized him, a "midwife to radicalism", guiding Michael through U.S. social and racial geography (1994, 81). Ben, recognizable almost immediately as a Marxist, also assures Michael of the possibilities of equality cast in "popular front" terms:

> Maybe some people do have to make their living chopping trees and picking hops and selling wholesale suits. But that is no reason to think they're domestic animals

[15] Bakhtin's rejection of an "authorial individuality in language" (264) pre-dates Foucault's own assertions about the "author-function of discourse" lying outside the specific ambitions of any individual person (129-30).

> rather than people, is it? Sure, wisdom for everybody's sake, *Pro gloria populi*. You've been all the way from Boston to Seattle now. Think what a swell place this country could be to live in if we applied just a little bit of the knowledge we have, if we only weren't such a bunch of lamebrains. (32)

The populist rhetoric aside, the thrust of Ben's speech gives the indication of not only the responsibility of the radical democrat to the needs of the "people" but also of the people's responsibility for claiming the sources of power that could meet those needs. This question of human agency in the struggle for liberation forms a central tension of the novel. Though, as argued earlier, the most distinctly experienced surface of the novel is the existential drama of the middle-class, white, male would-be radical in the move to a partisanship for "the working class", the relationship of the narrator (and reader) to the multiplicities, complexities, imperfections, and perfections of, as Michael puts it in his oft-repeated ruminations, the "bitter and commonplace" (300), compete with that superficial experience for textual space and dominance.

Michael's internal political journey, sparked by a persistent skepticism and tendency toward cynicism, is characterized by his profound sense of alienation. On one level, he is absolutely uncomfortable with the economic status of his family and his Harvard milieu and describes this life as desiccated and withering (he, however, remains able, until late in the novel, to move through this milieu easily and without being recognized as one who has "crossed"). On the other hand, he grapples with what he describes as "real", a dilemma that I will read later as integral to the formal conundrum of the novel (218). In conversation with people whom he likes, such as his Harvard roommate and friend, Dick, he always is equipped with a ready "supply of sarcastic questions" (218). He supposes his sarcasm to be critical, but soon recognizes that he has nothing beyond the question, "What good is it?" –a question he picks up from his African American friend and fellow student William Christmas, who is also described as a Marxist (216). Reed understands that this particular question aims to expose the ideological suppositions of the examinee en route to reworking the existing cultural, ideological, or political materials into a new imagining of social existence. He prefers, however, to simply tear apart, hoping that the perfect materials for a new society will appear on their own, apart from the labor of humans. His friend Ben feels "that in all things there was true and false, that the true remained real and good and worth taking in spite of the false". To this William added, "that bad as the present might be, out of it had to grow the powers to shape the future; there was no good renouncing the present". Half way through the novel, Michael recognizes the political bankruptcy of such cynicism, but still struggles to understand what is "true" and "real" (217). To himself, he concludes that his cynicism is "the evasion of the necessity to think and believe and act" (219). From Ben and William, he learns that people, particularly those who have nothing vested in the status quo must re-make the world in a more democratic fashion.

It is this lesson, Michael seeks to apply to his work as a writer. The education of the artist/writer entails learning what is "true" and "real", and Saxton divulges his views on these aesthetics through a romantic subplot. Saxton sets this romantic plot in what initially appear as arbitrary spaces within, but unconnected to the movement of the story and the development of Michael's character. However, this romantic plot parallels, pushes, and intertwines with the main storyline. Aileen Ratel, the daughter of the Ratels from Evanston (upper class Chicago suburb) and the female figure of the heteronormative romance, though a mostly apolitical character, through the linkage of partisanship to cultural production propels some important aesthetic discussions within the novel. Engaged to an actor and

literary journal editor, an acquaintance of Michael's, but intrigued by Reed's nonconformist goals and politics, Aileen provides Michael (and the reader) with two things aside from romantic plot interest. As an art student, she explores with Reed a radical aesthetics and politically engaged cultural production. Additionally, she enables Michael's continued access to the homes, lives, and outlooks of the wealthy, highbrow crowd of Michael's past. Her conversations with Michael on art take the form of Michael as teacher and Aileen as student. It might be useful to note that Aileen's development into a character with a radical political outlook signifies the essence of "popular front" politics. The point is that she moves from liberal open-mindedness caught in the snare of bourgeois life to a pro-working-class stand, even taking on a job as a receptionist while waiting for a developed sense of the subject of her art (mirroring Michael's own social movement). It is the progression of events through which Michael develops a political consciousness that reinvigorates him. From the stultifying and enervating middle-class life of his past, Michael's life in Chicago is filled with intellectual and political stimulation, developing creative productivity, and the generation of a sexual relationship with Aileen.[16]

Critiquing the highbrow aesthetics of his Harvard colleagues, Michael asserts to Aileen that an artist must be of the world, and not labor under the delusion that art is from an exclusive corner built by elites and sheltered from the actual workings and social relations of the world. An artist must be a "useful citizen" despite the pain to "his spirit and imagination" (264). As Michael argues to Aileen in a particular scene in which she questions her artistic ability, talent and style will follow once an artist or a writer has developed a useful understanding and knowledge of the subject (158). In contrast, and incidentally during a discussion that occurs at the crisis point of Aileen's relationship with Sherm Townsend (the Harvard colleague) and Michael, Sherm asserts that "there are two worlds, and he belongs to the world called culture" (260). To this Michael counters, "Art is an expression of something, *not the thing itself*. You have to live in the world first before you can express living in the world" (emphasis added, 264). In other words, art is intimately connected to life and social organization as the structure of life, not merely the details that compose description of human existence. If art is imagined as distinct, it becomes pure aesthetic, more real as an isolated and isolatable phenomenon than the experiences and struggles of people and, thus, unreal. There is a sort of convergence of Sherm Townsend's highbrow aesthetic and Michael's early revolutionary cynicism. Both sought a form of purity, but ended in isolation or political abstentionism.

All of this discussion works as competing lectures directed at Aileen, whose artistic abilities seem confused and blocked (109-110, 150, 158), and gestures of a masculinist competition for the heterosexual female romance interest. The argument that art is "not the thing itself", aside from the radical argument that art and representation are intimately involved in class struggle and the struggle against oppression, suggests something about the self-conscious form of this novel itself. Art, in this case the specific work *Grand Crossing*, is "not the thing itself", but is an expression of the process of political evolution that propels Michael's life, actions, and thoughts, set in the crisis of capitalism that produced both the crisis of highbrow art and culture and the interest in the emerging working-class subject of history. The function of art, then, is to reproduce and represent the social crisis as both an individual and a social phenomenon, and as inherent in the logic and operations of capitalism. It is the representation of the "bourgeois self" in crisis; and intimately linked to

[16] Saxton's problematic contrast of implied metaphoric libidinous dissipation in the world of Harvard with the sexual awakening encountered in Chicago seems intentional.

this is the suggestion implicit in the novel's argument that this crisis is also one of masculinity.

This focus on the externalization of the individual dilemma suggests the need to recognize the limits of dismissing *Gran Crossing* as merely ghetto sublime voyeurism (though elements of these lurk within the text). The dominant performance of the novel is the turning out of the protagonist/narrator/author's internal world–a sort of exposé of the middle class connected strongly to what Lukács described as the central role of realism: the formation of the "typical" and the development of a character within the social relations that produce the possibility of his or her development (Haslett 89ff). If global economic crisis and the threat of fascist war in the name of white supremacy destabilize normative identities and the production of the "typical" in literature in the 1930s, the narrative of *Grand Crossing* makes possible a new "typical" – even to the point of dismantling the possibility of the "typical". It creates a historical moment in which the subject's integrity could be salvaged in the process of becoming working class and committed to its liberation from exploitation and oppressions.[17]

Furthermore, the struggle for human liberation, not surprisingly, as a number of scholars have highlighted elsewhere about the period in which Saxton wrote, is cast specifically in masculinist terms (Faue; Rabinowitz; Coiner; Foley 1994; Wald 2007, 16-45).[18] The formation of commitment to this heteronormative, masculinist radicalism coincides with some psychological traumas enhanced by encountering unexpected social "realities". Michael's characterization of the potential for "pain" in the process of "crossing" is not simply a romantic formal device but rather reveals another interesting element of this novel's basic goal to link individual interiority to social commitment. Michael's cynicism, we learn, is not easy; "crossing" can be a treacherous path replete with traps and disillusions that are not simply erased just because one's political perspective (Marxism) ideally works toward social clarity.

For example, after moving into Ben's South Side apartment, Michael encounters class, national, and racial "others" who, in the customary manner of the modernist literary work, provoke and enable self-consciousness. On one occasion, Mary, the white, working-class girlfriend of Chicano worker and neighbor Johnny Morelos, the object of Ben and Michael's "progressive" sympathies, becomes ill as a result of her drunken and abusive father, poverty, and her own unwillingness to abandon her father for a dryer apartment and a less-fettered existence. In her semi-flooded basement apartment, Michael literally pulls up a chair (250) and becomes participant/observer/recorder of working-class oppression. But the thrust of this scene and internalized reflection work beyond the simple establishment of hierarchical opposites. Pushed to consider himself through the confrontation with the "other", Michael begins to learn and "unlearn" the sources of his racial and class privilege. "It might have been himself climbing on railroad embankments", recalling the hoboes and tramps out west, or living in extreme poverty "running through the alleys, frightened and hating, stumbling over garbage, hearing at each corner the shouts behind him, and the stones showering against the walls" as he imagines the life of the hoboes and tramps of

[17] See Wald for his close biographical study of numerous men and women, from various class and race backgrounds, who shared these particular destabilizations and identity concerns with Saxton and sought to resolve them in leftist politics (2007).

[18] In his later novels, Saxton attempted to re-examine this masculinist point of view and its political limitations by "crossing" gender lines and developing specifically female and feminist voices within his fictional work.

West Madison (254)–the street that stretches across the country, that "[r]uns from coast to coast" (224). Put more directly, the understanding of the geographic universality of social contradictions viewed through a class lens are placed in contradiction with the preservation of heteronormative, masculinist identification with radicalism as elucidated in the romantic sub-plot.

Complicating matters further is the novel's general treatment of the intersection of racial identities and inequalities with social class and gender. For example, the identity of Johnny Morelos, a Mexican American character whom Michael encounters in the slums of Chicago, is apparently mediated completely through the narrator's consciousness and within the context of the protagonist's radical political formation. Stern describes Morelos as a "flat" character who lacks serious development (136). Indeed, Morelos seems to provide the image of the "other" on which the true subject of the novel, Michael Reed, builds or transforms his identity.

Still, the character of Johnny Morelos works to initiate something beyond the text of the novel, beyond which Saxton (as decentered author) has little command. The initial image of Johnny delivered by Ben and sustained on the surface throughout the novel is that Johnny is a vulnerable person maintaining a "tough-guy" veneer in order to vent frustration with exploitation and oppression, to thwart the imposition of meaninglessness to his existence based on his national identity and his social and geographical location within the "ghettoized" section of Chicago (215, 253, 302-3). This fact of Johnny's agency generates the necessity of exploring the hidden "infrapolitics", to borrow from historian Robin D. G. Kelley, of the working class "from way, way down below" (1-13). Morelos, when first introduced, deceives Ben and Michael, who feel they "know" him because he fits a ghettoized type. He convinces them that his purchase of a suit was made illegitimately, or at least unethically, through gambling, while hiding the fact he had gotten a job with which he hoped to "normalize" his social status, provide a decent home for his white girlfriend, and escape the worst facts of ghetto life (*Grand Crossing* 212-15). Though the "known" type is seemingly sustained through the action of the plot, Saxton produces some possibility of self-criticism for "knowing" and generates complexity and agency in a character that also works to trick the reader/critic into believing in his superficiality. The fact that Saxton fails to pursue the element of agency more directly and thoroughly (i. e. it does not become the subject of his fiction until his next novel five years later) suggests two possibilities: that his relationship to the "naturalist" tradition is quite strong, or that he sought to "retreat" from authoritatively representing Johnny's life and situation in a manner that might "misrepresent" him.[19]

In other words, the text seems to be self-conscious of its failings, especially with regard to the encounter between the political story–the narrative of the development of Michael Reed–and the hinted at complexity of Johnny Morelos. Suggested in the encounter is the recognition of the limits of crossing and the need to avoid speaking for a person and his or her motivations without authentic authority that even a class-based alliance between Johnny and Michael may not provide. Nevertheless, it simultaneously indicates the necessity of the alliance of middle-class whites to a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-national uprising of organized labor within the CIO and the futility of individualized resistance –Johnny ultimately robs a store and kills the attendant for which he ends up in a shoot out with police at Ben's apartment that kills him and Ben.

