



ISSN 1300-574-X

VOLUME 24.1-2

SPRING-FALL 2015

INTERACTIONS



EGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları

Ege İngiliz ve Amerikan İncelemeleri Dergisi
Ege Journal of British and American Studies

INTERACTIONS

Spring/Fall

Volume/Cilt: 24.1-2

Year/Yıl: 2015

EGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Bornova-İZMİR
2015

Publisher **Yayın Sahibi**
On behalf of Ege University, Ege Üniversitesi adına,
Dean of the Faculty of Letters, Ersin Doğer Edebiyat Fakültesi Dekanı, Ersin Doğer

Managing Editor **Sorumlu Yazı İşleri Müdürü**
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INTERACTIONS address **Yayın İdare Adresi**
Ege University, Faculty of Letters, Ege Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi,
Departments of English Language & Literature, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ile
and American Culture & Literature, Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Bölümleri,
Bornova 35100 Izmir, TURKEY Bornova 35100 İzmir, TÜRKİYE

Printed by **Basıldığı Yer ve Matbaa**
Ege University Press Ege Üniversitesi Basımevi

Copies and Date **Baskı Adeti ve Basım Tarihi**
100 copies, February 2015 100 adet, 18 Şubat 2015

T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı
Sertifika No: 18679

Interactions is published annually.
Contents indexed in *MLA International Bibliography*
and *GALE CENGAGE Learning* database Academic OneFile
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ISSN 1300-574-X

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Interactions, Ege Journal of British and American Studies is a peer-reviewed, refereed journal. Strict anonymity is accorded to both authors and referees.

The views expressed in the journal are those of the authors, and do not necessarily coincide with those of the Editors or the Advisory Board.

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**From Pepperland to Alifbay:
The Influence of *Yellow Submarine* on Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories***

Silvia Albertazzi

Abstract: In Rushdie's 1990 novel, Haroun's journey from "the saddest of cities" to the ocean of the stories is full of fantastic elements that remind the reader both of Oriental and Western fables, and of contemporary examples of the fantastic, from Italo Calvino's fiction to Terry Gilliam's cinema to George Dunning's *Yellow Submarine*, a 1968 cartoon film whose main characters were the four Beatles, travelling across the seas, in order to bring music and colours back to Pepperland, a merry country reduced to silence and sadness by the ruthless Blue Meanies. In this essay, the universe of Haroun with its multifarious stream of stories is also compared with topoi and icons of psychedelic graphics, first of all Aldridge's illustrations for the *Book of the Beatles' Songs* (1969). Written during the darkest days of the fatwa, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* appears in this light as a sort of late 60s hymn to fantasy and imagination as the only weapons to defeat tyranny and totalitarianism.

Keywords: Salman Rushdie, Haroun and the Sea of Stories, Yellow Submarine, Beatles, Alan Aldridge, *The Location of Brazil*, Italo Calvino, George Dunning, Terry Gilliam

Rushdie's first novel published after the fatwa, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, is a children's story characterized by a very strongly marked visual aspect about a magical journey through space –the space of the imagination– and time, retreating towards the 1960s, as will be discussed in further detail below.

Zembla, Zenda, Xanadu:
All our dream-worlds may come true.
Fairy lands are fearsome too.
As I wander far from view
Read and bring me home to you.

All of the elements of the fairy-tale are present in the acrostic that dedicates the book to his son, together with their connections to reality: fairy lands that become real and may hide terrors; the uncanny hidden in the real; the relationship between father and son; the difficulties connected with the circumstances in which the author finds himself; the autobiographical and its transposition into myth; and, finally, the need to conclude every wandering with a return home, the need to have a home to which to return. As in the best known fairy-tale classics, the story tells of an escape to a magical otherworld, and at the same time delves into a family crisis. Haroun has to bring back to his father, a storyteller, the gift of story-telling, lost in the day that his wife left him. To do this, he has to overcome trials of every type in his journey towards the sea of stories, which is made up of thousands upon thousands of different currents that are intertwined like a liquid tapestry. The idea of story-telling as a fusion of intermixed waves is also to be found in all of Rushdie's "adult" novels. It is also a clear sign of the author's desire to take his work back to oral narrative and myth and to invent a choral story. What little

Haroun has to do is to find his own path through all the stories; the journey that leads him on and the strange characters that he meets on the way are only one of the various ways –the most fantastic possible, of course– to define the world through a dream.

It goes without saying that the world thus “defined and dreamt” is very different from conventional reality. It is a world governed by dream logic where human perception shifts radically, the only world that “the long arm of the law is unable to reach” (Rushdie 1991, 122). As is always the case in the classic fairy-tale, it does not matter how many horrors the hero has met with during his adventures; what matters is that at the end there awaits him a princess, a treasure, or a miraculously reunited family. “Unreality is the only weapon with which reality can be smashed, so that it may subsequently be reconstructed”, Rushdie wrote (1991, 122). Haroun’s greatest success is in fact his freeing fantasy from an absolute ruler who has had it put into chains. Haroun’s journey from the sad city where he and his father Rashid live, “the saddest of cities, a city so ruinously sad that it had forgotten its name” (*Haroun* 15), to the sea of stories covering Kahani, the second moon, is a tapestry of fantastic jokes that go back to archetypes of Eastern (*The Thousand and One Nights*) and Western (*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*) fairy-tales, as well as to visual and multimedia models of fantastic narration, from the cinema of Terry Gilliam (*Brazil*, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*) and Victor Fleming (*The Wizard of Oz*) to George Dunning’s animated films (*Yellow Submarine*) and Alan Aldridge’s graphic art. In other words, although *Haroun* was created as a *Thousand-and-Second Night* that Rushdie dedicated to his son, its colours and style relate it more to the multicoloured world of fantastic cinema and graphic art both before and after the nineteen-sixties.

Rushdie is on record professing himself a great admirer of Terry Gilliam from *Brazil* onwards, when he dedicated one of his most inspired essays to the film, “The Location of *Brazil*” (collected in *Imaginary Homelands*), where Gilliam’s film becomes the starting-point for an exploration of some of the key points of Rushdie’s poetics: the centrality of the emigrant intellectual to the twentieth century; the power of fantasy; the relationship between political power and the imagination. For Rushdie, *Brazil* represents the epitome of narrative that, from the point of view of literary influence, is situated on the border between England and the United States – a border easily crossed at will, drawing on “images with roots on both sides of the Atlantic” – (Rushdie 1991, 125); *Haroun*, on the other hand, is on the border between East and West, and is perhaps the best piece of work produced by Rushdie the citizen of Brazil, “a land of make-believe of which all of us who have, for whatever reason, lost a country and ended up elsewhere, are true citizens” (Rushdie 1991, 125). At a visual level, the influence of Gilliam’s film on Rushdie’s fairy-tale is obvious. To start with, in a universe where stories reach their tellers from a fantastic sea of stories through a mysterious system of waterworks, there is a Water Genie whose job is to cancel subscriptions by sealing the magic taps and whose first appearance very much recalls that of Harry Tuttle, the heating engineer and revolutionary played by Robert De Niro in black tights who bursts into the protagonist’s flat in *Brazil* with the excuse of having to repair the air conditioning. Tuttle is Rushdie’s favourite character, who sees represented in him “the power of dream-worlds to oppose this dark reality” (Rushdie 1991, 125). Furthermore, the reality in which Haroun and his father Rashid move is as “dark” as that in which Tuttle and Sam, the antihero of *Brazil*, act. In fact, in the first part of *Haroun* a dystopic world is portrayed that has many points of contact with Terry Gilliam’s *Brazil*. In both cases, the world is grey and where there stand “mighty factories in which [...] sadness was actually manufactured, packaged and sent all over

the world, which never seemed to get enough of it” (Rushdie 1990, 15). Equally, at the end of both works a note of hope lightens the atmosphere: in *Brazil*, the cell in which Sam is tortured is slowly filled by the clouds that adorned the sky in which he flew as an angel in his dreams; in *Haroun*, Haroun’s mother’s return home (and with her his father’s storytelling abilities) is underlined by her singing.

Haroun’s journey from sadness to joy, beyond the Dull lake to Kahani, the dark moon flooded by the sea of stories, goes from initial black and white to the Technicolor of the sea of stories, a liquid tapestry “of so many different colours, all pouring out of the Source at once, that it looked like a huge underwater fountain of shining white light” (Rushdie 1990, 167): his struggle against the powers of darkness does not only aim to bring back his father’s gift of storytelling but also colour and light, to the world surrounding him. The reference is clear here to the film version of L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, a fantasy film beloved by Rushdie, and which he has even analysed in a long essay. The film, made by Victor Fleming in 1939 partly in colour and partly in black and white, tells the story of Dorothy Gale, played by Judy Garland, who leaves a sad and empty monochrome Kansas for a fantastic world full of colour, music and special effects. It is from Rushdie himself that we learn that he took the right tone for his book from Fleming’s film (Rushdie 1992, 18). As Marc Poré and Alexis Massery have noted, the film inspired the balance between novel and fairy-tale, helping Rushdie deconstruct realism and show an unreal reality (like Dorothy’s Kansas) and a realist surreality (like the world of Oz) (Poré, Massery 147). Dorothy’s journey along the Yellow Brick Road along with the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion is revisited in Haroun’s journey with strange companions to the sea of stories. Both Dorothy’s and Haroun’s journeys underline, as Rushdie himself points out in his analysis of the film, the inadequacy of adults and the consequent need for children to face up to grown-ups’ weaknesses and take their fate into their own hands. Haroun’s sad city in the novel corresponds to Dorothy’s respectable “sepia-toned” Kansas; the worrying individuals she meets on the way correspond to the emissaries of the evil Khattam-Shud in Rushdie’s book; the home she returns to at the end by pronouncing the magic words “There’s no place like home” is equivalent to Haroun’s house filled with his mother’s singing, which Haroun himself has recreated by bringing back to it creativity and joy, for, as Rushdie writes about the film *The Wizard of Oz*, once we reach adulthood we realize that “there is no longer any such place as home – except, of course, for the homes we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz” (Rushdie 1992b, 103). Rushdie’s fairy-tale thus owes a debt to *The Wizard of Oz* not only in terms of a formal chromatic reflection on the marvellous, but also in terms of political thought. As Poré and Massery suggest, both film and novel analyse “the central figure of migration” (148), contrasting the home that is left with the land of imagination, “which one dreams of reaching, [...] a land that enchants, a world of stories where stories necessarily come true” (150). Even though the return home may seem an unsatisfactory end for Dorothy, “[t]he great lesson of the film, according to Salman Rushdie, is not that there’s no place like home; rather, once one begins to journey, then there can no longer be such a place, except those that we create for ourselves” (151). Khattam-Shud himself, the villain of Rushdie’s story, owes much to the character of the Wizard of Oz himself, whilst the central episode of the confrontation with the Wizard (once again in the visual form that Rushdie knew from the film and not from the pages of a book) is noticeably similar to the culminating scene in which Khattam-Shud, the prince of shadows and darkness, appears. For Haroun, the defeat of Khattam-Shud means defending the light and transparency of streams against the obscurity of death: “It is the

recovery of a world of colours and light in spite of a certain attraction to darkness” (Porè, Massery 148). However, although it is true that *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is above all a book “in colour”, a novel showing a visual element absent from the author’s previous works (148), it is above all the visual idea of the sea of stories as an ocean of striped waves that revisits the key archetype of *The Wizard of Oz*, the rainbow in the soundtrack and is the most lasting memory of the film for many viewers. In his essay on Fleming’s film, Rushdie focuses on the metaphorical meaning of “Over The Rainbow”, the song sung by Judy Garland, underlining that it refers to “human dream of leaving – a dream that at least is as powerful as the countervailing dream of roots” (Rushdie 1992b, 105). In the multicoloured currents of the ocean of stories, just as in the rainbow sung by Dorothy, the idea is expressed of the journey as dream and as flight (as in *Brazil*, where the protagonist dreams of having wings with which to fly beyond his dystopic reality, and as in *Haroun*, where the storyteller’s son is transported by a mechanical hoopoe).

On another level, we may say that if the narrative is a tapestry of destinies and motifs that intertwine like the waters of the ocean of stories, then the multicoloured plot woven by the movement of the sea of stories’ currents recalls the myth of the songlines traced by Australian Aborigines in their traversing and dominating of reality. It is no coincidence that one of last significant episodes of Rushdie’s pre-fatwa life was his 1984 journey to central Australia with Bruce Chatwin, borne witness to in Chatwin’s *The Songlines*. During this trip, Rushdie was to become aware of Aboriginal songlines and their figurative transposition, which would turn out to be fundamental for creating the Sea of Stories. “The idea of the ‘dreaming tracks’ or ‘songlines’ captivates me as much as Bruce. How could writers fail to love a world which has been mapped by stories?” reflected Rushdie on his Australian experience, and went on to ask himself: “What happens when two songlines cross? Do the songs acquire common lines? Or does one line ‘burrow’ while another ‘flies’?” (Rushdie 1991, 232). The answer to this question is to be found in the ocean of stories, where it is no longer a question of lines that weave and cross, but of waves that are mixed into “a liquid tapestry of unbelievable complexity”, a *miseen abyme* of the structure of all of his novels and the thronging of stories and situations characterizing them.

“Behind all my writing is the idea of crowd”, Rushdie specified to Melvyn Bragg on The South Bank Show in his first fatwa television interview after the fatwa, a year and a half after it had been issued: “You tell your main story, but it’s surrounded, engulfed like in the rush hour, by a crowd of other stories” (Bell 1100). Finding the path through all the various stories is the categorical imperative underlying all of Rushdie’s *œuvre*, and is metaphorized in the idea of the sea of stories. The strange characters that Haroun and his friends meet on their way are there to suggest how the journey undertaken by the hero of a fairy-tale (heroes very much *à la* Propp and fitting that Russian scholar’s morphological framework, as Kermode has acutely observed) (Kermode 13) have the same function as the Australian songlines; in other words, they go towards creating, especially at the visual level, a “defining and dreaming the world” (Bell 1100).

This is not all. The magic environment in which Haroun and his fairy-tale helpers move also presents many points of similarity with the surreal fairy-tale scenarios of an animated film that towards the end of the 1960s brought to the screen the multicoloured collective imagination swinging London: the Canadian director George Dunning’s *Yellow Submarine*. In this 1968 film, inspired by one of the Beatles’ most popular songs, the four musicians – the most famous in the world at that time –

leave on a yellow submarine bound for Pepperland, the land of colour and music, which has been reduced to silence by the evil Blue Meanies. The aim of their journey is to bring back love and life to Pepperland, thereby allowing Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band to start playing music again (once again, the reference here is of course to a work by the Beatles; the album with this title being considered by many their most important work). From this very brief summary it may be appreciated that not only are the plots of *Yellow Submarine* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* very similar, but also both primary and secondary characters correspond to each other to a certain extent. What is even more interesting to note here is the degree to which Dunning's cinematographic iconology (and above all that of the German artist who drew the film, Heinz Edelmann) is taken up in Rushdie's narrative.

In order to understand the close visual relationship between the two works, it is worth spending a little more time examining Dunning's film, which remains a milestone in animated films for having revolutionized the techniques and stories of animation, up until that point dominated by Disney-style productions. In the words of Mark Lewisohn, the aim of the film was nothing less than "to take animation beyond anything seen before in style, class and tone, but avoiding the precious and the pretentious" (Lewisohn 276). To Disney's polished and perfect anthropomorphism, Edelmann and his collaborators opposed a graphic style largely influenced by the whole of the twentieth-century avant-garde, from Escher's optical illusions to Peter Blake and Andy Warhol's pop art (Blake had designed the Beatles' most famous album cover for *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*) to the psychedelia then reigning in Martin Sharp and Rick Griffin's posters and Dadaism; from Dalí's surrealism to Aubrey Beardsley's Art Nouveau illustrations; and all of this by way of Bridget Reilly's op art and Alan Aldridge's illustrating work. It is thus that the approach to the plot—which is, in truth, rather thin—is purely aesthetic; this is once again the exact opposite of what happens in the world of Disney. The plot was created as a pretext for a series of graphic experiments suggested by twelve Beatles tracks, each of which is illustrated using a different technique. This does not mean that the screenplay is carelessly written: the dialogue is rich in puns, a far from banal English sense of humour, and continual sharp worldly; it was the work of George Segal, a professor of Classics at Yale who was soon to achieve worldwide fame with the tearjerker novel *Love Story*, and the poet Roger McGough, famous for his verbal acrobatics, who was called in to give a true Scotch touch to the humour and then paid off with the paltry sum of £500 and left unmentioned in the credits. Recognized at the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival as the third greatest animated film of all time, *Yellow Submarine* appears today a huge pop art fresco indispensable to our understanding of 1960s youth culture, a mirror of that never-to-be-repeated era when, in Rushdie's words, "the West was—perhaps for the last time—in the clutches of the optimism disease, when the microscopic invisible bacilli of optimism made its young people believe that they would overcome some day, when unemployment was an irrelevance and the future still existed" (Rushdie 1991, 276). It should not surprise us, therefore, that Rushdie—only just in his twenties when it came out, and, by his own admission, far more interested at the time in cinema and music than books (Rushdie 1991, 276)—should think of Dunning's film when he came to write a fairytale, drawing on it above all for his visual imagination.

Whilst it is the case that the function of Sergeant Pepper's band in Pepperland is analogous to that of Rashid the storyteller in the nameless city, and whilst, similarly, it is the role of the heroes of both tales to recover for Sergeant Pepper and the "Shah of Blah" respectively the charismatic gifts characterizing them, it is even more obvious

that the mechanical hoopoe transporting Haroun moves over the water with the ease of Dunning's yellow submarine, and Khattam Shud's dark soldiers greatly resemble the Blue Meanies who are the four Beatles' enemies. On this subject, it should be noted that the visual influence of the English cartoon on Rushdie's story is above all at the level of colour: Khattam Shud's thugs are ungainly and dark like the Blue Meanies; the colourful fish that pepper the sea floor in the film come back as angel-fish in Rushdie's book (they are also made to talk in rhyme, like Jeremy Hilary Boob, Ph.D., *Yellow Submarine's* "Nowhere Man"). Equally, although it is not particularly meaningful that both works open with standard fairytale beginnings—*Yellow Submarine* with "Once upon a time" and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* with "There was once"—it is interesting to note that colourful Pepperland becomes completely grey after its invasion by the Blue Meanies and that, to hammer home, the point, Liverpool, the point of departure for the Beatles' adventure, is represented in extremely sad black-and-white drawings as a landscape of gloomy factories where people live and die in loneliness, as Eleanor Rigby does in the song that opens the film in a comment on urban squalor. Where Haroun and Rashid live, the city so sad as to have forgotten its own name, could be illustrated by the sequence immediately following the opening credits of *Yellow Submarine*: a grim series of factory chimneys spitting out black smoke, dirty houses and anonymous crowds. We read, in fact, at the beginning of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* that in the sad city in the land of Alifbay, "Black smoke poured out of the chimneys of the sadness factories and hung over the city like bad news" (Rushdie 1990: 15). It is not by chance that the first Beatle to accept the invite to leave on the yellow submarine bound for Pepperland is Ringo the shortest and least serious-looking of them; the one most beloved by children, he is the one best suited to welcoming the marvellous and acting as the story's driving force. What Poré and Massery have said of Dorothy Gale in *The Wizard of Oz* is just as true of Ringo in *Yellow Submarine*:

The child's innocence allows him to be both the one who welcomes the marvellous, who gives refuge to the spectator's imagination, and, at the same time, the supreme agent, the motor driving the film. In this childhood duality, which is also to be found in Haroun, there is also a desire for new beginnings, a capacity to forget mixed with a hunt for the new. (Poré, Massery 18)

Equally, the Beatles' journey through the Sea of Time, the Sea of Science and the Sea of Holes to the Sea of Green and Pepperland, is mirrored in Haroun's voyage to the Sea of Stories, whilst the Sea of Heads traversed by the Fab Four becomes in Rushdie the land of the Eggheads, the only people able to understand the impossible P2C2E ("Processes Too Complicated To Explain"). Both stories take place under the sign of water: this is not only because, figuratively, much of the action takes place at sea or because, linguistically, aquatic metaphors abound. There is also a fluidity to the narrative that refuses to adapt itself to any pre-established form or genre, but instead it is "under the sign of flux", as "to grasp reality is to understand its endless mutations" (Poré, Massery 153), and in both stories metamorphoses and transformations are everywhere. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* has been described as an "aquatic epic" (154); a similar label would be even more suitable for *Yellow Submarine*, in which the water that permeates everything gives form and structure to the whole work to an even greater degree than in *Haroun*.

Water in *Haroun* sums up the quest [...] for fluidity and mixing. This reverie on water holds a desire for clarity, a passion for the multicoloured iridescent surface, and a refusal of the dark waters that lead to death. (154)

Although the two stories begin to show their differences as the action continues, and *Haroun* certainly heads further down the path of the Oriental fairytale by way of Oz and Wonderland, the finales of the two adventures return to the similarities. In order to defeat the Blue Meanies, who hate music as much as Khattam Shud hates stories, the Beatles wage a war that, like Haroun's in the kingdom of shadows, is primarily a fight for light and colour to triumph, which finishes, once again just like Haroun's, in a celebration of sound and colour. It has already been pointed out that following the dark enemies' defeat both stories end with a song. At the end of *Yellow Submarine* the real Beatles appear in a live-action finale and invite the audience to sing along with them in order to chase the Blue Meanies away from the cinema in which the film has been shown. In *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, as we have seen, it is the song of Haroun's mother, who has returned home, that closes the story. Before this song, however, Rashid, who has recovered his story-telling abilities, announces that he will tell a story named *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, thus allowing the homologation of the fictional narrator and Rushdie the author and repeating at a narrative level the appearance of the real Beatles at the end of the film. Time, which had stopped flowing with the disappearance of Haroun's mother, starts to flow again; equally, the people turned into statues by the Blue Meanies at the beginning of *Yellow Submarine* come back to life again. Thanks to the power of stories and music, life returns.

It is certainly superfluous, at this point, to stress the fact that both works are metaphors of the same need for freeing the imagination in a world where it is chained by absolute powers. To Haroun's question as to why he so hates stories, Khattam Shud replies that "inside every single story, inside every Stream of the Ocean, there lies a world, a story-world that I cannot Rule at all" (Rushdie 1990, 161). This peremptory affirmation is certainly there to unmask "the destructive potential of this viewpoint, by showing how the frenzied pursuit of totalitarian rule results in a society driven with jealousy, suspicion, and mutual mistrust" (Teverson 450). Furthermore, anybody who, like Rushdie, has lived during the years of "imagination in power" cannot fail to recognize in these words an expression of the fear—deeply rooted in the cultural and political establishment of the 1960s (and not just there)—of the ideologies born in the squares of Paris in May '68 and soon to spread wider in beatnik London, which taught the forgetting of everything learnt and a new beginning starting from one's dreams.

It is precisely from a dream that Rushdie starts in telling the magical story of Haroun: a dream in which the living words and numbers of *Yellow Submarine* return in the form of verbal play that almost becomes riddles. The dynamism and material energy characterizing Dunning's film are to be found in Haroun's voyage on the back of the mechanical Hoopoe, whilst the rotoscoping of some of the animated scenes in the film correspond to the kaleidoscopic vision of the multicoloured multiform waters of the Sea of Stories. The artists of *Yellow Submarine* also drew upon the colours of the West Coast poster art that was being developed at that time and was characterized by surreal imagery in luminous primary colours that recalled LSD trips; it should not be forgotten that Rushdie was working in advertising at the very beginning of the 1970s, and would therefore have been coming into continual contact with this iconography (see Neaverson 1997). Regarding this type of advertising imagery, George Melly has written in his summing-up of pop culture, *Revolt into Style*, of a "magpie approach to any artist who

seems to strike the right psychedelic note” (Melly 137); it is perhaps therefore superfluous to underline that this magpie approach has also been that of Rushdie from the very beginning of his career towards his own intertexts, something that the metaphor of the sea of stories repeats emphatically.

Different parts of the Ocean contained different sorts of stories, and as all the stories that had ever been told and many that were still in process of being invented could be found there, the Ocean of the Streams of Story was in fact the biggest library in the universe. And because the stories were held there in fluid form they retained the ability to change, to become new versions of themselves, to join up with other stories and so become yet other stories; so that unlike a library of books, the Ocean of Streams of Story was much more than a storeroom of yarns. It was not dead but alive. (Rushdie 1990, 72)

Rushdie’s most explicit acknowledgement of his debt towards Beatles iconography comes when, towards the end of the novel, he introduces a character of mythic stature, the governor of Gup, the land of storytellers, and Grand Comptroller of the P2C2E, who (not by chance!) answers to the name of “the Walrus” and is surrounded by “Eggheads”, in an obvious reference to one of John Lennon’s most enigmatic songs, “I Am The Walrus”, a surreal collage of neologisms and word play set to music from the album *Magical Mystery Tour*. To the question that Haroun asks him, “Who’s the Walrus”, the Water Genie replies, “At PC2C2E House in Gup City there are many brilliant persons employed, but there is only one Grand Comptroller. They are the Eggheads. He is the Walrus” (Rushdie 1990, 58), clearly echoing the refrain of Lennon’s song: “I am the eggman, they are the eggmen, I am the Walrus”. Later, in the last chapter of the novel, when he finally meets the Walrus, Haroun will describe him as “sitting on a shiny white chair at a shiny yellow desk, with his shiny, hairless, egg-shaped head shining as brightly as the furniture” (Rushdie 1990, 199): the Walrus’s luminosity once more brings us back to the intense brilliance of the colours used by the psychedelic artists, whilst his posture too recalls the Beatles song, where a “sitting” position is repeatedly invoked (“sitting on a cornflake”, “sitting pretty little policeman in a row”, “sitting in an English garden waiting for the sun”). Since it is the Walrus himself who grants a happy ending to Haroun’s adventure, bringing back joy and even its forgotten name (“Kahani, which means “story”) to the once sad city, it is nice to imagine that this hugely important task was given by Rushdie to no-one less than John Lennon himself, who, having first imagined the Walrus as a surreal alter ego, amused himself in “Glass Onion”, an even more dreamlike song (if such a thing is possible) and the sum of all his fantastic themes, by singing, “I told you about the walrus and me – man./ Well, here’s another clue for you all/ The walrus was Paul”.

Beyond conjectures linked to biographical details of the writer’s youth—authorized by Rushdie’s own admission that at the time of *Yellow Submarine* his myths were, amongst others, “Dylan, Lennon, Jagger...”—(Rushdie 1991, 276), it is significant that for his first piece of published creative writing after the fatwa, Rushdie not only chose a fairytale, but also based it upon two films that have entered cinema history as being amongst the most optimistic films ever made. It is no coincidence that both *Yellow Submarine* and *The Wizard of Oz* have been criticized, like *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, “for naïveté and for excessive simplification of complex issues” (Teverson 452). Without entering into matters that appear to us to go beyond the limits of discussions of fairytales and indeed risk transforming fairytales into allegories, if

insisted upon, it seems fitting to conclude by noting that *Haroun*, although written in the darkest period of his life in hiding following the death sentence passed upon him, remains Salman Rushdie's happiest novel.

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**Food and Stories to Grow Into:
The Pastiche of Inclusions in Diana Abu-Jaber's Writings**

Sihem Arfaoui Abidi

Abstract: As a concept that encompasses meanings of incorporation as well as adoption, inclusion proves a crucial notion in understanding and explaining different layers of cultural representations in Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* (2003) and *The Language of Baklava* (2007). While *Crescent* is structured on the endeavour to merge fairy tales within an Arab American novel, *The Language of Baklava* expands the writer's interest in food memoirs by explicitly playing on the overt inclusion of food recipes. The cultural and aesthetic intents of such inclusive processes are placed in conversation with Abu-Jaber's intertextual choice to both include a genre within a genre and ground the Arab American experience in the United States in the notions of recreating the collective self. Among other things, the narrative amalgamation of fairy tales is even tightly yoked to the latter's asset in disrupting the High/Low dichotomy of understanding art.

Keywords: Abu-Jaber, *Crescent*, *The Language of Baklava*, food memoirs, Arab American experience, fairy tales

*"I glimpse the electricity of the dinner party, the way that one might join
the perfect yet incongruous worlds of eating and thinking, food and art"
(The Language of Baklava 204).¹*

The literary corpus of Diana Abu-Jaber encompasses a memoir, and three novels which are respectively entitled *Arabian Jazz* (1993), *Crescent* (2003), *The Language of Baklava, a Memoir* (2005), *Origin* (2007), besides the unpublished *Memories of Birth* and a few short stories.² Of these works, the current essay examines *Crescent*, a romance, and *The Language of Baklava*, a memoir, both of which are set between the Middle East and the United States. It reads into the coalescent pastiche of food and stories along the considered titles from the perspective of inclusion, rather than exclusion. In fact, the foundation of *Crescent* and *The Language of Baklava* on storytelling—next to feeding and its related register as a parallel leitmotif and via a powerful mixture of the high and the low—articulates, among other implications, the resistant response of Arab Americans to an exclusionary politics.³ Consequently, it tries to put to the front a hopeful side of the Arab American experience or presence in the United States.

¹Subsequent citations from *The Language of Baklava* will figure as *TLOB* placed between parentheses. However, parenthetical references to *Crescent* will appear without abbreviation.

² Abu-Jaber's short stories include examples like "Sister", "Clean Room", "The Royal We" and "For the Time Being", to name only a few titles.

³ For an exploration of an American exclusionary history in relation to the experiences of Arab Americans in the United States, see Keith Feldman, "The (Il)legible Body and the Fantasy of National Democracy," *MELUS* 31.4 (Winter 2006): 33-53.

In consideration of this twofold interplay, the subtitle of the essay borrows, in part, from Abu-Jaber's foreword to *The Language of Baklava* and its reference to the writer's memoirs as an assemblage of family stories tracing "the ways we grew into ourselves" (xi). Its choice tries to capture the overarching prominence of telling and feeding as integral components in the formation of an Arab American identity and literary tradition. As it is also suggested through the prefatory citation at the onset of this article, the interwoven communication between food and art in Abu-Jaber's texts entails special meanings turning around the issue of inclusion and partakes in the self-fashioning of an Arab American collective self in cultural and political terms.

As to the account for the titles which are selected as subjects of this essay, it has much to do with temporal and generic considerations. On the one hand, *Crescent* and *The Language of Baklava* were published consecutively which already prompts a question of intertextuality. On the other hand, they involve two different genres in female fiction writing, that is, a novel and what is dubbed a food memoir. However, this last aspect about generic disparity is not all the time conditioned by the use of different motifs. Indeed, although both texts belong to seemingly incompatible literary modes, their manifest inclusions of food and stories are among the most outstanding dialogical features of cultural inclusion.

This paper will discover the extent to which the intertwining of these two realms in Abu-Jaber's selected narratives communicates an intertextual denominator and shows their importance in the construction of a multilayered Arab American vision of oneself. At one level, the central goal is to demonstrate that the notion of a mutual concocting of food and stories foregrounds a mnemonic strategy of masquerade. At another level, we endeavour to explain the implication of the oral and the culinary in grounding the Arab American experience in the principle of a cross-cultural or collective identity. In this process, there is an emphasis on the incorporation of feeding and telling as a political act that expresses a strong sense of resistance to a predominant experience of exclusion in the United States. That is why, throughout the discussion of such manifestoes of inclusion, there is an equal reference to the urge to humanize Arab Americans, instead of perpetuating their diabolization.

The approach of the dovetailing uses of food and stories through Abu-Jaber's narratives, that is, as a means to construct an Arab American identity on the basis of a hybrid composite, is indebted theoretically to two major sources. Its main argument departs from the centrality of food as a cultural emblem in Arab American writings. The list of writers exploring food as a genre category is quite noticeable in the literary and critical heritage of Arab Americans. As a major instance, Joanna Kadi is the editor of a whole anthology of Arab American writings significantly entitled *Food for our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab Canadian Feminists* (1994). Her anthology is formed of a variety of essays, poems, fiction excerpts and personal records; all of them are enmeshed in the world of food. Diana Abu-Jaber, in turn, suggests a connection between feeding, belonging and subject-making, particularly, upon indicating that food is "one of the most immediate and powerful ways of creating the metaphor of the hearth and a gathering place, a place where the collective forms" ("The Only Response to Silencing"). Her standpoint turns feeding into a tool or tradition that ensures the collectivity, also coalition, of Americans from an Arab origin.

In addition to the prevalent literatures and criticisms evoking food as a component of identity formation, this article hinges back to an essay by Carol Bardenstein entitled "Transmissions Interrupted: Reconfiguring Food, Memory, and Gender in the Cookbook-Memoirs of Middle Eastern Exiles". In this work, Bardenstein

emphasizes food as a whole system of signification, rather than a sheer drive. Indeed, Bardenstein calls attention to the awareness that for humans “‘eating is never a ‘purely biological’ activity but, rather, one of many arenas in which we invest ‘a basic activity with social meanings’ that are ‘symbolic, [...] communicated symbolically,’ and that ‘also have histories’” (355).⁴ In her eyes, the resurgence of food in scholarly writings is intrinsically related to the participation of this metaphor “in the social, religious, and cultural lives of people”, hence, the reference to “the ways food consumption, preparation, and transmission of knowledge about food has figured in how individuals conceive of themselves, affiliate and identify with home, homeland, and a range of social groupings” (356).⁵ What follows from this reading is the view that food amounts to a means of communion, revolving around sharing, intimacy and longing for reunion.

Almost the same thing can be said of storytelling and its determining impact on shaping and reshaping an Arab American identity. In the framework of Arab American narratives, Gregory Orfaea points out,

[a]n Arab American did not have to go too far for inspiration on that account. He only had to sit and listen to an uncle cough out how he had survived the starvation in Lebanon by hauling a chandelier over the snowy mountain; she had to listen to her mother’s long tale of woe at the hands of the Israeli or Iraqi or Libyan guard; they only needed to open their jug-like ears to a whole tradition of converting everyday life into verbal drama to know that story was very much as part of an Arab’s way of finding and making meaning in the world. (115-6)

According to this passage, storytelling almost runs like blood in the veins of the Arab writer. Its appeal feeds on its dramatic encompassment of pain, suffering and oppression as common sagas in the Arab world and history.

As with the theoreticians cited above, Diana Abu-Jaber emphasizes the concurrent prominence of the oral/culinary tradition in her Arab legacy. For instance, she states that “storytelling, along with food, was one of the great pillars of my own cultural education” (“A Prophet in her Own Town” 221). In the same interview and in a reinforcement of the merging of feeding and telling, Robin E. Field refers to *Crescent* as a “story of love, jealousy, and betrayal, of searching for belonging in a new country and for roots in the old, and of the importance of food and storytelling to the body and the soul” (208). The statement reveals the crucial intermittent relationship in this combined examination of food and stories, as long as it is possible to perceive food and feeding as being doubly anchored to the physical and spiritual/symbolical kingdoms as are stories. It is in this sense that this work refers to the criss-crossing of both strategies, with storytelling as one form of feeding the mind and the spirit.

Having accounted for these central issues, the following paper considers, in more depth, the textual indicators of embedding storytelling both in feeding and in Abu-Jaber’s narrative schemata to the extent of using the two as emblems of specularly, i.e. as reminders of a mirroring relationship. For this reason; only at the start of the analysis

⁴ See Sidney Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996): 7.

⁵ Among other voluminous works, Bardenstein bases her thesis on food writings by Goody 1982, Sered 1988; Curtin and Heldke 1992; Bower 1997; Counihan 1999; Korsmeyer 1999 and Van Gelder 2000 (n. 4, 256).

will telling and nourishing be used independently of each other. Soon, however, attention will be drawn to the ways they lapse into one another, hence, the treatment of their implications, not interchangeably, but in connection to each other. Their interdependence is based on the common purpose of their symbolic functions in Abu-Jaber's literary world, putting emphasis on a hybrid or *métis* identity which hovers between, at least, two cultures.

As a matter of fact, it should be noted that the reinforcement of the exchange between food recipes and stories has much to do with the consistence of the textual evidence on their interdependence. Amid other illustrations, the statement by Diana's aunt that "eating is a form of listening" can be termed the most prominent suggestion of interweaving feeding and telling as self-reflexive images (*TLOB* 191). "The stories were often in some way about food", Abu-Jaber notices, explaining that "the food always turned out to be about something much larger: grace, difference, faith, love" and so do the stories (Foreword xi). In terms of criticism, however, an exemplary echo of this concomitant re-integration is best captured in Lorraine Mercer and Linda Strom's discussion of Naomi Shihab Nye's poetry and Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* in an interesting essay, subtitled "Cooking Up Stories of Love and Loss". Such alternating references to food and stories always in connection to each other, let alone to their central determinations of oriental cultures, enhance the investigation of both acts of inclusion as reverberations of each other and their outstanding role in organizing Abu-Jaber's writings.

With this strong liaison in view, this discussion of the considered texts demonstrates the ways in which telling and feeding, beyond forming a pivotal intertextual dimension, also determine Abu-Jaber's configuration of each text and its internal structure. For instance, *Crescent* is structurally divided into a frame narrative that incorporates parts of *Arabian Nights* and a central love story inspired by William Shakespeare's *Othello* (Abu-Jaber, "A Prophet in her Own Town" 208). The frame story has strong affinities with fairy tales, that is, traditional stories "chanted down by oral transmission [...] from the past" and whose "subject matter consists in a general way of elements arising out of the idea of magic" (Collingwood 115). It should also be pointed out that the frame narrative in *Crescent* is not utterly "a classic text of the Middle eastern literary tradition", but rather a fusion of Arabic tales and Hollywood movies featuring Arab nomads and film stars such as Omar Shérif in *Lawrence of Arabia* (Donadey 64).

Through these myriad adaptations, what is important is proving the oral-culinary thread running between text and pretext or para-text. In *Recasting Postcolonialism: Women Writing Between Worlds*, Anne Donadey indicates that, rather than being a true border, the para-text mostly serves as "a threshold, or a 'vestibule'. [...] 'An undefined zone' between inside and outside, [...] on the fringe [...] between text and *hors-texte*" (98).⁶ Of the threshold, Donadey says that not only does it "mark the boundary between inside and outside, but at the same time, it deconstructs the opposition between the two terms by allowing the passage from one to the other" (98).

This essay is not concerned with the adaptation of *Othello* *se*, but instead with the enclosure of text and para-text, that is, with the ways the legendary exploits of Abdelrahman Salahadin and his mother speak to the love story of Sirine, an American of Iraqi and Irish origins, and Hanif, an Iraqi exile (Abu-Jaber, "A Prophet in her Own

⁶ Gérard Genette argues in that the paratext can be seen as "un seuil, ou ... un 'vestibule.' ... 'Zone indécise' entre le dedans et le dehors," "frange" "entre le texte et le hors-texte" (8).

Town” 209). In this vein, Sirine’s uncle calls Salahadin’s folkloric tale, which he recounts in the pre-text of *Crescent*, “the story of how to love” (15). The criss-crossing here between text and pre-text, or frame and kernel, establishes a bridge to the central romance between Hanif and Sirine. As such, the prefatory story in *Crescent* becomes imbued with what we might call a specular essence, given its “function as a kind of looking glass” for the lovers in the essential plot of Abu-Jaber’s novel (“A Prophet in her Own Town” 221).

In conjunction with the dialogical dimension between the text and the para-text, it is crucial to comment on the identity of the story-teller in the pretext i.e., Abdelrahman Salahadin’s tale. The writer refers to Sirine’s uncle, who functions as the surrogate father in the novel, as “a *consummate storyteller* of Arabic folklore and proverbs” (“A Prophet in her Own Town” 215)(emphasis mine). Already, the mixed oral-culinary metaphor, referred to through the italicized phrase in the previous quotation, enhances the idea of letting feeding cross over to the art of telling or narrating a story. To draw on Mercer and Strom afresh, this mingled image creates a sort of communion between “Sirine’s focus on food and her uncle’s focus on storytelling. These trajectories intersect in the kitchen, where she feeds him the Arabic food he loves, and he feeds her the Scherazade-like tale of his great Aunt Camille and her son Abdelrahman Salahadin’s adventures in a fantastical Arabian landscape” (40). In this specific example, the motifs of feeding and telling interact as aesthetic strategies of connecting text and con-text.

In a similar process that consolidates the philosophy of Sirine’s uncle about telling and feeding as interferential scopes, Sirine demonstrates that, from the simple act of tasting different flavours and smelling aromas, she can identify the essential ingredients of almost every meal with precision. Her proper philosophy is that “food should taste like where it came from. I mean good food especially. You can sort of trace it back [...] so the best butter tastes a little like pastures and flowers [...] Things show their origins” (*Crescent* 69). Even when Aziz, a Syrian poet appointed as a visiting professor in L.A. campus, asks her “to consider the difference between looking at a person and looking through their eyes”, Sirine picks up on his analogy, commenting, “that’s how I feel about eating” (*Crescent* 196). She explains that “tasting a piece of bread that someone bought is like looking at that person; but tasting a piece of bread that they baked is like looking out of their eyes” (*Crescent* 196-7). Beyond evincing that feeding and telling could be used as mirrors, such instances transcend the conventional attitude about food as only a basic need, affirming its possible implication of a lucid world-view which sees through nourishment a form of situating oneself from inside and outside.

Even Abu-Jaber’s structural and thematic conception of *The Language of Baklava* harkens back to *Crescent* by intertwining myriad food expressions, descriptions and metaphors to convey that “the body is the place of the spirit” (“A Prophet in her Own Town” 224). In the same interview, Abu-Jaber explains that her memoir “is about how a family is born, about the creation of and the development of the life of a family. Our family is a character in that sense, and it’s a character that’s formed around food: food as a way of instructing us and containing our cultural legacy” (225). To account further for the genesis of her memoir and explain its arrangement, Abu-Jaber comments that each “chapter is about a certain kind of Arabic dish. Then I use that dish to talk about my father’s love affair with food and how we were raised in this totally food-obsessed family, and the implications that the dishes had for us. How each one symbolized a different stage in our evolution as a family, as immigrants” (“The Only

Response to Silencing”). As such, the choice of food is embedded in the notion of a cultural identity as much as it provides Abu-Jaber with a significant scheme of outlining her narrative and concocting an adequate chapter division. More than this, while food-obsession anchors the memoirist to her roots it seems to have the liability of isolating her from an immediate milieu.

Overall, *The Language of Baklava* turns out to be a pastiche of Arab classic food recipes and others which are American. The former include shish kabob, Arabic ice cream, mensaf lelben, lamb kofta, maglouba, tabbouleh, muhammara, falafels, bamia, baklava, araq, baba ghanouj, spinach-stuffed fetayer, fattoush, mezza, garlic-stuffed roasted leg of lamb and roasted fish in tahini sauce. Abu-Jaber puts these names side to side with pita bread, grilled Velveeta sandwiches, grilled chicken, civilized panna cotta and roast beef. This selection of dishes could trigger a connection between the urge to inspire from a combination of an oral culinary tradition and the endeavour to familiarize the American reader with the Arabic names of these meals. The prominence of this selection requires further thought upon the rationale behind the leitmotif of eating and its connecting thread with telling for the Arab American.

With particular reference to *The Language of Baklava*, the food recipes, their components, preparation, being complex and infinite, and shifting placements are integrated as reverberations of the slippery, unstable aspect of the very act of remembering or retrieving the family’s past lore. As Abu-Jaber suggests, “one of the barriers that I came up against in writing *The Language of Baklava* was that our memories and our lives don’t seem to fall into neat, narrative arcs [...] Memory tends to be fragmentary; it tends to be diffuse” (“All Things Considered”). Beyond an ethnic ornamentation of the narrative, the representation of food recipes as a pastiche best embodies the fragmented process of re-collecting personal memories. In the same way, this choice could serve the memoirist to get through the fear of self-revelation. Abu-Jaber takes such a strategic patterning of recipes as a form of a poetic licence that allows self-protection against the troubles of honest, overt, at times, embarrassing family revelations and gives the author “something to hang it on, or hide behind” (“A Prophet in her Own Town” 224). This way, the description of food rituals helps underestimate the stakes of the venture to tell about the personal.

In line with the deliberate masquerade through food recipes, the concept of juxtaposing a wide range of American and Arab recipes, through *Crescent* and *The Language of Baklava*, or also adapting Eastern and Western traditional sources in the fable forwarding each single chapter of *Crescent* seems to work towards manifesting the arbitrariness and volatility of borders. In fact, the structural asset of culinary, even oral, inspirations should not lead to downplaying their combined focus on instability at the level of identity representation. Mercer and Strom focus on a prevalent trait of Abu-Jaber’s considered writings, the portrayal of characters resistant to “categorization as Arab, American, [...] Arab American” or other (40). Aziz emerges out as a major instance of this impossibility, especially, as he comments “I am Aziz, I am large, I contain multitudes. I defy classification” (*Crescent* 93). Similar multitude is also typical of other Arab American characters such as Sirine, an olive fair-skinned half Arab with “almond-shaped, and sea-green” eyes (*Crescent* 17), or even Rana, a university student at UCLA wearing the hijab, but also a woman activist affiliated with a Women in Islam group (168-71). Liminality extends to apply to the covered man who kidnaps Abdelrahman and is, actually, a covered woman who, unveiled, becomes the mermaid Queen Alieph (*Crescent* 326). Mercer and Strom push the argument of fluid representations further, noticing that the “Los Angeles police officers wander into Um-

Nadia's Café, not to harass the Middle Eastern proprietor and clientele, but in search of hummus and to catch up on their favourite Arabic soap operas on T.V". (41). The statement points out Abu-Jaber's commitment to opposing binaries and interweaving cultures, initially, heralded with the publication of *Arabian Jazz*.⁷

Integral to this issue is the emphasis on cross-culturalism. On her forty-first birthday, Sirine receives two cookbooks from her uncle, *On the Delights and Transfigurations of Food* (*Crescent* 314) and *Kitab al-Wusla Ila' L-Habib*, or *The Book of the Link with the Beloved* (342). Mercer and Strom observe that, going through its recipes, Sirine figures out that food "can serve as common denominator", for such staples of middle-eastern cooking as olives, garlic, lentils, and other foods "are also the main ingredients in the foods of other cultures". Indeed, they "migrated with travellers throughout the Mediterranean and beyond, [...] illustrating the illusory nature of borders and nationality" (43). In fact, Sirine, herself, purchases her favourite spices from an Iranian shop whose proprietor is willing to tolerate the Iraqi infringements of the Iranian border in the eighties in gratitude for Sirine and in a tribute to her exquisiteness (*Crescent* 20). Right here, food is a metaphor of the writer's inclusion in her immediate time and place.

Accordingly, the descriptions of food ingredients, their migratory origins and transcultural clients amount to "a kind of contact zone" or "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations" and overcome cultural entities (in Mercer, Strom 39).⁸ However, it should be asserted that "the contact zone formed in *Crescent* is a domestic one, situated in cafés, kitchens, and homes; it establishes the theme of the world-as-home and the theme of the personal as political" (39). To the extent that the contact zone suggests fusion and goes beyond conflicting encounters, it also hinges back to Gloria Anzaldúa's description of *métissage* as a state of in-betweenness which is replete with myriad possibilities, rather than troubles. Anzaldúa argues,

[a]t some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes. Or perhaps we will decide to disengage from the dominant culture, write it off altogether as a lost cause, and cross the border into a wholly new and separate territory. Or we might go another route. The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react. (100-1)

In a similar way to Anzaldúa, Abu-Jaber seems to uproot all hegemonic discourses of binary thinking and take issue with exclusive frontiers, in favour of anchoring every cultural aspect or sense of identity affiliating with as many layers of subjectivity as it is possible.

As described by Abu-Jaber, this alternative identity-formation makes sense only in the context of her father's faith in constant movement. "My father and his brothers

⁷ The title itself could be studied as part and parcel of this thrust for opposing cultural boundaries. For an interesting analysis of this thesis, see Michelle Hartman, "'this sweet/sweet music': Jazz, Sam Cooke and Reading Arab American Literary Identities," *MELUS* 31.4 (Winter 2006): 145-165.

⁸ Mary Louise Pratt. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge, 1992.6.

fly back and forth, back and forth, whisking over the oceans and continents. They live their lives in the air, in the ether of in-between, the borderlands” (*TLOB* 326). Abu-Jaber goes so far as to depict her status as an ever-shifting self or a *métis*, living between Jordan and the United States, as an appealing fate:

We grow into the curve of what we know; for me, that was my family’s rootlessness and my father’s control and scrutiny—movement and confinement. I am surely a Bedouin as anyone who have travelled in a desert caravan. A reluctant Bedouin—I miss and I long for every place, every country, I have ever lived—and frequently even the places my friends and my family have lived and talked about as well—and I never want to leave any of these places. I want to cry out, to protest: why must there be only one home! Surely there is one as bad, as heartbroken, as hopeless at saying good-bye as I am. The fruits and vegetables, the dishes and the music and the light and the trees of all these places have grown into me, drawing me away. And so I go. Into the world, away. (*TLOB* 327-8)

The passage makes clear the embrace of cross-culturalism and the endeavour to break free from the restrictions of ethnocentrism, including the archetypal tendency to dissolve in the WASP melting pot.

In another respect, the best manifesto of incorporating food in order to transcend cultural and racial boundaries lies in the “Arablish” (*Crescent* 264) Thanksgiving dinner which is concocted by the Arab American chef (193-200). Of pertinence to the hybrid idea behind this nomenclature is the notion that even in the Abu-Jaber family the writer conceives of Thanksgiving as “a way of being American and having an American tradition that also seemed to make room for our difference” (“A Prophet in her Own Town” 217). In view of the fact that the writer grew up in a family where food amounts to “the metaphor for cultural memory”, Thanksgiving can be considered “the apotheosis, the place where we could have long-standing American traditions: my mom’s traditions, and what she knew about Thanksgiving and being American, accompanied with my dad’s great love of cooking and food and the memory that comes through his dishes” (“A Prophet in her Own Town” 217-8).

In Mercer and Strom’s investigation of *Crescent*, there is a pointer to the considered feast as “a hybrid holiday” matching a wide range of origins, nationalities and cultures (43). Unrelated by blood, the guests and acquaintances come up from diverse backgrounds ranging from Europe to Elsalvador, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Palestine. In a similar way, their names range from Shark (East) to Gharb (West), Schmaal (North), Jenoo (South), Eliazar, Cristobal and so on. All of them partake in an unconventional Thanksgiving celebration with seemingly disconnected contributions, including “a big round fatayer—a lamb pie—that Aziz brought from the green-eyed girl at the Iranian bakery; six sliced cylinders of cranberry sauce from Um-Nadia; whole roasted walnuts in chilli sauce from Cristobal” and “three homemade pumpkin pies and a half-gallon of whipping cream” from Victor Hernandez (*Crescent* 193). To this cocktail Sirine adds her personal preparations for the feast by looking “up Iraqi dishes, trying to find the childhood foods that she’d heard Han speak of, the sfeeahas—savoury pies stuffed with meat and Spinach—and round mensaf trays piled with lamb and rice and yogurt sauce” (*Crescent* 191). Once presented altogether on the

dinner table, the banquet becomes an icon of cultural fusion and cross-culturalism, in turn, re-affirming cooking as a political gesture (Mercer, Strom 43).⁹

Moreover, it is interesting to note that the range of meals which are prepared on this occasion is no less trespassing or transcendent of boundaries than the dinner conversation. The latter progresses from gossiping about the café customers, the students and the teachers at California university, Los Angeles to politics about the Middle East and, more essentially, food and poetry (*Crescent* 196-7) and questions of identity such as what it means to be American or to be in America (Mercer, Strom 44). The same critics rightly note that the sharing of the bounty of food and the generosity of the community that gathers to cook, eat, and share their stories plays a major role in alleviating the losses suffered due to death and exile (45). That is, cooking and eating together become both commemorative acts and variables of translation, which brings in Hanif's expertise as a translator of Arabic and English literatures. More than this, they provide an antithesis to the false split between the private and the public.

Likewise, this diverse gathering on Thanksgiving can be accounted for as having everything to do with Abu-Jaber's conviction in the merits of inspiring ethnic solidarity from the coalition of Arab Americans not only with each other but, more importantly, with other minorities. As Abu-Jaber puts it,

we need to do more broadly-based identity building. If people from Arab countries in America want to have a stronger presence and a stronger voice, probably the most practical option is to band together and to do it under a broader rubric. Just saying "Egyptian" or "Syrian" is not going to do it. I think that's been part of the problem for many of Middle Eastern extraction—tribal differences have broken down any kind of coalition-building. We really need to band together, not only within the Arab countries, but also within other Middle Eastern countries and all different kinds of minority and cultural affiliations. We should be reaching out to Asian Americans and African Americans and so on, in order to allow their trajectories to inform our own. ("A Prophet in her Own Town" 223-4)

The writer seems to say that a real inclusion of Arab Americans in the United States is contingent on their communal efforts and cross-cultural bonds with Asian, African and Latin Americans as well as on following in the footsteps of their activism.

Interestingly, the idea of interweaving two cultures without losing one's difference grows with Abu-Jaber until amounting to the status of a creative project which turns on criss-crossing at least two cultures. Speaking highly of this scheme, Abu-Jaber says "[m]y grant proposal describes a novel that I will write about characters undergoing ambitious self-excavation, recovery, and reconciliation as they move between countries. It is set in both America and the Middle East, and it is meant to draw together my own deep cultural ambivalences—to try to look right at the conundrum of being Arab-American. Arab and American" (*TLOB* 235). Similar admissions express the power of cross-culturalism on Abu-Jaber's literary and conceptual world, one that rejects ethnocentrism in favour of a more universal transcontinental enhancement of

⁹ It is ironical that Abu-Jaber equally reveals how this harmony is somehow utopian or still impossible, noticing that the same "scene is tainted by Aziz bringing the lamb pie cursed by the evil eye", therefore, suggesting "that this combination is not going to work" ("The Only Response to Silencing").

identity. This way, they legitimate the idea of re-interpreting Abu-Jaber's creative fusion of oriental food and stories as "a form of oppositional discourse" to standardization (Donadey 118).

This very argument remains inseparable from the merging of eating and telling as being intrinsically encompassed in a striking hunger "for home, for family, for the old smells and touches and tastes" (*TLOB* 6). In fact, in commenting on the loving gesture of Abu-Jaber's Jordanian American father sharing the pleasure of a communal meal with his numerous brothers back in Jordan, the writer holds that "the greatest form of affection, actually, is to feed a guest or a friend from your own hand. And it's very sensuous, very all-encompassing way of eating and involving yourself in food, involving yourself in family and community" ("All Things Considered"). Described with caution and succinctness, the same food ritual sets up the deep connection between food and memory and recuperates a nostalgic fragment in the childhood of Ghassan Abu-Jaber, the writer's father, and his siblings back in Jordan as they feed each other with their hands (*TLOB* 326). In this sense, the scenes of habitual feeding are integrated in the memoir to weave a narrative "of origin and belonging", as Lisa Suhair Majaj puts it (266).

It follows from this that reconciling with one's mother culture through food is as overarching as self-compromise on the grounds of a tactile view of the world. In this respect, *Crescent* transforms food into a significant means to making peace with oneself, one's past and present, the world around and its system of signification. Thus, if there is something that saves Sirine from total surrender to the despair resurgent after her parents' death it is the staying power that she is able to derive from cooking to others or eating together with them. Suffice it to scrutinize her ability to grasp the life, the love and the richness that could be enveloped inside a forkful of sweet potatoes into her mouth:

The potatoes are soft as velvet, the gravy satiny. It is as if she can taste the life inside all those ingredients: the stem that the cranberries grew on, the earth inside the bread, even the warm blood that was once inside the turkey. It comes back to her, the small secret that was always hers, for years, the only truth she seemed to possess—that food was better than love: surer, truer, more satisfying and enriching. As long as she could lose herself in the rhythms of peeling an onion, she was complete and whole. And as long as she could cook she would be loved. (*Crescent* 194)

Hence, as long as Sirine cooks and nurses her culinary expertise as a chef she grasps her sense of being and, even, turns what sounds mere commonsense into something further meaningful. In this same sense, the fact that Hanif eats the meals prepared by Sirine is what enables him to realize the emotional essence that the language of cooking serves for Sirine. As the latter tastes the outcome of her recipes, she ponders upon "the small secret that was always hers, for years, the only truth she seemed to possess – that food was better than love: surer, truer, more satisfying and enriching. As long as she could lose herself in the rhythms of peeling an onion, she was complete and whole. And as long as she could cook, she would be loved" (*Crescent* 194).

At a larger scope, nobody should miss the function of embracing the collective feeding/eating rituals as an integral part of what we can term as corrective strategies that run counter to the misrepresentations of Arab Americans which are dominant in American media. "In this country", one of Diana's cousins complains, "the Arabs are

seen only through the lens of politics. The TV says we're oil sheikhs or fundamentalists or terrorists or all three at once. It's all stereotypes! We have no charm or texture! When do we get to have homes and parties and jokes and children? We need a strong national identity! We're held hostage by ideology, by things like Hollywood and politics and Palestine" (*TLOB* 128-9). In opposition to these discursive misconceptions, the notion of leaning back on the tactile should be viewed as being indivisible from a community project towards humanizing Arabs for a US white audience (Mercer, Strom 39). In her interview of Abu-Jaber, Andrea Shalal-Esa refers to the impulse "to put a human face on people who are culturally erased and provide human histories, family life, the day-to-day things that people can relate to, food, family, love, loss" ("The Only Response to Silencing").

In this same context and on the basis of "the issue of 'gender shifts'", Abu-Jaber provides outspoken instances in which her own father "becomes engaged in a traditionally 'female' cultural sphere" (Bardenstein 258-9). "On his days off", Ghassan Abu-Jaber "cooks and croons in Arabic to the frying liver and onions songs about missing the one you love" (*TLOB* 20). "In the end", Diana notices in reference to her own father, "the type of food doesn't matter so much to Bud; it's cooking it and feeding people and watching them eat, keeping them alive in the desert of the world—that is all he really cares about" (*TLOB* 325). Having eventually fulfilled his dream of establishing his own restaurant, Ghassan Abu-Jaber grasps the inevitable relationship between cooking for others, compromising with himself and his food-obsessed roots.

A similar implication of mutuality interwoven in feeding can be reached out in *Crescent*. As a matter of fact, there is a great deal of emotions encompassed in the act of preparing meals. Involved in the processes of transmission and creativity, eating and cooking together emerge out as the best revelation of the lovers' private language of desire. Principally, Hanif realizes the implications of cooking and feeding lovingly, particularly, considering how he feeds Sirine a "morsel of lamb from his fingers" (*Crescent* 299). More than this, Abu-Jaber brings to the fore a joint awareness of food as a means to communicate love through the collaborative making of baklava, a sweet cake based on almonds and other fruits (*Crescent* 59-61). During this particular episode, focus is on Hanif and Sirine fumbling through the layers of dough together. Such exemplified out a sense that "food is such a great human connector, it's so intimate" ("The Only Response to Silencing"). Thus, a joint preparation of meals turns out into a metaphor for a state of intimacy.

