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## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES


| Author | Page | Title |
|---|---|---|
| Aycan Akçamete | 1 | The Burst of the Real and the Law in Philip Ridley's *Mercury Fur* |
| Hüseyin Altındiş | 15 | "The world will go on living": Resistance to Eurocentric Epistemology in Linda Hogan's *Power* |
| Rinni Haji Amran | 29 | "Moving without Comprehensible Purpose Toward No Discernible Destination": The Sensation and Spectacle of Flight in William Faulkner's *Pylon* |
| Libby Bagno-Simon | 41 | Stronger Alone?: Bridging Gaps and Reaffirming Sisterhood in *Sense and Sensibility* |
| Ahmed Muhammed Faleh Banisalamah | 55 | Gender, Reason, and Androgyny in the Role of Righteousness in Marie de France's "Bisclavret" |
| William C. Boles | 65 | Staging Economics and Math in Lucy Prebble's *Enron* and David Hare's *The Power of Yes* |
| Ufuk Gündoğan | 75 | Translating the Self: Palimpsest and Visual Poetics in Kathleen Fraser's Works |
| Dilek İnan<br>Ayşe Didem Yakut | 91 | Language and Power Relations in Martin Crimp's *The Country* |
| Kübra Kangüleç Coşkun | 107 | Exploration of the Maternal Semiotic for Female Subjectivity in Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe* |
| Deniz Kırpıklı | 117 | Non-Essentialist Conception of Migrant Identity in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* |
| Susanne Klinger | 129 | Foreignizing Subtitling Versus Domesticating Dubbing: *Finding Nemo* in German |
| Hediye Özkan | 143 | The Spirit of the Carnival:Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Constantinople |
| Ceyda Özmen | 151 | Özdemir Asaf's Translation of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*: A Bermanian Approach |
| Klara Szmańko | 167 | The Trope of Sight in North American Whiteness Studies |
|  | 177 | **CONTRIBUTORS** |

**The Burst of the Real and the Law in Philip Ridley's *Mercury Fur***

**Aycan Akçamete**

**Abstract:** Philip Riddley's *Mercury Fur* portrays a dystopian world where violence has permeated and chaos prevails. This paper aims to argue that regulatory Law is subtly depicted as a necessary condition in this dystopic setting, where Law appears in the form of violence and the burst of the Real in Lacan's terms, and the military attack in the end terminates the existing system. This chaotic atmosphere which calls for the governmental intervention in the end is established through the burst of the Real, abjection, and the shift in subject positions. The structure of this dystopian world will be analyzed through the theories of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva.

**Keywords:** Philip Ridley, Contemporary British Drama, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, psychoanalytic critical theory, abjection

Philip Ridley is considered to write chiefly in-yer-face plays, and one of his major works *Mercury Fur* (2005), which takes a dystopian setting as its focus, was initially rejected by his publisher on the grounds that it was found unacceptable due to the explicitly violent content (Sierz 114). This motif of violence forms the kernel of the main argument of this paper, since my main postulation is that the dystopian violent world is constructed hinging on the elements of the Real, violence as the Law in Lacanian sense, and abject in Julia Kristeva's terms. As the play ends in a military attack that would restore order in the country, the intervention of the Law as a regulatory force is subtly depicted as necessary to regulate the environment. In the first part of the paper I would contend that the violent aspect of the Lacanian Real serves as the standard and the default element, leading to the conclusion that the Law emerges in the form of violence. In the second part, Kristeva's abjection will be exploited to elucidate the shift in or loss of subject positions especially through the hallucinogenic drugs referred to as "butteflies", furthering the discussion of the abject in connection with language, personal narratives and memory. Since abject is closely associated with the Real and a regressive state, the main points made in this respect will serve to illuminate how dystopia functions on the elements of the Real. Finally, it will be concluded that a world centred on the burst of the Real and violence as the Law cannot be sustained; hence, the final military intervention is depicted as inexorable.

*Mercury Fur* has its setting in a dystopian city and takes "the party" organized by the brothers Elliot and Darren with their leader Papa Spinx as the focus of the dramatic structure. The main story revolves around this party where the Party Guest pays the organizers to brutally torture, beat, violate and finally kill the young boy, Party Piece, with a meat hook. As the play proceeds, the reader is provided with the narrations of brutal and sadistic events the characters have gone through as well as the information that their leader Spinx also functions as a father substitute looking after Elliot and Darren's blind mother referred to as Duchess, who is apparently mentally derailed and dysfunctional as a mother figure. Another motif that haunts the play is "butterflies", the hallucinogenic drugs that cause memory loss and is of prevalent use by all characters (and apparently by the inhabitants of the dystopia) except for Elliot. Towards the end,

the Party Piece dies before being murdered, hence Spinx intends to replace him with Naz, a friend Darren and Elliot make whilst preparing the party; however this seems to be a transgression for the brothers and they rebel against the cycle of violence created by Spinx and achieve in preventing the death of Naz. However, Ridley sustains his bleak tone when the military bombing initiated by the government aims at terminating the existence of the dystopia since this fictional world is uninhabitable. In the final scene, Elliot opts to kill Darren himself in order to prevent his brother from being murdered by this bombing.

The first hint at the idea that violence is the standard is made through "the party", which is central to the unfolding plot and which is akin to an oxymoron when a brutal event resulting in murder is referred to as a party, for people are supposed to socialize and derive pleasure from it. Nevertheless, the fact that it is called a "party" unveils the sadistic side to it when the joy and pleasure of the merciless Party Guest is taken into account. The Party Guest states that he is so excited (*Mercury Fur* 100) since it is his ultimate dream and fantasy to torture and murder: "You dream … you don't think it can ever happen for real … it can't possibly … and then one day … it's real" (*MF* 104). He also discloses his sadistic wish to torture brutally: "I'll be ready to hurt him so much … I tell you! He'll be begging me to cut his head off" (104). Thus, it is manifest that the pivotal dramatic element in the play is contingent on violence as a fantasy, a dream and as a form of existence that ironically provides people with joy, pleasure and fun. Apart from the sadistic pleasure of the Guest, what is of great significance is that this ferocious practice forms the source of income for the brothers and Spinx, pointing out to the irony of having an organization of a great violent extent as one's source of living and life. Another striking element about these parties is that the brothers refer to having organized such brutal events before (*MF* 23), signifying the fact that these parties are normalized and mundane acts in the dystopia, and that this sadistic practice is deemed as a social code adhered to by the inhabitants.

Another allusion to the manner in which violence emerges as the standard is made through childhood recollections of Darren and Elliot when they re-enact the game they used to play as children. The games that they found amusing encompassed violent elements and imaginary guns, as well as pretending to injure the other party since the game ends in Darren falling on the floor so as to pretend he is dead (*MF* 19-20). That is to say, this ferocious child play becomes a detail that mirrors the common brutal deeds they witness as grown-ups and brutality becomes a form of existence that is not considered with the pejorative connotations since it is normalized for even children to adopt violence as a form of *play* and as part of a pastime activity. By the same token, brutality functions as such a basic constituent that it may come from unexpected sources and is commonplace as revealed through the story of Naz when he gives an account of his mother's and sister's murder in a supermarket. In the incident, an ordinary and everyday place of shopping transforms into an arena of violence and merciless murders. Naz states that the family encounters a gang who had "[b]its of meat hanging round their necks" and who were "screaming and waving these big knife things" (*MF* 38). Before the group approaches the family, they begin to kill other people shopping there, subsequently killing the mother and the sister, all of which Naz witnesses. After cutting the mother's head off (*MF* 38), they murder his sister in an even more sadistic and inhumane manner: "The gang has stomped on her head. One of her arm is gone. The gang drag her away and pull off her knickers. She's pissing herself … The gang laughs. One of them gets his cock out and says he'll plug the leak. He sticks his cock in her. One of the others fuck what's left of her mouth … They fuck Stace and they drink

Coke. I think Stace must be dead now" (*MF*39). Analogous to the idea of "the party", where one kills a defenceless victim deriving pleasure from the act, a group of people invades an everyday arena and violates other people brutally, rather sadistically, enjoying the unendurable pain they cause. That they laugh at their deeds and that they have beverages meanwhile suggest the fact that these brutal actions are a part of ordinary everyday life.

In this respect, the question of what violence as a prevalent mode of existence points out to in Lacanian terms becomes relevant. The analogy I will establish here is between the violent practices of Ridley's dystopia and the Lacanian register of the Real, which cannot be taken as separate from the other two registers of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. In his psychoanalytic theory, Lacan establishes his theory of the psyche through these three registers: the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. In his later work *Sinthome*, he illustrates the link between these three registers through what he refers to as a Borromean knot, rather a three ring chain-knot, each of which represents one register, and he maintains that although these three registers are tied to each other, they are also separate (*Sinthome* 11). Apropos of the Real, Lacan maintains that meaning, speech and language are not established in the Real, and the Real is bound to nothing (*Sinthome* 100). Likewise, the realm is mostly known for Lacan's reference to it as "the impossible". Although this impossibility is grounded on various aspects of the register, one reason for this impossibility is the Real's very peculiar feature; that it cannot be thought and that it is "imponderable" (*Sinthome* 106). Apart from the fact that the Real cannot be thought or assessed, it antecedes the Symbolic register that is marked by the Law, thus it is the realm when no order or rule prevails. Lacan expounds on this aspect of the Real by stating that "[t]he true real implies the absence of any law. The real has no order" (*Sinthome* 118). In other words, what is to be made of the Real is that it cannot be thought hence in this sense impossible, and it is bereft of order or law unlike the Symbolic register that comes through the Law. As Lacan himself establishes and as Allan Sheridan also maintains in the notes to *Écrits,* the Real is what is not Symbolic or Imaginary, and it is prior to these two realms:

> The 'real' emerges as a third term, linked to the symbolic and the imaginary: it stands for what is neither symbolic nor imaginary, and remains foreclosed from the analytic experience, which is an experience of speech. What is prior to the assumption of the symbolic, the real in its 'raw' state (in the case of the subject, for instance, the organism and its biological needs), may only be supposed, it is an algebraic x. (x)

That is to say, prior to the Symbolic and the Imaginary, stripped of any law or order, the Real resists signification established through language, for it remains beyond the realm of speech and is primarily dominated by biological needs as well as drives, neither demand nor desire.

At this point it would make sense to let Kristeva intervene since her theories on the Real could be illuminating. Kristeva explicates that the drives dominate the body during the register of the Real and these oral and anal drives which "are always already ambiguous, simultaneously assimilating and destructive […] are oriented and structured around the mother's body", rendering the mother's body as the mediator of this register (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 27). In connection with the Real, what is of equal significance is also the fact that the drives are both positive and negative, embedding violent elements and a positive facet at the same time. The child does not perceive his

body to be separate from the mother's, yet it is dominated by the destructive features of oral and anal drives.

When taken a look from this perspective, violence that emerges as the standard throughout the play connotes to the fact that the dystopia hinges on the destructive elements of the Real, without an order or a regulatory Law that makes the environment harmonious. As Lacan himself puts it, the Law and order are non-existent in the Real and this chaotic violent atmosphere points out to the burst of the Real. The parties organised, that murder and torture become source of joy and function as pastime activities, that the violent attack is potent to come at a random and sudden moment from an unforeseeable source at an unanticipated place add up to the idea that violence is a main form of existence, which in turn implies that the dystopia is characterised by violent elements of the Real hence a lack of order. It is not only in terms of the Real but also in terms of the Symbolic register that the ferocity in the dystopia can be interpreted since – as will be expounded – violence as the standard also functions as the Law of the Symbolic emerging in the form of violence. In order to explicate on the postulation that brutality appears in the form of the Law of the Symbolic, the realms of the Imaginary and the Symbolic need to be scrutinised. Therefore, going back to Lacanian psychoanalysis, the second ring of the knot-chain is the Imaginary, characterised by the mirror stage when the first sign of separation between the Mother and the child is perceived since the child assumes a unity with the mother throughout the Real. Mirror stage forms a significant part of the Imaginary and Lacan alludes to the mirror stage as a source of identification and Ideal-I where the first I "is precipitated in a primordial form" (*Écrits* 2). This image in the mirror, rather the imago, is in fact the first "other" the child encounters, which is both himself and the other – an investment of the ego in the other that is extended to the formation of subjectivity in the succeeding years.

The Real is ensued by the emergence of the first (blurry) border between an 'I' and its alterity in the mirror stage, ultimately leading to the separation from the mother in third ring of the Borromean knot-chain, the Symbolic. Separation from the mother is enabled through the intervention of the Father, the Oedipus complex and the Law of the Father, which become the markers of the Symbolic register. In his earliest works Lacan makes this association by maintaining that the Law is first introduced by means of the Oedipal complex since the father intervenes with this unity of mother/child, functioning as the reminder of the taboo on sexual desire and of castration as a punishment (Lacan, *Psychoses* 156). For this conflicting and ruinous Oedipal complex to resolve, the subject is in need of "the model of some harmony" which has to be in the form of "a law, a chain, a symbolic order, the intervention of the order of speech, that is, of the father" (*Psychoses* 96). Father – the Law of the Father or the-name-of-the-father – does not connote to the paternal figure. On the contrary, it becomes a signifier of a transition and of a Law on a broader level. Lacan asserts that "[t]he order that prevents the collision and explosion of the situation" which is a consequence of the Oedipal complex and separation from the mother "is founded on the existence of this name of the father" (*Psychoses* 96), which functions as a signifier for a transition from a natural order to a cultural order into the world of rules, taboos, language, laws and rules. Every rule and law that conveys this sense of harmony and order becomes represented through the Law of the Father. That is why, the world of culture and rules that is regulated through an order is an outcome of the transition to the Symbolic epitomised by the signifier of the Father. One should also keep in mind that as stated above language – hence the thetic position and subject position required for the acquisition of language – is also at the disposal of the Symbolic (Lacan, *Écrits* 232-33). Therefore, moving on to the Symbolic

means moving into the world of language. In short, a simple comparison would reveal that the Real is beyond expression and speech whereas it is through the Symbolic, the Oedipal taboo and the Law of the Father that the subject gains access to the domain of language.

In *Mercury Fur,* on two levels the Lacanian registers of the Symbolic and the Real make sense: one is that the violent and orderless environment is analogous to the realm of the Real, which can be taken as the first cause of a lack of order in the dystopia, and which is exemplified through the violent acts committed or experienced by the characters. However, on another level, the-name-of-the-father as a social and cultural law emerges in the form of violence, rendering violence as the Law itself. This, in turn, suggests the idea that though the Real and the Symbolic are separate chains in the Borromoean knot, they cannot maintain their autonomous and separate circular status, which is another reason for the chaos. As a consequence, as the Real erupts, or as it is allowed to erupt within the Symbolic, it leads to a regression, arrested development and to unfulfilled subjectivity since the impossible Real shows its head within the Symbolic realm where law and order as well as a subject position is supposed to have been established and such an eruption disturbs the order and harmony of this network. In order to expound on this implication of violence as the Law and hints at transition from the pre-Oedipal to the Symbolic in the dystopia, the Oedipal story that becomes a major link in the intersubjective relationship between Spinx, Elliot, Darren and Duchess needs to be taken into account.

Spinx, who is referred to as Papa by the Duchess (*MF* 90), serves as the father substitute and as the paternal figure that splits the mother and the children, analogous to the Oedipal complex. That Spinx is a father substitute and the authority figure, thus inevitably a part of the Oedipal complex, is revealed through the story Duchess recounts when she states that the biological father of Darren and Elliot violated and injured the two brothers brutally by hitting them with a hammer: “He is hitting my eldest on the leg. It’s all smashed. And the little one … has been hit on the head” (*MF* 91-2). In another part of the play, Spinx makes an allusion to the aftermath of this violent act: “Who went back and saved this fucking half-wit and the Duchess? Me! That’s who! … And who looked after all of you after that? Eh? Who got medical supplies and stuff? Who fed you? Clothed you? Gave you somewhere to live?” (*MF* 117). The crux of the matter is that when he replaces the Father figure, his Law in the form of violence prevails, mirroring the macrocosm; hence, his rules and Law are the ones that become the standard and the ones that one should abide by, pointing out to the transition to the Symbolic. That is to say, Spinx functions as the signifier the-name-of-the-father, whose Law becomes the code of existence and a marker of the Symbolic.

Not only that he causes separation, or that he establishes the Law, but that he is the one taking care of Duchess echoes the same intersubjective relations revolving around the Oedipal complex. Law in the form of violence, which is by no means the Law that is supposed to provide order and harmony, preponderates after the intrusion of Spinx as the head of the gang and family, for he is the boss and epitome of authority that establishes the Law of ferocity. This becomes manifest when Elliot tells Darren that “[y]ou bet your fucking arse we ain’t got much time. And if we don’t get things ready in time, you know what that means? … It means Spinx will be pissed off. ‘Cos Spinx has a habit of slicing people’s eyelids off when he is not a happy bunny” (*MF*14). Thus, it is indisputable that Spinx is the organizer of the atrocious parties and adopts a violent attitude towards the others setting the standard for violence by means of his manners, as

well. In other words, he is the one whose Law is at work in this microcosm as a reflection of the macrocosm where violence also functions as the Law.

By the same token, when a system is established on the basis of the Law, or any law, transgression becomes inevitable, akin to the idea that killing the paternal figure and sleeping with the parent of the opposite sex is transgression of the Law established by the Oedipal taboo hence the Law of the Symbolic. In this case, Elliot attempts to transgress at some certain points, specifically when his role in the rebellion against and the downfall of Spinx is concerned, which is evocative of the Oedipal myth since he brings down a father substitute and since it becomes analogous to the transgression in the Oedipal complex where the male offspring is in rivalry with the paternal figure, secretly desiring to eliminate his existence. The conflict between Elliot and Spinx springs up when the Party Piece dies and Spinx replaces him with Naz, who is a friend rather than a stranger like the Party Piece. This substitution appears to be unacceptable for Darren and Elliot since Naz is a friend, and it is at that point Elliot intervenes in an attempt to preclude the prospective murder of Naz, meaning that he rebels against Spinx (*MF* 121-22). The disagreement and dispute between Spinx and Elliot ends in Darren shooting the Party Guest to impede any further damage on Naz (*MF*122), and with Elliot, Darren and Lola fighting against Spinx (124-25). The group led by Elliot succeeds in putting an end to the Law of Spinx – the ferocity, brutality, violence and the party – indicating the idea that in lieu of the violent Law leading to chaos, Elliot struggles to interfere and regulate the system in his own way. On another level, it becomes manifest that Spinx as the father substitute and as the signifier Father is central to the Symbolic register through his place in this Oedipal story and his Law of violence considering the dispute/rivalry between him and Elliot. It also verifies the postulation that a transition to the Symbolic has been established; hence the burst of the Real causes the dystopia to be destitute of order or harmony and be dominated by chaos through a regressive state. From another perspective, Elliot, by dint of transgression of Law of violence, seeks to establish another form of Law, but his struggle proves to be in vain since on his own he is incompetent to replace the prevalent structure with his own, and his bid to bring order proves to be fruitless when the end of the play is concerned since an intervention on a larger scale is required.

At this point in the play, although Elliot functions as a transgressor by not partaking in the cycle of violence at the party, his transgression in the final scene echoes a different idea and reveals a contradiction because this time the act of transgression is also violent itself. At the end of the play, seeing that the fatal bombing is initiated, Elliot kills Darren in order to prevent Darren from being hurt by the military intervention. In other words, instead of the attack, he opts to end Darren's life himself (*MF*132), which is quite ironic since not only the Law in the dystopia but also the intervention of both Elliot and the military bombing take place in the form of violence. However, Elliot is not aware of the fact that his idea of transgression or order in the end is contingent on violence as well since he himself kills Darren instead of the bombing. That is, he employs the same means as the Law of violence and his action results in the same consequence, which corresponds to the contention that brutal or ferocious means are resorted to even by the transgressor, as violence is the standard and the ordinary way for the habitants of the dystopia whilst coping with life. In addition, although Elliot in a way resists the Law of violence, he is unable to create a more habitable, organized and ordered world, which in turn calls for a larger intervention that would establish a precept.

So far, violence as a reflection of the elements of the Real and the Law in the form of violence through a burst of the Real have been expounded on in connection with the prevalent chaos. Likewise, the final element that adds up to the lack of order is the fact that the habitat is destitute of the presence of a mother figure that regulates the realm of the Real and that functions as the mediator. As stated above and as Kristeva also maintains, the drives that are oriented towards the mother's body dominate the Real. However, the lack of a mother figure that regulates the realm contributes to the deprivation of order and law in this fictional world. To put it another way, eventhough Lacan maintains that the Real is bereft of any law as in the sense of the Symbolic register, the order in the Real is maintained through the mother's body, whose lack in this dystopia results in even a worse turmoil. The first allusion to the incompetency of the mother is made when the Duchess, the only mother in the play, first enters the stage and it is revealed through stage directions that she is blind (*MF* 74). Furthermore, it becomes apparent that she is unable to take care of herself and is treated like a child when Spinx states that "[s]he's getting more and more fretful when I ain't with her … She shit herself last time I left her alone for too long … I had to bath her" (*MF* 79). That is to say, she is like a baby who is in need of a parent, which forms a stark contrast to a capable mother figure that the baby needs due to what Lacan refers to as "specific prematurity of birth" in the Real (*Écrits* 3). On the contrary, she is the one who suffers from this prematurity, for she is dysfunctional and not equipped to provide for her basic needs on her own, signifying a regressive state and arrested development. Detached from the brutal reality of the world she inhabits, she seems to suffer from a kind of mental disorder given that she does not recognize her own son Darren, who fabricates a story about being a general in the army (*MF* 76). In short, the mother figure cannot function properly, she is not connected to the present reality and seems aloof, therefore is by no means a mediator, which in turn results in a lack of order, as well. When considered together with the fact that the dystopia is constructed on the burst of the Real as the Law, that a mother figure is non-existent exacerbates the prevailing lack of order, justifying the intervention in the end.

The contention that the eruption of the Real within a Symbolic domain causes regression and disarray also forms the pith of my main postulation in the second part of the paper since I will conclude that a loss of and a shift in subject positions through "the butterflies" result in a regression to the pre-Symbolic. By means of the "butterflies", the boundary between the object and the subject is blurred since these hallucinogenic drugs enable a constant shift in thetic or subject positions of the consumers. The first allusion to such a loss of distinction in the subject position is made through suicide butterflies. As the name suggests, suicide is when a certain person kills him/herself; thus, the action is committed by the subject itself. When a butterfly is referred to as suicide butterfly, what can be assumed is that a person would kill him/herself under the influence of it; however, the case proves to be different as Elliot states: "Oh, *you* don't have to do a thing. The butterfly does it all for you. Very convenient eh? You just lay back and – veins open without blades. Necks break without rope" (*MF* 69) (emphasis original). The fact that Elliot assures the subject does not commit the act and that the butterfly in fact kills the subject indicates the idea that the butterfly, in this suicide, occupies the position of the subject although it is an object, an alterity. In other words, since the suicide butterfly seizes the position of the self when one takes it, it serves to blur the line between the self and the other.

A comparable element can be discerned in the case of Darren who eats an assassination butterfly. He mentions that the butterfly works if the person has the

memory of an assassination (*MF* 42) and the consumer of the suicide butterfly can become the assassinator, the assassinated or a witness to the assassination (43). As a consequence, it is possible to confirm that the subject assumes other subjectivities, and/or can have different thetic positions upon consuming butterflies. Even the position that the user would assume is not clear since the effect of the butterfly may vary depending on the user. This shift in subjectivity is evident in Darren's case since Darren maintains that on swallowing the assassination butterfly, he becomes the Camelot girl sitting next to Kennedy and "wearing a pink dress" (*MF* 44) when he was assassinated. It is manifest that Kennedy assassination is immersed in Darren's memory as it becomes his experience after taking the butterfly. However, from his memory images the subject position he assumes is a girl's. As a consequence, it is indisputable that this subjectivity embeds fantasy elements, for instead of an influential political figure, Darren takes on the position of a girl in a pink dress. On another level, Darren loses his thetic position, yet the subject position experienced in the fantasy is established by means of an alter ego or an Other.

What this shift in subject positions through butterflies suggests is the burst of the Real since it becomes similar to abjection as developed by Kristeva and it connotes to a regressive state to the Real where no subjectivity is established. As Kristeva elaborates on, abject, in its simplest sense, is associated with the pre-Oedipal phase, therefore is marked by the absence of the Law since passage from the Imaginary to the Symbolic is characterized by the Oedipal complex. However, abject occurs after entrance into the Symbolic; hence, it can be heralded as a regressive move into previous registers, echoing a similar repercussion to the violence that erupts in the dystopia. As Lacan maintains, and as mentioned afore, the first formation of "I" occurs in mirror stage through identification with the imago, hence the first establishment of a subject position is made possible. However, after separation from the mother, subjectivity and the thetic position emerge with the Symbolic – the register where meaning, language and signification occur (Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* 49). Consequently, abjection is in a way regressive to the pre-Symbolic stage since it "draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 2) and where the thetic position for the language acquisition has not yet been established. In addition, abjection is what "does not respect borders, positions, rules" (4) as it is pre-oedipal and precedes the Law of the Father, thus the formation of subjectivity, the Symbolic and the language, through which laws, rules and borders are introduced. Rather, it is closely connected to the moment when one separates from the mother in order to establish an I, a subjectivity: "Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (10). Therefore, it is characterised by the violence of separation from the mother's body, with whom the child assumes a unity throughout the Real, even though abjection itself transpires after the subject has moved into the Symbolic.