[19] For a discussion of the concept of critical "retreat" as it relates to proletarian writers, see Wald (1994, 152-61 and 178-86) and Stern (139).

Saxton's inclusion of Morelos, especially with the interethnic romance, is extraordinary in an era when American mass culture still tended to view such romances as undesirable and to exclude Mexican Americans. For example, John Steinbeck's 1939 novel *Grapes of Wrath* and the subsequent popular film starring Henry Fonda could easily have included non-white and non-native born farmworkers (e.g. the hundreds of thousands of Latinos/as, Filipinos/as, Chinese, Japanese, South Asian immigrant workers who brought California agricultural into existence) as part of its narrative of working-class struggles. Instead, as Denning argues, both the novel and film represent dismal economic conditions in the Depression as most visibly felt by displaced white (even "racialized" by the nomenclature of "Okies") farmers who have lost the land and status that had given them an identity as part of a racialized agrarian mythology.[20] Through his aberrant inclusions, Saxton's decision to place the contradictions and complexities that involve the Morelos character before the reader indicates the social reality that produces the possibility of the text (in Saxton's mind the definitional essence of realism). This realism is more politically useful for Saxton and his imagined readers than the simple elision found in Steinbeck; and, it serves as a basis for recognizing Morelos' agency and character depth with averted vision.[21]

Another important character, an African American Communist named William Christmas, is central to the formation of Michael Reed's political development. Once again this character seems to be nothing less than a mirror in which Michael's political form takes shape or a person to whom Michael goes for advice or material assistance. Only on two occasions within the action of the novel does William leave his station in the dining hall at the student co-op near the university, to pick up Michael in his dorm room on the way to visit Ben in his new apartment (210-15) and to be present at the shootout with the police that kills Johnny and Ben (303-9). He is "presented as squeaky clean" and "idealized", according to Wald, following Stern's reading, who likewise describes William's "work ethic [...] as Christian and Puritan as anything can be" (1994, 174). It is true that William Christmas is characterized as hard-working, disciplined, highly politically developed (he is the only person in the novel with established Communist Party membership), and measured in thought and action.

An alternative reading of Christmas starts with understanding how Saxton, using his realist framework, "retreats" from representing William's life and work. This means that his representation of William in the text of the novel is limited, if positive, but it also suggests that Saxton, not having entered the realm of political work to which William is committed, is incapable of telling his full story. Late in the novel, we learn that William's main activities, other than school, revolve around union organizing among African American workers within the orbit of the CIO (*Grand Crossing* 361-62). Further, as a Party member and disciplined by the necessity of security it is not likely that an "outsider" like

[20] I am indebted here to Denning's insightful discussion of the migration narrative in *The Cultural Front*, in which he argues that Steinbeck's "racial populism" masks the historical fact that the migration of white farmers helped in the process of displacing non-white or non-native born farm labor (267). Journalist Carey McWilliams' 1939 best-selling exposé, *Factories in the Field*, does include stories about non-white and immigrant farmworkers, but its relative impact on the popular imagination in comparison to Steinbeck's novel and the subsequent film is far smaller.

[21] Averted vision is the technique star-gazers use to see dim stars. When looking at dim stars, one can see the star better by looking near, rather than directly at, the star.

Michael Reed would be privy to many details of William's life. Saxton's commitment to realism prevents him from doing more with William.

Scrutiny of the text, using the averted vision technique developed above, enables new insight, however. After Ben has been killed, Michael's political commitment wavers; he wonders if a progressive peoples' movement can effect change. He considers resigning from the "people" and returning to his previous life with its opportunities and compromises. Before deciding, he turns to William for some advice. To William he says, "[I]t was your pragmatic personality I came for". Once again Michael expects that he understands who William is and for what he stands. Michael says, "[Y]ou are a sane, hard-boiled guy [...]. Here you are year after year eating pancakes and coffee, just as unchangeable as that geyser out West". But William throws this "knowing" (i.e. Michael's knowledge as well as the critics) into doubt. He responds, "Now, that's a surprise to me". And William sits quietly playing along with Michael's assumptions about himself and listening to Michael's emotional conundrum and the individualistic manner in which he views it. William advises him to take an enema and reminds him of the politically reactionary form and content of his "crisis" (360-62). Exposing a little of his life, William tells briefly of his work in a union which the company tried to undermine by pitting super-exploited African American "scab" workers against the unionized African American employees. Confrontations with the police and the special effort to unite African Americans, who "unless they stand by each other", cannot "advance" as a "racial" group, nor can they "get anywhere" as a class, "white or colored [...] unless [they] stick together and fight together", demonstrate the scope of William's commitment to social justice (363).

While Michael's encounters with William suggest a "retreat" from representation demanded by realism and the inability to "cross" racially, the representation of William's brief though insightful schematic on racial and class liberation works to open a large space where the fictive and the social interact. Saxton, in a recent article, describes his own view of the issue of racism as developed in this early novel as "the one-world treatment" with a close analogy in Steinbeck's well-known novel *Lifeboat*. This "treatment" suggests that racism is eradicated when all people come to understand that their survival depends on mutual cooperation. Though basically a good outlook, he writes, it does not enable a clear understanding of the historically specific formations of racism and "racial" identity. He suggests that this "treatment" was the dominant outlook of anti-racists in the period (2000a, 21). And clearly, the story around William Christmas is a portrayal of a version of this "treatment", but with a particular difference that deserves some attention. As Kelley argues, an enduring contribution to anti-racism by American Communism was the space African American cultural producers and activists were enabled to carve out for independent theory and praxis, a kind of cultural and political sovereignty (35-54). Furthermore, though clearly the main thrust of William's argument is the "lifeboat" thesis, he is also pointing up the possibility of such sovereignty for the African American community led by Black workers. It is this sovereignty, which, as Michaelsen observes in another context, is not representable (4-5). Indeed, *Grand Crossing* is a text that seems self-conscious of refusing to represent.

Existentialism and realism

At the same time that these interventions are at work within the text and context of this novel, its central thrust and purpose remains the existential quandary of its main protagonist. After the deaths of Ben and Johnny, this crisis is pressed back into the center of the novel's movement. Faced with the loss of his friends, Michael's political commitments

are left in doubt. He verbalizes his identification with "the people", but his actions and thoughts express his ambivalence:

> After a while he threw his hands up into the wind and said, "I see the plains and the mountains and the people, I am part of them, their future is my future, their failure is my failure, their death my death, I will have no more timidity and constraint, I will have no more of the house with the barred windows"; but he held his foot on the doorjamb so the door would not blow closed behind him. Then the people began to stir and the lightning flashed over the mountains, but instead of stepping all the way out, he jumped back through the door. He closed the door against the outside and leaning on the sill of the barred window, he let the mist blow against his face, and thought, Ah, time, time, what is there real in the world? (*Grand Crossing* 391-92).

Instead of romanticizing working-class space and turning its inhabitants into heroes, Michael confronts the disquieting fact that "[t]he things that made the world were bitter commonplace" (255). What is "real" and "true" in the world often signifies poverty, destitution, garbage, disease, drabness, futility, drunkenness, dirtiness, routine, especially during the Great Depression. The romantic imaginary of the middle-class radical collided with an unexpected reality provoking "[t]he wordless unformed passion of desire [to rise] up into his throat, but there were no words and no hope [...] It might have been his own will that whispered: I will, I will; but found in the bitter and commonplace pictures that made the world, only the will to hate and to destroy" (255). This particular internal conflict is the hinge upon which *Grand Crossing* operates, and it is not the story of a man who simply relishes the proletarian life, romanticizes the imagined working-class world. It is a story of a man stifled in the exclusive highbrow culture of Harvard who comes to find creativity in the commonplace of the world, in the radical, Marxist interpretation of that world, but who is full of fear, dread, even hatred for that commonplace reality upon the point of crossing the line. Symbolized by his cynicism, Reed's initial attitude and "desire" is to sweep away the commonplace, the actual existing reality of the quotidian, but he cannot, as it is the political commitment to the imperatives of "realism" as form and political content that provides substance and structure to the vague artistic creativity that he feels flows through him.

This sense of despair over the "commonplace" contrasts markedly with Michael's attitude earlier in the novel. At the point he decides to leave Harvard for Chicago, Michael is sitting in his dorm room reading a history of medieval towns, castles, and social organization. On his own and distracting him from the argument of the book, Michael imagines the lives of the ordinary town dwellers, of the peons. Drifting into a daydream, Michael soon imagines the barricades of the French revolution or the Paris commune. In response to this scene, Michael asserts to himself, "There is a feeling of waiting, an excited feeling of lines of people moving at once. I'll be there. I'll be there helping them over the barricades and over the mountains. The lines of people stretch so far that part of them are in sunlight and part in darkness. I'll be there and we will say: This is freedom and this is the future" (133-34). At Harvard his feet sank "deeper into the dry sand, [his] life turn[ed] thin as the smoke of burning leaves in the autumn sunlight" (134). "To make a life worth living", to recreate himself, to breathe life into his own existence, is the motive for leaving. Once he finds himself in the commonplace for which he yearned, his imaginary slips away to cynicism. Thus he must come to grips with the existence of reality–as it is, whatever it might offer–as the initial point of revolutionary change, as containing the building blocks of socialism. Reality, composed of the "commonplace" is constructed by people (but not

always in revolutionary modes), but the revolutionary writer and activist must operate on this level of reality if he or she is to achieve anything like "real" representation, or concretized class struggle and the struggle against oppression. And it is at this point, not so coincidentally, that Saxton's commitment to realism as a mode of cultural production intersected with the Communist Party's articulation of and commitment to "popular front" politics.

In presenting an insightful debate on "realism" as a formal novelistic technique, Foley asserts an interesting possibility with which "proletarian writers" were confronted: that the use of realism implied a kind of risky concession or compromise on the part of the author to an ideologically imbued bourgeois form, calculating that the working-class, socialist, radical, Marxist content would sanitize the conservative influences (1993, 251ff). She concludes that contradictory politics of the "popular front" linked with problems with Communist thinking on the "woman question" and in the development of socialist relations of production within actually existing socialist states, generated the likelihood that "form exert[ed] its most bourgeois influence when and where the text's 'line' was least revolutionary" (1994, 54-6). This argument rests on the premise that proletarian writers privileged content (as Foley herself seems to do) over form; that a "realist" mode of writing, though at the time the best formal material for producing a working-class partisan novel, was not the fundamental purpose of creativity or writing.

In a letter to me, Saxton states that in his fiction writing he strove to the most accurate representation of reality, of characters, and situations as possible. He argues that proletarian fiction, though influenced ultimately by the bourgeois novelistic form, was counter weighted by "its choice of subject and its ideological message", by the working-class partisanship of the novel's content away from the suspected conservatism of the novel (Letter). This formalistic concession supposedly parallels political "concessions" made in the "popular front" period, not in terms of chronology per se, but in terms of theory and practice of engagement with existing cultural materials that were transformable only through radicalized and conscious labor on the part of cultural workers. Contrary to Foley's argument, however, Communist Party-affiliated critics were inclined to view sectarianism as the source of problems with the matter of form; vulgarized romanticism arose from the tendency toward narrating the unreality of imaginary class struggle (Murphy 15)[22] or skipping the day-to-day work of building class unity and power straight to the novel's political goal. As participants in mass popular movements were enjoined to express partisanship for working class power (with primary focus on the struggle against the international fascist danger), so proletarian literature strove to "express the ideology that emanated from the social experience of industrial working classes" (2000b).