At the heart of humanizing the Arab father, in particular, and endowing him with a great deal of sympathy and admiration, we also place his portrayal as a resourceful storyteller. In this regard, Abu-Jaber states: "Storytelling was very important when I grew up. My father and uncles are all great storytellers, and they regaled us with jokes, fables and reminiscences about their growing-up years" ("A Prophet in her Own Town" 221). A similarly powerful message runs through *The Language of Baklava* wherein the memoirist describes her father's interest in telling stories as follows:

Bud is a great talker in our family of mostly listeners. He soliloquizes on the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, beginning with the Bible; delivers a dissertation on free will versus destiny; and offers several exhortations addressing the nature of animals, the difference between men and women, and the meanings of the universe. He tells endless jokes and instructional stories starring his favourite classic Arab character – Jeha the joker. (153)

Time and again, emphasis is placed on Ghassan Abu-Jaber as an archetypal joker and a powerful storyteller. Also depicted as an expert cook, Diana's father contributes in undermining the stereotype of the Arab terrorist.

As such, the incorporation of folkloric tales and traditional/hybrid meals, either in *The Language of Baklava* or in *Crescent*, is not just the best embodiment of the crucial impetus of both as a rich and principal muse for the Arab American writer. More than this, it is, in certain respects, an illustration of a resistant valorization of one's humanity and cultural legacy as an American-born Arab. It also shapes the argument in favour of inclusion, to the detriment of and in response to exclusion, with the aim of registering the oppositional nature of interweaving food and stories as counter-manifestoes and strategies of resisting the exclusion of Arab communities in the United States as "The Most Invisible of the Invisibles" (Kadi, Introduction xix). "In the United States and Canada", Joanna Kadi observes, "it is not only white people who refuse to see us, it is other people of color—Latinos, Africans, Asians, Natives—who do not acknowledge our existence" (Introduction xix-xx). Abu-Jaber's works counteract these processes of exclusion by affirming that the "only response to silencing—besides our paranoia—is to keep speaking" ("The Only Response to Silencing"). At the core of this discourse of resistance is situated the positioning of feeding and telling as crucial parallels.

The focus of this article has been on tracing the use of telling and cooking back to the vitality of revising cultural roots as assets, rather than a stigma, and exploring the challenges of blending "past with present, the personal with the political" (Mercer, Strom 45). Indeed, the manifest inclusion of scenes and metaphors, adhering to food recipes and tales, stands for a form of ideological commitment which belies the notion of every ethnic story as a non-relational biography i.e., as a purely personal narrative. By registering the intersecting essence of similar acts of self-inclusion at evoking the urgency of integrating Arab Americans in American culture—without uprooting their cultural distinctions from mainstream norms, such an aspect partakes in scrambling the foundational myth of ethnic narratives "as self-expressive of an autonomous individuation" (Smith 114).

What is worth inferring about the comparable insertion considered in this article is that it equally affirms "the boundary markers delimiting the sites of the included and the excluded" (Smith 114). In fact, the cultural components which could exclude a community from a mainstream culture are the same things for which this community could be re-included. At one level, the examples about the deliberate use of Arab dishes, without even translating them, could evince out an impulse of familiarization as much as it speaks for "an avenue for questioning boundaries of culture, class, and ethnicity" and "a natural repository for memory and tradition and [...] the possibility for imagining blended identities and traditions" (Mercer, Strom 33). They are evidence that acceptance does not have to mean melting in the kaleidoscope as a prerequisite. At another level, since the memoirist's traditional recipes re-connect her to her paternal Arabian heritage, it, therefore, can serve as a strong ground for separating the immigrant from the target immediate culture. As such, the same strategies which are twisted in order to rationalize the (in)visibility of Arab Americans in the United States also amount to possible terrains for their visibility when re-examined.

To conclude, this essay has attempted to demonstrate the ways in which *Crescent* and *The Language of Baklava* make food metaphors and ingredients a *fil conducteur* in structural and thematic terms. Indeed, the prominent intersection of culinary and oral dictions, images and contents alert us to the dovetailing of physical and symbolical

nurturing as a unifying principle tying texts and pre-texts. Via the myriad layers of weaving the culinary and the oral, Diana Abu-Jaber features a dynamic trajectory in reducing the dichotomous division between fiction and non-fiction in her literary career. It is in this sense that the processes through which *Crescent* spills over to *The Language of Baklava* have been pointed out so as the latter two end up foregrounding their dialogical affinities.

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Translation as an Act of Interpretive Process: Interpreting the “Snow Man”

Esra Birkan Baydan

Abstract: This essay explores the implications of deconstruction and hermeneutics as complementary approaches for literary translation criticism. Deconstruction, on one hand, lays bare plurality and indeterminacy of meaning, and necessity of interpretation but leaves the interpretive process obscure. Gadamer’s hermeneutics, on the other hand, with its notions of “understanding”, “hermeneutical circle”, “fusion of horizons” and “dialogue” enlightens the way to interpretation. The essay presents diverse interpretations of Wallace Stevens’s “The Snow Man” both in literary criticism and in two Turkish translations in order to demonstrate how poetry may elicit contradictory interpretations, and offers a translation criticism guided by deconstructive and hermeneutic approaches, utilized not as tools or methodology but as a mindset.

Keywords: Poetry translation, literary translation criticism, deconstructive approach, hermeneutic approach, Wallace Stevens, The Snow Man

Introduction

Any encounter with a literary production, i.e reading a literary work, necessarily involves interpretation. Likewise, translating or writing a critical review of a literary text necessarily involves one’s understanding and/or interpretation of the text in question. Yet, the main distinction between a translation and a critical review would be that, a critical review might hint at possible meanings which can be inferred from a literary text and leave it at that, while a translation has to somehow make choices among possible meanings in order to be able to construct a coherent text in its own right. However, that should never mean that the translator should open up what is ambiguous in the original text or that s/he should reduce the multi-layered nature of the text and its multiplicity of meaning to a single meaning. Both acts of rewriting involve producing a “meta-text” (a text on/about another text) based on one’s understanding and interpretation. However, a translated literary work based on the translator’s interpretation might be judged as irrelevant or inappropriate; whereas literary criticism of a certain work is often considered as another possible reading/interpretation of that work.

Translation has come to be regarded as an act of interpretation under the influence of poststructuralism and deconstruction, due to the change of perspective which reflects how “meaning” is recreated rather than restituted in the target text. Therefore translation criticism under the guidance of deconstruction takes into account “inferred” meanings by individual translators rather than the author’s “intended meaning”. The notion of “inferred meanings” necessarily implies the individual’s own interpretation of the work and hermeneutics may prove to be useful in understanding the interpretive process. Gadamer’s hermeneutics could be seen as a torchlight with its notions of “fusion of horizons” and “dialogue” for literary translation criticism.

The first part of the essay consists of translation scholars’ views on how poststructuralist and deconstructive approaches towards meaning have changed the way translation is perceived today. The notion of undecidability of meaning, which is an outcome of poststructuralist and deconstructive approaches, necessarily reflects on how

a translation is criticized. In addition, Gadamer's hermeneutic approach, which warns against assigning habitual meaning, is explored in this part as a complementary approach.

The second part of the essay presents varying and even contradictory interpretations of Wallace Stevens's "The Snow Man" both in literary criticism and in two Turkish translations in order to demonstrate plurality of meanings in the poem; and offers a translation criticism guided by the notions explored in the first part. Thus, translation criticism starts from the premises that any literary production is a site of multiple meanings and translation is an act of interpretive process.

1a. Implications of Poststructuralism and Deconstruction for Literary Translation Criticism

Earlier assumptions about translation have been reconsidered vigorously under the influence of poststructuralism and deconstruction. Most importantly, poststructuralism and deconstruction have influenced the way "meaning" is understood. For instance, Rosemary Arrojo, as early as 1998, does not make a distinction between language- or culture-oriented theories of translation, but evaluates them in terms of how they approach meaning and differentiates between essentialist and non-essentialist approaches in this respect (26).

Indeterminacy and multiplicity of meaning, especially in literary texts, are widely recognized today, and this leads to the awareness of the reader's perspective. Tymoczko underlines the notions of "multiplicity, semiotic openness, and permeability rather than convergence of meaning" inherent in poststructuralist approaches to translation. She likewise calls attention to the "awareness of perspective and, indeed, conflicting perspectives" that are built into the deconstructive projects (Tymoczko 46-7). With regard to the reader's perspective for instance, Hans J. Vermeer maintains that "the recipient's individual world knowledge, actual disposition and situation and other factors inevitably interfere in the understanding" (43). Therefore, meaning is regarded as what the reader attaches to a certain text under his/her own individual circumstances specified by cultural, historical, sociological or psychological contexts. Hence, the reader's understanding, inference or interpretation, in addition to the role of context, are brought to the fore.

The assumption of meaning as a prior presence which resides before and beyond language is shaken up by deconstruction. For Derrida, each and every text is in fact, both translatable and untranslatable at the same time.

As a matter of fact, I don't believe that anything is translatable and, by the same token, that nothing is untranslatable? [...] Translation is always an attempt at appropriation that aims to transport home, in its language, in the most appropriate way possible, in the most relevant way possible, the most proper meaning of the original text, [...] A relevant translation is a translation whose economy, in these two senses, is the best possible, the most appropriating and the most appropriate possible. (Derrida, "What is a Relevant Translation" 178-9).

Translation is thus viewed as an attempt to appropriate meaning, "in the most relevant way possible", in the target language. If we consider "meaning" as separable and strive to transfer a stable meaning which remains untouched and unaltered in translation then we would have to admit that no text is translatable. Derrida explains the need and obligation to translate and yet the impossibility of translation through the myth of Babel.

The “tower of Babel” does not merely figure the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompleteness, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system, and architectonics. What the multiplicity of idioms comes to limit is not only a “true” translation, a transparent and adequate interexpression, it is also a structural order, a coherent of construct. There is then (let us translate) something like an internal limit to formalization, an incompleteness of the construct. It would be easy and up to a certain point justified to see there the translation of a system in deconstruction. (Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel” 191-192)

“Multiplicity of tongues” implies that languages are incomplete and therefore cannot guarantee a fully determined meaning. Davis explains this as such: “[t]here is no one-to-one correspondence between a sign and a real presence, before and outside of language” (10). Therefore, meaning can only be formed within “a structural order, a coherent of construct”, i.e. within the system of language. In other words, no signifier brings us to a final signified which is present outside language; each signifier leads to another signifier. We might assume, therefore, that meaning, which is never fixed or determined, can only be inferred. There can never be a fully determined meaning because a fully determined meaning would imply that there would be a signified that stands beyond language as the final truth. As Arrojo puts it, “the signified is always already also a signifier in a process which never leads us to a pure, definite origin”(41). Kaisa Koskinen explains, “[r]eaching for the signified one only encounters new signifiers” (447). In other words, there is rather a chain of signifiers that never brings us to a final signified. Each signifier is loaded with the “trace” of other signifiers, since each signifier acquires meaning through its relation and especially through its opposition with other signifiers. Meaning is thus multiplied and becomes indeterminate, requiring inference of readers.

Translation criticism, inspired by poststructuralism and deconstruction, foregrounds the instability and plurality of meaning and views the reader/translator of a literary work as producer of meanings. This approach certainly implies possibility of different and even conflicting inferences of meaning or interpretations, depending on the individual translator’s world view, disposition or perspective. However, whether any inferred meaning should be considered as another possible interpretation is another issue, whose answers can be sought from the hermeneutic perspective.

1b. Implications of Hermeneutics for Literary Translation Criticism

I intend to focus on the notion of “understanding”, “hermeneutical circle”, “fusion of horizons” and “dialogue”, which I believe would be useful in literary criticism not in terms of methodology, but in the manner these notions might guide criticism in general.

In Gadamer’s view, any work of art is made complete through “understanding” as the following quotation demonstrates: “Understanding must be conceived as a part of the process of the coming into being of meaning, in which the significance of all statements—those of art and those of everything else that has been transmitted—is formed and made complete” (146). Understanding, according to Gadamer, is not about reproducing the original meaning but about forming the meaning of a work of art. However, understanding is not about assigning any arbitrary meaning to the work of art. He adopts Heidegger’s description of the “hermeneutical circle”: “All correct interpretation must be on guard against arbitrary fancies and the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought and direct its gaze ‘on the things themselves’ (which, in

the case of the literary critic, are meaningful texts, which themselves are again concerned with objects)” (Gadamer 236).

This notion arises from the assumption that written literary works especially are meaningful and coherent in themselves. Therefore the interpreter should be first of all guided by the object of the communication and be aware of his/her preconceptions, “fore-meanings” or prejudices. However, this does not mean that s/he should or could in any way avoid them, but that s/he should leave room to the other’s meaning.

What another person tells me, whether in conversation, letter, book or whatever, is generally thought automatically to be his own and not my opinion [...] this presupposition is not something that makes understanding easier, but harder, in that the fore-meanings that determine my own understanding can go entirely unnoticed [...] All that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or of the text. But this openness always includes our placing the other meaning in a relation with the whole of our own meanings. (Gadamer 237-8)

In brief, “hermeneutical circle” is a process wherein fore-conceptions, which are anticipatory in nature, are tested against meaning borne out by the object or the things themselves, checking their validity against the unity of the meaningful text because, especially in poetry not even a single word is accidental.

The concept of “fusion of horizons”, explained below, is closely related with being aware of one’s own prejudices and the text’s quality of “newness”. The tension between the two horizons is not covered up but consciously brought out.

A hermeneutically trained mind must be, from the start, sensitive to the text’s quality of newness. But this kind of sensitivity involves neither “neutrality” in the matter of the object nor the extinction of one’s self, but the conscious assimilation of one’s own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one’s own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings. (Gadamer 238)

Therefore, understanding is itself the fusion of horizons where the interpreter is aware of his/her own prejudices and allows the text to modify them. This could be achieved through “dialogue” with the text, meaning practical engagement in a question and answer relationship with the text. Gadamer describes “the work of hermeneutics as a conversation with the text”: “The voice that speaks to us from the past—be it text, work, trace—itself poses a question and places our meaning in openness. In order to answer this question, we, of whom the question is asked, must ourselves begin to ask questions. We must attempt to reconstruct the question to which the transmitted text is the answer” (331). For Gadamer, “questioning is not the positing, but the testing of possibilities” (338).

In conclusion, Gadamer’s hermeneutics is understanding and interpretation, which requires the interpreter to engage in dialogue with the text through fusion of horizons. The “fusion of horizons” is the tension between our world view, which is an inevitable part of what is understood, and the newness of meaning in the alien text. What I find most valuable in hermeneutics is its claim that not every inferred meaning is possible and that our inferred meanings should always be tested against the meaningful unity of the text itself. This view, in my opinion, highlights the significance of justification of inferred meanings, whether it be translation or critical review.

In addition to deconstruction, which lays bare the ambiguity and indeterminacy of meaning and highlights the importance of interpretation, hermeneutics is useful in literary translation criticism for two reasons. First, it is effective because of its assertion that not any inferred meaning is valid; and secondly it is useful because of its claim that interpretation is possible, provided that one is open to the meanings presented by the alien text which poses itself as a question that requires answers in a gradual widening of the interpreter's horizon.

2. Translation Criticism of "The Snow Man"

Literary critics agree that Wallace Stevens's poetry is marked by ambiguity, obscurity, instability and flux, which is a deliberate composition strategy on his part and which leads to contradictory interpretations of his poems. Stevens's poetry does not foreclose possibilities of meaning by limiting them to one perspective only.

In what follows, there is a review of interpretations of "The Snow Man" both in literary criticism and in two Turkish translations by Talât Sait Halman and Yusuf Eradam. Interpretive clues, which are of crucial importance for comprehension of this poem are highlighted below.

<p>THE SNOW MAN</p> <p>One must have a mind of winter To regard the frost and the boughs Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;</p> <p>And have been cold a long time To behold the junipers shagged with ice,</p> <p>The spruces rough in the distant glitter Of the January sun; and not to think Of any misery in the sound of the wind, In the sound of a few leaves,</p> <p>Which is the sound of the land Full of the same wind That is blowing in the same bare place</p> <p>For the listener, who listens in the snow, And, nothing himself, beholds Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.</p>	<p>KARDAN ADAM (HALMAN'S TRANSLATION) <i>Kış beyinli olmalı ki insan Kırağıyla çam dallarında Kardan kabuğu görüp anlasın;</i></p> <p><i>Üşümüş olmalı uzun süre Görmek için buza bürünmüş ardıçları,</i></p> <p><i>Katı kozalakları uzak Ocak güneşinin; düşünmek isterse Mutsuzluğu rüzgarın uğultusunda, Birkaç yaprağın sesinde,</i></p> <p><i>Toprağın sesidir bu Aynı rüzgarla dolu Aynı çıplak yerde esip durur</i></p> <p><i>Kar içinde dinleyen insan için.</i></p> <p><i>Kendi bir hiçse göremez ki Orada olmayan hiç bir şeyi, olan hiç bir şeyi.</i></p>	<p>KARDAN ADAM (ERADAM'S TRANSLATION) <i>Kış beyinli olmalı insan Görüp de kırağıyla Çam dallarındaki kardan kabuğu;</i></p> <p><i>Üşüyüp uzun zaman, Bakıp da buzla taraz taraz ardıçlara,</i></p> <p><i>Hoyrat ladinlere, Ocak güneşinin Uzak pırlıtısında; aklına getirmezse Acıyla kederi, rüzgarın uğultusunda, Birkaç yaprağın hıştırtısında;</i></p> <p><i>Aklına getirmezse ki aynı rüzgarla dopdolu Toprağın sesidir bu ve rüzgar Esmektedir, aynı çıplak yerde</i></p> <p><i>Karlar içinde dinleyene, Kendisi hiç olduğundan görmeyene Orada olmayan hiç bir şeyi, olan hiç bir şeyi.</i></p>
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Gloss Translation (Halman): One must be winter-minded so that s/he can see and understand the frost and crust of snow on the boughs of pine trees; must have been cold a long time in order to see junipers shagged with ice, rough cones in the distant glitter of the January sun; if one wants to think the misery in the howl of the wind, in the sound of a few leaves, this is the sound of the land, full of the same wind, it blows in the same bare place for the one who listens in the snow. If he is nothing himself he cannot see anything that is not there, anything that is there.

Gloss Translation (Eradam): One must be winter-minded to see the frost and the crust of snow on the boughs of the pine-trees; if s/he does not think of any misery in the sound of the wind, in the rustling of a few leaves; in spite of having been cold for a long time (and) having beheld junipers shagged with ice, and the rough spruces, under the January sun's distant glitter; if s/he does not think that, this is the sound of the land, full of the same wind, and that it blows in the same bare place for the listener who listens in the snow, for the one, as s/he is nothing himself, does not see nothing that is not there and nothing that is there.

The main difference between Halman's and Eradam's translations is that Halman considers being winter-minded as a necessary condition to see and understand the frost and the crust of snow on pine trees. A long cold spell is a necessary condition that enables the person to behold the junipers shagged with ice. Halman translates "not to think of" as "*düşünmek isterse*" (if one wants to think), which might be considered a transition from a winter-minded person, who sees and understands the winter, into "a listener, who listens in the snow", and "who thinks of the misery in the sound of the wind". The last two lines are cut off from the rest of the poem by a full stop (.)

In Eradam's view, being winter-minded is not a necessary precondition to regard and behold, as in Halman's translation, but instead an expression of contempt as understood by the connotative consonance between *kış beyinli* (winter-brained) and *kuş beyinli* (bird-brained) in Turkish. *Kuş beyinli* means bird-brained in Turkish, which is a phrase used to dismiss stupid people. Therefore *kış beyinli* (winter-brained) becomes an expression of contempt for those who does not think of any misery in the sound of the wind, despite their having felt cold a long time and having seen junipers shagged with ice and rough spruces. In Eradam's interpretation, the wind blows for the listener in the snow and for the one who does not see anything that is not there and nothing that is there. Therefore the wind might be considered to represent a wake-up call for the winter-minded (or simple-minded people) in his translation.

However, in Milton J. Bates's interpretation, this limitation, i.e. being incapable of emotions, is the the snow man's virtue because being winter-minded enables the snow man to record the scene before him objectively. In Bates's view, being free of emotions enables the snow man to behold nature as it is or as it is not, without attaching any meaning to the sound of the wind or to the sound of the leaves. Let us consider the following quotation from Bates:

The speaker of The Snow Man is [...] a romantic, for he entertains pathetic analogies—hears misery in the sound of the wind, for example—that are lost upon the snow man's "mind of winter". The snow man is incapable of pathos because he is all snow and no man. This limitation is of course his virtue: he is better qualified than the speaker of the poem to record objectively the scene before him, the "nothing that is not there and the nothing that is". [...] To behold nothing that is not there, the snow man must be "nothing himself". He is the sum of his impressions, identical, in this instance, with the nothing he does behold. (Bates 132-3)

We might infer therefore that being a snow man or having a mind of winter is a state of detachment from the ego and a psychological equilibrium without intellectual content. The surrounding reality becomes an absolute void, without the ego, because no feelings or meanings are attached. Helen Vendler, for instance, argues that “‘The Snow Man’ announces [...] the discovery of the abolition of one old self by a new one, which necessitates at first the contemplation of an absolute void” (49). From this perspective, the “new self” which detaches itself from the ego is desirable and necessary for the contemplation of an absolute void and to regard it under a new light.

Although Halman’s and Eradam’s interpretations may be contradictory, they both seem to agree that being “nothing himself” implies *not* being able to “behold (anything) that is not there and the nothing that is”. However, in critical interpretations, being nothing or reducing oneself to nothing, could as well be a prelude to regarding and beholding the scene (nature) before oneself. Harold Bloom, for instance, concludes that the snow man “beholds as a nihilist beholds” and “nothing” is equated with “being” in the Nietzschean sense (62). Therefore, man must be reduced to nothing or “stripped off from all mythologies” in order to be made divine (Bloom 63). Yet when this happens, man ceases to be a human being. However, “the listener, reduced to nothing, remains human because he beholds something shagged and rough, barely figurative, yet still a figuration rather than a bareness” (63). Hence, the listener does not become one with reality or the divine but is only reduced; and the analogy for this reduction is the snow man. Bloom’s inference of reductiveness, as in “having said no to everything, in order to get at myself” arises from the concluding lines of the poem (48-9). Bloom maintains that, “[A]s Snow Man he was stripped of delusions (‘nothing that is not there’) and of illusions (‘the nothing that is’)” or “he diminished so as to augment the majesty of the imagination” (61, 274). Human beings experience things around them under the influence of their own emotions. For this reason the main character of this poem is not a man but a snow man, who is both snow and man and yet is neither snow nor man.

Whereas Bloom regards the snow man as an analogy for the listener who is reduced to nothing but still remains human, Schwarz focuses on the dialogue between speaker and listener and claims that “Stevens imagines himself his own listener” (10). The dialogue between the speaker and the listener is also an “indicative dialogue between the imagination and the external world” (Schwarz 59). Therefore, in Stevens’s poetry, dialogue becomes a tool to introduce different perspectives and create pluralistic meanings. Schwarz likens the layers in which the poem is constructed to the layers of snow composing the snow man (65). Schwarz interprets the poem as a whole as follows: “*Unless* one has a mind of winter [...] one feels the human in the landscape; one hears the misery in the sound of the wind—the wind that is there for the perspicacious listener, the man of capable imagination” (63).

This interpretation might at first glance resemble that of the translators, Eradam and Halman, who negate the state of having a mind of winter. Schwarz affirms this as one possible reading of the poem: “The mind of winter would, in one possible reading, be an exclusive, limited perceiver who would only hear one note” (64). However, Schwarz is also inclined to infer a negative capability: “The poet empties himself of his own ego as a prelude to responding with the full power of his imagination” (64). The speaker of the poem is thus transformed. Detachment from the ego enables him to transcend and open himself to new possibilities and to new experience. Hence, Schwarz points out the two contradictory thoughts in the poem, which are mutually exclusive but entertained at the same time.

In conclusion, literary critics Bates and Schwarz seem to agree that being a snow man and having a mind of winter are associated with being devoid of human ego and regarding nature or reality from a cold distance. Whether this is a required state or not is not obvious from the poem itself, and it depends on one's own interpretation or world view. In Bates's view, this state is the snow man's virtue, which enables him to regard the scene before him objectively, without attaching any meaning to it. Schwarz points out two possible readings of the poem. In one of them being a snow man depicts a negative condition and refers to a limited perceiver. However, at the same time, it is a prelude to responding to nature or reality with an increased power of imagination. Bloom interprets being a snow man as an analogy for the reduction of an individual to nothing, yet the person still remains human. In this regard his interpretation differs from Bates's and Schwarz's. This reductiveness boosts the snow man's imagination and thereby transforms him into a listener with human senses who gazes at his surroundings in amazement.

In light of the above, the ambiguity of meaning in "The Snow Man" mainly arises from the two contradictory thoughts associated with being a snow man. Since they are entertained at the same time, the poem leads to diverse interpretations. In one of them, being a snow man is a state of mind which hints at being nothing as a negative capacity. In this state one regards from a cold distance and does not think of any misery. In another interpretation, being a snow man prepares one to regard and behold under a new light or in a new self, without preconceptions which necessarily lead one to attach meanings which have already become clichés, as in the example of "to think of misery in the sound of the wind". Then, above all, being a snow man, being winter minded and being nothing are states of mind in the poem that may lead to diverse interpretations from particular perspectives. Being a snow man and reducing oneself to nothing might be a mind opening experience from a certain perspective; or from another perspective it can imply a state of mind which is deprived of human qualities. The translator might favor one meaning over the other depending on his/her world view; however, from a hermeneutic perspective s/he should guard against his/her own fore-meanings in order not to be led astray by them.

The translation of the phrase "winter-minded" is worthy of attention in both translations. The choice of *kış beyinli* (winter-brained), among other choices (*kış akıllı*, for instance), is deliberately preferred due to its connotations in Turkish. Whereas being "winter-minded" is open to interpretation within the "meaningful unity" of the source poem, in the hermeneutic sense, its Turkish translation *kış beyinli* (winter-brained, with its association of stupidity) closes it to other possible interpretations. This choice furthermore contradicts the meaningful unity of the target poem itself because if having a mind of winter is a necessary condition that enables the person to regard the scene before him, it should not carry the negative connotations of dull-mindedness. Therefore, the choice of *kış beyinli* for "winter-minded" not only forecloses possible interpretations arising from ambiguity, but it also harms the meaningful unity of the target poem.

Eradam's translation, on one hand, is a perfect example of an interpretation imposed by his own preconceptions or "imperceptible habits of thought". In Eradam's translation the state of being a snow man is obviously that of being a winter-minded (dull-brained) individual who is incapable of perceiving any misery in the sound of the wind. Eradam's translation has a meaningful unity in this respect. Halman's translation, on the other hand, is an example of indecisiveness that leads to confusion rather than ambiguity. The meaningful coherence of the target poem is also lost for this reason. In Halman's translation, ambiguity or plurality of meanings is created by dividing the

poem into two parts that contradict with each other. In the first part the translator tells us that one must be winter-minded so that s/he can see and understand the scene before her. However, as pointed out earlier, this seemingly positive attribution to being a snow man is already inflicted with a negativity because of the word *kış beyinli*'s (winter-brained) connotation with *kuş beyinli* (bird-brained). In the second part, being nothing himself becomes a negative state which disables one from seeing anything. I find this rather confusing because it could be understood this way: to be winter-minded (or stupid) is to be something, but if you are nothing you cannot see anything.

Conclusion

I believe, "The Snow Man" is a good example to demonstrate ambiguity which leads to diverse interpretations because Wallace Stevens's poetry in general is marked by obscurity and flux. Various interpretations of "The Snow Man" can be seen both through the literary critics' and translators' perspectives presented in this paper.

The ambiguity of the poem enables one to approach the verses within an array of many possible meanings. As pointed out above, literary criticism can more freely demonstrate the plurality of meaning in a poem, provided that the literary critic can justify her/his inferences on solid ground. However, the translator has to make certain choices among possible meanings in a way which would not foreclose other possibilities. The awareness of plurality of meaning is the key to understand the role of interpretation, which depends on the reader's world view and preconceptions. Through a hermeneutic reading of the poem, one can, through dialogue and fusion of horizons, be aware of her/his preconceptions and put them into relation (or test) with the foreign text's newness of perspective. And as argued above, Wallace Stevens's poetry calls for such a hermeneutic reading because it does not merely attract attention to its own language, but rather requires the pluralistic voices (perspectives) of the poem to be heard by the reader.

Translation criticism of "The Snow Man", offered in this paper, is guided by the implications of deconstruction and hermeneutics for literary translation criticism, explained above. These notions are utilized not as a method or a tool, but as a mindset. Deconstruction is not a translation method but a way of thinking about translation. Deconstruction lays bare plurality and indeterminacy of meaning, and necessity of interpretation, but leaves the interpretive process obscure. Undecidability of meaning brought about by deconstruction, neither means we cannot decide about the meaning nor implies we can identify a definite meaning. Especially in poetry, and specifically in "The Snow Man", diverse and even conflicting meanings reside side by side to make us think of various possibilities and perspectives. Gadamer's hermeneutics, with its notions of "understanding", "hermeneutical circle", "fusion of horizons" and "dialogue" enlightens the way to interpretation. Hermeneutic reading of a text, in its encounter with the foreign, seeks to understand and interpret by engaging in a dialogue with the text which in turn expands one's horizon and furthers one's experience. Consequently, it becomes possible to argue that the implication of deconstructive and hermeneutic approaches for literary translation criticism are important especially from two aspects which complement each other: (1) the notion of undecidability of meaning (deconstruction); (2) the notion of understanding, which warns against assigning meaning "imposed by [one's] imperceptible habits of thought"(hermeneutics).

From a deconstructive perspective, it becomes possible to argue that the choice of *kış beyinli* (winter-brained) for "winter-minded" in both translations fixes and stabilizes the meaning, whereas in the source poem having a "mind of winter" is more

ambiguous and thus opens up diverse possibilities and perspectives. As pointed out above, having a mind of winter could both mean being devoid of human ego and thus regarding nature from a cold distance or having limited perceptions. From a hermeneutic perspective, the preference of *kış beyinli* with its association of stupidity, instead of another possible choice of *kış akıllı*, for instance, could be considered an act of imposing one's own preconceptions without testing them against the source text itself.

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British South Asian Women's Voices on the English Stage: The Work of Kali Theatre Company

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Abstract: Founded in 1990 by playwright Rukhsana Ahmad and actress Rita Wolf in the wake of the growing political activism of Asian women in Britain in the 1980s, over the last decades the London-based Kali Theatre Company has been committed to supporting and producing writing for the theatre by women of South Asian descent. One of Kali's main objectives has been to explore the contours of the diaspora space, while placing cultural hybridity at the centre of the theatrical experience. Since the staging of *Song for a Sanctuary* (1990), Kali's debut play written by Ahmad as a response to the murder of Balwant Kaur by her husband in an Asian women's refuge in London, Kali has produced a diverse range of plays from a distinct gender perspective. The company's ongoing investigation of the plurality of South Asian British life has led to the production of a series of issue-based plays, revolving around crucial themes such as gender relations, patriarchy, racism, citizenship, as well as generational, class, religious and inter and intra-communal conflicts. While a considerable body of works by Kali writers has foregrounded the diverse experiences of South Asian women in the diaspora and privileged a South Asian setting, often projecting unsettling images of diasporic South Asian culture onto the stage, more recent works have moved on to explore themes with a broader cross-cultural appeal. This contribution intends to chart the development of the company since its founding by focusing on exemplary productions that arguably reflect different stages of the company's history in relation to issues of identity politics.

Keywords: Kali Theatre Company, British Asian women's theatre, identity politics, diaspora, Rita Wolf, Rukhsana Ahmad, *Song for a Sanctuary*, *Chaos*, *Another Paradise*

Since the establishment of the first theatre companies in the late Seventies, British Asian theatre has been active across the UK, articulating on the stage the different realities of South Asian communities in the country, while increasing the visibility of Asian culture in Britain and contributing to propelling it into the cultural mainstream.

As one of the longest-standing British Asian theatre companies, the London based Kali Theatre has been committed to offering in the space of the theatrical event a creative response to the experience of diaspora and exile on the part of South Asian communities in Britain. Similarly to fellow leading British Asian companies, one of Kali's main objectives has been to explore the contours of the diaspora space and affirm South Asian culture on the stage as "part of British culture" (Griffin 9), while placing cultural hybridity at the centre of the theatrical experience.

As Dominic Hingorani has pointed out,

British Asian theatre has not only been concerned with the reproduction of culturally "traditional" forms from the South Asian subcontinent... but has also focused on the contemporary frame and the emergence of new and dynamic forms as a result of [their] hybrid cultural location. (7)

As a theatre company specifically aiming to promote works by women writers of South Asian lineage¹, Kali has focussed on identity politics, debating “issues of race, colour and ethnicity” (Griffin 15) from a distinct gender perspective. The company’s ongoing investigation of the plurality of South Asian British life has led to the production of a series of issue-based plays, revolving around crucial themes such as gender relations, patriarchy, racism, citizenship, as well as generational, class, religious and inter and intra-communal conflicts. Thanks to their strong commitment to showcasing the work of South Asian women in Britain, Kali Theatre has arguably contributed to the understanding that there are now “three generations of Asian women living in Britain” (Wilson, *Dreams* 129). While a considerable body of works by Kali writers has foregrounded the diverse experiences of South Asian women in the diaspora and privileged a South Asian setting, often projecting unsettling images of diasporic South Asian culture onto the stage, more recent works have moved on to explore themes with a broader cross-cultural and transnational appeal, such as the harsh reality behind global trade and the fragile balance between sustainability and economic growth as in the play *Zameen* (2008), or the consequences of the government enforcement of identity cards and the danger of identity theft in the dystopian play *Another Paradise* (2009).

This contribution intends to chart the development of the company since its founding by focusing on three exemplary productions. The selected plays reflect different stages of the company’s history in relation to issues of identity politics, as well as to the representation of social and political concerns on the contemporary British stage.

Song for a Sanctuary (1990)

Kali Theatre was founded in 1990 by actress Rita Wolf and playwright Rukhsana Ahmad, as an ideal complement to the work undertaken in the 1980s by Black and Asian women writers’ collectives, such as the Asian Women Writers’ Collective which had been active since the mid-1980s, striving “to find a voice” (Wilson, *A Voice*). The aim of the Asian Women Writers’ Collective was to challenge the representational void that women of South Asian descent had long faced in Britain, in an attempt to redress their long-standing exclusion from cultural practices, while exploring their particular predicament of being Asian women in Britain. The Collective offered both a supportive environment for women writers and the opportunity to create links with prospective publishers. As Sarah Dadswell has noted, “for the development of Kali, the Asian Women Writers’ Collective provided a forum that was both multilingual and politicised and introduced [the company] to the workshop principle as a means of developing and supporting the work of others” (132), a principle that inspired Kali in their early stages of activity and has also oriented the company’s subsequent work, since the company continues to offer a variety of support structures for aspiring writers, such as new writing workshops, public rehearsed readings and training outreach schemes.

The company’s debut production entitled *Song for a Sanctuary* (1990), was written by Rukhsana Ahmad and drew on a real life event, the murder of a Punjabi

¹ Kali’s mission is clearly stated on the company’s website: “We seek out strong individual Asian women writers who challenge our perceptions through original and thought provoking theatre. We focus on content and ideas as much as on style, aiming to present memorable theatre events based on challenging and innovative ideas (...) Kali aims to present the distinct perspective and experience of Asian women to people from all backgrounds and to celebrate that richness and diversity”. (www.kalitheatre.co.uk/index).

woman in a women's refuge in South London, where she was tracked down by her violent husband. However, as Ahmad has pointed out, the play "was not a documentary but *an artistic response* to the horrific murder" (in Hingorani 121) and drew also on the writer's own research on women's refuges and her direct of running writing workshops with groups of residents in a refuge (Dadswell 132).

The play dramatizes the plight of Rajinder, the woman fleeing her abusive husband, and reveals tensions among the women living in the refuge, by inserting them in a dramatic framework drawing on the didactic/argumentative tradition of political theatre inspired by Brecht, a modality that has been often deployed by feminist women's theatre in Britain and that has also informed later plays produced by Kali. *Song for a Sanctuary* follows Rajinder's short-lived stay in the refuge with her two children and intersects her story with those of other characters, either residents seeking sanctuary or caseworkers. Ahmad sharply differentiates the main four female characters by generation, class, education and cultural background, stressing the fact that, as the social worker Eileen says, "the situation is the same but women are so different" (Ahmad 166): Eileen has herself a past history of domestic violence, whereas Sonia, one of the other residents, is constantly torn between her determination to escape from her abusive partner and the repeated attempts to return to him, in the hope he might change. Yet, all characters share the same transitional space of the refuge that stands for a fragile and precarious dwelling, eventually failing to provide Rajinder with security or shelter. Ahmad offers a sensitive depiction of Rajinder, whose tragic story is the focus of the play and is revealed through a series of flashbacks, shedding light on her life as a wife victim of domestic violence. Ahmad also hints at the woman's fragile position within her Asian community, following her decision to leave her husband. In a tense exchange with her sister Amrit, Rajinder is faced with the difficult choice of preserving the family honour (*izzat*) or publicly expose her husband's violent behaviour:

RAJINDER: Don't you care for me at all? I've adored you Amrit, ever since I was tiny. Why do you hate me so?

AMRIT: You'll be sorry. I'm warning you. Your selfishness will ruin your daughters ... They'll learn all the self-indulgent, sick ways of the West ... You'll regret this.

RAJINDER: Would you rather I set myself alight in my back garden?

AMRIT: Honour is always preferable to disgrace, but the choice of course is yours. (Ahmad 221)

The play ultimately dramatizes the fraught quest for an "alternative home or makeshift shelter" that Susheila Nasta (84) has considered to be a defining feature in the works of South Asian women writers in the 1980s and 1990s.

Song for a Sanctuary was redolent of the spirit of the politically conscious 1980s, and representative of the early stages of Kali's activity; it was instrumental in advancing the debate on the politics of representation of minorities, by raising issues of cultural allegiance and dealing with domestic violence as a political issue that is of concern to women of all backgrounds. As Christiane Schlote has argued: "*Song for a Sanctuary* is marked by overlapping discourses [...] through which Ahmad disrupts familiar and often problematic representations of domestic violence" (71). The play contributed to enlarging the representational scope of minorities in the early 1990s and went counter to the reassuring narratives that tended to offer fundamentally positive,

right on depictions of minorities— what Hanif Kureishi had once defined as “cheering fictions” (in Hall 449) —in favour of more complex and multidimensional narratives.

Chaos (2005)

The challenge to homogenizing and easily stereotyped images of minorities that informed Ahmad’s inaugural play for Kali, has been at the centre of Kali later works, with which the company has confronted other contentious political issues, such as the positioning of British Muslims in post 9/11 and post 7/7 Britain.

The play *Chaos*, written by British Muslim writer Azma Dar, was presented as part of a double bill along with *Bells*, an uncomfortable exploration of the seedy reality of *mujira* clubs in the UK written by playwright Yasmin Whittaker Khan, and looks at the dilemmas Muslims in Britain have had to face as a result of 9/11 and the subsequent “war on terror”. The play tends to reflect the tensions arising in the aftermath of 9/11, drawing particular attention to conflicting perceptions of British Asian Muslims. By raising questions of cultural allegiance and pointing to the fragmentation of identity politics in the post-millennium, *Chaos* engages in the “apparently ‘new’ and all consuming ‘grammar’” of the war on terror while “keeping making art in the face of terror itself” (Nasta, Boehmer 1). It also poignantly registers the shift that has taken place in the millenniums whereby migrant diasporic community are more commonly viewed in religious rather than in ethnic terms. In this respect Anne Marie Fortier has noticed a “taxonomic shift in Britain, from ‘ethnic minorities’ in the 1970s to ‘minority faith communities’ today”, casting “beliefs, morals and values [as] the primary site for the marking of absolute difference” (5-6), a shift which is aptly reflected in *Chaos*. The response to the ways Muslims are perceived in Britain in the post-millennium has been central to several works across genres and media, and British Asian theatre has also taken up the challenge to produce a body of works with a British Muslim focus, of which *Chaos* is part², works which arguably come across as an attempt on the part of British Muslim writers to respond to “[a] string of justified and unjustified questions about the nature of the British Muslim community”, as journalist Ziauddin Sardar has pointed out:

Our Britishness has been doubted since the dark clouds gathered on 11 September 2001 and spread devastation in the dark intestines of London on 7 July 2005. The urgency of the question of identity posed to British Asians, and especially British Muslims has intensified in the aftermath.(372)

As Dar states, the play explores “wider social and political concerns through the conflicts and dilemmas of the Rizvi family” (3). *Chaos* exposes the fissures within an Asian Muslim household in London, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and invites the audience to witness the family drama as it literally unfolds in the family front room, which constitutes the main setting of the play. Mr Rizvi and his wife Safia have set a wall of incomprehension between them, and both their sons grapple with issues of

²Among other plays by British Asian women writers dealing with post-9/11 British Muslim identities are *Too close to home* (2006) by Rani Moorthy for her Manchester-based company Rasa Theatre and Alia Bano’s *Shades* (2009), staged at the Royal Court Theatre in London. The 2009 production of *The Black Album*, an adaptation of Kureishi’s novel of the same title, directed by Jatinder Verma of Tara Arts at the National Theatre, was also part of this post 9/11 and post 7/7 exploration of British Muslim identities on stage.

identity and belonging. As Dominic Cavendish has noted, “Dar shows [...] the fissures within families– the usual generational and marital antagonisms, together with less common tussles between faith and belonging” (online 2005).

As the play opens, we discover that Mr Rizvi has political ambition and hopes to become MP for his local constituency of Wembley. Rizvi longs for assimilation and embodies a modern, politically conscious version of a mimic man, signalled at the opening of the play when he is preparing to host a reception in his house for his prospective voters, to whom he offers halal sausage rolls as a positive symbol of integration and cultural mix:

MR. RIZVI: [...] halal sausages. Think of it! It shows how far we’ve progressed [...] These are a symbol of my whole outlook–the union and mutual understanding of cultures. (Dar 26)

Rizvi holds on to the “cheering fiction” and dreams of a happy multicultural London, a better Wembley, “a multicultural rainbow where all the colours blend, harmonize and complement each other” (Dar 29), while his wife Safia has withdrawn from society and relinquished her active role within the household family. As a devout Muslim, her life is regulated by daily prayers and strict religious principles. Their son Babar’s skeptical reaction to his father’s rather naive political plans, introduces the generational gap that is elaborated on throughout the play:

BABAR: “He [Rizvi] is a brown face...and his ‘supporters’ know it. He’s as gullible as a baby. I don’t like seeing my father being taken for a fool”. (Dar 32)

The first outbreak of chaos in the Rizvi household comes with the revelation that Saleem, the couple’s eldest son has somehow tested to the limit the multicultural dream of his father by being in a relationship with a white Christian woman and fathering her child, who is aptly called Aaron Thomas Jameel. This triggers opposing responses in his parents; for Safia, Saleem is unclean and lives in sin, while Rizvi has a more secular and practical approach, but is worried this incident may alienate him from the British Muslim community and hopes to hide the news from his community until after the Election.

Chaos erupts more violently and with more dramatic consequences when Babar, the youngest son announces his decision to go and join the fight in Afghanistan. Babar vents his anger at his father, exposing his political ambitions and unwavering support for the Labour party. In Babar’s view, his father, by subscribing to British foreign policy and continuing to nurture “the cool Britannia” dream, has failed to perceive Britain’s ill-treatment of British Muslims and of Muslims in the world:

BABAR: I’m not going on holiday. I’m going to join the fight.

Mr RIZVI: What fight?

BABAR: The one organized by your new friends in Westminster. The one that’s turning our brothers and sisters into orphans and widows and corpses.

Mr RIZVI: You can’t be serious. How much slaughter are you going to stop?

BABAR: It’s our duty to help our brothers. Isn’t it, Mum? (Dar 54-5)

The play strongly relies on the generational conflict and insists on the mounting tension between father and son, a recurring motif in British Asian writing. It takes quite

a complex turn and also interestingly gives voice to the parents' different reactions to their son's choice, balancing the ordinary and the extraordinary within the confine of a family drama. As Dar States in the preface to the playscript, *Chaos* is ultimately about "the dangers of obsession and extremism of any kind, the need for tolerance and understanding" (1).

By confronting the complex questions surrounding British Asian Muslim identity in the post millennium and investigating the intricate web of cultural allegiance, religion, local and global connections, *Chaos* continues in the pursuit shared by Kali writers to reflect in the space of the theatrical event "the fractured world—the overlapping world—that is modern England", as Jatinder Verma, artistic director of the British Asian company Tara Arts, has suggested (*Sorry* 98). *Chaos* exploits the conventions of Western realism along with distinct forms of South Asian British popular culture like sit-com style humour, to critically stage the current singular position of British Muslims—that in the words of Sardar—is that of "conditional Britons" (265).

Another Paradise (2009)

The political strand of *Song for a Sanctuary* and *Chaos* are resumed in Kali's *Another Paradise*, written by playwright Sayan Kent and first performed at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2008. The play testifies to Kali's continuing commitment to debating political concerns on the contemporary English stage, as it was written in response to the identity card debate in Britain and reads as an exploration of issues of identity, belonging and citizenship which have always been central to the work of Kali writers. As Sayan Kent states in the introduction to the play, her work was meant to expose the sinister idealism that lay behind the government's plan to collect the whole population's biometric identities onto a national computer database (2). Kent aimed to specifically address questions such as "ethically what does it mean to have all our personal information at the fingertips of a civil servant? "What would happen to those people who didn't qualify for full citizenship but still reside here?" (2).

The play takes issues with the way the world has become increasingly technocratic and explores the impact on individuals of the excessive reliance on technology on the part of government and institutions. In a humorous and surreal way, it raises questions of freedom and individual agency in a futuristic world; by taking as its starting point the enforcements on citizens of biometric ID cards, *Another Paradise* dramatizes in a satirical but nonetheless serious way the characters' struggle with their variously manipulated, mistaken, lost or stolen identities.

Set in the Midlands town of Leamington Spa, the play features five characters all grappling with identity confusion, as a result of malfunctioning of the computers generating and managing their digital identities. The loss of identity causes the withdrawal of citizen status, followed by the subjects' immediate relocation as non-citizens to the nearby city of Coventry.

Sayan's futuristic version of "being sent to Coventry" envisions the uncomfortable reality of the precarious lives of those who are denied citizenship status, as Coventry takes on the sinister features of an internment camp; a town purposely requisitioned by the authorities and turned into a "haven for aliens", where "the many people living in the country who didn't fulfil the exacting requirements of citizenship" could be "dumped" (Kent 58).

Those who are forced to dwell in camps that are stripped of the connotations of home, security and belonging, feel that their inner, emotional world along with their past is totally obscured by the factual information contained on their digital cards. As Abigail, one of the characters in the play laments,

ABI: I'm not going anywhere without my past. Scarred as it is. My...school...my...aunt Jasmine in Broadstairs. My parking offences for God's sake. (*Desperate*) It's all I've got. (Dar 53)

Identities can be lost and automatically re-assigned and characters find it difficult to adjust to their new selves, but still they have no power to refuse them. In the case of Enoch, for instance, a thirty-year old accountant, it is impossible to object to his new identity as 40-year old Abigail, despite the obvious gender difference:

LISA: Look, this is a good ID. You'll love it. Once you get used to it. Now gohome.... There's your new address. Bank details. Potted history, employment record. National insurance number. Date of birth. All sorts of interesting things.

ENOCH: I can't just walk into another life.

LISA: This is you now.

ENOCH: Look at it. No one will believe me.

LISA: Of course they'll believe you.

ENOCH: But I've stolen somebody.

LISA: You can't do anything about it now (Kent 60).

Kent moves the paradox of identity to an even bleaker dimension, as we discover that people could even be assigned the biometric identity of an object:

FISHER: That can of baked beans

"Nobody knows how many women are being sold on supermarket shelves.

You could go and buy yourself a wife then have her on toast. (Kent 78)

As Btihaj Ajana has noted, "the play's most sinister messages have to do with the fine and fragile line that distinguishes between citizens and non-citizens", a concern that has become very pressing in times of global transnational movements, when "there is always the looming danger of turning exception into the norm, rendering every citizen as a potential non-citizen; every identity as a suspect identity, and making the space of exception, such as that of Coventry, the fundamental paradigm of the city itself" (Ajana 324).

In *Another Paradise* the debate on identity is inserted in a context that moves easily between questions of national identity, the impact of transnational movements and the right to citizenship and critically reflects the western governments' current anxieties about global migrancy and the ensuing stricter immigration laws that have led to the creation of abject others, as the following quote suggests:

PAINE: A legal citizen can be heard without shouting. But this country randomly selects and spits out certain individuals denying them their legal status. It's totally absurd. Every human being is entitled to the same rights. (Kent 85)

By way of conclusion, the work of Kali Theatre has extended over a period of more than twenty years, showcasing a wide array of plays and productions, of which the three works I have examined are representative. It could be argued that the company has played a key role in both shaping South Asian diasporic culture in Britain and nurturing the writing talents of women of South Asian lineage. By producing theatre works

engaging with crucial issues relevant to British Asian culture, but having nonetheless a broader cross cultural appeal, Kali writers have significantly contributed to the continued objective of minority writers to “achieve presence”, as argued by Jatinder Verma (1994, 2) and succeeded in articulating a distinct British Asian female voice in the current theatrical landscape of Britain.

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**The Political Turn of the Novel:
The Modernist Novel in the Post-War Era and Joseph Conrad's *Nostramo***

Taner Can

Abstract: In the aftermath of the Great War, the experimental ferment of modernism that dominated the first two decades of the twentieth century gradually faded, leaving its place to more conventional narratives with socio-political themes. The devastation and dislocation caused by the war led modernist writers to leave aside their aesthetic concerns and reconsider the role of the novel as an instrument of socio-political criticism. Joseph Conrad's literary career is an example of the transformation that the novelists were undergoing in the post-war era. In what is often referred to as "political phase" in his career, Conrad wrote three novels with overtly political themes, namely *Nostramo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907) and *Under the Western Eyes* (1911). This article aims at analysing *Nostramo* as a pertinent example of Conrad's artistic vision that foresaw the course of development the modernist novel would follow in the post-war period.

Keywords: Modernism, Capitalism, The Great War, Joseph Conrad, *Nostramo*.

Introduction

The social devastation and dislocation caused by the First World War led to a radical shift in the artistic sensibilities of the modernist writers. To respond to the cataclysmic effects of the war, they adopted more conventional writing methods with the contention that the novel should be accessible to political value. (Kershner 36-8, Stevenson 204-8, Bradbury 143-6). As a result, the modernist novel gained a new facade in the chaotic post-war period. Modernism no longer meant an aesthetic autonomy that severed its ties from history altogether, but an artistic endeavour to portray and highlight the socio-political problems inherent in modern societies. In attempt to explain the redirection in modernism's creative energies and preoccupations in the post-war years, Malcolm Bradbury notes,

[i]f the serious writers of the Twenties had generally seen themselves as vanguard, advancing, individualistically, aesthetically, apolitically, under the banner of experimental arts, those of the Thirties often saw themselves as inert agents driven by "inevitable", "necessary" forces beyond their individuality, recurring collective homage... In the Twenties History was a fool that knew nothing, a nightmare from which the artist was trying to wake. In the Thirties the writer was, it seemed, inescapably inside the nightmare [...] From this chaos, politics seemed, for a time, to offer an escape. In a recurrent Thirties enterprise writers "took sides", fighting each other, and the bourgeois class from which they generally came. The aesthetic revolt of the Twenties turned into the class wars and ideological confrontations of a new decade. (210)

Similarly, Randal Stevenson contends that behind this general movement from the experimental writing techniques, there was the social and political turmoil of the post-

war period that affected the ways the writers dealt with the social reality. The domestic and international crises of the decade, namely the rise of Hitler in Germany, Mussolini's rule in Italy, the Spanish Civil War and the economic depression of 1929 "discouraged 1930s novelists from continuing to write about the kind of 'aesthetic emotions,' profound relations or subjective states" and led them to espouse the realist style of the previous century to deal with the socio-political problems of the time" (Stevenson 206-7).

The experimental ferment of modernism that dominated the first two decades of the twentieth century did not, however, disappear instantaneously. It was rather a gradual process. While some writers like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce still had great experimental works to come, namely *The Waves* (1931) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939), others started to reassess their relation with the social reality. Stevenson points to Christopher Isherwood's literary career as an example of the transformation that the novelists were undergoing in the post-war period. Isherwood, Stevenson notes, embarked on his literary career, writing highly experimental novels under the influence of Woolf and Joyce; however, later in his career, he turned to a more conventional style, and the experimental writing techniques became "occasional and fragmentary" in his novels (204-5). Stevenson maintains that many of the major modernist novelists followed the same career path as Isherwood in the post-war years,

in general the 1930s are considered a period of decline or redirection of modernism's innovative energies. Many of the generation of novelists [...], emerging in the late 1920s, followed the same pattern of development as Isherwood, or more or less began from the conclusion—in favour of realist rather than modernist methods—which he eventually reached. (206)

A similar transition can also be observed in Conrad's career. His early works, *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897), *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and *Lord Jim* (1900), are all marked with structural complexities as a result of his Impressionistic style. Although these novels certainly have some political undertones, it was with the publication of *Nostromo* (1904) that Conrad started to deal with socio-political issues openly and critically. "Conrad", as Douglas Hewitt notes, "is often described as having a 'political' phase in his career [...]. Three novels written within a few years of one another stand out as overtly political in theme and they are generally judged to be among his best—*Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907) and *Under the Western Eyes* (1911)" (29).

Conrad centred each of these novels on overt political themes: *The Secret Agent* tells the story of a plot to bomb Greenwich Observatory; *Under Western Eyes* focuses on spies and revolutionaries in Russia and Switzerland, and *Nostromo: A Tale of Seaboard* is about imperialism and its destructive impacts upon a fictitious South American republic called Costaguana. In these novels, Conrad turned away from the sea to cities in order to concentrate on historical and political themes that had been held secondary to formal preoccupations in his early novels. Of the three political novels, *Nostromo* is generally acknowledged by the critics to be Conrad's greatest achievement. It is particularly acclaimed for its political awareness. For instance, Douglas Hewitt, who surveys the novels written from the 1890s to the 1940s in English literature, contends,

Nostromo is the finest political novel of this period of English literature [...]. The social and political changes of the nineteenth century stimulated a

number of our greatest novelists to explore the effects of them upon the fictional characters. The half-century from 1890 saw changes in technology, patterns of work, power and class relationships which would seem to provide a rich field for the novelist. Yet there in this period no large-scale treatment of English society which in any way approaches the sense of an understanding of the modern world which is given by this presentation of quasi-imperial relationships in South America by a man for whom English was his third language. (86)

Similarly, Benita Parry, writing on the political significance of Conrad's works, maintains that when Conrad embarked on his literary career, English literature was mainly dominated by best-selling colonial romances. Conrad with his political novels gave the English novel a new burst of life. Parry notes, "[i]n a situation where imperialism had been naturalised by fiction, Conrad's writings, which refused legitimacy to the imperialist vocation, entered literature as protest against the canonical account of its intent and destination" (128). Building on the arguments put forward by Hewitt and Parry that bring Conrad's pivotal role in the history of the English novel to the fore, this article aims at analysing *Nostromo* as a pertinent example of Conrad's artistic vision that foresaw the course of development the modernist novel would follow in the post-war period.

Joseph Conrad: A Modernist at War with Modernisation

Written in 1905, just one year after the publication of *Nostromo*, Conrad's two essays, namely "Autocracy of War" and "Henry James", provide the necessary background against which the novel should be read. These two essays provide initial insights about Conrad's attitude towards the socio-political issues of the twentieth century, and his conviction about the novel's role as a register of social reality. "Autocracy of War" with its prophetic vision is indicative of Conrad's political foresight that enabled him to see the disastrous consequences of material progress at the beginning of the twentieth century. Conrad points out that "[i]ndustrialism and commercialism—wearing high-sounding names in many languages [...] stand ready, almost eager, to appeal to the sword as soon as the globe of the earth has shrunk beneath our growing numbers by another ell or so" ("Autocracy"). In the same essay, he also points to Germany, in this fatal race for material progress, as a country devoid of idealism and moral basis, and prophetically points to its part in the disastrous war to come. "Germany's attitude", Conrad argues, "proves that no peace for the earth can be found in the expansion of material interests which she seems to have adopted exclusively as her only aim, ideal, and watchword" ("Autocracy").

In "Henry James", Conrad elaborates on the novel's capacity to reflect the contemporary social and political issues. In the passage below, he explicitly puts forward his opinions about the social function of the novel:

Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. But it is more than that; it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms, and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents, and the reading of print and handwriting—on second-hand impression. Thus fiction is nearer truth [...] A historian may be an artist too, and a novelist is a historian, the preserver, the keeper, the expounder, of human experience. ("Henry James")

Read against the backdrop of these two essays, *Nostromo* can be regarded as an outcome of Conrad's political foresight and his artistic imagination. First published as a serial in *T. P.'s Weekly* in 1904, the novel deals with social and political conflicts in an imaginary country called Costaguana, and anticipates many of the themes and issues presented in the modernist novels of the post-war era. In the Author's Note to *Nostromo*, Conrad states that the first hint of the novel came to him "in the shape of a vagrant anecdote completely destitute of valuable details [...] a man stealing a lighter full of silver during a revolution" (xxiii). Conrad claimed to have heard this story while he was in the Gulf of Mexico in 1875 or 1876 and to have found an account of the robbery in Benton Williams' *On Many Seas: The Life and Exploits of a Yankee Sailor* twenty-six or seven years later. At first, Conrad did not think that the story would make a novel in itself since he had "no particular interest in crime *qua* crime" (xxiii). However, he later recognised the creative potentials of this simple story of robbery and started to create his imaginary country, Costaguana, weaving his characters into its political and social fabric. Conrad writes,

[i]t was only when it dawned upon me that the purloiner of the treasure need not necessarily be a confirmed rogue, that he could be even a man of character, an actor and possibly a victim in the *changing* scenes of a revolution, it was only then that I had the first vision of a twilight country which was to become the province of Sulaco, with its high shadowy Sierra and its misty Campo for mute witnesses of events flowing from the passions of men short-sighted in good and evil. (xxiv)

Nostromo is free from the experimental possibilities of Conrad's Impressionistic style that dominated his earlier works. The story is told from the third-person point of view in a straightforward narrative flow. In an attempt to explain the technical aspects of *Nostromo*, Albert Guerard argues that

[i]n the breadth of its canvas and in the nature of its preoccupations, *Nostromo* is much closer than *Lord Jim* to the nineteenth-century realistic novel and to the Edwardian double-decker study of society. There is little danger now of art violating life through over-elaboration, of technique artfully concealing a paucity of material. The danger to *Nostromo* is the opposite: that so much imagined and felt life might finally violate art and understanding, and dismiss technique as irrelevant. (176)

Although the novel is, on the whole, closer to nineteenth-century novels in terms of technique, there are occasional shifts in time and point of view. However, these technical complexities are, as mentioned earlier, subordinated to the overt political themes of the novel. Therefore, the critics generally evaluate these technical qualities as a part of the novel's thematic concerns. Avrom Fleishman, for example, maintains that "[t]he novel marks the fulfilment of Conrad's political imagination; it represents the history of a society as a living organism. Indeed, the complex narrative structure of the novel reflects the sense of history's unfolding process" (85). Similarly, Cedric Watts concludes his critical reading of the novel with the following statement, "what emerges is a political reading of the novel's techniques which indicates a closer and constructive relationship between technique and plot" (145). As critics have repeatedly noted, *Nostromo* is closer to the nineteenth-century realistic novels than to the experimental works of high modernism. In other words, *Nostromo* provides a "readerly" text suitable

for a thematic analysis rather than a technical one. Accordingly, in the remainder of the present study, a thorough analysis of the thematic structure of *Nostromo* shall be presented.