From another perspective, the abject is what blurs the distinction between a subject and its alterity since its emergence corresponds to pre-Symbolic and to a stage prior to the formation of subjectivity although it is impossible to talk about a clear-cut distinction when I/Other is concerned and a full subjectivity, as such, is not possible to achieve. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that in order to acquire language and after separation from the mother, one gains a thetic position that establishes subjectivity to a certain extent. Similarly, Kristeva alludes to these ambiguous binaries of I/Other or Inside/Outside, yet she also contends that the alter ego becomes a part of the self in

abjection, leading to a further indistinction of 'I/Other': "It is simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become *alter ego,* drops so that 'I' does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence" (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 9). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that this already vague binary takes on a different form and may result in a shift in subject positions through a relation with the Other without abandoning the position of "I" completely. Similar to the contention that subjectivity may alter in abjection, Kristeva asserts that although "I" is established through passage into the Symbolic, what jouissance and abjection pave the way for is the opposite, which is the loss of thetic position and subjectivity. Alluding to the castration, the Symbolic and the Oedipal complex, Kristeva attests that "the advent of one's own identity demands a law that mutilates", whereas "jouissance demands an abjection from which identity becomes absent" (*Powers of Horror* 54). In other words, even though her theories of abjection cannot be pigeonholed into one single dogmatic meaning and interpretation, it is possible to draw the conclusion that with abjection she refers to a loss of subject position or the so-called distinction between one's self and its alterity that provides the boundaries and rules in the Symbolic.

This cannot be taken separately from the Lacanian registers and the formation of subjectivity starting from the mirror stage and it should be noted that acquisition of language and thetic position occurs within the Symbolic, thus the Real is marked by an absence of such a positionality and subjectivity. That is why, the emergence of abjection through butterflies also denotes to the burst of the Real in a regressive manner. When considered from this perspective, what butterflies cause is the abject to appear. When the "suicide butterfly" functions as the self or assumes the position of the subject, this shift in the positionality is akin to abjection and the realm of the Real. In the case of Darren and the Camelot girl, an 'other' functions as the self chosen from a range of possible subjectivities. It can also be read in relation to what Kristeva, as quoted above, refers to the role of alter ego in abjection since the Camelot girl functions as the alter ego of Darren. Within that subject position of the girl – not another position but specifically that one since it functions as an alter ego – he assumes a different positionality. It is not that the subject ceases to exist, but finds another form of existence in another subject position when under the influence of these drugs. As a consequence, abjection and the regression precipitated by the butterflies denote to the pre-Symbolic where the subject has no recognition of an alterity and subjectivitiy. Under any circumstances, what holds a pivotal place in the case of butterflies is that there is a shift in subjectivity, either the drug replacing the subject itself or through the formation of an alternative subjectivity by means of the other, creating the effect of abjection. Therefore, the abject functions as another constituent concerning the Real and its ubiquity in the dystopia.

Another point to further the discussion would be pertinent to language, memory and the abject. As argued above, abjection occurs where meaning collapses since language is at the disposal of the Symbolic register and entrance into the Symbolic means entrance into the realm of language. As also stated above pertaining to the Lacanian registers, it is the transition to the Symbolic that marks language acquisition and speech unlike the Real that cannot be thought or expressed in language. However, throughout the play, parallel to the pre-Symbolic and pre-Oedipal elements, the failure of the characters to provide and create a coherent narrative points out to an arrested development and burst of the Real via an impotency to use language efficiently. It is crystal-clear that when Naz, Darren and Spinx are at a loss to speak or fail to remember the words necessary to establish a consistent story, Elliot is the party that is resorted to

and is able to recount the stories that the others are unable to because he remembers everything. As revealed by means of a dialogue, Elliot remembers everything that the others do not specifically because he eschews eating butterflies that cause memory loss (*MF* 64). On the other hand, Elliot's capability to remember and narrate a story can be taken in relation to the fact that he is a part of the Symbolic. As revealed through his story with Spinx, that Elliot is a part of an Oedipal structure and is a part of the Symbolic order was concluded above. However, he has another Oedipal story, the story of his birth father violating him and Darren, which also embeds implications of a transition to the Symbolic. As quoted above, Elliot was hit on his knee by his father, and he himself states that having been hit by a hammer, his "knee had got infected" (*MF* 57), as well as making it known that after the incident his knee hurt so much and was bleeding (58). It is not only in the aftermath of the incident but also throughout the play that Elliot suffers from knee pains as Darren asks him: "Your knee playing you up?" and "Shall I rub it for you?" (*MF* 15). Apropos of his leg, Elliot can be associated with the Symbolic register since, as Freud contends, blindness and leg injuries are signs of castration ("The Uncanny" 231-32). In other words, Elliot's injury corresponds to the end of the Imaginary through an analogy with castration hence passage to the Symbolic. As a consequence, it can be asserted that through his two Oedipal stories Elliot has become a part of the Symbolic. Correspondingly, as language is correlated with the Symbolic, in a bid to establish a narrative, all the characters are in need of Elliot.

The first incident is when Naz seeks to recite his first encounter with Elliot while Elliot was selling butterflies. As Naz cannot come up with the correct words, it is Elliot who interferes:

> **Naz** I got it from the statue place … Big building up West. Glass roof. They set fire to it.
> **Elliot** The British Museum …
> **Naz** You gave me two butterflies for it … The bowl. It had people all around the side ...
> **Elliot** The Aztec bowl. (*MF* 29)

In the following lines, Elliot asks Naz if he has seen "what was left of the Ancient Egyptian galleries … Bodies wrapped in bandages" (*MF* 30), and when Naz does not comprehend what Elliot is referring to, Elliot has to enunciate the word "mummies" (30). Subsequently, touching upon the Egytpians, Elliot moves on to relate the history of pyramids and Pharaoh (*MF* 32), which nobody else remembers. Another occasion includes Spinx, who cannot recall the name of the Minotaur in mythology and resorts to Elliot in a likewise manner: "I got hold of this lovely little statute the other day … It's got a body of a bloke, but the head of a bull … Ring a bell with you, Ell?" (*MF* 85). Similarly, Elliot can come up with the word "The Minotaur" (*MF* 85*),* thereafter providing a lengthy account of the Minotaur myth as in ancient Greek mythology. From these two circumstances, it can be inferred that the characters Naz and Spinx become embodiments of arrested development and a regressive state due to butterflies that cause loss of memory–collective and cultural memory specifically–since they are impotent to recall certain words and stories. This also becomes analogous to abjection since abjection occurs in the realm where meaning collapses due to its regressive association. Moreover, since the dystopia is contingent on the elements of the Real that function as the Law, the characters lose their proficiency in language since the realm of the Real is impossible–impossible in that it is beyond thought and speech. In

other words, the fact that these characters cannot form a narrative or remember these stories and are unable to come up with the right words in order to recount the narratives suggest the fact that they are regressed into a pre-Symbolic stage where language formation has not been established yet. This, in turn, functions as another element that connotes to the ubiquity of the Real.

When all these elements are considered in relation to one another and as the basis for the foundation of Ridley's dystopia–due to the burst of the Real within the Symbolic realm, and abjection as well as regression resulting in unfulfilled subjectivity–the intervention in the end is depicted as necessary and inevitable so as to restore order that is supposed to be in effect through the Law and in the Symbolic. The information that there will be a military intervention is first provided by the Party Guest, who is to abandon the country soon with his whole company in order to settle in another one (*MF* 15). He ensures the group that

> [t]here'll be a three days of non-stop bombing. Fire bombs. Napalm. Technology we ain't even heard of. Everywhere's a valid target. Civilian. Military. The whole fucking thing. After three days the soldiers will move in … They'll be here to help … Open your window for fuck's sake. It's a shit hole out there. Riots. No law. We need the fucking bombs and soldiers to bring some fucking order back. (*MF* 116)

When taken a close look, The Party Guest himself admits to the need for law and order since, as discussed so far, the Law of violence does not serve to regulate the habitat. On the contrary, the Law of the dystopia results in a world that is permeated with turmoil and chaos. The outside world he alludes to embeds violence as its standard and the sole mode of existence, which necessitates the interference of the government as a higher form of Law, another signifier for the-name-of-the-father. The fact that the effort of the government to provide order also emerges in the form of violence in this incident fortifies the argument that violence is the Law, and it is inevitable or obligatory to resort to brutal means since it becomes the only means to deal with life or the only solution possible. Hence, the end of the play is suggestive of the fact that this habitat bereft of order and contingent on the burst of the Real cannot be maintained and the intervention is ineluctable, although it also emerges as a violent attack.

In the final analysis, it is manifest the dystopia in *Mercury Fur* is constructed through the elements of the Real, where anal and oral drives that have destructive facets prevail. This ferocious dimension of the register is closely connected to the idea that the environment depicted hinges on violence as a mode of existence and the default element as observed in the instances of "the party" organized and accounts of brutal murders/attacks. The idea that violence becomes a form of entertainment, is normalized, mundane and ordinary, as well as the fact that ferocious attacks and murders come from paternal figures who are supposed to function as sources of love, together with the fact that they emerge in everyday places, add up to the contention that Ridley's dystopia takes violence as its focal element as reflected in the fact that the burst of the Real is allowed through brutal deeds and as mirrored in the lack of order which is a peculiarity of the Real. These elements trigger further chaos since all these deeds emerge within the Symbolic, pointing out to a regression and connoting the idea that the rings of the Borromean knot that are linked yet separate cannot maintain their autonomous status. The existence of the Symbolic is hinted at through the Oedipal story of Elliot and Spinx, with the latter functioning as the-name-of-the-father hence the signifier of the Law emerging as violence. His Law, like in any kind of law, brings about a possibility of

transgression, as perceived through the endeavors of Elliot to defy the prevailing Law of violence when he resists against and causes a break with the cycle of violence established by Spinx. However, the fact that Elliot deploys the same means in murdering Darren–in order to prevent his death as a result of the attacks–strengthens the assertion that violence is the Law since it is the sole way Elliot resorts to when trying to prevent violence itself, akin to the violent bombing in the end. What is of equal significance is that the primary principle of the Real–that the mother functions as a regulatory body in the register–lacks in the dystopia. The Duchess, the only mother figure in the play, is a dysfunctional figure detached from reality and seems to be in a regressive state, bereft of any potency to establish order. Thus, though the burst of the Real is allowed, no regulatory means in the form of a maternal body can be observed, which makes the atmosphere even more disorderly.

A significant dimension of the argument is Kristeva's abjection, which can be observed all throughout the play referring to a regressive state, unfulfilled subjectivities and the burst of what is pre-Oedipal deprived of the Law. Even though many inferences and interpretations could be made concerning the abject, what is of utmost significance to the analysis of *Mercury Fur* is the fact that abjection is closely connected to what is pre-Oedipal and a shift in subject positions. This change in subject positions can be specifically discerned through butterflies of suicide and assassination since in the former the object occupies the subject's position and in the latter the subject may assume other subject positions depending on the alter ego. A similar regression is also detected through the issue of language, which most of the characters are incapable of deploying efficiently despite having moved on to the Symbolic. The dwellers of this world have lost control of language as made manifest through the incompetency to establish a narrative and employ the appropriate words to recount a story. At this point, Elliot seems to be the only character that has become a part of the Symbolic, for his leg and his completed Oedipal story point out to it. Although Elliot remembers more than the others due to his refusal to eat butterflies that cause loss of memory, the fact that language acquisition is related to the Symbolic throws light on his capability to employ the necessary words and establish narratives. As the others are impotent to relate the stories they wish to, it can also be claimed that they are pushed into what is pre-Symbolic through loss of memory and shift in subject positions both of which are a result of butterflies. Consequently, being at a loss for words and losing efficiency in language point out to the burst of the pre-Symbolic in the dystopia and an arrested development.

When all these are taken into account, as the system is contingent on the principles of the Real, abjection, violence and pre-Symbolic elements, revealing the desires and fantasies through the parties, it is bound to be terminated and the order needs to be restored by means of an intervention. Even though it seems that the government allowed the Real to erupt and put things in halt, and although–like the Law of the dystopia–the final intervention appears in the form of violence, ultimately it is maintained that a regulatory Law is necessitated since this system is not sustainable with all these dimensions to it. When the impossible Real emerges its head in the Symbolic in the aftermath of entrance into the Symbolic through Law of the Father that becomes the representative of all other forms of rules and laws, the system cannot be heralded as sustainable. That is to say, if an environment or a system functions in a similar manner, as in the dystopian world of *Mercury Fur*, it calls for a regulatory Law as the habitat cannot be maintained any longer.

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# "The world will go on living": Resistance to Eurocentric Epistemology in Linda Hogan's *Power*

**Hüseyin Altındiş**

**Abstract** Environmental literature has the potential to tell us stories in and about nature woven with individual threads that create a multivocal presence consisting of human/nonhuman relations, Indigenous cultures, and border crossings. This paper attempts to present the intensifying tensions between resistance and assimilation through conflicting relationship between Eurocentric and indigenous epistemology and ontology in Linda Hogan's novel *Power*. The article argues that the novel creates a paradigm shift in ecocritical consciousness and invites the reader to consider new ways of imagining the relation with nature through Indigenous philosophy. To do so, the paper uses "kincentric ecology", to use Enrique Salmón's term (1327), as well as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "rhizome" in defining the text as a continual dialectic between deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

**Keywords:** Linda Hogan, ecocriticism, kincentric ecology, indigenous epistemology, nature writing, Eurocentrism, resistance

Environmental literature has the potential to tell us stories in and about nature woven with individual threads that create a multivocal presence consisting of human/nonhuman relations, Indigenous cultures, and border crossings. The emergence of interdisciplinary studies has enriched the content and coverage of nature writing and ecocriticism. Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). In his essay, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism", William Rueckert defines ecocriticism as "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology (as a science, as a discipline, as the basis for human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world" (107). However, there are arguments that "ecocriticism remains primarily a white endeavor" that mostly reflects a Eurocentric ontological approach to human/nonhuman relations and does not represent or misrepresents Indigenous people and their relation to the land and nonhuman relatives (Glotfelty xxv).

Many American Indian writers, such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Linda Hogan, Paula Gunn Allen, Luci Tapahonso, Vine Deloria, Gerald Vizenor, Joni Adamson, and Wendy Rose, developed multigeneric and multidirectional discursive strategies suggesting ways of reading generated by indigenous cultures, epistemology, and intellectual traditions. They aim to promote indigenous philosophy and challenge Eurocentric approaches to nature, indigenous culture, human/nonhuman relations, and stereotyping of indigenous identity portrayed as "a product of literature, history, and art and a product that, as an invention, often bears little resemblance to actual, living Native American people" (Owens 4). Within this context, this paper attempts to present the intensifying tensions between resistance and assimilation through conflicting relationship between Eurocentric and Indigenous epistemology and ontology in Linda Hogan's novel *Power*. The article argues that the novel creates a paradigm shift in ecocritical consciousness and invites the reader to consider new ways of imagining the

relation with nature through indigenous philosophy. To do so, the paper uses "kincentric ecology", to use Enrique Salmón's term (1327), as well as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "rhizome" in defining the text as a continual dialectic between deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

Linda Hogan is a contemporary American Indian–Chickasaw Indian–poet, playwright, essayist and novelist. Her works focus on indigenous communities and their connection to the land, past, culture, and spirituality. In this sense, her novels mostly deal with environmental justice, sovereignty, cultural identity, indigenous knowledge and thought. Her ontological philosophy builds on indigenous knowledge and spirituality of native people, and prescribes remedies that would enable "the world go on living" (*Power* 223). She challenges the dominant society's treatment of indigenous people and their culture. Through her narrative, Hogan highlights the importance of sense of identity and personal renewal which would be possible by returning to the indigenous origins, land, and culture. In other words, she develops discursive strategies concerning American Indian culture and literature that suggest a theory of reading generated largely from indigenous culture and intellectual traditions.

*Power* is a crafted and intellectually sophisticated novel inspired by an incident in which a Seminole Chief, James Billy, killed a Florida panther while on a night hunt and was charged with a violation of the Endangered Species Act. In *In the Absence of the Sacred*, Jerry Mander writes that the offence was punishable for one year in jail and a $10,000 fine. There was a debate whether this Act can apply to a case on the tribal lands. The Seminole tribe argued that as a sovereign nation recognized by a set of treaties with the United States, they could determine their own rules about taking wildlife. Moreover, the treaties with the US guaranteed the tribe the "right continue their traditional subsistence activities at their own discretion" in exchange for the ceased land (Mander 256). Therefore, the court ended with Billy's acquittal.

Published in 1998, *Power* tells the story of Omishto, a sixteen-year-old member of a diminishing Taiga tribe, who lives with her sister, mother, and stepfather in a white community. She has a strained relationship with her mother who tries to pass as white and rejects her past, and with her white stepfather, who poses a threat of violence and incestuous abuse. She finds comfort in visiting her tribal aunt Ama Eaton, who lives by the swamp, between two adjacent zones and "halfway between the modern world and the ancient one" (*Power* 22). She always "watches for the panther, [which] she says …is her relative" (3). Both Ama and the panther have consciousness and sentience; they communicate with each other through their senses. Taiga people believe that when Ama returned to the land after she had been lost for a long time, she was married to a panther and appears as a panther in human shape now. Omishto is visiting Ama the day a hurricane hits the swamp, which Omishto and Ama survive, but afterwards Ama feels a mysterious compulsion to track an endangered Florida panther and kills the animal to restore the balance. Omishto feels that she has no option but follow her. The aftermath of their encounter with the panther is painful for everyone. Ama kills the panther and is sent to court, both federal and tribal. The federal court concludes with Ama's acquittal on the grounds that the killing happened in tribal sovereignty and lack of evidence, except Ama's confession. Contrary to the federal court, Ama is found guilty of killing the panther by the tribal court and is banished from the tribe for four years. The novel ends with Ama accepting the banishment and Omishto electing to live deep in the swamp with the remaining Taiga elders, closer to her nonhuman kin.

By creating a fictional tribe, Hogan crafts a version of events that allows for richer and more diverse histories to emerge from the living legacies of extinction. In

other words, through its story, characters, and tribal culture, *Power* explores the gray area between the laws that affect "the relationship with other people, with animals, with the land" (*Powe*r 111) and spells out the ways in which this wider-ranging worldview complicates questions of what is relative, especially in the case of killing a sacred and endangered animal who is a kin to them. The Taiga tribe is an imaginary and matriarchal native Floridian tribe by whom the panther is revered as a sacred family member. Hogan casts this imaginary tribe as forgotten ancestors who maintain fragile connections to the pre-contact past. The Taiga people embrace kincentric ecology when they state that "[they] are related to the panther, Sisa, one of the first people here" (85). These people are as endangered as the Florida panther as their habitat, the swamp, "has been turned into a small sections of natural space bordered on all sides by human 'development': the highways, homes, malls" (Bowen-Mercer 162).Taiga is a blanket term for the evergreen forests that span North America, Europe, and Asia and "by using this wide-ranging habitat name to designate an imaginary, marginalized people fading in a modern day Florida, Hogan subtly and broadly aligns historical erasures across several groups, including her own" (McHugh 12). This erasure is one of the focal themes of the text and is continually reminded to the reader. In an assignment she wrote for her English class, Omishto discusses the dwindling numbers of her tribe which is a form of erasure; she states that there are only thirty people left from her ancestral tribe and they are forced to live in the Kili Swamp nearby a junkyard in "the old and thrown away way"(*Power* 154).

In order to discuss indigenous ecological ethics, knowledge, and significance of attachment to the land and roots, this paper uses the concepts of kincentric ecology and rhizome and builds the argument around these concepts. Enrique Salmón, an indigenous scholar and critique, defines kincentric ecology in the following manner:

> Indigenous people view themselves and nature as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origins. It is awareness that life in any environment is viable only when humans view the life surrounding them as kin. The kin, by and in turn, affect the life surrounding them. The interactions that result from this "kincentric ecology" enhance and preserve the ecosystem. (1327)

Kincentric ecology, in this sense, enables the reader to assess, conceptualize, and induce sustainable, place-based relationships between human and nonhuman. Omishto is torn between loyalty to Westernized values represented by her Westernized mother and Ama who supports traditional way of life and articulates the essence of kincentric ecology in her words, "in the old days when we were beautiful and agile, we asked the animals to lay down their lives for us and in turn we offered them our kinship, our respect, our words in the next world over from here, our kind treatment" (*Power* 229). According to Indigenous philosophy, as Salmón explains, "everything that breathes has soul. Plants, animals, humans, stones, the land all share the same breath" (1328). In that sense, Omishto's narrative voice creates a space for indigenous philosophy and thus becomes a word warrior of such a philosophy that would depict the kinship and reciprocal dependence of entities in sharing the same breath.

The setting of the story, which is a swamp, represents an ecotone, or a mosaic-like habitat, which exemplifies this relatedness from kincentric ecological perspective. The ecotone, a "transition area, of varying size, between two adjacent ecological zones" (Buell 140), is a liminal space where human/ nonhuman kinship is performed. In other words, the setting as an ecologic zone enables transitions and energy exchanges at a

performative level, which prepares an appropriate ground for border crossings. The narrative defines this performative act as "a spirit that had changed bodies the way they used to do when people could turn into animals and animals could transform themselves into a human shape" (*Power* 22). The story begins when the first-person narrator, Omishto, is in her boat in the middle of a body of water. The opening scene highlights and thus portrays a story of creation according to the fictitious Taiga tribe. With this approach, Hogan problematizes the Eurocentric conflation of numerous indigenous cultures and, thus, the categorization of them as a monist culture.[1] In *Power,* Omishto sees the beginning as a form of creation that reminds the reader the tribe's origin: "I see this place from in the beginning when it was an ocean of a world. Even sky was a kind of water" (83). When Omishto visits Ama, looking at the clouds and sky, they realize that a storm is coming. Omishto decides to go back to the lake and secure her boat. Omishto explains that "the storm was not just wind and rain […] it was a beginning and end of something" (73). Hogan uses the storm as a rhetorical device to emphasize the significance of indigenous spirituality. In other words, Hogan uses the storm as a harbinger of a more systematic approach to territory and its human and nonhuman occupants. With its multiple frames of reference, the novel thwarts interpretive efforts to restrict its references to nature writing. A Sioux belief that "a great whirlwind would annihilate whites, leaving Indians free to reclaim their ancient traditions and land" (Hardin 142) serves to explain this aim. The storm is a beginning in the sense that it deterritorializes the foreign objects that represent foreign philosophies and invasion and then reterritorialize indigenous philosophy. In order to accentuate the significance of indigenous knowledge and culture, the text first uproots the traces of white invasion with the storm. Following the storm, Ama explains that "[they] were blown together by a storm in the first place", which codes the storm as an ontological device (*Power* 42).

The storm also represents the Ghost Dance, which is a performance to call the dead ancestors so that the living members of the tribe could get in touch with their past. When Omishto goes out to secure her boat, a storm breaks out. While Omishto is trying to return to Ama's house after securing her boat, she realizes that "[she] is naked" (*Power* 39). The strong wind takes her dress off, and she crawls to the house naked like a baby. Symbolically, her nudity and the storm embody some perspectives of native cosmology and signal the energy change that would initiate rebirth. Omishto is the one that the tribe has been waiting to secure the future of the tribe, its culture, language, and relations with the occupants of the land; yet she is aware of the difficulty and misery of her responsibility which frightens her. She states that "I know our survival depends on who I am and who I will become. But this is all too large for me. It makes me want to run away" (161). Becoming starts when Omishto feels as if she is "curled inside an opening leaf" (1), an image that reminds the readers of a caterpillar ready to change itself into a gorgeous butterfly, which is a "beginning at the beginning" (Derrida 15). Thus, deterritorialization of Western epistemology and reterritorialization of indigenous knowledge, philosophy, and sovereignty takes place on earth. Omishto describes the significance of a space in indigenous philosophy and the meaning of being attached to

[1] When it comes to creation, there is not a common story and/or entity among the tribes; yet each tribe has its own creation story, which is ultimately tied to the nature. In *Ecocriticism: Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literatures* (2002), Donelle N. Dreese states that "writers such as Linda Hogan and N. Scott Momaday evoke territories reminiscent of tribal origins, such as Kiowa emergence from the log and the Chickasaw origin in water" (17).

that space as a "beautiful manner" (*Power* 154). This philosophy is worth a lengthy quote here:

> We're in a clearing in the trees where the old people live among tradition and memory that is nothing more […] than the bones of something recalled real and whole. The old people at the place of their law are living still in a kind of paradise even though it is surrounded by devastation. […] but even so, it's like the people have stepped outside an ugly world and now they remain far away from it all, under the pale blue sky called remembering. It's where they hear what the creator tells them to hear and they hear it well because the sky is not full of the sounds of airplanes, this land is not cluttered with the sounds of cars or television. It's the place where they do what the creator tells them to do in spite of the world of rags and parts of the things that have fallen out of ruined world all around them. And because of this, they still hold themselves in a beautiful manner; that's what we used to call it, "a beautiful manner". It's the way of living that holds tight to memory, creation, and earth. You can see this goodness of life on their peaceful faces, on their skin, even though not far from here are old, rusted cars. (*Power* 154)

With this performance, I argue that Hogan, in order to prescribe American Indian philosophy and thought as healing remedies throughout the novel, complicates Eurocentric representation and emphasizes the significance of indigenous sovereignty that would provide a foundation for political and cultural liberation of indigenous people and the self. In other words, with *Power* Hogan rejects "ethnographic entrapment", to adopt Andrea Smith's term, and its relation to colonialism.