Moreover, contrary to what I perceive as mechanistic linkages of form to content by Foley in her argument, it is the points where these supposed "concessions" are made that

[22] Leftist critics and creative writers frequently challenged one another along these lines. Communist Party leader and cultural critic V. J. Jerome, renowned for the stringency of his polemic, challenged novelist Fielding Burke to commit to activism in order to decrease the distance structured by class between her and her subjects, a concept that paralleled, for Jerome, exactly the distance between imagined representation and realism, political apathy and political commitment (14-5). Mike Gold challenged Erskine Caldwell (*Tobacco Road* 1932) in a similar manner (27-8). Caldwell's biographer Dan Miller suggests that this challenge invoked a special creative time for Caldwell (155-58).

allows the "realistic" mode of writing to hold up best.[23] Another counter-weight to Foley's view is that masculinist representations of class struggle that tended to exclude or marginalize feminine or feminist voices was not a feature particular to the "popular front", but rather, as Kelley (114) and Faue (71) have pointed out quite well, they were particularly characteristic of the "revolutionary" and "proletarian" line of the previous "third period" (up to about 1935), during which Communist theorists shunned any deviation–as they saw it–from class-based action and thought. Indeed recent work by scholar Kate Weigand points to the mid-1940s as a period in which the Communist Party completely revamped and developed new ways of thinking about the issue of gender that should be viewed as a forerunner of contemporary academic analysis of gender inequality and patriarchy (2001). That retrograde sexism also found currency in the late 1930s and beyond is not surprising, but is not indicative of "popular front" compromising; if anything, it is indicative of the continued link to the previous period and the perpetual problem of defining liberation in heterosexist, masculinist terms. Further, it is the points of "realism" given life by progressive-radical coalition (in this context the struggle against international fascism), that points up the realistic possibility of "proletarian" leadership not only in class and peoples' struggles, but in the struggle for democracy and social equality.

Ultimately, after working on the railroad, during which Reed is injured in an industrial accident, he decides that his commitment to working-class and peoples' politics is set. "The dark country", he thinks at the end of the novel, "of remembering and hesitating and turning back lay behind them [him and Aileen]". The linkages of the individual to the social are exposed, and the responsibility one has to the development of a humane and just society is called forth (409). One might, yet again, suggest the romantic nature of this plot ending. Many critics who have not yet arrived at a similar political conclusion, though privy to the inner-workings of the argument and similar life circumstance, might consider Saxton's conclusion unreal and imaginary or "unconvincing" (Rideout). At the same time, it is important to remember that for many middle-class writers or intellectuals, this transformation and conclusion would have been quite real and true. What appear as political shortcomings in Saxton's early effort seem to have been quite self-consciously worked on as the narrative voice of his future novels shifted from a centered character to a multiply dispersed set of characters, narratives, trajectories, viewpoints, and possibilities for narrative "resolution", facts that resulted both from his political commitments and viewpoints as well as from the emerging social crisis of postwar anti-Communism and related rightward political shifts in general.

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[23] It is also my contention that Foley elides the possibility that, though a writer might be Marxist, social contradictions that produce the possibility of writing proletarian fiction are also likely to appear in the text.

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Özet

İşçi Sınıfı Olmak: Alexander Saxton'ın *Grand Crossing* Adlı Eserinde Yazın, Gerçekçilik ve Köktencilik

Bir tarihçi olarak oldukça itibar görmesine ragmen, Alexander Saxton'ın kurgu yazınındaki erken denemeleri büyük ölçüde göz ardı edilmiştir. 1930'lar ve 1940'lardaki gerçekçilik akımının içinde yer alan ve Komünist Partisi ile bağları bulunan Saxton, 1943 ve 1958 tarihleri arasında üç "işçi sınıfı romanı" yazmıştır. Bu makale, bu romanlardan ilkini teşkil eden ve Kuzeydoğu elitlerinin bir kolunun, Şikago'nun fakir işçi sınıfı dünyasına yaptığı "sosyal" geçişin varoluşsal sonuçlarının bir hikayesi olan *Grand Crossing* üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Yine de Saxton'un yazdığı dönemdeki gerçekçi romanların birçoğu "düz" olarak nitelendirilmiş ya da politik olarak genel baskılara maruz bırakılmış olsa da, bir temsil sorununu bilinçli olarak tanımak ve merkez dışı yazar anlayışını kullanarak deneysel bir okuma yapmak daha başka özellikleri dikkate almayı gerektirir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: edebiyat, işçi sınıfı edebiyatı, Alexander Saxton, kurgu, gerçekçilik, Amerikan edebiyatı

Space is Political: Reading Places, Names and Subjectivity in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*

Semiramis Yağcıoğlu

Abstract: This essay aims to demonstrate how spatiality, subjectivity, and the politics of racism are imbricated in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977), by drawing on critical geography which deals with the question of how politics can align with place and identities. It argues that reading space in the novel, as the active constitutive component of Milkman's identity, brings into relief Morrison's powerful analysis of the racist ideology that ruthlessly uproots, dislocates, and erases the chains of signification that thwarts the growth of the black subject.

Key words: *Song of Solomon*, space, subjectivity, politics, critical geography

This essay aims to tease out the interconnections between spatiality, identity and politics of racism in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977) by drawing on critical geography, which deals with the question of how politics can align with place and subjectivity. My argument will be that the novel's representation of space is in part inseparable from Milkman's quest for gold, which turns out to be the valuable knowledge of "where he is" and "who he is".

Within the theoretical framework of critical geography, much of the debate hinges around the understanding that it is "no longer good enough to theorize power as the expression of a singular dimension of oppression, such as class, or gender or race" (Keith and Pile 1). David Harvey argues that "space can be recognized as an active constitutive component of hegemonic power" (in Keith and Pile 37). In order to uncover the hidden geography of power, Frederic Jameson suggests that there is a need for articulating a model of political culture because contemporary culture is "increasingly dominated by space and spatial logic". He contends that "a model of political culture appropriate for our own situation will necessarily raise spatial issues as its fundamental organizing concern" (Jameson 71). Jameson conceives this spatial politics as guided by the process that he provisionally calls "cognitive mapping". This notion captures the idea that individuals can uncover the human geography of power only if they become aware of the spatial specificity of their subject positions.[1] Edward Soja, on the other hand, argues for a more "dynamic understanding" (Keith and Pile 4) of the relation between identity, power and space,

> [w]e must be insistently aware how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology. (Soja 6 in Keith and Pile 4)

[1] See Keith and Pile Keith, eds. Introduction Part I and Part II in *Place and the Politics of Identity* for an extended discussion of cognitive mapping and the notion of spatiality

With the reassertion of space as an explanatory category in social sciences and cultural studies, the post-modern politics of identity has come to deploy a highly spatialized vocabulary for articulating an understanding of social relations from the late 1960s onwards. In this spatialized discourse on both real and imaginary geographies, the question of "Who am I?" becomes "Where am I?". Consequently, questions such as "Is this where I want to be?", "Where do I want to be?", and "How do I get there?" become critical for those who are marginalized. A third world poster cited by Adrienne Rich in "Notes Toward a Politics of Location" seems to provide the answer: WE ARE HERE BECAUSE YOU WERE THERE (in Smith and Katz 77). The peculiar simplicity in this articulation puts forward the stark realization that social relations of subordination and domination inscribe the materiality of everyday life through spatial strategies. In their extensive discussion of Rich's conceptualization of power, Smith and Katz argue that the value of Rich's formulation lies in its ability to draw attention to the claim that "relationality of social location is inextricably imbricated with the relationality of geographical location" (77);

> [f]urther relativity of location applies not just to us versus them, one group *vis-à-vis* another, but inevitably implies a redefinition of ourselves, of the group. Just as she maintains that 'the United States has never been a white country', she concludes by asking who the 'we' are who are the supposed subject of political change. (77)

In a similar vein, Pratibha Parmar argues that "the appropriation and use of space are political acts" (101). Hence, Keith and Pile, drawing on Frederic Jameson and Edward Soja, advocate the notion of *spatiality* and suggest that "space cannot be dealt with as if it were merely a passive, abstract arena on which things happen" (2). Space is never innocent.

This view of space provides a way of rethinking the social world in concrete forms, which enhances our ability to decipher how spatial practices naturalize asymmetrical subject positions. In this respect space acquires semiotic value and hence can be taken as a sign capable of signification in terms of power relations. It is in this sense that Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* provides an excellent illustration of the relationship between identity and the spaces through which identity is produced. I will attempt to use *space* as a semiotic category in order to lay bare how relations of power are inscribed onto the "apparently innocent spatiality" (Soja 6) of the discourse of the family in *Song of* Solomon.

Indeed, geographical concerns lie at the heart of *Song of Solomon*. Guitar, one of the characters in the novel, is acutely aware of the fact that "relationality of social location is inextricably interconnected with relationality of geographical location". The following verbal exchange between Guitar and Milkman, the central character of the novel whose problem lies in his inability to grasp his axiological position in the web of social relations that govern his life, captures the central thesis of the novel.

"Give me tea, Guitar, Just the tea. No geography" says Milkman exasperated by Guitar's continual reference to geographical concerns. However, Guitar insists "No geography? Okay, no geography. What about some history in your tea? Or some sociopolitico–No. That's still geography. Goddam, Milk, I do believe my whole life's geography". Unable to grasp the political significance of what Guitar is saying, Milkman refuses to listen. "Don't you wash pots out for people before you cook water in them?" Guitar's ensuing words reveal that, perhaps unwittingly, he seems to have already deciphered the interconnection between the specificity of his social position, history and the relationality of geographical location:

> For example, I live in the North now. So the first question comes to mind is North of what? Why, north of the South. So North exists because South does. But does that mean North is different from South? No way! South is just south of North. (114)

In the same way Milkman's aunt Pilate, who embodies black values put under erasure by the discourse of dominant white culture, cultivates a love for geography and carries a geography book with her.

Thus, a spatialized reading of *Song of Solomon* will, I believe, provide valuable insights into the politics of the novel. First, I would like to concentrate on part I of the novel not only because it has received little attention from the critics, but also because it provides ample textual evidence on how the relation between identity and the spaces through which identity is both produced and expressed are inextricably intertwined. There are two paths I would like to strike out on in my spatialized reading of *Song of Solomon*. The first path traces the claims on the representation of the city that invoke "a multiplicity of spatialities simultaneously present" (Keith and Pile 31). The second path maps out the subjective positions conferred on the subject by the discourse of the Macon Dead family. The spatial analysis of the Dead family, I suggest, lays bare that each member of the family has problems with identifying with spaces that ensure a meaningful relationship in the domain of culture.

The novel opens with the history of Not Doctor Street that can best be characterized as an "impossible space", a notion theorized by Golding. The street signifies an impossible spatiality: "impossible not because it does not exist but precisely because it exists and does not exist at the same time" (Golding 206). In the course of situating her characters and readers physically in an unnamed upper Michigan City on Lake Superior, Morrison underscores a kind of cityscape whose very reproduction is based on and maintained by an irreducible conflict between the white authorities and the black residents: "The avenue running northerly and southerly from Shore Road fronting the lake to the junction of routes 6 and 2 leading to Pennsylvania, and also running parallel to and between Rutherford Avenue and Broadway" (4) constitutes a space for the white legislators to display their naming power in an official public notice. The notice proclaims that the street in question known as Doctor Street by the black community "had always been and would always be known as Mains Avenue and not Doctor Street" (4).

The proclamation with its hegemonic undertone and claim to truth actually puts under erasure the fact that the only colored doctor in the city had actually lived and died there. The hegemonic discourse exerts its power on the black community by a language game that excludes and thereby distorts historical information about black presence in the city. Obviously, the street plays a central role in the imagination of the black residents because Doctor Foster represents a figure whom they can look up to. In this sense, the street represents a place that engenders a sense of achievement, self-worth, and belonging. Therefore, to keep the history of the place alive becomes a struggle against submersion and cancellation. Interestingly, language, which can be used to bury facts by hegemonic discourses, allows the return of the repressed and becomes the site of emancipation for the black community. The narrative voice tells us mockingly that the black residents start calling the street Not Doctor Street in order to "please the city legislators" (4) whose principal concern is to maintain the city's landmarks. The exact repetition of the phrase, which intends to negate Doctor's presence, reduces the act of submission to the Law to a joke. The word "doctor", which is charged with profound significance, refuses to leave the

surface of representation. It keeps flashing like a neon sign, constantly mocking the city authorities and continually inspiring the imagination of the black community.

Attempts to erase the chains of signification that deny the black people the opportunity of representation is a pervasive everyday practice. As an activity that operates at every level of social life, this practice deprives them of their existential meaning and decenters them. While the white hegemonic ideology erases black cultural presences from the public domain by claiming public spaces for its own representation by design, the same force accidentally erases family history, leaving a barren field of existence for the black subject.