Nostromo as a Critique of Capitalism's Blind Faith in Material Progress

Set in Sulaco, a town in the imaginary South American country of Costaguana, the novel illustrates the destructive impacts of industrialisation on individuals and local communities. The story mainly relates the events that take place after Charles Gould returns to Costaguana with his wife, Emilia, to reinstate the San Tomé silver mine. To safeguard his own interests in the midst of the political instability in the country, Mr. Gould secretly supports a revolution to bring Don Vicente Ribiera to the power. However, the political stability provided by the Ribiera government is short lived. It is overthrown in a rebellion led by the Minister of War, General Montero, and his brother, Pedrito. When the city falls into civil war and anarchy, Charles Gould entrusts a large cargo of silver to Nostromo, known to the public as resourceful and incorruptible figure. Nostromo undertakes this dangerous duty for the sake of public prestige. Accompanied by the editor of the local newspaper, Martin Decoud, he sets sail in a lighter to prevent the silver from falling into the hands of the revolutionists. Their lighter crashes into the steamship of Sotillo, an opportunist who rushes to Sulaco for personal gain. The lighter survives the collision, and Nostromo manages to pilot the damaged lighter with its cargo of silver to Great Isabella, one of the islands in the gulf, but it is believed to have sunk. The two men bury the silver on the island, and Nostromo leaves Decoud there to return Sulaco to help the fight against the revolutionists. When he gets back to the mainland, Nostromo resents the political order that employs him for the most dangerous duties, but never rewards. This realisation makes him steal the silver. Nostromo starts to visit the island covertly for silver. One night while he heads for the buried silver, he is shot dead by old Giorgio Viola, who mistakes him for a common thief. Meanwhile, Sulaco emerges from the civil war as a capitalist country on its own, separated from the Republic of Costaguana. However, this time the city is under the threat of a revolt led by the rising working class, which may bring back the anarchy, bloodshed and misery that she has long suffered.

Although *Nostromo* is named after its protagonist, it presents, in reality, a panoramic portrayal of the political oscillations in the Republic of Costaguana. To prevent the reductive criticism that may label the novel as the moral quest of its protagonist, Conrad states that "*Nostromo* has never been intended for the hero of the Tale of the Seaboard. Silver is the pivot of the moral and material events affecting the lives of everybody in the tale" (in Frederick 155-6). Silver stands as a metaphor for the primary source of political action in the novel. Hostile groups with different political motivations struggle to get hold of the silver mine throughout the narrative. As a result, Costaguana undergoes a series of political upheavals, passing through four specific stages respectively: "exploitation, misrule, revolution and counterrevolution" (Guerard 178). Each of these political changes, together with the personal and public motives behind them, affords Conrad the opportunity to project his ideas concerning the contemporary socio-political events, and make predictions about the future of modern societies.

In view of the overt political themes and issues depicted in the novel, Irving Howe asserts that *Nostromo* reads like "a fictional study of imperialism" that presents "a coherent social world [...] in which all the relevant political tendencies balanced, one against other" (100-1). Indeed, Conrad devoted considerable effort to establishing a

cosmopolite, yet balanced society suitable for the political themes of the novel. In the Author's Note, he writes, "I have tried to set them [characters] down, Aristocracy and People, men and women, Latin and Anglo-Saxon, bandit and politician [...] And after all this is also the story of their conflicts" (xxv). The history of Costaguana is presented through the portrayal of the personal histories of the major characters, representing the conflict between different political groups. Bringing together hostile ideological voices, Conrad turns the city of Sulaco into a crucible of international political conflicts. Thus, an analysis of the histories of the individual characters, and their relation to the San Tomé mine will help reveal the major social and political themes in the novel.

The opening chapter introduces the thematic framework drawn in the Author's Note. In a historical overview, Sulaco is depicted as a peaceful, yet an undeveloped South American city. However, it is prophesied in a traditional folktale that this peaceful atmosphere in the city, free from the problems of the trading world, is to be disturbed by the material greed of foreigners. The story relates that two wandering American sailors go to the Azure peninsula in search of a buried treasure. Although they eventually find it, they never return from their quest, taken captive by the treasure. The tale runs,

the two gringos [foreigners], spectral and alive, are believed to be dwelling to this day amongst the rocks, under the fatal spell of their success. Their souls cannot tear themselves away from their bodies mounting guard over the discovered treasure. They are now rich and hungry and thirsty [...] tenacious gringo ghosts suffering in their starved and parched flesh of defiant heretics, where a Christian would have renounced and been released. (*N* 6)

It should be noted in passing that the folktale serves as a leitmotif in the novel, recalled at different points of the narrative as a reminder of the corrupting nature of material interests. The history of the San Tomé silver mine, the only exploitable wealth in the country, proves the truth behind the folktale. It is related in the novel that the mine has been started and run by the Spanish colonists, and it is a source of prosperity and an attraction for settlement in the colonial period. When its most accessible reefs have been exhausted in the early nineteenth century, the mine is left in neglect to deteriorate for decades by the government simply because they do not have the necessary technology to operate it. The second exploiter of the mine is an English company. The English work the mine with a great profit. However, the native miners, encouraged by the emissaries sent from the capital, revolt against their English employers and kill them. Later, the Minister of Finance bestows the apparently useless mine to Charles Gould's father in exchange for the loans of the successive governments. He is also forced to pay royalty on the estimated yield. Thinking that the San Tomé mine is a curse thrown upon the Gould family, in his letters he exhorts his son, who studies in Europe at the time, not to return to Costaguana, or to claim any part of his inheritance. Indeed, the curse of the mine ruins Charles' father's life. The unfair treatment of the corrupt government and his growing obsession with the mine lead Charles's father first into despair, and then to death.

Despite his father's repeated warnings, Charles Gould studies mining engineering, and returns home to revive the San Tomé mine, utilising the latest technology. At the time Charles sets foot in Costaguana, the country has recently emerged from decades of cruel dictatorship of Guzman Bento, who "ruled the country with the sombre imbecility of political fanaticism" (*N* 94). In the novel Bento

symbolises Costaguana's dreary past. His is a reign of terror and political oppression. He tortures the two respectful Costaguana citizens, Dr. Monygham and Don José Avellanos, and kills Charles' uncle, Harry Gould to show his hatred for foreign investors in the country. Thus, Gould holds Guzman Bento as the representation of everything that he desires to replace. He is determined to lead Costaguana out of war and bloodshed into order, stability and economic progress. Yet, he believes that the virtues of civilisation can only be achieved through material progress. In a rhetorical speech given early in the novel, Gould thus declares,

What is wanted here is law, good faith, order, security. Any one [*sic*] can declaim about these things, but I pin my faith to material interests. Only let the material interests once get a firm footing, and they are bound to impose the conditions on which alone they can continue to exist. That's how your money-making is justified here in the face of lawlessness and disorder. It is justified because the security which it demands must be shared with an oppressed people. A better justice will come afterwards. (N 57-8)

Charles Gould's speech epitomises the ideological rhetoric of capitalism that demands absolute faith in material progress regardless of its eventual consequences. However, Gould, perhaps as result of his seeming idealism, justifies his pursuit of profit with moral and social virtues. In his critical reading of Gould's speech, Brian Spittles argues, "[c]apitalism is presented in the novel as dressing its own interests so that they appear to be those of the common good" (98). Evidently, Charles presents himself as an emissary of light who strives to bring order and progress to a third world country, rather than as an eminent spokesperson of capitalism. *Nostramo* concentrates on this specific period in the history of Costaguana, which begins with Gould's introduction of foreign capital into the country and ends with the emergence Sulaco as an independent state of its own, namely the Occidental Republic, following the civil war. The question whether Charles Gould will be successful in his ambition, or to put in another way, whether material progress can prove to be beneficial for the public good, constitutes the major conflict in the novel.

Charles Gould is aware of the fact that he cannot achieve any of his objectives without a regular capital flow and political stability. Thus, he develops certain political strategies, which the omniscient narrator relates, "he [Gould] was prepared to stoop for his weapons" (N 58). This Machiavellian gambit immediately provides a sharp contrast with Gould's humanitarian ambitions for reviving the mine. To acquire the necessary capital, Gould cooperates with an American backer Holroyd, who is referred to as a "considerable" or "great personage" in the novel (N 52, 53, 55). Holroyd becomes Gould's political mentor. In an imposing speech, he explains to Gould the power the United States of America holds, and the things it is capable of:

The Costaguana Government shall play its hand for all it's worth—and don't you forget it, Mr. Gould. Now, what is Costaguana? It is the bottomless pit of 10 per cent loans and other fool investments. European capital has been flung into it with both hands for years. Not ours, though. We in this country know just about enough to keep indoors when it rains. We can sit and watch. Of course, some day we shall step in. We are bound to. But there's no hurry. Time itself has got to wait on the greatest country in the whole of God's Universe. We shall be giving the word for everything: industry, trade, law, journalism, art, politics, and religion, from Cape Horn clear over to Smith's

Sound, and beyond, too, if anything worth taking hold of turns up at the North Pole. And then we shall have the leisure to take in hand the outlying islands and continents of the earth. We shall run the world's business whether the world likes it or not. The world can't help it—and neither can we, I guess. (*N* 53)

It is self-evident in this passage that through Holroyd, Conrad anticipates the rise of American capitalism, and the consequential extension of its power and influence in the international arena. According to Eloise Knapp Hay, Conrad based Holroyd on a historical personage as his name suggests “an anagram for Henry Cabot Lodge, the United States senator who zealously supported cultural and economic expansion into Latin America [...] while Conrad was writing the novel” (86). The real significance of Holroyd, however, lies in his functional role to broaden the thematic scope of the novel. As Brian Spittles points out, while “the vast majority of writers were mainly interested in stressing the difference between Britain and the rest of the world, Conrad was interested in exploring the connections and similarities the imperial nations shared”, which made him “the main global perspective in the literature of his time” (111-2). The presence of Holroyd and Gould in the novel gives Conrad the opportunity to illustrate the mutual interests of the two imperialist powers of the world, the USA and Britain, in the third world countries.

The other figure that Gould collaborates with is Sir John, the head of the National Central Railway. While Holroyd is representative of foreign capital and a civilising power, Sir John, as the head of the railway business, stands for industrial and technological progress. Brian Spittles explains the symbolic significance of the railway in the novel as follows, “when Conrad makes the railway the central feature of the development of Costaguana it is not by a casual, or coincidental choice. Railways were the great symbol of scientific, technological and industrial progress in Europe in the nineteenth century” (97). Having thus obtained the necessary capital and technological support from Holroyd and Sir John to operate the mine, Gould precedes the next step of his plans: the establishment of a government that will provide a secure political atmosphere for the development of the mine. To this end, Gould, together with Holroyd, finances the revolution which brings Don Vincente Ribiera into his five-year dictatorship. “The Ribierist party, whose watchwords were honesty, peace, and progress” is, in fact, nothing more than a political extension of the capitalist collaboration (*N* 237). The foreign investors manipulate the president Ribiera for their own political ends. For example, when the aristocratic Spanish families rebel against the railway going over their fertile lands, Sir John resolves to acquire the land for the railroad by impressing the landowners with a Presidential tour:

He [Sir John] imagined to get the President-Dictator over there on a tour of ceremonies and speeches, culminating in a great function at the turning of the first sod by the harbour shore. After all he was their own creature—that Don Vincente. He was the embodied triumph of the best elements in the State. (*N* 27).

In time, Gould's dominance over the country politics and governance grows more powerful. It is reflected in the novel with two epithets appropriated for him and his mine; Gould becomes the King of Sulaco, and the San Tomé mine turns into an *Imperium in Imperio* which means a state within a state. However, this is achieved not

through the moral ideals as promised at the beginning, but through bribery. It is related in the novel that “the Gould Concession was a serious asset in the country’s finance, and, what was more, in the private budgets of many officials as well [...] Every Minister of Interior drew a salary from the San Tomé mine” (N 270). Conrad thus makes it clear from the outset that Charles Gould, Holroyd and Sir John are not humanitarian businessmen as they make themselves known to the public, but typical representatives of sordid material interest, or more precisely capitalism. They are only involved in politics in order to protect and develop their own property, rather than to provide security, progress and prosperity for the common good.

As a part of his critique, Conrad counterpoises the capitalist ambitions of the three investors with the public-spirited benevolence of Charles’ wife, Emilia Gould. In sharp contrast to the three investors’ selfishness, she is depicted as a true altruist. In the long absence of her husband, she devotes her time to the care of the indigent. In the passage below, Conrad juxtaposes Charles Gould’s self-interestedness with Emilia’s altruism:

he [Charles Gould] thinks of nothing apart from his mine; of his ‘Imperium in Imperio.’ As to Mrs. Gould, she thinks of her schools, of her hospitals, of the mothers with the young babies, of every sick old man in the three villages. (N 128)

Moreover, Mrs. Gould believes that the mine stands for as a sinister personification of all that is evil: “the San Tomé mountain hanging over the Campo, over the whole land, feared, hated, wealthy; more soulless than any tyrant, more pitiless and autocratic than the worst Government; ready to crush innumerable lives in the expansion of its greatness” (N 343). Karl Frederick notes that the repeated scenes of the contrasts between Mr. and Mrs. Gould is a part of the thematic structure that serves to voice larger social issues through seemingly personal conflicts. He further argues that Mrs. Gould is the first example of a type of character that would be frequently seen in modernist novels in the following years. Frederick states,

Mrs. Gould is the first in a line of a sensitive and feeling twentieth-century women who are the opposites of their husbands, she foreruns, for example, Mrs. Ramsay (*To The Light House*), Lady Chatterley, Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Moore (*A Passage to India*), Mrs. Wilcox (*Howard’s End*). (158)

Another character that plays a crucial role in providing a counterbalance for the capitalist discourse in the novel is Nostromo. In the Author’s Note, Conrad introduces Nostromo as “the man with the weight of countless generations behind him and no parentage to boast of” (xxv). However, Nostromo is also a worker; he is the leader of the dockworkers. Therefore, the critics generally read into Nostromo’s story an allegorical account of the rise of the working class. For instance, Matthew Waller argues, “Nostromo’s story functions as the allegorical tale of the working class passing through socio-political disillusionment and emerging into the consciousness of itself as Labour in the modern world of the material interests” (“The Allegorical”). Nostromo is adopted by the Violas, the aging owners of the Sulaco Inn. Giorgio Viola is the idealist of the old, humanitarian revolution who fought with Giuseppe Garibaldi to unite Italy. Dwelling on his heroic past, he condemns the kings, priests and the rule of money in his speeches. Giorgio’s role in the novel is apparently to provide a proper contrast to the corrupt investors and politicians in the country who are motivated only by personal

gain. Although Giorgio Viola sets a political model for Nostromo, he does not show any commitment to the ideals represented by Viola. In contrast, he lives for his public reputation among the foreigners. Signora Teresa complains: “[t]hat is all he cares for. To be first somewhere—somehow—to be first with these English. They will be showing him to everybody. ‘This is our Nostromo!’ [...] ‘What a name! What is that? Nostromo? He would take a name that is properly no word from them’” (N 17-8). His real name is Gian Battista Fidanza, but he is happy to be called “Nostromo”, which is an Italian corruption for “our man” *nostro uomo*. As this very name suggests, Nostromo is open to personal exploitation. Throughout the novel, he is employed for many dangerous missions by the foreigners. However, his last mission to escort the silver to safety leads him to question his role in the society. After his lighter crashes into a steamer, Nostromo swims back to the mainland and sleeps all day on the shore. When he wakes up, he has changed and reformed entirely, and despises his past.

Nostromo’s awakening, as Matthew Waller suggests, symbolises the rise of the working class from ignorance to class-consciousness (“Allegorical”). Nostromo immediately comes to the bitter realisation that “what he had heard Giorgio Viola say once was very true. Kings, ministers, aristocrats, the rich in general, kept the people in poverty and subjection; they kept them as they kept dogs, to fight and hunt for their service... and uttered a curse upon the selfishness of all the rich people” (N 279). Nostromo, like the other major characters in the novel, fails to protect himself from the dangers of material interests. He hides the silver in order to collect it later, thinking that “[t]he rich lived on wealth stolen from the people, but he had taken from the rich nothing—nothing that was not lost to them already by their folly and their betrayal” (N 360). Nevertheless, Nostromo’s failure to stay away from the silver does not taint the political group he represents. At the end of the novel, the revolutionary party leader, promoted as “the hater of capitalists”, visits Nostromo at his deathbed and tries to persuade Nostromo to reveal the place of the silver, saying that “[d]o not forget that we want money for our work. The rich must be fought with their own weapons” (N 373). Nostromo does not tell him where the silver is. Avrom *Fleishman* considers Nostromo’s reply to the party leader’s pledge for help as a sign of “his dedication to the revolution [...] [which] does not allow the curse to be passed on to the others” (98). Therefore, revolutionary ideals represented by Nostromo continue to exist in Costaguana, and culminates into a social movement at the end of the novel.

Although Nostromo’s allegorical story sheds light upon some of the political themes in the novel, Conrad analyses the impacts of the rising capitalism on a larger social scale in the novel. This is mainly achieved through a presentation of the changes the city of Sulaco starts to undergo with the revival of the mine and the related industrial activities. In this context, Conrad is particularly critical of the values and comforts of the modern industrial city. It is related in the novel that Sulaco, the remote city of peace and quiet, is now captured by “the material apparatus of perfected civilization which obliterates the individuality of old towns under the stereotyped conveniences of modern life” (N 66). The railways uproot the indigenous communities from their lands, and destroy their tribal life in the name of progress. Local customs, like the traditional Indian feasts, disappear under the shadow of industrialisation. The pastoral view of the city is devastated by cable cars, the modern villas of foreign merchants, and warehouses. Conrad puts his bitter criticism of Sulaco’s modernisation in the foreground with a bleak view of the city;

the sparse row of telegraph poles strode obliquely clear of the town, bearing a single, almost invisible wire far into the great campo—like a slender, vibrating feeler of that progress waiting outside for a moment of peace to enter and twine itself about the weary heart of the land. (N 113)

The very success of the mine also alters the economic activities in the country, creating a working class out of peasantry. However, this seemingly positive transformation entails a painful process of dehumanisation that leaves peasants with no identity except for the uniforms they wear. Albert Guerard points out,

[t]he Concession does bring a position of ‘privileged safety’ to the miners but at the cost of individuality and freedom. They live in the three numbered villages protected by an armory, and armed body of sereños, and under the benevolent absolute authority of Don P  p  . They are safe on their visits to Sulaco, even have relative immunity to arrest, but because they wear a kind of uniform, the colors of the mine. (197)

With his bleak portrayal of the transformation of Sulaco from a peasant village into an industrial centre with a growing worker population, and the representation of the dehumanising effects of industrial activities, Conrad does not only anticipate the major social problems of the twentieth century, but also introduces a recurrent theme in modernist literature; distrust towards industrialism. “Modernist artists”, as Kershner points out, “rejected the basic premises of industrialism—they recognised no progress in civilization and felt that industrial society was stripping men and women of what was most valuable in them” (44).

Apart from the destruction of the traditional way of life and values, the proliferation of the mine destabilises the political atmosphere in the country, generating war and anarchy. The Minister of War, General Montero and his brother Pedrito revolt against the Ribierist regime, dragging the country into a civil war. In the course of war, Conrad juxtaposes the ideals represented by the Monterist and Ribierist factions. The political conflict set at the very beginning of the novel culminates into a bitter resolution. When the Monterist troops enter the city, claiming the mine, Gould charges Don P  p   with blowing up the mine upon his personal command regardless of the cost of life and property. In the remarkable passage below, the omniscient narrator interpolates a crucial political commentary that brings Gould’s progressive discourse to a closure:

After all, with his English parentage and English upbringing, he perceived that he was an adventurer in Costaguana, the descendant of adventurers enlisted in a foreign legion, of men who had sought fortune in a revolutionary war, who had planned revolutions, who had believed in revolutions. For all the uprightness of his character, he had something of an adventurer’s easy morality which takes count of personal risk in the ethical appraising of his action. He was prepared, if need be, to blow up the whole San Tom   mountain sky high out of the territory of the Republic. (N 245)

As the emphasis on his English parentage suggests, Gould sees Costaguana as a land of colonial adventure where he can pursue personal profit without any regard to the fortunes of the local communities.

Ironically, the Monterist revolt that has set out to sweep the foreigners out of Costaguana is also economically motivated. The ultimate aim of the revolt is to take the control of the San Tomé mine, but the Monterist troops first head towards the Customs House to get hold of the silver ingots stored for shipment to Europe. However, the Montero brothers, just like Charles Gould, conceal their real aims from the public. In a political attempt to exploit the nationalist feelings of the Costaguana public, General Montero explains the cause of their revolt as follows:

war should be declared at once against France, England, Germany, and the United States, who by introducing railways, mining enterprises, colonization, and other such shallow pretenses, aimed at robbing the poor people of their lands, and with the help of these Goths and paralytics, the aristocrats would convert them into toiling and miserable slaves. (N 263)

In addition to anti-imperialist ideals, the Monterists also make use of the same political discourse as the Ribierists, promising that their regime, which they define as Caesarism, will bring order, peace and progress to the country:

In that attitude, he [Montero] declared suddenly that the highest expression of democracy was Caesarism: the imperial rule based upon the direct popular vote. Caesarism was conservative. It was strong. It recognized the legitimate needs of democracy which requires orders, titles, and distinctions. They would be showered upon deserving men. Caesarism was peace. It was progressive. It secured the prosperity of a country. (N 272)

Evidently, *Nostramo* leads to a cynical view of politics as all the political groups and actions in the novel are motivated either by greed, as with Guzman Bento and the Montero brothers or by a blind faith in the material interests like the capitalist Gould, Holroyd, and Sir John. Albert Guerard thus argues,

[t]he scepticism concerning historical and political process is less equivocal; it seems, at times, total. There is first of all a total distrust of political discourse, spoken or written. All governments however corrupt seek the “peace”, “progress”, and “security” of Sulaco; all journalism and all propaganda is deceitful. (194)

In the midst of the political uncertainty and anarchy, the civil war ends with the Ribierists’ victory. It is related later in the novel that “in this very harbour, an international naval demonstration, which put an end to the Costaguana-Sulaco War... the United States cruiser, *Powhattan*, was the first to salute the Occidental flag—white, with a wreath of green laurel in the middle encircling a yellow amarilla flower” (N 325). As the civil war ends, a new constitution is announced for an independent Sulaco: the Occidental Republic. The city becomes a centre of attraction for the foreign investors. The special correspondent of *The Times*, nicknames Occidental Republic the “Treasure House of the World” (N 321). Indeed, capitalism initiates an era of prosperity and progress in the province, but only to be destroyed again. Few years after the emancipation of Sulaco, labour problems and political unrest start to appear in the country. The workers have become class-conscious; union organisations and strikes start to emerge. Moreover, some political leaders, like Bishop Carbelon and Antonia Avellenos, voice their unionist plans to annex Sulaco to Costaguana. At the end of the

novel, through the mouthpiece of Dr. Monygham, the cynical survivor of Guzman Bento's brutal tyranny, Conrad articulates the dangers awaiting the country in the future:

There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law, and their justice. But it is founded on expediency, and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, without the continuity and the force that can be found only in a moral principle. Mrs. Gould, the time approaches when all that the Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back. (N 341)

This cynical view of material interests revealed towards the end of the novel also formulates a clear political message for the novel: all the political ideals solely established on the notion of material progress engender constructive results only for a temporary period of time. The picture at the end of the novel shows that nothing has really changed in Costaguana. The country is still in a state of political uncertainty, surrounded by threats of revolutions and anarchy.

Conclusion

As the thematic analysis suggests, in *Nostramo* Conrad presents a prophetic vision of the major social and political developments of the twentieth century. Through the political struggles over the San Tomé silver mine, Conrad shows the real intentions hidden behind the ideals of civilisation, unrestrained industrialisation and material progress. Behind them there is war and death. Despite the pretensions to social and economic advantages, the accumulation of capital corrupts and destroys. As such, some critics agree that Costaguana with its colonial past stands as a metaphor for some Latin American, or third world countries that underwent similar political crisis at a certain point in their history (Guerard 178, Fleishman 93-4). However, it should also be noted that *Nostramo's* international scope makes it possible to view the political themes depicted in the novel from a broader perspective. For instance, John Cooper maintains that "[i]n *Nostramo* Conrad foresaw, at the outset of the century, dead into the heart of the personal and political dilemmas that still vex us. This was his most extended lesson in the shape of the things to come... Perhaps, it has taken us all century to learn how to read this rich text" (126). It can therefore be concluded that *Nostramo*, although written before the Great War, expresses the apocalyptic sense that dominated the post-war period. The wide range of individuals, local communities and political factions interacting in *Nostramo*, offer an illustrative insight into the social and political problems of the post-war period. In particular, the distrust towards material progress, and the sceptical outlook towards the concepts of industrialisation and material progress makes *Nostramo* a prototype for the major modernist novels written in the aftermath of the Great War.

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The Nation and the Supernatural in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

Aslı Değirmenci

Abstract: As a celebrated example of magical realism and postcolonial fiction, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) tells the story of Saleem Sinai and his family, whose lives are irretrievably connected to the political and historical events of the Indian subcontinent, especially during the transition from colonialism to independence. This article examines the relation of the supernatural elements present in the novel to the concept of nation and nationalism. It is suggested that in *Midnight's Children*, the representation of the supernatural provides an arena in which the continual clash of the modern and traditional, progress and "changelessness", secular and religious can be observed. By centering the supernatural around the discourse of nation and nationalism informed by an emerging bourgeois class, Rushdie attempts to secularize magic and thus save it from its connection to a mythical and a supernatural past that fuels sectarianism in India and poses a threat to its becoming a unified modern nation.

Keywords: Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, magical realism, nation, nationalism, modernity.

My view is that the Indian tradition has always been, and still is, a mixed tradition. The idea that there is such a thing as a pure Indian tradition is a kind of fallacy, the nature of Indian culture has always been multiplicity and plurality and mingling.

Salman Rushdie, "*Midnight's Children and Shame*"

Salman Rushdie is not only one of the most prominent postcolonial writers, but also considered to be the most important representative of magical realism outside Latin America. Though Rushdie's first novel *Grimus* (1975) did not get much attention from the literary world, his second novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) was met with enthusiasm and initiated Rushdie's literary career. Since then, Rushdie has proved to be a prolific writer by writing nine more novels including two children's books, as well as three collections of essays, a collection of short stories, and a memoir. Although Rushdie's introduction to global fame as a writer was mostly due to the controversy his fourth novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988) created in the Muslim world (including the infamous *fatwa* by Ayatollah Khomeini that made Rushdie go into hiding), his literary reputation owes much to *Midnight's Children*, which won the Booker Prize in 1981 as well as the special award the Booker of Bookers in 1993 and the Best of Bookers in 2008 (chosen by public vote), making it the only book to win the same award three times and also testifying to the ongoing relevance and reputation of the novel. *Midnight's Children* has also been a favorite among literary scholars since this ambitious and encyclopedic novel provides fertile ground for discussions of history, history-writing, memory, colonialism, post-colonialism, neo-colonialism, nation, migrancy and hybridity—to name a few. The intricacies of Rushdie's narrative style also provide ample material for critics with its playful language, metafictional qualities, non-linear story line, satirical tone, frequent use of metaphors and allegories as well as the use of supernatural and fantastic elements. Over the years, this interest in *Midnight's*

Children has resulted in a plethora of attempts at defining the novel with expressions such as “aggressively postcolonial” (Faris 29), postmodern (Rubinson 13; Hassumani 31), “historiographic metafiction” (Hutcheon 65), “postnational” (Jani 151), “post-realist as much as anti-realist” (Kortenaar 229) and “neocolonial metafiction” (Brennan 85).

Midnight’s Children tells the story of Saleem Sinai and his family, whose lives are irretrievably connected to the political and historical events of the Indian subcontinent. The historical scope of *Midnight’s Children* covers a time period between 1915 and 1978, starting with Saleem’s grandfather Aadam Aziz’s story in Kashmir and ending with the story of another Aadam–Saleem’s son–uttering his first words in Bombay in 1978. The geographical scope of the novel extends to the whole Indian subcontinent, describing events not only happening in India after independence but also covering pivotal moments in the history of Pakistan and Bangladesh as Saleem’s life story takes us to those places. At the very beginning of his narrative, the narrator and protagonist Saleem Sinai asserts that he is “mysteriously handcuffed to history” due to the fact that he was born at midnight on August 15, 1947, the exact moment India gained its independence from England (3). Throughout the novel, family history and important historical events coincide, leading Saleem to think that his story and India’s history are connected to each other and to assume responsibility for most of what is happening in India.

Midnight’s Children is also considered to be the most famous example of magical realism outside Latin America, usually cited together with Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, particularly when scholars try to emphasize the global nature of magical realism. Magical realism is often defined by scholars as a mode in which reality and supernatural elements come together¹ and the supernatural is considered ordinary. Fredric Jameson and Brenda Cooper add to these definitions by drawing attention to the fact that magical realism is often suited to the representation of communities in transition, particularly those that go through a radical transformation that is typically informed by the uneven development produced by the simultaneous existence of various economic modes of production (Cooper 15, Jameson 15). The transition Rushdie registers in *Midnight’s Children* is the story of the transformation of Indian people from subjects under colonial rule to citizens of a newly independent nation with modern ideals. In *Midnight’s Children*, the focus is not particularly on what happens to the subaltern, the peasantry or the working class multitudes of India. It is rather a representation of the transformation that takes place in the ruling classes as we see colonial rulers replaced by the indigenous ones. However, this representation is far from being an endorsement of these classes. As Tariq Ali notes in his review of the novel,

[w]hat is beyond doubt is that Rushdie’s novel is centrally an attack on clearly identifiable targets: the indigenous ruling classes in South Asia. His book is not simply a pleasing mosaic of everyday life in the South Asian subcontinent. It is a devastating political indictment of those who rule these countries and, by implication, of those who placed them in their present positions of power and privilege. (87)

¹Angel Flores defines magical realism as “the amalgamation of realism and fantasy” (112), and Zamora and Faris state, “magical realism often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction” (5-6).

This article examines the ramifications of this focus on the bourgeoisie, and explains how this focus—combined with an emphasis on the nation and (secular bourgeois) nationalism of Saleem— shapes the main supernatural phenomenon of the novel. I argue that by bringing the nation—an imaginary concept both for Rushdie and his narrator—to the foreground as the source of the supernatural, and by disregarding the local and religious context of Indian culture in the content of the magical elements, Rushdie negates the idea that the supernatural exists in an unproblematic way and can be represented as such. I argue that this is mainly because the main supernatural phenomenon of the novel (also the titular one) is not culturally or religiously informed: the existence of one thousand and one children of midnight (including our own Saleem) who, having been born within the first hour of India's independence from England, are endowed with supernatural capabilities. I argue that by positing such a strong connection between the nation and the midnight's children (in addition to Saleem's special bond with India), Rushdie attempts to secularize the magical and the supernatural and save it from the hold of an atavistic longing that fuels sectarianism in India and poses a threat to its becoming a unified modern nation. However, as we shall see, neither the nation nor the children can fulfill their potential, which leaves us at the end with no magic left in the children and an oppressive government ruling India.

The emphasis on India and its existence as a nation is first of all conveyed through Saleem as an allegory of the country. The novel treats the plurality of India quite playfully and does not refrain from exaggerating this plurality. Rushdie showcases this first with Saleem, an obvious allegory of India with their synchronous births and their respective histories mutually affected by each other. However, this connection is not limited to Saleem's moment of birth. Saleem is biologically the son of Englishman William Methwold and Vanita, who has been cheating on her husband, the street performer Wee Willie Winkie. When the nurse Mary decides to perform a revolutionary act for her socialist boyfriend and swaps two babies born at the same time (making the rich boy poor and the poor one rich), Saleem ends up being raised within the household of the Muslim Sinai family leading a life of privilege while Shiva, the true son of the Sinais, is raised by Winkie in extreme poverty. The nurse Mary, a devout Catholic, regrets her action soon enough and becomes little Saleem's ayah. So Saleem, born of an Englishman and a Hindu mother, is raised in a Muslim family by a Catholic ayah. Abdulrazak Gurnah suggests that in this way Saleem becomes "also a metaphor for polyglot and multi-faith Bombay, itself an example to India" (101). Yet, Rushdie's use of Saleem as an allegory of India as the conglomeration of religions is not limited to the religious affiliations of his biological and surrogate parents. Saleem also occupies a Messianic role, a prophetic figure himself through many allusions to the important religious figures throughout the novel. The first one we encounter is Saleem's physical resemblance to Ganesh, the elephant-headed Hindu deity, with his nose as "elephantine as the trunk of Ganesh" (176). Rushdie also covers Islam and Christianity, giving Saleem a prophetic role through the names of his "two-headed mothers" Amina and Mary, who are the namesakes of the mothers of the prophet Muhammad and Jesus Christ. Finally, Saleem gets the name "the Buddha" when he joins the Pakistani army in his amnesiac state and prefers sitting alone under a tree rather than socializing with other soldiers. Thus, an overflow of symbolism and metaphors defines the representation of religion in the novel, turning Saleem into a meeting point of all of the major religions in India, making his allegorical position stronger, in fact so strong that it

is more “mock-allegorical”² than allegorical. Ironically, despite all this religious influence in his life, Saleem turns out to be a non-believer, or rather he becomes a believer in the new nation, which is conceived as a secular and modern state.

As I have stated above, *Midnight's Children* is almost always considered to be a prime example of magical realism. However, Rushdie most of the time reduces the credibility of the supernatural elements in the novel although most magical realist texts usually render unlikely happenings as ordinary and mundane, and therefore quite believable. In the novel, there are two factors that affect the credibility of the “midnight’s children”, the main supernatural phenomenon of the novel. The first one of these is the centrality of the nation’s emergence to the existence of the midnight’s children and their supernatural qualities as well as the representation of the idea of nation as an imaginary concept. The other factor, closely linked to the role of nation, is the lack of a cultural/religious context in representing the actual “magic” found in the children. Brenda Cooper suggests that “local context is of central importance in magic realist writing” (37) while Rushdie himself acknowledges the role of religion and religious belief in a non-rational perception of the world.³ Nonetheless, he chooses to center his depiction of these magical children in a framework that emphasizes the fictive quality of nation and alludes more to Western literary traditions than to the local folklore or profuse religious mythologies of India. The midnight’s children are introduced to the audience almost halfway through the novel. Although Saleem explains the details related to time of his birth at the beginning of the novel, we do not get to learn about the miraculous nature of his birth and the existence of other magical children until after a few hundred pages:

Midnight’s children!...From Kerala, a boy who had the ability of stepping into mirrors and re-emerging through any reflective surface in the land—through lakes and (with greater difficulty) the polished metal bodies of automobiles... and a Goanese girl with the gift of multiplying fish... and children with powers of transformation: a werewolf from the Nilgiri Hills, and from the great watershed of the Vindhyas, a boy who could increase or reduce his size at will, and had already (mischievously) been the cause of wild panic and

² Nicole Thiara and Keith Booker make the point that Rushdie’s use of allegory parodies national allegories. (Thiara 33; Booker 292) while Rushdie himself supports this point by his comment: “I didn’t want to write a book which could be conventionally translated as allegory, because it seems to me that in India allegory is a kind of disease” (“*Midnight's Children and Shame*” 3).

³ In an interview with Gunter Grass in 1983, Rushdie explains how realism seemed insufficient as literary style when he was writing *Midnight's Children*:

it struck me that here I am trying to describe everyday reality as it’s experienced by people who are not Western people and who, to give only the most obvious example, are by and large very religious. I mean, these are people who actually believe in God, not in a kind of theoretical symbolized way, but in the actual everyday interpenetration of the divine in the ordinary and the mundane. So it seemed to me that realism, the techniques, the conventions of realism, were completely inappropriate to describe reality perceived in that way. Because this is a very rationalistic kind of writing, and so, in a way, the form and the language would become like a judgement about the people you were talking about. And so it seemed to me that you have to find a different way in order to allow that reality to have stature, to exist in a way in which it’s not prejudged. So, it seemed that, in a way, realism was not realistic. (“Writing for a Future,” 57-8)

rumours of the return of Giants... from Kashmir, there was a blue-eyed child of whose original sex I was never certain, since by immersing herself in water he (or she) could alter it as she (or he) pleased(...)There was a boy who could eat metal and a girl whose fingers were so green that she could grow prize aubergines in the Thar desert; and more and more and more. (227)

The depiction of the children in this manner, one after the other quite serially, helps emphasize their plurality, drawing attention to this group of children as a community. Furthermore, the way Saleem introduces the children, without telling us their names but including their geographical location indicates their claim to represent all of India, east and west, mountain and lake alike. Saleem explains that midnight's children were "through some freak of biology, or perhaps owing to *some preternatural power of the moment*, or just conceivably by sheer coincidence, endowed with features, talents or faculties which can only be described as miraculous" (224)(emphasis mine). The fact that the moment of India's independence has given the children their powers is undermined here by being only one of the possible reasons Saleem lists to explain this "miraculous" event. However, with the information we gain later in the novel, the connection between the midnight's children and the independence of India gets stronger. As the novel proceeds, we learn that Saleem's telepathic power is limited to the borders of India. When he leaves for Pakistan with his family, he realizes that he has lost his ability to read minds. So, it becomes clear that the supernatural abilities of midnight's children are not only induced by the emergence of India as a nation, but also limited to its borders.

The metaphorical meaning of the children is not limited to the fact that they are the first-borns of their new nation. Later, Saleem finds out that he can perform like "a sort of radio" (189) turning his mind into a venue where all midnight's children can convene and discuss their future as members of the Midnight's Children Conference (the MCC), which the ten-year-old Saleem envisions as a "loose federation of equals, all points of view given free expression" (252). Nicole Thiara points out the similarities between the Indian National Congress (the dominant political party of the post-independence India) and the MCC noting they are both "nation-wide organisations and have a representative function with regard to the nation" (32). In his first discussion with his "alter ego" Shiva, Saleem voices the obvious questions about the children: "The thing is, we must be here for a purpose, don't you think? I mean, there has to be a reason, you must agree?" (252). Yet, Saleem's efforts to try and reason with Shiva prove to be futile as Shiva views the conference as a gang which he and Saleem (as the most senior members of the MCC) should rule as "joint bosses" (252). For the subaltern Shiva, who without a parent at the age of ten has been running a gang for two years, fighting for survival is the only way he knows how to live. So Saleem's idealism and democratic leanings are of no concern to Shiva:

'Rich kid,' Shiva yelled, 'you don't know one damn thing! What purpose, man? What thing in the whole sister-sleeping world got reason, yara? For what reason you're rich and I'm poor? Where's the reason in starving, man? God knows how many millions of damn fools living in this country, man, and you think there's a purpose! Man, I'll tell you—you got to get what you can, do what you can with it, and then you got to die. That's reason, rich boy. Everything else is only mother-sleeping wind!' (252)

As Nicole Thiara suggests, “Shiva represents the less palatable side of the subalterns which frustrates bourgeois benevolence...He speaks from a position which is hard to contradict from Saleem’s middle-class location” (35). As this first opposition from Shiva continues to grow and the other children grow up and fall prey to the prejudices of their parents, the midnight’s children are affected by racial, religious and class prejudices. As Pranav Jani suggests, “the real world stamps out all magic” in the MCC (153). When the opposition becomes too strong, Saleem slowly disbands the MCC quitting his habit of meeting with his fellow members each night. Thus, Saleem’s plans for finding a new way, becoming “the third principle” to “the endless duality of masses-and-classes, capital-and-labour” and thus fulfilling “the promise of [their] birth” prove to be futile (292).

The connection between the nation and the magical powers of the children is further reinforced later in the novel when the nation or the forces operating for it (at this point nation turns into the “state”) become the reason why the children lose their powers. By the time the Emergency is declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Saleem has already lost his ability to telepath due to a surgical operation that “drains” his clogged sinuses. With this clearing of his nose—the medium bringing his telepathic powers to him—Saleem loses his ability to read minds, but his clean sinuses introduce him to his supersensitive olfactory senses that he did not realize he had before. As for the other midnight’s children, all of them—the surviving ones—lose their abilities alongside their reproductive systems when they are gathered up during the Emergency and get sterilized by the government. Betrayed by Shiva, who is now a major in the Indian army, Saleem is captured by the police, tortured, and in the process he also betrays the children by giving information on their locations. At the end, all of them are sterilized; their reproductive systems completely removed, which results in the excision of the supernatural talent as well.⁴ Thus, the midnight’s children and their magical talents start with the nation and end at the hands of the nation. Not only Saleem himself (as the narrator and protagonist of the novel as well as a metaphor for the nation) but also the main supernatural incident of the novel is thus absolutely dependent on the nation.⁵

This connection between nation and the children’s talents implicitly emphasizes the constructed and imaginary nature of both of these concepts. As it has been explained,⁶ Rushdie views the supernatural as an ingrained part of the religious

⁴ How this is made possible is never thoroughly explained, which seems odd considering the know-it-all and tell-it-all attitude of Saleem. We only get to learn that anesthesia was involved in the removal process. The fact that Saleem also lost his ability in a different surgical operation, but similarly under anesthesia might suggest that the ancient boatman Tai’s distrust of Western medicine and technology was not unjustified. What starts with the freedom of the country ends under anesthetic influence.

⁵ It is intriguing that the discussions of *Midnight’s Children* overlook this relation between the supernatural content of the novel and the nation. I believe this is mostly because critics usually engage with either historical narrative of the novel thus also discussing nation, but ignoring the supernatural elements connected to it, or see it as an exotic narrative of a faraway land, in which case the importance of the nation does not make its way into the discussion. This case of considering the supernatural and historical/realistic elements separately indicates how focusing on binary oppositions in discussions of magical realist narratives shows a disregard for the seamless unity of these texts made possible by bringing the supernatural and political/historical together.

⁶ See the footnote 3.

lifestyles in India while Saleem reveals his inherent skepticism towards the possibility of the supernatural in his self-reflexive interruptions throughout the novel. As for the concept of nation, Rushdie questions the nature and the viability of a “free” unified India:

After all, in all the thousands of years of Indian history, there never was such a creature as a united India. Nobody ever managed to rule the whole place, not the Mughals, not the British. And then, that midnight, the thing that had never existed was suddenly ‘free’. But what on earth was it? On what common ground (if any) did it, does it, stand? (*Imaginary Homelands* 27).

Saleem, alternatively, has complicated feelings for India—“[his] subcontinental twin sister” (244). He cannot completely disregard the idea of India as nation, but his monologue describing the birth of the nation also questions it by pointing out to the imaginary quality of the concept:

and this year—fourteen hours to go, thirteen, twelve—there was an extra festival on the calendar, a new *myth* to celebrate, because a nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom, catapulting us into a world which, although it had five thousand years of history [...] was nevertheless quite *imaginary*; into a *mythical* land, a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will—except in a *dream* we all agreed to *dream*; it was a mass *fantasy* shared in varying degrees by Bengali and Punjabi, Madrasi and Jat, and would periodically need the sanctification and renewal which can only be provided by rituals of blood. India, the new *myth*—a collective *fiction* in which anything was possible, a *fable* rivalled only by the two other mighty *fantasies*: money and God. (124) (emphasis mine)

There are two things that stand out in Saleem’s description. The first one is his choice of words in picturing this new unified nation that comes into being with a declaration of independence: myth, fantasy, imaginary, dream, fiction, and fable. These words imply the constructed and in a way unreal nature of India as a nation. The other one is the emphasis on a sense of community with the words like “collective” and “mass”. These expressions invoke Benedict Anderson’s seminal work *Imagined Communities*.⁷ Benedict Anderson describes nation as “an imagined political community” (6) while he suggests that “nationality...nation-ness, as well as nationalism are cultural artefacts of a particular kind” (4). It is striking to see Saleem in his description of the birth of independent India also accentuating the same words that point to a definition of the nation as a collectively imagined invention.

Saleem’s awareness of the mythical quality of the nation, however, does not prevent him from adopting a nationalist discourse. After all, he knows that this “myth” in the process of happening creates one thousand and one other myths: the midnight’s children. India in being born gives Saleem his supernatural talent, the quality that identifies him the most; makes him a part of a community and gives him the opportunity

⁷ Note that *Imagined Communities* was first published in 1983, two years later than the first publication of *Midnight’s Children*.

to earn his living.⁸ Nationalism also comes forward as the natural outcome of a bourgeois upbringing in the postcolonial world. For instance, Arjun Appadurai (who is also a Bombayite like Rushdie and Saleem) suggests that “[f]or those of us who grew up male in the elite sectors of the postcolonial world, nationalism was our common sense and the principal justification for our ambitions, our strategies, and our sense of moral well-being” (Appadurai 158). However, nationalism has been a problematic subject in the colonial and postcolonial world. Partha Chatterjee, for instance, considers nationalism to be “a European import” (*Nation and Its Fragments*, 4) and draws attention to the paradoxical nature of the concept in the colonial world:

Nationalism sought to demonstrate the falsity of the colonial claim that the backward peoples were culturally incapable of ruling themselves in the conditions of the modern world. Nationalism denied the alleged inferiority of the colonized people; it also asserted that a backward nation could ‘modernize’ itself while retaining its cultural identity. It thus produced a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the very intellectual premises of modernity on which colonial domination was based. (*Nationalist Thought* 30)

This desire to modernize (the nation) in the postcolonial world, then, necessitates maintaining a cultural identity, but this seems to be a difficult task because “cultural identity” often rests on what is deemed retrogressive in a modernizing context. Modernity alongside the nation brings a “rationality” which, according to Chatterjee, “becomes the normative principle of a certain way of life which is said to promote a certain way of thinking, namely science” (*Nationalist Thought* 16). Nationalism’s desire to modernize and rationalize the society while retaining the cultural identity creates a paradox, which is visible in *Midnight’s Children* in the juxtaposition of the vision of a modern secular nation with the superhuman children it creates. Saleem as a person who is susceptible to nationalism and the ideals of modernity and secularism that come with it has a hard time reconciling his supernatural talent with it. Accordingly, there are a lot of references to the newly formed secular government’s desire to get rid of superstition and supernatural in the modern nation. Saleem, commenting on the plurality of the meaning of the midnight’s children, suggests that “they can be seen as the last throw of everything antiquated and retrogressive in our myth-ridden nation, whose defeat was entirely desirable in the context of a modernizing, twentieth-century economy” (229). Similarly, after he is poisoned by his caretaker Padma’s love potion, Saleem also comments that this event “has connected [him] briefly with that world of ancient learning and sorcerers’ lore so despised by most of us nowadays” (222). Saleem never directly suggests this collective desire to get rid of the supernatural events as his own viewpoint (note the passive voice in the quotes above: “can be seen” and “so despised by most”) but the reader is regularly reminded that in this period of India’s transition to a secular modern nation, there is a continual clash of the past and the present, the mythical and the modern, the religious and the secular. When Mary, influenced by the rumors she hears on the bus, is convinced that “the country was under the grip of a sort

⁸ In the thirty years of his life, Saleem works at three jobs all of which he is capable of doing due to his nose and its supernatural power: being a man-dog for the Pakistani army to track down “subversive elements”; performing in the magicians’ ghetto by telling the audience what they ate the day before; and managing a pickle factory where he creates superb pickles and chutneys, using his supernatural olfactory sense.

of supernatural invasion” (280), and wonders “why these old things can’t stay dead and not plague honest folk”, Saleem gives the reader a possible answer:

I remain, today, half-convinced that in that time of accelerated events and diseased hours the past of India rose up to confound her present; the newborn, secular state was being given an awesome reminder of its fabulous antiquity, in which democracy and votes for women were irrelevant...so that people were seized by atavistic longings, and forgetting the new myth of freedom reverted to their old ways, their old regionalist loyalties and prejudices, and the body politic began to crack. (281)

The supernatural here is presented as an invader, something of the past, and as the catalyzer of sectarianism in India, again revealing Saleem’s prejudice against the supernatural and his confusion about the fact that he is also magical. Yet, both the reader and Saleem know that his magic is different than the dangerous “atavistic” sort; it is new, belongs to the nation and is not necessarily divisive as it makes the children (who represent the nation) come together, albeit for a short time. So, Rushdie’s concept of the supernatural is refreshingly stripped of the retrogressive ideas that are considered to belong to the same realm. In this way, Rushdie, with a positivist look, both refutes the idea of the supernatural and redresses it so that it will not contradict the discourse of the new nation.

This separation of the supernatural from a religious or a religiously informed cultural context reflects the secularist ideals of the new nation and Jawaharlal Nehru. Nicole W. Thiara draws attention to the similarities between Saleem’s centrality in his own version of Indian history and Nehru’s centrality to the nationalist historiographies of India. While Rushdie might be parodying this centrality of a single individual to the history of the whole nation in his novel, it is also obvious that Saleem works as a metaphor for the first prime minister of India: quotations from Nehru’s famous “Tryst with Destiny” speech made on the evening of India’s Independence are used intermittently with the story of Saleem’s birth, and when Amina Sinai wins the prize of “Times of India” by giving birth to the first baby to be born in independent India, Nehru congratulates baby Saleem by writing to him in a letter that his life will be “the mirror of our own” (138). In contrast to this emphasis on Nehru and his idea of nationalism is the absence of Gandhian discourse in the novel, an absence that Nicole Thiara points out: “the Gandhian idea of India, with his references to Hindu mythology and his emphasis on India’s peasants, is clearly not endorsed by *Midnight’s Children*, whose idea of the nation is relentlessly urban” (25-6). Saleem, with his privileged urban lifestyle is more prone to Nehru’s discourse of nationalism, which Arjun Appadurai defines as “bourgeois nationalism” (160). Thiara also explains Nehru’s emphasis on secularism in imagining a new unified India: “Nehru placed great hope in scientific modernisation to combat what he perceived as primordial fissiparous communal, regional and caste identities, and he considered secularism to be crucial in achieving a modern, equal society. Nehru is usually referred to as the architect of secularism in India, and frequently criticised for having imposed this alien concept on a religious society” (30). In the case of *Midnight’s Children*, the idea of India as a nation together with this alien concept—secularism—becomes the source of the main supernatural event in the novel. Considering the various instances in the novel when this ideal of secularism fails (like when Ahmed Sinai goes through an economic freeze just because he is a Muslim businessman), Thiara concludes that in the novel “it is not the un-Indian

character of secularism that is criticised but its fictitious nature since it lacked serious implementation” (30). We can see Rushdie, then, trying to mend this situation (lack of implementation) by making the magical elements of his novel free of religion, and thus conforming to the secularist ideals of the nation. Accordingly, midnight’s children lose their supernatural capabilities when the new nation starts losing its secularist and democratic stance under the Emergency rule of Indira Gandhi. However, ironically, the children are targeted not because their supernatural powers are seen as a threat to the secular ideals of the new nation. On the contrary, Saleem thinks it happened because they had been a threat to Indira Gandhi, who also claims centrality to the nation as evidenced in famous phrase, “*India is Indira and Indira is India*” and who is jealous of the organic connection the children have with the nation (483). Saleem’s representation of Indira Gandhi’s regime as her personal ambition, though exaggerated in Rushdie’s usual style, indicates a current of individualization even at the highest level of government, which registers a change from Nehru’s vision of “the noble mansion of free India, where all her children may dwell” (131).

As a result, it becomes clear that neither Rushdie as a writer nor his narrator Saleem view the world as a place of unproblematic supernatural happenings, which refutes Rushdie’s claim that he uses fantasy in his work to depict (religious) Indian people more accurately. I suggest in *Midnight’s Children*, the representation of the supernatural provides an arena in which the continual clash of the modern and traditional, progress and “changelessness”, secular and religious can be observed. By centering the supernatural around the discourse of nation and nationalism informed by an emerging bourgeois class, Rushdie attempts to secularize magic and thus save it from its connection to a mythical and a supernatural past that fuels sectarianism in India and poses a threat to its becoming a unified modern nation. However, the supernatural is deemed useless in the hands of Saleem and other midnight’s children; the nation also disappoints them. As all of them lose their talents, Saleem slowly gets disenchanted by the nation and gives up his ambition to save it. The ending of the novel presents a quite pessimistic scenario as Saleem, as the ultimate representation of all of India in the novel, prepares for his death on his (and India’s) thirty-first birthday by exploding in the crowd celebrating India’s independence anniversary since he has “the privilege and the curse of midnight’s children” which is “to be unable to live or die in peace” (533).

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Losing One's Body: Byronism and the Problem of Authenticity

Marketa Dudova

Abstract: The death of Byron resulted in the emergence of a large number of his imitators and poseurs fashioning their bodies, clothes, gestures and hair styles on the model of Byron. It is an irony that Romanticism that valued authenticity so highly has generated such a great number of inauthentic bodies. This article uses the concept of authenticity, derived from the theory of René Girard, to examine the phenomenon of Byronism. The characters of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* are discussed to exemplify the influence of literature on the reader, an influence dealt with in Belinsky or Dostoevsky, among others, as well. Dostoevsky links authenticity and the body, and thus stresses the fact that a theory discussing authenticity of the Self that does not take into account the body turns out to be inadequate. Inauthenticity of Byron's readers starts with their transforming their bodies. Consequently, the body must be taken as the point of departure for talking about authenticity

Keywords: Byron, authenticity, the body, Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche

“Byron is dead”. No matter how unfavourable the opinion of the British public on Byron's poetry and sex life was when he lived in England, the news of Byron's death is reported to have struck London “like an earthquake”: “If they had said the sun or the moon was gone out of the heavens, it could not struck me with the idea of a more awful and dreary blank in the creation than the words, ‘Byron is dead’” (in Chew 194). Byron once envisioned his life after death, but given his physical handicap, he did not see it in the brightest colours: “[O]ur carcasses, which are to rise again, are they worth raising? I hope, if mine is, that I shall have a better *pair of legs* than I have moved on these two-and-twenty years, or I shall be sadly behind in the squeeze into Paradise” (*Letters and Journals* II 36). How well, and in what body form, Byron did in that heavenly squeeze is beyond the scope of this paper. However, during the Easter of 1824, when he died at Missolonghi, one resurrection, that is empirically verifiable, did take place: “that monster known as Byronism” rose from Byron's corpse and began to live a life of its own (Eisler 752).

In the reaction to Byron's death English newspapers that had attacked him in the previous years were now full of elegies and tributes: “[T]he moment in which we heard he was no more, united him to us at once, without a rival” (Chew 194). In Europe, the reactions were similar; Byron's voice did not “cease to be heard on the Continent when it was hushed amid the marshes of Missolonghi, but it echoed on to the Caucasus, to the Pyrenees and beyond” (Leonard 3). Europe, devastated by the Napoleonic wars and the Holy Alliance, clung to him as to no other Romantic poet: Wordsworth was regarded to be too “insular”, Shelley too abstract, Goethe, from his “Olympus of art”, too indifferent, Shiller “too philosophic” (Leonard 4). The phenomenon of Byronism that had already existed during his life, now increased, and very soon new Byrons appeared. Suddenly, every nation had its own Byron. Heinrich Heine came to be called “the German Byron”. In Italy, there was Giovanni Berchani, whose hate for Austria, forced exile and new-found home in Greece, made him inevitably “the Italian Byron”. In

Spain, José de Espronceda, a handsome, dissipated adventurer and liberal, who modelled his poetry on *Don Juan*, became “the Spanish Byron” (Leonard 6-8).

In America, Byron had been very popular already during his lifetime, though there were some reservations about his poetry, especially about its supposed immorality. However, although “the pulpit opened its thunders against” it, and “teachers warned their pupils, parents their children”, it was in vain: “Byron could no more be kept at bay than the cholera” (Leonard 20). Byron’s poetry very quickly won the approval of the American reading public, and his name was regularly appearing in the major newspapers. But then the shock came, and in the section “Latest from Europe”, the Americans read that “Byron is dead” (32).

Byronism in America was of a different kind than that in Europe. The major American writers of that time such as Emerson, Whitman, Longfellow or Lowell, do not seem to have been influenced by Byron at all. Byronism in America took place exclusively at the level of minor intellectuals: “De Musset wore a Byron collar, but he wrote *La Nuit de Decembre*; Byron’s American followers had little more than the collar” (Leonard 10). No American poet was called “the American Byron”, though Lowell said he himself knew ten; according to him, every village “had its little Byron” (20).

One of the most interesting imitators in America was James Gates Percival, who, in his attempt to be Byronic, combined poetry with celibacy, geology, chemistry, etymology (he spent four years correcting the proofs of Webster’s *Dictionary*), and misanthropy. He is reported to have been of a solitary and “not uninteresting personality” (Leonard 51). His pose of a “suffering genius” consisted primarily in “proud sorrow” and lone contemplation (51-2). He was said to walk “the world like one who neither accepted nor desired its friendship. [...] I think he had been deeply injured—nay ruined by the reading of Byron’s works” (in Leonard 51).

In Europe, Byron influenced the greatest Romantic poets. Nonetheless it would be misleading to assume that European Byronism affected only poets. Byronism was also stirring at the non-literary levels of society. Not only poets, but also people with no literary ambitions felt the influence of Byron in their lives. There was, for instance, a group in France of minor poets and painters who worshipped Byron to such an extent that they tried to transform their meeting place, a working-class café, into Newstead Abbey. Luckily enough, a father of one of them was a surgeon, so he was able to donate a skull, from which they drunk cheap red wine in order to emulate Byron’s favourite ritual (Eisler 756).

The phenomenon of Byronism resulted in the emergence of a large number of Byron imitators and poseurs from “the Caucasus, to the Pyrenees and beyond” (Leonard 3). They tried to write poetry which turned out to be mediocre, led, probably, by the seeming ease of that of Byron whose method sometimes indeed seems to have been a simple “pen and paper and presto!” (Leonard 115). These poseurs, nonetheless, very soon realized that there was an easier way to be Byronic, and adopted some of the notorious features of Byron’s personality such as deep gloom, melancholy, aggressive egotism, pride, passion, revolt and remorse. However, they were not just cultivating these emotional states; they were transforming their bodies as well, they tried to be pale, slender, and black-garbed. They fashioned their bodies, clothes, gestures and hair styles on the model of Byron. In their attempt to be Byronic, they literally lost their own bodies.

It might seem rather ironic that the Romanticism that valued authenticity so highly has generated such a great number of inauthentic bodies. This continues today, because Romanticism “has copied itself into Western culture like a virus. It’s an

entrenched, proliferating text” (Nevelidine 56). However, there is also a certain possibility in Romanticism; it “continues to confront us with questions about the status of the human body” and the text (56).

The concept of authenticity as it is understood in this paper is derived from the theory of René Girard formulated in his *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (1961). As inauthentic, Girard sees those desires and emotions that do not originate in the Self, but are imposed on the Self from the Other. The inauthentic Self is incapable of desiring anything that has not been marked by the Other. Whatever the Other has marked verbally, the Self desires; however, whatever the Other has marked in a text is even more powerful. The printed text is endowed with such suggestible powers that the Self will accept the desires and emotions written in it as its own (13-42).