During the storm, Omishto hears "the roaring voice of the storm" (*Power* 37), which literally is the voice of the nature and figuratively the indigenous resistance and their struggle of literal and ontological survival. Both aim to discard the objects and depictions that are foreign to this land in order to reconstruct historical ties with the past since "it's the way of living that holds tight to memory, creation, and earth" (154). Omishto articulates the cosmology and the significance of the storm in the following manner: "We humans are nothing more than a vision the gods had. We are only one song, one of the births of this singular world, one of the deaths, too, all of it blown together by the winds of a storm" (72). The Taiga people believe that wind is a living force and they call it "Oni" which "enters [them] all at birth and stays with [them] all though life. It connects us to every other creature" (28). In this sense the storm, as an entity in kincentric ecology, helps to blow people together and re-connect them to their lands and cultures.

The storm's uprooting the tree Methuselah can be considered a devastating and negative impact at first, yet it serves a better and a positive function because Methuselah, which has been there since the arrival of the Spaniards, represents the Western invasion and human destruction as it was "conceived on another continent" (38). With the fall of Methuselah, epistemological shift from Western epistemology to Indigenous one is initiated which, as Sean Kicummah Teuton notes, "may grant special access to [indigenous] knowledge" (xvi). The uprooted Methuselah, Spanish moss, and the dead Spanish horse are crafted, as Hardin points out, to "[remove] the visible burden of history" (140).The fall of the tree has a crucial symbolic meaning because they consider "this deeply, the oldest tree and how it fell as all the centuries have fallen before us like it was the end of all that time" (*Power* 163). With this removal, *Power* achieves a connection with the pre-contact past and explores the issue of tribal

sovereignty and environmental ethics of the American Indian society because "the old people are the ones who knows the laws of this place, this world, laws stronger and older than America" (160). The act also problematizes the mainstream environmentalism that diminishes American Indian agency by ignoring historical and contemporary realities. For centuries, the Methuselah tree and foreign species such as kudzu plant symbolize Eurocentric epistemology and assimilation which resulted in erasure of indigenous culture.[2] In this sense, Hogan becomes a warrior of "critical Indigenous Philosophy", to barrow Dale A. Turner's phrase (101), and with *Power* she aims to contribute to the survival and flourishing of American Indian philosophy.

After the storm, Omishto notices the dead animals and challenges and problematizes the Western perception of the destruction in the following manner: "It broke my heart to see little deer with their white undersides lying along the high roads in a line, counted and numbered as if they were nothing more than rocks or coins" (*Powe*r 27). For the mainstream consciousness the dead animals are only numbers, yet for indigenous consciousness they are family members; for that reason, for Omishto it is heartbreaking to see them lying dead. She also criticizes white community's attitudes toward nature when they accuse Ama of killing the endangered animal: "what followed [the storm] seemed natural and even though it was wrong by law, but that another law was at work that day and it was older than human history. Would they let me tell sugarcane and cattle and white houses with red roofs had killed the land the panther people even before the storm, they are true violators" (114).

In order to better articulate the logic of "another law [that] was at work that day" (114), Omishto questions both Ama's killing of the panther and the relationship between Eurocentric and Indigenous ethics. She states,

> "You have killed yourself Ama,"
> "I know it. Don't just know it"
> "Oh Ama what have you gone and done? You have gone and killed yourself". (67)

Her perspective displays the difference between Western and Indigenous ecocritical ethics. Hers is a result of kincentric ecology that she considers the nonhuman as members of her own family. It is difficult for Omishto to explain as she lacks indigenous knowledge to understand the meaning of killing Ama's herself. This event accentuates the necessity of transforming indigenous knowledge to new generations in order to maintain the culture. Omishto as a liminal character thinks that she knows both cultures and critically tries to reach a point that she would speak for one. Her liminality complicates the situation as she questions, "How can be there two truths that contradict each other? And me. I am on both sides now; that is the worst" (115). This excellent rhetorical question demonstrates Omishto's intellectuality that would help her to reach a reasonable decision rather than an emotional or sentimental one. Omishto tries to understand the difference between Ama's life and hers. Ama can hear the animals and talk to them while she is indifferent to technology and the modernization. Omishto contemplates about the two worlds and between the lines highlights indigenous epistemology as follows:

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[2] Dominant ideology prevented indigenous people to access ancestral knowledge by sending all native children to boarding schools where they were indoctrinated white epistemology and ontology.

> We do not hear even the same sounds. I try but I can't hear the sounds of animals walking and she doesn't hear the radio. Still, I saw the four women and I heard them, too. That must mean something. Perhaps it means that in at least one way I am as connected to the past as Ama is. Ama once said that space is full and time is empty; I think now I understand this. We are surrounded by matter, but time disappears from us. Or maybe, as Ama says, there are other worlds beside us all the time and every now and then we cross over and enter one, and every so often, too, one passes over and enters ours. (55)

Omishto's reasoning and rhetoric lays ontological ground for kincentric ecology and connects the human and nonhuman worlds utilizing indigenous epistemology in rhizomic multiplicity. In her English assignment, Omishto writes that in old days, a storm blew and opened a gap between the human and nonhuman worlds, through which a "panther woman [followed] the panther into that other world" (110). By entering the "other world" the panther woman internalizes the Other world and by looking from the perspective of the Other, or becoming the Other, she witnesses the destruction people caused; what she sees is "the rivers are on fire, animals are dying of sickness, and there are foreign vines. The world, she saw, was dying" (110). Through this symbolic passage, Hogan invites more mainstream environmental writing to enter the world of the Other and witness the destruction that invasion brings to the indigenous cultures, knowledge, and identity. The cosmological visit of the panther woman problematizes and challenges the arrival of Western invasion to the native land and this is another accusation of modernity of destroying the environment. Before the arrival of Westerners, there were rivers that were not poisoned, species that still existed, and the panther and the Taiga people lived in harmony. However, modernization, industrialization, and adopted species, like kudzu, that was brought to the American land caused "all the fires on rivers" which killed many fish species, spread "a disease that killed so many of the Taiga", sickness among animals, including the panther, and destroyed their habitats (181). Through this rhetoric and challenge, *Power,* I argue, "poses not a political challenge to the transcendent and simultaneously universally held barometers of truth" (*God* 3), but epistemological challenge to the institutionalization of this truth.

To support the epistemological challenge, in addition to kincentric ecology, I will use Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's term "rhizome" to show ties between human and nonhuman and land and culture, though it may seem problematic to some scholars[3] to use a Western Philosophy to analyze an Indian text. I draw on two scholars whose ideas encourage me to use Western philosophy to analyze this text. Terry Eagleton, for example, notes "[a]ny body of theory concerned with human meaning, value, language, feeling, and experience will inevitably engage with broader, deeper beliefs about the nature of human individuals and societies, problems of power and sexuality, interpretations of past history, versions of the present, and hopes for the future" (170). The other is a Native American writer and scholar Louis Owens who points out, "[w]e do not have the luxury of simply opting out, because whether or not we heard by Said, Sollors, or others, we already function within the dominant discourse. To think otherwise is naïve at best, for the choice we made for us generations ago" (*Mixedblood Messages* 52). Within this scope, I aim to use Deleuze and Guattari to analyze the human/nonhuman relation and kinship in *Power*.

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[3] For detailed discussion, see Alvira Pulitano's *Toward a Native American Critical Theory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

In *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of “rhizome” to denote a network, the relations and communication between human/ nonhuman and other parts of an “organ”, in which any node can connect with another node creating an assemblage through lines and measurable speeds (4). For Deleuze and Guattari, rhizome is a biological term that denotes the modification of an underground stem of a plant (4). They further state that the rhizome “assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers” (7). If a rhizome is separated into pieces, each piece may give rise to a new plant. Rhizome also involves the idea of process, and it is aimed at explaining principles of connection, multiplicity, a signifying rupture, and cartography. Deleuze and Guattari explain that “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other”, reflected in kincentric ecology as well, which argues that any creature human/nonhuman in the nature are related to each other (7). Like the concept of rhizome, indigenous knowledge and cultures assume diverse forms in which Deleuze and Guattari’s plant metaphor can be applied to various indigenous tribes, each of which has its own traditions and culture creating multiplicity in a connected body of cultures.

Through the connections of roots and stems, the rhizome displays “semiotic chains of […] diverse modes of coding that bring into being […] states of things of differing status” (Deleuze and Guattari 7). The rhizomic multiplicity critically and intellectually problematizes the concept of the “ecological Indian”, and I argue that this multiplicity, as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn aptly states, “[e]nvisions a project that would break away from anthropological focus on native people as exotics” (8). In other words, “coming out of the ground to the light after a dark season” (*Power* 229), P*ower* aims to deconstruct the most destructive stereotypes of Eurocentric imagination, which, Elvira Pulitano writes, “have prevented and still prevent American Indians from imagining themselves as contemporary, living human beings” (146).

After the storm, Omishto and the natural world become a part of rhizomic multiplicity. This multiplicity “ceases to have any relation to the One as a subject or object” (Deleuze and Guattari 8). It emphasizes the fact that neither human nor nonhuman is the subject or object in their relationships as they occupy equal spaces and roles in the survival of both. Symbolically, the descriptive narrative displays the multiplicity as the sky merged with the water creating a mesh which blurs the boundaries. In this mesh, each entity is liminal, visible, and bears the unique characteristic of itself as water, sky, and clouds do. However, this multiplicity should be read carefully as it is not an infusion of one to another, but a bare recognition of existing boundaries that helps us to define the Other much better in its own terms. This visibility brings the text to another level in which, as kincentric ecology offers, each entity becomes aware of the other and realizes that one’s existence severely depends on the wellbeing and existence of the Other. This indigenous philosophical explanation might be the main motive behind Ama’s killing the panther because Omishto claims that Ama “killed it for our people to go on” and “restore this world to balance” (*Power* 189). Through this image, the text implies that it is impossible to intertwine two worlds, indigenous and white world, but they are parallel worlds taking place at the same time. The awareness of the viable environment enables the members of the family to feel, hear, and see each other not only in the literal sense but also in the metaphorical sense. When Omishto talks about “the cat”, she mentions the visible and invisible creatures of the space in the following manner:

> I feel it in my body, something not right, eyes watching from the trees, something stirring about. I feel it in my stomach, an animal feeling, something –or someone –dangerous […] It feels like a space has eyes and ears, and it watches with all its might, listens with ears that can pick up the slightest hint of sound, and it moves slowly, silently. (2-3)

Through seeing and hearing, the text embodies the Indigenous philosophy that Donald L. Fixico articulates in his book *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World* (2003). On relation between physical and metaphysical, human and nonhuman environment, Fixico writes, "'Indian Thinking' is 'seeing' things from a perspective emphasizing that circles and cycles are central to the world and that all things are related within the universe" (1). "Indian people", he continues, "who are close to their tribal traditions and native values, think within a native reality consisting of a physical and metaphysical world" (1). *Power* delineates this reality via the relationship between the Taiga people and the panther. Omishto narrates that before the creation of people Sisa was there. More broadly, the text embodies how human/nonhuman relations are transcended into a new phase through indigenous knowledge and culture, which correlates with Deloria and Wildcats' idea that "universe is alive, but also contains within it very important suggestion that the universe is personal" (McKenna and Pratt 283). In so doing, Hogan problematizes mainstream ecocritical approach, which ascribes Indigenous people an essential closeness to nature. As Owens states, "mainstream environmentalism has often relied on the symbol of the Indian as an emblem of healthy human-nature relations. Thus the movement obscures Indigenous environmental concerns" (85). By blurring the corporeal boundaries and becoming a member of the kincentric family, Omishto dismantles the ontological divide between the human and nonhuman and also the hierarchical valuation of nature and culture. Reinforcing the blurriness of human–animal relations, Omishto in one last encounter with a panther proves unable finally to identify whether it is the literal mate of dead one, the panther god Sisa, or still another possibility, her own spiritual twin, as she says, "the one that was born alongside me at my beginning" (223).

Through Omishto's narration, the concepts of rhizome and kincentric ecology display the relatedness between human and nonhuman and offer new ways of reading indigenous knowledge, culture, and their relationship with the environment. On relatedness Hogan writes, "even having tried so hard to see ourselves apart, and so often without a love for even our own biology, we are in relationship with the rest of the planet, and that connectedness tells us we must reconsider the way we see ourselves and the rest of the nature" (*Dwellings* 114-15). The relatedness describes "the epistemology of the Indian worldview" (*Mean Spirit* 52), which provides tools to gather knowledge about the world and offers survival strategies for indigenous culture and identity, which will restore the destroyed balance.

Omishto's return to the Taiga tribe at the end of the novel, as a knot of a rhizome, ties significant messages of the text that are worth exploring in detail through kincentric ecology and rhizome. In this scene, Omishto eloquently describes the rhizomic multiplicity and the rhetorical message of the text as follows: "I am more, at this moment, than myself. I am them. I am the old. I am Ama and the panther. It is all that I am. And I am not afraid anymore of the future or the past. But still I am torn through. I sit and can't move" (*Power* 173). She is the root of a plant that will flourish the tribe and restore the broken ties with the past and with the nonhuman world that would involve changes in intellectual and spiritual spaces. As Bowen-Mercer aptly

mentions, this is a “road to survival” of not only the Taiga tribe, but also indigenous knowledge that would contribute to the flourishing of human nonhuman relations. This becoming would annul the existing philosophy offering a refreshed, rejuvenated, and reciprocal relationship that would include indigenous epistemology and ontology. This is a rebirth, a discursive strategy of indigenous philosophy, which problematizes, challenges, and re-envisions the historical, philosophical, and political representations of indigenous thought, which will exist in political, social, and economic arena.

Omishto’s return, in this sense, recovers alternative histories and makes evaluative claims against dominant narratives that produced their subjugation because dominant narratives are culturally constructed. Omishto’s return also highlights another significant aspect of indigenous epistemology–the importance of land. Dakota philosopher Vine Deloria Jr. notes that “American Indians hold their lands–spaces–as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind” (*God* 61), which displays one of the most significant differences that exist between Indigenous and Western metaphysics. In this vein, Omishto’s return to Kili Swamp highlights the individual’s responsibility to the land and to the others. Omishto transcends boundaries, identifies with a place, and embodies connection with the self and land that dominant ideology separated. In *Dwellings*, Hogan writes,

> [e]mptiness and estrangement are deep wounds, strongly felt in present time. We have been split from what we could nurture, what could fill us. And we have been wounded by a dominating culture that has feared and hated the natural world, has not listened to the voice of the land, has not believed in the inner worlds of human dreaming and intuition, all things that has guided indigenous people since time stood up in the east and walked this world into existence, split from the connection between the self and land. (82)

The return is a political and intellectual resistance to the removal of Indians from their lands and culture, and this implies that by returning to the land we can heal the wounds and restore the balance. This return as a fight against injustice is the restoration of honor or reestablishment of the power of indigenous knowledge and culture that would strengthen human knowledge on human nonhuman relations. Ultimately, the return symbolizes philosophical pluralism or pluralism of the worlds as a place “of knowing, experiencing, and relating with the world” (Cresswell 11) which, as I already mentioned, entails knowing and acknowledging the existence of pluralistic views of Western and Indigenous philosophies. Ama, for example, becomes a spokesperson for the Taigan version of kincentric rhizome and believes that “her faintest move or thought is governed not only by spirits but by the desires and dreams of animals who are people like ourselves, in different skins” (*Power* 189).

The metaphorical language of this passage highlights survival through building on existing indigenous knowledge and culture. The consciousness highlighted through the text would shed the constructed “old” Indian identity and unearth intellectual indigenous identity that would utilize existing knowledge and continue, at the same time, to generate knowledge for the survival of both human and nonhuman. According to the rhizomatic relationship, becoming contains an alliance and change that emerge between two entities so that both entities–human and unhuman–display transformation either in spiritual or intellectual spheres when Omishto states, “animals are the pathway between humans and god. They are one step closer to the true that we are. [Ama] says skin was never a boundary to be kept or held to: there are no limits between one thing

and another, one time and another" (188). Omishto's return, or as she stated earlier passing over and entering another world, entails renegotiating of the boundaries that separate and respectively redefine human and nonhuman. By returning to the tribe, Omishto recovers and re-articulates stolen identity and rediscovers belonging, sense of place, and survival strategies. From kincentric ecological perspective, these knots break anthropological entrapment and offer more ontological approach to indigenous knowledge. Thus, the last scene creates "a new consciousness of coexistence", to use Gerald Vizenor's phrase, that prescribes indigenous knowledge and culture as a healing method (ix).

Another important moment in the text that exhibit "alternative notions of what it means to inhabit the earth as human beings" (Rainwater ix) is depicted via two court scenes in federal court and tribal court. After Ama kills the panther she is judged both by the federal court and the tribal one. Through the court scenes, *Power* consciously depicts the ontological divide between traditional Indigenous and Western ways of life. The text also highlights the fact that "believing and knowing are two lands distant from each other" (*Power* 40). These moments signify the limits of human knowledge and depict how these limitations could lead to false conclusions and decisions. In other words, Omishto's attitudes during both court scenes display the complexity of tribal knowledge and "self-imposed cultural blindness" of the jury in federal court and of the white community (Rainwater 267). During the federal court scene, Omishto problematizes Western invasion, accusing the outsiders of destroying the existing balance and harmony in nature; she offers alternative ways of interpreting what it means to be an Indigenous and occupy a land. To complicate dominant narratives and Eurocentric view, Omishto rhetorically argues that it will not be the same "if it were a man who shot a cat, a white man"; she argues that "he'd be free to come and go as he pleased. He'd be called a hunter" (112). She uses rhetorical argument and narrates that "the cats out here in the cypress and mangroves and swamps humans aren't meant to enter, not most humans anyway, though it seems to me like a natural place. And I think of the cats killed by cars. A dozen of them since the highway went in" (*Power* 123). She also wonders whether "it would have been a different world if someone had believed [indigenous] lives were as important as theory and gold" (179). Thus, the text, as Hardin puts it, "continuously reminds [and also complicates] the reader of the Europeans' influence on the Indigenous peoples and the land" (139). The federal court drops the case as there was not any evidence that Ama killed the panther. Rainwater states that "the non-Indian jury holds rigid notions about Indians, animals, and 'reality'" (267), which emphasizes lack of knowledge to make judgment about the case. Moreover, there was "Treaty rights" (*Power*115). Omishto articulates that "By treaty, Ama could kill the cat. And it enrages the people who want to save them, especially when the panther has so many illnesses they hardly stand much of a chance" (115). However, the tribal court becomes more serious on this environmental issue and banishes Ama with four years of exclusion from the tribe.

During the tribal court scene, Omishto becomes a speaker of Indian philosophy and narrates the significance of attachment to culture and land in the form of energy transfer which entails staying or being rooted in this old land and in old ways that would restore the balance to save endangered species, including the panther and the Taiga tribe:

> [I] am motionless in spite of the feeling in my chest that tells me […] to go. I sit as if the strength of the old ones is a magnet that holds me here, inside the circle

> created by generations and living and dying, that has boundary lines too thick to be drawn or made physical in this world, and I am only a speck inside it. (173)

From the perspective of kincentric ecology, Omishto's attachment to the land and saving the future of the tribe means saving nature since nonhumans are all considered to be members of the tribe. Omishto blurs the boundaries and metaphorically unites human and nonhuman environment in one body. For that reason she is not Omishto anymore; she is the other(s): she is the land; she is human; she is unhuman; she is the past; she is the present, and she is the future. She is not only returning to the Kili Swamp, to the native land, but also to native identity and thought that requires re-envisioning the role of Indigenous identity and knowledge. Omishto's return underscores that intellectual landscapes continue to have political significance for Indigenous people. Omishto's multilevel becoming embodies the fact that, as Deloria succinctly notes, "[t]housands of years of occupancy on their land taught tribal peoples the sacred landscapes for which they were responsible and gradually the structure of ceremonial reality became clear. It was not what people believe to be true that was important but what they experience as true" (*God* 66). By crossing over the boundaries, Omishto experiences a kincentric ecological perspective as truth which includes justice and reciprocal relations with the Other.

Despite her liminal position in relation to the two cultures, Omishto feels that it is useless to try to mediate between them. Therefore, when she states that "I live [the white] world. I leave war and fear. I leave success and failure, owned things, rooms of the light that was once a river and is now reduced, I leave the radio, the manners of living" (*Power* 232), she enters the indigenous self by leaving the mainstream society and the surrounding colonial discourse, arguing that "their law will not protect me […] nothing of their world serves me" (205). Rejecting "anthropological entrapment" (Smith 208), Omishto reminds the reader of the arguments that "Indians were the heirs to vast legacies of knowledge about this continent and the universe that had been ignored" by Western ontology (Teuton 10). She aims to maintain the legacy of indigenous culture though she admits that she is "a foreigner here because I understand almost nothing that is said in the old Taiga language. I am inept and hardly know our ways" (*Power* 161). Her rhetoric lays the logical ground that she was severed from her ancestral culture. In other words, body and mind are separated. The process of returning and recovery will not be as easy as one might expect. Thus, the text once more complicates Eurocentric erasure and all the values that were introduced to the native land because Western ontology did not seek a complex negotiation and syncretic discourses that would enable all different forms of life and cultures to survive while sharing the same space.

Omishto's return to Indigenous culture "starts the process of healing and balancing the world [….] [in the] complicated colonial space" (Peters 121). Her return to the tribal life style and wilderness aims to question and restore the values that emerge from nature and resist the socio-ecological problems that exploit the relations between the human and nonhuman. It also aims to raise awareness of the interdependency among the kin. Thus, the text implies the multidimensionality of Omishto's action, which represents the idea that integrity with nature and nonhuman world nurture their very existence and culture, what Peters reads as "complex syncretisms" (119). With her decision, Omishto offers an alternative way to imagine "nature and humanity's relation to it" (Buell 2). Upon arriving at Kili, she dances "as the wind stirs in the trees," as my title states "Someone sings the song that says the world will go on living" (235). Leslie Marmon Silko, a Laguna Indian writer, emphasizes the significance of this complex

relationship and notes that humans must maintain this relationship if they want to survive in it. Silko claims that "survival depended upon harmony and cooperation not only among human beings, but also among all things-the animate and less animate, since rocks and mountains were known on occasion to move" (29). This will be possible through acknowledging traditional ecological knowledge which is on the verge of extinction with the old people. The environmental destruction that the invaders brought to this land and culture severed the intimacy and dependence on the land. Within this context, Omishto's return enlivens not only the traditional ecological knowledge but also the lineage of the Taiga tribe. In other words, Omishto sings the song and prescribes non-anthropocentric environmental ethics that would enable the indigenous world continue living. In her survival narrative, Hogan tends to foreground continuous process of creation indigenous knowledge which is necessary for the maintenance of life, self, community, and kinship bonds. Through Omishto's story, Hogan aims to shape cultural notions of what makes life worthwhile. As such, reading the story in its own terms allows the reader to perceive an alternative view of human-nonhuman relations and the significance of indigenous knowledge to maintain culture of the community that would enrich our world. Finally, *Power,* by acknowledging the power of indigenous cultures, traditions, and ways of life, challenges Eurocentric epistemology and offers alternative epistemology for the survival of human an unhuman alike. She also brings an ecological crisis into a fictional account and invites the reader to acknowledge indigenous knowledge and culture in order that indigenous culture can stay alive, survive, and thrive again.

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## "Moving Without Comprehensible Purpose Toward No Discernible Destination": The Sensation and Spectacle of Flight in William Faulkner's *Pylon*

**Rinni Haji Amran**

**Abstract:** Looking back at the history of barnstorming in 1920s and 1930s America and William Faulkner's own experience in aerial performing, this paper investigates the repositioning of the aeroplane as an aesthetic figure rather than a purely instrumental vehicle in *Pylon* (1935). Faulkner notably foregrounds exterior descriptions, such as the characters' physical sensations during their flights, rather than elaborate on the barnstormers' psychological struggles (which previous critical studies of *Pylon* frequently focus on), as a way of highlighting the purity of the barnstormers' passion for flight, which has become rare in a world preoccupied with making a profit and conforming to social conventions. With Faulkner's increasing disillusionment at the entertainment industry in Hollywood, *Pylon* might be interpreted as his indictment against the loss of appreciation for abstract entertainment in an increasingly capitalistic and dispassionate culture.

**Keywords:** Faulkner, *Pylon*, barnstorming, aviation, modernist literature

### Introduction

Although William Faulkner's *Pylon* (1935) revolves around a group of barnstormers, little critical attention has been given to the author's focus on barnstorming– an area of aviation that is distinct both formally and historically from the more predominant forms of military and commercial flight. Instead of being seen primarily as a vehicle, instrument, or weapon, the aeroplane becomes an aesthetic figure in barnstorming, central to the performance and spectacle. It is this shift, this paper proposes, that is integral to *Pylon*, moving the novel beyond commentary on modern technology to interrogating contemporary aesthetic values, or, to be more precise, the lack thereof.