The story of the renaming of Milkman's grandfather Jake dramatizes how personal history of the black subject is obliterated and displaced by the disregard of the white hegemony, engendering a sense of non-being. Milkman's grandfather is misnamed as Macon Dead when a Yankee Soldier writes in the wrong spaces in the registry of The Bureau of Freed Slaves, substituting the town Jake lived in and the fact that his father was dead for his name. Indeed, the family name Dead, thus assigned, signifies a dead space of familial relations. The family that Milkman is born into is depicted as a portrait of cultural alienation and internal dysfunction. Guth suggests that "the ugly suspicions and rampant hatred that substitute for human warmth all contribute to the analysis of a family which has denied its cultural heritage in favor of the acquisitive, status-conscious values of the white urban middle-class" (580).

Milkman's father Macon Dead exchanges black cultural heritage for the culture of acquisition idealized by the white ideology. Early in the novel he tells his son that there is only "one important thing you'll ever need to know. Own things. And let the things you own own other things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too" (55). This piece of advice reveals Macon's materialistic outlook on life. For Macon, everything, including human beings, is perceived as objects that one uses at will.

The same cultural illness that results in the displacement of "peoplehood" infects Milkman's mother Ruth Foster, who happens to be the daughter of the black doctor in whom the black community has invested so much pride. She honors her father's contempt for the black community by burying him "someplace other than the one where Negroes were all laid together" (123). Absence of love and human contact characterizes the space that the Dead family inhabits. The doctor's "big dark house of twelve rooms" (9) on Not Doctor Street is "more prison than palace" (10). Macon Dead treats his wife abominably by occasionally beating her and denying her love and sexual gratification. She seeks comfort in sleeping on her father's grave and nursing her son until he is eight years old. Macon's two daughters, First Corinthians and Magdelena called Lena, waste their lives away by making "bright, lifeless flowers". With respect to the community they live in they signify a dead space, too. Their Sunday tours in their "wide green Packard" go unnoticed by their neighbors in the city:

> [Macon] hailed no one and no one hailed him. There was never a sudden braking and backing up to shout or laugh with a friend. No beer bottles or ice cream cones poked from the open windows. (32)

As Bjork aptly points out, "to the community the Packard has no lived life at all" (40). So, the effect of the genealogical rupture caused by grandfather Jake's misnaming can be compared to the effect of an earthquake that dislocates everything in their world, turning it into a wasteland.

The process of naming and being named plays a similar role in Milkman's personal history in losing his touch with reality and meaning in his life. He earns his nickname when Freddie, the Janitor, stumbles on Ruth as she nurses her son one afternoon. Ruth jumps up as quickly as she can and covers her breast, dropping her son, who is already eight years old by then. His mother's panic "confirm[s] for him what he [has] begun to suspect—that these afternoons were strange and wrong" (14). Freddie calls the boy "between gulps of laughter [...] [a] milkman. That's what you got here Miss Ruffie. A natural Milkman if ever I seen one. Look out womens. Here he come" (15). Freddie carries his discovery into the homes in the neighborhood. The nickname is never acknowledged by the family members. Ruth stays at home and does not receive afternoon guests so that she does not hear that "her son had been rechristened with a name he was never able to shake" (15).

Macon Dead never learns how his only son "acquired the nickname that stuck in spite of his own refusal to use it or acknowledge it . . . [T]he name he hear[s] school children call his son, the name he overhear[s] the ragman use [...] he guesses that this name [is] not clean [...] It sounds dirty, intimate and hot" (15).

Hence, the nickname designates a space of not-space (or no-space-at-all) for Milkman. While it signifies a subject position in the public domain, it does not signify a space within the family sphere because it does not find a residence in the syntax of the family discourse. As Milkman, he is denied a space of representation in the structure of the Dead family. At any rate, the boy does not have a separate body of his own. He seems to enjoy a prolonged period of infancy during which he does not differentiate between himself and his mother's body upon whose nurture and warmth he relies. It is not until later in the novel he realizes that he does not have a separate physical existence apart from his mother. "Never had he thought of his mother as a person, a separate individual with a life apart from allowing or interfering with his own" (75). Ruth, too, feels exactly in the same way. "Her son had never been a person to her, a separate real person" (131). Together, they lead a symbiotic existence. Thus, Milkman has the status of what Freud describes as the "oceanic self" or what Lacan calls "l'hommelette"[2]. Milkman, like a human omelette, spreads in all directions. Devoid of any fixing of the spaces of being, he is nobody. He instinctively seems to be directed towards everything experienced as pleasurable without recognizing any boundaries. At the age of twelve, he enters into a sexual relationship with his aunt Pilate's granddaughter Hagar. The relationship goes on until he is thirty-one and Hagar is thirty-six. He decides to end the relationship when Hagar "place[s] duty in the middle of their relationship" (98). He sends some money and a letter to Hagar to end their relationship, which drives Hagar crazy. His relationship with his father is also tainted by an inability to differentiate himself in any way. For a time, he passively accepts his father's code of behavior and becomes his lackey. He works for him in the real estate and rental business, becoming an undifferentiated continuity of his father's body. This sort of existence denies the possibility of acquiring any value, or meaning for himself because, to echo Ferdinand de Saussure[3], meaning depends on difference.

Deprived of existential meaning, his growth into manhood reflects a process of disengagement and alienation. He does not care whether he lives or not. During a fight with Guitar, who tells him to pay attention to what he is trying to tell him, Milkman retorts: "And if I don't? What then, man? You ganna do me in? My name is Macon, remember?

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[2] See Kaja Silverman's *The Subject of Semiotics* for a discussion of the psychological mechanisms of the symbiotic subject as discussed by Freud and Lacan.

[3] See Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de Linguistic Génerale* on linguistic meaning.

I'm already Dead" (118). He exhibits the same disinterest to Hagar's repeated attempts to kill him. Thus, a total inner detachment both from others and more disturbingly from himself marks his mode of existence.

Interestingly, Ruth has the status of a nobody, too. The same symbiotic existence characterizes her relationship with her father. Macon Dead denies love and sexual gratification when he discovers Ruth kissing her dead father's fingers. She, too, has problems with her name and the social space it signifies. She prefers to be called with her father's name Foster rather than her husband's name. When Macon Dead protests at the table saying "Anna Djvorak don't even know your name! She called you Dr. Foster's daughter! I bet you hundred dollars she still don't know your name! You by yourself aint nobody. You your daddy's daughter" –Ruth replies in a steady voice, "I certainly am my daddy's daughter" (67). The reply enrages Macon Dead and he hits Ruth. When Macon's hand flies into Ruth's face, Milkman knocks his father down.

Later Macon tries to justify his abominable behavior toward Ruth by relating her sickly relationship with her father. He says: "I began to wonder who she was married to– me or him" (72). Thus, it is very difficult to pin down the subjective position Ruth occupies in the discourse of the family where each particular position is constituted by the responses of the other subjects in the field. Although she is Macon Dead's wife, there is no sexual relationship between them; while on the other hand, she is bound with an incestuous relationship to her father. Thus, with respect to her husband she occupies an impossible space because she is a wife and not a wife at the same time. Her position with respect to her father is of the same order in that she is a daughter and not a daughter at the same time. The same impossibility characterizes her position with respect to her son. She is a mother and not a mother. In a similar way, Milkman's and Macon's subject positions are dislocated and unregimented. All the textual evidence point that both Ruth and Milkman have the status of "L'hommelette", lacking any demarcation or boundary of the self.

The constant allusion to incestuous relations points out that the Macon Dead family lacks a regulatory mechanism that regiments the intersubjective relations in the family. By drawing on Lévi-Strauss' *Elementary Structures of Kinship,* Silverman points out that in the state of nature mating is unregulated whereas in culture it is subordinated to the incest taboo. The positions of "father", "mother", "daughter", and "son" determine a wide range of relationships such as acceptable responses to other members of the family. Acceptable mates, the names and attitudes with which the subject identifies, including the distribution of power, are all regimented by the incest taboo: "[T]he family is perceived primarily in terms of its capacity to confer identity upon its members" (180). In the light of this discussion, I suggest that the family signifies non-being because it lacks an organizing principle that would usher them to the symbolic order. Thus, the familial space that is designed to nurture, protect, and connect becomes a site of dysfunction that radically truncates Milkman's identity formation

Milkman's journey to find Pilate's gold that is supposed to be buried in a cave in the South has received more attention from the critics than Part I of the novel. For Ryan it is "a captivating quest to literally piece together–to re-collect" (598) the history of his ancestors which has been callously fragmented and put under erasure by the hegemonic discourse. Although the quest has also received mythical interpretations[4], I suggest that spatial issues prefigure as the fundamental organizing concern and the journey from north to south

[4] Trudier Harris, "Song of Solomon" in *Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon*, provides an extensive bibliography on the mythological readings of Song of Solomon

provides further textual evidence on the complex relation between history, identity and the spaces through which identity is produced. Milkman's discovery of his roots is depicted as a process inextricably linked with geographical movement. The journey from north to south becomes a journey of healing by reversing the traumatic effect of the North on the Dead family that resulted in erasing chains of signification that originate in the family history. The fact that events, stories, and songs that are part and parcel of the Dead family history turn out more or less differently in different places, heightens the readers' sensitivity to the way in which claims to truth and space are inextricably bound up in history. Space, place, geography, and erasure of names emerge as sources of fragmentation[5] in Milkman's quest for gold. Interestingly, it is Pilate,who carries a geography book at all times, who acts as the compass in Milkman's quest, thereby eventually saving him from his callous insensitivity to human feelings.

According to Harris, in *Song of Solomon* Morrison "debunks one myth and creates another" because "few characters in African-American Literature chart their courses from North to South, for the myth informing their actions invariably pictured the North as the freer place, where money was plentiful and liberty unchallenged. So they usually went to north, to that earthly land of milk and honey" (14). In contrast, in *Song of Solomon*, The North is the land of materialistic pursuits where inner fulfillment is dwarfed and communal ties are severed. Going back into the territory of his ancestors enables Milkman to shed away the layers of sedimentation heaped on him by the acquisition culture that characterizes everyday life in the North. What happens in the cave in Danville, Pennsylvania, can be viewed as an archeological stripping away of the debris deposited on him in the North. His northern outfit proves to be a hindrance in this geography. He sheds away the pieces of his middle-class clothing, and attendant accessories one by one as he searches for the gold. When he finally realizes that there is no gold in the cave, he screams in anger and the bats in the cave startle him into a run "where upon the sole of his right shoe split away from the soft cordovan leather" (252). When the search in the cave proves to be fruitless, it dawns on him that Pilate might have probably returned with it to her ancestral home in Shalimar, Virginia.

Harris views the coon hunt and later scenes that take place in Shalimar as tests that questers undergo in order to be initiated into the tribe: "Having been tested verbally, physically, emotionally and sexually Milkman is better prepared, more sensitized to recognize that his family history is more important than any gold he could seek" (20). Thus, Shalimar becomes the site where Milkman reassesses his own limitations, capacity to endure, and his abominable behavior to his family, Pilate and Hagar. The realization that what he has acquired in the North is totally useless in this geography dawns on him during the coon hunt: "There was nothing here to help him–not his money, his car, his father's reputation, his suit, or his shoes. In fact they hampered him" (277). Having successfully completed the coon test, he is now allowed to make love to Sweet, who is regarded as the "reward presented to the successful quester" by Harris (20). The bathing scene that takes place before they make love to each other echoes the bathing scene in *Beloved,* when Baby Suggs bathes Sethe on her arrival at 124 Bluestone Road, "a place where fragmented bodies [...] can be reassembled" (Yagcioglu 127). Similarly, Shalimar becomes a place for Milkman where he can finally reassemble the fragmented stories of his ancestral history

[5] See Chris Philo, "Foucault's Geography"(in *Thinking Space*. 2nd. ed. Mike Graig and Nigel Thrift. eds. New York: Routledge. 2003. 205-38) on Foucault's understanding of spatialized history which sees places, spaces and geography as sources of fragmentation in history.

and the bathing scene turns into a ritual of discovering each section of his body as separate from his partner's body, yet at the same time recognizing Sweet's body as a precious site to be equally respected:

> What she did for his sore feet, his cut face, his back, his neck, his thighs, and the palm of his hands was so delicious he couldn't imagine that the lovemaking to follow would be anything but anticlimactic. (285)

On the Greyhound coach, on his way back to Michigan, as Milkman reads the road signs he wonders what lay beneath them. As the landscape of each subsequent place unfolds before him, Milkman understands that names have "meaning". He becomes aware that places are "imbued with affective connotations charged with emotional and mythical meanings; localized stories, images, and memories associated with place provide meaningful cultural and historical bearings" (Kennedy 6). His sensitivity to place names and their history effectively shows that his experiences in Shalimar have enabled him to acquire the "cognitive map" that Jameson theorizes about, for he becomes aware of the spatial specificity of his subject position:

> He read the road signs now, wondering what lay beneath the names. The Algonquins had named the territory he lived in the Great War, *michi gami*. How many dead lives and fading memories were buried in and beneath the names of places in this country. Under the recorded names were other names, just as "Macon Dead" recorded for all time in some dusty file, hid from view the real names of people, places and things. Names that had meaning Like the street he lived on recorded as Mains Avenue, but called Not Doctor Street by the Negroes in memory of grandfather, who was the first colored man of consequence in that city [...] When you know your name, you should hang to it, for unless it is noted down and remembered, it will die when you do. (330)

The names all bear witness to the presence of black people in spite of all the distortions and erasure imposed by racist ideology. Milkman loses the false name "Dead" to acquire the ancestral real name, Solomon or Shalimar. He realizes that "Pilate had taken a rock from every state she had lived in–because she had lived there. And having lived there, it was hers–and his and his father's his grandfather's and his grandmother's. Not Doctor Street, Solomon's Leap, Ryna's Gulch, Shalimar, Virginia" (330).