From this theory it is clear what a crucial role literature plays in making the Self inauthentic. In Girard’s theory it does not matter if readers read the most debased forms of Romanticism or the major male Romantics; if they model their identities on a written text, they are inauthentic. According to Girard, there is no difference between *Don Quijote* and a commercial advertisement. They both reveal Logos by which the readers shape their lives (Girard 41-2). The inauthentic Self is thus completely incapable of any individual reaction to the world (Girard 14).

To be authentic, on the other hand, is to reconstruct one’s own feelings, desires and opinions under the layer of those imposed on the Self from the outside, to uncover them as foreign; to understand that they give the Self the idea of an autonomous and spontaneous Self in the very moment when the Self ceases to be autonomous and spontaneous (Girard 49).

Alexander Sergejevich Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin* (1832), the masterpiece of Russian literature, examines and exposes to ridicule Byronic poseurs and imitators of his time. Eugene Onegin, an aristocrat without money, models his body, hair-style, gestures and clothes on Byron’s Child Harold. Onegin is pale; his clothes follow the latest London fashion, and his hair is “fashionably curled” (1.4). He has also adopted Byronic emotional states; he is melancholic and bored with the society of Saint Petersburg:

The illness with which he’d been smitten
should have been analysed when caught,
something like *spleen*, that scourge of Britain,
or Russia’s *chondria*, for short;
it mastered him in slow gradation;
[...]
So, like Childe Harold, glum, unpleasing,
he stalked the drawing-rooms, [...] (1.38)

He moves into a house in the Russian countryside as he hopes that that will do him good. However, it “all seemed new—for two days only” (1.54), and he is as bored there as he was in Saint Petersburg.

In the countryside he meets Tatyana, who also shapes her desires on the heroines she has read about. She falls in love with Onegin. But has the feeling come spontaneously from her Self, or is it imposed on her from the Other—either from the books, or her neighbours who talk about her and Onegin? Pushkin says it clearly, she felt in love “despite herself”. Her Self is no longer spontaneous or autonomous; she cannot think independently, because: “Today a mental fog enwraps us/[...] /Lord Byron, with his shrewd caprices,/dressed up a desperate egoism/to look like sad

romanticism” (3. 12). The “tattle” of her neighbours, also, contributes to her love for Onegin:

Tatyana listened with vexation
to all this tattle, yet at heart
in indescribable elation,
despite herself, rehearsed the part:
the thought sank in, and penetrated:
she fell in love – (3.7)

Nonetheless, after she has confessed her love to Eugene, he rejects her, and after his duel with his friend Lensky, he leaves the countryside and heads for Moscow. After his departure, Tatyana enters his library, finds there “Lord Byron’s portrait on the wall” (7.19) as, though Eugene had “ruled out reading”, a few writers “had escaped disgrace” and “Don Juan’s and the Giaour’s creator” was one of them (7.22). When reading Eugene’s books, Tatyana starts to question Eugene’s authenticity:

What was he then? An imitation?
An empty phantom or a joke,
A Muscovite in Harold’s cloak,
Compendium of affectation,
A lexicon of words in vogue
Mere parody and just a rogue? (7. 24)

Tatyana starts to realize that everything Onegin did was just a pose and imitation.

Pushkin’s text is a well-known satire on Byronic poseurs. Another comment on the phenomenon of Byronism in Russia was made by Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky, the founder of the Russian school of literary criticism. In one of his essays, Belinsky discusses the impact of literature on people’s lives. In his analysis, he links together the beginning of literature and the change in eating habits. He says that before literature, Russians had lived without intellectual speculations; they ate, drunk, and slept. His contemporaries, nonetheless, lack their ancestors’ ability to eat, drink, and sleep. When an aristocrat Karamzin had toured Europe, and then published his narrative which was read by the whole literate Russia, the readers started to model their identities, emotions and desires on Karamzin’s characters. When Pushkin started to publish his Romantic pieces, and when Byron’s poetry was translated in the 1820s, this phenomenon intensified, and, according to Belinsky, people did not want to be healthy, but pale, slender and gloomy; they refused to eat or to be happy, because it was the mass that ate, drank and enjoyed themselves (15-6).

Belinsky attacks romantics for not doing anything but discussing, meditating or theorizing. By making plans, they are not actually living for they spend their whole life in preparation for it. All their lives, they could do with a few thoughts and sentences they have read in books. He criticizes them for being impassionate, false, affected; and the style of the Romantic literature for having pretentious phraseology, for being insincere and fake. He ends his critique by pronouncing that Romanticism lost its way, both in life as well as in literature (10-21).

Later, these thoughts were echoed in the work of his friend, Dostoevsky, in his *Notes from the Underground*. His hero is unable to distinguish between the desires and emotions that have originated in him, and those that have come to him out of books. He has adopted a few lines “largely stolen from the poets and novelists” “to all sorts of needs and uses” (94). He can speak only “stiffly, artificially, even bookishly, in fact,

[he] could not speak except ‘like a book.’” (132). He is “so accustomed to think and imagine everything from books” (149) that he is incapable of any individual reaction. In the end, he realizes that his life has been “so affected, so purposely made up, so completely a product of the brain, of books” that he “could not even keep it up a minute” (152), and stops telling lies both to his reader and to himself. And then, his critique of idealist philosophy, Romanticism, and literature follows:

[W]e are all divorced from life, we are all cripples, every one of us, more or less. [...] [W]e have come almost to looking upon real life as an effort, almost as hard work, and we are all privately agreed that it is better in books. [...] [W]e don't even know what living means now, what it is, and what it is called? Leave us alone without books and we shall be lost and in confusion at once. We shall not know what to join on to, what to cling to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise. We are oppressed at being men—men with a real individual body and blood, we are ashamed of it, we think it a disgrace and try to contrive to be some sort of impossible generalised man”. (154)

Dostoevsky suggests that “a real individual body” should be taken as a point of departure for reconstructing and regaining one's own authenticity. For one's authenticity it is crucial not to lose one's individual body in literature that imposes on the individual foreign values and desires, or in the systems of idealist philosophy, in its abstract concepts and theoretical speculations that neglect real and concrete bodies.

Dostoevsky's link between authenticity and the body is especially interesting from the perspective of neurology. The history of neurology has described a few cases of the loss of the body. One of the patients was a young woman who loved the poets of High Romanticism. Her body lost the ability of proprioception, awareness of her own body. Proprioception serves as inner eyes of the body by which the body sees itself. When proprioception is lost, the body is, in fact, blind, does not see itself, and the patient's eyes have to be also the body's eyes. The patient is aware of her body only when she is looking at it, when she closes her eyes she falls down. Everything that the proprioceptionally functioning body does automatically, unconsciously—speaking, sitting, walking, the patient had to do consciously. She could not sit naturally, but only in a pose she adopted; when she was speaking she was speaking as if being on a stage playing a part, not that because she was theatrical, but because she lost the natural tone of her voice and natural posture of the body (Sacks 54-60).

A similar case was described by two French neurologists. A young woman lost body awareness, and she described her condition: “I'm no longer aware of myself as I used to be. I can no longer feel my arms, my legs, my head, and my hair. I have to touch myself constantly in order to know how I am ... I cannot find myself” (Eakin 10). This state was accompanied with “doubts of her own existence and doubts of the existence of others. She wasn't sure who she was. She had difficulty remembering her parents, her house, her family” (Eakin 19). Only when touching her body could she momentarily recover “a sense of self” and recognize her family members (Eakin 19).

These two cases show how identity and the body are interconnected; they confirm that “subjectivity and selfhood are deeply rooted in the body” (Eakin 20). The woman had to touch her body in order to know who she was and to recognize others. From that it seems that Descartes' theory is no longer valid. It is not “I think therefore I am”, but rather, “I feel my body therefore I am” (Eakin 10-1).

Recent feminist theories came to understand the body as the “very ‘stuff’ of subjectivity” (Grosz ix). The subject, when “recognized as corporeal being, can no longer succumb to the neutralization [...] of its specificity” (Grosz ix). The body helps to challenge the universalist “assumptions of humanism” through which “specificities, positions, and histories” of individuals are seen as “irrelevant or redundant” (Grosz ix).

Any theory discussing authenticity of the Self that does not take into account the body turns out to be inadequate. Inauthenticity of Byron’s readers starts with their transforming their bodies. By adopting foreign poses, gestures, postures, they lose postures and gestures that are natural to them. Inauthenticity starts with the body. Similarly, the body must be taken as the point of departure for talking about authenticity. Only the subject “recognized as corporeal being” will realize the specificity of its existence. It is the body that gives the subject experiences that are not available to anyone else, as Ulric Neisser, the cognitive psychologist observes: “I am, in principle, the only person who can feel this unique and particular pain” (Eakin 23).

As it has been shown literature plays a crucial role in making the Self inauthentic. However, it is also clear that there are readers who are not affected by their reading at all. Nietzsche was so aware of the harmful effects of reading that, when he was about to write a new book, he was very cautious not to be “surrounded by books” (*Ecce Homo* 242). He, also, saw with his “own eyes” naturally gifted people who “‘read to ruin’ in their thirties” (253). On the other hand, Daniel Harris describes his act of reading the Romantics: “After I polished off Coleridge, who was no sooner read than forgotten, I would just as dispiritedly plow through the complete Shelley and again read every fragment, hymn, stray stanza, epitaph, dirge, epithalamium, song, and poetic drama, never stopping for a second to consider whether [...] I made any aesthetic distinction between “Adonais” and the footnotes at the bottom of the page” (210). It seems that there are at least two kinds of reading. What kind of reading then, has the power to control and transform the life of the reader?

When the acts of reading of Onegin and Tatyana are examined, it becomes clear. They do not just read books, they digest them: Onegin “swallowed *Childe Harold* whole” (Eisler 756), and Tatyana “devours” “delicious” novels:

From early on she loved romances,
they were her only food... and so
she fell in love with all the fancies
of Richardson and of Rousseau.
Her father, kindly, well-regarded,
but in an earlier age retarded,
could see no harm in books; (*Eugen Onegin* 2.29)

Now, she devours, with what attention,
delicious novels, laps them up;
and all their ravishing invention
with sheer enchantment fills her cup! (*Eugene Onegin* 3.9)

Reading-as-reading does not matter, reading-as-digesting, however, does.

Thomas Beddoes, the well-known physician of the Romantic era, recalls a case when a doctor killed his patient by having prescribed him wrong drugs: “[T]he physician cannot believe but he has poisoned his most interesting patient by a slip of pen” (Grinnell 241). Grinnell elaborates on this story by taking into consideration Schelling’s dialectical interest in poisoning: “No poison does an organism harm unless that organism makes a move to ingest it” (241). As Schelling notes, there is no poison in

itself; a “poisonous mushroom does not attack us unless we attack it at the table” (241). Reading the wrong prescription did not kill the patient, but the ingestion did. There is nothing harmful in reading in itself; it does no harm—unless digested.

According to Nietzsche, reading is an activity by which “man unlearns to act” and by which his spontaneity is weakened; it makes him artificial, and changes him to “a mirror” (Weineck 35). Reading might help to articulate one’s own feelings and thoughts, but for Nietzsche, a mirror, the traditional trope for self-reflection, is rather a symbol of self-deflection (Weineck 35). Reading-as-digesting is harmful, as he sees the digestive body as “permeable, unstable, invaded and inhabited by other (parasitic) bodies” (Weineck 36).

Nutrition is thus a key issue in Nietzsche’s philosophy; it is a “question on which ‘salvation of humanity’ depends far more than on any theologians’ curio” (*Ecce Homo* 237). Nietzsche attacks idealist philosophy for its intellectualism, theoretical argumentation and abstract concepts which, according to him, are not realities “but mere imaginings— more strictly speaking, *lies*” (256), and for its neglect of the body that is seen by it as unimportant, subordinate and loathsome. The whole Western culture has “been falsified through and through because one mistook the most harmful men for great men—because one learned to despise ‘little’ things, which means the basic concerns of life itself” (*Ecce Homo* 256).

Romantic idealism tries to conceal the body, but the body will out. Kant might be working on his system of transcendental philosophy, but the rest of time he spends in thinking out how eat well so as not to upset his digestion (Youngquist 113). Coleridge might be writing his idealist poems, whereas in his private life he is preoccupied with his irregular digestion, completely ruined by opium; he might be passing his poems off for being spontaneous outcome of his imagination, of a dream even, whereas, as it has been identified, “Kubla Khan” is but a result of a magazine article on oracles and foretelling (Procházka 79). What a swindle Romanticism is!

How to get rid of the Romantic diet, this “careless mental diet and pampering” (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* n.p.) which is being ingested in Western culture for more than two centuries? How to reconstruct one’s own instincts, opinions, feelings and desires under the layer of the Romantic ideology?

One either cannot eat Romanticism, or, must get rid of it before it is digested. “One has to know the size of one’s stomach” (*Ecce Homo* 239), says Nietzsche, and Weineck adds, “one must also know when to throw up what is already inside: Romanticism, Wagner, both Anti-Semitism and Christian Love, for example, all those overly sweet stuffs that, if digested, will make you lazy and interfere with your instinct” (38).

In *Don Juan*, Byron, also, associates reading with ingestion. When he asks “in turn” his readers why they read, he positions the act of reading and drinking next to each other: “I ask in turn/[...] Why drink? Why read?” (14.11). Their effects are identical; they both deflect people from themselves. Reading, writing, drinking, they all occupy “me to turn back regards/On what I’ve seen or ponder’d, sad or cheery” (14. 11).

Byron writes, reads and drinks in order to distance himself from himself. In his “Fragment” to *Don Juan*, Byron the narrator, due to “[h]aving got drunk exceedingly today”, is sick. However, as drinking and reading are identical activities, he might as well change the line; he might be sick not because of drinking, but because he has been reading exceedingly. Byron is over-drunk, over-read, his head is “reeling” so he seems “to stand upon the ceiling”; he is sick. And the “Dedication” that follows is nothing else but his throwing up Romanticism. He is throwing up one major Romantic poet after another: Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth:

BOB SOUTHEY! You're a poet—Poet laureate,
 And representative of all the race;
 [...]
 And now, my Epic Renegade! what are you at?
 With all the Lakers, in and out of place?
 [...]
 And Coleridge, too,
 [...]
 Explaining metaphysics to the nation—
 I wish he would explain his Explanation.
 [...]
 And Wordsworth, in a rather long “Excursion”
 (I think the quarto holds five hundred pages)
 Has given a sample from the vast version
 Of his new system to perplex the sages;
 ‘T is poetry—at least by his assertion,
 [...]
 And he who understands it would be able
 To add a story to the Tower of Babel.

You—Gentlemen!
 [...]
 You're shabby fellows—true—but poets still,
 And duly seated on the immortal hill. (1-6)

There is something in Romanticism Byron cannot digest—lies, hypocrisy, pretentiousness, insincerity, artificiality. He must throw it up.

Throwing up, according to Kristeva's theory of abjection, is understood as a dark revolt “of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate” from an outside or inside (1). Kristeva thus shows that throwing up is not just an important physiological function of the organism, but is also a powerful philosophic concept, encapsulating a conflict with one's own being and with the outside world, a concept that grapples with traditional philosophic concerns such as being, subjectivity, or the relation between the self and the other. It is the fear of being transformed by the threatening other that makes Kristeva formulate her theory of abjection. She understands that what she eats define her in a most literal, bodily way; what she eats is transformed into her flesh, tendon, blood, and bone.

In Kristeva's theory, throwing up separates the subject from that what poses a threat to him and his existence. The rejection protects the subjectivity because vomiting prevents the self of the subject from disappearing into an ideology foreign to his body. More than that, the subject defines itself more firmly and clearly during the process. Sickness, as “an active maintenance of self against the outside” (Rajan 225), makes the self strengthen itself against that which cannot be digested. The abject is “a violent, clumsy breaking away” of the organism from the danger coming to him from the outside, threatening to transform him into, ideologically, someone else (Kristeva 13).

Nietzsche shares with Kristeva a belief in the rebirth of the self through sickness. Although he longs for health, Nietzsche, finally, learns to appreciate sickness. Throwing up for Nietzsche is a life-saver, an instinct of self-defence: it commands us to say No. Throwing up thus serves as a barrier to push back everything that would threaten us from the outside world.

In addition, Nietzsche sees a certain stimulus in vomiting; it impels the subject to start afresh: “[B]eing sick can even become an energetic *stimulus* for life, for living more. This, in fact, is how that long period of sickness appears to me *now*: as it were, I discovered life anew, including myself; I tasted all good and even little things, as others cannot easily taste them—I turned my will to health, to *life*, into a philosophy” (*Ecce Homo* 224). Nausea gave Nietzsche the power and impulse to live and create, and his *Gaya Scienza* is the result of the most unexpected thing, “*convalescence*” (“Preface” to *Gay Science*, n.p.). From such severe sickness as he had experienced, “one returns *newborn*, having shed one’s skin, more ticklish and malicious, with a more delicate taste for joy, with a tenderer tongue for all good things, with merrier senses, with a second dangerous innocence in joy, more childlike and yet a hundred times subtler than one has ever been before” (“Preface” to *Gay Science* n.p.). Nevertheless, at the beginning of this new life of more intense joy and subtler sensitivity, there was nausea, a nausea “that had gradually developed out of an incautious and pampering spiritual diet, called romanticism” (“Preface” to *Gay Science* n.p.). It is the throwing up of Romanticism therefore that makes him live more, anew and more fully.

Throwing up is thus the body’s reaction to the bitter diet of Romanticism, to idealist philosophy, its pretentiousness and insincerity. It is the body’s self-defending strategy to reject opinions, feelings and desires that are foreign to the body while presented as being its own. It is the body’s impulse to regain authenticity.

The body and authenticity cannot be separated, they are interlinked. Nietzsche gives his recipe for an authentic life at the very beginning of his *La Gay Scienza*. It is the poem that is written over the doors to his house:

I live in my own place
Have never copied nobody even half,
And at any master who lacks the grace
To laugh at himself—I laugh.

What is the “place” he lives in he refers to, a place enabling him not to copy anyone? It is his body. A house is in fact an “image of the body:” “In western culture, whole rooms within a house attend to single facts about the body, the kitchen and eating, the bathroom and excreting, the bedroom and sleeping” (Scarry 39). Nietzsche’s own body thus enables him to be authentic. There is no recipe, no instructions to follow though in order to be authentic. One must follow one’s own body.

In a similar way, Byron does not want to follow or be followed. He does not want to “imitate the petty thought” of other Romantics (“Dedication” 6) nor be imitated. He neither wishes to “be bound nor bind” (*DJ* 9.24). He is very well aware of the power of Romantic poetry: “sometimes/Monarchs are less imperative than rhymes” (*DJ* 5.77). He rejects any life shaped by a model, be it even that of his own. He wishes “men to be free/As much from mobs as kings—from you as me” (*DJ* 9.23).

Although Byron himself has been accused of inauthenticity and self-stylization by readers, scholars and critics, still, he sends us a message through his poetry that he wants us to be real people with real bodies. He sees each body and individual life as a new event in the world, not previously lived or experienced by someone else. No definitive answers or solutions to one’s life can therefore be found in books, no matter how great their author was. Living according to books might be easier, but finding one’s own way is worth trying as well, because, after all, life is “stranger than fiction” (*DJ* 14.101).

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**Orientalisation of the Occident:
Nadeem Aslam's *Maps For Lost Lovers***

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Abstract: Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*, which is considered by critics a very impressive novel of Pakistani migration to England, a la Marquez, creates an Oriental city in the heart of the West, or, the Occident. The novel, with its emphasis on and questionings of migration, culture clash, ambivalence, in-betweenness, homelessness, belongingness, otherness, identity and racism, offers a picture of contemporary society, which is becoming more globalized, but, at the same time, more glocalized. The desperate newcomers or recent settlers of a foreign country, doomed to remain "outsiders" from the very beginning, lead broken lives while longing for their homeland and thus trying to create aspects of this homeland in the middle of England. The lyrical descriptions of the novel are the parts where orientalism makes itself felt most obviously. Apart from this, the characters of the novel live in a mystical, dream-like world in which stillness remains a determining aspect; in other words, it is debatable whether they really live or not. The intersection of cultures, congregations, nationalities and religions is narrated together with the pains of a family whose members represent the fragmented Pakistani migrant.

Keywords: Orient, Orientalisation, Nadeem Aslam, *Maps for Lost Lovers*, migrant, ambivalence.

The Orient in postcolonial studies signifies a geographical location that has been defined in very negative terms by the Eurocentric theoretical, philosophical and even scientific approaches, at the basis of which lies the fact that "European theories themselves emerge from particular cultural traditions which are hidden by false notions of 'the universal'" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 11). Europe's encounter with the Orient and the Oriental is at the same time a confrontation with the Other, who serves as a symbol for the definition, determination and confirmation of a European identity as opposed to the Oriental one. This threatening "other" is given various attributes, mostly negative, while the opposite and favourable characteristics are regarded as typically Western and European. In other words, the contrast between two different worlds is presented as a set of binary oppositions. Accordingly, as Said put it, among "the figures of speech associated with the Orient" are "its strangeness, its difference, its exotic sensuousness" (Said 2003, 72). Said's *Orientalism* provides numerous examples of the image of the Oriental from various books and works of Western culture in which the Orientals are described as people who are inferior, gullible, devoid of energy and initiative, given to flattery, cunning, unkind to animals, unable to walk on a road or pavement, prone to lying, lethargic and suspicious, lazy, mystical, etc. On the other hand, the Western and/or European people are those who are rational, moderate and progressive and who possess none of the Oriental values. The very distinction between the Orient and the Occident from the very early beginnings of modern Orientalist discourse has been concretized in the famous lines by Kipling: "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet".

It is exoticness that is mostly associated with the Orient; in other words, it is the intriguingly unusual and different, excitingly strange Orient that has captured the interest of the European most throughout history. Accordingly, the term "Orient" has, in the minds of the Westerners, created a geographical space thoroughly different from the Occident. Said implies that the Orient as such has been above all imaginary than real: "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said 1). What is certain is that the Orient has always remained a mystery to demystify or a cipher to decipher for the West. That was the main reason why the Europeans have deliberately preferred to travel to this geography in order to witness personally how Orientals lived. Especially in the Middle Ages, when the countries in the Orient were leading a life of luxury and progress while Europe was in the middle of a chaos and ecclesiastical dogma, the Orient was regarded as a place envied and thus to be conquered by the West for obtaining its riches. At the basis of the images of the Orient as a place of imaginations and inventions rather than reality lies such a view of the mentioned place as it lived in fantasies. That is why many Orientalistic images encountered in and reflected upon the products of European culture are either exaggerated or simply false, apart from being "popular[ly] prejudice[d] (Said 53) and subjective.

Especially in the colonial period Orientalism served as a discourse used to justify the colonizers' desire to exploit the colonised lands and their peoples. Accordingly, the Eastern people and their lands were to be governed by much more rational Westerners simply because of the fact that these Orientals could never govern themselves. Even science from time to time contributed to this process. The Orientals were denied their own means of representation, and thus, it fell to the West to represent them on the basis of orientalist discourse. The present-day Orientalism especially revolves around the issue of representation and it is the media, mostly the visual ones, that go on spreading prejudiced images of the East. The cinema goes on depicting the Orientals as backward people incapable of progressing themselves. Even in movies made in 2012, one encounters images of İstanbul as a typically Oriental city rather than a modern one and of people wearing fez. The Orient in such movies and representations is still a dangerous place where a European can be trapped and feel besieged. Not surprisingly, the Orient of present times is a product of the US, the superpower which is at the same time the leading country in the production of policies in the Orient.

Nadeem Aslam essentially belongs to that generation of writers who have been shaping the novel since the 1960s, those who write back to the centre either from their own countries or from within imperial centres, mostly London. The decolonization process in the second half of the twentieth century has caused a shift in the definition of the English novel, which is now defined as "the novel in English" instead. "The last half of the twentieth century witnessed a monumental shift in the character of both literary and national identity; the 'novel in English' supplanted the 'English novel' in significance and cogency" (Schaffer 15). This kind of novel is mostly associated with, but not confined to, the black immigrants to England who are also labelled as "Windrush generation". As the decades went on, more and more people went to and settled in Britain. Among them, there were many Indians and Pakistanis who came to the centres of British Empire in search of better lives, but mostly failed to find one. As they helped Britain to become much more multicultural than ever, their otherness and homelessness became much more obvious. It might be said that the reactions towards the migrants have become less prejudiced as the time went on, which is generally

explained by England's being one of the most tolerant countries of the world. The process of adaptation of the native to the migrant is defined by Aslam as follows: "It was a time in England when the white attitude towards dark-skinned foreigners was just beginning to go from *I don't want to see them or work next to them* to *I don't mind working next to them if I'm forced to, as long as I don't have to speak to them*, an attitude that would change in another ten years to *I don't mind them socializing in the same place as me if they must, as long as I don't have to live next to them* (*The Maps*11). Nevertheless, the migrant has never been thoroughly accepted as equal to the native English and that is why the migrants have had to live in their own quarters. In other words, migration has generally and even frequently been accompanied by ghettoization, which is a case also observed in *Maps for Lost Lovers*. The Pakistani inhabitants of England prefer to live close to each other and thus form a ghetto, a miniature of Pakistan in the middle of England.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the first phase of substantial postwar south Asian and Afro-Caribbean migration to Britain, observers had commonly assumed that Pakistani and other minorities, like their Irish and Jewish immigrant predecessors, would inevitably become assimilated into the British social structure and adopt 'western' customs and values, however these may be defined. From the 1970s onwards, it was increasingly clear that this was a simplistic assumption. It is now obvious that Pakistanis settled in Britain have not adopted wholesale western lifestyles and values, despite the fact that at least some have achieved quite significant material and educational success. (Shaw 3)

The reason for this is the fact that life in England is associated with "loss" in the minds of these migrants. There is loss experienced in any sense; even seasons are evaluated on the basis of loss: "Among the innumerable other losses, to come to England was to lose a season, because, in the part of Pakistan that he is from, there are five seasons in a year, not four [...] The snow falls and, yes, the hand stretched into the flakes' path is a hand asking back a season now lost" (*The Maps*5). Some feel that loss more, like Kaukab, who continually accuses England of causing all kinds of problems they are faced with. That is why the latecomers of England want to see and create an Oriental country, their homeland, in that foreign country. The Pakistani characters of the novel are depicted as living in a dream-like land, like the figures of a fairy tale, which might be indicating that they are not living as a matter of fact. The exoticness typical of Pakistan is reflected on the lines of the narration from the very beginning:

Shamas stands in the open door and watches the earth, the magnet that it is, pulling snowflakes out of the sky towards itself. With their deliberate, almost-impaired pace, they fall like feathers sinking in water. The snowstorm has rinsed the air of the incense that drifts into the houses from the nearby lake with the xylophone jetty, but it is there even when absent, drawing attention to its own disappearance. (*The Maps* 3)

The title of the first chapter, "The Night of the Great Peacock Moths", is the first sign of exoticness and will be used throughout narration. The Great Peacock Moth is the largest of butterfly or moth species found in Europe; however, what is more interesting is the ornamental appearance of the animal, especially the ocelli on the wings. Aslam

chooses not any other butterfly but the peacock moth simply because peacock is a well-known symbol of the Orient. The bird is famous for its array, like the Orient itself.

The attempt to exoticise England is a conscious one. Nadeem Aslam himself says “I wanted every chapter of *Maps for Lost Lovers* to be like a Persian miniature. In these miniatures, a small piece of paper—no bigger than a sheet of A4, holds an immense wealth of beauty, colour and detail. Trees have leaves each perfectly rendered. Flowers are moments old and the tilework of the palaces and mosques is lovingly detailed. That was the aim in *Maps*”.¹ There is an apparent longing for the Orient, and it is realised in Aslam’s narrative that this hankering is also for the golden ages of the Orient. History seems to have changed the economic positions of two different geographies of the world and the Orient seems to have left its riches to the Occident; that is why a Pakistani can’t help watching the richness of the Occident with wonder when he first comes to England and can’t help remembering the times of Harun al-Rashid and the world of the one thousand and one nights (*The Maps* 5).

Maps for Lost Lovers, which “focuses those isolated Pakistani communities who are still trapped in their orthodox religious cocoon and are struggling to reconcile themselves with everyday transnational challenges” (Butt 153), revolves around the story of a Pakistani named Jugnu and his lover Chanda, both of whom are killed by the very people who share their destiny in England as migrants, although it is a story of all Pakistanis who struggle to adapt themselves to a foreign land. Chanda’s brothers are arrested as suspects in the murder. The novel tells the next twelve months, and doing so, focuses on Pakistani migrants’ experience of adaptation to England, which becomes difficult and even tragic from time to time. It is not only the totally different conditions of England, but the conflicts between different religions, sects, communities, nationalities and cultures. “The crescent faces the cross squarely” (*The Maps* 9) here, and differing cultures, traditions and histories are also hostile to each other.

The reason why these people have migrated to England is explained very briefly in the early pages of the novel and poverty is presented as the main factor.

Pakistan is a poor country, a harsh and disastrously unjust land, its history a book full of sad stories, and life is a trial if not a punishment for most of the people born there: millions of its sons and daughters have managed to find footholds all around the globe in their search for livelihood and semblance of dignity. Roaming the planet looking for solace, they’ve settled in small towns that make them feel smaller still, and in cities that have tall buildings and even taller loneliness. (9)

Another reason behind the forced settlement of the Pakistani migrants in England is the feeling of inferiority. The rich people of their homelands in a sense force them to migrate. Therefore, the poor of Pakistan also escape their humiliation: “We are driven out of our countries because of people like her, the rich and the powerful. We leave because we never have any food or dignity because of their selfish behaviour” (*The Maps* 312). Cultural problems are especially visible in relations between the old and the young because while the old try to hold to traditional values and norms, the young feel more flexible in the process of adaptation. Once the place has changed, the traditions are also forced to transform themselves into a newer environment:

¹ <http://literature.britishcouncil.org/nadeem-aslam>. Access: 07.04.2014

And so the cleric at this mosque could receive a telephone from, say, Norway, from a person who was from the same village as him in Pakistan, asking him whether it was permitted for him to take an occasional small glass of whiskey or vodka to keep his blood warm, given that Norway was an extremely cold country; the cleric told him to desist from his sinful practice, thundering down the line and telling him that Allah was perfectly aware of the climate of Norway when He forbade humans from drinking alcohol; why, the cleric had asked, couldn't he simply carry a basket of burning maple leaves under his overcoat the way the good Muslims of freezing Kashmir do to keep themselves warm? A telephone call could also come in the middle of the night from Australia, a despondent father asking the cleric to fly immediately to Sydney all-expenses paid and exorcise the djinns that had taken possession of his teenaged daughter soon after an end was put to her love for a white schoolmate and she was married to a cousin brought hurriedly over from Pakistan. (9-10)

The newcomers to England have to continue to live with the memories of past lives they have left behind because they are not easily accepted by the natives, or the real owners of England. They face physical attacks, and "Something died in the children during those years" (*The Maps* 11). Although the natives of England feel more adapted to the migrants as the time passes, there are still provocative actions, such as the placement of a pig's head outside the door of the mosque. The worshippers are found by Shamas "in tears at the realization that Allah does not consider them worthy enough to have placed them in a position where they could have prevented this insult to His home" (15). The feeling of loss and perception of life in England as a punishment recur here again. The migrants even have to bear forced medical operations, as in the case of a woman who is strongly advised to have a hysterectomy and who feels obliged to accept the operation simply because of a fear of arrest in case of her possible rejection. The migrants, especially the younger ones, are described as inclined to crime simply because the law in most cases does not provide the solution they need. Aslam tells all these as if they had happened within an Oriental atmosphere in which scented geraniums, breezes dense with rosehips, ripening limes etc. come together as if to make the newcomer miss his past life in Pakistan. Jazz becomes a kind of self-expression for them and articulates the common and shared feelings all the newcomers, that is, the others of England, have. As they listen to singers of this music, "so engrossed would the listeners become that, by the end of the piece, the space between them would have contracted, heads leaning together as though they were sharing a mirror. All great artists know that part of their task is to light up the distance between two human beings" (*The Maps* 13). In 1978, those newcomers are strongly opposed by the native Englishmen with the claim that there have already been thousands of migrants. On the early years of their arrival, Shamas and Kaukab try not to be late and thus encounter the whites who get out of the pubs and who will choose them as the easy targets of their violence. As the years pass and as different people of different nationalities arrive in England, the names of places in ghettos are changed and these ghettos are slowly turned into a mini India, a mini Pakistan, a mini Sri Lanka and a mini Bangladesh. "The novel is particularly interesting in that it treats Pakistan and Britain as one contiguous space where people inter-marry, disappear to, or escape from" (Shamsie 185). However, "only one name has been accepted by every group, remaining unchanged. It is the name of the town itself. Dasht-e Tanhaii. The wilderness of Solitude. The Desert of Loneliness" (*The Maps* 29).

According to Kaukab, England is a “deplorable country”, a “nest of devilry from where God has been exiled” (*The Maps* 30). This place is “bumpy with buried secrets and problems swept under the carpets” (45).

Shamas, who is Kaukab’s husband and Jugnu’s father, is the one who is described as “the person the neighbourhood turns to when unable to negotiate the white world on its own” (15). He is a man who does not have a very strong religious belief, unlike his wife, who is a very strict Muslim and who from time to time can show attitudes typical of a fundamentalist. *Maps for Lost Lovers* divides Muslims into two groups, and these two groups represent two opposite sides that lead religious lives at two different extreme points. On the one hand, there are the Muslims who strongly believe in Islam practise it accordingly, and on the other hand there are those who are close to losing all their faith, like the children of Kaukab. The opposition between these two extremities might at times lead to violence and even murder as in the case of Jugnu and Chanda. One is not surprised to witness honour killings in this atmosphere.

Kaukab remains one of the symbols of the tragedy of the migrant caught between two totally different worlds and cultures. “Islam provides a very sensitive portrait of Kaukab, who cannot cope with an alien, racist England, nor understand her British-born children” (Shamsie 185). She sincerely believes in Islam and the Prophet; however, she is almost always in pain simply because she has not managed to turn her children into devoted believers. She hates England and misses Pakistan; she even rejects learning English because of this hatred; however, she also bears in mind that this hatred might be an objection to Allah’s rule. For her, life in England is a kind of Godly test: “The period in England was the equivalent of earthly suffering, the return one day to Pakistan entry into Paradise” (*The Maps* 96). She has lost the link with her children, especially with Ujala, who accuses her of causing the deaths of Jugnu and Chanda since she did not approve of their illegitimate relationship. Solitude has become the way of life for her: “Kaukab was alone in the house, alone in the house just as she was alone in the world, alone to let out a noisy sob whenever she felt the need” (35). She always lives in a life of comparison in which England is doomed to remain the negatively-described foreign land and linguistic alienation is a recurrent aspect of it: “What was a person to do when even *things* in England spoke a different language than the one they did back in Pakistan? In England the heart said *boom boom* instead of *dhak dhak*; a gun said *bang!* instead of *thah!*; things fell with a ‘thud’ not a *dharam*; small bells said ‘jingle’ instead of *chaan-chaan*, the trains said ‘choo choo’ instead of *chuk chuk*” (36). Kaukab is shocked by Mah Jabin’s unawareness of Ramadan, her children’s ideas about Islam and by her husband’s support for them. When the light is off as Jugnu and Chanda enter their house, she regards it as a sign sent by Allah. She suspiciously examines the white girlfriend of Jugnu, wonders whether this white woman has a shower after sex as a rule of Islam, considers her son’s sexual relation with this woman adultery and tries to avoid the wine stain on the carpet. She makes a comparison between Western perceptions of offence and Islamic perception of sin: “For the people in the West, an offence that did no harm to another human or to the wider society was no offence at all, but to her—to all Muslims—there was always another party involved—Allah; *He* was getting hurt by Chanda and Jugnu’s actions” (43). When Jugnu catches a venereal disease, Kaukab feels sure that it is because of Chanda, who must have transmitted it to her son after catching it in the vile places of a Western country; however, when it is understood that she has caught it in Tunis, she does not want to believe that since, according to her, the claim is surely made on purpose to denigrate a Muslim country and its Islamic culture. When she hears the tannoy announcement at the bus station, she remembers the speaker

of the mosque in Pakistan, calling people for Friday sermon. In fact, almost all Pakistani migrant women around are like her. They all live with the same fear of the possibility that one day their children might convert to Christianity or turn into nonbelievers.

Maps for Lost Lovers sometimes makes references to the history of English colonialism in India and Pakistan. The Pakistani migrants believe that the reason why they are in England is the English imperialism. For them, it is the imperialists that stole all the richness of their country, including the famous Koh-i Noor diamond. In addition, they deliberately imposed a system in which the white colonizer always had a privileged position. Even the dressing styles were a proof of this. The English women wore swaying crinolines and ruched bustles, which made native people think they had tails. References to colonial past include not only such comic anecdotes, but violence as well. Shamas from time to time remembers the murder of hundreds of people in Amristar and the following uprising of the local people. This uprising remains significant in that different communities and religions of India and Pakistan come together against a common enemy. However, these different communities and congregations of India and Pakistan can never come together and work for similar ends in England. On the contrary, they are in a state of continual conflict while they commonly share the status of being migrants and foreigners as well as the problems brought about by this fact. Aslam seems to criticise the principles of Islam in the matters of divorce and traditions of Eastern cultures in matters of marriage throughout the novel. The main point of criticism in divorce issue is the principle that a Muslim woman who is divorced by her husband is supposed to marry another man before she is able to get married to her previous husband again. Some female characters of the novel suffer greatly from this principle and their lives turn into personal tragedies. This principle even becomes the reason why they feel alienated from their religion and why they commit sins, as in the case of Suraya. Besides, the point of criticism of Eastern traditions in matters of marriage is related to intermarriages between cousins and close relatives, and the significance placed upon virginity. People of Pakistan find divorced women inappropriate for marriage simply because they are no longer virgins. There are other signs of image of women in the novel. Kaukab says "I remember when I was a girl my mother used to say that when it comes to food a woman should neither end something nor begin it: meaning, she must never take the first helping or cook something especially for herself because it indicates an indecent lack of restraint" (94). Thus, Aslam pictures an image of Islam as undemocratic towards women. However, from time to time he cannot help confessing its focus on love: "Love. Islam said that in order not to be unworthy of being, only one thing was required: love. And, said the True faith, it did not even begin with humans and animals: even the trees were in love. The very stones sang of love. Allah Himself was a being in love with His own creations" (64). It might be argued that Aslam criticises not the essence of Islam, but the way it is practised by Muslim people. So, the above quotation is just another indication of creating an Oriental world in the middle of the West. Here the Orient is represented as an alternative region of love as opposed to the highly rationalistic world of the Occident. Aslam goes on entitling the chapters of his novel with the names of exotic flowers, trees, animals and flowers. This shows the ongoing longing for Pakistan especially among such figures as Kaukab. There are many Kaukabs in England as a matter of fact. They have, unlike other and especially younger people, obviously failed to adapt themselves to the life in England. When Kaukab first arrives in England, she is shocked to see that England lacks blossom-headed parakeets, lorikeets, mynahs and bee-eaters. First she thinks this is because the English do not know anything about

agriculture. The way Pakistani people deal with agriculture is also exotic, Oriental, and thus, completely different from the way the Western people treat trees: “She knew that paradise flycatchers were heartbroken when coral trees were cut down and that the tiny sunbird would quarrel with a butterfly to feed on the lustrous hibiscus bloom that dwarfs them both”(95). Compared to Orient, England is a waste land: “And so she had written back home to ask for seeds, and seedlings and cuttings, none of which had flourished here, leaving the hoopoes and the blue-jays and the red-vented bulbuls circling above the clouds of England for want of somewhere to perch, and later she had wondered whether this country’s soil itself hadn’t been responsible for the failures and contemplated requesting sacks of Pakistani soil which was hospitable to everything as the century-old public parks and gardens of Lahore- planned and opened during colonial times—were said to testify” (96). She eats orange in the way all Pakistani people do; she eats it by dipping the segments in salt first. “The smell penetrates. In Pakistan it gave no trouble because the houses were—big and airy and nothing lingers. But here the rooms are small and closed up, and the smell refuses to shift” (105). England is where she cannot breathe.

The novel raises broader questions about the image of Islam and that of Muslim and this is related to the developments after 9/11. The Muslim suffering from the prejudiced attitudes of the non-Muslim is the focus in the conversations of the conservative migrant Pakistanis. It is also relevant simply because of the fact that their home geography has been shown as the place where Al-Qaeda has emerged. In other words, the peoples of the mentioned geography feel the burden of the responsibility for the terrorist attacks more compared to other Muslim communities all around the world. Nevertheless, they, like many Muslims, think that the propaganda against the Muslims following the 9/11 events is simply unfair:

These last few days have been very hard for Ateeka, though, because her sister in America was fondled and handcuffed by police for wearing her head-to-toe veil. It would soon be a hanging offence to be a Muslim anywhere in the world, it seems...In Portsmouth, Virginia. They stopped her [a girl in Islamic dress] as she walked towards the shops, and even though she explained she was wearing Islamic dress they asked her to uncover her face: when she refused they handcuffed her and searched her while she screamed “Stop touching me, stop touching me”. An *unmarried* girl: anything could have happened. (*The Maps*107)

Mah Jabin, Kaukab’s daughter, symbolizes the rejection of Eastern values and traditions as well as anything related to Pakistan. She aims to go to the States and she supports her decision as follows, turning Pakistan into a typical Oriental country resistant to change of any kind: “I’ve been to a country full of my own kind of people and seen what that is like so I thought I’d try a strange country full of strangers this time” (*The Maps* 110). And when Kaukab says “What’s wrong with Pakistan? I grew up there” (112), she disrespectfully answers “And look what happened to you, you fool” (112), humiliating not only her mother but all the traditions representing belongingness to Pakistan. She holds that the way Pakistani people and, in a sense, all the Easterners live is nothing but a monotony from which they draw no lessons: “Why do you people keep doing the same things over and over again expecting a different result?” (113). She regards the people of her own nation and culture as dehumanized figures who will never question the validity of “the so-called traditions that you have dragged into this country with you

like shit on your shoes” (114). For her, the Pakistani people are those who never can become themselves and behave authentically since they are from the beginning taught to restrict themselves, their instincts and all natural desires. If one wants to follow his/her instincts and desires, that is, his/her nature, everyone thinks there is something wrong with him/her (117). The restraints as imposed by Pakistani culture are clearly visible in the attitudes of Charag, the eldest son of the family who is expected to help his family get out of England after his graduation from the medical school. It is Charag who represents the suffering caused by in-betweenness as it is experienced by the migrant Pakistani. Besides it is Charag who firstly meets Suraya, another figure of tragedy as a Pakistani migrant woman. Suraya is one of such women frequently encountered in England’s migrant society, divorced by her husband and looking for a man to marry her so that she may get married to her previous husband again. She makes her purpose obvious enough, leading Charag to think that she is a very courageous woman compared to other members of her nation and culture for “The culture she shares with him is based on segregation, and on the denial and contempt of the human body, and in all probability this is the very first time she has ‘propositioned’ someone” (133). The fact that their first meeting occurs in lake while swimming naked is also interesting, which implies their hidden desire to reject this culture based on restrictions over flesh. Suraya’s search for a temporary husband is combined with Shamas’s desire for her. Shamas is aware that he should not do any harm to Suraya’s womanly honour because even in England when a Pakistani woman is seen with a man who is not her husband, this might cause very strict punishments and revenges: “A Pakistani man mounted the footpath and ran over his sister-in-law –repeatedly in broad daylight– because he suspected she was cheating on his brother [...] This was here in England and, according to the statistics, in one Pakistani province alone, a woman is murdered every thirty-eight hours solely because her virtue is in doubt” (136). The case of Chanda and Jugnu is nothing but a similar honour killing. However, he cannot restrain himself and as for Suraya, she yields to Shamas simply because of her tragic situation. From time to time she cannot help thinking that Allah might have forgotten women while establishing His religion and its rules; nevertheless, she immediately forces herself to forget such demonic thoughts:

Dear Allah, why can't I understand the reasons behind your laws? It's the man who deserves to be punished if he has uttered the word divorce as idle threat, in anger or while intoxicated, and, yes, the punishment for him is that he has to see his wife briefly become another man's property, being used by him. But why must the divorced wife be punished? Nothing is more abhorrent to a Muslim woman than the thought of being touched by a man other than her husband. She hides her body like a treasure. But if she wants her husband back she has to let another man touch her. (The Maps 166)

Even rape could be considered a wilful intercourse if the raped woman cannot find male witnesses who would say that the woman was really raped. Also, the divorce is so simple; it is enough for the husband to repeat the word “Talaq” thrice and then the wife is supposed to find another man to marry before she could marry her previous husband again. The novel’s comments about Islamic law especially in matters concerning women are nothing but ironic, even satirical. This is indicated by the implications encountered in various parts of the book that the laws of Allah are not to be questioned. Suraya has no guilt in the event of the divorce because it is her husband who divorced

her while he was drunk. However, not only the husband, but his family can blame Suraya since she cannot find some husband to marry in a short time, asking how much longer they are supposed to wait. Aslam contrasts the strict Islamic tradition of law with the tradition of the Sufis, who are “referred to as ‘the opposition party of Islam’” (191) and who include in their works radical female figures opposing the system and trying to build a new world. Aslam’s consideration of Islamic law as anti-democratic towards women is felt here once again. As already mentioned, Suraya’s aim in having a relation with Shamas is to persuade him to marry her so that she could remarry her previous husband. However, Shamas does not want to marry her simply because he finds the Islamic principle that a man can get married to four women nonsensical. When he goes to the mosque to find out whether there is another alternative for Suraya, he is shocked to find the imam having a homosexual relation with one of the young boys from the congregation. This event is significant in that it shows Pakistani society’s blind reliance on clerics. There are people who accuse the same imam for a similar abuse; however, these claims and accusations are covered up because of the fact that the revelation of them would harm not only Islam but Pakistan, that it would lead to the closing down of mosque, thus preventing the young from being informed about the dangers of having a relation with white English girls, that the Muslim girls would not be convinced about the necessity of marrying cousins, and that the Hindu, the Jew and the Christian would enjoy seeing Islam being dishonoured. (*The Maps*235). Then, the fact that it is women who accuse, becomes a valid reason why the Muslim men never take it seriously. Aslam describes a Muslim society that strongly supports clerics even when they carry out scandalous acts. Another point to be emphasized here is that the Pakistani community in England is a close-knit one and the information about almost everything that interests this community is spread fast. That is the main reason why Shamas is brutally beaten by those who hear about his relation with Suraya. Islamic fundamentalism, which is one of the main themes raised by the novel, makes itself apparent in the newspapers, so does the tragedy of migrants experienced all around the world:

Shamas glances at the newspaper in front of him...*A seventeen-year-old Palestinian girl was beaten to death in the Gaza Strip by her father for having lost her virginity...The Bahamian authorities found 56 Haitian migrants and the body of another on a desolate shore six days after their sailing boat foundered, the US coastguard said yesterday. The survivors said about 130 people were on board when the 30ft boat left Haiti for Miami ten days ago... In Saudi Arabia, a fifteen-year-old boy has been publicly beheaded for changing his religion from Islam to Christianity.* (*The Maps* 281)

Sijal Sarfraz is of the opinion that *Maps for Lost Lovers* “presents a reductive view of Islam and reinforces its stereotypical image of fundamentalism” and that “Aslam’s perception of Islam has reminiscences of Orientalists” (503). On the other hand, Charles R. Larson claims that “Aslam treads on difficult territory. His novel makes it clear Islamic fundamentalism cannot survive in the face of Western values” (63). Such arguments might be considered right as far as the examples given in the novel are concerned; however, it must be borne in mind that Aslam also seems to represent a positive image of Islam and faith from time to time: “Aslam’s progressive, but also sympathetic and immanent, critique of religion presents religion as the very antithesis of

an opiate: instead, it emerges as a genuine cause for psychic and conceptual struggle” (Abbas 454).

In the novel, the murder of Jugnu and Chanda is depicted as an event that results from the haunting traditional and cultural domination of Pakistan. Both Jugnu and Chanda are victims of their past lives in Pakistan and their violation of cultural perceptions of honour. By turning them into ghosts and/or spirits who are claimed to walk about the very places where they used to live, Aslam seems to warn against the dangers of fundamentalism and teach a lesson about the necessity of tolerance towards those who might not think like ourselves, which he finds closer to an outlook based on sacredness or true Islam: “Never one to shy from controversial or difficult topics, Aslam is unequivocal in his condemnation of superstitions associated with Islam, which harm many people, particularly women” (Chambers 137). At the end of the novel, Shamas is represented at a loss because of rejecting Suraya although he has impregnated her. However, he is now regretful and he realizes that the fruit of the passion he experienced with Suraya will not remain as a disgraceful thing but something that will protect Suraya and help her pains to lessen: “Aslam’s novel mourns the loss of love which is trapped by the laws of Islam; or rather by an interpretation of Islam which does not only supply meaning to an individual life but defines the borders of a Pakistani diaspora in Britain. Set in a postmodernist world of determining structures, the novel explores how the laws of Islam shape the lives of lovers and murderers alike” (Lemke 172). Although Aslam’s novel teaches his lessons from within a microcosm of Pakistan built in England, it must not be forgotten that his vision is much broader, encompassing the whole world. His continual references to treasures, images, motifs and works of Oriental cultures, his deliberate attempt to create an East in the middle of the West, above all serve such an emphasis.

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**The Language of Suffering in Anne Killigrew's
"On the Birthday of Queen Katherine" and *Penelope to Ulysses***

Laura Linker

Abstract: Anne Killigrew's posthumously published *Poems* (1686), the only known collection of verse written in her short lifetime, includes several important depictions of Catherine of Braganza, Charles II's foreign, Catholic queen. A royalist, Killigrew admired the queen, and in at least three of the poems in the collection, "To the Queen", "On the Birthday of Queen Katherine", and *Penelope to Ulysses*, she features sympathetic figures with strong resemblances to Catherine, publicly targeted for her religion, barrenness, and Portuguese heritage by her enemies. This paper closely examines the language of suffering in "On the Birthday to Queen Katherine" and *Penelope to Ulysses* and argues that Killigrew, also persecuted at court, shows affinity with the queen, imaginatively giving her a voice to express sorrow in her poetry.

Keywords: Anne Killigrew; Catherine of Braganza; Charles II; Restoration; "Upon the Birthday of Queen Katherine"; *Penelope to Ulysses*

Anne Killigrew's posthumously published *Poems* (1686), the only known collection of verse written in her short lifetime, includes several important depictions of Catherine of Braganza, Charles II's foreign, Catholic queen. A royalist, Killigrew admired the queen, and in at least three of the poems in the collection, "To the Queen", "On the Birthday of Queen Katherine", and *Penelope to Ulysses*, she features sympathetic figures with strong resemblances to Catherine, publicly targeted for her religion, barrenness, and Portuguese heritage by her enemies. Whereas in the fragmentary poem "To the Queen" the speaker concentrates on the queen's majesty, in the latter two poems, the speakers dwell on sorrow. Likened to Thalestris, the Amazon warrior-queen, the figure for Catherine in "To the Queen" appears triumphant:

Alone she stands for Virtue's Cause,
When all decry, upholds her Laws:
When to Banish her is the Strife,
Keeps her unexil'd in her Life [.] (ll. 45-48)

In this poem, the queen overcomes the "Persecutions of the Age" (l. 52), while in "On the Birthday" and *Penelope to Ulysses*, such persecutions cause the speakers to feel melancholy. Killigrew concentrates on sorrow in the dream vision of "On the Birthday" and the forlorn voice of a neglected wife in *Penelope to Ulysses*. This paper closely examines the language of suffering in "On the Birthday" and *Penelope to Ulysses* and argues that Killigrew, also persecuted at court, shows affinity with the queen, imaginatively giving her a voice to express sorrow in her poetry.

Jennifer Keith explains that Killigrew imagines Catherine as a saint, a Christ-like figure in "On the Birthday" (60-1). Catherine reappears in a very different context as a heartbroken and angry queen, Penelope, in *Penelope to Ulysses*. The latter, adapted

from Ovid's *Heroides*, is a fragment likely unfinished owing to Killigrew's early death from smallpox in June 1685. The figure of Penelope imaginatively voices Catherine's bitterness at her husband's neglect for other women. Killigrew employs Penelope as a mask for Catherine, who suffered public mistreatment by her rivals at court and her husband, Charles II, who had many powerful mistresses.

Both Killigrew and Catherine of Braganza endured humiliation. As Keith, Harriette Andreadis, Carol Barash, Robert C. Evans, and Marilyn L. Williamson have reminded readers, Killigrew entered a contentious and often hostile world of late seventeenth-century poetics, particularly for women, and Killigrew expresses the same feelings in her poems about being a woman writer that she does in her poems about the queen, often attacked during the 1670s and 80s. Catherine faced political enemies plotting her downfall, while Killigrew drew ridicule as a woman writer, which she laments in her best known poem, "*Upon the saying that my Verses were made by another*" (Barash 164). Killigrew invokes the poet Katherine Philips and defends her right to compose poetry, alluding to the coterie poetics and "Society of Friendship" that Philips formed in the 1640s. Considered a "queen" among the women poets writing in the middle and late seventeenth century, Philips inspired women writing poetry even into the eighteenth century, and like many women writers following Philips, Killigrew consciously models her poetry after her predecessor.¹ Both writers were known royalists with strong ties to the Stuarts.

Killigrew's most celebratory poem to Catherine, "On the Birthday", begins in literal darkness. Writing at a tumultuous political moment, when England verged again on civil war in the 1680s, Killigrew employs darkness to refocus the reader's attention on a dream vision given to the speaker that is both deeply religious and political. The queen appears as a divine figure, and royal symbols hold Christian significance to reinforce Killigrew's support for the queen. The "Empire of the Night" (l. 1)² covers the landscape. The sky lacks stars, and there is a "churlish Storm" (l. 3) outside while the speaker sleeps inside. The poem moves spatially into the landscape of the speaker's mind. Despite the chaotic weather, the speaker says she "slumbr'd" (l. 5) and relates a dream vision from Heaven, situating the poem in a specifically Christian context.

Many of Killigrew's poems draw on religious imagery and language. The dream vision in "On the Birthday" alludes both to the second coming of Christ told in *Revelation* and the birth of Christ, directly referenced in the poem: "...such a Sable Morne/Was that, in which the *Son of God* was borne" (ll. 19-20). The "cheerful Bells" (l. 3) ringing through the storm on earth parallel the "like things" heard and shown to her, including "Harps Angels did singing fly" (l. 7) in the dream. The musical sounds of the church bells contrast the noisy storm and complement the heavenly "Royal Ensigns" (l. 12). The angels circulate a "Throne, and Royal Robes display'd" (l. 9), as though the angels—like the queen's ladies—attend the throne of the Queen of Heaven, who wears a splendid gown. It is a specifically royalist vision, the symbols indicating Catherine's divine right. It is also a Catholic dream, strongly alluding to Catherine's religion. There appears "a Massy Cross" (l. 10) on the throne, and the speaker tells us this vision made her weep, likely owing to Catherine's suffering from anti-Catholics during Charles II's reign. The Catholic Duke of York, later James II, experienced the same anti-Catholic feeling during his brief rule, and his attempts to revoke the Test Act, which prevented

¹ See Barash's discussion of Killigrew and the *femme forte* poetics in her *Poems* (164-74).

² All quotations from Killigrew's verse taken from Margaret J. M. Ezell's edition, "*My Rare Wit Killing Sin*": *Poems of a Restoration Courtier*.

Catholics from holding public office, further antagonized his opponents and created more ill will for Catherine as well (Harris, *Restoration*, 580-5). Lacking knowledge of the English court when she arrived in 1662, Catherine soon became a target not only for her faith, but also for her foreign manners, hairstyle, dress, and language. False tales about the queen and the Duke of York came to a crisis point during the Exclusion Crisis and Popish Plots in the late 1670s and early 80s, when a series of conspiracies began to threaten both Catherine's marriage and the succession (Harris, *Oxford Dictionary*).

In Killigrew's poem, "On the Birthday", religion and ritual form part of a larger divine plan. Rather than rejecting these symbols of heaven, the speaker suggests that they should be read instead as emblems of salvation. Their signification becomes increasingly important to the speaker's understanding and relaying of the vision as the poem progresses:

I wept: and earnestly implor'd to know,
Why Royal Ensigns were disposed so.
An Angel said, The Emblem thou hast seen,
Denotes the Birthday of a Saint and Queen. (ll. 11-4)

The poem encourages the reader to see Catherine's faith as a testament to her virtue, to look beyond the politics and to Heaven's expansive toleration for the Catholic emblems and network of saints. According to the angel, Catherine is a saint on earth sent by God, who gave the world a patient, divine-like figure implicitly likened to another divine queen, the Queen of Heaven, Mary. Mary figures more prominently in the Catholic than in Protestant faiths and would have held special significance for Catherine. Killigrew both flatters the queen and promotes a theology of toleration rather than dogma, a spirituality that extends to all Christians rather than just one sect.

Likely aware, however, of alienating anti-Catholic readers, Killigrew firmly maintains a Protestant context. The figure addressing the speaker's questions is a "Glorious Minister" (l. 15), not a priest, though he also appears as a supernatural agent, an angel of God endowed with divine knowledge. The speaker wonders why "Goodness and Bliss together do reside/In Heaven and thee, why then on Earth below/These two combin'd so rarely do we know?" (ll. 16-8) Killigrew combines theological speculation, political associations, and philosophical questions about the nature of suffering in her speaker's questions. The Angel replies that God ordains it to be so: "Heaven so decrees: and such a Sable Morn/Was that, in which the *Son of God* was borne" (ll. 19-20). Like the Old Testament figure, Job, who asks God why he suffers, the speaker receives no real answer. The "decree" from Heaven sounds more like Calvinist doctrine, a rhetorical strategy Killigrew may have employed to convince Dissenters, often hostile both to Catholics and Queen Catherine, reading her work to follow a divinely ordained cosmos. In Calvinism, humans cannot know this plan and must therefore read "signs" of election or damnation in the known world. In the poem, the speaker communicates no real knowledge of the divine "decree" beyond what is revealed biblically, that Christ, the savior, will bring light to the world.

While Killigrew does not steep the poem in either Catholic or Calvinist theologies, she alludes to both, drawing on the likenesses between the faiths, both of which rely on symbols, if not interpretations, of grace. The dark imagery in the poem, the "Sable Morn" (l. 19), like the "Empire of the Night" (l. 1), suggests humans' lack of divine knowledge. Only Christ's birth is revealed to humans. The poem offers Christian assurance of a better hereafter and virtuous models like the sainted queen as divine

figures to be revered in this life. Killigrew thus combines faiths, an attempt to be more inclusive of differing theologies in a hostile world.

Nevertheless, the speaker mourns in "On the Birthday". The images of the storm and chaos cause the speaker to weep, and an angel commands her to quieten: "Then Mortal wipe thine Eyes, and cease to rave,/God darkn'd Heaven, when He the World did save" (ll. 21-2). The speaker's pathos reflects the chaotic storm outside and contrasts the peace of the divine message and vivid emblems of the cross and throne belonging to Christ and his saints. The poetic imagery of the "churlish Storm" (l. 4) and the royal emblems, "Empire of Night" (l. 1) "troubl'd Sky" (l. 8), and the "Sable Morn" (l. 19) also resonate politically as the question of the "divine right of monarchs" dominated the 1680s.