Previous studies of *Pylon* frequently view the figure of the aeroplane as representative of wider technology–an "icon of technology" as Zoltán Simon puts it (50)– hence shifting much of critical discussion towards technophobia and technophilia. Michael Zeitlin, for instance, sees the aeroplane as being alienating and hostile and asserts that "Faulkner anticipates Orwell in representing modernity's ominous technologies for controlling, surveying and manipulating its subjects" (16). His interpretation echoes Pauline Degefelder's view of the barnstormers as "prototypical cyborgs, extensions of their machines and an indictment of the technological system which has seduced and enslaved them" (242), which arguably contradicts Faulkner's admiring portrayal of the barnstormers' in the novel. In contrast, Vivian Wagner argues that *Pylon* portrays "Modernist technophilia" rather than technophobia, "literally a love for and fetishization of the machine –particularly–in the case of the barnstormers and Faulkner's stories about them–the airplane" (80). Indeed, the barnstormers–even more so than the European Futurists–are consumed by their passion for the flying machines. The aeroplane, however, was not just any ordinary machine in the 1930s. Given its rich military history, its significant commercial role, and its capacity for aerial performance, its figure is imbued with complex and contradictory connotations that most other forms

of technology had not yet acquired or acquired to a similar degree. To have chosen to focus the novel on barnstorming over military or commercial forms of flight was to make a deliberate rejection of capitalist, nationalist, and militarist values in favor of personal, artistic and creative liberation. One might also argue that a reconceptualization of technology takes place in the novel, from being perceived as mainly instrumental and mechanical to being seen as an aesthetic figure.

More than depicting technophilia, then, *Pylon*, this paper argues, is a critique of a capitalist culture increasingly devoid of such passion and appreciation for creativity as demonstrated by the barnstormers. Looking back at barnstorming in 1920s and 1930s America and Faulkner's own experience in aerial performing, this paper demonstrates how the barnstormers in *Pylon* seek flight primarily to feel the physicality of flight as movement, as entertainment, and as performance, as opposed to flying for financial, social, or political gains, which can likely be found in military and commercial aviation. Faulkner notably foregrounds exterior descriptions, such as the characters' physical sensations during their flights, rather than elaborate on the barnstormers' psychological struggles (which previous critical studies of *Pylon* frequently focus on), as a way of highlighting the purity of the barnstormers' passion for flight, which has become rare in a ruthless world preoccupied with making a profit and conforming to social conventions. With Faulkner's increasing disillusionment at the entertainment industry in Hollywood, *Pylon* might be interpreted as his indictment against the loss of appreciation for abstract entertainment in an increasingly capitalistic and dispassionate culture.

**Barnstorming, Aerial Circuses, and Stunt-Flying**

Compared to its military and commercial counterparts, barnstorming was a more independent form of flying where the airman could make his own decisions about what aircraft to fly, where to fly, and what hours he worked, thus giving him more freedom to spend his time up in the air. Barnstorming was a by-product of the Great War that left a surplus of pilots and aeroplanes without discernible purpose. As Paul O'Neil explains, "[y]oung men who had been abruptly denied the excitement of flight were dismayed at the prospect of going back to classrooms or drugstore counters" (24), which Faulkner would have understood as he himself lamented the end of the war simply because it caused his training to be cut short at the Royal Canadian Air Force training school. Don Dwiggins articulates these fliers' feelings when he notes, "aviation had opened a brand new world of adventure, and the taste of flying behind stinking, oil-throwing engines was still strong in their mouths" (*The Barnstormers* 19). Notably, their less than altruistic motivations distinguish them from the romanticized image of aviator as a noble hero. The abrupt end to their careers, according to O'Neil, consequently produced "a locust-like invasion of the American countryside by dashing young fliers, and a new direction for aviation" (24). He describes their typical activities as follows:

> These restless ex-military pilots followed the sun as they barnstormed, traded five-minute rides for gasoline money or an occasional pint of moonshine whiskey, filched eggs from rural henhouses and boiled them in their breakfast coffee over campfires, and slept under the wings of their planes when darkness fell. They learned tricks of survival by necessity as they made their uncertain way, often without maps, over a countryside devoid of airports or weather forecasters. (O'Neil 29)

The barnstormers' rootlessness and their innovative "tricks of survival" that this description highlights is exactly what makes the barnstormers in *Pylon* unconventional

and appealing to readers. When Shumann, for example, suggests to the Reporter that they sleep in his house, stating, "It wouldn't be the first time Jiggs and Jack and me have slept on the floor", the Reporter agrees and regards them with "hushed quiet amazement" (*Pylon* 153), wondering perhaps at the ease with which the group adapts to new environments. While they are a unique group of people, their appeal is different from the widely-known image of the aviator-hero especially because they chose their way of life for their own pleasure, "follow[ing] the sun" rather than going where they can find more stable income (O'Neil 29). The amazement and fascination with their rootlessness is also reflected in the novel when people ask, "Where do people like that go?" and what "make[s] them move?" (258). So, to read these characters in terms of the conventional heroic narratives of military fliers is to misunderstand their motives and also to overlook the admiration and appreciation that lies behind Faulkner's portrayal.

In the early 1930s, Faulkner himself resumed his flight training with flight instructor-turned-barnstormer, Captain Vernon C. Omlie, which led to their collaboration in aerial performances as "William Faulkner's (Famous Author) Air Circus" along with Faulkner's brother, Dean (Blotner, *Faulkner* 333). Faulkner was "finally [fulfilling] a boyhood dream" (Blotner 318) as he completed his training with Omlie in December 1933 (Blotner 330). In his records, besides his "Daybooks" in which he listed his expenses such as rent, he also kept his Pilots log, which shows the flights that he took during and after his training, signed also by Omlie ("Pilots Log"). Initially, the flights were short, taking not more than an hour and made locally, then they increased in duration as he went further to New York and Washington ("Pilots Log"). Some flights were marked as being "acrobatic" ("Pilots Log"), thus showing Faulkner's sustained interest in aerial performance. What likely also drew him to barnstorming was Omlie himself, who along with his wife Phoebe lived the sort of adventurous life of an aerial performer, which represented the unconventional kind of living "that fascinated Faulkner" (Blotner, *Faulkner* 317). To him, Omlie and Phoebe's liberated lifestyle, dedicated solely to their passion for flight, must have seemed appealing in comparison to his own, being responsible as he was for his family and having to make great efforts to make ends meet.

Due to the nature of their work, the barnstorming community frequently faced questions about their legitimacy or usefulness by those who were hoping to establish a safe image of flying in order to encourage the growth of commercial aviation (further highlighting the loss of appreciation for the creative and performance arts in a society where things lose their value if they cannot make a profit). As O'Neil states, "[t]hese freewheeling barnstormers and speed kings and the self-appointed aircraft designers of the 1920s and 1930s were deplored by editorial writers, by government agencies and by manufacturers grown big enough to hope for an orderly and profitable aviation establishment" (24). An article published in *Aviation*–which states that it is "The Oldest American Aeronautical Magazine" on its covers–in 1924 laments the "unsung" "deeds performed by gypsy fliers [who] are worthy of the pen of a Kipling" ("Barnstorming and Making Money"), and criticizes the unfavorable views towards barnstormers: "Others may preach commercial aviation, but they–the gypsy fliers–practice it, supplementing with their skill the doubtful merit of the plane they fly" ("Barnstorming and Making Money"). The writer continues to defend the significant roles that barnstormers play in the field of aviation by insisting that they "are thus laying the foundation of America's future greatness as a merchant air power–for they form, this very day, a reservoir of men probably unexcelled for flying skill and resourcefulness" ("Barnstorming and Making Money"). The article then goes on to give tips on how to

make a profit as a barnstormer. The fact that the article–titled "Barnstorming and Making Money"–needs to express the legitimacy of barnstorming in capitalist terms underscores the devaluation of pure entertainment. In *Pylon,* it is precisely this devaluation that Faulkner rejects by highlighting the thrill, sensation, and spectacle of flight.

The entertainment industry itself, particularly Hollywood, furthered the marginalization of aerial performers and stunt pilots. Jacob Smith refers to "the stuntman's paradox" (35), whereby stuntmen's identities are necessarily kept hidden in order to "[maintain] the unity of the star image" (38), and as a result, "the more successful they are, the less they are known" (35). To be sure, when the aeronautical stunt man was first employed by motion picture studios in the early 1920s, barnstormers could find lucrative work as stunt pilots, making more money than by "carrying passengers, in a decrepit war relic, at five dollars each" (Boylhart 19). A price list for a 1920s Los Angeles-based stunt-flying group called "Thirteen Black Cats", for instance, shows that to "Crash planes (fly into trees, houses, etc.) [costs] $1200", a "Loop with man on each wing, standing up [costs] $450", and to "Blow plane up in mid air, pilot chutes out [costs] $1500" (Hatfield n.p.). As Dwiggins explains, Hollywood was the "mecca of stunt pilots in the 1920's, boasted more airports than movie studios back in the days when Charles Lindbergh was just another airmail pilot" (*The Air Devils* 155). However, as the decade came to a close, "riotous dissension was brewing among the growing horde of tramp pilots trying to cash in on their talents by risking their lives for money in front of the cameras", and as there were no unions to protect their rights, "producers hired only the best of the stunt flyers and paid them off in peanuts" (Dwiggins, *The Air Devils* 157). The callousness with which these barnstormers were treated in Hollywood can be detected in an article in *Popular Mechanics* in 1928, notably titled "Crashes Made to Order". In Leland S. Jamieson's observations, the director instructed the pilot to "take it easy […] If you can't get free of the cockpit and down into the shell hole right after you crash, just take it easy and don't spoil the shot" (804). Clearly, getting the film made took priority over their stuntmen's safety, which reveals the extremity of the profit-oriented mindset prevalent in Hollywood. As one contemporary commentator astutely points out, "Hollywood's a swell but coldly exacting customer" (Boylhart 19).

However, despite the aviation and entertainment industries' poor treatment of barnstormers, they were nevertheless essential to their livelihoods, and it is this unbreakable relationship that Faulkner arguably bemoans in *Pylon.* While barnstormers may see themselves as aesthetic figures, they were also necessarily vehicles and instruments for the industry to employ. Similarly, this indissoluble connection is also reflected in the figure of the aeroplane that needed the military and commercial industry for its manufacture and development. This must have resonated with Faulkner the writer who eventually needed to write film scripts for money–whose livelihood depended on the same industry he criticized.

In a review of *Test Pilot* (1935) by Jimmy Collins that Faulkner wrote for *American Mercury*, he states his desire for

> a folklore not of the age of speed nor of the men who perform it, but of the speed itself, peopled not by anything human or even mortal but by the clever willful machines themselves carrying nothing that was born and will have to die or which can even suffer pain, moving without comprehensible purpose toward no discernible destination. (Meriwether 192)

It is worth quoting Faulkner's review at length due to the similarities that can be found in his vision of a folklore of speed and *Pylon*, suggesting the text's heavy emphasis on the physical experience of flight, particularly that of speed; for instance, Faulkner's emphasis is notably on the physical force of speed, and *Pylon*'s focus on barnstorming–an occupation solely dedicated to the experience of flight–satisfies this criteria. The climactic pylon race where the presumed leader of the barnstorming group, Roger Shumann, dies in a fatal aeroplane crash is particularly indicative of the speed around which the barnstormers' lives revolve and, considering the way in which Shumann dies, end. In addition to this, as I will show, the pace of the narrative is significantly quickened as if reflecting the speed of flight itself as well as the chaotic demeanor of the barnstormers' unconventional lifestyles. In watching Shumann fly, the reporter states: "Watch him! Oh, can he fly! Can he fly! And Ord aint going to beat the Ninety-Two to——Second money Thursday, and if Ord aint going to——Oh, watch him! Watch him!" (*Pylon* 207). His brief and unfinished sentences and the elongated dashes indicate that even his verbal commentary cannot keep up with Shumann's aircraft's extreme speed. If Faulkner wanted his folklore of speed to be "peopled not by anything human", then he certainly almost meets his requirement in Jack, the child in the barnstorming group and Laverne's son. Although human, Jack seems to have unhuman-like beginnings as the reporter surmises that he "was born on an unrolled parachute in a hangar in California; he got dropped already running like a colt or a calf from the fuselage of an aeroplane" (*Pylon* 39). The barnstorming group can also be seen as "moving without comprehensible purpose toward no discernible destination," as their goals and motivations become a source of debate among the locals in New Valois, who ask "Where do people like that go?" (*Pylon* 258). They liken the group to "a wagon broken down in the ditch" and question amongst themselves, "do you wonder whatever became of whatever it was that used to make them move?" (*Pylon* 258), indicating the lack of comprehensible reason behind their seemingly absurd actions.

*Pylon* portrays the kind of life that Faulkner perhaps wished could be possible–a life free from the burdens and responsibilities that he had. A letter to his agent, Morton Goldman in 1935, reveals his desire for freedom from responsibilities when he states his wish for his debt to be cleared so that he could "really write," commenting, "[t]he man who said that the pinch of necessity, butchers and grocers bills and insurance hanging over his head, is good for an artist is a damned fool" (Blotner, *Selected Letters* 91). This is perhaps why he gives the barnstormers in *Pylon* freedom from financial and familial ties (at first), allowing them to put their passion for flying at the center of their existence. Flying can thus also be understood metaphorically as liberation from such obligations. This absence of a stable force consequently produces an unconventional group that cannot be strictly categorized as family nor colleagues, but whose bond is only explainable by their shared passion for flight. When the Reporter meets them for the first time, he describes them as being "four shades this moment out of the living world", like "a citizen of the shadows" (*Pylon* 69). The simile that he uses highlights a sense of impermanence about their existence that revolves around mobility–so fast do they move that they seem to become visually unclear, leaving behind mere shadows.

The group consists of the pilot and assumed leader, Shumann, his wife Laverne who used to jump off the aeroplanes in their performances and is now the group's mechanic, her child Jack, the current jumper also called Jack, and Jiggs, an alcoholic mechanic who opens the story by reserving a pair of boots he sees in a store. His obsession with the boots is the first signal of the group's obsession with mobility, which is further underlined when Jiggs says that he is from "Anywhere" and that "The place

I'm staying away from right now is Kansas," as he still has "two kids there. I guess I still got the wife too" (*Pylon* 11). Anything and anyone that can cause immobility is avoided, as the peculiar dynamics of the group also demonstrates: Laverne maintains a polygamous relationship with both Roger and the jumper Jack, who both seem to accept having to share a lover, which results in the ambivalence regarding the question of who the father of Laverne's child is. This becomes a recurring joke with Jiggs, who provokes the child into hitting him whenever he asks, "Who's your old man today, kid?" (*Pylon* 14), highlighting his lack of a certain background or origin that keeps his identity fluid, ever-changing. Notably, at the end of the novel, the barnstorming unit disintegrates as each member moves away to a different place, yet again proving their inherent aversion to stability and to being tied down.

The barnstormers form deep connections to the aeroplane and to flight, rather than to each other, thus furthering their freedom from traditional obligations towards one another. Their close relationships to flight is underscored in the beginning of the novel when Jiggs observes that the aeroplanes prepared for the race "seemed to poise without weight, as though made of paper for the sole purpose of resting upon the shoulders of the dungareeclad men about them" (*Pylon* 13). The simile that he uses, which notably likens what should be a heavy machine to something as light as paper, highlights his own unique perception of the aeroplane. Their seeming weightlessness reflects the rootlessness of the barnstorming group, which the Reporter notes when he remarks, "No ties, no place where [they] were born" (*Pylon* 39). As if to highlight the close relationship between the barnstormers and the aeroplanes, they seem to mimick one another. Like the aeroplanes' reliance on the mechanics, the barnstormers too occasionally need to "come in contact with the human race like in a hotel to sleep or eat now and then" (39). Further underlining the connection that the barnstormers have with their aeroplanes is the way in which the latter "appeared more profoundly derelict than the halfeaten carcass of a deer come suddenly upon in a forest" (*Pylon* 14), which brings to mind the shadow simile the Reporter uses earlier to describe the barnstormers, as both seem to barely exist in the physical world and both make deep impressions on those who come across them for the first time, like the carcass of the deer "come suddenly upon" in the description. Their dilapidated state reflects the barnstormers' dishevelled and grimy appearance, which is highlighted when Laverne "drew the back of her hand across her forehead, leaving a smudge of grease up and into the mealcolored, the strong pallid Iowacorncolored, hair" (16). The parallels in the appearances of the barnstormers and their aeroplanes hint at the near-hybridity of their beings, underscoring the deep connection between man and machine.

While their appearances are unappealing–particularly the likening of the aeroplane to decaying flesh–the language used to describe them is markedly vivid and detailed as it tries especially hard, for example, to capture the colour of Laverne's hair, even creating intricate portmanteaux, "Iowacorncolored", after having mentioned "mealcolored", as if the latter is not enough to depict the colour. The same attention to detail can be read in the portrayal of Jiggs's face, which has a "hard tough shortchinned face, blushaven, with a long threadlike and recently-stanched razorcut on it" (*Pylon* 4). Additionally, the diction is almost poetic as the aeroplanes are described as appearing to be "profoundly derelict", and the mark on Laverne is portrayed using the sibilant and onomatopoeic phrase "smudge of grease" (16). The detailed language and attentive narration hint at an undertone of admiration for these characters despite their unappealing appearances. The narration's close-up of Laverne's hand as it moves is also

similar to the cinematic technique of zooming-in on a subject and is almost reverent as it follows the slow motion from her forehead to her hair.

Note that Faulkner foregrounds the details of their appearance rather than their thoughts, which suggests that visual imagery in the novel is important. The novel significantly opens with Jiggs's observation of aeroplanes in a photograph: "the trim vicious fragile aeroplanes and the pilots leaning upon them in gargantuan irrelation as if the aeroplanes were a species of esoteric and fatal animals not trained or tamed but just for the instant inert" (1). The likening of the aeroplanes to live, ferocious animals not only underscores the novel's unique perception of them, but also highlights the idea of flight as spectacle as the mention of the words "trained" and "tamed" brings to mind the notion of circus animals. Additionally, the work of barnstormers or aerial performers are not unlike that of circus performers, which the pose of the pilots in the photograph appears to evoke. The figure of the aeroplane in this novel, then, is not the aeroplane in military aviation nor that in commercial transportation, but is the aeroplane in performance. Also notable is the fact that Jiggs sees this image in a photograph, which again suggests the importance of surface appearances, the spectacle and the performance.

Nowhere is this idea more prominent than in the passage that recounts Laverne's first time in an aerial act as a parachute jumper, where during the performance she coerces Shumann, who was flying the plane at the time, into having "wild and frenzied" sex with her mid-air (*Pylon* 172). The act is ostensibly not out of love for one another and not emotionally-based, but is a "blind and completely irrational expression" of their physical desire (171). What is highlighted in this passage is not love or some deeper emotion but pure, physical sensation as it highlights Laverne's "perennially undefeated" and "victorious" body and Shumann's own physical reaction as he waited "for his backbone's fluid marrow to congeal again" (172). The anatomically detailed passage points to the pure, raw, exciting physical sensation that flight imparts, which adds to the spectacle of flight. Highlighting the importance of the spectacle is Laverne and Shumann's decision that Laverne should wear a skirt for the performance: "they had decided that her exposed legs would not only be a drawing card but that in the skirt no one would doubt that she was a woman" (171). Laverne's bold and daring attitude is perhaps also an allusion to the appeal of barnstormer Matilde Moisant, sister to famed barnstormer John Moisant, who, after receiving her flying license in 1911, began her barnstorming career. She is described as a "laughing, dark-haired beauty [who] caused gossips' tongues to wag" (Dwiggins, *The Barnstormers* 6), and once broke a blue law for exhibition flying on a Sunday: "When the sheriff sent men to arrest her, she spun her ship around, dusted them good and proper, and took off again, to land at nearby Moisant Field" (Dwiggins, *The Barnstormers* 6). After Laverne's own daring performance, she too was "arrested by three village officers" (*Pylon* 172). Both women's bold attitudes signify their passion for flight, which Faulkner would have likely admired.

The foregrounding of spectacle and sensation in *Pylon* is also noted in a 1935 *New York Times* review, which states that it "is a book that pounds on and batters the senses, that imparts the physical sensations of flying at 300 miles an hour" (Strauss). Coming back to the photograph of the aeroplanes at the opening of the novel, the image appears to foreshadow Shumann's death in the air as the machines are likened to untamed animals, warning of their volatile nature. While they seem "just for the instant inert" (*Pylon* 3), there is already a sense in the beginning that somewhere along the course of the novel, they will become uncontrollable. The plane that Shumann finally uses seems itself to be unpredictable, as its "blunt, a little thickbodied, almost sluggish"

looks hide "its [paradoxical] lightness when moved by hand" (190). The subtle fast-forwarding of time in this opening scene points to the force of speed that permeates the structure of the novel as well as the barnstormers' lifestyle, which is so fast-paced that they seem to come from the future rather than the present. The placement of the story in the future is therefore especially appropriate, even if Faulkner had done this ostensibly to lessen similarities of the story to real-life events and characters. The Reporter observes that while he was talking to the barnstormers, "they did not appear to hear him, as though they had arrived too recently to have yet unclogged their ears of human speech in order to even hear the tongue in which the guide spoke" (69). The passage highlights a sense of alienness about the characters, emphasizing the idea that they are not of this time. To have placed them only a year ahead suggests that Faulkner had sensed the fast pace of the development of technology (along with societal changes and the impact of historical events such as the end of the World War) that would manage to infiltrate the way people lived in only a short amount of time. As illustrated in the novel, these changes were rapidly producing vast differences in lifestyles– the most apparent being the barnstormers' nomadic existence and unconventional family structure with which the Reporter is at first uncomfortable.

Accelerating the fast pace of the novel is the turning of the news cycle. Newspaper headlines are mentioned throughout the novel, which raises the awareness of time passing. One of the earlier headlines reads:

**FIRST FATALITY OF AIR**
**MEET: PILOT BURNED ALIVE**
**Lieut. Frank Burnham in**
**Crash of Rocket Plane** (*Pylon* 43)

Burnham's fatal crash markedly foreshadows Shumann's death and is an example of the brief fast-forwarding of time in the novel. This is one of the instances in which perhaps Faulkner borrows from cinematic techniques to illustrate a different experience of time, influenced by the increasing prevalence of technologies–particularly the aeroplane–that speed up the pace of life. It is worth noting here that the "black harsh and restrained" letters of the headline appear insensitive to the tragedy of Burnham's violent crash (*Pylon* 43). As Hugh M. Ruppersburg argues, the newspaper signifies the "[insufficient] capacity of language to express" (66), and the fact that the newspaper headline reduces the tragedy into eight words further underscores the insensitivity of commercial journalism. The newspaper's ruthless condensing of the tragic event into a few words is also significantly reminiscent of Hollywood's harsh treatment of stunt flyers. Time is also fast-forwarded and condensed in the schedules of the Mardi Gras event provided twice in the novel. The timetable for the event on Friday reads:

Friday
2:30 P.M. Spot Parachute Jump. Purse $25.00
3:00 P.M. Scull Speed Dash. 375 cu. in.
Qualifying speed 180 m.p.h. Purse $325 (1,2,3,4)
3:30 P.M. Aerial Acrobatics. Jules Despleins, France. Lieut. Frank Burnham, United States. (*Pylon* 124)

That these timetables and newspaper headlines are clearly separated from the main text is important to note as these abbreviated accounts of the characters' experiences contrast sharply with the literary portrayal of the barnstormers in the main

text. In contrast to the way in which the newspapers see the barnstormers in terms of news stories to be sold, the main narrative that revolves around their lives is richly and vividly detailed, which signals Faulkner's respect and admiration for the way they live their lives.

The portrayal of the barnstormers in the main narrative is also juxtaposed with the garish advertising for the newly-opened Feinman airport. The bills advertising its opening, for instance, state that the airport is dedicated to Colonel H. I. Feinman, "THROUGH WHOSE UNDEVIATING VISION AND UNFLAGGING EFFORT THIS AIRPORT WAS RAISED UP AND CREATED OUT OF THE WASTE LAND AT THE BOTTOM OF LAKE RAMBAUD AT A COST OF ONE MILLION DOLLARS" (*Pylon* 10). The capitalization of the letters appears gaudy, and to include the amount that the Colonel spent on the airport in the advertisement seems tasteless. In contrast to the barnstormers who do what they do for almost nothing, the advertisement of the Colonel's "effort" represents the tainting of passion by money or profit. The barnstorming characters, who "dont need money; it aint money they are after anymore than its glory" (*Pylon* 38), are therefore the antitheses of Colonel Feinman and the capitalist institutions that he stands for, whose greed for profit and status are hidden beneath a veneer of magnanimity.

The narrative moves relentlessly forward as if flying the reader towards the end and as if trying to impart the physical sensation of speed to the reader. Again, Faulkner appears to foreground or prioritize the sensation and experience of speed, rather than deliberate over its significance or question why the experience matters. Just as the barnstormers keep moving from place to place in search of opportunities to fly, there seems to be a sense of refusal within the narrative to pause or linger at certain moments, phrases, or words, which implies a more carefree or nonchalant attitude towards the notion of value or meaning. Faulkner fashions, for instance, portmanteau words such as "painwebbed" (*Pylon* 22) and "scarcetasted" (23), almost without any lengthy consideration as to whether the meanings of the words "pain", "web", "scarce" and "taste" are compatible enough to be fused together. Additionally, these portmanteaux reinforce the sensation of speed when reading as the reader does not have to pause between two single words. The elimination of the space between the two words to form one also reflects the seeming obliteration of space or large distances when one is able to travel quickly and easily across them. Despite a few moments where the narrator lingers on a description of a certain moment, object, or character, the narrative always seems to move quickly from one thing to the next. When the Reporter drinks, for example, "he raised the cup as he had the final glass before he left home; he felt the hot liquid channeling down his chin too and striking through his shirt against his flesh, with his throat surging and trying to gag and his gaze holding desperately to the low cornice above the coffeeurn he thought of the cup exploding from his mouth" (94). The narrative moves quickly from the cup, flashes back to the Reporter's previous drink, then to the physical sensation of the liquid down his chin to his shirt, and then multiple perspectives are given simultaneously—signified by the use of the conjunction "and"—of his throat surging and gagging, of his gaze trying to look above the coffeeurn, and also of his thought of the cup exploding.