In poetic simplicity, Milkman renders the complex connectedness of his own identity and the identity of his forefathers and the journey back home metaphorically erodes the rigidity of territorial boundaries like South and North and suggests that social identity and cultural identity is the sum of all these connections in space.

Thus, reading the spaces in *Song of Solomon* as the active constitutive elements of Milkman's identity brings into relief, I suggest, Morrison's powerful analysis of the inextricable relation between the ontological and the spatial. The novel powerfully captures the effects of uprooting, dislocation, and the erasure of the chains of signification that lie at the heart of the racist ideology that thwarts the growth of the black subject and turns him into "dead" soil.

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Özet

Mekan Politiktir: *Solomon'un Şarkısı'* ında Yerler, Adlar ve Öznelik Konumlarını Okumak

Bu makalenin amacı, Toni Morrison'un *Solomon'un Şarkısı* (1977) adlı romanında ırkçı ideolojilerin, mekan ve kimlik politikalarını *eleştirel coğrafya* kuramında ileri sürülen

temel savlar doğrultusunda incelemektir. Çalışma, mekan üzerinde yer alan pratiklerin asla masum olmadığı görüşünden yola çıkarak romanın kahramanı Milkman'ın kimlik oluşumunu etkileyen mekansal pratikleri sergilemektedir. Bu bağlamda, temel amaç, Toni Morrison'un yetkin bir estetik anlayışla irdelediği bu uygulamaların, Afrika kökenli öznenin ismini, geçmişini ve ait olduğu mekanların üstünü örterek ve onu geçmişinden koparak onu nasıl bir hiç haline getirdiğini çözümlemektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Song of Solomon*, mekan, öznellik, politika, eleştirel coğrafya

Anachronism and the Transgression of Center in Jeanette Winterson's *Boating for Beginners*

Zeynep Yılmaz Kurt

Abstract: Jeanette Winterson rewrites the Biblical Flood Story in her novel, *Boating for Beginners*, by superimposing the moral exhaustion and materialism of modern Europe upon the ancient Middle East. This study considers Winterson's anachronistic commitment to projecting modern consumer society on to the context of the Biblical story as an attempt at transgressing the boundaries of the "grand narratives" on which Western tradition is based. As will be shown, her aim in crossing these boundaries, however, is not to validate the marginal over the tradition only, but to reveal a holistic perspective of reality that retains many realities at the same time. Winterson's anachronistic attitude is aimed at de-constructing the inconsistency of traditional religion to reveal love as the cosmic energy that connects all parts to the whole by referring to quantum physics, the basic concepts of which eliminate the material and spiritual opposition.

Keywords: Jeanette Winterson, *Boating for Beginners*, anachronism, holistic reality, love

As a contemporary novelist, Jeanette Winterson follows the postmodernist trend, the dominant features of which are "temporal disorder; the erosion of the sense of time; a pervasive and pointless use of pastiche; a foregrounding of words as fragmenting material signs; the loose association of ideas; paranoia; and vicious circles, or a loss of distinction between logically separate levels of discourse" (Lewis 123). In his seminal work, *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), Jean-Françios Lyotard refers to the term "postmodern" as "the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies [...] it designates the state of our culture following the transformations which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science, literature, and the arts" (355). The traditional concept of reality, based on the Enlightenment rationalism, has been influential throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the universal reality, up to the radically deconstructive changes following scientific developments and historical events in the twentieth century. Critical of this perception of reality, which they term "logocentric" "metanarratives" or "grandnarratives", post-structuralists assert that this is a system of constructing power centers (Lyotard 358-59).

Winterson challenges the grand narratives of Western culture to validate individual or "local narratives" that reveal "alternative life styles" and alternative modes of existence (Lyotard 353). Considering that "the fixity of reality is the hallmark of a static status quo", Christy L. Burns explains the widespread use of fantasy in Jeanette Winterson's fiction as a commitment "to open[ing] up a space for alternative life styles" (304). *Boating for Beginners* (1985) is an experimental attempt at rewriting the Biblical Flood Story by situating Noah in a pattern of relationships with his family, his society, and his God, Yahweh. Rather than the sublimated divine being and his prophet, both Noah and Yahweh are depicted as members of typical contemporary consumer society, with their material greed and discriminative social norms and popular culture. This study explores the anachronistic context of *Boating for Beginners* as an attempt to transgress the

discriminatory boundaries of Western culture, their "grand narratives" of power, by decentering them in order to validate the margins as much as the center. Jeanette Winterson does this not for nihilistic purposes, as many potmodernist authors do, but only to break the tyranny of the center by revealing its inconsistencies.

Winterson's early religious education does not only familiarise her with the Bible, but initiates her, at the same time, into the inconsistencies of religious discourse. As revealed in her semi-autobiographical novel[1], *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, also, she was rejected for her sexual choice, by the religious community the central discourse of which is based on the concept of love. Costel Ciulinaru refers to the central status of love in Christianity as that "The Holy Trinity is the foundation and the purpose of creation due to love," and he equates "creation" with "love", "[...] because God–The Holy Trinity has created evertything by love"(196). Winterson, however, displays the way in which even the concept of love is abused by the power politics of religion. Moreover, as a feminist writer, she believes in a holistic conception of existence that deconstructs all the grand narratives of Western Culture, its patriarchal discourse especially. Love, as the basic concept in Winterson's perception of reality, is more inclusive and conceived as a form of energy that unites the parts of a whole which includes not only all human beings but the whole universe.

Crossing temporal and spatial boundaries, by reversing the chronology of time thousands of years back to the biblical Flood Story, Winterson deconstructs the biased concepts of western culture to open up a holistic space that covers alternative lives as well as different modes of existence. Winterson begins to deconstruct the Biblical narrative by setting Noah's story with the Ninevah of Jonah's story. Noah's image, as a morally wise man as opposed to the rest of humanity in the Biblical context, is reversed by depicting him as well as his God, Yahweh, as corrupt capitalists. The novel opens with a newspaper extract that states that "Bags of rocks and chunks of Ararat, Turkey, that Biblical archeologists believe are relics of Noah's Ark have been taken to the US for laboratory analysis" (1999). This paradoxical statement, reflecting a scientific attempt to cross the mythic boundaries of religion, seems to contradict Winterson's postmodern commitment to deconstructing the "meta narrative" of religion. Considered in terms of anachronistic transgression, however, this epigraph, quoted from *The Guardian* dated August 1984, helps Winterson to close the gap of thousands of years in her attempt to factualize the myth in order to nullify its authority by referring to its culturally constructed nature. By depicting Noah as a selfish capitalistic patriarch plotting against the Ninevites, she de-mythifies Noah's image, with reference to this scientific attempt at factualising the myth by finding the proof of Noah's Ark. Defining anachronism, in its simplest terms, as "temporal dislocation", Luzzi explains the strategies of it as the subversion of "[...] the more rational and empirical elements traditionally associated with [past]" (83). Thus, as opposed to Noah's prophetic image in the Bible, he is depicted as an ordinary man who becomes a celebrity in the consequence of his accidental discovery of the unpronouncable, the God, who is nothing more than a cloud of gas extracted from the rotten ice cream. After their collaborative popular novel, "*Genesis* or *How I Did It* [which] had sold out over and over again", they write the second volume *Exodus* or *Your Way Lies There*" (15). In the process that follows their collaboration, both God Yahweh and Noah are depicted as typical capitalists who want more and more material rewards from the film rights to their book.

[1] See Julie Ellam. "Jeanette Winterson's Family Values: From *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* to *Lighthousekeeping*". *Critical Survey*. 18.2: 79-88.

God becomes furious when Noah starts a filming project without asking His permission. "Things with wings and lyres" angels, "begged the Unpronouncable for mercy" whereas "one of the more hyperactive angels", Lucifer, calls "[d]estroy him, destroy him" (53). As opposed to the God that created Adam in his own image in Genesis, Winterson's Yahweh in *Boating for Beginners* is selfish, vindictive and corrupt, just like Noah himself. Yahweh's first reaction, when He is annoyed by Noah's capitalist ambitions, is to destroy human kind: but "[it] would mean a riot. I've just started to get some control down there, and our Good Food Guide's selling well. I like being in print" (53). Rather than for the sake of "Christian love", He delays it, since He needs humankind for His commercial success. Failing to agree with Noah in His later negotiations, God decides to destroy mankind in a flood, excluding, ironically, Noah and his family, the real cause for His anger.

Noah and his family, on the other hand, have been making the best of his reputation. Rather than a prophetic messenger dedicated to man's well-being, he is a retired boatman, an ordinary person who ran pleasure boats on Euphrates and Tigris. Becoming the Messenger of Yahweh and a celebrity, transforms Noah's ordinary life into one of wealth and luxury. While going to meet Yahweh to convince Him about their filming project, at the Gaza Strip, "Noah's limousine came careering across the sands, with Japeth, Ham and Sham sitting on the back [...] Noah was driving and looking for all the world like an enervated cue ball" (89). When accused by Yahweh of being concerned only with his "bank balance", and threatened with the destruction of mankind, Noah is worried, not about the disaster that is going to fall upon men, but about his own profit: "But what about my tour company? What about my inventions?" (91).

All three of Noah's sons and their wives, like Noah himself, live in luxury. The local newspaper, *The Tablet*, publishes news about the miracles performed by Noah, and his great film project of adapting *Genesis*, in which his own household is employed: "The greatest excitement was generated by the imminent return of Japeth, Ham and Shem with their lovely wives Sheila, Desi and Rita. Japeth the jewelery King, Ham the owner of that prestigious pastrami store, More Meat, and Shem, once a playboy and enterpreneur, now a reformed and zealous pop singer" (21). All their "god given" success depends, in fact, upon their father's reputation. Ham's "expanding chain of pastrami stores", for example, is assisted by God: "He has guided me through the Money markets and the loopholes in the Health and Safety Regulations because he is more than YAHWEH, the God Love, he is YAHWEH, the Omnipotent Stockbroker and YAHWEH the Omnicient Lawyer" (30). The presentation of Noah as a celebrity who decides to retire except for occasional public appearances after making best of his reputation, functions to subvert the Christian discourse of love. By depicting Noah as a typically capitalistic patriarch, who is "right wing, suspicious of women and totally commited to money as a medium for communication", Winterson criticizes the materialistic and patriarchal center of the western culture which totally excludes the concept of love (69).

Through the temporal border-crossing in *Boating for Beginners*, Winterson "mix[es] up the times–what is forward goes back, what is back goes forward" (Barnes and Barnes 243). Modern consumer society, with its popular culture, material greed and technological conveniences is set against the simple life style of the holy men depicted in the Bible, whereas the cultural conceits, discriminating discourses as well as human opportunism and egoism remain the same. This kind of transgression of temporal boundaries has been termed "regressive anachronism", which, "[b]y emptying contemporary problems into the dustbin of history [...] give[s] readers the unsettling impression that they are encountering events and crises that has been same since time immemorial" (Luzzi 75). One of the main

reasons for Winterson's "'updat[ing' the past to the present" is to deconstruct the oppressive discourse of the patriarchal culture. By de-mythifying Noah's religious image, thus, Winterson nullifies his critical perception of women.