"On the Birthday" is not the only poem in which Killigrew connects personal with national sorrow. In "On my Aunt Mrs. A.K. Drown'd under London-Bridge, in the QUEENS Bardge, Anno 1641", the speaker connects her virtuous aunt's fatal accident to the chaos of civil war, when many of the royalist supporters died tragically and, to courtiers like the Killigrews, without cause:

When angry Heav'n extinguisht her fair Light,
It seem'd to say, *Nought's Precious in my sight;*
As I in Waves this Paragon have drown'd,
The Nation next, and King I will confound. (ll. 16-19)

The date of the accident, 1641, is thematically crucial. Killigrew's aunt, Anne Killigrew Kirke (1607-1641), was a maid of honor to Queen Henrietta Maria (Ezell 90). Her drowning occurs at the beginning of the civil wars in the 1640s and signals the coming crisis, an omen portending chaos and war in the poem. Killigrew also employs apocalyptic language in "On the Birthday". This time, however, the queen is a healing figure that portends salvation. Her presence signifies spiritual renewal in Christ's coming, when light travels from heaven to brighten a dark world. In "On my aunt", the speaker shows bitterness that Heaven leaves the world in the darkness of war, seemingly abandoning those on earth. It is a remarkably unchristian poem, bleaker in its questioning of suffering than the hopeful promise of heaven conveyed in "On the Birthday", which ends with salvation rather than doom. Marilyn L. Williamson points out that Killigrew projects an angry, bitter voice in her poetry (78), one highly attuned to the political events of the late seventeenth century, when England was in flux. "On my Aunt" offers much less assurance of a benevolent God than does "On the Birthday of Queen Katherine", but it resonates throughout in the *Poems*, where the language of suffering in "The Miseries of Man" or the "Discontent", among others, communicate the poet's darkest vision of human nature.

The fragmentary *Penelope to Ulysses* features another bleak portrait, this time depicting a different queen figure, Penelope, who rails against the gods and her absent husband for leaving her. Catherine may have had the patience of a saint, but the poem shows a very real human character in this queen figure, one longing for her husband. If Penelope is meant to resemble Catherine, then it is a less idealized but more "real" portrait of a neglected wife whose husband has left her for another woman, abandoning her to lonely exile, as there was no divorce, either in Penelope's world or

Catherine's.³ The poem is not Killigrew's only one about marriage. In "*On a young Lady Whose LORD was Travelling*", Killigrew examines the experience of marriage where even the fairest, most aristocratic, and most virtuous of wives suffers neglect: "Proud from their Parents Bondage they have broke/Though justly freed, she still does wear the Yoke" (ll. 21-22). Both a "Noble Virgin, and a Wife" (l. 14), Celinda, the young bride, is left alone with her mother, with whom she attends church, praying with her so frequently that mother and daughter appear as the real couple of the poem: "You'd think two Bodies did One Soul obey: /Like Angels thus they do reflect their Bliss./And their bright Virtues each the other kiss" (ll. 28-30). Celinda is neglected by her husband, who leaves her in the country to enjoy "Foreign parts" (l. 15). The speaker encourages the husband to come back to his wife: "Return young Lord, while thou abroad dost roam./The World to see, thou loosest Heaven at Home" (ll. 31-2). Such a construction of marriage was fairly common in late seventeenth-century England, and Killigrew may not herself have looked forward to the prospect. She sympathizes with neglected wives in her poetry, including Catherine, whose husband's affairs were the most notorious at court and set a pattern for his courtiers. The diarist Samuel Pepys records that the king "cannot command himself in the presence of a woman he likes" (Pepys July 27, 1667; 356) and was therefore subject to much criticism and ridicule, as was Catherine, who endured the affairs and slights with quiet patience.

Charles II's court mistresses do not directly appear in Killigrew's verse, likely owing to the unseemliness of the women's promiscuity for an unmarried maid of honor at court like Killigrew. Any discussion of Queen Catherine's life, however, must include some discussion of these women, who dominated the court and her marriage to Charles II.⁴ They appear as shadowy figures collapsed into one "type" in *Penelope to Ulysses*, the "captive Dame" (l. 21), a seductive *femme fatale* figure that prevents Ulysses from returning to Penelope, his rightful wife and queen. Like many Ovidian epistles, *Penelope to Ulysses* is intensely personal, an intimate communication of anguish and heartbreak. In the classical text, Penelope waits decades for her husband, the King of Ithaca, to return from the Trojan Wars. Often prevented by catastrophe or the gods from returning to Penelope, Ulysses, the wiliest figure in the *Iliad* and not unlike the strategizing Charles II, also becomes distracted by beautiful women, including Calypso, among others. Sometimes Ulysses is held captive beyond his will, other times he has no wish to leave.

Catherine could not compete with the beautiful women Charles II kept at court, and Killigrew imagines Catherine's sadness in *Penelope to Ulysses*, where the speaker begs her husband to return to her in the first stanza:

Return my dearest Lord, at length return,
Let me no longer your sad absence mourn,
Ilium in Dust, does no more Work afford,
No more Employment for your Wit or Sword. (ll. 1-4)

³ The idea was proposed a number of times during Charles's reign, but Catherine's inability to remarry would have been assured given her assumed and well-known barrenness. As well, she would have lost the throne and likely had no community once Charles remarried.

⁴ See Susan Shifrin's discussion of these women and the power they exerted over the court and in art (95-105). Both Sonya Wynne (171-90) and Sharon Kettering (67-87) also examine their political influence, which damaged Charles II's image at home and abroad. Nancy Klein Macguire argues for the supremacy of the Louise de Keroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth, who seriously considered herself a rival to Queen Catherine and believed Charles II might really divorce his wife to marry her (247-73).

Likely written towards the end of Charles II's reign, when Killigrew was in her early twenties, the poem's first stanza suggests that the king's work was finished. It will be James's task to secure his throne and employ his "wits and sword", neither of which he wielded very well, to keep it. Killigrew eerily anticipates the Glorious Revolution, perhaps sensing that more war, chaos, and violence would follow Charles II's death. Killigrew often ends her poems in anticipation of a future disaster, a likely reflection of the uncertainty at court in the 1680s. In "Upon the saying", she likens herself to Cassandra, whose prophesy about the destruction of Troy was "believ'd too late" (l. 64).

Penelope to Ulysses takes place after Troy burns down and targets the adulterous woman the speaker blames for its fall, Helen of Troy. The poem changes tone after the first stanza, the speaker becoming less melancholic and more vengeful as the poem progresses. Penelope questions the gods and their inability to destroy the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, whom she sees as the source of the Trojan war and the chaos that has kept her husband away from her:

Why did not the fore-seeing Gods destroy,
Helen the Firebrand both of *Greece* and *Troy*,
E're yet the Fatal Youth her Face had seen,
E're lov'd and born away the wanton Queen? (ll. 5-8)

No doubt Catherine had a similar perspective on Charles II's mistresses, often blamed for conflicts abroad and taking away the king's attention from important state matters and his wife. The figure of this "wanton" Helen refers to many of the court mistresses, and Ilium/Troy represents London, a city ravaged and on the verge of another civil war: "Why *Ilium* ruin'd? Rise, O rise again!/Again great City flourish from thine Urn: /For though thou'rt burn'd, my Lord does not return" (ll. 16-17). Even fire, plague, and the possibility of war cannot entice Ulysses/Charles II back to Penelope/Catherine or a "rightful" place by her side. Penelope mourns her husband's folly, and the poem seems less about Ulysses and his voyage home than about Charles II's relationships and perceived faults:

Sometimes I think, (but O most Cruel Thought,)
That, for thy Absence, th'art thyself in fault:
That thou art captiv'd by some captive Dame,
Who, when thou fired'st *Troy*, did thee inflame
And now with her thou leads't thy am'rous Life,
Forgetful, and despising of thy Wife. (ll. 19-24)

Killigrew ties the destructive flames of war figuratively with the heat of lust and contextually with the burning flames of the London Fire, which was often attributed to divine punishment of Charles II's many adulteries. The burned Troy/Ilium represents the Town that takes Ulysses/Charles II away from Penelope/Catherine. Though Catherine likely did not literally wish for the Town/London to burn down in the Great Fire, she must have wished that the city's tragic, destructive events could have brought Charles closer to her and away from the "am'rous Life" (l. 23) of Town values that religious writers often connected to the perceived divine destruction of London in the 1660's. Even national catastrophes of plague and fire, however, could not make Charles II less "Forgetful" (l. 24) or more faithful to his queen.

Both “On the Birthday” and *Penelope to Ulysses* demonstrate Killigrew’s continued interest at voicing her protest against the libertinism of the age. Whether or not Killigrew wanted to publish her verse remains unknown. Henry Killigrew, Anne Killigrew’s father and editor, may have published her *Poems* at the prompting of other writers, including Dryden, who writes his famous elegy praising her art, “To the Pious Memory of the Accomplisht Young Lady Mrs. Anne Killigrew, Excellent in the two Sister-Arts of Poesie, and Painting. An Ode”. Dryden’s poem was included with the collection and alludes to the seriousness of Killigrew’s verse in such poems as “On the Birthday”. Dryden’s speaker explains that Killigrew “Mov’d with the Heaven’s Majestic Pace” (l. 9) and was “call’d to more Superior Bliss” (l. 10), walking “with Seraphims” (l. 11) as a “Candidate of Heav’n” (l. 22), a description not unlike Killigrew’s depiction of Catherine in “On the Birthday”. Dryden contrasts Killigrew’s verse with the profane poetry of the age, “Debas’d to each obscene and impious use,/Whose Harmony was first ordain’d Above” (ll. 59-60). The muse figure, now “made prostitute and profligate” (l. 59), causes most poets to live in a “*Second Fall*” (l. 66) of a “lubric and adult’rate age” (l. 63) of “Foreign Filth” (l. 69), an allusion to Charles II’s French mistresses and the influence of libertinism at court.⁵ Killigrew, whose “Wit was more than Man, her Innocence a Child” (l. 70), appears like the “Matchless Orinda”, or Philips, also referenced in the poem (l. 162). A tribute to Killigrew’s poetry, Dryden’s elegy ends in the apocalyptic vision of a returning victorious God, echoing Killigrew’s images in several poems, including “On the Birthday”.

The elegy also includes an extended portrait of “Our Phoenix Queen [...] protray’d too so bright” (l. 134) by Killigrew:
 Beauty alone could Beauty take so right:
 Her Dress, her Shape, her matchless Grace,
 Were all observ’d, as well as heav’nly Face.
 With such a Peerless Majesty she stands,
 As in that Day she took from Sacred hands
 The Crown; ‘mong num’rous Heroines was seen,
 More yet in Beauty, than in Rank, the Queen! (ll. 135-40)

Like Killigrew, Dryden idealizes Catherine, figured here as a rising phoenix, the symbol of the eternal bird rising from ashes of destruction. The image appears like the Troy/London connection Killigrew draws in *Penelope to Ulysses*. A Catholic, Dryden wrote his elegy on Killigrew most likely because of their shared royalist politics. He gives her verse credit not only for its merit but also because it strongly supports the Stuart monarchy and champions the queen, the greatest beauty of the realm owing to her inner worth, a quality Dryden saw both Catherine and Killigrew sharing.

Killigrew gives voice to a silent, patient, and suffering queen. As Barash suggests, “[s]everal of her poems speak directly to members of the royal family or to aristocratic women, who figure as the sources of authority the female poet cannot claim for herself” (165). However, Killigrew aligns all the queenly figures in her poetry, granting them agency and the authority to speak in her verse. Catherine, who could not really speak for herself, was silent as a foreign “other”, even at her own court, and she may even have looked to women poets like Killigrew to voice her anger at the

⁵ Both John Spurr and James Grantham Turner examine libertine profligacy and its influence over Restoration writers. See especially Spurr’s discussion, 197-209.

mistreatment she received. In Killigrew's poems, the queen found a champion to empathize with her plight and give her a language of suffering. As Killigrew reminds her readers in "Upon the saying", the world might "Conspire" (l. 59) against women, but "But let 'em Rage" (l. 59). She seeks a higher purpose, to compose "Divinely Inspired" (l. 62) verse. Killigrew desires only "To speak the Truth" (l. 64), willingly accepting the world's disbelief as she upholds the queen she supported.

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The Representation of Dystopia in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*

Özge Özkan

Abstract: The idea of a catastrophe threatening the human race with extinction is a well-known theme in the scope of apocalyptic science fiction, as was pioneered by Mary Shelley with her novel *The Last Man*. Regarding the catastrophe in *The Year of the Flood*, Margaret Atwood provides an alternative to a widespread scenario that has mostly remained a source for fascination, namely the survival of mankind after divine punishment. In this respect, the flood alluded to in Atwood's novel reminds the reader of the narrative pertaining to Noah's Ark and the flood given in sacred texts. Furthermore, what makes *The Year of the Flood* unique is that it combines nature, natural elements and science fiction in a single text, which enables the novel to be considered an excellent representation of interweaving apocalyptic science fiction with ecocriticism.

Keywords: Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, Science Fiction, Dystopia, Ecocriticism

As the world becomes both more populated and polluted, and limited natural resources are consumed to the point of exhaustion each day, the concern for the future of the world and the protection of the environment and animals has recently become a central source of debate. Apart from scientific evaluations estimating the consequences of global issues such as the rapid change in climate, the topic has received much attention among both literary critics and the academia, and in accordance with the changes in late twentieth century literature and criticism, authors such as Cheryll Glotfelty, William Howarth, William Rueckert and Michel J. McDowell have contributed to the advancement of a new genre, ecocriticism. Likewise, as well as serving as a stimulus for especially writers of science fiction in terms of imaging how such a world can manage to survive at all, the growing awareness that the world is on the verge of extinction has recently become a source of inspiration as to finding new alternatives of living, hence the imaginary creation of the future's dystrophic world. In this sense, *The Year of the Flood* provides the readers with a vivid illustration of how humanity creates a new life on the dystrophic world in her novel *The Year of the Flood*, which could be considered a striking representation of how nature, natural elements and science fiction can be intermingled successfully in a single piece of literary work. Therefore, it will be the major concern of this article to analyze the relationship between dystopia and ecocriticism with reference to Atwood's novel.

Looking at the historical traces of the past both actually and fictive will illustrate what inspired Atwood to blend a religious myth with an apocalyptic scenario in *The Year of the Flood*, thereby reframing the motif of the deity punishing sinners for committing the crime of disobedience in sacred texts. From its religious origins, the idea of a catastrophe threatening the human race with extinction is a consistently utilized theme in apocalyptic science fiction, a sub-genre pioneered by Mary Shelley in her novel *The Last Man*. In *The Year of the Flood*, Margaret Atwood provides an alternative to a widespread catastrophic scenario, which has remained a source for fascination for

readers, namely the survival of humanity after divine punishment. Moreover, Atwood not only makes use of sacred texts with reference to the deity's punishment of mortals with flood, but also draws a parallel between other parts of these texts such as the creation of universe, as well as hinting at the representation of Adam and Eve with the Gardeners who are instructed by Adams and Evesin the novel.

In this respect, the flood alluded to in Atwood's novel reminds the reader of the Biblical story of Noah's Ark and the flood, when man is punished a second time after Adam and Eve were cast out of paradise. Moreover, God's hesitance to trust in the ultimate salvation of humanity by their own free will could thus be traced to this traditional narrative of the The Flood, implying that it was the disobedience of mortals which caused God's wrath, hence the curse of the catastrophe, which remains a recurrent motif throughout history. The idea of disobedience is then intricately connected to the prospect of catastrophe. In unison with what has hitherto been mentioned, the flood narrative in Atwood's novel functions to demonstrate how the flood is transformed from a historical form of divine retribution into an apocalyptic man-made project intended to erase the existence of mankind with viral infection referred to as the Waterless Flood.

Concerning the virus that is depicted to have infected the Earth in the novel, what should be of major concern is that Atwood strives to emphasize the possibility of enduring in real life what has hitherto been presented merely as fiction unless people put an end to their anthropocentrism. In essence, she is arguing that humanity will cause its own downfall. This extinction or downfall of humanity is directly related to many factors which have damaged the earth including: the usurpation of natural resources like water and minerals, as well as the harm done to plants and animals. Furthermore, owing to the pollution of the earth, the world is on the verge of witnessing the extinction of several more species each day, the destruction of rainforests, poisoning of animals and contamination of the soil due to toxic and nuclear waste. When all this is taken into consideration, it is not surprising that Atwood declares that what her novel depicts as dystopian fiction will be unavoidable if these circumstances do not change. As she states, "what if we continue on the road we are already on? How slippery is the slope?" (*Writing Oryx and Crake* 286).

Apart from the major factors threatening the future of the world mentioned above, global warming also poses a great threat, bringing about a severe change in the climate that can lead to food scarcity, and eventually, water shortages. The relation of such changes to the influence of technological advancements upon life on Earth has increasingly become a widespread subject of discussion, and not only scientists, but also literary critics have been eager to supply the public with new perspectives on this overwhelming issue concerning the future of mankind. Likewise, *The Year of the Flood* strikes the reader's attention regarding the threat of extinction.

Before commencing with the analysis of Atwood's novel, it is essential to discuss how the effects of global warming, which may end with draught and famine, will shape the lives of future generations. As is explained by Schneider: "In 1988 the environment was as big a story as politics, AIDS or baseball" (iv). He continues that "heat, draught, air pollution and forest fires filled the front pages of newspapers, newsweeklies, and TV news cover series formonths" (iv). This meant that "the greenhouse effect and global warming had emerged from academia and government offices to mingle with popular culture" (iv). The greenhouse effect referred to above is a term to "describe the increased warming of earth's surface and lower atmosphere due to increased levels of carbon dioxide and other atmospheric gases" (13). Moreover, it has

crucial importance for the future since many scientists are concerned “whether the amount of these greenhouse gases will soon be increased by human actions to levels harmful to life on earth” (13).

In unison with the concern stated by scientists, as to the extent of the dangers that threaten the world such as the greenhouse effect and global warming, an increasing awareness of environmentalism has grown thanks to the “active radicalism” of organizations, such as Greenpeace, who actively campaign for the conservation of the world’s ecology by “promoting recycling” (Garrard 20). The environment is threatened by many factors, among which pollution seems to be quite destructive in terms of the extent of harm done to the environment, as is mentioned below:

The most alarming of all man’s assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil initiates not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues which is for the most part irreversible. (Carson in Garrard 95)

Therefore, taking all the factors hitherto mentioned into consideration, it is hard to imagine what the future will hold for the next generations, as it is most likely that the world itself will eventually face extinction by the tremendous impact of an impending catastrophe. This catastrophe may result from an extensive change in climate, which would lead to the shortage of many natural resources, including water. In fact, what life will be like in the future is a topic that has attracted much attention, and literary writers have also had their share in making predictions of the future as is the case in many science fiction novels. The prospect of how the world will come to an end has stirred the imagination of many writers and as a result, novels about dystopia and apocalypse have gained in popularity. In this sense, in order to be able to analyse *The Year of the Flood* in terms of dystopia, a brief introduction to the recent developments in science fiction and a general description of what is referred to as dystopia will be given.

In this respect, science fiction has attracted much attention in terms of its engagement with a wide spectrum for imagination, creation, and alternation. The allure of science fiction may be considered a sign of science fiction’s potential to prophesize future technological advancements, reflecting the fact that it has a prominent place in the interaction between literature and science. Likewise, the idea of dystopia, which is “the negative of utopia”, is represented in science fiction as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which the reader lived” (Sargent in Murphy 473). Outstanding examples of dystopia novels such as Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* and George Orwell’s *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* deal with the topics of “condemnation of consumer capitalism” and the “censure of nightmarish government power” respectively (474).

In fact, Atwood also reflects on the outcome of consumer capitalism in her novel, as she elaborately combines her sensitivity towards environmental concerns with the depiction of how scientific research and profit are interrelated, as in the case of genetic modification corporations whose experiments are supported at all costs notwithstanding their misuse of animals and side effects of drugs. Furthermore, the government policy maintains a private police force called CorpSeCorps (corporation security corps) to maintain absolute authority. Moreover, cloning animals has an essential role among scientific experiments as well, hence the bioengineered creation of

new species such as the “rakunk”, a cross between a raccoon and a skunk, “mo’hair, “ which is sheep with human hair , “the pigoon” which is “pig with human brain tissue” and “the liobam, a “lion-sheep splice [...] commissioned by the Lion Isaiahists in order to force the advent of the Peaceable Kingdom” (YF 112).

Moreover, Atwood strives to show the folly of presuming that man is superior to all other creations, just as Adam One preaches in *The Year of the Flood*: “why do we think that everything on Earth belongs to us, while in reality we belong to Everything?” (63). That the novel criticizes the human incapability to grasp the unity in nature is also supported by Kohlke, who maintains that “[t]o believe ourselves set above all other life as masters of the universe, instrumentalising other beings rather than regarding them as companion species, leads to an ethical and existential dead end, and eventually the expendability of humanity itself” (65). Therefore, the dystopia presented in the novel could be regarded as the virtual representation of the unavoidable end of the world if humanity insists on continuing to be egocentric.

Apart from the particular vision of dystopia discussed above, the trope of the apocalypse has also attracted much attention in other recently published works of fiction. Apocalyptic fiction is “a new literary genre” deriving its name from “the Greek *Apo-calyptein*, meaning ‘to unveil’”, bringing about the concept of “apocalyptic literature” as “the form of a revelation of the end of history”, and “apocalypticism” as “a genre born out of crisis” (Thompson in Garrard 86). In fact, apocalyptic writing has a long history, as in the case of Paul Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* published in 1972. Ehrlich’s theory was that “overpopulation would bring about environmental collapse, international instability and nuclear war in the mid-1980s”, believing that “three of the four apocalyptic horsemen—war, pestilence and famine would be the result of failure to regulate birth rates” (Ehrlich in Garrard 96).

Moreover, apocalyptic writing is closely connected to science fiction, which “is often considered to be dominant twentieth-century site for the expression of visions of apocalypse and catastrophe, something that might seem paradoxical for a genre generally associated with the ideas of scientific progress and technological utopianism” (Mousoutzanis 458). However, it should be noted that progress in this sense does not refer to the improvement of an existing system, but on the contrary, the destruction of that system, since “progress implies the destruction of an existing state of affairs so that it can be replaced by a new one” (458). In this sense, it is no wonder that science fiction feeds on the intersection between progress and technology, as “the convergence of science fiction and catastrophe may therefore be interpreted in terms of their shared relationship to modern conceptions of progress and technology” (458).

As mentioned above, the idea of a plague destroying mankind was first introduced in Mary Shelley’s novel *The Last Man*: “The first “last man” novel published in English, Shelley’s text, which staged the extinction of the human race by a plague, anticipated the “viral apocalypse” subgenre that was to figure prominently in later texts such as Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Masque of the Red Death” (1842), [...] and Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* (2003)” (Mousoutzanis 458-9). As is the case in Shelley’s *The Last Man* and Atwood’s novel, the apocalypse takes place because of the human incapacity to care for the ecology: “Texts like these represent the apocalypse as the result of either a lack of sensitivity to the planet’s ecology or the inability of social systems to respond to environmental needs” (459).

Concerning the apocalypse in *The Year of the Flood*, the novel fundamentally consists of a postmodern rewriting of the story of Noah’s Ark, which plays on the theme of retribution with water. Nevertheless, the Flood is not the first catastrophe in the

history of the human race, since the Fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis, due to their disobedience of eating the forbidden fruit, hence their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, was “in Western Europe arguably the first real apocalypse, in the course of which not just life, but eternal life was lost and a disobedient animal won the first skirmish” (Lisboa 53).

As to the idea of a catastrophe by a devastating Flood mentioned previously, the novel’s structure is undergirded by this religious myth; however, contrary to its biblical connotations, it is not a God-stricken catastrophe that human beings have to survive in the novel, but a man-made project designed to erase the existence of humanity through a virus caused by a pill called “BylssPluss” (*YF* 24). The novel’s time span is from “Year Five” to “Year Twenty-Five”, “The Year of the Flood when Crake releases the virulent virus” (Morrison 16). However, the term Flood referenced constantly in the novel reminds the reader of its origins in the Bible, when man is punished again after the First Sin: “in the Genesis, in one of the moments of his most blatant pique, God punishes the world with a flood, Noah builds his Ark, and the rest is history (or at least myth)” (Lisboa 51).

Moreover, the wrath that mankind inflicts upon themselves, owing to rebelling against the Creator, hence the curse of a catastrophe, is what this postmodern version of Noah’s Ark takes for granted; “[t]he small print in the narrative of the flood, however, includes the caveat that, albeit having allowed the benefit of the doubt and a fresh start, the grudging deity suspects that the second attempt will almost certainly fail, just like the first (Lisboa 51-2). So, the idea of an uprising against the deity is intricately related to the emergence of an unavoidable catastrophe; “[i]f the belief in a second chance underpins most apocalyptic thinking, however, the certainty that old habits die hard and old mistakes get repeated is equally fundamental to narratives of catastrophe” (53).

Returning to the Flood in the novel, it bears a strong resemblance to the narrative of Noah’s Ark in the Bible, specifically in how Noah was rescued together with the animals in his ark as they took refuge on Mount Ararat is told:

The Gardeners call their storehouses Ararats, presumably after Mount Ararat, where Noah’s ark was said to have come to rest. Since God promised in the Bible never again to send a flood to destroy the earth and its inhabitants, the Gardeners speak of a waterless flood. Like many cults, the Gardeners believe they are the chosen people, and will be saved—‘they exempted themselves’ from the predicted disaster. (Macpherson 83-4)

Likewise, Atwood explains the impending catastrophe with reference to Gardeners’ faith in their own survival: “A massive die-off of the human race was impending, due to overpopulation and wickedness, but the Gardeners exempted themselves: they intended to float above the Waterless Flood, with the aid of the food they were stashing away in the hidden storeplaces called Ararats” (*YF* 56).

In fact, the allusion to the Bible in Atwood’s novel is not merely restricted with the reference to the Flood hitherto mentioned. There are various references to the Bible, the first being that of the world’s creation. After the novel’s introduction, the chapter entitled “Creation Day” takes place in Year Five and consists of Adam One’s speech concerning the creation and naming of the animals (*YF* 13). It could be considered an allusion to the Creation in Genesis in the Bible, where, as Adam One states, the story of how God created the world in six days is explained (14). However, Adam One points out that it is not right to take this as a scientific fact, since the human measurement of

time may not be a reliable source for the assessment of how long creation actually lasted.

Moreover, Adam One seems to highly revere the process of the naming of the animals. Referring to the myth of creation in the Bible, Adam One states that animals were brought before Man, “to see what he would call them”, and since God had ordained Adam with free will allowing him to do things that “God himself cannot anticipate in advance” (14). In addition, Adam One believes that God had spoken to animals “in their own languages”, not in “Latin, or Greek, or English, or French, or Arabic, or Chinese” (15). Thus, language proves an essential feature in the course of creation, as “the names of the animals were the first words spoken by Adam One”, and it was at this “first moment of human language” that “Adam claimed his Human Soul” (15). That Man’s treatment of animals in his unfallen state was “one of loving-kindness and kinship” stresses the bond between Adam and the animals, the sort of bond whose destruction by man is much regretted by Adam One.

So, this reference to the sanctity of nature and animals portrayed in the novel that takes place in a dystopic world present the reader with the combination of science fiction and ecocriticism, the latter of which refers to “the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term ‘human’ itself” (Garrard 5). In addition, the relation of ecocriticism to other critical theories could be explained as follows:

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (Glotfelty in Garrard 3)

In terms of representing ecocriticism in the novel, the reader witnesses humanity’s struggle with sustaining life with very limited resources, as is seen when Toby collects the afternoon-storm rainwater in pails, she has hardly enough water even to wash herself, and she can only use greywater to flush her toilet (*YF* 20). Likewise, the affection for animals reemerges further on in the novel in this respect, when Toby refrains from shooting the pigs digging in the garden, reminding herself of Adam One’s warning not to “kill without just cause”, and that “they are God’s creatures” (*YF* 21). When she finally loses control and shoots the boar, she scolds herself that she has “acted rashly and from anger”, so she “should feel guilty” (22). Therefore, regret for the destruction of those created by God, hence the destruction of animals and nature is an issue expressed by Adam One, and is supported by Toby’s hesitation to shoot the pigs, both of which reveal the sanctity attributed to nature and animals in the novel.

Furthermore, it is of interest to note that there are characters in the novel whose names are derived from the first two human beings, Adam and Eve, which illustrates another representation of Atwood’s enthusiasm for conveying biblical elements in her narrative. The Adams and Eves in the novel are the members of the religious group called “Gardeners”, a name that is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden in the Bible where Adam and Eve lived before the Fall. The Gardeners are willing to accept new members to their group, thereby welcoming anyone who is eager to repent and join their cult: “Like any cults, then, the gardeners take in refugees, offer another sense of living and rename their members: people powerful in the cult become Adams and Eves, with

numbers attached to their names to indicate their function (though not for their rank except for Adam One)” (Macpherson 82). Among those who accepted to the Gardeners’ cult are Ren and Toby, two women characters Atwood employs to narrate the events in the novel:

Atwood returns to the more familiar perspective of female characters, with two women as central focalizers: Toby (also known as Tobiatha), who speaks in the third person and Ren (also known as Brenda), who speaks in the first person. Ren has spent time in the Pleebats and her friend Amanda is familiar with the Pleebats (or the underclass) and is figured as a Texan refugee. Toby’s entry to the cult is more accidental, as she is rescued from her job as meat barista at Secret Burgers (and unwilling sexual hostage of her boss Blanco). (Macpherson 83)

According to Adam One, just like their ancestors in the Bible, mankind is about to face an impending Flood. Adam One is also quite critical of mankind’s selfishness and its taking for granted that everything on Earth exists merely to satisfy their need: “Ours is a fall into greed: why do we think that everything on Earth belongs to us, while in reality we belong to Everything? God’s commandment to ‘replenish the Earth’ did not mean we should fill it to overflowing with ourselves, thus wiping out everything else. How many other species have we already annihilated?” (YF 63).

Furthermore, the Gardeners could be considered representatives of the ecocriticism conveyed in the novel, as they are “one of several religious groups resisting consumerism, technology, and science run amok” (Morrison 16). Gardeners are against consuming the meat of animals, as well as using too much of the existing natural resources, which are rules to be obeyed according to the Vegivows that members in the cult have to make. For example, “no daily showers was one of the many Gardener rules” (YF 77), as was the prohibition of writing since “paper was sinful because it was made from the flesh of trees” (73):

Within the space of the novel itself, it is clear that religion is being manufactured, and the doctrine itself is being constructed. The Gardeners eschew washing and fine clothes: Ren’s interpretation of this as a child is “we looked down on these others because their clothes were nicer than ours (YF 141). They avoid writing things down, to avoid capture, and rely on ‘instructive rhymes’ (YF 19) and old medicine: honey as antibiotics; maggots for infection, willow as analgesic. (Macpherson 83)

Consequently, the novel should be taken into consideration as a whole in relation to its constitutive elements derived from the Bible, its critical perspective concerning the usurpation of nature and animals for the sake of fulfilling humanity’s greed, and its intention of arousing awareness in the sanctity of the environment. Thanks to these elements, the text proves to be a unique work of literature which enthusiastically unifies nature with science fiction. Last but not the least, the importance Atwood attaches to environmentalism is crucial in grasping her aim in writing the novel: “unless environmentalism becomes a religion, it is not going to work” (Wagner in Macpherson 86). Moreover, Atwood’s narrative is an excellent example of women writers’ success in achieving a unique way to present the reader with a closely interwoven text comprised of different fields of interests in literary works such as science fiction and ecocriticism. Such an achievement is accomplished in the novel by the employing the

concept of the catastrophe presented from the perspective of women characters, thus providing an alternative version to the traditional narratives of the creation and the fall.

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Mary Butts, Revisionary Classicism and H. Rider Haggard's *Cleopatra*

Andrew Radford

Abstract: In 1933, the British avant-garde author Mary Francis Butts (1890-1937) published in *The Bookman* magazine an ambitious survey of uncanny and Gothic literary motifs, entitled "Ghosties and Ghoulies: The Uses of the Supernatural in English Fiction". One of the major figures in Butts's essay was H. Rider Haggard, whose 1889 novel *Cleopatra* provided the inspiration for her own historical fiction about the Egyptian queen, *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* (1935). Butts's wide-ranging account works against the grain of much interwar middlebrow journalism by affirming Haggard as an author of maverick ambition who anticipated the modernist preoccupation with archaeological and esoteric discourses. However, while Butts states her admiration for a literary predecessor who was decisively drawn to mystical and visionary conceptions, she also uses her novel about Cleopatra to debunk Haggard's judgements concerning the Egyptian queen. Indeed, Butts's formally bold re-visioning of Cleopatra challenges the gender stereotyping which mars Haggard's enterprise of "imaginative archaeology".

Keywords: Mary Butts, H. Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, modernism, archaeology

Enchantment is just what this writer exercised; he fixed pictures in our minds that thirty years have been unable to wear away [...] violent images remain like a prophecy of the future (Greene, 1970, p. 157).

In his July 1951 book review of *The Cloak that I Left*, Lilia Rider Haggard's biography of her father, Graham Greene addresses H. Rider Haggard's vivid power of "enchantment", and how such power is inextricably tied to the "violent images" with which his fictional texts are replete. Like Jim in Greene's 1988 novel *The Captain and the Enemy*, who has read *King Solomon's Mines* four times, Greene registers a hallucinatory strangeness in Haggard's adventure stories that never "wear[s] away". By the 1920s, legion middlebrow reviewers had accused Haggard of being little more than a "sensation writer", whose "meretricious artifice" pandered to "bloodthirsty instincts" and "unwholesome appetites" (Rashleigh 45). This is not the gist of Greene's book review however; he articulates instead the "violence" of Haggard's impatient dismay at the inhibiting reflex of cool rationality. Indeed, Greene declares that the "poetic element in Haggard's work", which smudges lyrical description and meditation, "breaks out where the control fails. Because the hidden man was so imprisoned, when he does emerge from the tomb, it is against enormous pressure, and the effect is often one of horror". (Greene 158) Here Greene presents an author given more to rapt reverie than to sober chronicle, to inspiration than to intellection. Haggard's fictions enact and explore startling flights away from the concrete particularities of present time, thus dissolving the markers of possessive individualism. In a region of the "fantastic", Haggard weighs the merits, potentialities, and drawbacks of John Keats's "Negative Capability": "uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason" (Keats 193).

Haggard's aesthetic strategy of measuring the minutiae of social circumstance against the buried self of subconscious prompting—what lies beyond the lip of the apprehensible—is revelatory for Graham Greene, whose essay “The Lost Childhood” traces the origins of his novelistic obsessions to the narratives he had absorbed in early adolescence, especially *King Solomon's Mines* (Greene 13). Greene's verdict is striking because he does not position Haggard primarily as a stolid proponent of imperial romance; far from it. Like those contemporary pundits of Haggard's critically overlooked texts such as *The Mahatma and the Hare: A Dream Story* (1911) who discussed the author's leaning towards the paranormal and the recondite, Greene construes Haggard as a harbinger of the modernist uncanny. He concludes that Haggard is an author of viscerally compelling intensity, whose fascination with spiritual trance and sudden expressions of the unconscious function as “a prophecy of the future” (Greene 157). This mapping of esoteric lore supplies a critical lens through which to magnify the link between psychic aberration and geopolitical strife; what Haggard terms in *Cleopatra* (1889) “the destiny of Empires” past and present (*Cleopatra* 8).

II

Graham Greene's portrayal of Haggard as a tireless excavator of the atavistic, the instinctual and the numinous was partially indebted to the British avant-garde author Mary Franeis Butts (1890-1937), whose interwar journalism scrutinized Haggard's “imaginative archaeology”. Published in *The Bookman* in four parts between January and April 1933, Butts's essay “Ghosties and Ghoulies: The Uses of the Supernatural in English Fiction” was at the time one of the most subtle attempts to translate Haggard's aesthetic repertoire into an exacting modernist idiom. Instead of foregrounding, like Graham Greene, the perennially popular texts such as *She* (1887) and *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), she turns—in a bold and surprising “knight's move”—to the primal vision imbuing what she calls Haggard's “neglected masterpieces”:

Who to-day reads *Stella Fregilius*, *Cleopatra* or *The World's Desire*? [...] From these and other forgotten books one learned [...] the rules of mysticism, the sentences which crystallise the mystic's experience and belief. An exciting story illustrated them; and if Victorian morals and if certain historical ignorance made him condemn *Cleopatra* for not being married to Antony, his portrait of the queen is not vulgar. He had a sense of the mysterious links and repetitions of history—*Cleopatra* strung like her own pearl on a thread of beauty and disturbing power running through man's history. (“Ghosties” 356)

Graham Greene's “violent images” and his friend Elizabeth Bowen's sense of an “explosive charge”¹ imbuing Haggard's narrative prose fiction invite comparison with the “disturbing power” which Butts lauds in defiance of seminal interwar cultural

¹Reading Haggard's *She* reputedly gave Bowen a sense of the vigour of individual agency, which, “came up like a reinforcement”, of her own adolescent insurgency. *She*, Bowen proclaims, “contained thoughts and sayings I never had seen in print”. Its seditious impact prepared her, “to handle any book like a bomb”. (See *Afterthought* 107). In a short story of the Blitz inspired by *She*, “Mysterious Kor”, Bowen links the immense impact of fictional recreation with that of an explosive charge. (See *Collected Stories* 730).

commentators such as Malcolm Elwin, whose *Victorian Wallflowers* (1934) mocked Haggard and his romancer acolytes as maladroitness hacks.

Butts utilizes Haggard's *Cleopatra*, the most ambitious of its author's novels according to *Murray's Magazine* at the time of first publication, as inspiration for her own revisionary classicism in her 1935 novel *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra*. In her *Bookman* essay Butts evokes the core tropes of Haggard's other "forgotten books": the ruined Phoenician fortress and hidden loot of *Benita: An African Romance* (1906), the ancient Egyptian codes of courtly and hierarchical formality in *The Way of the Spirit* (1906), and the ambience of superstitious dread imbuing *The People of the Mist* (1894). Butts's critical survey positions her admired literary precursor not as the smug "son of a manor upholstered by centuries of comfort and social amenity" (Collins 108-111). Rather she views an author whose temperamental bias is at odds with a hidebound Victorian culture of "dogmatic materialism" ("Ghosties" 334), embodied for example by the truculent sceptic and scientist Blickley in Haggard's *When the World Shook* (1919). Perhaps mindful of how Haggard weaves reincarnation motifs into his later fictions such as *Moon of Israel* (1918), Butts interprets him as an avatar of her own novelistic project, which is to salvage "the old motif of ghost and spirit"; as well as "our occasional sense of awareness of other forms of life" than those "shown us by our senses" ("Ghosties" 334). Haggard, in her judgement, charts the steady accrual of archaeological data that is passed on through generations not only as tangible vestiges like tattered "papyrus rolls" (*Cleopatra* 1); but also as a subliminal heritage that is far from impersonal: a medley of ancestral "echoes", elemental "harmonies" (*Cleopatra* 52, 60) and elliptical auras. In a genre heavily reliant upon depictions of witchcraft and elemental agencies, Butts's validates how Haggard transcends the "common business" of his less gifted literary peers. He triggers

[n]ot simple horror or terror at a new and generally evil world, usually invisible but interlocked with ours; we mean also a stirring, a touching of nerves not usually sensitive, an awakening to more than fear—but to something like awareness and conviction or even memory. A touching of nerves inherited from our savage ancestors. ("Ghosties" 335)

A "touching of nerves" wittily puns on familiar accusations levelled against the "sensational school" of the 1860s, epitomized by Wilkie Collins's novel *The Woman in White* (1859), a volume that was guilty, according to the cultural commentator Henry Mansel, of violating sanctioned modes of mimetic realism by a profusion of lurid physical data and "preaching to the nerves" (Mansel 495-6).

III

Butts posits that Haggard's prodigality of invention "touches" a deep human chord, and she praises the visionary imagination which impels her predecessor figuratively to sift among the ruins of the dead. The late-Victorian middlebrow periodical press tended to call Haggard's archaeological lore into question, accusing him of reheating and repeating his own back catalogue according to the law of diminishing returns. Mary Butts by contrast interprets his Gothic figurations (treasure concealed in a subterranean crypt) as part of an elaborate fictional ceremonial in which recurrence and revenance are watchwords. His formidably prolific output reflects for her a serious effort to confront and process the hermeneutic challenges of reading the archive of a remote mythical past. As late as *The Virgin of the Sun* (1922), Haggard is

still exploring the metaphorical possibilities of the manuscript as a recovered vestige, this time a half decayed pile of parchments found in an old chest from a curio shop, its runic inscriptions deciphered by experts at great expense (see Randell 206-7). So when Butts gauges Haggard's keen interest in "the mysterious links and repetitions of history" ("Ghosties" 356) she celebrates the motifs or "unquiet spirits" which resonate through his entire corpus of writing.

Butts proposes that Haggard's *Cleopatra* extends the exhumation fantasy by illustrating how "historical visions and hauntings" ("Ghosties" 336) spring from the comfortless grandeur of the North African desert. Haggard's visions evidence "the consciousness of a universe enlarged" and seem more substantial in Butts's opinion than her own "age's half shamefaced interest in supernatural beliefs" ("Ghosties" 337). Haggard's *Cleopatra* throws into sharp relief a cluster of discursive tensions between logical positivism and ecstatic trance; the depredations of the tourist "Foreigner" (*Cleopatra* 15) and the loyal "guardian" (*Cleopatra* 100) of deep, durable institutions; the seemingly dishevelled present of frayed "nerves" (*Cleopatra* 123) and the ceremonial gravitas of bygone epochs. Throughout "the adventures and the big-game hunting, the battles, the lost treasures", Haggard conveys, in Butts's estimation, that "here we are no more than shadows, working out a play on our true existence, and aware of it as shadows might be of their body" ("Ghosties" 357). Her pointed stress on "shadows" evokes the initiation and dream-visions of the priest Harmachis in Haggard's *Cleopatra*, who imagines himself as a "Shape of Flame" apprehending "[g]reat shadows [and] lines of darkness" in a "rolling sea of air" (*Cleopatra* 56). Such episodes persuade Butts that Haggard's novelistic craft is proto-modernist in scope; that is, committed to fighting a rearguard action against the inflexible rules of sociological realism, which was the dominant literary form of the interwar years. Yet, as reviewers of Haggard's *The Ancient Allan* (1920) contended, a novelist with his peculiar antiquarian persuasion might struggle to win over a substantial audience in a disenchanting post-war milieu:

It is rather late in the day for incantations and invocations in fiction; we have to recognise that a hard-headed, disillusioned and incredulous generation has to scramble for a living now in an utterly practical manner. [...Of] the occult powers and visions of Harmachis [...] readers now are less inclined now to surrender their reason even temporarily to the acceptance of this class of event. (Randell 206-7)

"[C]lass of event" is a key phrase in this extract, anchoring Haggard's fictional evocation of "ancient custom" (*Cleopatra* 65) within a system of cultural stratification. So his literary texts resonate with a lower class of readership which craves the escapist solace epitomized by his garish "picture[s] from the past" (*Cleopatra* 8). Butts's revisionist reading overturns this dismissive view by re-branding Haggard as a "seer" who glimpses and chronicles an intense atavistic actuality. Her interpretation of Haggard's *Cleopatra* prioritizes not the extrovert virility or sabre-rattling patriotism deprecated in myriad contemporary periodicals, but rather the "ghostly strength" (*Cleopatra* 98) of an imperious female fertility figure. This conception of a priestess is rooted in the pioneering research of her intellectual mentor, the feminist classicist Jane Ellen Harrison and the Cambridge Ritualists. Butts's essay foregrounds Haggard's ability in *Cleopatra* to conceptualize the shadowy past not as inaccessibly alien; rather it is a vibrant reality which bolsters urgent personal and cultural imperatives. Butts's selective myth of ethno-cultural provenance and feudal tradition in her own interwar

fiction exploits Haggard's depiction of Cleopatra's royal "blood" (*Cleopatra* 178) so as to reinforce rather than reconcile caste differences. Indeed, she proposes that "Mr. Haggard knew very much more than he cared to write down; that some experience of no common order lay behind the country gentleman turned popular novelist ("Ghosties" 353).

However, Butts is by no means blind to the peculiarly problematic status of Haggard's portrait of the magisterial Egyptian queen. Just as many middlebrow pundits found Haggard's later fiction overly hectoring and didactic, so Butts deplores how Haggard's Cleopatra belies her noble temperament and becomes merely a temptress who destroys those who love and trust her. This narrative arc reveals, in her account, the censorious "preaching" of a "Victorian gentleman" ("Ghosties" 357). What Butts's analysis overlooks is that Harmachis, the son of an Egyptian priest of venerable "lineage" (*Cleopatra* 282) and instructed as a devotee of the Isis cult, is the core protagonist in Haggard's text. By situating the young priest as the narrative linchpin, Haggard can, at precisely that historical juncture when British military forces had become embroiled in a messy Egyptian conflict, gauge the nationalistic zeal which prompts this embodiment of physical purity to "cleanse" Egypt of the Greek taint embodied by Cleopatra, the third daughter of the eleventh Ptolemy. It is likely that Butts found Haggard's choice of a priest as a "patriot of royal blood" and guarantor of Egypt's "fertile fields" (*Cleopatra* 14) conducive to her own ethnographic interests. She mobilizes her archaeological passion for a more forbidding purpose however: she retools Haggard's quasi-religious discourses of election and predestination, especially "the secret of religion, which is Sacrifice" (*Cleopatra* 54), to position her chosen few as staunch epitomes of inbred distinction and genetic "descent" (*Cleopatra* 39). In her own historical fiction Butts side-lines the machinations of Harmachis to regain the Egyptian throne from the Hellenic Ptolemies. Haggard's detailed focus on Harmachis has the effect of "fixing" Cleopatra as the stereotypical "strumpet" (*Scenes* 345) whose derogatory connotations Butts's own narrative counteracts.

IV

Butts's *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* is on one level a commemorative literary campaign that shows relatively little interest in the male priest as custodian of the "Divine Mother", "Many-shaped", the "Executrix of Decrees" (*Cleopatra*, p. 57). Instead it is the "primitive" and "holy body" of Cleopatra herself which captures Butts's attention. The "primitive", for disciples of J.G. Frazer and Sigmund Freud, signified a turbulent force menacing to daily routine and which "still lay stratigraphically embedded in the human psyche" (Stout 106). Butts reimagines the primitive by developing Haggard's thesis that the female fertility figure, or "enchantress", is a dynastic defender who possesses "pure" attributes (*Cleopatra* 25). These qualities resist the bleak repercussions of the matrimonial code with its alteration in property rights and the status of women (see Garrity 189-230). Butts's Cleopatra, a figure of mutinous aspiration and reminiscent of the venturesome Morning Star from Haggard's 1910 novel of the same name prompts us to unpick normative national myths and the exact location of authority in advanced culture. Butts's Cleopatra unmoors the priestly "clan" from the conception that patriarchal family manners should be universally construed as the fixed foundation of civil society. In order to validate her vision of Cleopatra as a "great goddess", the "type of all things which a woman is or may become" (*Ashe of Rings* 13), Butts stresses a deterministic credo of "blood" immune to comparative scrutiny or

logical criticism. She remakes Cleopatra as the exclusively ordained protector of what Jane Garrity has termed the “maternalized primitive” (Garrity 188-241).

Butts locates in Haggard’s *Cleopatra* a historical personage who epitomizes her own fascination with matriarchal divinities canvassed in E. B. Tylor’s seminal *Primitive Culture* (1871) and Frazer’s multivolume *The Golden Bough* (1891). For Butts, the Egyptian queen dramatizes her own personal quest for secret knowledge in a late-Victorian culture that sought to veil its own contradictory valuation of female fertility. In Butts’s estimation, Haggard’s “little preaching” in *Cleopatra* discourages frank discussion of sexuality yet at the same time implies that reproduction is a married woman’s paramount civic responsibility. Butts’s novel demonstrates that the queen triumphantly unites “all the qualities” her own late-Victorian “culture struggled to keep apart” (Hoberman 140). This facet is thrown into relief in the section of Butts’s essay dedicated to Haggard’s imaginative excavations:

This is really Mr. Haggard’s theme. Even in his Zulu tales he wrote about little else but a piece of some absolute beauty, divided up, usually into three, bodies of men and women; trying again to unite, slipping through each others’ fingers; and according to their quality, realising or destroying themselves. (“Ghosties” 356)

Butts indicates that the key to the narrative dynamics of Haggard’s *Cleopatra* is its portrayal of human desire as a process of endless deferral: Harmachis, the physically chaste devotee of “the Holy Isis” (*Cleopatra* 299), can only realise his lofty nationalistic agenda to “overthrow the foreigner” and “set Egypt free” (*Cleopatra* 75) if Cleopatra is slain. Yet his rapt regard for her “absolute beauty” is so acute that both his pledge of corporeal purity and plot to assassinate the queen are derailed. Harmachis is ironically undone by Cleopatra’s lady-in-waiting Charmian, whose own passion for the priest is at least as vehement as that which Harmachis feels for Cleopatra, who exploits his personal frailties in order to secure the affections of Mark Antony. All these figures then, in Butts’s reading, slip through “each others’ fingers”. Butts’s terms are especially resonant when read through the prism of Jacques Derrida’s “Che cos’ è la poesia?”, a dialogue with the ghostly, evacuated subject behind all poetic utterance; an eerie trace that erodes “the borders, *slips through the hands*, you can barely hear it” (Derrida 298-9). Harmachis’s attempt to record on papyrus the heightened consciousness that Cleopatra induces in him is as tragically doomed as his insurgent impulse to liberate his homeland from the predatory outsider’s “yoke” (*Cleopatra* 31). The faded parchment that he leaves behind, recording his tormented and “broken years” is fractured and unfinished. Despite his claim that “[a]ll is written; I have held back nothing”, his text breaks off: “*Here the writing on the third roll of papyrus abruptly ends. It would almost seem that the writer was at this moment broken in upon*” (*Cleopatra* 299). The very possibility of fulfilment in written communication as well as spiritual communion is open to doubt. In a further macabre irony, Harmachis’s “unembalmed body” (*Cleopatra* 7) literally slips through the unspecified narrator’s “fingers” in the “Introduction”: “within a few seconds from its uncovering [it] began to crumble, now that it was exposed to the action of the air” (*Cleopatra* 7). At the very moment of its unveiling, the archaeological “body of evidence” dissolves into an “abyss where the ghost of poetry writhes [...] unable to incarnate. You can barely hear its cries as it moves perennially towards a body which it will never achieve” (Punter 3).

Haggard's starkest image of thwarted yearning, disjunction and estrangement is the narrator's discovery, after descending into the "tomb", that the mummified corpse of Harmachis had been buried alive by his own votaries as punishment for betraying the "fervid zeal of patriotic faith" which Isis instils (*Cleopatra* 92). Richard Pearson argues that Harmachis is "effectively cursed by an eternal separation from his desire". The "symbolic unwrapping" through the parchment narrative located with his remains shows the priest as the victim of his own stymied libido (Pearson 218-44). He is, like Cleopatra, punished for allowing intemperate personal passion to supplant sober concerns for civic wellbeing and national security. However, this does not quite distill the essence of the narrator's "shock" when he glimpses the look frozen on "this dead man's face" (*Cleopatra* 7). Returning to Butts's essay, she proposes that when reading Haggard one awakens "to more than fear— but to something like awareness and conviction or even memory" ("Ghosties" 335). A "memory" of what though? Haggard's excavating narrator in *Cleopatra* is forced to become, in Joseph Conrad's riddling phrase, a "secret sharer"; he is reluctantly initiated into the ineffable experience which that "look" conveys. Harmachis has been *secreted*, while still alive, in a crudely made coffin; a liminal state suspended between womb and tomb.

V

The archaeological dig portrayed at the start of Haggard's *Cleopatra* uncovers a grisly site/sight where the customary coordinates by which one assesses felt sensation no longer hold. This may be why the narrator is unwilling, or unable, to translate or capture in the permanency of print the exact features of Harmachis's "death-mask". The term "mystical" derives from the Greek verb *myein*, signifying "to close" and more specifically, "to close one's eyes". With regard to the pre-Christian mystery cults that Haggard illustrates in his Egyptian romances, the word specifies those symbolic rites and local cultural productions about which the adept maintains a stony silence. As the tomb of Harmachis is prized open then, Haggard's narrator keeps his mouth *shut* as to what he finds "frozen" on the body of the priest; and it remains an inscrutable mystery. Ultimately the archaeological tomb is enlisted as a "focalizing point for the intersection of physical desire, morbidity, and the displacement of ideal love into a spiritual realm beyond life" (Pearson 219).

Mary Butts's version of the Egyptian queen as a "biologically determined" heroine and "giver of sanctities [on] the most ancient throne on earth" (*Scenes* 122) exalts rather than diminishes physical desire (see Garrity 190). Whereas in Haggard's text Harmachis must disavow bodily imperatives as part of his initiatory ordeal ("put away the thought of earthly woman" [*Cleopatra* 50]), Cleopatra's mystical kudos is anchored in the symbiosis of the corporeal and ethereal:

She saw herself standing alone between her kingdom and this Power, this Rome [...] Indeed she was like a person seeking an essentially spiritual victory in terms of the body. That will not do. Not because she was a specially sensual woman, but because she knew no other way. A rare body, a quick mind, immense prestige, limitless wealth was all she had. All her life, until the end, they seemed to her enough, tempering them as she did with her [...] brilliant understanding, her wit. (*Scenes* 264-5)

What Butts's underlines here is a mercurial, ritualized sexuality that challenges Haggard's implied link between Harmachis's purity, physical chastity and dynastic

pride (see Slingsby 28). While Haggard's "Author's Note" in *Cleopatra* claims that the story is told not from the "modern point of view", Butts deliberately interpolates her own "modern" impressions and value-judgments.

Although Butts deprecated Haggard's indictment of Cleopatra's so-called decadence, she was no doubt impressed by his conception of Harmachis as a disciple of Isis. Haggard's authorial fascination with the Isis cult subverts early-Victorian ethnographic perceptions of this ancient religion as a byword for female sexual incontinence. In Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) for instance, the hierophants of Isis are biddable, volatile and venal (Hoberman 140-1). Informed by his careful reading of Frazer's *The Golden Bough* which measures the dignified restraint of Isis worship against the cruel rites and lawless caprice which characterize the veneration of rival Oriental deities, Haggard shows the beneficent power of Isis. Similarly, Butts lauds a vitalizing feminine archetype in her short story "Mappa Mundi" (1938): "the womb of Isis" is "eternally fertile, eternally bringing forth. An activity of which we were the latest *eidola*" (*Selected Short Stories*, 192). Like H. D., Butts saw herself as a self-appointed "secular Isis" (Blondel 102). This view of the divinity not only evokes the Russian émigrée Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's 1877 spiritualist opus *Isis Unveiled*; but also the "Isis Movement" that Moina MacGregor Mathers, a follower of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, had staged with her husband in Paris during the 1890s. When Butts was introduced to the occultist celebrity Aleister Crowley in the first half of 1921 her keen preoccupation with clairvoyance, divination and geomancy, partly fostered by reading Haggard's African romances, deepened. For Crowley, as for Haggard, Isis is a goddess synonymous with ideas of unstinting plenitude; an "eternal spirit" whose "majesty" (*Cleopatra* 60) and obedience to all of nature's appetites exposes the grudging, narrow-minded piety of suburban mores. Isis appears both as "portent" and "prodigy", symbolizing the "aeon" of the "woman", and reverence for the "Great Mother" (Crowley, 1972 399).

Butts's essay presents Haggard as a guide through the obscure "chambers" (*Cleopatra* 4) of the archaeological past, claiming that he "made the ancient religions live; re-evoked Isis; led one into the heart of the Pyramid to the grave of Menkau-Ra" ("Ghosties" 356). Butts admits that she is "haunted" by one of the defining episodes of Haggard's *Cleopatra*: Harmachis and the Egyptian Queen infiltrate the "Pyramid" so that the queen may seize the secret "treasure" of "Menkau-ra, the Osirian" in chapters ten and eleven of Book II:

We stood and gazed in awe, for the weight of the silence and the solemnity of that holy place seemed to crush us. Above us, cubit over cubit in its mighty measure, the pyramid towered up to heaven and was kissed of the night air. But we were deep in the bowels of the rock beneath its base. We were alone with the dead, whose rest we were about to break; and no sound of the murmuring air, and no sight of life came to dull the awful edge of solitude. I gazed on the sarcophagus; its heavy lid had been lifted and rested at its side, and around it the dust of ages had gathered thick. (*Cleopatra* 164-5)

This arduous journey into "the bowels of the rock" echoes Haggard's "Introduction" to the novel, in which he alludes to the German Egyptologist Heinrich Karl Brugsch

(1827-1894), who descended into the tomb of the royal mummies in 1881.² Harmachis's bitter self-reproach at his own sacrilegious act—deliberately disturbing the “rest” of the holy “dead”—parallels Haggard's enigmatic ambivalence throughout *Cleopatra* about the claims made on behalf of modern excavatory science, which often destroyed the very curios it was supposed to salvage and preserve for posterity. So the narrator of the “Introduction” impugns the “shameless” treasure-seekers who violated “the coffin-chamber” of the “rock-hewn cave” and “broke up” the “bodies of the High Priest, Amenemhat, and of his wife, father and mother of Harmachis” (*Cleopatra* 1-2).

Haggard's opening gambit, detailing the “violence” and dissolution attending the archaeological dig, in which acquisitive interlopers “sell” the “very bones for a few piastres to the last ignorant tourist who came their way” (*Cleopatra* 1-2) foreshadows Cleopatra's ruse to steal the subterranean trinkets so as to fund her opulent lifestyle. Haggard's account of the queen's cynical manipulation of Harmachis acerbically judges the stereotypical “Egyptologist in Europe” (*Cleopatra* 8) as well as dilettante collectors and amateur antiquarians. Indeed, Haggard's 1906 *Pall Mall Magazine* article “Thebes of the Hundred Gates”, notes that since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and Thomas Cook's lavish package tours along the Nile, Cairo had become a “fashion resort” and so for “the lover of old Egypt and of the East, the place” is irredeemably “spoiled”. He deplores the extent to which archaeological “science in its zeal, and greed in its hunger, have between them rifled here about a thousand tombs”. Haggard observes with especial dismay “Egyptian women weeping over the desecration of the mummies of their ancient kings” (“Thebes” 688-97). This concern informs his rendering of burial sites in *Cleopatra* that are “yet unprofaned” by avaricious “tourists” (*Cleopatra* 2).