Not only does the narrative move quickly, then, but it also emulates the aeroplane's mobile aerial view as it gives a multi-angle perspective of what happens. Significantly, when we reach the end of the novel, there is no concluding full-stop. We are left with the note that the Reporter leaves his boss, Hagood, telling him to "come down [to Amboise st.] and look at me and when you come bring some jack because I

am on a credit" (*Pylon* 280). The absence of the full-stop suggests a rejection of an ending that effectively closes the story. Without the full-stop, the characters presumably keep moving forward into the future, which is less a remark on progress than it is on the barnstormers'—and now the Reporter's–rootlessness that keeps them liberated from the restrictions of social conventions and financial and familial obligations.

Despite the modernist and cinematic techniques that he employs, *Pylon* still remains one of Faulkner's least experimental novels in comparison to his more prominent works such as *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). The novel has a continuous, chronological structure, only once pointedly going back in time to refer to Laverne's first jump. The seven chapters are of similar length, and with the exception of the final two chapters, "Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "The Scavengers", the other chapters' titles refer to the respective events or period of time that each chapter details, such as "Dedication of an Airport", which chronicles the events surrounding the opening of the Feinman Airport. As Peter Lurie argues, "*Pylon* is not as recognizably modernist" as his other novels, considering that it is set "almost completely in unified space", and, "following a series of events that take place over a circumscribed period of time, *Pylon* makes use of few of the narrative and temporal ruptures that characterize high-modernist experimentation" (16). In addition to this, Lurie explains, Faulkner uses a single narrative voice and perspective that make the novel "relatively straightforward" (17), which is why he excludes the work from his study of Faulkner's texts. I would argue that the relatively traditional, straightforward structure of the novel, for one thing, lets the unconventionality of the barnstorming characters take center stage. Furthermore, the unified structure reflects the barnstormers' single-minded commitment to the pursuit of flight–a pursuit that they unquestioningly believe in, illustrated by the fact that they do not once question their motives, even if the people outside of their group do. The barnstorming group's unity is demonstrated when they silently work together to fix the aircraft: "They worked quiet and fast, like a circus team, with the trained team's economy of motion, while the woman passed them the tools as needed; they did not even have to speak to her, to name the tool" (*Pylon* 114). The team's unity, as they work swiftly and smoothly together, is reflected in the continuous structure of the sentence itself that, rather than breaking the sequence into different sentences, packs the description into one with the commas enhancing the sense of swiftness in the characters' actions. While their steady and seamless actions may be construed as being hostile and machine-like, the simile of being "like a circus team" counters this reading as a circus is made up of humans and live animals rather than non-living objects and machines. That they do not need to communicate verbally also points to their deep connection to each other, rather than a lack thereof, much like animals that communicate in a way that humans cannot comprehend. So, despite the less experimental (and therefore less modernist) structure of *Pylon*, once we consider Faulkner's fascination with barnstorming and admiration for barnstormers, we can see that the structure of the novel serves a rather unconventional subject, i.e. the seemingly meaningless act of flight and performance, which in this novel is viewed appreciatively and admiringly. The modernist element in *Pylon*, it seems, is in the unconventional subject matter, which can only be detected once we critically consider barnstorming and place the novel within its historical context.

As the spectacle and sensation of flight takes precedence over traditional obligations in *Pylon*, Faulkner highlights modern society's inability to appreciate the former because of the latter. In an interview conducted after the novel was written, Faulkner acknowledges that there was something "immoral" about the way in which

"those frantic little aeroplanes [dashed] around the country," and how "[the barnstormers] just wanted enough money to live, to get to the next place to race again" (Gwynn and Blotner 36). He states, "They were outside the range of God, not only of respectability, of love, but of God too" (Gwynn and Blotner 36). However, this is not to say that *Pylon* was written as an indictment of their unorthodox lifestyle choices. Rather, "[w]hat the writer's asking is compassion, understanding, that change must alter, must happen, and change is going to alter what was" (*Pylon* 277). It is the Reporter who undergoes this process of understanding the barnstormers as he gets more involved in their affairs. After having rushed through forty miles in a plane, "his skull [was] still cloudy with the light tagends of velocity and speed […] he had never become conscious of the sheer inertia of dimension, space, distance through which he had had to travel" (191). Notably, after his experience, his mind becomes empty of thought and is instead filled with the remains of the physical experience of speed –he has now become aware of the immensity of the physical sensation of flight and is no longer preoccupied with the barnstormers' lack of traditional values. After Shumann's death, the Reporter seems to reach a deeper level of understanding, marked by his vomiting: "as though his throat and the organs of swallowing had experienced some irrevocable alteration of purpose […] which would forever more mark the exchange of an old psychic as well as physical state for a new one" (*Pylon* 212). The purging of his insides leaves him feeling "profoundly and peacefully empty", with a taste in his mouth "not of despair but of Nothing" (212). The emptying of his insides, further underscored by the word "Nothing," signals the relinquishment of his past judgments and concerns of what is right and what is wrong. When he first meets the barnstormers, he is enraged at their unconventionality and seeming irresponsibility: "The reporter glared at them all now with his dazed, strained and urgent face. 'The bastards!' he cried. 'The son of a bitches!'" (*Pylon* 68). His first impression markedly contrasts with the "profoundly and peacefully empty" feeling he experiences near the end of the novel.

As if to further prove his transition to a "new state," the Reporter transforms into a writer of fiction from being a reporter of "information" (*Pylon* 34). In the closing passage, the copyboy peruses his discarded papers and finds that he wrote about Shumann's crash in a style that was "not only news but the beginning of literature" which states that Shumann's competitor on his last flight was "Death, and Roger Shumann lost" (279). In contrast to news reports, his writing is more creative as he personifies death as the competitor, signalled by the capitalized first letter. It reveals his newfound appreciation for creativity and style, perhaps taken from the barnstormers' own respect for performance and spectacle. It is also worth noting that the copyboy finds these papers in the trash, which signifies the Reporter's refusal to participate in the commercialization of news stories, thereby rejecting capitalist endeavours. The placing of the papers in the trash draws a parallel to the likening of the aeroplanes to decaying flesh, and also points to the barnstormers' existential crisis as they question their place or value within society. While the novel ends on a tragic note, the Reporter's transformation relays Faulkner's hopes that the novel itself can make readers aware of the value of pure passion, performance, sensation, spectacle, and artistry. In his letter responding to Marjorie Lyons in 1950, he reveals that the Reporter in *Pylon* "had no name. He was not anonymous: he was every man" (Blotner, *Selected Letters* 301), which hints at his hopes that *Pylon* will resonate with all who read it, just as the barnstormers affect the Reporter.

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# Stronger Alone?: Bridging Gaps and Reaffirming Sisterhood in *Sense and Sensibility*

**Libby Bagno-Simon**

**Abstract:** *Sense and Sensibility* examines the female dynamics within the family structure and society at large. The Dashwood sisters, unlike other heroines written by Jane Austen, experience a life with a mother whose presence is unmistakably felt and is often problematic. In addition to the challenge of dealing with blurred parent-child boundaries in their household, the sisters also struggle to find common ground amongst themselves. While the novel follows the traditional marriage plot, leading both heroines into happy unions, I maintain that *Sense and Sensibility* is, first and foremost, a novel about reaffirming sisterly bonds and their strength above all others.

**Keywords:** Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, motherhood, sisterhood, generations, female dynamics

Depicting the lives of two sisters living with their mothers, *Sense and Sensibility* takes a closer look at tight-knit female familial dynamics. Unlike other Austen heroines, the Dashwoods have an all too present mother in their lives. Still, while Mrs. Dashwood is a warm and gentle woman, she is not without her faults. She is over-involved in her daughters' affairs, and fails to establish a healthy boundary between parent and child. With juvenile or overly emotional mothers, daughters cannot help but be impacted on, and the sisters at the center of this novel develop bonds of trust and friendship that become just as important as their ensuing happy marriages, if not more so. The sisters have not only their mother's inadequacy to overcome, but also the differences between themselves. Their journey is not only one of self-knowledge and eventual romantic bliss, it is also one through which they rediscover each other, and learn to bridge the gaps that might have kept them from fully knowing each other's heart. The novel affirms a belief in the truest form of sisterhood, and ends with sorority prevailing over all other familial ties.

Austen's first published novel focuses on two equally engaging heroines who also happen to be sisters. The plot follows their growth and maturation not only as individuals but also as sisters.Through a series of romantic and social trials, the two learn new things about themselves, a process which, in turn, enables them to strengthen their always loving but often conflicted relationship.

Out of all the heroines that Austen has given us, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood undoubtedly have the most caring and nurturing mother. Still, Mrs. Dashwood's genuine concern and affection are not enough to transform her into an adequate moral guide. In fact, in the very first pages we are told that Elinor is the one who often takes on a mothering role in the family's purely feminine dynamics:

> Elinor, this eldest daughter, whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and a coolness of judgment, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counselor of her mother. [...] Her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them; it was a knowledge her mother had yet to learn. (*Sense and Sensibility* 3)

Though Mrs. Dashwood appears to be endowed with all one could ask from a good mother, we learn rather quickly that traditional roles within the family are not necessarily filled by the person one would expect. Mary Margaret Benson claims, and I am inclined to agree, that Mrs. Dashwood "acts more like a sister, especially to Marianne" (120). Indeed, like her middle daughter, Mrs. Dashwood is a hopeless romantic and is unfortunately lacking where discrimination and judgment are concerned. With regard to her daughters we are told that she "entered into all their feelings with a warmth which left her no inclination for checking excessive display in them" (45). The blurriness of the parent-child interaction in the Dashwood household is of pivotal importance to the novel's heroines and to their chosen paths.

Elinor and Marianne's relationship, though loving, is not without its obstacles. Austen explores their values and ethics with regard to their own identities, to their function as social players and, of course, to their sisterly bond. According to Glenda A. Hudson, a fundamental part of their maturation and growth involves not only the way they respond to their suitors but "how they understand, react and become involved with each other's needs and problems, in spite of their own miserable predicaments" (78). James Thompson also highlights the significance of sorority in the novel: "What is truly innovative about *Sense and Sensibility* is its founding assertion that affiliation does not necessarily need to be found or forged–it needs to be understood, valued, and maintained" (par. 5).

Indeed, while other Austen heroines expand their familial web of relations and others replace it altogether, Elinor and Marianne find their way back to each other. As Thompson notes, "instead of a romance in which the heroine journeys out in search of adventures that will yield marriage and a husband, Austen's first published novel is in fact a romance about maintaining and repairing the family into which her protagonists are born" (par. 5). I would also argue that Austen's choice of romantic partners for the Dashwood sisters is not inadvertent. While Willoughby excites our imagination, the sisters end up with Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon, two worthy but wholly unexciting characters. It is almost as if Austen cast them in these roles in order to let the progression of the sisterly bond outshine all other relationships in the novel. I do, however, disagree with the way in which Thompson lumps all of Austen's heroines together where family obligations are concerned: "From heroines such as Elinor, Fanny, and Anne, who understand these duties from the start, to those such as Elizabeth and Emma, who must learn them in the end, they all without exception affirm familial ties" (par. 5). Thompson's generalization is not only incorrect in my eyes, it also belittles Austen's achievement as an author who grew to realize –along with her heroines–that "home" is a developing and varying concept. While his assertions regarding Elinor are quite accurate, Fanny and Anne–both of whom find eventual happiness in families that are not the ones they were born into–cannot be said to have had a similar journey to that of Elinor. Nor can this comparison be drawn between Elinor and the static Emma or the eventual mega-matriarch Elizabeth Darcy. In fact, the Dashwood sisters are unique among Austen heroines who–as her novels progressed–found it increasingly harder to affirm biological familial ties.

**Mrs. Dashwood**

As much as we may wish to root for Mrs. Dashwood, her unwavering approval of Marianne's antics as well as her romantic silliness as opposed to Elinor's mature groundedness, prove just as destructive as will the behavior of some of Austen's more

overtly monstrous mothers. To start with, Mrs. Dashwood has no sense of frugality. Her lack of economic understanding, along with her romantic tendencies, lead her to believe that nothing material could keep two lovers apart. While there is no doubt as to her devotion to her daughters, Mrs. Dashwood's naïve outlook detracts from her mothering abilities. We commend her for telling Sir John that "catching" men is not an employment which her daughters were brought up to pursue (*SS* 37) but at the same time we question her perception of social reality. For someone in her financial predicament, Mrs. Dashwood devotes no time to any practical thinking regarding her daughters' future security and prefers the romanticized imaginings she shares with Marianne. Her carefree attitude takes a dangerous turn when the affection between Willoughby and Marianne becomes more pronounced; Mrs. Dashwood never supervises the young lovers' behavior nor does she attempt to act as a buffer between her daughter and what could turn out to be a disastrous situation. This is when readers begin to understand the ways in which Mrs. Dashwood falls short of her eldest daughter. The former has no actual knowledge of an assured engagement between Marianne and Willoughby, but unlike Elinor, she does not need one; knowledge only gets in the way of fantasy. Tension rises between Elinor and Mrs. Dashwood with Willoughby's abrupt departure, since Elinor, who thinks empirically and reasonably, needs more proof of his seriousness towards Marianne. Mrs. Dashwood does not need anything but what she already knows, which is–as we all know–nothing at all.

Mrs. Dashwood makes the fatal mistake of not asking Marianne to relay the true account of her presumed engagement to Willoughby. Elinor's insistence on the matter is pointless since "common sense, common care, common prudence, were all sunk in Mrs. Dashwood's romantic delicacy" (*SS* 73). Allowing Marianne to wallow in her own misery instead of setting the record straight while in Barton Cottage, Mrs. Dashwood exacerbates Marianne's mental and emotional volatility, a state that becomes catastrophic in the London chapters with the discovery of Willoughby's engagement to Sophia Grey. While Marianne eventually rids herself of perpetual melancholy and of over-sentimentalism, these positive transitions in her character are in no way due to her mother's guidance. In fact, as I will argue, I see very little change in Mrs. Dashwood's character in the final chapters of the novel. Mrs. Dashwood understands the error of her ways but is in no hurry to correct her thinking. She transfers her romantic aspirations from Willoughby to Colonel Brandon, who suddenly seems like the only man meant for Marianne. Mrs. Dashwood is yet again fantasizing and weaving romantic scenarios before she has any solid ground to build on. Furthermore, in promoting Brandon as the perfect match for Marianne, Mrs. Dashwood suddenly "remembers" made-up things that she did not like about Willoughby and convinces herself that Marianne could never have been happy with someone like him. Since we know how thoroughly she adored Willoughby and how trusting she was in his character and intentions towards Marianne, the self-delusion and denial she is in when it comes to him now makes it difficult for us to trust that she has changed.

Bill Hughes locates the tension between Elinor and Mrs. Dashwood in the latter's reluctance to "move the speech onto the level of discourse, where . . . questions can be examined critically" (42). *Sense and Sensibility* is a novel filled with female speech but most of it is just the words of too many female characters who only speak for the sake of speaking. Though Mrs. Dashwood is not a gossipy chatterbox like Mrs. Jennings or Mrs. Palmer, she shares with them the absence of any desire for critical doubts or substantial facts. Elinor is the only woman in the novel who operates on the level of discourse; she asks questions, demands evidence and relies on facts rather than

imagination. The friction between her and her mother reaches a boiling point when Willoughby unexpectedly quits Barton, leaving their entire family in limbo. Naturally, Elinor's suspicion is raised, and most unnaturally, her mother's is not. This is where the breakdown in communication between them is most evident. When one party refuses to move from speech to discourse, no beneficial results can be attained. As Hughes notes, Mrs. Dashwood is "persuaded by her own, completely unsupported, narrative" and refuses to enter into a meaningful dialogue "unless Elinor can provide an equally unfounded, but persuasive, counter-narrative" (42). Mrs. Dashwood, like Catherine Morland, exemplifies the dangers involved in believing a narrative of one's own making rather than simply asking the correct questions in search of the truth. Unlike Catherine, Mrs. Dashwood is not a doe-eyed teenager, but she certainly acts like one. Moreover, while *Northanger Abbey*'s heroine learns to see the beauty in truth, Mrs. Dashwood– even in the final stages of the novel– continues to embellish the narrative she lives by.

Conversely, Kathryn Davis attempts to portray the character in a more positive light, and while I do agree with her fundamental assertions that Mrs. Dashwood's intimate involvement and wholehearted concern with her children's happiness "makes her remarkable among Austen parents" (61), I am not as quick to vindicate this very problematic mother figure. Davis acknowledges that "Mrs. Dashwood's relationship with her middle daughter is described linearly rather than hierarchically: she and Marianne are more like friends and confidantes than mother and daughter" (62). This, she states, is Austen's invitation for readers to attend not just to Marianne's decline and eventual distress, but to Mrs. Dashwood's as well (62). By establishing an alliance between Marianne and Mrs. Dashwood, Davis argues, readers are urged to see how Marianne's deficiencies in moderation and prudence extend to her mother, and how this alignment dangerously throws off the "balance within the community of the family" (64). However, while I see a divergence in Marianne's and Mrs. Dashwood's paths as the novel comes to a close, Davis continues to believe the latter is an extension of the former. She argues that just as Marianne grows and develops, so does her mother: "Austen presents us with a woman who, despite her age, could still become receptive to an education . . . [T]hrough her, Austen suggests that change and growth are not the exclusive prerogative of the young" (65). While Mrs. Dashwood understands that she has made mistakes, she does not really comprehend the nature or the extent of these mistakes. Her embellished imaginings regarding Marianne's and Brandon's match, along with her almost bizarre renunciation of the once adored Willoughby, prove that she is very far from being what Davis calls "transformed" (74). A transformed Mrs. Dashwood would have admitted to being deceived by Willoughby and she would not revise history to suit her newly written narrative or imagine faults that she had supposedly seen in Willoughby in the past–since there were none. Davis claims that the greatest indication that Mrs. Dashwood has acquired knowledge and prudence is her decision to remain at Barton Cottage after Marianne marries Brandon: "She is able to relinquish an immoderate level of intimacy with her daughter, an intimacy that would undoubtedly have been a detriment to Marianne's happiness in marriage" (74).

I struggle to see Davis' point, since choosing to stay at Barton may just mean that Mrs. Dashwood has accepted Marianne's progress and does not necessarily indicate that she has been "educated" and will not repeat similar mistakes with Margaret, her youngest daughter. By the time Marianne marries Brandon she has not only reached the awareness that her prior behavior had been selfish and damaging, but she has also matured in age. Marianne is nineteen when she marries, which means that she has had

sufficient time to prove to her mother that she has gained a similar level of prudence and moderation to that of Elinor. Is it not likely that Mrs. Dashwood chooses to stay at Barton because she now trusts Marianne to make the right decisions? Even if this is not the case, Marianne marries a man of great maturity and sense, and due to Edward's receiving a living from Brandon, Elinor is also nearby. Since Marianne is surrounded by people who not only love her but are able to give her valuable guidance, it is also possible that Mrs. Dashwood feels that her constant presence in Marianne's life is no longer crucial. Indeed, there could be several explanations for her decision to keep her residence at Barton, and so I cannot share Davis' conviction that this is a sign of true transformation. In a survey of Austen parents there is no doubt Mrs. Dashwood scores high; her affectionate heart and genuine concern for her daughters are without parallel. However, Austen always shows us the damages of excess, so while with Mrs. Bennet it is vulgar stupidity and with Sir Walter Elliot it is unwavering vanity, with Mrs. Dashwood the excess of feeling–as refreshing as it may be–eventually proves just as hazardous.

**Marianne and Elinor**

The Dashwood sisters and their evolving relationship are at the center of the novel, and a wonderfully complex relationship it is. Both sisters go through an intense inner journey, though it is mostly Marianne who is transformed. Elinor, whose morals, manners and judgment are admirable from the start, does, however, learn to balance these with more expressive emotions.

Marianne says she can only love a man who "will enter into all [her] feelings" and acknowledges that she "require[s] so much" (*SS* 13). What Marianne fails to realize is that letting someone into all your feelings means you are left with nothing that is just your own; nothing is truly protected. As we learn later, this is the source of Marianne's devastation. Marianne's overall approach towards love and human emotions is similar to her mother's: overly-romantic, hopelessly sentimental and often immature. One example of this frustratingly emotional point of view is Marianne's perception regarding love at an older age:

> A woman of seven and twenty . . . can never hope to feel or inspire affection again, and if her home be uncomfortable, or her fortune small, I can suppose that she might bring herself to submit to the offices of a nurse, for the sake of the provision and security of a wife. (*SS* 31-2)

Though it is clear that Marianne is not mature or evolved enough to see beyond her romanticized notions, her words in this section are nonetheless thought-provoking and not entirely without reason. One cannot help but think about two twenty-seven-year-old characters that Austen readers are very familiar with, and the difference in their situations. While both *Persuasion*'s Anne Elliot and *Pride and Prejudice*'s Charlotte Lucas are at this age when we meet them, only Anne, who is somewhat financially secure, has the privilege of hope (which eventually pays off); Charlotte, on the other hand, is forced to marry the ridiculous Mr. Collins due to grim social circumstance. So, it seems that in spite of its childish cruelty, Marianne's comment is at the very least realistic.

Marianne's naiveté is quite different from Catherine Morland's in the sense that Marianne is utterly convinced in her "knowledge" of things and by the accuracy of her convictions. It is not the endearing ignorance we saw in Catherine but an almost tragic

assurance that is bound to collapse eventually. Marianne rejects the language of female conquest, which to her seems "gross and illiberal" (*SS* 38) and one cannot overlook the sad irony of her declarations considering how imprisoned she already is in the rigidity of her own romantic notions. Similarly, Marianne's certainty that "we always know when we are acting wrong" (*SS* 60) is almost heartbreaking; her conviction is so strong, and her belief in her views so unrelenting that when these crash and burn there is no wonder she crashes and burns along with them.

As I have argued earlier, *Sense and Sensibility* is very much a novel about the bonds of sisterhood, more than it is about finding the perfect husband. Indeed, Marianne's first step towards the maturity and prudence she so desperately lacks is made on her sister's account, not for the sake of a suitor. She keeps her promise to Elinor and does not overreact to the news of Edward's and Lucy's engagement. Her behavior is described as "advances towards heroism" (*SS* 228), informing us that Marianne is not a heroine quite yet. This also points to the fact that containment and discretion–at least to a certain degree–are what constitutes a true heroine. These first advances, followed by a life-threatening (but also life-altering) illness, eventually place Marianne where we have wanted her to be–in a state of mind that involves rational thinking and balanced emotions.

Marianne's actions in the novel are a part of the female dynamics of the Dashwood household and have a significant impact on the relationships within these dynamics. The motives and reasons behind Marianne's behavior are never fully explored in the novel and we are left to believe that she is just a silly, child-like fantasist. However, Marianne's psychology is far more complex and her path towards true happiness far more difficult than is usually perceived.

Marianne is addicted to melancholy; she wills it and embraces it to a worrisome degree. As Márta Pellérdi notes, Marianne is not only "excessive in her emotions and imprudent in her behavior toward Willoughby, she is also inconsiderate towards others" (par.11). Marianne's behavior, then, has an impact not only on her family, but on her ability to function properly in society. This is an issue that is cardinal to the novel, especially when one considers Elinor, who, in spite of her own suffering, never lets melancholy cloud her judgment or influence her ability to truly engage with others. Elinor is proof that self-control influences not only the individual who exercises it, but also his or her social world, something that Marianne fails to understand. Elinor attempts to remind Marianne that her tumultuous feelings do not exist in a vacuum and that she must think of others: "Exert yourself, dear Marianne", she cried, "if you would not kill yourself and all who love you. Think of your mother; think of her misery while *you* suffer; for her sake you must exert yourself" *(SS* 159). As Pellérdi notes, "*[e]xertion* is Austen's word for fighting against idleness and melancholy. [...] It is with fortitude that such exertion becomes possible and difficulties can be overcome" (par. 11). Moreover, as Sarah Emsley claims, fortitude is the most important virtue in the "process of discovering happiness" (13). Marianne does not have the tools to enable her to contain her suffering and function as a thoughtful social being. Her answer to Elinor reflects a total submission to melancholy: "'I must feel–I must be wretched'" *(SS* 163). Marianne's insistence on pursuing this form of distorted happiness comes at the expense of "every common-place notion of decorum" (*SS* 40), and if a prominent moralist like Samuel Johnson took the time to address this issue, we can assume that an infatuation with melancholy was not uncommon. Johnson warns against just such self-indulgence in his *Rambler* No. 4: "[S]orrow is to a certain point laudable . . . , but . . . it ought not to

be suffered to increase by indulgence, but must give way, after a stated time, to social duties, and the common avocations of life" (255). Moreover, in such circumstances, a habitual sadness, he writes, "seizes upon the soul, and the faculties are chained to a single object, which can never be contemplated but with hopeless uneasiness" (255).

Marianne is a part of something greater than her own private misery; when we meet her, she is dangerously close to becoming a dysfunctional member of society, neglecting her duties and imprisoning her abilities. Though Johnson probably saw women's duties as mostly domestic, he nonetheless believed in women's capacity to be educated and encouraged them to make intelligent, reasonable choices.[1] One of Marianne's biggest lessons in the novel is not to learn how to stop feeling, but how to refine her feelings with the help and balance of more cerebral faculties. Marianne is not the hopelessly spoiled Lydia Bennet–she has the depth and solid morals to improve and mature. What we witness in *Sense and Sensibility* is her struggle not only against a wounded heart, but mostly against a damaged consciousness that she must rectify.