Through his negative opinion of women, Noah is depicted as the representative of a typically sexist society. He commits himself to a big campaign against deep-freezers, for example; for him "A simple diet prepared by a simple wife [...] are the corner-stones of a godly life," so a woman's priority is her house and her family" (15). Noah takes advantage of his power in denying women's rights, first as a male, then as a capital owner and finally as the mouthpiece of the divine being, "the unpronouncable". By all means then, "[t]here was no need after all, to be vegeterian, charitable and feminist. Noah promised a return to real values and, if possible, the Gold Standard; and he had the backing of the unpronouncable who couldn't be wrong because he was God" (15). As a man, a money owner or a prophet, in all cases, however, women become the target of Noah's aspirations for a better life. Frozen food, banned by Noah, is considered responsible for all kinds of problems in family life. The rejection of frozen or ready made food, in fact, reflects the anti-feminist attitude of patriarchy. For Burns, *Boating for Beginners* "playfully invert[s] social expectations for women, linking the present to some fantastically reconstructed moment in the past (the time of Noah and the ark)" (Burns 280).

It is paradoxical, however, that the most enthusiastic supporters of Noah are women themselves. The president of the association that fights against frozen food, NAFF–No Artificial and Frozen Food, for example, is a dedicated activist woman. An expert who has carried out a research on the behalf of NAFF, blames all familial maladies on this food, through women who make use of it, by declaring that "[w]e're all tempted by the odd packet of *petits pois*, how quickly that becomes ready-meals and oven chips, how quickly that leads to the wife being out somewhere, the children neglected and rebellious, and the husband forced to fend for himself" (88). The president of NAFF, Lady Olivia Masticater, declares that "[t]here is now every reason to believe that frozen food has contributed to the rise of feminism, premarital sex and premature hair loss" (88). Noah's ally, the novelist, Bunny Mix, is another conformist woman who also does not favour refrigerators and ready food. Her anti-feminist criticism, however, is not limited to emancipated women only but encompasses new forms of writing as well. She disapproves of those "claiming to develop new art forms," and she receives Noah's approval in believing that "[t]he experimental novel is a waste of public funds" (59). She dedicates all her books, excessively romantic and sensational, to Noah, whom she considers is "the regenerator (along with herself) of tattered morality" (16). Winterson imposes the maladies of the postmodern age upon the mythical context of the flood story. While highlighting the ordinary human quality beyond centuries and thousands of years, she deconstructs these facts by indicating their constructedness.

In line with the "temporal anachronism" that aims at setting the problems of the present within the past in order to highlight the unchanging human nature, "anapotism", or spatial anachronism, is employed in the novel, to de-construct Euro-centric concepts of western culture. Aravamudan claims, with reference to Vico, that

> nation-centered conceit is a nation's habitual overestimation of its own originality, power, and antiquity. Vico attributes this conceit to ancient cosmologies, and perhaps we can update it as the target of critics of Eurocentrism and other forms of racialism, nationalism and localism. For instance the attribution of global modernity to the West

> is replete with intellectual diffusionist hypothese that radiate outward from metropolis to colony, spirit to matter, and civilisation to barbarism. (337)

By substituting Nineveh with England, the ideas, concepts and norms that belong, basically, to European civilization are transferred to legendary Nineveh, the Middle East (Aravamudan 336). The Orient (the metropolis), then, becomes the Occident (the colony), the civilized becomes the barbarian, the spiritual becomes the material etc. The tour that Noah intends to take, for example, to "heathen" lands to show the film adaptation of his collaborative work with God, is to England, the heart of Europe, which is othered from the "Oriental" perspective as the site of primitive:

> Stunned by the success of their literary collaboration Noah and God had decided to dramatise the first two books, bringing in Bunny Mix [the writer of popular romances] to add legitimite spice and romantic interest. The cast would be large, probably most of Ur of the Chaldees, and the animals would take pride of place. The whole show was to tour the heathen places of the world, like York and Wakefield, in a gigantic ship built especially by Noah's most experienced men. (20)

The Eurocentric conceits are de-centered by marginalising Europe as the site of the primitive. Winterson furthers her deconstructive claims by not privileging one binary opposition over the other, but rather totally eliminating all the boundaries to attain a cosmic wholeness over the basis of love, which is unifying, not discriminatory like grand narratives that are centered on power. She neutralizes patriarchal conceits, not by asserting women over men, but by de-contructing religious discourse, which forms the basis of women's subordination to men, by the reflection of frail human nature through the characterization of God and his Messenger. By the means of anachronistic transgression she juxtaposes the traditional basis of human goodness and love, the Bible, with the human nature, its liability to selfishness and corruption, to reveal the hypocricy of the power politics centering grand narratives of western discourse.

Winterson employs temporal and spatial transgression, anachronism, as a means of de-constructing western norms to re-construct alternative forms of existence by transgressing the traditional conceptions of gender and human ontology. As revealed by Cockin, "[f]or the female political subject, the body was a site of ideological conflict during the British campaigns for women's suffrage in the early years of twentieth century and it continues to haunt feminist subjectivities and gender transgressors" (18). To defy the body politics of western culture, Winterson develops a transvestite character, Marlene, who together with two other characters, Gloria and Desi, own human love and understanding as opposed to Noah, his three sons as well as Yehwah, the God. By transgressing, first, gender boundaries, Marlene annihilates gender discrimination, then, by her demand to have both her operated organ back as well as keep her breasts she blurs the gendred boundaries of the logocentric discourse. Winterson defies the body politics of traditional culture by depicting Marlene as neither male nor female. By reflecting Marlene's marginal case through the perspective of Desi, Noah's cosmic-conscious daughter-in-law, Winterson widens the conception of reality by considering Marlene's case as only one of the manifestation of many other possible forms of plural realities. The naive young Gloria, who is just on her way to know the world by helping Noah's daughters-in-law at their clinic, is shocked by Marlene's marginal demand for her organ back. She asks Desi whether "there really people who ..." (37). For Desi, however, "[t]here are always people who...whatever you can think

of. Whatever combination, innovation or desperation, there are always people who…'" (37). Marlene's genderlessness frees her from the gendered boundaries of the center.

As a "boundary challenging text", *Boating for Beginners* refers to "women's awareness of themselves as marginal" (Nourse 487). Despite their diffrent orientations, there is self-sacrifice, love and human solidarity in the base of Marlene, Desi and Gloria's friendship. Like Marlene's transgressional gender, Desi behaves selflessly by warning as many people as possible about the flood, when she overhears God's decision to destroy humankind after His bargain with Noah. Moreover, she refuses to board on Noah's Ark, to which she has right as Noah's daughter-in-law. She meets Marlene and Gloria to face the flood together. These women's solidarity in this anachronistically regenerated "society troubled by the alienation that is [...] a consequence of its technological character", reveals one of the basic themes in the novel (Haddock 487). Alienation from others as well as the self blurs spiriuality, and results in corruption. The materialistic indulgence into appearance blurs one's perception of reality. Thus, living in such a society, Marlene doubts whether people will believe them when warned about the flood. Marlene says, "[w]e can do our best to warn people as soon as we can prove it, but what makes you think anyone is going to believe a zoo keeper, a transsexual and a member of the rich middle class?" (95).

The basic idea suggested, by Winterson, through this transgressional anachronism and marginality is to reveal a new concept of reality. David Lodge defines Winterson's concern with "the un-familiar" in her novels as a means of "transgress[ing] known limits, and transport[ing] the reader into new imaginative territory" (in Burns 278). As a woman who works as a cook at Noah's house, Gloria's eccentric mother, Mrs Munde, reveals, for example an extremely "un-familiar" ontology. As opposed to the alienated "[m]odern people [...] [who] don't feel much", Mrs Munde defines her heart as a "roaring heart", a lion, that will escape one day (61). However, she is convinced that this escape will not be a separation but a re-union with stars, which is the "Gross Reality". She says: "I love the stars because they calm me down. When I look at them I feel like I'm looking into myself, without all the cares of the world. The lion sleeps then, but only then [...] they didn't seem far away. Something you love is never far away because you know it so well, because it has become part of you" (62). The identification of the stars with "Gross Reality" as the extension of Mrs Munde's existence, represents, in this context, an ontology that makes her the part of a wider existence. This existence is defined, in the book that Gloria has been reading on the train which "wasn't actually a thriller, although it was about space. Space and the new physics. There is no such thing as objective experiment, it said, because the observer always effects whatever he observes. Subject and object are only arbitrarily split for the purpose of limited investigation" (73). Defined in these terms, quantum physics develops, in the twentieth century, as the study of the smallest particles of the atom. By its finding that particles behave both like particles and waves at the same time, quantum theory opens up a new space for the discussion of the borderline between the physical and spiritual world. Thus, the borderline between material and energy is bridged, as one can be both at the same time. So, reality is not limited to the visible world only, and both visible and invisible reality are manifestations of the same "Gross Reality"[2]. This metaphor is explained through a tale told to Gloria by her mother, about a young man who goes out to find the secret of the world. After a long period of searching, he learns that "[t]he secret of the world is this: the world is entirely circular and you will go round and round endlessly,

[2] For more information see *The Ghost in the Atom* . P.C.W. Davies and J.R Brown. eds. Great Britain: Canto, 1993.

never finding what you want, unless you have found what you really want inside yourself" (65). As a part of a wider unity, every individual retains the whole.

Despite her controversial de-mythification of the Biblical Flood Story to transgress the boundaries of traditional belief, Winterson also re-constructs myths in *Boating for Beginners*, to offer many variations of reality by trangressing the boundaries of fantasy and imagination. Pellegrini asserts that "what remains true is the potency of the myth. Committing to the myths as a way of transsgressing boundaries of rationality is important for Winterson in achieving "a sense of connectedness that crosses and disrupts borderlines of self and other" (190). For Winterson herself, however, "[m]yths hook and bind the mind because at the same time they set the mind free: they explain the universe while allowing the universe to go on being unexplained; and we seem to need this even now, in our twentieth-century grandeur" (66). This seemingly paradoxical reference to "myths" reflects Winterson's multiple border crossings throughout the novel.

Love also unites the parts of Winterson's holistic universe. She refers, for example, to traditional religion's excepting non-believers from god's love. She believes that "[t]he sinister side lay in their atttitude to those who didn't believe. If you refused the message you were an outcast, and although they might claim to love your soul the rest of you could literally and metaphorically go to hell" (70). The main problem of the modern world is "the move towards the reason, the loss of wonder, the empty place in the heart" (71). Marlene, for example has a tragic story: "Immediately after her sex changed she had fallen in love with a curate, older than her in most ways, riddled with guilt about pleasure that did not involve pain, and unable to enjoy love for its own sake"(94). It is conditioned by Noah's religion that "love is hard and strong and love makes choices. Love discriminates and above all, love cannot embrace the inherently unlovely, i.e. those without YAHWEH in their hearts" (70). This principle contradicts itself, for it refers to Yahweh as God of love on one hand, but rejects non-believers on the other. As suggested by Marlene, "[w]hy should a God of love disown a large part of his beloved?" (70). Despite this pain, however, Marlene is a dedicated lover, who "had seventy lovers [...] [though] never [...] found *the one*" (93). Love is presented to be the magic that makes one see beauty in ordinary things and connect one to the cosmos (93).

Winterson's anachronistic contextualization of capitalistic society helps the transgression of traditional boundaries, which provide her with a background to reveal her criticism of Grand Narratives, present a plural perspective of reality, and suggest love as the central cosmic truth. First, depicting Noah with reference to Yahweh, who is created by Noah himself, then both Noah's and Yahweh's opportunism and materialism, she de-mythifies traditional religion. She, then, by developing such characters as Gloria, Mrs Munde, Marlene and Desi re-concstructs a context through which she validates the cosmic truth which connects all the existence to the whole through love, solidarity and human understanding.