VI

While Haggard's *Cleopatra* and journalism concedes that the genetic study of archaic Egyptian institutions had been tainted by touristic appreciation, he is also skeptical about positive snapshots of the contemporary excavator who was “dropping a sounding-line into the oceanic depths of the remote past, and dredging up” striking “evidences of the life and labour of prehistoric man” (Swayne 3). Egyptology truly came of age during Haggard's lifetime, and he grasped better than most late-Victorian novelists how excavation as a research tool had amplified and enriched the results of surface observation and record. He is explicit in *Cleopatra* as to how much of his “illustrative matter” in Book I derive from recent archaeological findings. Haggard's own amateur fieldwork shows that he was responsive to the semiotic status of exhumed “fragments” (*Cleopatra* 227). However, in his Egyptian romances he queries empiricist techniques of documenting the material past, most of which were crude and reductive in their calibration of the relationship between artefacts and the cultures that crafted them. Indeed, Haggard concludes how “that moment of measurable time which we call” the Egyptian “Past has gone from us, and can be reconstructed only with the aid of imagination's faint and fickle gleam shining on it” (“Thebes” 696-7). Haggard's “gleam” carries complex accretions of semantic resonance in *Cleopatra* (it is mentioned on eight separate occasions); reminding us not only of Wordsworth's “visionary gleam” in “Intimations of Immortality” but also of his “Perfect Woman” (“She was a phantom

²Brugsch became director of the School of Egyptology and his associated primarily with Auguste Mariette and the excavations at Memphis. See (Pearson 218-41).

of delight/When first she gleam'd upon my sight"[ll.1-2]) which mirrors Harmarchis's highly charged response to Cleopatra's sleeping form. However much Haggard is piqued by accounts of intrepid excavators and their "triumphs" in rescuing Egyptian rarities from oblivion, he postulates that it is the novelist's "gleam", rather than the scientist's cold, estranging light of logic, which revitalizes "the legends of antiquity" (*Cleopatra* 9). Haggard therefore practices what Harriet Martineau called the novelistic "fairy gift" of blowing away "the sand which buries the monuments of Egypt" (Martineau 45).

In "Thebes of the Hundred Gates", Haggard avers that the "modern research" of Egyptologists has wrested precious amulets from one kind of tomb, only to immure them in a different, more sanitized crypt: physical heirlooms garnered, fabricated, and enshrined in the "glass cases" of a "new museum" such as the Great Exhibition ("Thebes" 690). Haggard indicates that late-Victorian Egyptology sought to pique the audience's appetite for an emotional "encounter" across centuries that purged the distant past of the brutish, the untidy and the "desolate" (*Cleopatra* 1-2). In his *Pall Mall Magazine* article Haggard's "new museum" approximates to a bizarre modern parody of Harmachus's subterranean shrine in *Cleopatra*. Haggard questions the capacity of excavated curios to transmit the ambience of a lost locality. He implies that Egyptologists have distanced themselves from and quarantined the discoloured evidence of purported cultural beginnings. Inquiries into ancient Egyptian mores decree a perceived separateness from that venerable history, and a need to extol as well as memorialize the gulf.

In *Cleopatra* Haggard bridges that glaring gap, providing an imaginative point of entry into "records of the past" (*Cleopatra* 37) that Egyptologists could only explicate through partial, mangled or incomplete tangible evidence. The Egyptologists referenced in the opening gambit of Haggard's *Cleopatra*, seeking a conceptual, cultural and historical classification which would lend coherence to the shards of flawed records, arrogate a certain kind of "knowledge" which affects a spurious "authority". Egyptology has produced troubling signs of historical decay (the torn papyrus, the dissolving body of Harmachis) and belatedness rather than a copious reserve to be tapped and exploited. So the historical romancer's "imagination" affords the necessary "gleam" by which to irradiate the shadowy "recesses of the desolate Libyan mountains", the "supposed burying place of the holy Osiris" (*Cleopatra* 1-2). In 1869, J. R. Green remarked that "History [...] we are told by publishers, is the most unpopular of all branches of literature at the present day, but it is only unpopular because it seems more and more to sever itself from all that can touch the heart of a people" (Green xi). Yet Haggard, through a canny compression of discrete time-periods, makes what might have seemed an absent past a piercingly vivid and immediate "presence" (*Cleopatra*. 21), indeed an intransigent actuality.

This is why Haggard assumes such cultural importance in Butts's critical essay. He employs archaeological data as a springboard to experiment with "theories of life existing beyond" our mundane perception; "theories which, in different make-ups" are "immeasurably old" and "not *all* accounted for by our increased scientific knowledge of the world". Haggard charts the recesses of an inland empire; he gifts his readers with what Butts terms an "atlas of unknown worlds" ("Ghosties" 335). Haggard's fictional enterprise, "convey[ing] a picture, however imperfect" of the "inmost mysteries" of old Egypt (*Cleopatra*, "Dedication") implicitly endorses Oscar Wilde's thesis in "The Truth of Masks: A Note on Illusion" (1891), published two years after *Cleopatra*. While late-Victorian cultural pundits tended to report Egyptology either as a uniquely compelling

cultural phenomenon or as an evolving professional institution, Wilde repackages it not as “priggish pedantry” but as a fund of supernatural tropes, open to the visionary artist who wishes, through the gleam of surmise and speculation, to make the ancient past move “as a pageant before our eyes, without obliging us to have recourse to a dictionary or an encyclopaedia for the perfection of our enjoyment” (“Truth of Masks” 1160). Wilde asserts that the literary artist is better equipped to piece together the shattered fragments of a defunct past than those archaeologists and comparative mythographers who expound and become overly reliant on an ideal of rational spectatorship.

Wilde’s claim not only harmonizes with Haggard’s published remarks; it also augurs Mary Butts’s notion in 1929 that the historical novelist should, with impudent brio, “take over” the “anthropologist’s material” (*Journals* 324). How else, Butts asks, can pharaonic time be captured in palpable human terms except through the creative writer’s repertoire of literary effects? So she chronicles the “Pharaohs in days gone by” (*Scenes* 122) in a manner that relies on the “gleam” of subjective impressions. “For during the first three reigns, reigns of the Ptolemaic Pharaohs [...] it is possible to hear another pulse beating, Pulse of an earlier world, with a dawn-light still on it, and a touch of mind distilled from an earlier dew” (*Scenes* 122). Butts, like Haggard, is unconvinced that archaeological practice can of its own surmount the historical record’s lacunae, and push back dated scrutiny to an earlier epoch for which other documentary clues were too damaged or simply non-existent. Instead she assesses and dramatizes the mysteries linked to the provenance of Isis worship, and the genetic relationship of that worship to aesthetic innovation, language, myth, matrimony and philosophy.

It is a notable irony then that Haggard’s *Cleopatra*, so conflicted about the cultural repercussions of archaeology, was first serialized in the *Illustrated London News*, whose editors were at the forefront of devising breezy, eye-catching methods to expound, visualize and publicize Egyptian “finds”.³ In a magazine that frequently invited its readership to acclaim the Egyptologist as a dauntless treasure-hunter, Haggard wittily depicts Cleopatra as the consummate *gold-digger*, whose own descent into the subterranean crypt of the “Pyramid” (*Cleopatra* 78) is impelled by an acquisitive aim to fill depleted coffers. Her improvidence, according to Harmachis (“being ever wasteful, she was ever in want of money” [*Cleopatra* 78]) smothers any respect for the sanctity of a hallowed site. Against the motifs of the “burying-place” (*Cleopatra* 78) as a continual memorial of decay, stripped of any picturesque connotations, Haggard reveals Cleopatra as both fiery advocate and hapless victim of conspicuous consumption, whose domestic “resting-place” is festooned with “many coloured marbles, with gold and ivory, gems and flowers” (*Cleopatra* 98).

As a conscious riposte to Haggard’s embellishment of description when situating the queen as a “wanton squandering the wealth of Egypt” (*Cleopatra* 85), Butts shows Cleopatra’s ascetic resolve, and the way her rigorous “training” consecrates “the right abstinences” (*Scenes* 138) against a “flood of foreign luxuries” (*Scenes* 234). Butts’s counter-narrative implies that Haggard’s novel hampers its own well-intentioned effort to render the “richness and variety” of Cleopatra’s mind (*Cleopatra* 105) by reverting to trite prejudices about a queen fatally distracted by opulent props of selfhood. In another

³ Founded in May 1842, the *Illustrated London News* it began publication when Queen Victoria had reigned only five years and it was one of the few general periodicals to consistently report archaeological discoveries as a general practice. It was selling 20,000 copies within six weeks of initial publication and reached a circulation of 250,000 by 1852. See (Sinnema 1998).

decisive re-visioning of Haggard's text, Butts allows Charmian scope to demonstrate her commanding abilities as prophet. For Haggard Charmian is governed by petty jealousy, whispered innuendo and "strange", destructive "whims" (*Cleopatra* 111): "the blood of youth runs too warm in those blue veins of hers" (*Cleopatra* 92). This supplies a sharp contrast to Butts's rival conception: "Charmian [...] came out then, drawn up to what we call her priestess' size, as though she might be as tall as she willed, thinned to a flame—to the idea of a hierophant" (*Scenes* 213). Here Charmian personifies the animistic affinities for which Butts praised Haggard in her essay on supernatural fiction. Haggard does not fall into the trap of belittling "the beliefs and faiths of our ancestors as science misunderstood", or "as nothing *more* than a way of externalizing the unconscious" ("Ghosties" 334). "Our forefathers thought 'animistically', endowed everything that lives with life, like or unlike our own. (All artists still do.)" ("Ghosties" 335). The meaning of that clipped parenthetical clause is crucial: Butts fashions Charmian and her mistress Cleopatra as upholders of the traits which Freud undervalues in his seminal essay on "The Uncanny":

Our analysis of the uncanny has led us back to the old, animistic conception of the universe. This was characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with the spirits of human beings; by the subject's narcissistic overvaluation of his own mental processes; by the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts and the technique of magic based on that belief; by the attribution to various outside persons and things of carefully graded magical powers ("The Uncanny" 240)

Whereas Haggard's Cleopatra embarks on a self-serving odyssey of personal deification—she becomes in effect her own vanity project—Butts's eponymous protagonist, encouraged by Charmian's animistic insight, retains a humility to work as a conduit between spiritual and secular domains; she moves and speaks with "divine directness" (*Scenes* 300) and does not presume to act as if she were a god, for whom pre-established earthly decrees were negligible. In many respects she assumes the grave duties that weigh so heavily on Harmachus after his initiation into the Isis mystery cult: she is a "deputy [...] of the divine" who "has in some measure to play Providence to her people which means bearing more than a share of their griefs, let alone their resentments when things go wrong" (*Scenes* 217). Unlike Haggard, whose account proposes that Cleopatra permitted illicit desire to quash political pragmatism, Butts shows that "[g]ood interior government was as essential to [Cleopatra] as the use of her power over men" (*Scenes* 263). This assertion signifies that Cleopatra's "magical powers" ("The Uncanny" 240) are rooted in a sincere commitment to sober governance. Such is the "fitting end" (*Scenes* 316) which Butts believed Haggard's salvaging of the text of Harmachus so signally lacked.

VII

What finally unites Haggard and Butts in terms of their "imaginative archaeology" is a shared sense of how the "sacred depths" (*Cleopatra* 3) of the archaeological site operate as a crucible for the elaboration of uncanny and Gothic motifs (see Butler 62-98). Haggard's *Cleopatra* opens with descent into a "tomb" (*Cleopatra* 7) in which the choking, oppressive residues of time ("mummy dust and spices") make the narrator feel "more dead than alive" (*Cleopatra* 7). And yet through the gleam of Haggard's art, defunct personalities declare their urgent presence as part of

a spectral conversation between the endemic and the exotic, the recent and the remote. This sensation is what prompts Mary Butts to begin her own visionary “descent” into the Egyptian archives. Haggard’s text however reveals the dangers of an author who fails to write against the grain of stereotypical portraits of the queen; what Butts calls the “oriental lady of temperament incarnate, loaded with jewels, eyelashed ‘like a panther’s whiskers’” (*Scenes* 23). Butts’s novel figuratively *corrects* the “papyrus rolls” that Haggard’s narrator exhumes, turning the torn document into a suggestive palimpsest for the next generation of readers to decode. And yet the crusading verve behind Cleopatra’s effort to “play the queen” (*Scenes* 207) remains encrypted, or “broken off” like the last words of Harmachis himself.

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**“Proper Words in Proper Places”:
Gulliver’s Travels, the Subtractive Fallacy,
and the Colonialist Linguistic Nightmare**

Zack Rearick

Abstract: For Swift, proper words in proper places definitely means economical writing, but it can also mean using the right set of words in the right spatial or geographic context. This interpretation is particularly relevant in reading *Gulliver’s Travels*. The book’s narrator, Lemuel Gulliver, claims “great Facility by the Strength of [his] Memory” in “learning the Language” of non-English speakers. Yet, Gulliver’s catalog of acquired languages does not help him in his travels; Gulliver’s known languages fail him. However, his *capacity* for language acquisition does not. However, this adaptability is not without its price; as Gulliver becomes more adept at each language, he becomes less certain of the superiority of his own culture and less convinced that his “Englishness” makes him extraordinary. In this regression of anglophilia, Gulliver becomes a satire of the colonialist fear that increased exposure to native culture would weaken the traveler’s loyalty to England and moral character.

Keywords: Swift, postcolonialism, linguistics, satire, *Gulliver’s Travels*, anglophilia

The above quote, shamelessly lifted from a letter Jonathan Swift wrote to a “young clergyman” in 1721, is often quoted by writers in composition studies because Swift intended it as a concise definition of “style”. However, beyond its context as a call to an economy of words in prose, Swift’s most famous statement concerning composition can also be seen as a link between the world of language (and hence the study of language) and the geographical world that was very much at the forefront of the English mind in the early eighteenth century in the form of the discovery of new lands and expos like The Great Exhibition. This excitement manifested itself in the extremely popular travel narrative genre that Swift so deftly satirized in *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World. In Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of Several Ships*, hereafter referred to as *Gulliver’s Travels*. Proper words in proper places definitely means precision in word choice and syntax, but it can also mean using the right set of words in the right geographic location and linguistic context. What are improper words, and where are the improper places that they might come from? Do improper words in improper sources destabilize proper words and the legitimacy of their proper places?

This interpretation of Swift’s maxim (though admittedly more than a little isogetical) is of particular relevance to a reading of the aforementioned 1726 satire for which Swift is most well known to modern readers. In *Gulliver’s Travels*, the work’s narrator, Lemuel Gulliver, claims “great Facility by the Strength of [his] Memory” in “learning the Language” of non-English speakers (*Gulliver’s Travels* 325). Later readers learn that Gulliver had at least a “Smattering” of the following European languages before embarking on any of the voyages related in his narrative (in addition to the just referenced language, which may have been Malaysian): “High and Low Dutch, Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, and Lingua Franca [by which Gulliver, tellingly and anglocentrically, means ‘English’]” (332). Yet, Gulliver’s catalog of acquired

languages does not help him in the travels he records; indeed, we as readers learn of his breadth of language knowledge in the same sentence in which we witness its communicative failure: “I spoke to [the Lilliputians] in as many Languages as I had the least Smattering of [...] but all to no purpose” (332).

Gulliver’s known languages may fail him, but his *capacity* for language acquisition does not. He picks up the languages of the peoples he encounters with astonishing rapidity and is rarely more than merely inconvenienced by his initial inability to communicate. Yet Gulliver’s linguistic adaptability is not without its price; as Gulliver becomes more adept at using each individual language, he becomes less certain of the superiority of his own culture, less convinced that his “Englishness” (and his knowledge of English as a language) makes him extraordinary in any appreciable way. This is true not only in each individual part of the novel (i.e. Gulliver becomes less linguistically and culturally anglocentric the more time he spends on any one island acquiring their language), but true on a larger scale throughout the story as a whole (i.e. Gulliver becomes less sure of the superiority of England as the world’s cultural and ideological center and of English as *Lingua Franca* the more foreign lands he visits). In this regression of anglophilia (or perhaps progression of proto-post-colonial consciousness), Gulliver, through his linguistic acquisitions, becomes a satire of the colonialist fear that increased exposure to native customs and ideas would weaken the traveler’s loyalty to England, English, and their moral character. And if, as Ekhtiari and Amjad claim, “language is Swift’s mightiest weapon” (“Gulliver; The Man-Mountain, The Crumb, The Historian and The Polyglot”¹), then the novel attacks colonialism itself by exploiting English anxiety about the mix of cultures and languages. In *Gulliver’s Travels*, language is at the forefront of each individual story and of the book as a whole, and Gulliver’s Englishness is both tied up in and tied closely to his English. As he encounters different countries, he also encounters different languages, and the effect that those languages have on his own is a mirror of the effect that their cultures have on his view of his own, a view that becomes less and less positive with every new land he visits.

Swift’s novel is a satire of the eighteenth Century fear that excess exposure to foreign cultures (particularly along the lines of language) would weaken one’s ties to their native country and their native language and thus their Christian faith and moral fiber. The prevailing eighteenth century view of non-European languages was one of condescension and dismissal. Sir John Narborough’s response to the language of the West Indian natives he encounters in his *An Account of Several Late Voyages and Discoveries* is typical: “the Men have a harsh language, and speak ratling [sic] in the Throat, and gross, the Women shriller and lower: the pronounce the word *Ursah*, but what it means I could not understand, nor any word they spake. If they did not like any thing, they would cry *Ur, Ur*, ratling in their throats” (65). Narborough does not attempt to learn the natives’ language or to examine it beyond his initial observation that he cannot understand it. For the rest of his description of the area he has visited, he assumes English as a *Lingua Franca* and does not reference the natives’ language at all. This, combined with the unpleasant-sounding description of the way the sounds of the language are created vocally, shows Narborough to be, like his contemporaries (from Defoe to Dampier), only passingly interested in the communicative means of the groups he encounters. Linguistic imperialism was at full force in the eighteenth century, and the countries that England colonized experienced the language as “an alien invasive force, occupying the space of other languages and so threatening linguistic and cultural diversity” (*Understanding English as a Lingua Franca* ix-x), one that “intrude[d] on all

the languages that it [came] into contact with" (*Linguistic Imperialism* 7). To the English colonist, foreign languages, like foreign lands, were something to conquer, and so they were regarded, as in Narborough, as having no value.

Nevertheless, the eighteenth century response to native languages was not simply one of dismissal; at times, it was necessary to at least have a passing knowledge of these languages to engage in trade and exploration. This created an uneasy power dynamic for European travelers, convinced of the superiority of their language and culture, but ultimately unable to accomplish what they had come to do without the assistance of some knowledge of the natives' language. Out of this dynamic sprang the idea that "non-native users...threaten English" (*Understanding English as a Lingua Franca* x), both as a language and the culture, and the fear that excessive language acquisition or prolonged exposure to native culture could result in a weakening of the connection to one's cultural and linguistic roots, and, as a result, the disintegration of one's morality. This fear is expressed clearly in travel narratives like 1743's *The American Traveller*, which records that "Welshmen mingling with the barbarous Chimecae, one of the most uncultivated nations in America" have often "[lost] their Native language" (136). Manifest in this passage is the fear that over-exposure to "barbarity" of the natives will not, as was hoped, convince them to act more European, but will, instead, convince the Europeans to act more barbarous.

This fear is an embodiment of what Robert Phillipson, in his landmark book on post-colonial applied linguistics *Linguistic Imperialism*, calls "the subtractive fallacy". The subtractive fallacy is one of the five precepts of linguisticism, an approach to language that Phillipson et al define in *Language: A Right and a Resource* as consisting of "ideologies and structures which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce unequal division of power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language" (455). The subtractive fallacy is the linguisticist concept that holds that "if other languages are used much, standards of English will drop" (*Linguistic Imperialism* viii) and is one that "logically originates in monolingual societies" (214). This theoretical concept is borne out in Swift's novel in two ways, one literal and one synecdochical. In terms of the former, Gulliver's English deteriorates as the novel progresses, finally being shaken at its very core by Gulliver's interaction with the Houyhnhnms, whose language is the the most "othered". In terms of the latter, Gulliver's allegiance to English culture, represented metonymically by his allegiance to English as a language, is also severely undermined, and by the novel's end he is not only disillusioned with his homeland but with all of humanity. Of course, the subtractive fallacy is just that: a fallacy. Swift's nuanced satire must not be confused with the opinion that he is satirizing; fully cognizant of the linguisticist paranoia of his countrymen, Swift is mocking (as well as problematizing) this view in *Gulliver's Travels*, not supporting it.

Lilliput

Gulliver's first voyage shipwrecks him on the island of Lilliput, populated by "human creature[s] not six Inches high" (*Gulliver's Travels* 327). It is in the episode, that we learn of the Gulliver's capacity for language and the first example of the languages the captain has already acquired failing him, as they do in the passage previously cited in which he is unable to communicate with the island's natives despite trying all of the languages he knows. From the beginning of his encounters with the Lilliputians, Gulliver is focused on language. He inserts into his re-telling of the narrative the proper versions of phrases that they used in first attempting to

communicate with him and continues to do so for his other adventures. He constructs word for word translations of the edicts issued from the Lilliputian aristocracy concerning him. In an act that the narrator does not seem to consider remarkable, Gulliver is able to gain enough command of the Lilliputian language to address the King without a translator in less than a month, though he admits that he is not yet entirely fluent. He is, however, clearly so by the time he is granted his liberty a short while later, as he needs no translator to understand the precisely-worded legal document that enacts his liberty, and he even goes to the trouble of producing it verbatim for his reading audience.

This acquisition of language is concurrent with an adaption of Lilliputian culture that is initially motivated by Gulliver's desire to "cultivate [a] favourable Disposition" amongst his captors so that he might obtain freedom but that persists once this freedom is granted and that eventually results in Gulliver's decision to participate in the Lilliputians' ongoing war with their geopolitical rival, Blefuscu. Gulliver captures an entire fleet of ships from the enemy island, an act for which he is rewarded via language. Gulliver's reward comes in the form of language and language only: a speech act. He has conferred upon him the position of "Nardac", "the highest Title of Honour among them" (346). Gulliver's transition from feared giant to Nardac occurs simultaneously with his own transition from being amused at the natives or even repulsed by them (he is "often tempted" to "dash" them against the ground) (328) to accepting their culture so entirely that he is willing both to participate in their never-ending military campaign with a people he has never met and has no ill will towards and to rescue several members of the royal family at the risk of exposure and great personal embarrassment in a scene in which he puts out a fire by means of urination. The latter act of selflessness unfortunately ends in his public condemnation and a scheduled execution that forces him to flee the island to Blefuscu for sanctuary.

Gulliver frames his disappointment in the Lilliputians in terms of those of the aristocracy of his homeland:

I had been hitherto, all my life, a stranger to courts, for which I was unqualified by the meanness of my condition. I had indeed heard and read enough of the dispositions of great princes and ministers, but never expected to have found such terrible effects of them, in so remote a country, governed, as I thought, by very different maxims from those in Europe. (355)

Gulliver's decision to describe his feelings of betrayal in terms of the European courts represents a dissension from the view of Europe (and England specifically) as culturally and politically superior to "discovered" nations such as the Lilliputians. I believe that this dissension is causally related to his acquisition of the Lilliputian language, as well as the appropriation of and assimilation into the culture that accompanies it. Gulliver is eventually picked up by an English sea-captain after his flight and returns to England as an only slightly less enthusiastic nationalist, but his "insatiable Desire of seeing foreign Countries" (364) only allows him to stay in Europe for two months, after which he embarks on a second voyage.

Brobdingnag

In a move that invokes the Sinbad stories from Galland's translation of *The Thousand and One Nights*, Gulliver's second voyage brings the same results as the first: a shipwreck and his desertion on an uncharted island populated by strange creatures.

This time it is the Brobdingnagians, human-like entities twelve times the size of Gulliver, who capture our unlucky narrator. As with the Lilliputian adventure, it is language that is central to the early encounters between Gulliver and the island's natives. He reports that he is saved from being dashed to the ground (just as he was tempted to do to the Lilliputians) by his being able to "pronounce articulate Words" (although he is careful to note that his captor cannot understand them) and that the giant "appeared pleased with [his] Voice and Gestures" (369). Again, Gulliver answer the natives "as loud as [he can] in several Languages", but, as in his previous voyage, he and his captor are "wholly unintelligible to one another" (370). The farmers who originally discover him observe that he "seemed to speak in a little Language of [his] own [and] had already learned several Words of theirs" (374), and by the time he is brought before the royal courts, he is given the opportunity, as in Lilliput, to address the Brobdingnagian royalty "in as few Words" as he is able. Readers of the lengthy dialogue between him and the Queen (including a "speech", by his own description) will note that his "Words" are not quite so few as he seems to imply, though the Queen does give "great Allowance for [his] Defectiveness in speaking" (378). Gulliver again acquires the island's language rapidly, and though we are given no indication as to how long this process takes, Gulliver makes no further reference to his lack of fluency hindering his communication with the Brobdingnagians.

As Gulliver's command of the Brobdingnagian language increases, so too does the degree to which he becomes a part of their culture. Though the role he occupies is not as regal as his role in Lilliput (here he is the royal pet rather than a tool of military power, a consequence of his size), Gulliver is beloved by the native aristocracy and is mostly treated with care and tenderness. And so too does Gulliver move from his earlier terror of the giants and disgust at the hideousness of their grossly enlarged features to a position of security and contentedness under their care, all within the context of his further acquisition of their language and culture.

It is because of the high regard that the royal family has for him that the King earnestly requests that he give an honest and informative description of his homeland. This is an important moment in the novel, and Gulliver is fully aware of his position as a rhetorician, a conscious and skilled user of language. Gulliver calls his description a "Discourse" and wishes for the "Tongue of Demosthenes or Cicero" to properly praise his home country (393). Here the novel's readers witness, as in the previous adventure, the same struggle within Gulliver between his duty to and love of his native England and the "extreme love of Truth" that compels him to reveal the flaws and vices of that same England (397). Demonstrating full competence of the Brobdingnagian language, Gulliver delivers an ornate speech detailing the wonders and intricacies of British government, law, religion, and history that stretches over five separate meetings, using his most "artful" rhetorical skill to avoid answering some of the questions that he feels will reflect particularly poorly on the English, ultimately in the hope that he will impress the King with the richness and splendor of English culture.

However, the King has taken extensive notes on Gulliver's speeches and has questions of his own, questions that undermine the notion of the superiority of English culture at the very moment when Gulliver is the most convinced that he has asserted it. Gulliver is not up to the task of defending his country against the accusations brought forth by the King, and it is noteworthy that he does not appeal to his insufficient mastery of the language in reporting this failure to his English readers, a foreshadowing of the idea that the ability to communicate about his homeland in his native tongue would not suffice to make his listeners revere it. This leaves the Brobdingnagian

monarch free rein to conclude “the bulk of [Englishman] to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth” and that the entirety of English history is “only a heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments, the very worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, and ambition, could produce”. The King excuses Gulliver from these accusations because he has “spent the greatest part of [his] life in travelling” (396), a further indication of the degree to which exposure to other cultures and languages distances one from those of one’s country.

Though Gulliver is unable to refute the majority of the King’s points about the folly and vice of English culture, he does not give up his loyalty to his home country so easily, saying that he feels that his “most beloved” homeland has been “injuriously treated” by the King’s negative characterizations. Gulliver tellingly attributes this not to any actual strength of the English way of living, but to that “laudable partiality to [his] own country” (and, of course, to his own language) that causes him to “hide the frailties and deformities” of England, as well as to “place her virtues and beauties in the most advantageous light” (397).

Gulliver becomes more critical of the Brobdingnagians after his failure to present England in a positive light to the King, suddenly declaring the learning of the giants to be “defective” and their language “simple”, choosing again to ground the worth of culture in language. By virtue of their flawed language, he concludes that “as to Ideas, Abstractions, Entities, and Transcendentals, [he] could never drive the least Conception into their heads” (399). It is not far after this episode that Gulliver finds himself transported away from Brobdingnag, this time unintentionally, a sign of his increasing reluctance to view England as a welcoming home. He is rescued again by an English captain and makes his way back to England. Once he returns, he is noticeably more affected by his stay amongst the Brobdingnagians than he was after his previous journey, to the point where many believe him to be out of his mind. This time, his allegiance to his home country lessened by the decreased conviction of English cultural superiority brought on by his progressing foreign language acquisition, he only stays for ten days before taking off on another voyage. The subtractive fallacy has begun taking its toll on his love for England and English.

Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Gkubbudrib, and Japan

Gulliver’s third voyage results in he and his crew being overtaken by pirates, and Gulliver is “set-adrift” (410) in a small boat by himself and ends up on the floating island of Laputa. Language is again central in Gulliver’s initial observations of these natives. This time he is confronted with a language that is more familiar than those he has previously experienced, the Laputan language being “not unlike in sound to the Italian”, which causes him to answer in that same language, “hoping at least that the cadence might be more agreeable” to his listeners (412). Gulliver notes, in regards to the failure of this attempted discourse, that the Laputans are “so taken up with intense speculations, that they neither can speak, or [sic] attend to the discourses others without being roused by some external taction upon the organs of speech and hearing” (412). This paroxysm of abstract thinking necessitates the presence of Flappers, individuals who will provide the aforementioned “taction” (touch) to the mouth and ears when the Laputans have fallen into their speculative comas. Gulliver is offered a Flapper but reasonably declines, after which he once again tries to “[address] himself in all the languages” that he is in possession of, and, once again, can “neither understand nor be

understood" (413).

Gulliver is sent to dinner and he immediately begins to acquire the Laputan language ("I made bold to ask the names of several things in their language") and, as before, makes quick progress ("I was soon able to call for bread, and drink, or whatever else I wanted") (414). After dinner, Gulliver is given a language primer, lasting four hours. He takes in the lesson with zeal and, "in a few days, by the help of a very faithful memory" (414), he is capable enough in the Laputan language to speak to the natives comfortably. A few days more are all that are required for him to be competent enough to speak directly to the Laputan king, the novel's benchmark test of fluency. As before, this feat does not appear to be particularly extraordinary to him, though he will later recount that he "obtained by hard study a good degree of knowledge of their language" (423), and further studies in mathematics helps him with his language labors because their "phraseology [...] depended much upon that science and musick [sic]", in the latter of which he admits he "was not a little unskilled" (415).

As Gulliver masters the language, he also begins to see the Laputan people as curiously similar to his countrymen (and women) in ways that were not true of the Lilliputians and Brobdignagians. At this stage in his process of linguistic and cultural acquisition, this is not a positive comparison. When he records that his description of the Laputan women "may perhaps pass with the reader for European or English story", he is referring to their qualities of silliness and insatiability, and he is quick to add that "the caprices of womankind are not limited by any climate or nation [...] they are more uniform than can easily be imagined" (417). This critique of women has an obvious misogynist reading, but, taken in context of Gulliver's larger comparison of the Laputans to European nations, it may also be seen as Gulliver tiring of the European-ness of his new companions. In other words, the degree to which the Laputans are like his own countrymen is the degree to which he becomes "heartily weary" of them (422). This adds another layer to Swift's satire; if Gulliver's acquisition of the Lilliputian and Brobdignagian languages pulls him further away from his own Englishness because he begins to view their cultures as superior through that acquisition, then his acquisition of the Laputan language, the first that has any real European counterpart, pushes him away from that same Englishness by revealing to him within it his homeland's most unappealing characteristics. The linguisticism that has previously caused him to favor the English language is thus assaulted from two fronts, and his ties to England continue to weaken.

This "push" continues with his tour of Balnibarbi, one of the stationary islands ruled by the flying Laputan monarchy, led by one of the few Laputan aristocrats who shows in any real interest in him. As with the islands colonized by England during the First British Empire, the people of Balnibarbi speak the colonizer's language; Gulliver later refers to the language he has recently acquired when in Glubbudrib as the "Language of Balnibarbi" (436), with no evidence that he has picked up any new languages since his stay on Laputa. Given the trajectory I have outlined, it should not surprise readers to find that the capital city, Lagado, is compared to London or that Gulliver's principal occupation while on the continent is an examination of the Academy of Lagado, a thinly-veiled allusion to the Royal Society of London, whose experiments, which were at the forefront of the "interest and demand for establishing a universal language" that Sena argues first "became pervasive" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Swift did not hold in high regard (145). Many, from Swift's contemporaries to contemporary readers, have read the Academy of Lagado as a criticism against the fruitlessness, myopia, and circularity of the Royal Academy's

experiments and arguments.¹

Of particular interest to this project is the “first Professor” that Gulliver sees, who has constructed a mechanism by which “the most ignorant person at a reasonable charge, and by a little bodily labour, may write books in philosophy, poetry, politicks [sic], law, mathematicks [sic], and theology” (428). Though the Professor’s machine is a satire of the linguistic work of the Royal Society, Gulliver himself compares the machine favorably to the work of his English contemporaries, admitting that it is “the custom in Europe to steal inventions from each other” (429), which at least gives the Professor the advantage of having created the machine on his own. Gulliver also goes to the “School of Languages”, where he encounters projects that attempt to “shorten discourse by cutting Polysyllables into one [...] because all things imaginable are but nouns” and to “entirely abolish all words whatsoever” (429), both of which serve to satirize the Royal Society’s linguistic efforts.

Again disappointed by the pseudo-Englishness of his current location, Gulliver opts to leave Balnibarbi, arriving soon in the nation of Glubbdubdrib. As with Balnibarbi and Laputa, the island of Glubbdubdrib is almost immediately compared to Europe, being said to be “about one third as large as the Isle of Wight” (436) and the port of Maldonada being said to be “about as large as Portsmouth” (435). It is worth remembering that the decidedly non-European nations of Lilliput and Brobdingnag did not receive such comparisons.

Gulliver does not acquire a new language on Glubbdubdrib, as his guide understands the Laputan language sufficiently, and, instead, he is finally able to use the European linguistic catalog that has so often failed him in the scenes in which he has Glubbdubdrib’s necromancers resurrect famous figures from the history of the Western world. Though there are historio-linguistic barriers (he has “great difficulty” in understand Alexander the Great’s Greek), Gulliver has surprisingly (perhaps even suspiciously) little trouble communicating with individuals with as diverse linguistic backgrounds as Hannibal’s Carthagian Phoenician, Socrates’ Greek, Sir Thomas More’s Middle English, and Descartes’ Middle French. Such a linguistic triumph would seem to be a perfect opportunity for Swift to have Gulliver ruminate on the superiority of European language and culture, but, though Gulliver develops an even greater respect for most of the historical figures he talks to, he ends up seemingly less happy to be English than ever before:

For having strictly examined all the persons of greatest name in the courts of princes, for a hundred years past, I found how the world had been misled by prostitute writers, to ascribe the greatest exploits in war, to cowards; the wisest counsel, to fools; sincerity, to flatterers; Roman virtue, to betrayers of their country; piety, to atheists; chastity, to sodomites; truth, to informers: how many innocent and excellent persons had been condemned to death or banishment by the practising of great ministers upon the corruption of judges, and the malice of factions: how many villains had been exalted to the highest places of trust, power, dignity, and profit: how great a share in the motions and events of courts, councils, and senates might be challenged by bawds, whores, pimps, parasites, and buffoons. How low an opinion I had of human

¹ For a thorough listing of reactions to the Academy of Lagado along these lines among Swift’s contemporaries, see Douglas Lane Patey’s “Swift’s Satire on ‘Science’ and the Structure of *Gulliver’s Travels*.”

wisdom and integrity, when I was truly informed of the springs and motives of great enterprises and revolutions in the world, and of the contemptible accidents to which they owed their success. (439)

Gulliver's invective against the corruption, foolishness, and immorality of (Western) history also includes a painful "slight examination" of "a very modern period" in which he "[discovers] such a scene of infamy that [he] cannot reflect on it without some seriousness" (440). This proliferation of "Perjury, oppression, subornation, fraud, panderism", in addition to sodomy and incest, is initially said to exclude the English, as Gulliver (possibly afraid to see the truth of the modern state of affairs in his homeland) adds quickly that, in regard to the above vices, he hopes "the reader need not be told that [he does] not in the least intend [his] own country in what [he says]" (440). Yet, England is not spared from the withering critique of modern European failure and folly, as Gulliver remarks at length upon his native people's "degeneracy", coming to a point where he has "descended so low as to desire that some English yeoman of the old stamp, might be summoned to appear; once so famous for the simplicity of their manners, dyet [sic], and dress" (441). Alas, Gulliver is not heartened by the appearance of these strong historical Englishmen, as the aforementioned simplicity only serves to remind him of how "these pure native virtues were prostituted for a piece of money by [these Englishmen's] grand-children" and how "vice and corruption" have overtaken the once proud English lineage of truth and virtue.

Where Gulliver has in the past only been uncomfortable when thinking about his native England, here, in the islands that most resemble England and whose languages most remind him of European languages; here, where he comes into contact with historical and modern figures from the culture he has been invested in for most of his life; here, where he is reminded most of England, he finds himself most disgusted by it. It is at the very point when he first encounters an Englishman and the English language on one of these foreign islands (albeit one from the past) that he is for the first time willing to directly criticize his native country. He does so in a style that seems on the surface a call to action, but that ultimately is closer to a disheartened lament.

Gulliver leaves Glubbudrib for Luggnagg with another guide who possesses "the language of the Balnibarbi" (442). Interestingly, though he stays in Luggnagg for three months, has audience with the King on several occasions, and explores the nation's major city, Gulliver makes no attempt to learn the Luggnaggian language, instead relying entirely on his Balnibarbian translator except in those instances where he must engage in specific speech acts of obedience to show deference to the King, in which cases he translates the Luggnaggian into English for his readers. This indifference to acquisition, which occurs here for the first time in the novel, comes directly after Gulliver's first real criticism of English culture and, read in context of the parallels he continues to draw between the islands of his third voyage and European countries (Luggnagg, for its part, requires Gulliver to "call [himself] a Hollander") (442), represents a satiety of linguistic acquisition for Gulliver spurred on by the Englishness of these islands. Unlike the Lilliputian or Brobdnagian languages, the Laputan and Luggnaggian languages, which correspond to pseudo-English cultures, remind Gulliver of the homeland he is developing distaste for. It for this reason that, already saddled with his European linguistic catalog and now the pseudo-European Laputan language, Gulliver is indifferent toward acquiring the presumably pseudo-European Luggnaggian, choosing instead to press on home to the England he now can only love half-heartedly. Gulliver makes one more stop in Japan before he arrives in

England, communicating with the Japanese Emperor in Low-Dutch and again showing no interest in acquiring a new language. The subtractive fallacy looming via his increasingly burdensome collection of foreign languages, he finally arrives in his native country after an absence of five and a half years, noting laconically upon his return home that he “found [his] wife and family in good health” (451). It is a mere five months before he is at sea again.

The Country of the Houyhnhnms

Gulliver’s fourth and final voyage takes him to a land that is different than all of the previous nations he has visited in many ways: it is unnamed, it ruled not by humanoids but by sentient horse-like creatures, it includes non-civilized humanoids (in the form of the repulsive Yahoos), and its national language is both not entirely unfamiliar to Gulliver and at the same time more “othered” than any of the other languages he acquires. The country of the Houyhnhnms is populated by a ruling class of creatures that resemble ordinary European horses and by a group (they can hardly be called a class) of animalistic humanoids who act as wild beasts. The Houyhnhnms, the nation’s only intelligent life forms, speak in a language that is so similar to the whinnying and neighing of European horses that Gulliver believes them to, in fact, simply *be* ordinary horses. He soon perceives that they are capable of rational thought by their use of language, highlighting again the importance that language plays in establishing identity, culture, and personhood (or rather, horsehood) in the novel. Once he realizes they are sentient beings, he attempts to address them in English, and, as always, fails to communicate anything more than that he is capable of communication. Upon seeing the Houyhnhnms communicate with one another, Gulliver instantly attempts to discern as much as he can of their language. It is here that a close reader perceives both the inherent familiarity and otherness of the Houyhnhnm tongue: on the one hand, its resemblance to the whinnying and neighing of the horses he has previously been in contact with give the language an ease of conversion to English that exceeds any language he has met thus far (“The words might with little pains be resolved into an alphabet more easily than the Chinese” (457), he writes); on the other hand, precisely because the language is connected to a species that was at Swift’s time popularly used as a contrast with humankind², it is positioned as a language of the animal-other, a language that exists in a linguistic sphere outside of the humanoid languages he has encountered. Moreover, though he can convert it to an English alphabet easily (and does within his first few days in the country), it takes him ten weeks to be able to “understand most of [his master’s] questions” and three months before he can “give him some tolerable answers” (461). Only after five months (a lifetime by Gulliver’s previous linguistic standards) is he able to “express [himself] tolerably well” (462). Thus, the Houyhnhnms’ language is both extraordinarily familiar and alien to Gulliver; he can conceptualize and alphabetize it easily (a division that he has never made with any of the previous languages he has acquired), but he cannot actually acquire it without an unprecedented degree of difficulty, a fact that is all the more puzzling since he notes that it has some resemblances to High Dutch (though it is more “graceful and significant”) (461), which readers already know him to be quite fluent in. It is perhaps

² I am here indebted to R.S. Crane’s article “The Houyhnhnms, the Yahoos, and the History of Ideas,” which argues that Swift’s “horse as rational animal” is a deliberate reversal of the popular Porphyrean argument that used a contrast between man and horse to demonstrate man’s uniqueness as the planet’s only rational creature.

in an attempt to counter this difficulty that Gulliver incorporates more direct phrases of this language in his re-telling than he does for any other. The potential for the subtractive fallacy to divest Gulliver of his remaining affinity for England and English is the strongest on this nameless island, and Swift, in a move that speaks directly to his satirizing of the very real fear of such an occurrence amongst his fellow Englishmen upon exposure to foreign cultures and languages, capitalizes on that potential. Gulliver's acquisitive trouble is accounted for by the profound and unparalleled alterity that the language represents. Though in some ways familiar, Gulliver cannot acquire the Houyhnhnms' language (and, by proxy, their culture) without almost fully and nearly irreversibly othering himself and, in doing so, coming as close as he ever does to disencumbering himself from his English and his Englishness. It is this struggle that slows down his normally speedy acquisitive process.

Gulliver's task of first importance, his "principal endeavor", is, predictably, "to learn the language" (461). The Houyhnhnms, who view him as a "prodigy" of the Yahoos, are all too eager to teach it to him. Thus begins a long series of discourses in which Gulliver gives a full account of his personal history and of the precepts of English/European culture. Like the Brobdingnagian King, the Houyhnhnm Master attacks the foundations of the culture Gulliver ostensibly supports. Unlike the events in the second voyage, however, Gulliver does not provide a sincere defense for the English (though he will later feign to have done so), and he does not give his readers a succeeding passage in which he bolsters their faith in their own country by detailing the flaws of the one he now finds himself in. Instead, Gulliver relents to the questioning and dismissal of his Master, which seems less like the pitying wonder of the Brobdingnagian king and more like a disdainful evisceration. In a critical linguistic moment that signals his near-total assimilation into Houyhnhnm culture and rejection of his own language and culture, he scornfully resents his having to translate the discourses into "our barbarous English" (468). The full effect of the subtractive fallacy is upon him; Gulliver's English has been corrupted by his acquisition of foreign tongues, and his linguisticism has been inverted. Indeed, Gulliver justifies his rejection of Englishness (not to mention humankind) in terms of enlightenment:

But I must freely confess, that the many virtues of those excellent quadrupeds, placed in opposite view to human corruptions, had so far opened my eyes and enlarged my understanding, that I began to view the actions and passions of man in a very different light, and to think the honour of my own kind not worth managing. (476)

In light of his newfound understanding, Gulliver resolves to stay in the country of the Houyhnhnms forever, but, though he has rejected his own identity, he cannot fully take on the forever othered Houyhnhnmness. The Houyhnhnms will not allow him to assimilate into their culture, and, at the moment where Gulliver has most thoroughly abandoned the notion of English superiority, he is told that he cannot transcend his Englishness. This is an abandonment that he has arrived at, through the progressive acquisition of non-European languages, culminating in this familiar, alien, supremely difficult tongue, and the subsequent rejection by the Houyhnhnms leaves Gulliver crestfallen.

Still deeply in love with the Houyhnhnm culture and language, the spurned once-again-Englishman resolves to isolate himself from all of mankind, but he is "rescued" by a group of European sailors and carried back to England against his wishes. In the

culmination of the subtractive fallacy's linguistic inversion, Gulliver expresses supreme difficulty in returning to intelligible communication in his native English. He does not merely struggle with word choice or mechanics. Just as the foundation of his devotion to England, his pride in his Englishness, has depreciated, so too has the "Englishness" of his English. The very foundation his English, inflection and pronunciation, has been subverted, and his "tone of speaking" now resembles "the neighing of a horse", so much so that crew that has rescued him falls "a-laughing" (495). Gulliver's subsequent misanthropy (clearly a reflection of Swift's own) stems not only from the undermining of his English but also from the undermining of the Englishness that that command of the language is a representative of. As the book closes, Gulliver slowly begins to recover his English and Englishness, albeit with extreme reluctance, manifested most obviously in his suddenly sterling description of England as "an example to the whole world for [its] wisdom" (501). Ultimately, however, English as a language (and thus as a culture) will never be truly satisfactory for him again, and the book ends with Gulliver remarking sadly that the culturally superior Houyhnhnms have "no terms to express any thing that is evil" in their language (501).

Conclusion

It is clear that Gulliver regresses (or progresses) from anglophile to Yahoo-hater in *Gulliver's Travels*. Also, it is equally clear that he makes similar, gradational movements during his stays on the various islands he encounters. These movements (and the larger, novel-wide movement that they constitute) are based ultimately in Gulliver's acquisition of the languages of the people groups he comes across, through which he also acquires understandings of their respective cultures. As Gulliver acquires each individual language, he becomes less and less certain of the superiority of his own linguistic catalog and of the culture of his native land. The subtractive fallacy causes Gulliver to become increasingly less proud of his homeland as his new linguistic catalog of non-European languages grows, and his time with the Houyhnhnms ultimately undoes his English and his Englishness. Indeed, "after" the novel's composition, Gulliver writes a letter to his cousin in which he says that the "infernal Habit of Lying, Shuffling, Deceiving, and Equivocating" is "so deeply rooted in the very Souls of all my Species; especially the Europeans" (317)

The movement of this novel represents a satire of the eighteenth century fear that excess exposure to the foreign cultures (particularly along the lines of language and cultural immersion) would weaken one's ties to their native country and thus their moral character. It is this concept that Swift employs in the movement of Gulliver, through increased language acquisition, from happy Englishman to pessimistic barn-dweller. It is clear from the context of the novel itself and from Swift's other writings that the novel is satiric. Swift himself, as has been noted (perhaps to a fault) by George Orwell, Andre Breton, and others, had a profound dislike of humanity as a whole, whether European or "savage". Breton remarked that "from one end of [Swift's] life to the other his misanthropy was the only disposition that never altered" ("Swift and Black Humor" 759), and this idea is so prevalent in biographical accounts of Swift that when Orwell writes that Swift "hates lords, kings, bishops, generals, ladies of fashion, orders, titles and flummery generally; but...does not seem to think better of the common people than of their rulers, or to be in favor of increased social equality" (37), the reader knows that Orwell means that what Swift has "left out" from the equation is the notion of there

being any redeeming group or section of humanity at all.³ Orwell himself saw the goal of *Gulliver's Travels* as being to "humiliate Man" (38), not too far a cry from Swift's own claim about the book in a letter to Alexander Pope that the book was meant to "vex the world".⁴ And both the historical and Orwellian Swift line up with the post-publishing remarks of Lemuel Gulliver himself, who laments that humanity-as-Yahoos is "utterly incapable of Amendment by Precepts or Examples" (315), as well as with more contemporary assertions, like this one by Ian Higgins, that the book is meant as a "a satire on contemporary European civilization and the vices and follies of humanity" (*Swift's Politics: A Study In Disaffection* 356).

Viewing the transformation that Gulliver undergoes both throughout the entire novel and within each respective voyage through this lens, it is difficult to imagine Swift being sincerely troubled by colonialist fears about the dangers of language acquisition on a cultural and moral level, and one is led to conclude that Swift most likely intended this seemingly cautionary move in the *Gulliver's Travels* as primarily satirical. Thus, Gulliver's journey from quintessential Englishman to depressed misanthrope, a journey that comes about through the disillusionment he suffers from his increasing acquisition of non-European languages (culminating finally in his acquisition of the Houyhnhnm tongue and subsequent self-othering, only to have that process forcibly reversed), is a clever and insightful satire on the fear of losing one's Englishness through the acquisition of other languages and the exposure to other cultures, one that, through the gradual manifestation of Phillipson's subtractive fallacy, calls into question the very value of maintaining Englishness at all, if not the stability of the English language itself.

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³ Orwell attributes the contrast between the "sensible" Gulliver of Part I and the "intermittently silly" Gulliver of Part II to Swift's desire to "make the human being look ridiculous," but I think that Swift's "manoeuvre" is necessary more in regards to theme than craftsmanship.

⁴ And vex the world it did. Samuel Johnson's remarks on the Houyhnhnm episode are characteristic of the general critical reception of the book (grounded, as they often were in the eighteenth century, within the framework of morality, either humanist or religious): "the part [...] which gave the most disgust must be the history of the Houyhnhnms" (*Johnson's Life of Swift* 1). The indignation here is not solely moral; it is also nationalistic.

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**The Importance of the Midwestern Setting in
Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark* and Her Other Novels**

Claudio Salmeri

Abstract: In a 1979 interview, Sharon Pollock, one of the most outstanding contemporary Canadian playwrights, asserted that: "Canadians have this view of themselves as nice civilized people who have never participated in historical crimes and atrocities [...] But that view is false". In her 1973 play *Walsh*, she dramatized the history of Chief Sitting Bull and his failed attempt at finding retreat in Canada after the battle at Little Bighorn. The play focuses on Sitting Bull's interchange with the NWMP officer Major Walsh, and the causes for the eventual disaster of the Sioux: while Sitting Bull claimed that the Sioux were as much Canadian Indians as American, given that the Great Plains were their traditional hunting grounds, the Canadian authorities saw the Sioux as American Indians who had trespassed the international boundary into Canada and should be persuaded to leave. The essay proposes to discuss Pollock's *Walsh* as an example of "historiographic metadrama" (Knowles), and as an important contribution to reconstructing a crucial episode in Canadian Indigenous history that has proven requisite for the country's self-definition.

Keywords: Willa Cather, Midwestern, prairie, immigrant settlers, *The Song of the Lark*

When I strike the open plains, something happens. I'm home. I breathe differently. That love of great spaces, of rolling open country like the sea—it's the great passion of my life. Willa Cather

For Willa Cather, the place where she spent her childhood—the American Midwest—was both her inspiration and an abundant source of her art. She felt touched by the countryside the same way Thea Kronborg, the protagonist of *The Song of the Lark*, was moved hearing Dvorak's "New World Symphony" for the first time in her life,

When the first movement ended, Thea's hands and feet were cold as ice [...] Here were the Sand Hills, the grasshoppers and locusts, all the things that wakened and chirped in the early morning; the reaching and reaching of high plains, the immeasurable yearning of all flat lands. There was home in it, too; first memories long ago; the amazement of a new soul in a new world; a soul new and yet old, that had dreamed something despairing, something glorious, in the dark before it was born. (*The Song of the Lark* 174)

When Cather was only ten years old, her family moved from Virginia to Nebraska. Having seen only the lush, verdant, forested hills of Virginia, Willa was shocked when she first gazed at the flat, treeless plains, but almost immediately the vast open spaces of this land mesmerized her, becoming an intrinsic part of her mind just as the lark's song took hold of Thea: "It was over flat lands like this, stretching out to drink the sun, that the larks sang—and one's heart sang there, too [...]" (*The Song of the Lark* 191-192).

The Song of the Lark is a story of a little girl who comes of age in a pioneer town in the West and gradually develops into a mature woman and an artist. Even though Cather based the character of Thea Kronborg on famous opera singer Olive Fremstad, Thea's story contains a lot of elements of Cather's own life. The action takes place in Moonstone, Colorado, a town closely resembling Red Cloud, Nebraska, where Cather grew up. Both the fictional and the real settings portray busy railroad towns in the heart of a desolate, wide-open countryside.

Just like Cather, Thea is a courageous girl who adores exploring the land surrounding her town: creeks, canyons, gullies and sand hills all appeal to her. On her thirteenth birthday she wanders about the sand ridges for a long while, picking up crystals and examining yellow prickly pear blossom with thousands of stamens. She looks at the sand hills until she wishes she were a sand hill herself (*The Song of the Lark* 79).

Thea lives in a white frame house similar to Cather's own house in Red Cloud, down to the details of her loft room with low slanted ceilings and flower print wallpaper. Thea spends entire days and nights in her room, reading and thinking, her body "pulsing with ardor and anticipation" (*The Song of the Lark* 140). It is during these intimate moments that Thea feels she carries within her another as yet unborn self: "How deep they lay, these second persons, and how little one knew about them, except to guard them fiercely. It was to music, more than anything else, that these hidden things in people responded" (217).

Thea spends much of her life struggling to bring to life the artist within her—through hard work, discipline, determination and fervor. Numerous adults pass through Thea's early life; they are all aware of and eager to help her hidden self to come out. All these characters are based on people Cather actually met in Red Cloud. Early on, Dr. Archie cures Thea from a case of pneumonia, just as Dr. McKeeby cured Willa. When Thea gets old enough, Dr. Archie often brings her along on his trips, introducing her to a part of life that she would otherwise never see. In Mexican Town, for instance, she meets Spanish Johnny, a traveling musician given to bouts of drinking and insanity, and his long-suffering wife, Mrs. Tellamantez. It is when she sings in a duet with Spanish Johnny during a dance in Mexican Town that she realizes her voice can truly dazzle with its natural tones and sensual depths. The drunken Professor Wunsch, who teaches Thea to play the piano and inspires her love of music, is based on the wandering German musician Schindelmeisser, who gave Cather music lessons. Thea's friend, Ray Kennedy, also draws on a real life character. He introduces Thea to the world of nature lying outside the town by taking her on long journeys deep into the sand hills where she can collect "bits of brilliant stone, crystal and agates and onyx, and petrified wood as red as blood" (*The Song of the Lark* 48). Ray, an uneducated man who had run away from home as a boy and had been to Mexico and the American Southwest, stirs Thea's imagination with his stories about cliff-dwellings, burial mounds with caches of pottery and feather blankets, and a completely preserved corpse of a woman wearing a string of turquoise around her neck.

Years later, after Ray's death in a heartbreaking accident, when Thea leaves Moonstone and moves to Chicago, hoping to make it as a singer there, she visits the Southwest and lives in a cliff dwelling herself—an essential experience for her artistic awakening. Willa also made a trip to the Southwest that marked a crucial milestone in her life as a novelist. At that time, she enjoyed a flourishing career in New York as a writer and editor but it wasn't until she returned to the West she had known and imagined as a child that she was ready to become a great writer. After the journey she

wrote her greatest works of fiction: *O’Pioneers!*, *My Ántonia*, and *The Song of the Lark*. All these novels, at least some of the time, take place in the American West, and draw on Cather’s memories of the place and the splendidly different lives of the people she encountered throughout her life.

Likewise, Thea does not become a famous singer until she gets back to the land she knew and dreamed of as a kid. Thea abandons Moonstone because she feels constrained by the stifling, local rules imposed upon women at the time. In Chicago, she has difficulties supporting herself while stubbornly pursuing her singing career. Feeling worn out and disheartened, she makes a journey to Panther Canyon, Arizona. It is there that she awakens to her true self as a woman and an artist. She falls in and loses her love and in experiencing this emotional sadness she discovers her strength as a woman, and eventually as an artist. Thea finds power in the raw but stunning scenery of the wilderness and the canyons. The ancient crafts of the Native American Indian women inspire her. Thea recalls her childhood in Moonstone and understands that her memories of places and people make up a profound part of her, something that she will never lose. In this deep recognition, the artist inside her is born.

Ten years later in New York, Thea lives in a high rise which looks like a “perpendicular cliff” overlooking a sharp drop-off to the river—a modern parallel to cliff dwellings. At the height of her artistic powers, she sings with a “deep-rooted vitality”, her voice brimming with the power of her memories of the place—“the light, the color, the feeling. Primarily, the feeling”. The spirit of the place has become a part of the spirit of her song.

At the age of nine, Willa Cather was uprooted from everything she knew and loved at her hometown near Winchester, Virginia, and taken to the plains near the emergent town of Red Cloud, Nebraska. The well-known, green, encroaching Virginia scenery was replaced by an apparently never-ending undulating countryside of bushy red grass, “not a country at all”, says Jim Burden in *My Ántonia*, “but the material out of which countries are made” (*My Ántonia* 36). The uprooting marked a cultural surprise of Cather’s life, shaping her attitude and fiction. The historically rich and complex South—the fruitful burden of William Faulkner’s characters, which provides the context for their tragedy, was abruptly swept away from Cather. The tragic context for her characters, in contrast to Faulkner’s, is that they are always from “someplace else”, defined rather by creating a country and attempts to connect to a long-lost past. They carry their molding burden of remembered gods into remote and savage places. In Cather’s portrayal, such uprooting produces simplistic attitudes that alienate the sensitive and the creative, aggravating even more their difficult adjustment.

For Cather, her childhood in Red Cloud proved to be both successful and suffocating. Red Cloud gave her a setting (Black Hawk in *My Ántonia*, Moonstone in *The Song of the Lark*, and all the little towns she wrote about are different versions of her native land) and inspiration for the characters. A Bohemian acquaintance, Annie Sadilek Pavelka, became the model for Ántonia Shimerda Cuzak, and the family of Red Cloud miners turned into a source for the Harlings of Black Hawk. But as productive as this material was, Red Cloud could not survive unblemished, and sanity demanded access to a wider world. There, Cather’s activities and achievements were remarkable; she worked at everything: from teaching at school to book and drama reviewing; to serving as managing editor of *McClure’s Magazine* to being a prizewinning author. The land itself offered Cather an essential theme and defined her as a Western writer. The land seemed an enormous feature in Nebraska: uncultivated, barren and breathtaking. A girl from Virginia, Cather felt nostalgic, lost, and culturally ravenous. To overcome the

sadness of estrangement, she “had it out” with the country, “and by the end of the first autumn”, she wrote, “that shaggy grass country had gripped me with a passion I have never been able to shake. It has been the happiness and the curse of my life” (*The World of Willa Cather* 140).

After an apprenticeship in Pittsburgh and New York writing short stories (many of them about artists) and her first novel, “Alexander’s Bridge”, which takes place in London and Boston, she turned to her Nebraska experience for material and wrote a “novel of the soil”, before it became fashionable (*Willa Cather on Writing* 93). A long holiday spent in the West in 1912 wrought a great impact on her work. Her brother Douglass was working for the Southern Pacific at Winslow, Arizona, at the time and while visiting him she traveled to Indian missions, Anasazi Indian cliff dwellings, and the Grand Canyon. Her experience of this western setting offering more than just a geological past, with historic treasures comparable to those of ancient Greece and Rome, made her see her own grassland country in a new light when she stopped there on her way back to the East. A year later, in 1913, she published *O Pioneers!*, which she considered her first original work, “the first time I walked off on my own feet” (*Willa Cather on Writing* 200).