It is quite difficult for me to place Marianne Dashwood and Lydia Bennet in the same company, but although the former is worthy of so much more empathy and respect for her eventual transformation, the two are what a modern reader would define as obnoxious teenagers. Indeed, the teen years of a young woman's life received no specific attention in eighteenth-century literature, mostly because the term "teenager" (for all its psychological attributes) is relatively modern. In one of the most refreshing pieces of criticism I have read regarding Marianne Dashwood, Shawn Lisa Maurer outlines what she calls Marianne's "painful process of maturation". Maurer sees Marianne's marriage to Colonel Brandon not as an artistic or ideological failure (as many readers and critics do), but as a "developmental progression from the intense emotions and dangerous passions associated with adolescence to the duties and responsibilities of adulthood" (723). As Maurer explains, in eighteenth-century conduct literature adolescence is never acknowledged because it is not a phase which is considered significant: "adulthood is the goal, and that adulthood must be achieved by avoiding, rather than learning from, the dangerous feelings and risky behaviors associated with youth" (726). What conduct literature cannot provide, fiction can. Therefore, novels provide "a place in which characters might undergo and assimilate precisely such perilous experiences" (726). All of Austen's foolish, naïve or just plain stupid young female characters are given a fictional stage on which to act out their childish antics and missteps. The point is that only those who are able to learn from their mistakes emerge as heroines, while the rest remain stuck in their infantile ways and become even more detestable to us for failing to gain any knowledge from the experiences they are granted by the narrative.

Maurer also makes a valid point with regard to the Marianne's difference from her mother:

> Escaping the stasis of sensibility through the notion of temporal progression, adolescence provides a conceptual framework that can incorporate change through its linking of past experience with present behavior. In this way, the novel creates an important distinction between Marianne and Mrs. Dashwood, in that the daughter transforms in the course of the novel whereas the mother remains the same–her immaturity based in character rather than developmental stage. (728)

[1] For more about Johnson's support and advocacy of women, see Acker, Julia Robertson. *"No Woman is the Worse for Sense and Knowledge": Samuel Johnson and Women*. MA thesis. University of Maryland, 2007. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2008.

In relation to Kathryn Davis' exoneration of Mrs. Dashwood, I do not believe that the latter grows out of her sentimental, excessively romantic habits because, as Maurer implies, for Mrs. Dashwood, this is not a phase she can emerge from. It is, essentially, who she is. Marianne's extraordinary fate allows her to have a taste of the danger involved in excessive feeling, but prevents this phase in her adolescence from becoming a permanent feature in her adult life. Learning to govern, rather than avoid or repress, "overwhelming and sometimes even life-threatening emotions" (Maurer 742), is what enables Marianne to make her successful transition into adulthood. Austen provides Marianne the social space in which to both be an adolescent and to grow out of this stage.

Elinor Dashwood is similar to Fanny Price and Anne Elliot in that she never really transforms throughout the narrative. However, like all Austen heroines, she does learn her share of valuable lessons and adjusts her views and judgments accordingly. When we meet Elinor, it is immediately evident that she is remarkably different from her mother and sister in the way in which she perceives society, human relations and her own place within these. When it comes to her budding relationship with Edward, but really in anything she puts her mind to, Elinor needs certainty, evidence and assurance. Unfortunately, no one in her immediate surroundings shares this attitude: "She knew that what Marianne and her mother conjectured one moment, they believed the next– that with them, to wish was to hope, and to hope was to expect" (*SS* 15). From the very beginning, then, we are made to understand how isolated Elinor is, in spite of the genuine love that resides in the Dashwood household. However, what is truly admirable about Elinor is the fact that unlike Marianne–whose withdrawal into her own private world of melancholy and romantic misery makes her socially inadequate–she is able to use her often isolated state in order to watch, evaluate and judge the people and the situations around her, making her supremely capable of engaging with others with little fear or discomfort. WhileMarianne's isolation (which she chooses to enter) means that she sees no one but herself, Elinor's isolation (which is a given situation due to her unique character within the family dynamics) enables her to see well beyond herself, into the hearts and minds of others.

When Elinor discovers that Edward is engaged to Lucy she chooses to keep the news to herself. She knows that nothing can be gained from confiding in her sister and mother: "From their counsel, or their conversation, she knew she could receive no assistance, their tenderness and sorrow must add to her distress" (*SS* 122). As harsh as this realization might be, it is, nonetheless, accurate. Unlike Marianne, who only adds to her suffering by not confiding in her mother and sister, Elinor knows that for her own sake, she needs to manage the pain of such a discovery alone. When we remember how Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne handled Mr. Dashwood's death–by making one another more miserable instead of supporting each other–Elinor's choice to weather this emotional storm by herself seems more than reasonable. "She was stronger alone" (*SS* 122), we are told by the narrator, and as crushing as this may sound, it seems to capture Elinor's state throughout the novel and for most of her life. She is wise enough to know that excessive intimacy, empathy and commiseration can actually aggravate an already unfortunate situation.

In London, Marianne is governed by her emotions more than ever, and is irritable, scatter-brained and without the ability to enjoy anything or anyone. The fact that Elinor has to write to their mother, asking her to get the real account of Willoughby's and Marianne's supposed engagement, goes to show how far apart the

sisters are at this point–both mentally and emotionally–though they are physically together all the time. There is genuine love between Elinor and Marianne, but the disconnection between them is too gaping to bridge at this stage in the novel. It is only when Elinor finally confesses to Marianne the turmoil she has been dealing with, that we come to understand the power of sisterly support, and more so, the power of its absence. While Marianne inflicted her misery on her surroundings and placed Elinor in the role of the watchful caregiver, the latter had no one she could converse with on matters of her own heart, and no place where she could find the kind of support she needed. Still, in spite all that has transpired, and although she has much to be bitter about, Elinor's behavior during Marianne's life-threatening illness is remarkable. She is exceptionally attentive yet unaffected by hysterics (a foreshadowing of Anne Elliot's behavior at the scene of Louisa Musgrove's near-fatal fall). Elinor has great fears regarding Marianne's chances of survival, but does not allow herself to convey them. When Marianne is declared out of danger Elinor cannot be openly cheerful; she completely internalizes her overwhelming sensation of comfort and satisfaction.

Elinor's tremendous ability to "see" others is very evident in her treatment of Willoughby after their final meeting in Cleveland. Elinor's compassion towards Willoughby might appear strange to some readers since she seems to believe every word coming out of his mouth, and even regrets judging him as harshly as she did. In fact, it takes time for her to break loose from the grip his visit has on her mind. Why does she sympathize with him so profoundly? Perhaps because, like Edward, Willoughby portrays himself as a pawn in someone else's game, and possibly because she knows Marianne was wrong to act the way she did without having any reassurance from him of a real engagement. Even in her most dire hour, Elinor cannot judge blindly just because she is Marianne's sister. Her ability to enter the feelings of others and to reach conclusions that are impartial and levelheaded applies even to the man who shattered her sister's heart. Unlike her mother, who is quick to forget all that she once loved about Willoughby, Elinor weighs up the good together with the bad, and thus allows Willoughby to enter her mind until she is able to gradually and naturally let go.

It is only when Elinor sees Edward (thinking he has married Lucy) that we see her struggling for the first time to keep her composure: "I WILL be calm; I WILL be mistress of myself" (*SS* 311). We have never seen Elinor like this, having to talk herself into self-control. Her overpowering outburst when she learns that he is not married is beyond anything that we have come to expect from her, and it becomes clear that this emotional outpouring has been brewing for far too long. It takes her a long while to get used to it, to calm down and to finally embrace her good fortune.

Elaine Bander discusses the differences between the Dashwood sisters, using the philosophical debate between aesthetic and ethical judgment that went on during Austen's day. When defending her visit to Allenham with Willoughby, Marianne posits one side of this debate: "[I]f there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have had no pleasure" (*SS* 60). As Bander sees it, Marianne invokes an eighteenth-century philosophical belief "[t]hat we have an innate moral 'sense' or 'taste'; that just as we are born with the natural ability to recognize the Beautiful, so too we recognize and are drawn to the Good; that what is beautiful must be good; that what attracts us must be virtuous" (par. 5). This belief is contradicted by Elinor (and probably by Austen herself), who believes that human beings are imperfect and in need of rational principles "to guide behavior when emotions blur self-knowledge" (Bander par. 9). The novel, in a sense, articulates what happens when these

categories get mixed up and when “subjective feelings supplant rational judgment, and we build castles where none exist” (Bander par. 11). Marianne is not the only character in the novel who builds such castles, and both her mother and Mrs. Jennings tend to weave a tale of someone’s character or of a certain love affair before having any grounds to do so. The difference is, of course, that Marianne’s life is at risk due to her blind attraction to beauty. Elinor, aware of others’ and her own imperfect judgment, highlights the problem with attraction to superficial impressions:

> I have frequently detected myself in such kind of mistakes […] in a total misapprehension of character in some point or other […] Sometimes one is guided by what [people] say of themselves, and very frequently by what other people say of them, without giving oneself time to deliberate and judge. (*SS* 81)

Elinor exhibits a level of self-awareness that all the other characters combined would find difficult to achieve. She acknowledges not only one’s need for private and disinterested judgment, but also her own occasional errors in forming judgments. Indeed, Elinor, though profoundly different from her sister, is not unmoved by beauty and grace; this may explain the profound impression Willoughby leaves on her after their last meeting, and as Bander notes, only serious reflection–which includes carefully sorting ethical from aesthetic considerations–diminishes that influence (par. 19). Austen uses Elinor to show us that even the wisest, most grounded person can be sidetracked into making errors in judgment. The important thing, though, is to be able to adjust the false judgment that has been formed. This is what Elinor re-learns, what Marianne must learn, and what the novel’s readers should learn when faced with their own tug of war between reason and feeling.

One thing that Elinor does not need any lessons in is how to function as a social being. Elinor has to implement a slew of strategies in order to engage with the sometimes unbearable people that surround her. Nonetheless, as I have stated before, her ability to see beyond herself, and her adherence to reasonable, fact-based judgment, enable her to operate smoothly in diverse social settings–something that Marianne has no aptitude for. I find difficult to accept Jenny Davidson’s claim that Elinor is aware that “she may have more in common with the odious Lucy Steele” than with Marianne, and that “*Sense and Sensibility* repeatedly emphasizes Elinor’s accomplishments as a social hypocrite” (151). The novel, I argue, does not celebrate nor does it glorify hypocrisy, and what Davidson calls hypocrisy, I call exertion. I do not think Elinor ever aligns herself with Lucy, but she does acknowledge that the latter is a fiercer opponent than she had expected. Elinor, as we know, has a personal interest in the news Lucy delivers and needs “to employ strategic speech, not merely to preserve social stability but to defend her selfhood” (Hughes par. 24). Elinor knows that she cannot confide in Marianne and their mother about this matter for reasons that I have already discussed, and also, in her usual vein, she does everything in her power to reach the truth before she forms any sort of judgment. Hughes argues that here, “Elinor’s concealment of her authentic self is not, as elsewhere, to maintain social harmony; she is as self-seeking and strategic as Lucy” (par. 27). He paints Elinor in less than flattering colors and like Davidson, unfairly places her and Lucy on the same moral plane.

I argue that if Elinor recognizes anything it is not that she and Lucy have something in common, but that she must *exert* herself to converse with Lucy on a matter so hurtful to herself and do so in a slightly “manipulative” way–by not saying much at all–if she is to get to the bottom of Lucy’s claims. I struggle to find any difference

between Elinor's behavior in this instance and her conduct in other social situations. Marianne's incapability of behaving properly and respectfully in society leaves Elinor with the perpetual burden of conversing with others. As we know, almost always these "others" are insufferable people. There is an element of forced manipulation in almost every social interaction Elinor takes part in, and since we know that even if her heart bleeds when hearing Lucy's news, she will never attempt to sabotage an engagement or to humiliate Lucy, there is no reason to believe that she has any hidden agenda here other that finding out the facts so that she can process and deal with them.

Michal Beth Dinkler stresses that a careful examination of the "conversational combat" between Elinor and Lucy "supports the view that Austen does not equate the two women, but rather places them in stark contrast with one another" (par. 10). Dinkler emphasizes Elinor's use of speech in a surprising way: "Rather than utilizing the spoken word as an offensive strategy to demand social supremacy, Elinor uses silence–the withholding of the spoken word–as a defensive strategy to maintain power" (par. 12). Indeed, these strategies of concealment that Hughes and Davidson view as attesting to Elinor's self-interest, actually confirm her superiority over Lucy and what Dinkler calls "her presence of mind" (par. 13). Language is often the only weapon Austen's women have in their attempt to subvert the hierarchy of patriarchal power structures. These power structures are responsible for both Lucy and Elinor becoming commodities in the ruthless marriage market, but it is Elinor's refined use of speech and silence that elevates her above the petty competitiveness that this meat market induces. This is perhaps the most important lesson that Marianne has to learn: how to replace her indiscriminate loquacity with verbal moderation and reason.

George E. Haggerty considers language in the novel from another perspective: "Marianne's illness becomes for both sisters the test of their feelings for one another and the proof that language can be a bond rather than a barrier separating them from their inmost selves" (231). After Elinor meets with Willoughby for the last time, she needs to wait for something very important to happen in order to communicate to her sister what has transpired; she needs Marianne to be on the same level of speech as herself, meaning she waits until Marianne finally and completely accepts the limitations of her old sentimental language and is able to converse with Elinor on an equal linguistic level. When this happens, Haggerty notes, Elinor "offers her communication not as a lesson to Marianne but as a way of consoling her sister and convincing her that she had been loved" (232).

Elinor's highly developed emotional intelligence enables her to hold her tongue until her words can be received by Marianne as encouraging rather than demoralizing. Someone who rejects this sister-empowering atmosphere is Tara Ghoshal Wallace who argues that

> *Sense and Sensibility* betrays Austen's anxieties about female authority; seen from this perspective the novel reveals struggles and tensions rather than ideological serenity […] It is Austen's most antifeminist book, a book inhabited by monstrous women and victimized men, a book which seems to deny all possibility of sisterhood. (150)

Wallace goes on to discuss the ways in which the sins of man and male insensitivity are overshadowed in the novel by "an emphasis on the despicable behavior of a woman" and by "female anger" (150, 152). While I agree with her that both Edward and Willoughby find it all too comfortable to blame the controlling women in

their lives for their troubles, I do not think that readers so easily forgive either of the men for their wrongdoings. Edward may get his happy ending with Elinor–albeit purely by the power of circumstances–but throughout the novel he is a less than inspiring hero and garners a great dislike for his impotence in the face of his mother's aggression and Elinor's suffering (which only the readers know about). By the time the novel reaches its conclusion, one cannot help but think that Elinor deserves so much more than this spineless, insipid man as her life partner. Similarly, Willoughby does not come out unscathed, for together with Elinor, readers eventually teach themselves how to resist his deceitful charm and acknowledge–as she does–that he is the architect of his own downfall.

As for Wallace's claim that the novel thwarts any possibility for sisterhood, it is unclear why she chooses the most dreadful women in the novel to make her point. She claims that "[t]he destructive egoism of Fanny Dashwood, Lady Middleton, Lucy Steele, Mrs. Ferrars, and Sophia Grey makes abundantly clear what sort of woman seeks authority and tries to make the world conform to her image of it" (157). For Wallace, these women represent a welcome insistence on independence, and she sees their vilification as a way of keeping women "unempowered, marginal, silent" (157). It is my contention, however, that Austen was attempting to criticize not the female longing for power, but women's abuse of it. Wollstonecraft said it best in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* when discussing the need for equality in women's education: "I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves" (133). Indeed, the underlying problem with the supposedly vilified characters Wallace mentions is that they seek to control and manipulate the men in their lives. Neither Wollstonecraft, nor Austen, I maintain, saw such an aspiration as the fulfillment of female empowerment. So who in *Sense and Sensibility* has power over herself? It is, of course, Elinor. In her, Austen can dramatize not a ruthless desire for power, but a genuine struggle to balance propriety and willpower. Elinor's claim for authority is her impeccable self-control, which contrasts with the power seized by some of the more aggressive women in the novel.

## Conclusion

To conclude, as counterintuitive as this may sound, it is the young, romantic, dramatic and captivating Marianne who is stuck in a state of stagnation throughout the majority of the narrative. As Susan Morgan notes, Marianne is the true conservative in the novel as she "stands against adaptation and change" and "upholds a fixed version of meaning and value against the principle of giving oneself time" (195). While Marianne is trapped by her childish and rigid view of the world, Elinor, whose self-control can easily be mistaken for repression, is actually the freer of the two sisters. As I have pointed out, Elinor's social intelligence enables her to constantly adjust her judgments, and as Morgan indicates, since Elinor knows that social forms are made up, she does not mistake them for human nature. She is therefore free to manipulate those forms and to learn from those around her (199).

It is almost an oxymoron to say that restraint entails freedom, but in Elinor's case, it is indeed so. Elinor is self-controlled not self-involved, hence her ability to manage and monitor her emotions gives her the liberty to truly participate in an ongoing social discourse. Marianne, of course, has to learn to turn self-indulgence into self-discipline since "[t]here is no freedom of thought in a self-centered isolation or a code of sentimental maxims. Freedom is only to be found beyond the boundaries of the self"

(Morgan 202). Among the many private and social lessons Marianne learns by the end of the novel–and will continue to learn after her life outside of the narrative goes on–none is more important than her reevaluation of her sister. Karen Stohr notes that "[o]ne of Marianne's major intellectual failures is that she refuses to see emotional reserve as valuable or even possible" (390). We see how this rigidity leads Marianne to act unkindly towards Elinor since she views the latter's contained emotions as feeble. For Marianne, what is not directly displayed on the surface must not be strong or true enough to garner any attention or esteem, and thus Elinor's suffering goes unnoticed. Marianne has to come to terms with the fact that visibility has little or nothing to do with earnestness of feeling. She has to learn that "the criteria for determining warmth and goodness need not be an expression of feelings, need not take the forms she gives value to, need not be visible at all" (Morgan 196). As the emotional and linguistic gaps between the sisters are finally reduced, and as they are able to communicate as equals, Marianne can finally appreciate not only Elinor's sensibly governed emotions–which she once discounted–but also the extent to which Elinor had to go in order to maintain this unwavering restraint. When Marianne grows out of her dangerous melancholy and unrestrained adolescence not only can she become an active and valuable member of society, but even more importantly perhaps, she can be the sister Elinor very much deserves.

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**Gender, Reason, and Androgyny in the Role of Righteousness in Marie de France's "Bisclavret"**

**Ahmed Muhammed Faleh Banisalamah**

**Abstract:** This paper argues that Marie de France's story "Bisclavret" presents a feminist interpretation of gender expectations and represents a landmark work in feminist critical theory. My argument is that although it was common in Medieval England for people to be judged according to their performance of their gender roles (where women usually wore dresses and long hair and were subordinate to men, and men were expected to be strong in both body and character and to be victorious in battle), Bisclavret shows us that people are better judged by their characters, which are depicted through virtuous behavior rather than by how they look on the outside. I argue that this image of a man living without gender–but who nevertheless is seen as virtuous–offers a deconstructionist critique of gender expectations, and because of its appearance in Medieval England, it also positions Marie de France as one of the earliest feminist writers in literature.

**Keywords**: Marie de France, Bisclavret, androgyny, gender, righteousness, feminism, gender

The Lais of Marie De France remain valuable to the modern audience not just because of their female authorship–though women authors would struggle for recognition and respect for seven more centuries after Marie–but also for their non-doctrinaire treatment of gender, self-description, and identity. Several of France's lais, and perhaps most particularly the story of Bisclavret, take an ironic position on social issues, making an effective and ultimately damning commentary on the oppressiveness of the patriarchal social order. Yet readers should not expect *mere* commentary. Nor should they expect the common tactic so popular later on the renaissance stage of reversing gender roles–often by cross-dressing–for a comical effect. France, instead, creates androgyny, or more accurately "genderlessness" in the form of Bisclavret, a noble Baron-turned-werewolf. France creates a world of fantasy, common in medieval fiction, where men often turn to werewolves and people can shed their social identities, identities so connected with the ideas of virtue and decency, and become who they are. The overlying tone is playful and unserious, but the undertones suggest that the playfulness is irony and is intended to contrast the ease with which Bisclavret sheds his gender and his identity with the reality of her time–and ours–that real protocols of gender, instead of being whimsical and mutable, may be oppressively limiting. "Bisclavret" is a story of oppression, but also a story of freedom.

In the lai of Bisclavret, De France begins her comment at once. The narrator introduces Bisclavret by name and immediately mentions that he is called by a different name in another place: "In my effort to compose lays I do not wish to omit *Bisclavret*—for such is its name in Breton, while the Normans call it *Garwaf*" ("Bisclavret" 68). The notion of identity is decentralized. Bisclavret both is and is not Bisclavret and this is true from the beginning. His identity is contingent upon his location and the context of his audience. In one place he *is* one thing, while in another place he *is* something else.

The narrator develops his identity further by listing the typical identifiers of a person's character. We get his title–a baron–and we know that he is "greatly praised" ("Bisclavret" 68). The baron is "good" and "handsome" and a "knight" (68). We perceive all the common accolades of an archetypal man in this culture. The baron has social status in his title, he is handsome and he is courageous enough to be a knight. He also has political sway, being "his lord's closest advisers", and is "loved by all his neighbors" (68). However, the reader can see through this. These accolades are impressive, if we are impressed by conformity; but they are also excessive, even hyperbolic. The portrait we see is that of an ideal baron, not a realistic person. This image is created by the author. The form of the story-telling stands out, pointing at the fictionality of the work and at art itself

Besides then we learn that Bisclavret does a curious thing. "[E]ach week he was absent for three full days […] no one in the household knew what happened to him" ("Bisclavret" 68). We find out that he goes into the forest to "become a werewolf" where he goes around "completely naked" (69). In the fictive world this is possible. Bisclavret removes his clothing, his recognizable signs of status. He becomes a werewolf, perhaps human in its most animal form. He removes and hides all indications of his social identity and becomes a pure animal, naked, alone, living in the deepest part of the wood. The curiosity, however, is his motivation to do this. Why would a man, who seemingly has everything a man could possibly have, decide to give it all up? What could he possibly gain from moving away from everything that should make him happy?

Yet, the curiosity may not be Bisclavret's actions, but *our* reactions to them. It certainly would be true in France's time–as it still is in ours–that these features used by the narrator to describe Bisclavret are the very features that make up the set of identity characteristics for men. Bisclavret's features read like a bullet-list summary of the protocol of masculinity. We likely hear a success story in his description and we wonder why he would give this up. This is the point. The burden of performing gender cuts both ways, for both sexes. Socially enforced conformity creates psychological pain in males and females. Although it is more common to talk about this in the context of the feminine gender, it also applies to the masculine. This is what Michael Kaufman calls the "contradictory experiences of power", where it is actually men who feel oppressed by the expectation that they conform to social roles. Men feel this pain, too, like women.

In "Men, Feminism, and Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power", Kaufman's conjecture is that males are unfairly expected to be happy with the achievements expected of them by society. He claims that although men are more often than not granted the power in oppositional relationships of the genders, the act of acquiring, possessing, and exercising the protocol of masculinity does not necessarily equal happiness. In fact, it likely does not. Kaufman says,

> men's lives speak of a different reality. Though men hold power and reap the privileges that come with our sex, that power is tainted. [...] Men enjoy social power and many forms of privilege by virtue of being male. But the way we have set up that world of power causes immense pain, isolation, and alienation. (142)

It is not hard to see Bisclavret's identity–the identity described by the narrator at the opening of the story–as a performance of expectations his culture requires of him, a performance against his will. The qualities expected to create happiness, or at least

success in males, sometimes produce a pain remediable only by escaping from what is said to be masculinity. Kaufman infers that the rewards often reaped for adhering to the expectations of masculinity are not success and happiness, but a tortured existence of oppression. Performing masculinity is

> a process through which men come to suppress a range of emotions, needs, and possibilities, such as nurturing, receptivity, empathy, and compassion, which are experienced as inconsistent with the power of manhood. These emotions and needs do not disappear; they are simply held in check or not allowed to play as full a role in our lives as would be healthy for ourselves and those around us. (148)

Men are confined by the limitations of their gender; they are expected to act in only one way, and this way often denies them permission to be emotionally healthy and stable people. Dissention is difference and difference is often unacceptable. Even the presence of gender expectations, then, presents a dilemma juxtaposing the *self*-denial inherent in conformity with the *social*-denial from dissention from expectations. The story of Bisclavret, the handsome knight who is greatly praised, presents this juxtaposition with the account of a man torn between two sides of self and society, two types of pain and two types of rejection.

Bisclavret is a character who shows identity to be performative, in Judith Butler's terms, where "the body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality [..] but a continual incessant *materializing* of possibilities" (Butler 404). The body, for Butler, is not linked directly or biologically to any sort of identity–gender, nobility, occupation, etc. –nor is it a static or pure being, impervious to interactions with the world and with autonomous choice. One's identity comes about by virtue of the specific performances one gives in the world, performances which are directed by their relation to the protocols of social identity and gender. Butler notes that "one is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body" (404). De France depicts Bisclavret's body in the typical conception of masculinity; she creates a man in possession of the characteristics, qualities and standing typical of successful and seemingly happy males. An initial reading of the lai from a mindset clouded by a gendered outlook would produce in the reader an intuition that Bisclavret should be happy with his accomplishments, with his status, and with all of his actions and acquisitions that are congruent with expectations of gender-appropriate behavior. It is also likely that the modern reader will fall into this trap, reading it from a gendered worldview. France's character seems to deliberately elicit this type of gendered reading at first glance.