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Özet

Jeanette Winterson'ın *Boating for Beginners* Adlı Eserinde Anakronizm ve Merkezin Yıkımı

Jeanette Winterson, *Boating for Beginners* adlı romanında modern Avrupa'nın ahlaki tükenmişliğini ve materyalizmini antik Orta Doğu'ya yansıtarak, İncil'deki Nuh Tufanını yeniden yazar. Bu çalışma, Winterson'ın bu anakronistik girişimini, batı kültürünün temelini oluşturan "büyük anlatı" yapılarını bozma eylemi olarak değerlendirir. Ancak, yazarın bu sınırları ihlal etmekteki amacı, sadece marjinal olanı onaylamak değil, farklı gerçeklikleri kapsayan bütüncül bir gerçeklik anlayışını da yansıtmaktır. Winterson, farklı var oluş biçimlerini, romanın arka planında sunulan ve madde ile enerjiyi eşitleyen kuantum teorisi üzerinden, aynı gerçekliğin farklı tezahürleri olarak tanımlar. Sonuç olarak, Winterson'ın bu anakronistik tutumu, bütünleyici sevgi kavramını öne çıkararak geleneksel dinin tutarsızlıklarını vurgulamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Jeanette Winterson, *Boating for Beginners*, anakronizm, bütüncül gerçek, sevgi

Ertuğrul Koç. *The Victorians and the Novelists from Dickens to Hardy*. Ankara: Barış Books. 2010. P/bk 242 pp. ISBN 978-9944-137-50-8

Laurence Raw

The Victorians and their literary products have been an endless source of fascination for historians, media professionals and literary critics alike. Next to the Second World War, it is probably the widely studied–and reinvented–period in British history, with the principal focuses of interest centring on social life (the so-called "Victorian Values" embraced by Margaret Thatcher in 1980s Britain), the foundation of Empire and the consequences of the Industrial Revolution. It was a period when it seemed that Great Britain truly ruled the waves.

Ertuğrul Koç's awkwardly titled *The Victorians and the Novelists from Dickens to Hardy* (why not *The Victorians and Their Novelists*?) takes a critical look at the works of major writers of that period, including Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, Emily Brontë and Bram Stoker. It begins with a general view of the Victorian social scene, taken almost entirely from secondary sources. I'd like to have heard more authentic voices–as expressed in diaries, reports, newspaper articles and other ephemera that appeared during the period. As it is, we have the Victorian era as mediated through the views of twentieth century critics: and, as with any critical views, opinions change over time. What was considered critically valid in 1962 might not seem so significant today. Perhaps Koç should have dug a little deeper into the abundant primary source material available, both in libraries and online, to produce a less slanted portrait.

His second chapter on the middle class reading public tells a familiar tale of novelists writing primarily for that class of people who acquired power as a result of the Industrial Revolution. This is certainly true; but we must not overlook the power of the spoken word: Dickens, in particular, attracted huge audiences both in Britain and the United States, comprised of fans from all walks of life, both literate and illiterate, who enjoyed listening to dramatized renderings of his novels. Dickens had a genuinely classless appeal; this was one of the reasons why he drove himself so hard, leading to his early death at the age of 58.

The bulk of Koç's book consists of detailed analyses of familiar novels, often included on undergraduate literature syllabi: *Great Expectations*, *Vanity Fair*, *Silas Marner*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Dracula*. The author's critical approach remains resolutely untheoretical; he is more interested in what he terms "textual analysis", more precisely defined as an analysis of plot and characters. This approach has its virtues; it provides readers with valuable introductions to the novels' principal themes, as well as helping us understand the differentiation between characters. However, I think the book would have benefited from a more detailed comparative analysis; how does the Dickensian technique of irony differ from that of Thackeray, for instance? And to what extent is George Eliot's view of industrial Britain shaped by her gender; as compared, for instance, with Dickens. Again, I'd have liked more consideration of the relationship between Brontë's and Stoker's construction of the Gothic novel; to what extent did social and political changes in the Victorian era affect the ways in which readers consumed the genre? I'd have also welcomed some comment on the different vocabularies each author employs; their use of similes, metaphors, or points of view.

Nonetheless, within its limited scope, *The Victorians and the Novelists* is a sound piece of work–generally well written and tightly structured. Perhaps the proof-reading should have been a little more judicious, suggesting that the book was written in a hurry. There are several grammatical mistakes in the text, and some unnecessary errors in the bibliography that should have been avoided, especially with publishers and places of publication. But I think that the book will prove an ideal undergraduate text for anyone seeking a general survey of the Victorian period and the major writers of that time, especially at the undergraduate level.

A Discourse against Slavery: *Underworld Rise of the Lycans*
Dir. Patrick Tatopoulos. Screen Gems, 2009.

Antonio Sanna

The past history of the *Underworld* vampires and werewolves is finally unveiled! The facts leading to the beginning of a centuries-long blood feud are now revealed in the latest chapter of the *Underworld* trilogy. *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans* is indeed the third instalment and much-awaited prequel of *Underworld* and *Underworld: Evolution*. From the first episode of the saga viewers had already received some details about the beginning of the war between the two monstrous species and about the love story between the Lycan Lucian (Michael Sheen) and the vampire Sonja (Rhona Mitra), daughter of the coven's ruthless leader Viktor (Bill Nighy). However, viewers could hardly have imagined the meticulous reproduction of the Medieval atmosphere and savagery created by director Patrick Tatopoulos and his attention to details in the representation of a love story which is intertwined with a discourse against slavery. Through this narrative, Tatopoulos (a prolific creature-designer and special-effects supervisor who has worked in films such as *The Cave* and *Silent Hill*) presents the beginning of a war unjustly waged by vampires against Lycans and suggests viewers to support the latter's perspective.

The story begins with the birth of Lucian in the thirteenth century. He is presented as "the first of the breed" of Lycans and utilized by Viktor to create a harnessed species intended to daily guard the vampires' fortress and further to construct it. The narrative then immediately cuts to a couple of decades later and brings the viewer *in media res*, when Lucian is a grown-up man who works as a blacksmith, supervises the other Lycans and is already in love with Sonja. Vampires are portrayed as constantly under the attack of the werewolves living in the woods outside of their impressive fortress (that is pictured as a huge Gothic cathedral). On the other hand, Viktor already suspects of his daughter's betrayal of the vampire species, but rather attempts to preserve her favourite position through the games of politics he continually enacts.

The story is therefore particularly focused on these three protagonists and frequently becomes a tale about the rebellion of the young to the authority and severe attitude of an adult. Indeed, Sonja's rebellion against her father's wish and position is paralleled throughout the narrative by Lucian's progressive understanding of the pains inflicted to his own race and his full realization of the influence he can exert on the other Lycans and the werewolves.

Lycans are specifically distinguished from werewolves as capable of re-assuming human form and, therefore, as able to maintain human intellectual faculties. Contrary to the descendants of William (the first werewolf, according to the story of *Underworld: Evolution*) residing in the woods, Lycans do not act according to their murderous instincts. Therefore, they do not represent frightening figures uniting human and animal attributes and enacting a type of behaviour which is outside convention in both form and morality. In the majority of previous films on such a figure, werewolves are usually represented as tormented by their own monstrosity. Popular films such as George Waggner's 1941 *The Wolf Man* or John Landis's 1981 *An American Werewolf in London*, all exhibit the terror of an individual who is vexed with an incurable condition which deeply affects his body and mind as well as (after the transformation), and causes the death of the surrounding people.

In *Rise of the Lycans*, as in the previous instalments of the trilogy, Lycans live in the underground, in a dark and dilapidated underworld (which could suggest that the titles of the films are specifically referred to them and are intended for the viewer to sympathize with them) and are devoid of the privileges that vampires have. However, they become conscious of their equal rights and finally rebel in order to obtain freedom and better conditions of living. On the other hand, vampires are represented as aristocratic beings, accustomed to privileges and leisure, and mainly interested in politics. Political intrigues are shown as central to the vampires' life: the reunion of the council are frequently portrayed as fundamental for the decisions regarding the human community too and are actually based mainly on cunning intrigues and ruthless games of alliances.

This film consistently explores a series of conflicts that begin with spatial contrast. Specifically, the Gothic interior settings constituting the vampires' castle are juxtaposed to the exterior spectacle of wilderness, which is populated by the werewolves living in the uninhabited woods. These spatial contrasts constitute the groundwork for the thematic contrasts: violence inside of the walls is made of the abject slavery inflicted by the vampires on the Lycans, whereas outside of the walls the werewolves inflict violence instinctively only as a means to obtain nourishment. As in the case of the underground corridors as set against the mansion in *Underworld*, the film's central contrast between the purity of blood and the (alleged) infection diffused by werewolves is thus represented by the contrast between the closed space of political intrigues and aristocracy and the open space of wilderness, rebellion and freedom.

It is very interesting to note that, contrary to the fact that in "real" life the contagion of venereal and mortal diseases can occur through the practice of unprotected sex, in this film sex is represented as a liberatory act, which is located far from the eyes of a disapproving and prejudiced vampiric community governed by (and imposing) strict rules of (sexual) behaviour. The dangers of unprotected sex alluded to in films such as John Fawcett's 2000 *Ginger Snaps* is therefore exorcised in *Rise of the Lycans*. Sex among the members of the two monstrous species is pictured as natural and romantic, contrary to the violence inflicted by a vampire or werewolf on a human victim as represented, for example, in Fred F. Sears's 1956 *The Werewolf* and Neil Jordan's 1994 *Interview with the Vampire*.

Until some of the Lycans rebel and escape the vampires' fortress, the film often lingers on the inhuman and severe treatment they are subjected to, on the abominable conditions of their lives in chains and sufferings. The fast-paced scene of the escape of the first group of Lycans is certainly memorable, generating a clear affective response in the viewer who is hopeful for the end of the enslavement. The narrative abruptly changes when Viktor discovers the truth about Sonja's relationship with Lucian (by penetrating and violating both her veins and her memories through his bite) and imprisons her to allure her Lycan fiancé, in a scene that partly reminded me of a contrasted love such as in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Lucian manages indeed to free Sonja, but in the subsequent fight against a group of vampire guards and, specifically, in an unexpected and emotionally-intense duel between father and daughter, Sonja courageously and unashamedly admits to be pregnant with a hybrid child (whom a disgusted Viktor defines as "an abomination", thus assuming a definitely racist argument against inter-racial relationships). Viktor is then forced to imprison and, during a ruling of the council, condemn her to death. As we anticipated in the first *Underworld*, Lucian has to painfully assist to his lover's deathly exposition to the sun but then, outraged by the lack of pity and compassion on the part of Viktor, he escapes again.

Sebastian Groes. *The Making of London, London in Contemporary Literature.* Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. P/bk 309 pp. ISBN 978-0-230-34836-3.

Şebnem Toplu

Sebastian Groes, Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Roehampton University, London, is a scholar of modern and contemporary fiction. Groes is a Series Editor of *Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (Continuum), Palgrave has just published a co-edited volume on Kazuo Ishiguro's work: *Kazuo Ishiguro: Critical Visions of the Novels* (July, 2011) and his *British Fiction in the Sixties* (Continuum), will be published in 2013.

The role of cities is important, Featherstone and Lasch maintain, "for they offer the potential of an open public life built around the values of diversity, urbanity and experience" (2). Hence, Sebastian Groes' groundbreaking *The Making of London* is about the contemporary London novel, a city which has been fictionally and literally frequented for centuries. Groes's book explores the fact that London is a city undergoing complex transformations with its "more than fifty thousand streets, motorways, squares, cul-de-sacs, mews and parks […] marinas, sprawling business parks and golf courses", a city, incomprehensible "by its sheer material bulk" (Groes 3), yet also with its multilingual, multicultural society. Groes states that the key postmodern tropes present the city "as text, as narrative, as palimpsest, as a narrated labyrinthine space" (14). However, he undertakes a complicated task- "understanding" a prominent city, by studying "the lives the city is given by writers who make and remake it in their imagination" since it is "the subject matter and producer of fictions", its literature "generates its own peculiar knowledge" (1). As to why not any other city such as Paris or Venice, Groes argues in his book that London's "long and dense history make it, more than any other city, a fiction", in a world in which" reality is ruled by fictions of every kind", thus foremost, for Groes, London is "a language", "creating our understanding of reality" (13). However, the title also holds the *Making* which he clarifies by referring to the constructed and artificial nature of the city, since the metropolis is a place that "embodies and literalises *process*" rather than "a place that *is*" (2) (emphasis original).

The ultimate master of London is T.S. Eliot, states Groes, referring to *The Waste Land* (1922), the most famous poem of and about modernity. Yet from a philosophical point of view Bauman states that "not all city life is modern; but all modern life is city life" (126). In his "attempt to sew together the textual body parts into the monstrous, multilayered London palimpsests", Groes suggests that "acts of phenomenological, intertextual and theoretical mudlarking" renders "a sense of the vocabulary, textures and techniques, obsessions, colours, speeds and atmospheres of contemporary London writing, resulting in a typology and textual topography of London at the end of the twentieth, and beginning of the twenty-first, centuries" (10).