In *The Song of the Lark*, Cather once more used the Western land to create a Swedish-American female protagonist. Thea Kronborg, like Alexandra, is a self-conscious, even backward girl until she finds her goal in life: to draw and entertain people, bringing them joy through her singing. Early on she senses the idiosyncrasy that sets her apart from her family and most of the other people in her Colorado prairie town, Moonstone. She finds there is another primitive and ferocious self inside her soul that emerges through vocal training and emotional and physical growth, at one point struggling to break out of her shrunken white organdy dress. In conclusion, when she becomes a successful opera singer, the demands on Thea’s personal life impoverish and curtail her relationship with people. When she finds out, too late, that Fred Ottenburg, a St. Louis beer prince she is fascinated with, has been trapped in an unhappy marriage, she becomes persuaded that her bed has become her Waterloo, and realizes how vulnerable she is to a need she barely suspected when her father said she would never get married. Although Thea finally marries Fred, she cannot avoid the damage caused by sacrificing her personal life for her career. To her sensitive best friend, Dr. Archie, who feels anxious about it, Thea explains,

Your work becomes your personal life. You are not much good until it does. It is like being woven into a big web. You can’t pull away, because all your little tendrils are woven into the picture. It takes you up and uses you, and spins you out, and that is your life. Not much else can happen to you. (*The Song of the Lark* 455-6)

The situation is reminiscent of the sacrifice of personal life demanded of Alexandra when she devotes herself to the Bergson farm. Cather combines frontier and artistic elements as Thea listens to Dvorak’s “New World Symphony” and imagines grass-overgrown wagon trails that brought tears to her eyes the day she visited the high tablelands above Laramie. Finally, Thea’s stay in Panther Canyon, Arizona, sets her free “from the enslaving desire to get on in the world” (*The Song of the Lark* 296), and puts her, like Alexandra, at sexual risk. She turns strangely passive in the canyon, capable of converting the tactics of art into constant sensation, and to “become a mere receptacle for heat, or become a color [...] or [...] a continuous repetition of sound [...]”

(*The Song of the Lark* 300). Following in the footsteps of Indian women and exploring shards of their pottery, Thea recognizes “a long chain of human endeavor” (380), as she compares the Indian women’s effort to embrace life-giving water in aesthetically pleasing jars to her own singing. In spite of her inclination to compete with men and the fear of losing her freedom, Thea now admits she needs Fred, she wants him “for everything” (403). As in *O Pioneers!*, the female protagonist must develop a personal component, become dependent and show sexual need whereas satisfaction remains suspended in both novels because self-sufficiency of female protagonists was clearly too difficult for Cather to give up.

Throughout her life, Willa Cather was an eager traveler; she planned summer vacations and visited tourist attractions. Her trips often provided important locations for her novels and stories: London, France, New England, the American Southwest, Quebec, Virginia. Furthermore, tourists themselves become critical characters in Cather’s fiction. Despite her well-known use of the classical motifs of displacement, exile and migration, her characters also travel simply for pleasure. Her favorite tourists—neither natives nor immigrants, but visitors—observantly move through foreign places gathering impressions. They are intelligent, curious, courteous to their environs, and not averse to souvenirs, or detours. They pursue an interest in finding a significant reflection, in discovering some creative kinsmanship to a strange landscape. Cather’s tourists include, among others, Thea Kronborg in Arizona, Claude Wheeler in France, and Jean Latour visiting pueblos and missions of New Mexico. Occasionally, she also creates exquisitely bad tourists who blunder around insensitive to their surroundings, like “Marge” and “Jim”, the chattering, smoking, dirty-knickered American motorists of “The Old Beauty”.

Writing about Sarah Orne Jewett, Cather pitied the denatured modern New Yorker, “knowing no more about New England (or country folk anywhere) than he has caught from motor trips or observed from summer hotels” (*Not Under Forty* 93). Yet, after she moved away from Nebraska, motor trips and summer hotels were her own main way of exploring many of her settings. Like her contemporary and friend, D.H. Lawrence, Cather was a fast student of place; as with Lawrence, her friends always noticed the focused intensity of her curiosity, her quick impassioned identification with people and places. Even on a Manhattan bus ride in 1910, Elizabeth Sergeant could see Cather’s

vigor, her authenticity, her delight in the landmarks. There was so much she did not want to see and saw not. What she did see she selected instinctively and made it so her own that her impulsive sharing of it gave it a sort of halo of brightness. (*Willa Cather, A Memoir* 46)

In the Southwest, a few years later, Edith Lewis described her as “intensely alive to the country—as a musician might be alive to an orchestral composition he was hearing for the first time” (*Willa Cather Living: A Personal Record* 101). In all her holiday itineraries she solicited and listened enthusiastically to the stories of natives and of other tourists (her creative writing is filled with “chance meetings” in hotels and on trains and boats). She visited a number of museums and galleries, and she read (to her own advantage) old books she picked up in hotels.

Cather’s particular talent as a tourist—the source of the “halo of brightness” that pervades her narrated landscapes—was a skill enabling us to discover her worlds through story and history, as meaningful texts, framed, annotated and revived by an immense

literary record of human endeavor. Landscapes and high culture (usually European) were inseparable. To give just a small example, in *My Antonia*, the muddy prairie beyond Jim Burden's rooming-house window is illuminated by an evening star hanging "like a lamp suspended by silver chains—like the lamp engraved upon the title-page of old Latin texts, which is always appearing in new heavens, and waking new desires in men" (*My Antonia* 298). Such a vivid "textualizing" habit left its traces everywhere in Cather's work, inextricably entwining writing and scenery, converting a world of inert things to readable text and assimilating it to the great glittering continuum of human ideas.

From its first appearance as a romantically impossible destination in her 1909 short story "The Enchanted Bluff", the American Southwest had a special fascination for Cather as a writer. It also posed a special challenge to Cather the tourist because it resisted her propensity to cultural assimilation. To her friends she described her first encounter with a sense of big strangeness and vacancy, when in 1912 she had spent several weeks with her brother Douglass in Flagstaff, Arizona—through fearful images of human smallness, of "hanging on by one's fingertips, measuring oneself with that ancient image, Death, which so easily overpowered a white man in this environment" (*Willa Cather, A Memoir* 123). Her late vision in *Death comes for the Archbishop* of the desert as incomplete and unassembled, a "country [...] still waiting to be made into a landscape" (*Death Comes for the Archbishop* 95), echoes Jim Burden's anxiety upon arriving on a Nebraska prairie that was "not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made" (*My Antonia* 8). In 1912, she summoned her literary resolve to "read" the desert and recalled an impressively austere image of human absence from Balzac: "*Dans le desert, voyez-vous, il y a tout et n'y rien; Dieu sans les hommes*" ("In the desert, you see, there is everything and nothing; God without men") (*Willa Cather: A Literary Life* 11). It is not surprising that she was grateful to return to the conventional civilities of upper-middle-class New York.

However, in Arizona, in response to the land's oppressive emptiness, she began the project of textualizing and humanizing the Southwest: of finding art and culture in Walnut Canyon's cliff dwellings; of learning about missionary and Indian legends from the Flagstaff priest; and of falling in love with her Mexican "Antinous", the beautiful singer Julio, who allowed her to visualize a high Aztec civilization that could rival that of the classical Europe she loved, and from which she drew his nickname. This difficult project continued through four more visits to the Southwest and was memorialized in three novels that energized Cather's career. Struggling to find human significance in an apparently indifferent and apparently barren landscape, she began to articulate a set of metaphors for cultivating the wild that characterized all her works after 1912 and culminated in *Death comes for the Archbishop* and in Jean Latour's restored garden: the triumph of a simultaneously literal and allegorical familiarization.

Although all of Cather's encounters with the Southwest brought out the double modes of humanizing it, as her 1912 attraction to Julio "Antinous"—importing and imposing an orderly European tradition while at the same time "discovering" a mirror image of an existing indigenous American tradition—her August 1915 visit to Mesa Verde, Colorado, dramatically clarified these contrasts. The trip replaced an ambitiously planned tour of wartime Germany with S.S. McClure and Isabelle McClung, a tour derailed by the strong objections of McClung's father. Instead, Cather took Edith Lewis west, choosing the remote new Mesa Verde National Park with its famous cliff dwellings as their holiday destination. At Mesa Verde, she found (at least in her imagination) not some scattered mysterious remains, shards of culture that sometimes

surface on the American soil, but whole cities of stone: complex architecture that you could touch, proof of a noble human history, replete with technology, science, art and religion. In Cather's 1925 dramatization of this discovery in *The Professor's House*, her archeologist-priest Father Duchene speaks words of cultural reassurance to Tom Outland: "Your tribe", he says, "were a superior people [...]. In an orderly and secure life they developed considerably the arts of peace" (*The Professor's House* 219). Their pottery is identical to artifacts found in by-gone Crete. By the end of his stay on the mesa, the Virgil-student Tom has so thoroughly annotated and assimilated its landscape to the classical high culture that

When I look into the Aeneid now, I can always see two pictures: the one on the page, and another behind that: blue and purple rocks and yellow-green pinions with flat tops, little clustered houses clinging together for protection, a rude tower rising in their midst, rising strong, with calmness and courage—behind it a dark grotto, in its depths a crystal spring. (*Willa Cather, A Memoir* 252-253)

Such a mingling of place and text is literate tourism at its most ambitious and audacious. Not yet itself wholly allegorical, it anticipates Cather's victorious allegories of *Death comes for the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock*.

The essays themselves are very literal attempts at "literate tourism", the results of a self-conscious experiment in the relationship between language, culture and place. Cather's recreational travel and the centrality of visited landscapes in her fiction have combined since her death to create a kind of sacred itinerary for her readers: Red Cloud, Grand Manan Island, Avignon, Aix-les-Bains, Santa Fe, Quebec, and the Shenandoah Valley. More than other writers, Cather readers and scholars have become tourists themselves. Since the early 1970s they have met periodically in these places and in her "home" cities, Pittsburgh and New York, to share re-evaluation of her work.

In late October 1999, under the auspices of the Occidental College and the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation, a group of approximately one hundred gathered at Mesa Verde—more accessible this time than in 1915, but for most it still represents a far departure from familiar landscapes. For three days the visitors stayed at the Far View Lodge on the mesa top, simultaneously conducting conventional academic meetings and unabashedly collecting impressions and mementos of the cliff dwellings, along the canyon rims among the pinion pines, in the National Park Service museum, and in the lodge stores. From its inception, the symposium organizers intended to use tourism—the transient, curious association of the individual to some important land—as a paradigmatic structure to develop a new understanding of Willa Cather's intricate connection to the American Southwest.

The American Southwest was unequivocally as formative a countryside for Willa Cather's artistic vision as was her beloved Nebraska. Both sceneries elicited in her a sense of unrefined incompleteness. They appeared not so much as finished places, but as things unassembled, like countries "[...] still waiting to be made into a landscape" (*Death Comes for the Archbishop* 95). Cather grew so fascinated with the Southwest that it turned into a fixed presence, an important element in three of her greatest novels: *The Song of the Lark*, *The Professor's House* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

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**Corporeal Feminism:
Gendered Bodies in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve***

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Abstract: This article focuses on Angela Carter's novel, *The Passion of New Eve*, as a fertile ground for exploring how bodies are constituted and how these bodies are gendered through both gender performances and lived experiences. Bringing Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity in conjunction with corporeal feminist philosophy of the body, I argue that Carter's foray into material and discursive construction of the body is a kind of feminist quest for self-identity, which centres on fe/male dis/embodiment and gender reassignment, for the embodied self is always in a state of flux as in gender performativity. This corporeal examination of the novel provides a glimpse into Carter's critique of patriarchy, matriarchy, technology, science and rationalism.

Keywords: Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve*, corporeal feminism, gender performativity, corporeality

Angela Carter's 1977 novel *The Passion of New Eve* tells the story of English Evelyn's gender metamorphosis in his nomadic perambulations from apocalyptic New York through desert and on to Zero's harem in the United States. Evelyn begins his narrative as male and then goes through a gender reassignment and becomes a female. At the beginning of the novel, misogynist Evelyn, who experiences a futuristic civil war in New York, is abducted by a radical feminist group, and the leader of the group, Mother, who is regarded goddess and surgeon, transforms Evelyn into New Eve through his semen. While in this predicament, Evelyn/Eve struggles to find a way to attach himself/herself to his/her new transgendered "corporeality" and ultimately becomes accustomed to her new embodied self. Along with Evelyn's gendered transformation, *The Passion of New Eve* is concerned with the ways in which bodies of Tristessa de St Agne, Leilah/Lilith, Mother and Zero become gendered. In this respect, this article focuses on *The Passion of New Eve*, as a fertile ground for exploring how bodies are constituted and how these bodies are gendered through both corporeal performances and lived experiences. Bringing Judith Butler's theory of "gender performativity" in conjunction with feminist corporeal theory of the body, I argue that Carter's foray into material and discursive construction of the body is a kind of feminist quest for self-identity, which centres on fe/male dis/embodiment and gender reassignment, for the embodied self is always in a state of flux as in gender performativity.

The Passion of New Eve is rendered as "Carter's most subversive novel", as Lindsey Tucker points out, "an attempt to textualize the truly indeterminate and fluctuating directions of gender construction" (11). For example, critics like Elaine Jordan, David Punter, Alison Lee, Heather L. Johnson, Lucie Armitt, Aidan Day and Sarah Gamble offer different ways of re-reading *The Passion of New Eve*, bringing to the fore the discussion of the re/deconstruction of gendered subjectivities. Taking into consideration the fluid structure of gender construction, however, this article provides a new interpretation of the gendered body in terms of the imbrication of gender performativity with "corporeality".

Before considering *The Passion of New Eve* in more detail, it is necessary to examine the critical context of recent discussions of corporeality. Feminist theories of the body scrutinize both ontic and epistemic structures of the body by challenging the trenchant patriarchal assumptions about both material and discursive status of the female body. Underlining the division between two schools of feminism about the body, however, Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick claim that “other feminist writers have developed theory that is explicitly embodied and insistent on the centrality of the material body; while yet others, influenced by poststructuralism and postmodernism in particular, have put into question the givenness and security of the so-called natural body, positing instead a textual corporeality that is fluid in its investments and meanings” (1). From this discussion on the body, “corporeal feminism”, associated with Australian feminist theorists, such as Elizabeth Grosz, Vicki Kirby, Moira Gatens, Gail Weiss, and Elizabeth Wilson, have emerged, suggesting a new approach to the body. In general, corporeal feminism draws more attention to both textuality and materiality of the female body simultaneously rather than just discursive or biological status. In *Volatile Bodies*, a ground-breaking corporeal feminist text, Elizabeth Grosz remarks that “[t]he body is regarded as the political, social, and cultural object par excellence, not a product of a raw, passive nature that is civilized, overlaid, polished by culture. The body is a cultural interweaving and production of nature” (18). Importantly, in her argumentation, the interaction of nature and culture plays a considerable part in the constitution of the body; that is, the human body is not at all a biological entity, but rather a sociocultural “matter” enmeshed in the world. In this respect, “corporeality” refers to “the material condition of subjectivity” (Grosz, *Space* 103). For corporeal feminism, corporeality signifies the materiality of the body shaped by discursive practices. In this argument, the body is regarded as “a kind of hinge or threshold: it is placed between psychic or lived interiority and a more socio-political exteriority that produces interiority through the inscription of the body’s outer surface” (*Space* 33). Both “inscriptive” body and “lived” body produce a fluid corporeality; that is, corporeality is conceived both as “a surface on which social law, morality, and values are inscribed” and as “the lived experience of the body, the body’s internal or psychic inscription” (*Space* 33). So conceived, material and textual corporeality constructs a specific self-identity, a particular subject in terms of specific cultural production. According to Grosz, “[a]s pliable flesh, the body is unspecified raw material of social inscription that produces subjects as subjects of *a particular kind*” (*Space* 32)(emphasis original). On this view, it is of great importance to understand the embodied self in *The Passion of New Eve* in terms of textual and material corporeality. What makes this novel meaningful for feminist corporeal theory is that the novel is centrally concerned with the “interplay of text and physicality which posits a body in process, never fixed or solid, but always multiple and fluid” (Price and Shildrick 6). Carter sets out to demythologise the familiar representations of gendered corporeal identities by reflecting on the corporeal performativity of the body in the novel.

Furthermore, corporeal feminism has drawn attention to the significance of gender and gendered bodies in relation to the social construction and the materialization of the body. Obviously, gender is deemed as a concept shaped by discursive norms. For Grosz and Judith Butler, as Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook suggest, “the body is a crucial site of gender constitution” (36). Corporeal feminist scholars attach more importance to the discursive structure of gender and sexual difference, considering gender as a sociocultural construct. The reason for this is that it is from René Descartes onward that the body is relegated to an inferior status and is explicitly linked with the feminine regarded as lacking, mindless, passive, and inert. In this sense, the female

body has become “the site for feminist reinscriptions and symbolic reappropriations of woman’s subjectivity” (Braidotti 248). Essential to feminist argumentation of the female corporeality is an understanding of gender and sexuality. In her ground-breaking book, *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler propounds a radical consideration of sex/gender binary opposition which constructs, regulates and controls female subjectivities in the society. What Butler contends is that gender is constructed through the iterative discursive norms that are social, medical, political, technological, and economic. In conjunction with other social categories, such as race, class, and sexuality, gender is an effect of iterative stylized acts which are performative. In this context, “gendered” body is only constructed as “gendered” through the stylized repetition of acts which are regulated by historical, social, and cultural discourses (*Gender* 179). The effects of these regulatory norms attach new meanings to gender. More to the point, gender becomes performative through the repetitive acts and performances (*Gender* 178), which Butler calls “gender performativity”. Consequently, the gendered body is constituted through this performativity. This discursive performativity is not at all enough for embodied subjects in Angela Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve*.

On this view, Butler contends in *Bodies That Matter* that the materialization of gendered bodies is produced as the effect of power. It is at the intersection of power/knowledge or discursive formations which are cultural, social, political, economic, medical and technological that gendered bodies are installed and materialized. In Butler’s contention, the material body can be only accessed through discourse which is always already gendered. Hence, the material body already becomes discursive and gendered. Unlike corporeal feminist theorists such as Grosz, Kirby, and Braidotti, Butler supports the radical social constructivism, focusing on the discursive production of the material body that is sexed. However, as mentioned above, feminist corporeal theory underlines the view that the fleshy material body already exists, that is, the corporeal body has an ontological status constructed by discursive norms. That’s why this article suggests a corporeal performativity of bodies that are both textual and material, inscribed and lived. In this regard, Angela Carter breaks down the ontological stability of corporeality in the novel by emphasising corporeal performativity and gender fluidity. This destabilisation poses significant challenges for the female body and opens new avenues for considering gender beyond Butler’s theory of gender performativity and hegemonic discourses.

Angela Carter dexterously questions “the idea that all of the things around us are constructed rather than natural but also invites us to ponder why they are made in the way they are—and, by extension, to ask ourselves why they *are* the way they are, or indeed why they are *at all*” (Cavallaro 6). In this sense, the concept of “corporeal performativity” offers an interesting angle on *The Passion of New Eve*, which is so essential to the understanding of the formation of gendered bodies. Julie Sanders notes that “[f]rom *The Passion of New Eve* to the twinned and constantly swapped identities of *Wise Children*, Carter was fascinated by the constructed nature of social and gendered identity” (119). Carter makes fundamental comments under the article title “Notes from the Front Line” on the way in which the readers need to evaluate Carter’s approach towards the conceptions of gender and femininity. Firstly, she argues that “we were truly asking ourselves questions about the nature of reality” (37). The question Carter posed is whether the real is artificial or not. She is concerned with whether the reality is actually real or artificially constructed when she points to “my own questioning of the nature of my reality as a *woman* (38). In this article, secondly, she continues: “How that social fiction of my ‘femininity’ was created, by means outside my control, and palmed off on me as the real thing” (38). Obviously, these statements

support the idea that gender/ed identities and bodies are discursively and corporeally constructed. This process is itself performative. What is important to note is that Carter, Butler and corporeal feminist scholars reveal the process of the formation of gendered corporeality. As Sarah Gamble points out, “the elaborate games that Carter plays with gender identity in this text [*The Passion of New Eve*] means that the nature of both femininity and masculinity is subjected to critique” (*Fiction* 90). Not only does Carter present a critique of the culturally constructed bodies, but also she provides quintessential angles on artificiality, human corporeality, masquerade, cross-dressing, androgyny and transgenderism.

In *The Passion of New Eve* Angela Carter examines “the specific historical and socio-cultural contexts for the construction of *gendered* subjectivities” (Munford 8) (emphasis original) by means of diverse corporealities of Eve/Evelyn, Tristessa de St Agne, Mother, Leilah/Lilith and Zero. First, it is significant to take into consideration the gendered corporeal metamorphosis of Evelyn/Eve in the novel. At the beginning of the novel, Evelyn, the misogynist and misanthropist Englishman, comes to New York City from London to work at a university. When arrived, “in New York I found, instead of hard edges and clean colours, a lurid, Gothic darkness that closed over my head entirely and became my world” (*The Passion of New Eve* 6). This darkness of the city is implicitly connected with the gendered and raced corporeality of a black woman, Leilah/Lilith, later in the novel with the black, monstrous body of Mother. The dark atmosphere here supports the recurrent images related to womb/tomb/grave/cave throughout the novel. Later, Evelyn encounters a Czech soldier called Baroslav, who states that “[t]he age of reason is over” (*The Passion of New Eve* 9). Conspicuously, this soldier symbolises the derailment of rationalism in that he performs alchemy through magic and science like Mother. This critique of rationalism and technology again comes to surface in the practices of Mother, because for Carter, science, technology and rationalism are important tools to objectify and commodify the female body. In *Volatile Bodies*, as Grosz suggests, in Cartesianism, the body is scrutinized in three ways: first, “the body is primarily regarded as an object for the natural sciences” (8); second, the body is seen “in terms of metaphors that construe it as an instrument, a tool, or a machine” (8); third, “the body is commonly considered a signifying medium, a vehicle of expression” (9). In the light of the abovementioned statements related to Cartesianism, the body has often been structured in terms of dichotomies. In corporeal feminist theory, the prime concern is to disrupt the entrenched notions and norms of science concerning physiology of the body, to shatter the stratified thoughts of philosophy on the Cartesian body. In a similar fashion, Carter deconstructs this idea of Cartesian body, creating constructed corporealities of Eve/Evelyn and Tristessa in the novel.

In addition, the motif of hermaphrodite is of great significance to a questioning of androgyny in relation to material and textual corporeality in the novel. In the apartment of the Czech soldier, there is a poster which is loaded with various meanings: “There was a seventeenth-century print, tinted by hand, of a hermaphrodite carrying a golden egg that exercised a curious fascination upon me, the dual form with its breasts and its cock, its calm, comprehensive face. (Coming events?)” (*The Passion of New Eve* 9). The narrative voice implies something related to the gendered corporeal metamorphosis of Evelyn/Eve. The image of hermaphroditism re-emerges in chapter 9 at a time when Evelyn/Eve and Tristessa have intercourse in the sterile desert. The interrogation of embodied essence and projected self is as such:

[E]very modulation of the selves we now projected upon each other's flesh, selves—aspects of being, ideas—that seemed, during our embraces, to be the very essence of our selves; the concentrated essence of being, as if, out of these fathomless kisses and our interpenetrating, undifferentiated sex, we had made the great Platonic hermaphrodite together, the whole and perfect being to which he, with an absurd and touching heroism, had, in his own single self, aspired. (*The Passion of New Eve* 144-5)

The single body of Evelyn/Eve and Tristessa forms a perfect corporeal self without any trace of genders. As Claire Colebrook explicates the concept of gendered performativity in *Gender*, “the self is nothing more than a series of actions—a performance” (211). In this sense, this hermaphroditic self is a performance, a corporeal performance. When we look at the corporeal performativity of Tristessa, a Hollywood movie actress, the constructed illusory image of the body comes to surface in relation to the male body of Tristessa. In particular, in an interview with John Haffenden, Carter explains why she created this character:

In *The Passion of New Eve* the central character is a transvestite movie star, and I created this person in order to say some quite specific things about *the cultural production of femininity*. The promotion slogan for the film *Gilda*, starring Rita Hayworth, was ‘There was never a woman like *Gilda*’, and that may have been one of the reasons why I made my Hollywood star a transvestite, a man, because only a man could think of femininity in terms of that slogan. Quite a number of people read *The Passion of New Eve* as a feminist tract and recoiled with suitable horror and dread, but in fact there is quite a careful and elaborate discussion of *femininity as a commodity*, of Hollywood producing *illusions as tangible commodities*—yet most of that was completely by-passed. (*The Passion of New Eve* 85-6) (emphasis mine)

In this sense, the feminine body of Tristessa is formed through the projected images of Hollywood movies. Tristessa's corporeality is marked as “gendered” by means of cinematographic reflection on the screen. In the narrative Tristessa is described in such words: “Tristessa. Enigma. Illusion. Woman? Ah! And all you signified was false! Your existence was only notional; you were a piece of pure mystification, Tristessa” (*The Passion of New Eve* 2). In the novel there is an ongoing disruption of the causality between corporeality and ontology and gender. This is valid for Eve/lyn, Tristessa, and Leilah. In the text Tristessa “had been the dream itself made flesh though the flesh I knew her in was not flesh itself but only a moving picture of flesh, real but not substantial” (4). It appears to support the idea that Tristessa's gendered corporeality is both textual as a female and material as a male. Underlining the textuality of the body, the narrator, Evelyn/Eve, expresses the illusory body of Tristessa by stating, “[b]ody, all body, to hell with the soul” (3). Tristessa, “the very type of romantic dissolution, necrophilia incarnate” (3), aligns textuality with materiality of his/her body. That is, Tristessa's corporeality is a meeting point constructed through the specific social, cultural and historical discursive structures, as well as lived vicissitudes he goes through as a male. It is through the images of photographs, advertisements, and magazines that Tristessa's gendered body is produced. This inscription of cultural and social and visual power upon Tristessa's corporeality signifies that the specific discursive structures are vital elements in producing the gendered body. The narrator notably emphasizes the idea that Tristessa is a cultural artefact due to the fact that “now I was disillusioned with her when I discovered she could stoop to a *pretence of humanity*” (4). This acting and

false appearance of Tristessa is of utmost importance to the understanding of gender as performative. Butler highlights that “in *imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself-as well as its contingency* (*Gender* 175) (emphasis original). Tristessa as a drag displays the constructedness of gender, and drag highlights the fact that it is a cultural artefact moulded by the heterosexual matrix. The masculinity or femininity of Tristessa is a social fabrication based on corporeal acts like Evelyn/Eve’s masculinity. In the novel, Evelyn/Eve’s comment upon the corporeality of Tristessa is:

You were an illusion in a void. You were the living image of the entire Platonic shadow show, an illusion that could fill my own emptiness with marvellous, imaginary things as long as, just so long as, the movie lasted, and then all would vanish. This world had never been sufficient for you; to go beyond the boundaries of flesh had been your occupation and so you had become nothing, a wrath that left only traces of a silver powder on the hands that clutched helplessly at your perpetual vanishings. (107)

The fleshy situation of Tristessa takes place only after he/she meets Evelyn/Eve in the glass mausoleum. The inscribed body combines the lived body in the corporeality of Tristessa there. The imitation of woman’s acts turns out to be “authentic” in Tristessa’s case. It is worth remarking that “the sufferings she had mimicked with such persuasiveness they had achieved a more perfect degree of authenticity than any she might have undergone in real life” (*The Passion of New Eve* 119). However authentic his/her gestures are, Tristessa is a self-created, self-constructed ersatz. Tristessa “performs” womanliness in such a real way that he/she becomes a fetishized image. It is stated that

her own shadow, worn away to its present state of tangible in substantiality because, perhaps, so many layers of appearances had been stripped from it by the camera – as if the camera stolen, not the soul, but her body and left behind a presence like an absence that lived, now, only in a quiet, ghostly, hypersensitized world of its own. Even her terror had a curiously stylised quality; she acted it out with absolute conviction but I cannot tell whether or not she experienced it. (119-120)

Tristessa wears varied masks to obfuscate his/her another socially sanctioned gender. Tristessa is “the perfect man’s woman! He had made himself the shrine of his own desires, had made of himself the only woman he could have loved!” (*The Passion of New Eve* 125). Both Evelyn/Eve and Tristessa are social and cultural artefacts constructed through the quotidian material reality. As Grosz points out, the body “must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitution. The body is not opposed to culture, a resistant throwback to a natural past; it is itself a cultural, the cultural, product” (*Volatile* 23). Thus, Evelyn/Eve is amazed at “the authenticity of Tristessa’s womanhood” by noting that “Tristessa, the sensuous fabrication of the mythology of the flea-pits. How could a real woman ever have been so much a woman as you?” (125). The surface falsity of Tristessa turns out to be his/her authentic gender identity. As he/she remarks in the novel, “when the years passed and my disguise became my nature, I no longer troubled myself with these subterfuges. Once the essence was achieved, the appearance could take care of itself” (138). In fact, this fabricated essence is by all means an illusion, for, as Carter expresses, the essence is a kind of appearance. As Sarah Gamble underlines,

“theatrical illusion is displayed in all its artifice and it is in the act of acknowledging it as an illusion that we arrive at the reality of life” (“Something” 48). The theatricality of Tristessa opens up new spaces for disrupting the illusory nature of corporeality. In *The Passion of New Eve*, what is emphasised is that “[f]lesh is a function of enchantment. It uncreates the world” (144). This offering is exemplified in a passage stated by Evelyn/Eve from the novel: “I had become my old self again in the inverted world of the mirrors. But this masquerade was more than skin deep. Under the mask of maleness I wore another mask of femaleness but a mask that now I never would be able to remove, no matter how hard I tried, although I was a boy disguised as a boy again, like Rosalind in Elizabethan Arden” (129). Obviously, both inscribed body and lived body produces Eve/Evelyn’s corporeality as such.

Besides the gendered corporeal performance of Tristessa, the character of Leilah/Lilith, after all, reflects the typical roles of femininity when she encounters Evelyn/Eve in New York City. As Evelyn/Eve points out, Leilah/Lilith is “a girl all softly black in colour—nigredo, the stage of darkness, when the material in the vessel has broken down to dead matter. Then the matter putrefies. Dissolution. Leilah” (10). She is a performance artist, and the fictiveness of her femininity like Evelyn/Eve and Tristessa reflects the idea that gender is an effect of corporeal performative significations. Leilah/Lilith “was unnatural, she was irresponsible. Duplicity gleamed in her eyes and her self seemed to come and go in her body, fretful, wilful, she a visitor in her own flesh. Her skin was like the inside of a glove” (23). As is indicated, the flesh is tangible but at the same time contingent. As Anne Enright notes, “[s]kin is the substance that turns ‘meat’ into ‘flesh.’ It transforms the brute and mortal, and births it into the sexual and deathless world of sign” (38). Leilah/Lilith’s skin is akin to “meat” when she dons her apparatuses in her theatrical performances. The theatricality of femininity is explained through Leilah/Lilith’s gendered performative corporeality. The essence of her gender is already constructed, and her corporeal surface already becomes a gendered surface refigured by iterative corporeal acts. The image of the mirror in her apartment indicates that the fabricated, inscribed self is different from the tangible, lived body:

I would lie on her bed like a pasha, smoking, watching, in her cracked mirror, the transformation of the grubby little bud who slumbered all day in her filth; she was a night-blooming flower. But, unlike a flower, she did not grow beautiful by a simple process of becoming. Her beauty was an accession. She arrived at it by a conscious effort. She became absorbed in the contemplation of the figure in the mirror as, in any degree, herself. The reflected Leilah had a concrete form and, although this form was perfectly tangible, we all knew, all of three of us in the room, it was another Leilah. Leilah invoked this formal other with a gravity and ritual that recalled witchcraft; she brought into being a Leilah who lived only in the not-world of the mirror and then became her own reflection. (*The Passion of New Eve* 24)

Significantly, her non-corporeality in the mirror is only a theatrical and performative illusion. Her fictive self in the mirror is a fabrication which might reflect Evelyn’s hedonic fantasies. Leilah/Lilith’s corporeality becomes “gendered” through significations of Evelyn/Eve’s desires and fantasies, cosmetics and costumes:

All the delights of the flesh available in one institution of bone and muscle. The finicking care she used to give to the creation of this edifice! Applying the rouge to her nether lips and the purple or peony or scarlet grease to her mouth and nipples; powders and unguents all the colours of the rainbow went

on to the skin in the sockets of her eyes; with the manual dexterity of an assemble of precision instruments, she glued on the fringe of false eyelashes. Topiary of her hair she would sometimes thread with beads or dust with glinting bronze powder she also applied to her pubic mound. Then she sprayed herself with dark perfumes that enhanced rather than concealed the lingering odour of sexuality that was her own perfume.(25)

The corporeality of Leilah/Lilith is a sociocultural artefact which is moulded through theatrical acts, costumes and make-up. In "Introduction", Lorna Sage points out that "Carter's people are constructs in any case, not born but made" (24). Leilah/Lilith is a material fabrication out of illusory feminine myths. Leilah/Lilith embodies both artificiality and reality. She has fleshy corporeality, but in her performances she turns out to be "her ritual incarnation, the way she systematically carnalised herself and became dressed meat" (*The Passion of New Eve* 27). She becomes a fetishized corporeality like Tristessa in her theatrical performances.

When we return to corporeal performativity of Eve/Evelyn, geographical inscription has great effect on his/her corporeality. The desert, like New York City, is personified as "the abode of enforced sterility, the dehydrated sea of infertility, the post-menopausal part of the earth" (*The Passion of New Eve* 36). In fact, the world is seen as the body as is indicated in these sentences: "The earth has been scalped, flayed; it is peopled only with echoes. The world shines and glistens, reeks and swelters till its skin peels, flakes, cracks, blisters" (37). The corporeality of the city and desert is created through these images. Another image supporting the idea that gender/ed metamorphosis will take place in the desert is a bird. It is important to remark that "it was a bird. [...] it was at once—the Bird of Hermes, the bleeding bird of the iconography of the alchemists; now the great, white, beautiful bird turns to dead and putrefying matter". (40). This "an instantaneous metamorphosis" (40) is valid for Evelyn/Eve and Tristessa in the text. Carter's desert imagery here indicates the imbrication of "passive" body of desert with lively bird in the transformation of Eve/Evelyn's corporeality.

In this corporeal desert, Evelyn/Eve is kidnapped by the feminist guerrilla warriors, The Women. The Women lead Evelyn/Eve to Beulah, "the place where contrarities exist together" (45). For Evelyn/Eve, Beulah seems to be an inner city like a womb/tomb/cave. The leader of this constructed matriarchy is Mother, regarded as "a chthonic deity, a presence always present in the shaping structure of dream. She is a holy woman, it is a profane place" (43). This militant feminist group is constructed by Mother, the scientist and the goddess. "Beneath this stone sits the Mother in a complicated mix of mythology and technology" (44). Conspicuously, Carter critiques material and discursive power structures, especially mythical archetypes and technological intervention as is understood from the aforementioned sentence. By means of these myths and technology, especially cosmetic surgery, the corporeality of Evelyn/Eve undergoes a "gendered" metamorphosis: "The plastic surgery that turned me into my own diminutive, Eve, the shortened form of Evelyn, this artificial changeling, the Tiresias of Southern California, took, in all, only two months to complete" (68). The plasticity and artificiality of the feminine body is emphasised throughout the narrativization of Evelyn/Eve. Notably, as a consequence of this technological intervention Evelyn is surgically transformed into New Eve with a new synthetic flesh. Mother, who is "the Great Parricide", and "the Castratrix of the Phallogocentric Universe" (64), castrates Evelyn/Eve with a knife. The artificial corporealities and constructedness of gender are prevalent in Beulah, too. Evelyn/Eve points out that "[t]his room was quite round, as if it had been blown out, like bubble gum, inflated under the earth; its walls were of a tough, synthetic integument with an unnatural sheen upon it that troubled me

to see, it was so slick, so lifeless. Everything in the room had a curiously artificial quality, though nothing seemed unreal, far from it" (46-7). Commenting upon this artificiality, Evelyn/Eve thinks about his/her discursively constructed corporeality. Evelyn/Eve feminine body is produced not only by discursive mechanisms such as Hollywood films and magazines in which Tristessa St Agne is the best example of femininity, but also by material, technological implantation and transplantation. Above all, this biotechnological intervention to which Evelyn/Eve's flesh is exposed is by no means enough to be a "woman". In Beulah, his/her flesh is moulded by the specific discursive social engineering so that she could become "a perfect specimen of womanhood" (65). When we return to Judith Butler's conceptualization of gender performativity, she argues in *Gender Trouble* that

[t]he parodic repetition of gender exposes as well the illusion of gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance. As the effects of a subtle and politically enforced performativity, gender is an "act", as it were, that is open to splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of "the natural" that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status. (187)

This "phantasmatic" status becomes materialised when Evelyn/Eve is in Zero's harem. As iterative acts and gestures, he/she begins to "perform" his/her gender corporeally: "[M]y manner became a little too emphatically feminine. I roused Zero's suspicions because I began to behave too much like a woman and he started to watch me warily for signs of the tribade" (98). It is significant to underline that gendered corporeal performativity of Evelyn/Eve turns out to be a self-parodying performance, a spectacle, a performative theatricality of his/her femininity as can be observed in Tristessa's nature of femininity. As Butler remarks in *Undoing Gender*, "it is through the body that gender and sexuality become exposed to others, implicated in social processes, inscribed by cultural norms, and apprehended in their social meanings" (20). Evelyn/Eve's corporeality undergoes this kind of "gendering" process through corporeal suffering and social engineering performed by the matriarchy of Mother and the patriarchy of Zero. What the above quotation underlines is that the idea that "gender is performative is not simply to insist on a right to produce a pleasurable and subversive spectacle but to allegorize the spectacular and consequential ways in which reality is both reproduced and contested" (Butler, *Undoing* 30). As Carter interrogates the reality and artificiality of the feminine flesh in the novel, the text itself paves the way for this kind of literary criticism related to the conceptualization of gendered corporeal performativity.

More important, Evelyn/Eve's "natural" sex is surgically transfigured, and throughout his/her journey he/she copes with the hardships she encounters. In doing so, she displays the artificial and performative nature of his/her gender through his/her corporeal performativity. Evelyn/Eve tells of her corporeal experience as follows: "This intensive study of feminine manners, as well as my everyday work about the homestead, kept me in a state of permanent exhaustion. I was tense and preoccupied; although I was a woman, I was now also passing for a woman, but, then, many women born spend their whole lives in just such imitations" (97). It is from this context that Evelyn/Eve's becoming-woman takes place through such gendered corporeal performances. From corporeal feminist angle, the feminine body might be perceived as an object inscribed upon by the outer discursive power structures, and as a lived body constructed by psychic inscriptions. Grosz states that "[b]odies speak, without necessarily talking, because they become intextuated, narrativized; simultaneously, social codes, laws,

norms, and ideals become incarnated" (*Space* 35). In this respect, in *The Passion of New Eve*, Evelyn/Eve points out that "I am a tabula erasa, a blank sheet of paper, an unhatched egg. I have not yet become a woman, although I possess a woman's shape. Not a woman, no; both more and less than a real woman. Now I am a being as mythic and monstrous as Mother herself" (79). Mother's ideal image gets embodied in the corporeality of Evelyn/Eve. Nevertheless, this process of Evelyn/Eve's becoming-woman takes place when his/her corporeality interacts with other bodies, such as Zero's castrated corporeality. The cultural, social and historical inscriptions are written upon his/her corporeality through corporeal suffering, corporeal beatings of Zero the poet during his/her gendered metamorphoses. As a dehumanized subject in the novel, Zero is an oppressor raping, abusing and torturing his wives. As Charley Baker suggests in "Nobody's Meat: Revisiting Rape and Sexual Trauma through Angela Carter", Zero is "the ultimate personification of misogyny, almost to the extent of becoming a caricature" (77). This misogyny ends up with brutalising his wives. As for his corporeality, Zero "had only the one eye and that was of an insatiable blue; he covered his empty socket with a black patch. He was one-legged, to match, and would poke his women with the artificial member" (82). The castrated corporeality is complemented with the artificial organ. This prosthetic corporeality, indeed, reinforces the brutal situation of Zero in the sense that his virility is only reinvigorated through the brutal acts. What is more, the corporealities of his women, Marijane, Sadie, Apple Pie, Tiny, Betty Boop, Betty Louella and Emmeline are regulated by Zero's corporeal acts: "They all bore the angry marks of love bites on the exposed flesh of throat and neck" (85). Claire Colebrook underlines the idea that the body "forms itself through power, achieving both its specificity and its sex through actions and relations to other bodies" (220). Evelyn/Eve's corporeality is produced through these kinds of experiences in his/her journey. His/her inscribed and lived corporeality becomes gendered as result.

Evelyn/Eve's corporeality draws more attention to the question of whether his/her body has its own agency to perform sexual difference. In Beulah, she undergoes psychosomatic processes to be a perfect woman. In this process, Evelyn/Eve states that "the programming began and, wonder of wonders, old Hollywood provided me with a new set of nursery tales" (68). The new flesh of Evelyn/Eve turns out to be an apparatus moulded through Hollywood simulated images of women. Carter shows us how the hegemonic discursive structures like Hollywood have a great influence on one's flesh and how it is projected upon the formation of gender. He/she comments,

I don't know if the movies were selected on purpose, as part of the ritual attrition of my change in ontological status: this is what you've made of women! And now you yourself become what you've made ... Certainly the films that spun out a thread of illusory reality before my dazed eyes showed me all the pain of womanhood. Tristessa, your solitude, your melancholy – Our Lady of the Sorrows, Tristessa; you came to me in seven veils of celluloid and demonstrated, in your incomparable tears, every kitsch excess of the mode of femininity. (*The Passion of New Eve* 68)

The interrogation of ontological status of the feminine corporeality reflects the idea that your appearance or body image might be artificial and illusory. As Butler argues in *Bodies that Matter*, the materialization of the body takes place through significations, performances and signs (67-72). That is to say, the body as a matter is only an effect of powerful discursive mechanisms regulating human corporeality according to heterosexual matrix. Evelyn/Eve is obviously concerned with the appearance owing to the fact that everything in Beulah is only a surface. He/she points out that "your essence

were hung up in a closet like a dress too good to be worn and you were reduced to going out in only your appearance” (*The Passion of New Eve* 69). Indeed, in her writing entitled “People as Pictures”, which she examines the traditional Japanese tattoo art, *irezumi*, she notes that “the essence is often the appearance” (383). In the novel, Evelyn/Eve states that “this unfleshed other whom I was had not the slightest idea how to utilise the gadgetry of her new appearance” (*The Passion of New Eve* 79). Clearly, his/her corporeality is an artificial costume moulded on his/her body. Evelyn/Eve is “involved in ideological games wherein reality is considered a mere by-product of textuality” (Cavallaro 82). However, Evelyn/Eve’s body is both material and textual in the novel as this article argues. In the psychosomatic condition, Evelyn/Eve feels an estrangement towards his/her gendered body:

[W]hen I looked in the mirror, I saw Eve; I did not see myself. I saw a young woman who, though she was I, I could in no way acknowledge as myself, for this one was only a lyrical abstraction of femininity to me, a tinted arrangement of curved lines. I touched the breasts and the mound that were not mine; I saw white hands in the mirror move, it was as though they were white gloves I had put on to conduct the unfamiliar orchestra of myself. (71)

The ontological destabilization of Evelyn/Eve is reinforced as a consequence of plastic surgery. This ontological disruption enables him/her to be accustomed her new skin which is artificially engineered like his/her vagina implant. As Rebecca Munford states, “she is concerned with the *re*-location, rather than the *dis*-location of the subject” (10). The re-location of Evelyn/Eve takes place after he/she experiences the corporeal vicissitudes in the novel. In *The Passion of New Eve*, Evelyn/Eve highlights the fact that “[t]o be a man is not a given condition but a continuous effort” (60). The gendered metamorphosis of Evelyn/Eve gives his/her a corporeal void:

I was literally in two minds; my transformation was both perfect and imperfect. All of New Eve’s experience came through two channels of sensation, her own fleshly ones and his mental ones. But at length the sense of having been Evelyn began, in spite of himself, to fade, although Eve was a creature without memory; she was amnesiac, a stranger in the world as she was in her own body – but it wasn’t that she’d forgotten everything, no. Rather, she had nothing to remember. (*The Passion of New Eve* 74)

His/her gendered metamorphosis at first seems to be ambiguous, but he/she ultimately gets accustomed to her new embodied self after meeting Tristessa. At the dénouement Eve transgresses the boundaries of gender with her new corporeality by sailing to new life.

Reading *The Passion of New Eve* through corporeal performativity opens a textual space for the disruption of social and cultural norms regarding Cartesian dichotomies and its discourses of objectification, sexualized commodification, mythification and fetishization of the fe/male body. Placing corporeality in the context of both matriarchy and patriarchy, Carter provides a new gender critique for the constitution of corporeality in the novel, suggesting that both inscribed body and lived body co-produce fluid corporeality that is already gendered.

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Paganism and Dance(s) as Instruments of Bakhtinian Carnavalesque as Reflected in Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*

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Abstract: Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) is, in fact, about socio-cultural status of Irish women in the 1930s, which is illustrated by the experiences of the Mundy sisters. The sisters are disciplined and symbolically imprisoned by the norms of the Church. The hierarchical position of the Church and the repressed and secondary position of women are maintained by means of women's performing the roles determined by the Church and by their repetitive acts such as knitting and housekeeping, which are thought to be appropriate behaviours for women. The hierarchy of the Church is subverted only when the sisters momentarily lose themselves due to their dance(s)'s liberating effect. These dance(s) coincide with the time of Celtic Lughnasa festival which represents paganism, the "id" and temporary relief from the burdens of the Church which is the symbol of civilisation, order and discipline. In the light of these discussions, this paper aims to argue that paganism and dance create a Bakhtinian carnivalesque atmosphere which brings temporary liberation from symbolic imprisonment, deconstruct problematic representation of women and distort the unquestionable "facts" of society determined by the Church albeit momentarily. These discussions are further elaborated by giving references to Judith Butler's theory of performativity of gender.

Keywords: Brian Friel, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Bakhtinian carnivalesque, Lughnasa, Christianity, Irish women in the 1930s

Brian Friel's 1990 play, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, is, in fact, reflective of socio-cultural status of women in 1936 Ireland. It is a clear indication of social and religious conservatism of the country and the repressive impact of Catholicism particularly on women in the 1930s. These socio-cultural facts are represented either directly or indirectly by means of symbolic representations and Irish folklore. They are also presented via a flow of conflicts between the liberating and instinctively shaped primitive religion intrinsic to pre-Christian paganism and the norms of Christianity which are associated with civilisation, order and discipline. It may be observed that paganism defies the determinism of Christianity. In this sense, that the play takes place in a short period of Lughnasa, a Celtic festival celebrated in the honour of one of the greatest gods, Lugh, is not a coincidence. By means of this festival, reflective of Irish folklore and metaphorically a Bakhtinian carnivalesque atmosphere, Friel questions and criticises the hegemony, norms and so-called fixed order of Catholicism which suppresses women and represses their feelings in the 1930s.

Actually, as means of liberation, all festivities are times when people act as they wish without the restrictions of the Establishment/ the *status quo*, and particularly carnivals, in Bakhtin's words, create a "second life" (9) in which they feel a sense of temporary relief from the burdens of the maintenance of the *status quo*. In *Dancing at Lughnasa* which is embroidered with the characteristics of carnivalesque, this relief is enabled through dances that coincide with Lughnasa. The play as a whole may be

regarded as the narrator Michael's memoir of dances which create this "second life", a dream world for his aunts: "When I remember it, I think of it as dancing. Dancing with eyes half closed because to open them would break the spell" (*DL* 71). If/when the whole play is analysed as Michael's memoir of the temporary relief of his mother and four aunts from the heavy burden of Christianity throughout Lughnasa, Lughnasa, and instances of dances observed in the play may be said to be reflecting the characteristics of Bakhtinian carnivalesque. In the light of all these arguments, this paper aims at arguing that paganism and dances bring a Bakhtinian carnivalesque atmosphere of laughter, joy and relief to the boring and suffocating lives of the sisters shaped by the Church. In this respect, paganism and dances may be regarded as instruments of temporary relief from the burdens and temporary distortion of "facts" in society. They bring the sisters the chance of writing and acting their own "script" through denying the roles determined by the Church.

In fact, *Dancing at Lughnasa* is about a historical period in Ireland, the 1930s, a decade shortly after Ireland was declared as a Free State in 1922. This decade is of great significance particularly for Irish women because the 1937 Constitution which determined the status of women in society was formed in this period. Actually, "[d]espite some tensions between the Church and militant republicans, the new Irish State after 1922 was closely and continually influenced by Catholic thinking" (Hussey 381). The Irish Free State, which gained independence from England in 1922, continued its strict link with the Catholic Church. In the 1930s Éamonn de Valera, who was a leading political figure in Irish politics, "worked closely with the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid" (Hussey 382). As a result of this close contact, de Valera created a new Constitution in 1937 which began to be formed in 1936 (Girvin 140), and which "was explicitly religious in its overtones and some of its provisions" (Hussey 382). According to this constitution, "[w]omen were placed in the home: 'In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved' (Article 41.2.I)" (Hussey 382). Coinciding with this period, *Dancing at Lughnasa* may be considered as a play which mirrors the conservative Catholic society's great impact upon women in the post-colonial period. As McMullan argues, the play

articulates the lack of social and economic agency and mobility available to Irish women such as the Mundy sisters on the eve of Ireland's 1937 Constitution, which endorsed contemporary Catholic doctrine on the primary domestic role of women as wives and mothers. The play therefore critiques the inequalities and conservatism of post-independence Ireland, and offers an antidote to nostalgic and insular images of Irish history. (214)

It is obvious that the status of women was never equal to that of men in the 30s. Women were tried to be silenced by keeping them within the borders of their houses. A woman at home would not be a dangerous or rebellious figure in society. As Karen Steele accentuates, "in the decades after 1921, the voices of [...] dissident women were silenced by the now partially Irish Free State, which worked assiduously [...] to restrict women to the home, as wives and mothers—and to suppress their role as authors of the revolution" (199). Victimised by the hegemonic control of the powerful State, Church and the patriarchy, women, in this way, gradually were pushed into the otherisation process. In relation to all these discussions, it may be stated that the experiences of the Mundy sisters in the small town Ballybeg represent in microcosm what is happening in

the country as a whole in the 1930s. Thought in relation to the restrictions of Catholicism, the setting of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Ballybeg is significant in terms of the meaning it signifies. It is “a mythical town in Donegal invented by Friel”, and, “[i]n Gaelic, it is *baile beag*, and literally means small town” (Gussow 204). On the one hand, the name denotes the physical characteristic of the town as a small place. On the other hand, it symbolises the suffocating nature of the restrictions in the society. The town is small but its impact on people, particularly on women is profound. It indicates the sisters’ entrapment within the borders of this small town surrounded by the repressive rules of Catholicism from which there is no escape as Catholicism has fixed meanings.

The authority of the Church is felt throughout the play, even in the microcosmic world of the Mundies. All the sisters act the gender roles determined by the Church, which is directly related to Judith Butler’s “performativity” idea. According to Butler, members of society perform their roles in accordance with the constructed discourses of the powerful: “That the gendered body is performative [...] suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control” (185). By means of this discursive “regulation”, disciplining women and exercising control over them are guaranteed. As a consequence, submissive bodies that serve the powerful with consent are created, which is exemplified by the Mundies whose activities are regulated by the Church. Especially Kate’s job is significant in this sense. Unlike her sisters who are symbolically imprisoned in the cottage, Kate is the one who has close contact with the outside world. She is a teacher in a parish school. This position, however, does not make her a free individual. She is still a subject, and may be regarded as a pseudo-individual since she is an agent of the Church and her job is a kind of ideological Church apparatus which is under the control of the Church, and she serves it through teaching the doctrines of the Church. She preaches the doctrines of the Church not only at the parish school to her students but also at home to her sisters. Her function might be regarded as “the repressive force of Christianity” (Andrews 232). She would be irritated by any action taken against the laws and norms of the Church. The Mundy sisters are always reminded by Kate of the fact that they are “in a Christian home, a Catholic home” (DL 29) and that “this is Father Jack’s home—[they] must never forget that—ever” (DL 25).

Similarly, all the other sisters are occupied with something that the Church would be content with. In this sense, it may be suggestive to accentuate the role of “repetition” in constructing gender roles. As Judith Butler puts forth, “[t]he rules that are partially structured along matrices of gender hierarchy [...] operate through *repetition*” (199). She also points out that “the very injunction to be a given gender takes place through discursive routes: to be a good mother, to be a heterosexually desirable object, to be a fit worker, in sum, to signify a multiplicity of guarantees in response to a variety of different demands all at once” (199). Women learn and internalise the discursive forms and roles imposed by the hegemonic power, and act and re-act these imposed roles. This brings repetition. The “discursive routes” that maintain the “gender hierarchy” are exemplified by the sisters’ repetitive acts of knitting and housekeeping in *Dancing at Lughnasa*. Rose and Agnes, for example, always knit gloves at home through which they earn some money. As knitting is associated with womanhood, there is nothing wrong with their occupation. Maggie is dealing with house work as a housekeeper as expected from a woman in a house. Rose, Maggie and

Agnes are depicted as wearing the “aprons of the time” (*DL* 5). Chris helps her sisters doing the house work. It may be deduced from the behaviours and occupations of the sisters that “[t]hrough Bellybeg’s priest never appears onstage, he is evidently authoritarian and cruel” (Lojek 87). The authoritarian Church is the centre of their life, and this centre is the dominating factor in all their acts. Women are expected to be obedient to the priest. Hence, they cannot express themselves properly in society. It is clear that “[l]ife did not grant the women a level of freedom or subjectivity” (Jordan xlvi). They are tools or puppets in the hands of the Church authorities.

Moreover, the fact that they are the sisters of a priest, Jack, pressurises them, and they try their best to represent the responsibilities and requirements of Christianity in the best way. Getting used to these obligations, they can never be aware of the fact that they are actually suffocated by all the rules and regulations and the burden of civilisation brought by religion. Especially Kate, “the guardian of Christian value” (Andrews 226), is so much dominated by the doctrines of the Church that she gets very angry when the sisters get very enthusiastic about the idea of going to Lughnasa, a pagan festival which lasts for fifteen days (Andrews 226). She says angrily: “Look at yourselves, will you! Just look at yourselves! Dancing at our time of day? That’s for young people with no duties and no responsibilities and nothing in their heads but pleasure” (*DL* 24). Kate even “panics” when Rose “does the first steps of a bizarre and abandoned dance” (*DL* 24). The word, “panic”, as explained by Andrews,

is derived from ‘Pan,’ the personification of deity displayed in creation and pervading all things. Pan was the god of flocks and herds, of the woods and all material substances. Part goat, part man, he was renowned for his lustful nature. In reacting to the dancing as she does, Kate is reacting to the *id*, to the assertion of the spermatic principle, the free imagination, the buried impulse. She represents the repressive force of Christianity inhabiting full and free embracement of this primitive, pagan, secret life of Pan. (223-4)

The desires and libidinous feelings of the sisters are tried to be repressed by Kate, the agent of the Church. Representative of the superego, Kate, who feels on her shoulders the burdens of responsibility towards the *status quo* as the sister of a priest, cannot tolerate even the implication of the *id* by her sisters. She feels responsible for instructing her sisters to know what is “right” and to behave accordingly.

However, the authority of the superego is subverted by the influence of Celtic festival Lughnasa, celebrated in the honour of Lugh, the god of harvest associated with the Sun. Lughnasa, “pronounced LOO-na-sa, as in lunacy” (Gussow 203), brings an inevitable clash between the head and the body, between “Apollonian world of rational order” (McGrath 235) and “Dionysian impulse” (McGrath 246), between order, reason represented by Christianity and momentary release of feelings, the *id* and crazy bodily movements as observed during the dance scene of the sisters. “Luna” means “moon”, and “moon” connotes a dream world, and is also associated with temporary madness. Under the influence of “LOO-na-sa”, or lunacy, the sisters lose their control and reason and behave as if they were “lunatics” and they were reacting against the restrictions of the norms of the Church. The sisters including Kate are exposed to Lughnasa’s magical or hypnotic impact, and the authority of the Church and the hierarchical order are shaken and inverted. The first instance of this subversion is enabled by Marconi, the Italian inventor of the radio. Marconi, in a way, indirectly *resents* a traditional Irish song to the sisters on one of the days in Lughnasa via the Marconi, the wireless set at

the cottage, named after Marconi. Already filled with the desire to dance, with “the sheer magic of that radio” (*DL* 35), they find themselves dancing grotesquely and crazily as if they are emptying their souls repressed and suppressed by the Church for years:

The music, at first scarcely audible, is Irish dance music—‘The Mason’s Apron,’ played by a ceili band. Very fast; very heavy beat; a raucous sound. At first we are aware of the beat only. Then, as the volume increases slowly, we hear the melody. [...]. Then Maggie turns round. [...]. She is breathing deeply, rapidly. Now her features become animated by a look of defiance, of aggression; a crude mask of happiness. [...]. Now she spreads her fingers (which are covered with flour), pushes her hair back from her face, pulls her hands down her cheeks and patterns her face with an instant mask. At the same time she opens her mouth and emits a wild, raucous ‘Yaaaah!’—and immediately begins to dance, arms, legs, hair, long bootlaces flying. [...]. Chris, who has been folding Jack’s surplice, tosses it quickly over her head and joins in the dance. [...]. Agnes and Rose, Chris and Maggie, are now all doing a dance that is almost recognisable. [...]. They form a circle and wheel round and round. But the movements seem caricatured; and the sound is too loud; and the beat is too fast; and the almost recognisable dance is made grotesque because—for example—instead of holding hands, they have their arms tightly around one another’s neck, one another’s waist. Finally Kate, who has been watching the scene with unease, with alarm, suddenly leaps to her feet, flings her head back, and emits a loud ‘Yaaaah!’ (*DL* 35-6).

This “moment of fierce pagan joy” (Lahr 214) brought by the dance which connotes a carnivalesque atmosphere totally shakes and violates the “‘normal’ reality” (Andrews 223), which helps the sisters find the opportunity of refreshing their souls which have been overloaded with the pressures brought by the socio-cultural realities of their time. This relief brought by Marconi also brings “temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established social order” (Bakhtin 10).

Moreover, Chris’s putting Father Jack’s surplice on her head functions as a costume worn in carnivals to parody the ones who are at the top of the hierarchical order such as religious figures. Now, everything sacred is totally subverted, parodied and even caricatured as can be observed in carnivals. This is a way of questioning and criticising the norms of the Church. The Mundy sisters celebrate the moment just like the ancient Celts or the Ryangans who are pagans. By acting against the norms of the Church, the sisters have already taken a “defiant” (*DL* 37) step towards the Church. Moreover, the flour mask on Maggie’s face and the “mask of happiness” on the face of all the sisters not only function as tools for concealing the problems of the sisters lying beneath the appearance but also represent the grotesque costume imagery dominant in festivities used as an instrument of parody. Similar to Michael’s kites with “primitively drawn” “crude, cruel, grinning face[s]” (*DL* 106), “the mask of happiness” on the faces of the sisters, their grinning faces symbolise subversion of the hierarchical order of the Church.