Bisclavret has everything he should need or want, including a marriage with love based on these solid foundations, yet he leaves it all for three days every week to shed his gender in the woods, to rid himself of societal rules, and to live without the standards of expectation in a freeing, purer version of himself. It is always three days, the Christly number. In three days Bisclavret dies and then returns. He disappears and re-emerges triumphant, and happy. He "return[s] home in high spirits" (68). During this interval, Bisclavret doffs his social identity and becomes more natural, more animalistic, more like a werewolf as De France describes him, without gender, without expectations, and without the pressure to conform into something he clearly is not. The woods are an escape where Bisclavret can exist without his gender and where he can act as he chooses. For three days in the woods, he lacks the pressures of maintaining that

identity. The person he is in the public sphere, the person signified by the garments and performance of Bisclavret, exists only in sight of those who judge by such standards.

So, again, what happens in that period? Simply, performance of self. When Bisclavret's wife asks him to reveal his secret, Bisclavret does not fear embarrassment for what he does, he fears for his freedom. He says, "If I tell you this, great harm will come to me, for as a result I shall lose your love *and destroy myself*" (68-9) (emphasis mine). Bisclavret's conversation with his wife is a turning point. The reader knows that if she discovers that another man exists beneath the façade of Bisclavret she will not love him the way she loves Bisclavret, for these are two different men. If his secret becomes public and he is not allowed to return to the woods under the guise of a werewolf, he would lose his opportunity to perform his self, and he would lose his self.

Kim Worthington, in *Self as Narrative*, talks of the self as dynamic and constantly in flux. For Worthington, like Butler, the self is not an essential structure that simply *is* within our bodies, adequately accounting for who we are, but is rather an ongoing narrative, an inner text, written in part by all who come into contact with it. She suggests that "the construction of a subject's sense of selfhood should be understood as a creative narrative process achieved within a plurality of intersubjective communicative protocols" (13). This notion of self, conceived as an "incessant materializing of possibilities", according to Butler (404), and one written collaboratively within a plurality of widely known social protocols for Worthington, shows how we exist without an essential, permanent *core* identity. One can, and must, exist only as that personal narrative with the world develops. This notion is the key in order to understand the dangerous effects of Biclavret telling his secret to his wife.

The narrative of Bisclavret is different when he becomes a werewolf and lives in the woods. It is also different for the Normans who call him Garwaf. Each context affords a different story and each audience interacts differently with our stories. Our personal narrative constitutes our identities to others as they read and interpret the actions of our lives. If we perform different identities by dissembling our appearances, our interactions with others, and thus our narratives, change dramatically. In other words, as the actions we perform approach particular and intersubjective protocols of behavior, gender for example, or class, or rank, we say with some conviction that one is a "such-and-such". Or when we describe ourselves, as Denise Riley says, "I project myself as being a such-and-such, I tacitly envisage myself participating in the wider social scene through some new identity category" (13). And if we describe ourselves differently than we usually do, or in constantly different ways, we then take control, to some degree, over our own identities. "Self-descriptions", Riley says, "are indeed costumes" and can be worn deliberately as if they were clothing (151). As Bisclavret chooses to unfold his personal narrative in the woods, or in his home with his wife, he chooses to write his own narrative of identity as he continually does his body differently. If Bisclavret tells his secret, he loses himself.

But can we blame the wife for her uneasiness? Even in De France's fictive world, Bisclavret's wife does not escape her own performance. When Bisclavret does eventually expose his secret, that he sneaks into the woods to shed his gender and live freely three days out of seven, his wife immediately turns on him, plots against him, and leaves the relationship for another man who, not coincidentally, adheres closely to the expectations of masculinity. "She was greatly alarmed by the story, and began to consider various means of parting from him, as she no longer wished to lie with him" ("Bisclavret" 69). Bisclavret's wife performs her gender dutifully and has no desire to

remain married to a man who turns out to be different than what society asks men to be. Her reaction is extreme. She would much rather live her life alongside a man who resembles a man, a *proper* man in everyone's eyes, then stay married to someone who may or may not be such a man. The man she calls to replace Bisclavret is a man "she had never loved ... or promised him her affection but now ... she said [to him] ... I grant you that which has tormented you; never again will you encounter any refusal. I offer you my love and my body; make me your mistress" ("Bisclavret" 69). To her, Bisclavret becomes just the animal he seems to be as a werewolf. He no longer represents the archetypal social man in his wife's eyes and has to be replaced immediately by someone who does resemble it. Here De France comments similarly to Kaufman in that she shows how dangerous and controlling the roles of gender can be, particularly that of the male, and how much disagreement one may meet with should he flout his expectations. All Bisclavret does is acknowledge to his wife that he is able to undress from his character and become something else. He does not describe his new form with any judgments of its value. Nor does his wife ask what type of person he is, or whether he is good or bad. The thought that he might still be a good person does not come up.

It may be useful to take a digression here in order to consider other possible ways of understanding Bisclavret's situation. The psychologist Carol Gilligan explains that gendered worldviews are a natural product of a gendered environment. In *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan analyzes the responses of a male and a female to Kohlberg's famous Heinz Dilemma and determines that much insight into the differences of men and women can be gleaned from the results. In Gilligan's study, "the two children in question, Amy and Jake, were both bright and articulate and, at least in their eleven-year-old aspirations, resisted easy categories of sex-role stereotyping, since Amy aspired to become a scientist while Jake preferred English to math" (25). Her subject displayed an interesting relationship to gender. Their actions, if not genderless, at the least exhibit only minor influence from their social expectations. When given a moral dilemma problem, the Heinz Dilemma, Jake relies on logic to decide that one thing is more important than the other and should take priority, despite laws saying that his decision is illegal. Amy, on the other hand, sees the problem as one of relationships and reasons that it can be solved by developing and utilizing relationships between people to come to a compromise. Both employ critical thinking and are able to think about the basic needs of people without appealing to their genders or the roles they might be expected to play. While Jake and Amy work the problem out differently, they both think outside of typical gendered thought patterns and both use reason to explore different options and come to reasonable conclusions. Their genderless critical thinking allowed both children the intellectual freedom to use whatever means necessary to render a decision and, since given such freedom, both children turned to reason and to their own instinctual care for other human beings in order to come to conclusions. Their thoughts did not run through the filter of gender indoctrination, Gilligan says, and their conclusions were not constrained by the intimidation of being passed through the courts of gender judges. In this case, reason and care for humanity are the common denominators of the children's genderless thought processes. Gilligan's conclusion, in part, is that people seen to have this common denominator. This also suggests very strongly that gendered thinking and acting come about after a longer interaction with the society. This is not different from what we have been saying so far. For a different perspective we can look at an empirical study.

Babette Francis addresses this issue in her article "Is Gender a Social Construct or a Biological Imperative" and as compelling evidence sites the medical faux pas of Dr. John Money, a Harvard-trained psychologist. Dr. Money was able to take advantage of a naturally occurring situation to study the roots of gender in order to determine whether they initiate biologically or from the influence of society (Francis n.pag.). In this case, after a botched circumcision left a male infant without a penis, the boy was surgically altered to resemble and function as a girl. His parents were given instructions by Money to raise the child as a girl and encourage his femininity, never revealing the truth of the child's accident. Dr. Money published a paper revealing the success of his experiment, claiming the child born as a boy successfully developed in society as a girl. His paper gave weight to the then-surging second wave feminism in 1950s America, and was sufficient to convince many people that the root of gender identity lies in interaction with society. However, the reality of the situation was quite different, with the patient presenting depression, confusion and various other psychological phenomena linked to her gender confusion. When the patient finally learned the truth of her biology, a lifetime of confusion and misery was explained. Revealing the truth ultimately ended with "Brenda's" surgical transformation back to "David". In the end, the experiment showed quite the opposite of what Dr. Money had originally reported: the child born as a boy, raised as a girl, never identified as feminine, never acted feminine, never was a girl. The biological tendencies genetically ingrained in his makeup proved dominant over the influence of society. While this lies counter to the idea proposed by Gilligan in her article, the mixed data from this experiment and Dr. Money's less than honest analysis contributed more confusion to the biology versus society debate than it provided answers.

As a rejoinder–if unintentional–Nancy Holmstrom's article "Do Women Have a Distinct Nature?" offers a balanced perspective. Holmstrom concludes that "there probably are significant differences between the sexes. However […] the most important determinants of these differences are social" (Holmstrom 50). Holmstrom takes the same view as Gilligan in thinking men's and women's behavior are influenced in the largest part by their own societies, large or small. We are reminded of Bisclavret's naming, his clothing, his titles (of man, of husband, of baron, of knight). In De France's story, these define him at first glance. Yet, a closer look shows these thoughts to be shallow and misguided. De France aims at the point explained by Kaufman that these terms are just that, terms that do not affect the person who they intend to modify and define. These types of terms create an alienating situation for the individual who has to choose between being him/herself and giving society what it wants, a situation, Kaufman says, that creates immense pain. While Holmstrom acknowledges the influence of biology on one's behavior, she says, "those who emphasize the biological differences between the sexes as critical to their social roles and their natures usually maintain (or simply assume) that the biological differences cause psychological differences and these in turn determine their respective social roles" (51). She also says that even if we do have some pre-programmed nature, "it carries no evaluative implications; if a group has a distinct nature, nothing follows automatically about how its members ought or ought not to behave" (51). Bisclavret's wife, however, would disagree. For her–and for many people–social "natures" have much to say about how one ought or ought not to act.

This society that constructs rigorous expectations of gender performance, causing pain sufficient to drive Bisclavret to reduce himself to a werewolf for half the

week at a time, is the same that recognizes the basic virtue and decency that is the common denominator of humanity–that is, of human beings naturally, independent of social indoctrination. We see this in Bisclavret's relationship with the King.

A year after Bisclavret was "betrayed and wronged by his wife" ("Bisclavret" 69), the king's hunting expedition comes upon Bisclavret in the woods and the dogs chase him down like an animal. The narrator tells us the king's hunting dogs attempt to both "tear him to pieces *and* destroy him" (70) (emphasis mine). However, rather than running up a tree as an animal, and rather than giving in to the dogs as someone who does not value life, Bisclavret "ran up to [the king] and begged him for mercy" (70). He chooses a basic human action and he implores a basic human action of the king. At no time does he act like the beast he looks like. Nor does he act like a man or like a woman. These actions are genderless, they are human, and they save his life. While his actions are not performances of gender or any other kind of identity, they are performances of the loyal, king-loving person he always is. The king is impressed: "He summoned all his companions. 'Lords' he said, 'come forward! See the marvelous way this beast humbles itself before me! It has the intelligence of a human and is pleading for mercy. Drive back all the dogs and see that no one strikes it! The beast possesses understanding and intelligence. Hurry!'" (70). Twice the king mentions the intelligence of the beast. Twice he mentions human actions the beast makes ("humbles itself […] is pleading for mercy"). And these are enough for the king to take the animal home and treat it with respect. Bisclavret, on the other hand, treated the king with respect. "Wherever the king might go, [the wolf] never wanted to be left behind, it accompanied him constantly and showed clearly that it loved him" (70). These are simple human virtues. Love, respect, loyalty are behaviors not specific to society, and not tied to any gender. And here they are enough to earn the wolf great respect from the king and his men.

> [The king] considered the wolf to be a great wonder and loved it dearly, commanding all his people to guard it well for love of him and not to do it any harm. None of them was to strike it and plenty of food and water must be provided for it. His men were happy to look after the creature and each day it would sleep amongst the knights, just by the king. It was loved by everyone and so noble and gentle a beast was it that it never attempted to cause any harm. ("Bisclavret" 70)

The scene reminds us the opening scene of the lai. Here Bisclavret–who is not Bisclavret, but just a simple beast with no society and no expectations–acts as he chooses. He acts with decency and respect, and he is in turn treated with decency and respect. He is treated much as he was as a baron.

Here De France's comment becomes clear; Bisclavret's actions never stray from his true feelings, despite the changes in his outward appearance, and the king and his men recognize the actions as human, without gender, and recognize them further as commendable and righteous actions deserving reciprocal love and respect. This is contrary to what the reader would expect given the precedent, but De France shows here that the society will in fact recognize genuineness when it sees it. The narrator's description of Bisclavret as a werewolf describes almost the exact same achievements attributed to him as a baron, and show that these feats can be accomplished in the absence of gender, and that indeed, gender has nothing to do with the judgments of goodness, virtue, or decency. The king and his peoples' acceptance of Bisclavret without not only gender and masculinity, but also without a human body, shows the

reader the irrelevancy of necessitating gender and the pointlessness of doing so. In addition, while Bisclavret represents here the possibilities of genderless life, his wife represents a foil of sorts, of gender standards.

Bisclavret's wife embodies the common complacency and error associated with a blind acceptance of and conformity to social expectations. To her, gender is a necessity, one that defines people and without which people are inconclusive and insufficient. She judges her husband not on his merit, as the king does, but instead on his masculinity, and the relation of his performance to her expectations. When that fails, so does her allegiance to her husband. She needs, as does society, a visual superficial way to define a person in order to understand him/her. When Bisclavret does reveal his secret, that under this cloak of Bisclavret he is his own man, his wife tries to banish him forever. She hides the clothes which were previously his costume, ensuring he can never play that part again. Then she immediately calls on another man who remains willing to perform the traditional role of masculinity. Both his wife and her new husband, when visiting the presence of the king, are described as dressed elegantly–that is, conforming to the expectations of appropriate appearances. They both think that by not dressing elegantly in front of the king that they will not represent themselves accurately and will not be understood; to them, the superficial, outward appearances are what defines a person, not, as Bisclavret finds out, that the quality of one's actions when freed of gender is what really defines the person. The wife's new husband is described as "rich and elegantly attired," and she is described as "dressing herself elegantly" ("Bisclavret" 70-71). She wishes to be defined and judged on her outward appearance, on her adherence to her expectations, and not on her merit; in her case, an elegant outer appearance contradicts the selfish, lying, indecent person underneath.

She chooses to perform in order to cover up her deficiencies. Bisclavret chooses to shun his performance in order to let shine his true self. De France, here, presents a situation where gender validation should prevail over gender deviance. The reader expects the King and his men to favor the adherence of Bisclavret's wife to the code of conduct regarding proper attire. However, they are rebuked by the King and banished. The wolf "dashed towards her like a madman [...] he tore the nose right off her face. What worse punishment could he have inflicted on her?" ("Bisclavret" 71). Her appearance did fool Bisclavret. For him, the truth was underneath and was different from what everyone saw. The same was true for him, of course, as a baron, but his situation was tragic. He was oppressed. He had to move through the hoops of his performance even though all of it was unnecessary. His wife, however, was manipulative. She, too, used her performance and her fashion to present the proper image. Her performance, however, only shows the reader how powerful a force gender performances can be. If her performing elegant female convinced everyone of her virtue, her performance has a massive ability to persuade.

While gender appropriate behavior remains normalized and expected, it is not for the lack of impact from stories like this. De France does an effective job of highlighting social protocols decentering their importance. The story of Bisclavret shows the potential effects of gender performance along with the great dangers involved. Importantly, De France shows how a move away from gender stereotypes leaves, by necessity, a focus on the shared *human* qualities of men and women. Without a structured code of behavior to follow we are forced to turn to reasonable thought, independent of social mores, to render rational, honest decisions. In the fictive story, Bisclavret learns the freedom of genderlessness. Bisclavret *is* what Bisclavret *does.* So,

as he does himself differently, with different bodies, different clothing, he controls his own self-narrative and his own identity. Yet, the story is ironic, and fantastic. Outside of the fiction the reality is very different. People cannot choose to become a werewolf in order to escape. We cannot rid ourselves of our performances entirely and cannot have others judge us as some pure, uncultured animal. This realization, however, tells its own story. It tells us the great power of what we choose to do, power that can be used for good and for bad. Bisclavret's actions as a wolf earned him the company of the king and the king's knights. Besides, they earned him everyone's respect. They did as much if not more for his social standing than his properly male actions. Ultimately Bisclavret returns to his human form, but not before giving an important performance.

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## Staging Economics and Math
## in Lucy Prebble's *Enron* and David Hare's *The Power of Yes*

**William C. Boles**

**Abstract:** The immediacy of theatre makes it reflexive and reactive, allowing playwrights and theatrical companies to respond to dramatic local, national and international events much more quickly than other genres, as evidenced through the theatrical works that appeared shortly after 9/11 and the plays that challenged the resulting conflict in the Middle East. However, not all events are as easily translated. After all, as a theatre practitioner how do you theatricalize what happened on September 15th, 2008, as the Great Recession was born? How do you stage concepts such as "securitized credit arrangements", "credit derivatives", and "liquidity crisis"? How do you get beyond the brick walled edifices of banks and investment houses with the names of RBS, Northern Rock and Lehman Brothers? In essence, how do you dramatically capture the esoteric elements behind one of the greatest economic failures of the Western world without putting your audience to sleep? These questions will be answered by exploring Lucy Prebble's *Enron* and David Hare's *The Power of Yes*.

**Keywords:** Economics, David Hare, Lucy Prebble, *Enron*, *The Power of Yes*, British drama

Since the turn of the century, London theatre has been in crisis mode–not in the sense that the theatre itself has been facing a crisis (in fact, over the last fifteen years the London theatre has experienced a great deal of success especially in regard to how diverse its offerings have become), but in the sense that many of the new plays being written are responding to crises at home and abroad. September 11th, the resulting involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, and London's own terror attack on July 7th have inspired and is still inspiring plays like David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (2004), Roy Williams's *Days of Significance* (2007), Joe Penhall's *Landscape with Weapon* (2007), Simon Stephens's *Pornography* (2008), The Tricycle Theatre's Trilogy *The Great Game* (2009), and many others. Soon thereafter, environmental fears of climate change came to the forefront with plays like Steve Waters' *The Contingency Plan* (2009) and Mike Bartlett's *Earthquakes in London* (2010). Two plays, Mike Bartlett's *Game* and Philip Ridley's *Radiant Vermin*, premiered in early 2015, addressed the nation's ever growing housing crisis. The economic crisis of 2007-2009 has inspired myriad plays, such as Laura Wade's *Posh* (2010), Dennis Kelly's *The Gods Weep* (2010), Anders Lustgarten's *If You Don't Let Us Dream, We Won't Let You Sleep* (2013), Clare Duffy's *Money: The Game Show* (2013), Tim Price's *Protest Song* (2014), and Jack Thorne's *Hope* (2014). This latter crisis is of interest here and, more specifically, the question of how one theatricalizes a global economic meltdown, which stemmed from arcane, confuse-the-common-man jargon and policies, like derivatives, credit default swaps, "light touch" regulation, sub-prime mortgages, predatory lending, and securitized debt arrangements, and involved a litany of fiscally irresponsible financial institutions, including Freddie and Fannie Mae, AIG, Lehman Brothers, Bear Stearns, RBS, among others. The question facing the theatre and its playwrights was how to transfer such an esoteric, wide-ranging and confusing-to-understand crisis of economics, which, after all,

has never really been a popular theatrical subject, to the stage. As indicated by the list above, several playwrights and theatres were willing and invigorated in dramatically capturing the catastrophe. Clare Duffy, for example, created a scripted game show, where 10,000 pounds, all in coins, sat on stage while audience members were split into two teams that competed to replicate the economic strategies that led to the collapse. Laura Wade offered a contrasting view, showing the 1%'s complete lack of regard for the struggling economy, while the remaining 99% of the population, as twelve well-off college males in a secret society trash a pub dining room, sexually harass the owner's daughter, beat up the owner, and articulate a philosophy of being "sick to fucking death of *poor people*" (Wade 126). Tim Price's *Protest Song* delves into the situation of those same "poor people" by focusing on the Occupy Protest outside of St. Paul's Cathedral through a monologue by a homeless man, who wakes up to discover that his home is now the center point for a socio-political movement.[1] While these and other intriguing takes on the crisis deserve further exploration, the focus here is on the two best known productions to emerge on this topic, namely Lucy Prebble's *Enron*, which was a surprise West End hit, and David Hare's *The Power of Yes*, which was commissioned by the National Theatre to be their commentary on the financial crisis. Both plays premiered within a few months of each other in 2009, with Prebble's play opening first. A look at the two plays reveals one of the significant challenges to staging the lead-up to an economic collapse, namely that narrative structure and the conveying of complex economic information significantly impacts the audience's engagement but also the success of the production itself.

*Enron*, which features video and topical references to the heydays of the 1990s to contextualize the play's action, presents the rise and fall of the Texas-based energy company through the gyrations of its three main characters. Ken Lay is presented as a leader completely above the fray, not understanding or paying attention to the chicanery surrounding him. While Jeff Skilling, a larger-than-life figure, dominates his employees with an eye only toward the upward trajectory of the company's stock price, Andy Fastow is the devious brain behind Skilling, hiding the company's debt from its employees, investors, and Wall Street. The play begins with Enron's hiring of Skilling, who insists that the company adopts mark-to-market accounting, a manipulative bookkeeping philosophy where once a business contract is signed the profits from that venture are automatically counted toward the quarter's revenue, even though no cash has changed hands and no profit has yet to transpire. Despite whether the company will or will not see any of the revenue from its deal, Enron will still claim it as a completed and booked transaction. The dramatic financial success and eventual fall of Enron hinges entirely on Skilling, introducing this financial concept to the company. Prebble documents Enron's growth through the new markets it enters, like trading electricity, which results in the state of California experiencing blackouts, and the proposed plans to trade bandwidth and enter into business with Blockbuster for a video-on-demand service. Eventually, the company is unable to maintain its reckless growth, causing the debt that Fastow has been hiding in shadow companies to collapse upon itself, leading the company into bankruptcy.

[1] An interesting comparison play with Price's *Protest Song* is Steve Water's *Temple*, which offers an alternative look at the Occupy Movement from the office of the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, who now finds himself politically wedged between church and city officials on the fate of the protestors camped outside and his own inclination to open the Cathedral to worshippers.

Of all the playwrights, so far, to delve into the economic crisis, Prebble's play has been the most successful financially and critically in England. Prebble's familial connections may have prepared her to be an apt candidate to explore the economic disintegration of Enron, which was, up to that point, the largest corporate failure in the history of the United States.[2] She comes from a business-oriented family, as her father was the head of a multinational software firm, and at the time of her writing the play her brother and sister worked for Accenture, a major multinational corporation. The jargony nature of business language, the hierarchical nature of corporations, and the key desire to grow and make money would be second nature to her family members and a valuable resource for her. However, even more important than her familial relations to the business world was her concept behind constructing the play's relationships and characters. She explained that as a playwright writing about such a financial disaster you

> have to try and create a tragic hero with whom you may not agree, but who is dramatically magnetic. It's what Shaw did with Andrew Undershaft in *Major Barbara*, and Tony Kushner with Roy Cohn in *Angels in America*. And it's what I have tried to do with Jeffrey Skilling. I learned that he used to wake up at four in the morning thinking of all the pressure on him. I found it easy to relate to that since I used to do exactly the same when I was younger, thinking of all the lies I'd told and fantasies I'd created. (Billington)

In addition, she acknowledged that at the heart of the economic system are the traders on the floor whose actions, vocal inflections, and rituals are inherently theatrical. "It's the purest form of theatre, of course, and belief in it is kind of the religion behind our society, so it's odd that that world hardly ever makes it into a theatre" (Adams). The theatricality of the traders was highlighted through Rupert Goold's direction, which included a scene with light sabers being wielded by the traders as they decimated California's distribution of energy grid, as they use *Star Wars* terminology to describe their trading actions. Goold also added other theatrical devices including a running ticker tape display of Enron's stock price, raptors populating Fastow's basement office, barbershop quartets, and Lehman Brothers represented as a carnival-like two-headed man. In doing so the play not only surprised and entertained, but also educated, as Prebble stated, "When I watch my play, I see the audiences leaning forward in their seats to have this stuff explained to them" (Broughton). Goold transformed dry, potentially confusing material, into visually engaging scenes driven by theatrical spectacle and Pebble's incisive writing. What Goold did theatrically with the economic concepts surrounding Enron is a clear precursor and influence to Adam McKay's Oscar winning film *The Big Short* (2015), adapted from Michael Lewis's book of the same name. McKay, too, offered inventive means of helping audiences understand the complexities of the crash, but through the medium of film he combined celebrity and economics in small snippets of comical creativity, including Margot Robbie sipping champagne in a bubble bath and explaining the nature of subprime mortgages; Anthony Bourdain explaining how the reusing of unsold fish in a restaurant compares with the

[2] It is worth noting that Prebble began researching and working on her play before the economic crisis occurred. Because of its timeliness, it was seen as a perfect example of Brecht's concept of using history to comment on present conditions. In this case though the history being depicted was only a few years removed from the present.

passing along of bad mortgages; and Selena Gomez playing blackjack contextualizes how betting in the banking world works.

The critical response to Prebble's play was ecstatic due, in part, to the piece's brilliant theatricality as well as her illuminating clarity in explaining the company's complex economic and business philosophies. *The Times* found it "nimble, funny, clear-eyed, inventive, informative, exhilarating and then sobering, relentlessly entertaining, surprisingly affecting, this is not to be missed" (Maxwell). *The Evening Standard* appreciated Prebble's "ability to take us through complex concepts with ease, without bemusing or, worse, patronizing us" (Mountford). Charles Spencer of *The Telegraph* also praised the play's ability to teach: "What needs stressing equally strongly is that it is also hugely entertaining–and accessible even to dunderheads like me who wouldn't know a financial instrument from an instrument of torture". Like Caryl Churchill's *Serious Money* (1987) and Tony Marchant's *Speculators* (1988), both plays that successfully interwove Thatcher's monetarist policies into successful theatrical productions, Lucy Prebble's *Enron* proved that economics and business can work as a viable, engaging, and successful theatrical event.