Before exposing the chapters of Groes' book, I would like to pinpoint the fact that *The Making of London* is enriched with photographs by Sarah Baxter, embedded as a "visual essay", in dialogue with the "textual cities" (15). Throughout the book, located even at the introduction section, Baxter's "illuminations" contribute to the meaning, by "shaping our understanding of London" (15) at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Groes comments. I wish the pictures were printed in colour, though, since black and white blurs

some details. However, for practical reasons, one cannot but help agreeing with Groes that so many pictures in color would have highly increased the cost of the book.

The Making of London covers eight chapters discussing the works of Maureen Duffy, Michael Moorcock, J.G. Ballard, Ian Sinclair, Peter Ackroyd, Ian McEwan, Martin Amis, Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith and Monica Ali. The first chapter explores Duffy's Londons since Groes suggests that her work can be seen as a series of experimental mappings of changes in British identity. Michael Moorcock's London novels *Mother London* (1988) and *King of the City* (2000) are investigated in the second chapter in terms of the city's histories and mythologies. J. G. Ballard's negative views of London as a "messy, congested, squalid" city "completely unsuitable for living twentieth and twenty-first-century lives" (67) reflected in his non-fiction *Airports* (1997), holds the third chapter, along with the discussion on his various fiction. What Sinclair's *London Orbital* (2002) adds to this sequence is the significance of the discourse of space, a typology and textual topography of London at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The body metaphor of the city is revealed in Ackroyd's *London: The Biography* (2000) along with his other works. Groes concludes that the "heterogeneous nature of London's space lies not so much in its material diversity, but in heteroglossic nature of the British and London languages that mould our perception of the city" (142). In the sixth chapter McEwan's work is analysed from the perspective that his version of London is a city that "defiantly beats against the currents of pessimism and apocalypticism that run so strongly in the contemporary London novel" (166).

Martin Amis' image of London as an "ever-changing city" (167) is exposed in the seventh chapter focusing on his novels, Groes comments, as attempts "to transform consumption into a refined literary form; in other words, to alchemically turn excrement into gold by means of the creative imagination" (190). Against Ballard, Sinclair and Amis' pessimistic projections of London, Groes concludes his book allocating the last two chapters to the "immigrant" writers: Rushdie, Kureishi, Smith and Ali as the representatives of vibrant writing, foregrounding the city's new voices, reinventing Britain through its different colours from men's and women's perceptions.

After a highly detailed meticulous study of all these writers and their works, with major shifts and developments in London novels since the early 1980s, the remaining strongest image of London in the mind, Groes remarks, is of fire, the paradoxical symbol of life; of destruction and of love. In these London fictions, then, fire operates as a structuring element that connects Londoners throughout the ages, from the Great fire of 1666 to the continued effects of the Blitz, revealed as the traumatised post-war consciousness. Yet, Groes concludes his work with the significance of the renewed interest in the voices of London; claiming that "the privileging of living speech *in text* keeps the city floating free, out of reach from organisation by political powers; contemporary London narratives operate by an elusive mixture of the written and the spoken" (260). Thus the question Groes asks by means of his final title: "[Is] London undone", is answered by himself maintaining that the addition of voices with different backgrounds continue to encourage the literary writer to "imaginatively make and remake these infinite Londons", underpinning an optimistic stance than of some of the writers he discusses in his book. I highly recommend Sebastian Groes' *The Making of London* since it covers a wide range of research perspectives in terms of authors, narrative techniques and critical praxis, and is hence an asset for English literature students and academics alike, and of course, for everybody interested in fiction and London. As for Sarah Baxter's photographs, they are conspicuous, and maintain a "visual essay" on London, both in the way they accompany Groes book and on their own.

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CONTRIBUTORS

M. Fikret Arargüç holds Ph.D. in English Literature and an Assistant Professor of English at Atatürk University, where he teaches various graduate and undergraduate courses on English literary history, poetry and literary theory. He has published a number of articles in various academic journals and presented numerous conference papers at both national and international level. He is currently at work on a book project on magic(al) realism. His academic interests include post-colonial literature, cultural studies, postmodernism and contemporary British fiction. Address: Atatürk University, Faculty of Letters, English Language and Literature Department, Erzurum, Turkey. E-mail: fikretararguc@gmail.com

Gönül Bakay is an Associate Professor in Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul, holding a PhD. in 18th century English novel. Her teaching expertise covers Women's sudies and English literature from 18th century to the present. She has published four books in Turkish: Virginia Woolf ve İletişim (Virginia Woolf and Communication), Günümüz Türk Kadını Başarı Öyküleri (Success Stories by ContemporaryTurkish Women), Kadın ve Mekan (Women and Space) and Atatürk'ü Yaşıyanlar (They have met Atatürk). She has many articles published both in Turkey and abroad. Address: Agah Efendi Sokak, no.6 Erenköy-İstanbul, Turkey. E-mail: gonulbakay@gmail.com

Carla Comellini is an Associate Professor of English Literature (Bologna University) and the Director of the Canadian Centre "Alfredo Rizzardi". She is on the board of the Doctorate in Modern, Comparative and Postcolonial Literatures. Her books are: *D.H.Lawrence, A Study on Mutual and Cross References and Interferences* 2009 (1995), *Invito alla lettura di Greene* (1996), 3*I.V.Crawford, Un Nuovo Eden* (1990) and *G. Greene: le forme del narrare* (1990). Among her critical editions: *G.Greene: The Tenth Man* (2003), *Fra le culture: l'Italia e le letterature anglofone (Bologna, la cultura italiana e le letterature straniere moderne* I/ b), 1992), *D.H.Lawrence cent'anni dopo. Nuove prospettive della critica lawrenciana* (1991). Her published essays and articles are on British writers (G.Greene, D. H. Lawrence, J. R. R. Tolkien, M. Lowry and L. Durrell), on Canadian authors (I. V. Crawford, M. Laurence, I. Layton, J. Newlove, J. Rosenblatt, M. Atwood, T. Findley and M. Ondaatje), on South-African and Australian authors, on the North-American Native writer Lance Henson, and on the Nigerian C. G. Okafor. She translated *The Green Plain/La verde piana* (1990) and several poems by J. Newlove. She has been in the Board of Directors of *Englishes*, a literary Journal (University of Rome) since 2000. Address: Dip. L. L. S. M., University of Bologna, Via Cartoleria, 5, 40124 Bologna, Italy. E-mail: carla.comellini@unibo.it

Catherine Coussens took her first degree in English Literature at the University of Sheffield, UK (1998), and gained an MA in Early Modern Studies (1999), and a PhD in seventeenth-century royalist women's writing (2004). She has been teaching at Cankaya University in Ankara, Turkey, since 2006. She has published articles on early modern literary culture, contemporary fiction, drama and poetry, and is currently working on a book about seventeenth-century (male) life-writing. Address: Çankaya University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, Öğretmenler Caddesi No:14, 06530, 100.Yıl, Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: cathycoussens@yahoo.co.uk

Delphine Munos received her M.A. in English from the University of Bourgogne (France), and her Ph.D. from the University of Liège (Belgium). She wrote various articles on the Indian-American diasporic literature. She is currently working on a book project, *After Melancholia: A Reappraisal of Second-Generation Diasporic Subjectivity in the Work of Jhumpa Lahiri*, which was accepted for publication by Rodopi Press. Address: Université de Liège, Littérature anglaise moderne et littérature américaine, place Cockerill 3-5, 4000 Liège, Belgium. E-mail: Delphine.Munos@ulg.ac.be

Laurence Raw is one of the leading authorities in adaptation studies today. Books such as *Adapting Nathaniel Hawthorne to the Screen* (2008) and the earlier *Adapting Henry James to the Screen* (2006) have been published to critical acclaim. In 2009 he published three books-*The Ridley Scott Encyclopedia*, *Days at the Turkish Theatre* and the co-edited collection (with Tanfer Emin Tunç and Gülriz Büken) *The Theme of Cultural Adaptation in American History, Literature and Film*. His latest books include *Exploring Turkish Cultures* (2011), plus two edited collections–*Merchant-Ivory Interviews* (2012), and *Translation, Adaptation and Transformation* (2012). In 2011 he received a Harry Ransom Research Fellowship at the University of Texas at Austin. Address: Başkent University, Faculty of Education, Department of English, Bağlıca Campus, Etimesgut, 06530, Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: l_rawjalaurence@yahoo.com

Huriye Reis is an Associate Professor at Hacettepe University, Department of English Language and Literature. She has publications on medieval English literature, contemporary British poetry, war poetry and representations of women in medieval literature. She is the author of the book *Ademin Bilmediği Havvanın Gör Dediği: Ortaçağda Türk ve İngliz Kadın Yazarlar (Dörtbay, 2005)*. She teaches poetry, literary criticism, British cultural studies courses and has research interest in medieval literature, twentieth century and contemporary British poetry, cultural studies as well as representation of women in these fields. Address: Hacettepe University, Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature, 06532, Beytepe, Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: huriye@hacettepe.edu.tr

Antonio Sanna received his degree at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures in Sassari (Italy) in 2001. After his MA in English Literature, he completed his Ph.D. on the relation between knowledge and love in late-nineteenth-century culture at the University of Westminster, London, in 2008. His main research areas are: Victorian culture and literature, Gothic literature, horror films and postmodern culture. He is a peer-reviewer for the journals: *Victorian Network*, *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, *[Inter]sections* and *Frame*. Currently, he is working as a teaching assistant at the University of Cagliari (Italy) and a teacher of English Literature (Istituto Dante Alighieri, Cagliari). Address: via Biasi 5A, 07100 Sassari (SS), Italy. E-mail: isonisanna@hotmail.com

Şebnem Toplu is a Full Professor at Ege University. She received her BA from Boğaziçi University, Istanbul on English Literature and Linguistics and MA and PhD from Ege University. She is the author of *Cultural Materialism: Text and Context Relation in Jane Austen's Works* (2001) and *Diverse Aspects of Italy and Italians in Contemporary British Literature* (2001), both published by Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia, Italy where she lectured and supervised MA theses as visiting professor for six years. Her most recent book is *Fiction Unbound: Bernardine Evaristo* (Cambridge Scholars

Publishing, 2011). She published various articles on the eighteenth century British literature, contemporary British fiction, postcolonialism, autobiography, multiculturalism, transnationalism and ecocriticism and has been the editor of *Interactions* since 2002. Address: Ege University, Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature. Bornova, 35100 Izmir, Turkey. E-mail: sebnemtoplu@hotmail.com

Tülin Ece Tosun received her BA in Ege University-English Literature and Language Department in 2005. Following this, she received her MA in State University of New York, College at Fredonia in 2011. She has been a PhD student at Purdue University-Comparative Literature Program since August 2011. Her areas of interest are Shakespeare Translations across cultures and Comparative drama. Address: Purdue University Beering Hall of Liberal Arts & Education, Room 1289 100 North University Street West Lafayette, IN 47907-2098, USA. E-mail: ttosun@purdue.edu

Joel Wendland teaches in the Liberal Studies Department at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan, USA. He studies 19th and 20th century U.S. literature and contemporary popular culture. He has recently completed essays on Chinese American writers Sui Sin Far and H. T. Tsiang. Address: Grand Valley State University, Liberal Studies Department, LOH 204, 1 Campus Dr N, Allendale, MI, USA, 49507. E-mail: wendlajo@gvsu.edu

Semiramis Yağcıoğlu is a Full Professor of Linguistics. Having earlier taught at the Department of American Literature, she faunded the Department of Linguistics at Dokuz Eylul University, Izmir, in 2001. She is currently supervising Doctoral Dissertations at the School of Graduate Studies. Her major fields of interest are cognitive poetics and critical discourse analysis. Address: School of Graduate Studies, Linguistics Doctoral Programme, Dokuz Eylül University, Kaynaklar Campus, Buca, 35180, Izmir, Turkey. E-mail: semiramis.yagcioglu@deu.edu.tr

Zeynep Yılmaz Kurt received her BA from Atatürk University, English Language and Literature Department. She received her MA and PhD on English novel, at Hacettepe University. Her main area of concern is novel. She wrote articles on comparative novel and modern English novel. She is currently teaching at Çankaya University. The general courses she teaches are Modern English Novel, Victorian Novel and Literary Theory. Address: Çankaya University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, Öğretmenler Caddesi No:14 06530, 100.Yıl, Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: zeynep@cankaya.edu.tr