This dance, in Andrews’ words, “represents a break in the acknowledged order, an irruption of the inadmissible within the usual routine, a ritualised suspension of everyday law and order” (223), which is expressed by Friel himself in the stage directions as well: “With this too loud music, this pounding beat, this shouting—calling—singing, this parodic reel, there is a sense of order being consciously subverted, of the

women consciously and crudely caricaturing themselves, indeed of near-hysteria being induced" (*DL* 37). In this respect, *Dancing at Lughnasa* signifies "carnivalized writing, that is, writing which has taken the carnival spirit into itself and thus reproduces, within its own structures and by its own practice, the characteristic inversions, parodies and discrownings of carnival proper" (Dentith 63). The Mundy sisters, during this short break from the realities of painful and restrictive life feel that they are here as they are with their body, "the carn", and with "gay, triumphant" (Bakhtin 11) laughter and feel as individuals, one of the rare moments in their lives. This laughter signifies a grotesque reaction to the serious Establishment. With their eccentric movements, with "the images of material bodily lower stratum" (Bakhtin 275), they gain carnivalesque spirit and they, in a way, send a "defiant" (*DL* 37) message to the Establishment by their being metaphorically crowned as "queens" for a short moment through subversion and "uncrowning" (Bakhtin 275) the authoritative figures. This carnivalesque nature, as a result, "build[s] a second world and a second life outside officialdom" (Bakhtin 6), and now the ones at the top and at the bottom are equal to each other.

Moreover, it will also be suggestive to state that in the 1930s, the dance music was "subject in the Ireland of that time to much ecclesiastical censure" (Brown 198). As Andrews points out, "[i]n the repressive climate of the 1930s, dancing was regarded with some suspicion as representing a species of moral decadence and a threat to the morals of the nation's youth" (Andrews 223). That the protest of the sisters is with a music type which is exposed to prohibitions from time to time by the Church is meaningful. They defy the Church with something censored as a way of protest. As a result, all the hierarchies are completely distorted, and the Mundy sisters symbolically vomit their repressed anger towards Catholic doctrines to their own society whose boundaries are determined according to the firmly fixed strict laws of Catholicism. As Michael says, it was "as if language had surrendered to movement—as if this ritual, this wordless ceremony was now the way to speak, to whisper private and sacred things, to be in touch with some otherness[...]. Dancing as if language no longer existed because words were no longer necessary" (*DL* 107-8).

It should also be underlined that the circle the sisters create while dancing is symbolic, and it reflects the unity they create not only with themselves, but also with the Sun god, Lugh. In this new unity with the pagan religion for a short time, they get liberated. The circle, as Nozedar points out, "represents the spirit and the cosmos" and "the circle unifies spirit and matter" (xiii). Nozedar also states that "the perfect circle has no beginning and no end; it is unassailable. [...]. The magic circle creates a fortress of psychic protection, a physical and spiritual safe haven where unwanted or uninvited entities cannot enter". She also emphasises that one of the most significant circles is observed in the Sun and the Sun as "the circle is a symbol of the passage of time". Lastly, she states that "the circle has no divisions and no sides, it is also a symbol of equality" (xiv). This circle is the reflection of the inner world of the sisters who desire to live in a world of equality, liberation from repression and suppression. The play, in this sense, may be regarded as a "critique of the institutional authority of the Catholic Church and the lack of gender and economic equality in Irish women's lives" (McMullan 220). They are very happy in their newly created utopian world/ circle into which an intrusion of the "unwanted", in the case of the sisters the influence of the Church, is impossible at that moment. They feel one with Lugh, the Sun by means of their circle. In this sense, the symbolic circle is very functional in the liberating effect of Lughnasa through which "the instincts are given free expression" (Andrews 227).

Another influential figure in *Dancing at Lughnasa* in contributing to the creation of a carnivalesque atmosphere by helping the intrusion of the magic of Lughnasa into the house of the Mundies is Uncle Jack. Uncle Jack has an intermediary role between the Apollonian order of the Mundies and Dionysian world of the ones living in the back hills and of the Ryangan. Father Jack, who has been under the influence of pagan Ryangan religion and who has “[g]one native” (DL 62) is now like a pagan dancer. “Pagan” Jack, already filled with pagan energy in Uganda where he served as a colonial priest and with the values related to “ancestral spirits” (DL 61) and dedicated to “offer[ing] sacrifice to Obi, [their] great Goddess of the Earth” (DL 73), comes back home as “a new man” (DL 79), as a total disillusionment to his sisters since he is no longer the “hero and saint” (DL 17) they have dreamed so far. The transformed Jack continuously talks about the “dancing and incantations” and “a ceremony” (DL 62) in Ryangan tribes: “We light fires round the periphery of the circle; and we paint our faces with coloured powders; and we sing local songs; and we drink palm wine. And then we dance—and dance—children, men, women [...] –dancing, believe it or not, for days on end! It is the most wonderful sight you have ever seen” (DL 74). He is also seen while dancing like Ryangans “[w]ith his body slightly bent over, his eyes on the ground, his feet moving rhythmically. As he dances—shuffles, he mutters—sings, makes occasional sounds that are incomprehensible and almost inaudible” (DL 65). Totally enchanted by the rituals and dances of the natives in Uganda, Father Jack may be thought as an intermediary character between the back hills or Ryangans representing paganism and the cottage of the Mundies which may be thought as the microcosmic representation of civilisation and Christianity. His enchantment influences the sisters, even conservative Kate. In short, as an intermediary figure who goes to the hills where Lughnasa is celebrated with great joy, Uncle Jack breaks the walls between the back hills and the cottage. In this way, the dream world created by Lughnasa enters the house of the Mundies.

Now, with the help of the Marconi, “a presiding whimsical deity” (Brown 201) and Uncle Jack, but more significantly, with the influence of Lughnasa, Christians and pagans, the ones in the centre like the Christian Mundies and the ones in the peripheries living in the back hills called “savages” (DL 29) and even the Ryangan are bridged and united. This condition makes Bakhtinian *polyglossia* possible because, now, the voices of different groups of people or individuals can be heard at the same level. The Catholic Mundies experience a temporary moment of equality with the ones in the hills celebrating Lughnasa, which is enabled by Marconi. Now “[t]he pagan forces [...] seem to possess the sisters” (McMullan 214). Throughout the dance, which lasts a few minutes, Kate’s actions clash with her beliefs as previously she has always been heard saying: “And they’re savages! I know those people from the back hills’ I’ve taught them! Savages—that’s what they are! And what pagan practices they have are no concern of ours—none whatever!” (DL 29). She always reminds her sisters that there is a tension, a never bridgeable gap between the primitive religion and the civilised Christianity. Now, however, she seems to be enchanted or hypnotised by the magical atmosphere of Lughnasa celebrations which reflects “the Dionysiac side of even the most religious and outwardly repressed people” (Gussow 204). By means of “Marconi’s magical invention” (Brown 200), the dream world turns out to be “a second life of the people who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance” (Bakhtin 9). Moreover, as Dentith accentuates, during the “second life” created by the carnival, “the very language that people speak is altered, to allow a familiarity and fraternisation impermissible at other times” (74). Now, they are “in

touch with some otherness" (*DL* 108), which makes them more liberated, enables them to think freely and individually. This primitiveness brings liberation to them. In a way, Marconi, the "lord of misrule" (Brown 200) and Uncle Jack help the Mundy sisters defy the rules of civilisation which suppresses and controls them. As Kate expresses, Marconi has "[k]illed all Christian conversation in this country" (*DL* 100), and ironically, now the Mundy sisters act like a "female tribe" (Sternlicht 125), they become like the ones they have criticised.

As a result of "a temporary suspension of the entire official system with all its prohibitions and hierarchic boundaries" (Bakhtin 89), women's repressed libidinous feelings arouse as well. As Andrews states, "Lughnasa is traditionally associated with sexual awakening, rebirth, continuance and it is significant that the date, 1 August, is exactly nine months, the normal period of gestation, before the great feast of Beltaine which celebrated the beginning of summer. These motifs of sexual awakening and magical transformation are central to Friel's play" (227). In a similar strand, during the carnivals, the id is in the foreground and the superego is defied and silenced by the id and "Dionysian impulses" (McGrath 246) throughout the celebrations. As according to the Celtic belief, "the August of the year" is "the point at which the cycle of the seasons is beginning to turn" (O'Toole 203), with the influence of this transformation, the moods of the women have changed as well. This transformation from the position of repressed women into expressive ones whose primitive feelings are on the foreground now contradicts the norms of the Church which never allows free will and liberation of feelings. In the real and so-called "normal" world, as Freud argues, in fact, "[c]ontrol is exercised by the higher physical control" (20), and in the case of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, by the Church. In their dream world, however, they become the rulers and controllers of their own lives. Rose, for example, "was wearing her good shoes", "her blue cardigan and her good skirt" (*DL* 85) to meet Danny Bradley from the back hills and to go to "Lough Anna" (*DL* 85) together with him where they experience romantic moments, which is totally against the doctrines of the Church; Maggie begins to long for Brian McGuinness that she loved when she was sixteen (*DL* 34). Moreover, already hypnotised by Lughnasa and full of libidinous energy due to the hypnotising agents of Lughnasa, the Marconi and Father Jack, the sisters' ids reach their peak when Gerry, Michael's father and a ballroom dancer, comes to the Mundies' to visit Chris. Gerry "provides a means of entry for the Dionysian into the lives of the sisters" (McGrath 238). Sisters' desire for man is always foregrounded by Maggie, who smokes cigarette as a compensation for her desire: "Wonderful Wild Woodbine. Next best thing to a wonderful, wild man" (*DL* 38). When Gerry appears, "Agnes picks up her knitting and works with excessive concentration. Rose and Maggie change their footwear. Everybody dashes about in confusion—peering into the tiny mirror, bumping into one another, peeping out the window, combing hair" (*DL* 40). Moreover, "Chris now rushes to the mirror and adroitly adjusts her hair and her clothes" (*DL* 42), and when he comes, Chris "laughs all the time with him" (*DL* 50). "Suddenly he takes her in his arms and dances" (*DL* 52), which makes her very happy and even her manners begin to change: "She laughs, pirouettes flirtatiously [...] and dance[s]" (*DL* 58). They "once more danced together [...]. And this time it was a dance without music; just there, in ritual circles round and round that square and then down the lane and back up again; slowly, formally, with easy deliberation" (*DL* 65). Later, however, he does the same flirtatiously to Agnes (*DL* 97) and later, to Maggie (*DL* 99). "Gerry is an urban outsider (he speaks with an English accent) to the small, parochial world of the sisters [...]. Gerry offers to a repressed community the opportunity of release from routine, the experience

of romance” (Andrews 229). The behaviours exhibited by the women are totally “against stereotypical notions of” (Llewellyn-Jones 37) pure and obedient womanhood. Dancing, for a short time, satisfies the needs of the sisters and “has healing power” (Andrews 225). When the radio stops working, their “second life” becomes Gerry, who helps the women experience a *carpe diem* (seize the day) moment and to understand that there is another life beyond the boundaries of Christianity. His effort to repair the radio and fix the aerial may symbolise his effort to revive the repressed feelings of the sisters and keep their libidinous feelings alive. As a result, he shakes the repressive order and brings an expressive order, which brings the chance for women to express themselves.

In relation to all these arguments, and, in conclusion, *Dancing at Lughnasa* may be regarded as a play which questions the socio-cultural condition of women in the 1930s. The play “explores the undercurrents and contradictions of conventional social mores” (McGrath 246) and may be regarded as the song of “ordinary unsung women [...] of his [Friel’s] nation” (Sternlicht 125). The play offers an alternative world to the real world characterised by the restrictive norms of the Church due to which women cannot express themselves. As Jordan points out, “[t]he temporary, wild, exuberant and excessive energy of carnival [is] a temporary inversion of order [...]”. Dancing, although grounded in the real, moves to the level of fantasy and will-fulfilment” (xlv), albeit momentarily. Dance enables women to evade performing the repetitive roles determined for them. The play, actually, does not bring solutions to sexist, hence, problematic representation of women in a Church-dominated society. However, it at least helps the reader question and subvert the internalised and falsely constructed representation of women, in Simone de Beauvoir’s terms, as the “second sex”. As Butler argues, “[i]f the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity” (186). Gender is, in fact, a constructed and learned idea which is later internalised by the members of society, either male or female, and according to the discourse of the powerful (in the case of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, the Church) to guarantee or maintain the secondary position of women. By means of the dance, however, the play helps to check once more the constructed hegemony of the Church. In a way, Friel is accentuating the urgent need for Irish women to have their own voices, to reconstruct and rebuild the representation of women and to have the chance of writing their own scripts and playing their own roles not momentarily, but continuously.

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Stoppard's *Travesties*: Parodying and Mystifying Wilde's Aesthetics¹

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Abstract: *Travesties* by Tom Stoppard is based on Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The action takes place in the amnesic memory of Carr, the protagonist. His memory allows for the shifting perspective through which the play becomes the embodiment of parody or travesty as its title suggests. Drawing on Wilde's statement that all art is "useless", and that life imitates art more than art imitates life, the play turns around the question of perception reflected through the distorted memory of Carr and the travestied figures of Joyce, Tzara, and Lenin who all have something to say about the function of art. The paper will focus on the play as a parodic re-writing of Wilde's aesthetics which ultimately tries to show that art's responsibility to itself cannot be that clearly cut off from its social and cultural function.

Keywords: Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Tom Stoppard, *Travesties*, parody, travesty, aestheticism,

Oscar Wilde and his works are among the most popular materials that have been again and again re-constructed or re-written by contemporary writers. Peter Ackroyd's *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, Terry Eagleton's *Saint Oscar*, Mark Ravenhill's *Handbag, or The Importance of Being Someone*, Joe Orton's *What the Butler Saw*, and Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* and *The Invention of Love* are some examples that reflect "the two basic modes of intertextual dialogue with the cultural icon. [...] Wilde's life or his works" (Pfister 359).

Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*, based on allusion, pastiche and parody, is a re-writing of Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest*. *Travesties* deliberately draws on the cultural memory and aesthetic views of the Wilde icon seeking to reassert the function of art for its own sake as well as acknowledging its function in cultivating or improving taste. Questions related to the function and nature of art and the role of the artist, according to John Fleming, "form[s] part of Stoppard's internal debate" as he has been recognized as "a flashy, entertaining, apolitical, intellectual artist" (101). While his 1972 radio play *Artist Descending a Staircase* deals with these artistic arguments, *Travesties* extends the debate to the relationship between art and politics; an issue that personally concerns Stoppard: "One of the impulses in *Travesties* is to try to sort out what my answer would in the end be if I was given enough time to think every time I'm asked why my plays aren't political, or ought they to be?" (Hayman 7). Stoppard tries to resolve "an ongoing debate with [himself] over the importance of the artist" (Wetzsteon 82) by centering *Travesties* on an intricate argument "whether an artist has to justify himself in political terms *at all*" (Hudson, Itzin, and Trussler 69).

Constructing *Travesties* on Wilde's play, at first, is a mere coincidence. Upon a remark of a friend that Dadaist Tzara, Lenin, and perhaps Freud were living in Zurich in 1916, Stoppard decides to write a play "a two act-thing, with one act a Dadaist play on Communist ideology and the other an ideological functional drama about Dadaists"

¹This essay is an expanded version of the paper "Re-writing and Mystifying Wilde's Art for Art's Sake by Tom Stoppard" presented at INST-KCTOS Conference in Vienna, 2007.

(Gussow 8). As Stoppard digs in history he discovers that James Joyce was also in Zurich during World War I. This changes his attitude towards his initial material. He wants to know “whether the artist and the revolutionary can be the same person or whether the activities are mutually exclusive [...] How would you justify *Ulysses* to Lenin? Or Lenin to Joyce?” (20-1). The historical figures of Lenin, Tzara, and Joyce are now ready to discuss all these issues related to art, but the narrative is lacking. As John Fleming states, Stoppard “had the characters who could debate his chosen themes, but until he learned of the *Earnest* production he had no narrative: this sparked the idea of grafting his plot onto Wilde’s” (103).

Coincidence or not, Wilde’s *Earnest*, a parody or even a travesty of Victorian “earnestness”, functions both structurally and thematically to demonstrate the validity of Wilde’s aesthetic, articulated in his *The Decay of Lying*, that “[l]ying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of art” (1091-2). Approaching art from this perspective liberates it from all kind of moral purpose and makes it, in Wildean terms, quite “useless” for any utilitarian purpose and detached from society and ideological intentions. Wilde’s art is detached from life and divorced from reality; “his language” is constantly “separating itself from its social background” (Paglia 534). Hence, having lost its ties with life, the relationship between art and life is also inverted so that “Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life” (Wilde, *The Decay of Lying* 1082). Wilde believes that nature is imperfect and therefore needs the perfecting aid of art, a role which art performs by its creativity and imagination; hence, fiction or lying.

Wilde’s aestheticism provides the basis for Stoppard’s stance in the art-politics debate. Stoppard never overtly asserts that art and politics are exclusive. In his play, he rather “wishes to give the impression of straddling the fence in the art-politics debates” (Kelly, Guralnick, Delaney 354). Thus, he juxtaposes the divergent opinions of his characters on Dadaism, Marxism, and modernism and by putting extremely convincing arguments in their mouths, makes the audience consider each side of the topic. Since Tzara, Lenin, and Joyce are also travesties of the real historical figures, whatever is attributed to the real character is inverted or trivialized in the play. The collision of ideas mystifies the topic and creates confusion about the real function of art and the artist. While none of the characters seems to be privileged over the other, critics like Katherine E. Kelly claim that Stoppard “stacks the cards in favor of art (i.e., limerick-spouting ‘James Joyce’ emerges the clear hero of the play, while ‘Lenin’ is consigned to a mock-documentary but aesthetically inferior position) (Kelly, Guralnick, Delaney 354). Hence, Wilde’s art for art’s sake is justified and implicitly reasserted by Stoppard.

My argument here is that Stoppard’s play reaffirms Wilde’s aesthetics of the autonomy of art. Nevertheless, Stoppard modifies and extends it by paradoxically hinting at the implication that art also functions as a corrective to society since art cannot be divorced from life that easily; the boundaries between life and art are not as clear as we imagine them to be. Though not in Lenin and Tzara’s sense, but art might have some revolutionary effects. As Christopher Innes comments about Stoppard’s stance on the topic, art functions obliquely and “[t]he revolutionary function of art is aesthetic, creating social change through changing the way reality is perceived” (335). This can be best explicated by another Wildean assertion that “a truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true” (Wilde, *Plays, Prose Writings and Poems* vii). Hence, this essay will focus on the play as a parodic re-writing of Wilde’s premises on art, which mystifies by raising questions rather than providing answers.

Stoppard’s *Travesties* consists of two acts: in the first act, Carr and Tzara argue about the relativity of language and the function of the artist followed up by the discussion of the same topic by Joyce and Tzara; in the second one, it is mostly Lenin’s

thoughts about art and politics that are presented. After that, the final scene of *Earnest* (where Jack's real identity is revealed) is parodied in *Travesties* through the discovery of the "missing chapter" of Joyce's *Ulysses*. The play begins with the indication that most of the action takes place in Henry Carr's memory, who is also the main character and narrator, but we cannot rely on it since it is defective and amnesic. Carr's illusive memory provides the shifting perspective through which the play becomes the embodiment of parody or travesty as its title suggests. In Bakhtin's terminology parody is double-voiced discourse that uses another text or style to create "a semantic intention that is directly opposed to it" (193). It involves gross distortion and incongruity. Drawing on Wilde's aesthetics of "earnestness" displayed in *Earnest*, *Travesties* turns around the question of perception reflected through the distorted memory of Carr and the travestied figures of important historical and literary personalities such as Joyce, Tzara, and Lenin, all of whom have something to say about the function of art. Stoppard's approach in his play can be summed up as a "combination of philosophically significant issues with intellectually trivial theatrical ingredients" that produces the incongruity, while raising or generating significant questions as to the nature of art and its production, the function of art, linguistic ambiguity, meaning and memory, the unsettled debate between fact and fiction, and life and art (Innes 327). Through an ironic prism it tries to touch upon and illuminate these issues by also parodying them.

Travesties confronts life with art by transferring, or fusing, real life characters into a dramatic form filtered through Henry Carr's amnesic memory—himself an actual minor British Consular official based in Zurich during the war. Joyce offers the role of Algernon to Carr when he stages *Earnest* in Zurich. Unfortunately, the two men's affair ends in a lawsuit about the payment of tickets and trousers. Joyce takes his revenge by presenting Henry Carr as a drunken soldier in his masterpiece *Ulysses*.

Lenin, Tzara, and Joyce are the three revolutionaries, the three canons of politics, modern art, and literature that shook the pillars of society and culture at the beginning of the twentieth century. Each of the three characters fought against the mediocre middle class ideology and tastes in politics and art, in order to lay the foundations of a better society and expression in art. Set in the "pacific civilian Switzerland of 1917" however, the play reflects conditions "that fostered vain pretenses which later incited political terror, aesthetic absurdities, and literary confusion" (Orlich 372). Underneath the trivial and polished dialogue of the characters lies the selfish and cruel aesthetic, literary, and political ambitions that undermine the stability of century. The characters are displayed as travesty of what they aim to establish.

Taken from life, the four characters are re-inscribed into a dramatic form to become, in Wildean terms, "Art's rough material" by being "translated into artistic conventions" (*The Decay of Lying* 1091). Through Carr's flawed memory, Stoppard attempts to rewrite history epitomized by these three figures and correct the crimes committed against art. Carr's memories distort facts and present them as fiction. Thus, the audience is offered a travesty of history, as well as, a travesty of canonical figures such as Joyce, Lenin and Tzara whose historical significance is dwarfed and inverted within the play. The play engages in a constant deconstruction of strongly held views and ideals about the function of art and its relationship with revolution by juxtaposing and contrasting characters' views.

Stoppard's historical characters and events are embedded within the plot of Wilde's *Earnest*. Wilde's play significantly demonstrates his own provocative assertions that the proper aim of art should be lying, which he deliberately uses to signify imagination, since the play revolves around a lie which ultimately becomes the truth at the end of the play. Jack Worthing, who lies about being Earnest, discovers that

he has been Earnest all through his life. Wilde's play consciously parodies the Victorian ideals of "earnestness" by making the play lie about sincerity. The meaning of "earnestness" is deconstructed so that it finally comes to mean everything that it is not. Evaluating the centrality of sincerity in the play, Eric Bentley says that it

is about earnestness, that is, Victorian solemnity, that kind of false seriousness which means hypocrisy, priggishness, and lack of irony. Wilde proclaims that earnestness is less praiseworthy than the ironic attitude to life, which is regarded as superficial. Wilde calls *The Importance of Being Earnest* a trivial comedy for serious people meaning, in the first place, a comedy which will be thought negligible by the earnest and, in the second, a comedy of surface for connoisseurs. (in Orlich 373)

In a similar fashion, most of the action in *Travesties*, as Stoppard himself emphasizes at the beginning of the play, "takes place within Carr's memory" which is senile. Everything that has been revealed as truth throughout the play becomes a travesty of this truth; nothing but a lie, illusion exposed by Carr's old wife Cecily at the end of the play. Cecily corrects Carr in the coda that Bennett was actually the British Consul of Zurich and Carr was his employee. Carr, however, imagines Bennett as his manservant in the rewrite of the opening scene of *Earnest*. Eventually, this also casts shadow on the consistency of his representation of Lenin, Tristan and Joyce. He also repeats "Is there anything of interest?" several times in the same scene which signals the "time slips" in the play and merging of real and imaginary: old Carr and his reconstructed past, the historical significance of the three characters and their fictional representation, the real and the dramatic, etc. As Sammells writes, "memory functions in *Travesties* in the same duplicitous way as the fictionalizing imagination" (79). The play enacts Wilde's assertion that "historians gave us delightful fiction in the form of fact" while modern artists "present[s] us with dull facts under the guise of fiction" (*The Decay of Lying* 1073). Stoppard ironically hints at the analogy between memory and the creative imagination (Rayner 136). He also depicts the impossibility of pure reality or truth. All truth is subjective depending on which perspective or prism you are looking at it; hence the ironical significance of the play's earlier title as *Prism*. Indeed, the ultimate point *Travesties* seems to make, as many other plays by Stoppard, is that illusion and reality cannot be opposed in a conceptual universe bound with the laws of subjectivity and relativity, where we can speak only of an infinite number of infinitely shifting realities" (Özdemir 186). Fleming, however, accepts that Stoppard's plays reflect "uncertainty and instability as being central components of human life", but he believes that they "also embrace order, logic, and those things that provide stability in an uncertain world" (257).

A deeper sense in which *Travesties* engages with Wilde's play involves Wilde's aesthetic, which is based on the principle "that art is 'useless'" (Brown 71). Wilde uses the term useless to indicate that art cannot be reduced to any utilitarian purposes such as conveying useful information or carrying moral responsibility. Art is useless in that it does not bear any simple referentiality to life. In fact, life imitates art more than art imitates life:

All bad art comes from returning to Life and Nature, and elevating them into ideals. Life and Nature may sometimes be used as part of Art's rough material, but before they are of any real service to art they must be translated into artistic conventions. The moment Art surrenders its imaginative medium it surrenders everything. (Wilde, *The Decay of Lying* 1091)

Travesties demonstrates this premise both thematically and structurally. By incorporating elements of *Earnest*—dialogues, scenes, characters, the dramatic action and plot itself—it absorbs and reaffirms “the ideologically loaded ‘uselessness’ inscribed in *The Importance of Being Earnest* as the epitome of the kind of literature Wilde championed in his critical writings” (Özdemir 188). Life is divided from art in Wilde. According to Camille Paglia, Wilde’s *Earnest* is “divorced from social function” and “society is divorced from practical reality” (554). Lady Bracknell’s words about Jack’s origins cannot be taken seriously. They are meant to create laughter and the audience laughs at the beauty of her dialogue:

To be born, or at any rate, bred in a handbag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume what that unfortunate movement led to? (Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*268)

Paglia argues that this cannot be taken as a criticism of fashionable life. Wilde is not “satirizing” Lady Bracknell, but making her beautiful. She is “beautiful *because* she is absurd” (554).

Contemplating on art, Stoppard parodies his characters to the extent that finally they become travesties of what they actually represent. Not one of the characters manages to escape Stoppard’s ironic twists played on the sincerity of their own creeds and convictions. In the second act, where Lenin is heard speaking in a paraphrase of Algernon and Lady Bracknell, the travesty reaches a climax; it is both ironic and absurd. Stoppard’s comedy, here, derives from the beauty of style and wit, rather than content:

Lenin: Really, if the lower orders don’t set us a good example what on earth is the use of them?! They seem as a class to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility! To lose one revolution is unfortunate. To lose two would look like carelessness! (58)

The ironic effect in Lenin’s words develops from his becoming a travesty of Lady Bracknell, the Victorian upper-class matriarch, the ultimate embodiment of what Lenin hates. Moreover, as Fleming states, “Lenin’s sentiments on the lower classes are diametrically opposed to the words he seems to say” (105). In a similar fashion, Stoppard offers his audience bits of self-contradiction in Tzara as well. In the first act, Tzara and Carr argue whether the meaning is objective or relative. Each are convincing in their argument. After that, they proceed in a heated argument over the politics of war:

Carr: the nerve of it. Wars are fought to make the world safe for artists. It is never quite put in those terms but it is a useful way of grasping what civilized ideals are all about. The easiest way of knowing whether good has triumphed over evil is to examine the freedom of the artist. The *ingratitude* of artists, indeed their hostility, not to mention the loss of nerve and failure of talent which accounts for ‘modern art’, merely demonstrate the freedom of the artist to be ungrateful, hostile, self-centred and talentless, for which freedom I went to war.

Tzara: Wars are fought for oil wells and coaling stations; for control of the Dardanelles or the Suez Canal; for colonial pickings to buy cheap in and conquered markets to sell dear in. War is capitalism with the gloves off and

many who go to war know it but they go to war because they don't want to be a hero. It takes courage to sit down and be counted. But how much better to live bravely in Switzerland than to die cravenly in France, quite apart from it does to one's trousers.

Carr: [...] I'll tell you what's *really* going on: I went to war because it was my *duty*, because my country needed me, and that's *patriotism*. I went to war because I believed that those boring little Belgians and incompetent Frogs had the right to be defended from German militarism, and that's *love of freedom*....

Tzara: *Quite right!* You ended up in the trenches, because on the 28th of June 1900 the heir to the throne of Austro-Hungary married beneath him and found out that the wife he loved was never allowed to sit next to him on royal occasions, except! When he was acting in his military capacity as Inspector General of the Austro-Hungarian army—in which capacity he therefore decided to inspect the army in Bosnia, so that at least on their wedding anniversary, the 28th of June 1914, they might ride side by side in an open carriage through the streets of Sarajevo! (22-3)

Both characters are convincing in their opposing views and both views equally seem to be offering the truth. In this scene, Tzara contradicts himself and his Dadaist views that are based on chance: “causality is no longer fashionable owing to the war” (19). On the other hand, Carr claims that “war itself had causes” (19). Although different from Carr's reasons, Tzara ironically presents “causes” for the war. Fleming interprets the scene as pointing “to a need to minimize the manipulation of language so that events can be seen as clearly as possible” not as suggesting “anti-art and turning everything on its head” as Tzara and his Dadaism declared (110). Another ironic and comic example provided by the inversion of intention is the words Tzara utters while evaluating Lenin's folder of social critique, assuming wrongly that it is Joyce's folder. He says to Joyce:

Furthermore, your book has much in common with your dress. As an arrangement of words it is graceless without being random; as a narrative it lacks charm or even vulgarity; as an experience it is like sharing a cell with a fanatic in search of a mania. (69)

Actually, Tzara is unknowingly criticizing Lenin's revolutionary views on social change that will be aided by the artist. Tzara's biased thoughts and admiration of Lenin are brilliantly displayed through an ironic prism. Also, it shows Tzara's ignorance about Lenin's views. In a much deeper sense, however, the conflation of Joyce's manuscript of *Ulysses* and Lenin's politics on art blurs the distinction between “political art” and “art for art's sake” providing, I think, one of the major parodic scenes, as well as, the gist of the play. Reading the folder with the utmost seriousness and strong conviction that it belongs to Joyce, Tzara is deluded. Or, should we interpret it as even the most contradictory theories might contain some common assumptions? The play goes back to its initial postulation that in complicated matters as art, it is difficult to suggest any single solution. A much flexible and humorous perspective seems better than rigid views.

In the argument about the function of art, which takes place between the four characters, Stoppard often stated that he was on Joyce's side, at least he felt closer to him than Tzara. Hinting through the sympathy and admiration the play embodies for Joyce and Wilde and distaste for Tzara and Lenin, it centers around the doctrine of art

for art's sake, that art exists for the sake of its beauty and that it need not serve any political, didactic, or other purpose. Also, by travestyng all these revolutionaries, Stoppard reflects his dislike for strong ideals and seriousness. He humorously undermines the earnestness of Lenin, Tzara, and Joyce (Orlich 373).

According to Kerensky, what Stoppard did not want with *Travesties* was the play ending up to be “an inconsequential Dadaist play” (86). Thomas Whitaker asserts that *Travesties* presents a trickier game than Stoppard's earlier plays “asking us to refract both the content and the style of our playing through an ironic prism that illuminates several large questions: How do we make art? Or revolution? Or history? Or, indeed, any kind of meaning? (*The Prism of Travesty* 194). Whitaker also identifies the overall style of the play with Joyce, and sees Joyce and Tzara as different representatives of two diverse aspects of modernism. He argues that from Tzara

descends the subversive tradition of ‘anti-art’ that has emphasized the spontaneous, absurd, and often socially provocative gesture, howl, or happening. From Joyce ... descends the formalist tradition of ‘art’ that has emphasized the long-mediated, comprehensive, seemingly apolitical and labyrinthine artifice. (*Tom Stoppard*, 120).

Near the end of the first act we see Joyce and Tzara engaged in a heated argument reflecting their views on art:

Tzara: [...] Your art has failed. You've turned literature into a religion and it's as dead as all the rest, it's an overripe corpse and you're cutting fancy figures at the wake. It's too late for geniuses! Now we need vandals and desecrators, simple-minded demolition man to smash centuries of baroque subtlety, to bring down the temple, and thus finally, to reconcile the shame and necessity of being an artist! Dada! Dada! Dada!

Joyce: You are an over-excited little man, with a need for self expression far beyond the scope of your natural gifts. This is not discreditable. Neither does it make you an artist. An artist is the magician put among men to gratify—capriciously—their urge for immortality. The temples are built and brought down around him, continuously and contiguously, from Troy to the fields of Flanders. If there is any meaning in any of it, it is in what survives as art, yes even in the celebration of tyrants, yes even in the celebration of nonentities. What now of the Trojan War if it had been passed over by the artist's touch? Dust. A forgotten expedition prompted by Greek merchants looking for new markets. A minor redistribution of broken pots. But it is we who stand enriched, by a tale of heroes —husband, father, son, lover, farmer, soldier, pacifist, politician, inventor, and adventurer [...] It is a theme so overwhelming that I am almost afraid to treat it. And yet I with my Dublin Odyssey will double that immortality, yes by God *there's* a corpse that will dance for some time yet and *leave the world precisely as it finds it*. (41-2) (emphasis original)

Joyce's statement about art emphasizes its function of assigning immortality to the artist while taking the raw material of life and molding it into the perfect forms of art. Without artist's imagination, or lies, life is imperfect and cruel. Also, art is divorced from its utilitarian function of conveying morals; the value of art comes from its correcting the deformities of life and presenting it beautifully. It can equally represent a tyrant as well as a common. Consequently, it becomes an affirmation of Wilde's aesthetic.

Joyce's statement, which remains undefeated in *Travesties*, also forms a dramatic contrast with Lenin's statement: "Today, literature must become party literature. Down with non-partisan literature! Down with literary supermen!" (58). This speech draws the connection between Dadaist Tzara and Lenin who utter almost the same things. As Tzara character puts it, "I am the natural enemy of bourgeois art and the natural ally of the political left" (45). Stoppard implicitly reminds us the Zurich Dadaists' view that pointed out Lenin as the greatest Dada on earth. As Ileana Orlich notes "Dadaism's political aesthetics is closely related to the program of Leninist ideology formulated in opposition with the bourgeois establishment and aiming at a certain social end" (375). Tzara's speech above anticipates Lenin's militant ideology "whose professed goal was to crash the monsters of imperialism" and their art (376). A travesty of Lenin's views on art as politics is depicted in his fondness for Beethoven's "Appassionata":

I don't know of anything greater than the Appassionata. Amazing, superhuman music. It always makes me feel, perhaps naively, it makes me feel proud of the miracles that human beings can perform. But I can't listen to music often. It affects my nerves, makes me want to say nice stupid things and pat the heads of those people who while living in this vile hell can create such beauty. Nowadays we can't pat heads, or we'll get our hands bitten off. We've got to hit heads, hit them without mercy, though ideally we're against doing violence to people [...] Hmm, one's duty is infernally hard. (62)

Subtly, *Travesties* implies the horrors of political extremes contrasting them with the healing and perfecting function of art. It seems that if Lenin had continued to listen to "Appassionata", he would have given up the idea of the revolution completely. More precisely, it points to the abuse and manipulation of art by those in power. Lenin is sarcastically depicted in contradiction to his doctrine of claiming the rights and well being of the oppressed; he himself becomes the persecutor.

Closely related to art and anti-art debate between Joyce and Tzara is the problem of tradition. Issues concerning the importance of tradition in art and the immortality of artistic production are effectively invoked in the scene where Gwendolen recites Shakespeare's eighteenth sonnet. Tzara, who is the travesty of Jack in Wilde's play, is after Carr's sister, Gwendolen. She insists that she would marry him only under the condition that Tzara should share her regard for Mr. Joyce as an artist. Joyce, being now a travesty of Lady Bracknell here, requires Tzara/Jack to provide himself with the necessary equipment that would make him an artist: "I would strongly advise you to try and acquire some genius and if possible some subtlety before the season is quite over". (42). It is a paraphrase and replica of the funny scene between Lady Bracknell and Jack in *Earnest* where she utters the same words about Jack's origin—Lady Bracknell insists that before the season ends, Jack should produce at least one parent. The word "parent" implies the origins of one's own genealogy; it provides a sense of identity, background, and tradition. Drawing on this same speech, Stoppard seems to suggest that tradition in art provides some of the indispensable sources of imagination, craftiness, and subtlety for a true artist.

Shakespeare's eighteenth sonnet is the very same poem which Tzara cuts into pieces, puts into a hat and finally recreates at random by picking up the pieced words. Stoppard deliberately shows that no art, even anti-art, can survive without a tradition. Even to claim that you are anti- you have to have a canon, a reference point, to react against. Fleming writes of the significance of the poem in the play as Shakespeare's

traditional art and Shakespeare as tradition, being glorified over Tzara's non-intentional, anti-art:

Gwendolyn recites the entire poem. Not only does the audience hear the grandeur and beauty of the original, but Tzara and Gwendolyn proceed with a conversation that is composed entirely of excerpts from Shakespeare. Here Stoppard's anthology of styles strives to show the superiority of conscious craftsmanship and linguistic mastery over the random and unstructured avant-garde. (112)

Throughout the play Stoppard creates witty dialogues and situations that reflect Carr's, Joyce's, Tzara's, and Lenin's views on art. By giving equal chance to each one of them, he actually provides different perspectives each with a valid argument that bewilders his audience. According to Christopher Innes, the questions he poses raise significant philosophical issues, which are "a means of challenging the audience to re-evaluate their assumptions"(346). It seems, for Stoppard, that this is the way art revolutionizes and conditions people's beliefs. Stoppard's intellectual exercising on the function of art and the artist should not be taken as something inconclusive or open-ended:

While Stoppard's plays are known for stylistic flair, nothing in a Stoppard work is arbitrary; underneath the surface glitter the plays are highly ordered and underpinned with logic and a point of view. Relativity in a Stoppard play is not so much postmodern equivalence, as it is intellectual uncertainty—a hallmark of intellectualism is an open mind, the willingness to see the validity of an alternative perspective. (Fleming 256)

Stoppard gives the three characters equal representation "but not equal *weight*" (Wetzsteon 82). He has never valued too highly the kind of art represented by Dada. Instead, Stoppard acknowledges that he finds Joyce to be "an artist I can respect and sympathize with" (Eichelbaum 105). He has loaded the play for Joyce because to him "Joyce's evolution means more [...] than Tzara's revolution" (Wetzsteon 82). As Orlich explains "[w]hile holding in his hands the strings of ideology, art, and aesthetic attitudes, Stoppard seems to pull their ends and turn the gigantic body of twentieth-century culture into a formidable marionette" (380). While Dada and Lenin's political art collapsed, the permanence of Joyce's art affirmed the prevalence of art over life. The play reaffirms Wilde's aesthetic that art should be responsible only to itself and that life should imitate art, not the other way round. As Max Beerbohm said about *Earnest* in 1902,

[b]ut the fun depends mainly on what the characters say, rather than on what they do. They speak a kind of beautiful nonsense—the language of high comedy, twisted into fantasy. Throughout the dialogue is the horse-play of a distinguished intellect and a distinguished imagination—a horse-play among words and ideas, conducted with poetic dignity. (in Barnet, Berman, and Burto 140)

Likewise, in Stoppard's play characters communicate in a kind of beautiful nonsense. *Travesties* raises questions while displaying serious topics under the apparently trivial surface where characters utter serious things disguised as nonsense. Considered from that perspective, Stoppard is joking in "earnest", he is travestying and

maybe satirizing, while also pretending to be playful. Depending on one's perspective, the play appears both as a work of art divorced from reality and as a work of art that implicitly comments on life. Stoppard interacts with both sides of the problematic relationship between art, life, and politics. Fleming argues that his plays reflect both the "uncertainty" of human life and the necessity of "order" and "logic" to provide stability amid this chaos. He states further that "the both/and quality of Stoppard's work allows him to cut across categories and to attract admirers from different critical, theoretical, and ideological backgrounds" (257). In the heated argument about the function of art and the artist, *Travesties*, as a whole, seems to be echoing Algernon: "The truth is rarely pure, and never simple".

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Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. London and New York: Verso, 2013.p/bk 358 pp.ISBN 978-1-84467-970-6

Laurence Raw

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, questions of translation took on a new urgency: the importance of cross-cultural communication was seen as a means to negotiate the kind of misunderstandings that caused the tragedy. This movement could also be seen as a creation against the idea that something existed called “World Literature”, a course of study—often pursued in higher education institutions—that required learners to read texts from as many different countries as possible, often in translation, without considering in any great depth the contexts in which they were produced. The phenomenon of World Literature, taught in the lecture hall via translations, seemed to validate Erich Auerbach’s gloomy prediction made in his 1951 essay “Philologie der Weltliteratur” that “in a single literary culture [...] the notion of *Weltliteratur* would be at once realized and destroyed”.

At the same translation studies, although professing to validate plurality and difference, was following the same path. Apter comments: “A course in translation [...] was often deployed as a patch for ‘humanities lite’ and for literary education that was [...] [amenable] to soft diplomacy and [...] models of oneworldliness freighted with the psychopolitical burden of delusional democracy” (8). In its determination to fit into existing curricula translation studies ignored the concept of the untranslatable that prevents rather than enables communication across languages, cultures and disciplines. Consequently the discipline lost its political potential to address issues of cultural misunderstanding.

Emily Apter’s *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* re-emphasizes the importance of the untranslatable, “an intransigent nub of meaning that triggers endless translating in response to its resistant singularity” (20). The power of the untranslatable lies in the nature of words and their relationship (or lack of relationship) to one another; to understand what they “mean” in different contexts requires a close knowledge of source and target cultures that seems markedly absent from contemporary translation practice, which has tended to flatten out words and phrase in order to render them palatable to the Anglo-American tradition with its emphasis on common sense. To acknowledge the untranslatability of particular terms acknowledges the richness of the ideas in the language of the source text which might not be reproducible in the target text. She cites the example of Auerbach, who fled to Istanbul in 1936 and produced much of his great work, including the seminal text *Mimesis*, while believing in “the untranslatability of cultural expression and [...] discrepant literary traditions”. He was more preoccupied with incomparative rather than comparative literature (195).

Apter uses this framework to mount an attack on World Literature which she believes tends to “anthologize and curricularize the world’s [literary] resources” (87). By reading authors in translation only, with little concern paid to the structures of the target-text, learners end up with a distorted view of the world. In a book that covers a bewildering variety of texts, from Auerbach, to Said, to Derrida, Marx, Benjamin and Heidegger, Apter argues for the retention of borders, both linguistic and political; to be aware of such borders represents an implicit acknowledgment of the untranslatability of certain phenomena. Perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book is the one entitled “Thou Shalt not Translate Me” where she discusses the work of Arabic theorist Abdelfattah Kilito, who begins one chapter with the following phrase: “I used to think it

my duty to endeavor as best I could to make my language radiate its brilliance, to increase the number of its learners, and so forth. But that noble goal disappeared when I realize that I dislike having foreigners speak my language” (in Apter 253). The term to “speak my language” here might be read more precisely as to “colonize” a language through translation and/or incorporation on to a world literature course.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of *Against World Literature* is Apter’s discussion of certain keywords—“cyclopaedia”, “peace”, “sex”, and “gender”—which she believes are untranslatable, in the sense that there is no consensus as to what these terms actually signify. She uses mistranslations and misinterpretations to reveal the philosophical specificity of words and phrases in Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le deuxième sexe* (1949), and contrasts words that correspond to “peace” in various European languages to critique western conceptions of security.

The deeper problem with *Against World Literature* arises when Apter tries to establish a “politics of untranslatability”. Although perfectly justified in believing that the translatable/ untranslatable binary has political and philosophical as well as linguistic significance, there is something troubling about her assertion that words and terms can be “fully mined” so as to discover their significances in different cultures (150). Orhan Pamuk’s definition of the Turkish term *hüzün* offers a case in point; he offers two definitions, one arising from Sufi mysticism, the other oriented towards more worldly ends. However there are other authors, notably Elif Şafak and Maureen Freely, who have used the term very differently; its meaning depends very much on the context, and hence eludes the “mining” process Apter so confidently describes. On another occasion Apter suggests that the theorist John T. Hamilton’s analysis of the term “security” is not just concerned with translatability and politics but shifts the entire focus of the discussion by “marshaling philology in the name of untested configurations: Homeland Security with security blanket [...] security has become the late-twentieth and early twenty-first-century watchword of choice, a control-term for every aspect of private and political life” (131). Apter’s conclusion overlooks the potential of the untranslatable to create new linguistic possibilities that elude attempts at control.

The major source of the problem lies in the book’s assumption that comparative literature and translation should be “political” in focus—in other words, they should be approached as a means by which the existing neoliberal status can be challenged and new possibilities discovered instead. For Apter world literature should be “an unownable estate, a literature over which no one exerts proprietary prerogative and which lends itself to a critical turn that puts the problem of property possession front and center” (329). Approaches from the right angle, it can expose the “network of political conspiracies and masterminded interests” that exist today (331). Such preoccupations are particularly western in the sense that they are determined by binary oppositions—dominance vs. marginality, capitalism vs. socialism, acceptance vs. resistance. The untranslatable should allow for alternative viewpoints that elude such frameworks; this is what “unownable” truly signifies. By contrast, Apter’s conclusions establish alternative patterns of ownership determined by western thought-patterns.

Such contradictions in *Against World Literature* go far deeper than any quarrel between comparative literature and/or translation theorists. Western philosophy has always been dominated by a basic contradiction between universalists (Hegel, Marx, Badiou) and those belonging to the hermeneutic tradition (Heidegger, Gadamer) and its poststructuralist legacy (Derrida, Deleuze). A satisfactory reconciliation of the insights of both traditions is yet to be achieved.

David Ellis, *Memoirs of a Leavisite*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP., 2013.h/bk 151 pp.ISBN 978-0-84631-889-4

Laurence Raw

To a large extent the school of criticism embraced by F. R. Leavis has been discredited in English departments worldwide. Close textual analysis has been superseded by cultural criticism, with attention paid to the social, cultural and political forces that shape a text rather than stylistic qualities. Practical criticism of the kind I learned in school, where texts were analyzed in terms of content and form, has become obsolete, save for the theater where such techniques are mandatory for every aspiring actor.

There is no doubt that Leavis had a fundamental part to play in the development of English Studies, especially the form popularly termed “Cambridge English” that evolved in the middle of the last century. Although several books have appeared about him, notably the late Ian MacKillop’s magisterial biography, we have scant information about his pedagogic practice. Few recordings exist of Leavis lecturing; and those that do offer an unflattering representation of a dominant speaker with a high-pitched voice. David Ellis’ memoir offers a sympathetic portrait of Leavis at work towards the end of his Cambridge career. A lower-middle class student from Manchester who spent two years between school and university working in the Kellogg’s factory, Ellis had three seminars a week with Leavis, during which time he listened to the senior academic proclaiming that a literary text could only come alive in individual reader’s minds. The fact that the seminars were lecturer-dominated (and hence preventing students from developing their own responses) seems to have eluded Leavis. Nonetheless he was always something of a performer, enlivening his lectures with autobiographical reminiscence as well as gossip stories about his Cambridge colleagues (13-14).

In terms of technique, Leavis’ seminars emphasized the importance of close textual scrutiny. Ellis recalls that “when we looked at lines of poetry, or passages in a novel, it was as if our very lives depended on it [...] and there were none of the escapes an English degree now offers, and did then, from a struggle with the text” (25). Studying English was arduous, as students learned how to cultivate critical sensibility and develop sensitive and closely relevant thinking. In the wider context of university life, such abilities might have been unrecognized (Ellis notes that many senior figures still regard English Studies with suspicion as a subject that does not always lead to a career), but the book shows how Leavis drew attention to the processes in the phenomenology of reading that encouraged students to develop “self-understanding, linguistic skill, and indeed *precisely invoked* knowledge” (28). He genuinely believed that with the benefit of a schooling in “English”, his students could go out into the world to counteract the potentially malign influences of mass culture – especially cinema and television. This belief stemmed from his view of the English language and its speakers as “a cultural life, a large creative community” (58). Language was central to living, so literary criticism was something essential to society’s future. Students should use their abilities to make a contribution to all aspects of life.

Leavis was forthright in his views, no more so than in the Richmond Lecture given at Downing College, Cambridge in February 1962, where he responded to C. P. Snow’s call for reform of the educational system that would bring arts and science subjects closer together. Leavis emphasized that the Industrial Revolution had been a

disaster for the quality of English social life, while science and technology lacked the moral purpose associated with the arts. Snow was dismissed as “portentously ignorant” with an “utter lack of intellectual distinction and an embarrassing vulgarity of style” (69). While his critics responded with equal fervor (one dismissed him as “scarcely literate”), Leavis stuck to his beliefs in an attempt to define the matter in hand – the value of the arts – with as much precision as possible: “He [Leavis] is often difficult to read [...] because he is presenting a subtle argument” (72).

While Leavis’ work was underpinned by philosophical issues (Ellis describes it as “heavily Wittgensteinian in direction” (96)), he belonged to a tradition of literary critics who resisted “theory” on the grounds that it was either too literal or too abstract and thereby detracting from the important business of textual analysis. On the other hand his insistence on the moral seriousness of literature proved highly useful for his students: once Ellis had graduated and found his first teaching post in Australia, he met a group of like-minded professors who helped to establish the English department at La Trobe University in Melbourne. Nonetheless Leavis’ work did fall out of favor as the Seventies wore on. Increased student numbers at all universities prevented professors from conducting the kind of small-group seminars that could encourage close textual analysis. Academic trends moved towards multiplicity and fragmentation: literary criticism was no longer the focal point of an English degree (120).

In Ellis’ opinion Leavis was a genius, possessed of an extraordinary sensitivity to poetic language. Although derided by many of his contemporaries, he refused to conform to prevailing critical trends. He displayed an intensity of concentration that denoted “an exceptional degree of impersonal and disinterested devotion to the intellectual aims he pursued” (133). Leavis was not only a gifted teacher but someone who, in spite of his insistence on the primacy of the text, understood the social aim and utility of English Studies. In a world where the discipline’s future is perpetually subject to review by funding authorities—whether central governments or university senates—we might do well to bear his core beliefs in mind about the basic form and function of literature.

From Dark Shadows to a Triumph of Colours: Tim Burton's Intertextual Homage to the TV Serial

Antonio Sanna

The daytime TV soap opera *Dark Shadows* was created in 1966 by Dan Curtis, the television "auteur" who produced and/or directed twelve horror films between 1968 and 1996, such as *Dracula* (1973, with Jack Palance in the title role), *Trilogy of Terror* (1974) and *Curse of the Black Widow* (1977). The programme, which became the first to be sold in syndication, was broadcast on ABC in the mid-afternoon from June 1966 to April 1971. Initially conceived as a serial merely set in a Gothic atmosphere, *Dark Shadows* became progressively more supernatural with the introduction of ghosts, vampires, witches, werewolves, time travels and parallel universes, thus presenting a mixture of the soap opera's "family saga" and the Gothic drama. Many plotlines are in fact recognizable references to popular works such as Alexandre Dumas' 1844 *The Count of Montecristo*, Charlotte Brontë's 1847 *Jane Eyre*, Daphne du Maurier's 1938 *Rebecca* and several of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories. The programme reached the amount of 20 million viewers at its peak and its narrative was then extended through the production of novels, comic books, costumes, board games, conventions, board games and audio dramas (Jowett 208).

The most recent production derived from the serial is Tim Burton's *Dark Shadows*. The 2012 film can be rightfully defined as a faithful adaptation of the original soap opera: the American director has appropriated and compressed the material on the major characters developed through hundreds of episodes and has only slightly altered the general storyline. For viewers who are familiar with the primary source, it is indubitably a pleasure to discover the quotations of the original scripts and to follow the insertion in the film of many of the TV serial's specific images. The most evident example is offered by the image of the waves crushing against the rocks in the main titles of the TV programme, which are framed on many occasions throughout the film. Furthermore, precisely as was the case in the soap opera (which was revived in 1991 and in 2006), the main character of the film is Barnabas Collins (Johnny Depp), the reluctant vampire whose tragic figure was actually modelled according to the phenomenal fan response to the character (Thompson 57-8). Indeed, the development of the vampire, interpreted on the small screen by Jonathan Frid, was actually shaped by the fans' collective interpretation of him as a lonely victim of his own supernatural condition (Jowett 49) and thus anticipated reluctant vampires such as Louis in Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*, Edward Cullen in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga and Stefan Salvatore in *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-). Burton ambiguously depicts Barnabas as a savage murderer unwillingly forced to kill by his thirst for blood, but also as a calm and honourable individual with a noble posture, good manners and a deep belief in family values.

Nevertheless, Burton simultaneously underlines the effective difference of Barnabas from his descendants, a trait which constitutes the major source of irony in the whole film. Imprisoned in the 1776, the vampire is mistakenly freed in 1972 (interestingly, in the original serial by the greed of a single man hunting for family heirlooms, whereas here by the workers of a multinational corporation) and experiences many difficulties in adapting to the modern world. His initial encounters with paved roads, troll dolls and cars or attempts to understand concepts such as doctor/patience

confidentiality provide viewers with continuous hilarity, especially when he addresses and then attacks a television—thus ironically asserting that the cinematic film is better than the TV serial—actually in order to intimate the singer of The Carpenters to come out of the box. We could therefore apply Will Brooker’s definition of the director’s oeuvre as characterized by “eerily comic film[s] about gothic outsiders, freaks and clowns” (54) to *Dark Shadows* as well. Precisely as in *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and *Tim Burton’s Corpse Bride* (2005), the title character is an outsider, both for his “different” appearance and for his nature as “the Other”. As Manohla Dargis has suggested, indeed, “alienation runs in his blood, literally”. It is difficult, however, to feel sympathy for Barnabas, especially because, as Richard Corliss has pointed out, the film lacks the emotional intensity and palpable pain characterizing other works by Burton such as *Ed Wood* (1994) and *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (2008).

The narrative revolves around the vampire’s attempts to re-establish the family’s fortune and décor as well as the mental health of its dysfunctional members against the “darkness” that has corrupted their behaviours (a selfish and negligent father, an alcoholic psychiatrist, a rigid mother and a troubled child) and that is visually translated into the decaying status of the mansion. The major difference from the TV programme is based on the treatment of some of the characters. Indeed, the original serial presents the werewolf curses of Chris Jennings and Quentin, whereas Burton introduces us to the character of Carolyn (Chloë Grace Moretz), Elisabeth’s rebellious daughter, the troubled adolescent, whose aggressiveness is thus explained through the association (frequently evidenced by both critics and film directors) between lycanthropy, menstruations and the lunar cycles governing both. Similarly, instead of merely being a governess with an unsolved past, Victoria Winters (Bella Heathcote) is also a sort of medium who frequently witnesses the apparition of Barnabas’ seventeenth-century bride-to-be Josette DuPres and apparently becomes her reincarnation—probably an allusion to Mina/Elisabeta (Winona Ryder) in Francis Ford Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992).

The cast of actors and actresses is certainly one of the greatest merits of this production, from a severe Michelle Pfeiffer (excellently reproducing the elegance, coldness and austerity of the original struggling matriarch Elisabeth Collins Stoddard) and Helena Bonham Carter (who interprets the disloyal psychiatrist Julia Hoffman) to a very talented Eva Green in the role of the monomaniac witch Angelique Bouchard, whose love for Barnabas demonstrates both the incredible endurance of an affection and the obsessive side of it. The strength of such a female cast is then reflected in the numerous allusions to the struggles of feminist writers and artists during the 1970s—epitomized by Dr. Hoffman’s reprimand: “How do you ever expect us girls to advance if we keep reducing each other to labels?”

As in many films by Burton, the cameo by Christopher Lee is inevitable: his basso voice shall inevitably thrill the members of the audience even when interpreting Clarney, the fishermen’s captain. In this sequence, however, the director upsets the viewers’ expectations on the role of the austere English actor by portraying him as easily hypnotized by Barnabas and immediately submitting to the vampire’s will. Burton thus manages to subvert the results of the principle of “celebrity intertextuality”, defined by Gerard Genette as the evocation of a series of other films in the mind of the spectator through the presence of a star or celebrity (qtd. in Verevis 20), by inverting the role of the actor who majestically interpreted Count Dracula in the Hammer series on the Transylvanian vampire (1958-73) and the malignant wizard Saruman in Peter Jackson’s trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-03).

The director's stylized and Gothic signature—what Peter Bradshaw calls “the Gothic, jokey ‘darkness’ of Burton’s style”—is evident in this film’s aesthetic too, from the depiction of Barnabas’ fast-paced murders and the low angle frames of Collinwood’s façade to the close ups of the family mansion’s ornate architecture and the frequent frames of the solitary tree on the cliff. Interestingly, the representation of naked trees is a common trait in the majority of Burton’s films: it could be the plastic scale model near the tomb in *Beetlejuice* (1988), the trees near the eponymous protagonist’s mansion in *Edward Scissorhands* or those of the abandoned zoo covered with snow in *Batman Returns* (1992). In *Sleepy Hollow* (1999) the Headless Horseman rises from the gnarled Tree of the Dead and crosses a dried forest—the same tree and forest that are reproduced in *Alice in Wonderland* (2010)—and in *Tim Burton’s Corpse Bride* the forest outside the village is naked and sharp-pointed, whereas *Sweeney Todd* presents the realistic naked trees of Victorian London. In this respect, we could affirm that Burton reproduces the work of the character of Mrs. Graham in Anne Brontë’s 1848 novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, a painter who “was studying the distinctive characters of the different varieties of trees in their winter nakedness, and copying, with a spirited though delicate touch, their various ramifications” (54).

Because of its numerous intertextual references to other films, *Dark Shadows* could be defined as a compendium rather than a mere adaptation, a particular which, according to Kamilla Elliott, specifically characterizes *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). Indeed, the 2012 film is a collage of references to previous vampire films such as F.W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922) and Erle C. Kenton’s *House of Dracula* (1945), but it also quotes William Friedkin’s *The Exorcist* (1973), Robert Zemeckis’s *Death Becomes Her* (1992), Danny Devito’s *The War of the Roses* (1989) and Burton’s own previous works.

There are also many references to the music of the 1970s and to contemporary singers. Noteworthy is in fact the film’s soundtrack, which alternates the valuable orchestral work of Danny Elfman to a selection of songs perfectly recreating the atmosphere of the period, from Donovan and Barry White to Iggy Pop and Alice Cooper, who actually appears in a cameo while performing two songs whose lyrics are appropriately associated to the thematic concerns of the story (“No More Mr. Nice Guy” and Ballad of Dwight Fry”). On the other hand, it is inevitable to notice that Barnabas Collins walks during the day under a black parasol and in an attire that closely reproduces late Michael Jackson’s.

Dark Shadows is a very pleasant and ironic film which shall be certainly appreciated by those viewers who never heard of the original TV serials and who will then hopefully trace the origins of Burton’s work by discovering a small treasure of (Gothic) television partly consigned to oblivion. For the spectators who are familiar with the 1960s-70s soap opera it will be a pleasure to observe the director’s meticulous work in the reproduction of the original thematic and visual elements and the conversion of a black and white production (in its first seasons) into a glorious triumph of colours. A final note: do not miss the brief cameo appearance of the original *Dark Shadows*’ cast as guests of the ball organized by Barnabas in Collinwood—another detail that demonstrates both the symbiotic relationship of the film with its precursor and Burton’s will to pay homage to it.



Barnabas Collins (Johnny Depp) welcomes the original cast of *Dark Shadows* at Collinwood (copyright Warner Bros).

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Ege University
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ISSN: 1300-574-X



1300-574-X