Whereas *Enron* stemmed from Prebble's interest in the company's failure, the prompting for *The Power of Yes*, David Hare's foray into the economic crisis, came from Nicholas Hytner, artistic director of the National Theatre. Seeing the financial wasteland affecting the country, Hytner felt that the National needed to produce a play addressing the crisis (just as it had done with the response to the British invasion of Iraq, when he called Hare and asked for a play, which became *Stuff Happens*). He once again called up Hare, asking him to write a play about the economic catastrophe shaking not only the City, but also the country as a whole, for example, the crisis surrounding the Royal Bank of Scotland, which had its customers queueing outside branches to remove their savings.

In order to help Hare with his research, the National hired Masa Serdarevic, a *Financial Times* journalist, to aid his understanding of the economic complexities. Hare made her a character in the play and through her assistance, Hare, in full journalistic mode, seeks out journalists, government officials, wealthy investors, and Nobel-prize winning economists to explain what led to this cataclysmic event. Unlike Prebble's fictionalized narrative presenting the demise of Enron, Hare chose verbatim theatre, which relies on factual items like interviews, documents, and transcripts to tell its story, as his narrative device. Twice before, Hare had used the format to great success earlier in the decade. *The Permanent Way* (2003) about the national rail crisis powerfully explored the deregulation of the country's rail system and the ensuing tragedies from two deadly crashes. His piece, offering searing testimony from victim's family members and upset employees, took the theatrical world by surprise in showing the inherent power of verbatim theatre to energize and personalize what seemed to be a fairly dry topic: the British rail service. He returned to verbatim theatre with *Stuff Happens* to examine Great Britain's commitment of troops to the Middle East after September 11th. Hare admitted that while the play did contain verbatim words from government officials, it also featured conversations that Hare made up to fit the events that unfolded–for example, a conversation between President George Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair as they walked on the grounds of Bush's Texas compound. Again, through this technique *Stuff Happened* was considered by some to be the most effective play in response to September 11th and the ensuing conflict in the Middle East. It would

make sense that he would return to the same format with his examination of the steps leading to the Great Recession.

However, what made the pieces before successful was absent in *The Power of Yes*. Hare revealed that his main motivation behind the creation of the piece "is clarity. I want a non-professional audience to understand an incredibly complicated subject, and no longer to feel excluded when it's reported on television" (National Theatre 6). In Hare's logic: "Plays which satisfy curiosity answer a deeper need than plays which recycle familiar psychological patterns" (6). He set out, then, to write a didactic play that would explain the crisis, and nothing more, unlike Prebble, who, as noted above, theatricalized a distinct psychological pattern present in Jeffry Skilling (that Shaw and Kushner used to great success in their plays), while also educating her audience on the specifics behind Enron's meltdown. Hare believed his audience needed an evening of education rather than an evening of theatrical entertainment. *The Power of Yes* is a lecture, a class lesson, a primer, but not really a play. His piece is comprised of a litany of suited men coming forth and lecturing Hare on the nature of the crisis and how it came to be. One critic joked that the play's real title should have been "Bring on the Suits" (Muir). And yet, the most intriguing part of the play occurs in the first few minutes as various economic authorities give Hare smart, theatrical advice about how he should write the play that he is researching, offering wise counsel to frame it as a Greek or Shakespearean tragedy or as a comedy or as a villainous portrayal of Alan Greenspan. Unfortunately, Hare did not listen to them. Ironically, the advice given by these economic experts is precisely what Prebble recognized was crucial in the telling of an economic disaster. At some point he must have realized the problematic path his play had taken because *The Power of Yes* begins with a disclaimer by David Hare, the character, who one critic termed as a "corduroy-clad Columbo" (Chakrabortty), announcing: "This isn't a play. It's a story. It doesn't pretend to be a play. It pretends only to be a story" (Hare 3). He attempts to pre-empt what he knows are going to be criticisms directed at the play's lack of theatricality. Unfortunately, his own self-criticism did not keep the critics at bay.

The reviews took Hare to task. *The Independent*, almost sounding like an English composition teacher reading a bad final draft of a student paper, wrote "this piece is not so much a play proper as an artfully arranged dramatization of the research that could have led to one" (Taylor). It continued on to state: "He's given us a sort of Everything You Wanted to Know About the Credit Crunch, But Were Afraid to Ask. It's honourable, lucid, tenacious, and a little dull" (Taylor). The *Socialist Review* thought that "By the end of the play Hare leaves his audience…more confused than they were at the start" (Farmer). In addition, "[t]his confused structure is compounded by the play's sheer blandness" (Farmer). *The Wall Street Journal* offered: "The play doesn't work as a drama. It's more like a lecture given by two dozen speakers" (Levy), while *The Guardian* called it "ploddingly unimaginative" (Flatt) and *The Sunday Telegraph* suggested that it was a "tutorial for slow learners" (Walker). Perhaps the most damning thing, which was echoed in many of the reviews, was that they encouraged their readers to avoid *The Power of Yes* and instead see Prebble's *Enron*, if they really wanted to understand the nature of the country's economic troubles.

While some of the reasons for the success and failure of the two plays have been laid out above by the opening night critics and the author's themselves, a more specific example of the intricacies of theatricalizing economics may be more efficacious in delineating the fate of the two works, namely: how they both handled mathematics.

A perfect example of the difficulties with dramatizing the math behind economic theory occurs in *The Power of Yes*, where Hare includes Robert Scholes' Nobel Prize-winning mathematical formula about managing risk when investing. Scholes explains the equation to Hare, while the formula appears on the screen behind him (one of the few theatrical flourishes in the play):

> An options' value, C, depends on five variables. The current market price of the stock, S. The agreed future price for the option, X. The time till the expiry of the option, T. The risk-free interest rate, R. And the decisive factor—the expected fluctuation of the stock price, called volatility, and represented by the Greek letter sigma. By working to the following formula–C equals S multiplied by N brackets d one which is the area under the Normal curve a d one, minus, X multiplied by e to the power negative rT multiplied by N brackets d two which is the area under the normal curve at d two. d one equals, log of S over x plus, open brackets, r plus sigma squared over two, close brackets, multiplied by T, all divided by sigma times the square root of T. d two equals d one minus sigma times the square root of T, it is possible accurately to arrive at the optimum selling price of option contracts. Does anyone have any questions? (10)

Clearly, Hare includes this impossible-to-follow equation as a jab at the erroneous and almost nonsensical rationale that financial risk can be mathematically mitigated, as the market proved the formula wrong in 2008-2009. Scholes' query if anyone has any questions successful pokes fun at the mind-numbing nature of the equation, but at the same time the formula's inclusion highlights precisely what is problematic in Hare's theatricalization of the crisis. The Black-Scholes' equation, featuring a litany of variables, which all become alphabet soup to the audience, is actually contained within a larger lecture by Scholes aimed at educating the audience about the incidents leading to the crisis. Scholes appears within the play's first fifteen minutes, and his presence occurs at an important moment of the play. The audience is now making the decision whether to become active participants (like Prebble's audience who leans forward from their chairs) in Hare's dramatic version of an economic classroom or mentally check-out, becoming passive members of the audience looking forward to intermission (becoming an audience who leans back into their chairs). Instead of intellectually or emotionally drawing his Lytellton theatre audience into the economic hubris behind the crash, as Prebble does with Enron, Hare's writing provokes glassy-eyed stares from Scholes's convoluted formula. Instead of providing building blocks to give the audience some comfortable ground upon which to build their understanding of the history behind the crisis, Hare presents them with complexity, mentally losing them almost immediately, as they divorce themselves from the material aimed to educate them. In turn, Scholes's formula merely reinforces what they already knew before coming into the theatre: the reasons behind the crisis are far and away too complex to understand. Rather than educating his audience, Hare reifies their position that it is beyond them.

And yet, a perfect counterpoint to Hare's use of Black-Scholes can be found in Simon Stephens' adaptation of Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, which ends with the main character, Christopher, a highly functional autistic teen, essentially doing exactly what Scholes does in *The Power of Yes*, namely, bombard the audience with a complex mathematical formula, in this instance a geometric proof. However, his equally esoteric proof about the characteristics of a right-angled triangle occurs to cheers and adulation from the audience, who revel in

Christopher's explanation of such a difficult mathematical equation, quite in contrast to the dry etchings of Scholes. Here is a sample of some of what he tells his audience:

> If a triangle is right angled, one of its angles will be 90 degrees and will therefore follow Pythagoras's theorem. Pythagoras said a squared plus b squared equals c squared. To put it simply, if you draw squares outside the three sides of a right-angled triangle then add up the area of the two smaller squares, this will be equal to the area of the larger square. This is only true if the triangle is right angled…. The A level question is an algebraic formula for making right-angled triangles. Algebra is like a computer program that works for whatever number you put into it. To find the area of a square you must multiply the length by the width. So … the area of this square is 2n x 2n. (101-2)

Like in *The Power of Yes*, the play relies on a video representation of the formula, in this case a computer-generated explanation of the proof appears writ large behind him on a screen as Christopher proves the theorem. No doubt, what Christopher shares with the audience is just as confusing and unclear to theatre goers without math smarts as what Scholes provides. However, what Stephens does is something that Hare fails to do. He recognizes that the formula needs to be theatricalized. Christopher's speech comes after the play has ended, and Christopher comes back on stage after the curtain call, just as the audience has begun to gather their belongings and head toward the exits (a perfect way to ensure he gets a standing ovation after he recites it). However, throughout the play the audience has been invested in Christopher's travails of trying to solve the murder of his neighbor's dog, his journey to London to find his mother, and the difficulties of trying to adapt to the changing familial dynamics of his life, all the while wanting to be the first in his school to take an A levels test. By the time the equation portion comes around, Stephens has primed the audience for this mathematical moment as the joyous pinnacle of Christopher's journey. Acknowledging the dullness of geometry, Stephens directs the creative crew to use

> as much theatricality as we can throw at it, using music, lights, sound, lasers, the boxes, the train tracks, the rest of the company, the orchestra, the fucking ushers for Christ's sake, using dance, song, bells, whistles, the works, he proves by means of a counter-example that when a triangle with sides that can be written in the form n squared plus one, n squared minus one and two n (where n is greater than one) is right angled. (99-100)

Stephens understands that math is not theatrical, it is not dramatic, and it is not interesting when spoken about or explained. Math is a dry topic that in the case of most people shuts them down immediately, as they longingly want to think about anything else. Math takes us back to boring high school or college classes. In other words, math sucks. If you are going to talk about it, you need, as Stephens notes, to use every single device at hand to make it interesting, which the play successfully does.

Hare, who made the topic of trains an emotional and powerful evening, cannot overcome the stagnating nature of math and in turn the play early on begins it precipitous descent into dullness. Prebble, though, is aware of this distinction and she, like Stephens, makes the discussions of the economic principles upon which Enron's financing is founded interesting, engaging and, more importantly, rooted in character. When the "mark to market" accounting principles are introduced early in the play, they are intrinsically tied into a party celebrating Enron's hiring of Skilling. At the party is Mark Fastow, who wants to ingratiate himself to his new boss. Of all the employees in

the room only Fastow understands of how the bookkeeping process works. Skilling acknowledges Fastow, saying "This guy gets it" (9), and this recognition will allow Fastow to move into Skilling's inner circle, becoming his second-in-command. This introduction of economic information not only allows for the explanation of a difficult financial principle to be shared with the audience but also introduces the symbiotic relationship between the two men who will eventually bankrupt Enron. They are the only ones who really understand the nature of the scheme. Later when Fastow suggests using shadow companies to help hide the debt being incurred by Enron, Fastow visually explains the scheme using his office to represent the size of Enron's debt. He then uses the example of boxes within boxes within boxes to show the Russian doll-like manipulation of phantom companies that will hide all of Enron's debt with only a minimal amount of capital outlay on their part to keep the transaction legitimate. Eventually, Fastow gets down to a box the size of a matchbox:

> Fastow: Until for all this to be real, for this huge shadow company to exist, all we actually need…
> *He opens the matchbox and takes out a tiny red, glowing box.*
> *He holds it up. The men are bathed in it like some totem from an Indiana Jones film.* (50)

On paper, the concept is difficult, but Prebble recognizes the importance of the visuals that theatre offers to explain the brilliance of and manipulative nature of the SEC's rules by Fastow's plan. Essentially, if all of Enron's debt was represented by Fastow's office, then all they would need is an outlay of cash the size of that box (in relation to the rest of the room) to keep it hidden. With the visuals, a confusing idea becomes completely clear, educating and entertaining the audience all at once.

Prebble, Hare, and many other British playwrights have seen the need to turn the theatre's attention to the financial world, but their aim is to find the delicate balance between explaining the complexity of economic formulas and policies and keeping the audience engaged. As Philip Broughton noted, the theatrical audience "want[s] to understand the roots of our economic problems in psychological, behavioral and technical terms. And they want great stories to help them. Writing about business today is not just worthy and necessary. It's as close as it may ever be to sexy". The challenge then becomes making the dry areas of finance emotionally powerful theatrical experiences. With the world's finances being interlocked in a global market, the precariousness of these economic relationships and reliances came to full fruition with the Great Recession of 2008-09. The British theatre has always been a location for exploring and explaining the socio-political ramifications of world events and their connection to Britain. With the recent spate of plays enmeshed in examining the economy, it behooves the writers to find ways to transfer the material in a palatably theatrical method to their audiences. If Prebble and Hare's plays are to be guide posts, then clearly Prebble has found a way to capture economic complexity, while also providing the emotional connection desired by the audience, making for a natural blend between two disciplines that very rarely intertwine. Time will tell as to whether Hare's drier method will find its own success with another playwright and economic topic.

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# Translating the Self:
# Palimpsest and Visual Poetics in Kathleen Fraser's Works

**Ufuk Gündoğan**

**Abstract:** Innovative contemporary poet Kathleen Fraser experiments with language and form in her poems, subverting conventional poetic style to give voice to muted women, exploring new ways of illustrating female experience. Fraser resists received poetic forms, as her poems are products of erasure and revision and possess a female self-empowerment as a result of reconstructing the text. Innovative techniques that stand out in her work are the use of palimpsest and visual poetics. Fraser's use of palimpsest is a subversive technique that bears traces of her predecessors' writings and makes audible the "muted" voices from the past. In addition, Fraser's innovative use of visual techniques illustrate her claim that man-made forms of writing and representations of women need to be re-"shaped". Her use of the visual aspect of poetry and palimpsest enable her to give voice to muted women and subvert the patriarchal construction of the female.

**Keywords:** Kathleen Fraser, visual poetics, muted women, feminism, palimpsest, revision

Among the most innovative contemporary writers, the American poet Kathleen Fraser[1] experiments with language and form in her poems, exploring innovative ways of illustrating female experience. Fraser is opposed to pre-established models and rules pertaining to poetry and resists these received forms, as her poems are products of erasure and revision and possess a female self-empowerment as a result of reconstructing the text. Innovative techniques that stand out in her work are the use of palimpsest and visual poetics. On the one hand, Fraser's use of palimpsest is a subversive technique that bears traces of her predecessors' writings and makes audible the "muted" voices of the past. On the other hand, Fraser's innovative use of visual techniques illustrate her claim that man-made forms of writing and representations of women need to be re-"shaped".

As many other theorists, Dale Spender also contends that "the silence which is required of women within a patriarchal order extends to writing" (191-92). This "muteness" thus unites women writers–whether or not they call themselves a feminist–to break this silence using innovative narrative strategies. In her book *Women and Men Speaking: Frameworks for Analysis*, Cheris Kramarae provides extensive research on the interaction between gender and language. Her theories are built on the work of anthropologists Edward and Shirley Ardener, who developed the "muted group" theory claiming that dominant groups are in control of access to communication. Consequently, according to this theory, the dominant subjects retain the power to create

[1] Fraser has published twelve volumes of poems and two children's books, including *What I Want* (1974), *Magritte Series* (1977), *New Shoes* (1978), *Each Next, narratives* (1980), *Something (even human voices) in the foreground, a lake* (1984), *Notes Preceding Trust* (1987), *When New Time Folds Up* (1993) and *WING* (1995). After *il cuore: the heart-New & Selected Poems (1970-1995)*, published by Wesleyan University Press in the Fall of 1997, her most recent collection is called *Discrete Categories Forced into Coupling* (2004).

reality as they perceive it, while the non-dominant groups are muted. Kramarae poses that "women's perceptions differ from those of men because subordination means they experience life differently. However, the words and norms for speaking are not generated from or fitted to women's experiences. Women thus are 'muted'" (*Women and Men Speaking* 1). It is clearly summed up in *International Encyclopedia of Women*, edited by Spender and Kramarae: "The way discourses name, define, and construct groups profoundly affect their identity and efficacy, especially among those such as women who have been designated 'other' and silenced accordingly" (263). While women have struggled against their exclusion from a dominant system, they have endeavoured to create a place for themselves in a literary tradition established through patriarchal language use.

For centuries, women writers have ventured to give shape to their own experiences while the models handed down to them are male-produced and do not lend themselves to express female experience; consequently, women have sought ways to be innovative in their writing. Although there exists a patriarchal resistance to women writing outside the tradition, modernist women invented different forms to express themselves, proving that gender plays a pivotal role in language use and style. Susan Howe also utters the common idea among women writers when she says "Yes, gender difference does affect our use of language, and we constantly confront issues of difference, distance, and absence, when we write" (13).

At the turn of the twentieth century, female poets expressed their need for a female authoritative voice as a role model. Kathleen Fraser, for instance, points out in her book *Translating the Unspeakable. Poetry and Innovative Necessity* (2000) that her "twentieth-century poetic writing models had been exclusively male" (93). She observes that women "were still being taught to read the world's codes through a limited authorship of mostly white male privilege" (94). In her essay "The Tradition of Marginality" (1985), Fraser also concludes from her studies of the early modernist women's writings that gender constitutes the basis of language, culture and tradition, and ponders:

> Why was there no acknowledged tradition of modernist women's poetry … as there clearly was for men (and women) working out of the Pound/Williams tradition or the Stevens/Auden lineage? Why had most of the great women modernists been dropped cold from reading lists and university curricula? Why were most feminist and traditional critics failing to develop any interest in contemporary women poets working to bring structure and syntactic innovation into current poetic practice? (61)

Similar questions have been posed by a great number of woman scholars and poets in search of strategies to break through conventions and utter their voice in innovative works. Nevertheless, especially when it comes to experimental poetry, writing outside the traditional lyric form is still accepted as a privilege only for male writers. In her essay "Without a Net: finding one's balance along the perilous wire of the new" in *Translating the Unspeakable*, Fraser states that "something still remains troubling about women writers' –even feminists, god forbid–working outside the tradition of the personal lyric or the classical epic forms. Whose status quo does it threaten?" (134-35). Although women writers produced extensive work, the impulse to subvert the "received structures of inherited language"–the grammar, lexis, and syntax–remains unacceptable. Fraser claims that it seemed "as if there were no tolerance for the contemporary extension of that 'new music' inherited from Dickinson and further pioneered by the brave and highly imagined writings of the modernist women preceding

us" (135-36). Through women-edited anthologies and journals, more women writers were able to publish their experimental and innovative work. These poems are characterized by "syntactical dislocation, complications of grammar, and shifting lines of subject" ("Without a Net" 138). Fraser also contends that "Dickinson understood, as did Stein, that one's linguistic perspective is inseparable from gender and that new–if traditionally uncomfortable–terms are needed with which to inscribe the at-oddness of a life whose forms of cultural expression and exclusion are continuously inherited and reforming" (137-38).

In the early 1970s, Fraser began lecturing at universities after the publication of her first book, *Change of Address* (1968), in addition to editing and publishing the journal *HOW(ever)* with associate editors Frances Jaffer, Beverly Dahlen and Susan Gevirtz, and contributing editors Carolyn Burke and Rachel Blau DuPlessis. The journal, currently published online as *How2*, ran from 1983 to 1991, and focused on innovative writing by contemporary women. The concept of women using a language in an innovative way to distinguish themselves from the predominant patriarchal mainstream is a common thread in women's poetry.

Particularly in her collection *New Shoes* (1977), Fraser's poems investigate patriarchy's myths, ideas, and images of the feminine and insist on a rewriting of the feminine. The female body provides for Fraser the place for knowledge and change. In addition, the poems in this collection show Fraser's writing process in visual poetics, in which she focuses her attention on spatial aspects of form. In her poems, the movement created by the lineation of words on the page, with links and breaks, create "textual forms" that "interact with the retextualization of the feminine" (Kinnahan, *Poetics of the Feminine* 190).

On writing her sonnets, the poet describes how the movement in them does not "follow a linear or logical development, as a more traditional lyric passage might. It more resembles the jump cuts in a film . . . One line in each sonnet was pulled out and used as a title to create a repetition and return of material by recontextualizing it" (Hogue, "An Interview with Kathleen Fraser" 18). She further notes that she wanted to "visualize a condition of 'rubble' of inner life next to [her] writing or organized reading life–so [she] puts these bits of language out in the margin, to talk with, to resonate with the main text" (18). Furthermore, Fraser intentionally includes errors in her poems. She explains how she is "partly making fun of an attitude of perfection that denies disruption as a reality, that denies all the accidents of change that shape our experience" (18).

A poet who refuses the prescribed definitions of poetry throughout her work, Fraser puts forth that the traditional, formal, left-justified and regularized poetic form proved to be an unsuitable means to create what she strived for. Her experimental poetics originates from necessity–it is a poetics that uses ellipsis, palimpsest, non-closure, and disruption. These are all radical approaches invented by writers who resisted being confined in existing forms. In her search for a new poetics that incorporates her view of the world, she progressed, for instance, to a poetics of error in which she embeds actual errors or "typos" as a part of poetic material. This led Fraser to engage in a writing process that focuses on the stages of writing instead of intentional writing or acceptable, intentional poetic form. In her book *Translating the Unspeakable*, the poet collects her essays on line, time, poetic form and shape, field, and the instability of poetry. Fraser describes her view and practice of "open poetry" as including the incidental and the unstable; concepts such as "contingency", "the incidental", "the inessential", and "instability" permeate her essays in this book. Moreover, the poet adopts open form as a means to interpret uncertainty and

dislocation. Influenced by H.D.'s works, Fraser uses palimpsest as a technique in creating a visual poetics. Dislocated sentences and simultaneous lines in the margins interact with each other as they produce multiple meanings. In addition to this technique, Fraser uses the page as a visual field for her innovative work. Broken-up lines, handwritten texts intertwined with typeset texts, and inserting alternative words comprise some elements of her visual poetics.

Describing herself as a lyric poet, she points out how by seeing other forms of poetry, she became more visually and syllabically aware. In an interview with Cynthia Hogue, Fraser explains that she strives for "a notation of one's own way of seeing things– the movement of a mind as it notices and jumps. Although I was increasingly conscious of gender issues, I never thought of participating in the construction of a separate 'female' language. What did have meaning for me, thinking about structure, was a notion of "female time" ("An Interview with Kathleen Fraser" (10). Fraser states that she has tried "poetic gestures for recording broken-up time" (13). As an example that inspired her, the poet refers to T. S. Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", which was composed "to have one narrative text going, and then to have bits of language to the side of that, representing one's own argument with the primary text, or even to locate other, simultaneously held fragments of perception" (13). This is a recurring strategy in Fraser's poems as well. In the beginning of the 1970s, Fraser described herself as not being interested in essentialist views of female language or female poetry. Rather, she explores a more layered, structural poetics of fragmented or multiple perspectives. She states: "[t]hat was my truth" (13). Later on, she created her own feminist poetics that ventured to recreate the feminine.

The poet H.D. introduced the concept of the *palimpsest*: writing on top of previous writing creating layers and contributing to a female collective consciousness. In *The Pink Guitar*, Rachel Blau DuPlessis describes palimpsest writing as "an over-written page, a script under which is shadowed another script, another text ... palimpsest is the visual image of the situation of writing. Palimpsest is the feel of writing within the consciousness of the producer of poetic language" (86). In this kind of writing, imperfectly erased writing from old female texts and myths are still present, in addition to pieces of language and words. Poetry becomes for the contemporary woman writer a place to break out of her social and cultural role and "break rank: *her* words, *her* line lengths and placements, *her* 'stuff'" (Fraser, "Line" 156).

Besides palimpsest, another innovative style in Fraser's works is visual poetics, or "concrete poetry" as Marjorie Perloff defines it in her book *Differentials* (2004)–the visual arrangement of text, images and symbols is crucial to convey the intended effect of the work in visual poetry, which blurs the distinction between art and text. In *Modern Visual Poetry* (2001), the scholar Willard Bohn defines visual poetry "as poetry that is meant to be seen–poetry that presupposes a viewer as well as a reader. Combining visual and verbal elements, it not only appeals to the reader's intellect but arrests his or her gaze" (15). Bohn adds that all poems are in a sense visual because the words are first processed by the eye before the mind interprets them. Poets who engage in visual poetry refuse to conform to a rectilinear form and transform their poems into a picture. The visual information is presented through the particular distribution of the poem's lines on the page that determine the reading of the text. In order to interpret the written message, the reader needs to follow verbal and visual signals.

Visual poetry dates back to ancient Greece or even earlier and was known as *technopaigneia* to the Greeks and as *carminafigurate* to the Romans; the poems were composed in the shape of wings, altars, eggs, axes, and panpipes. As Bohn contends, throughout history, "visual poets sought to 'restructure the basic vision' they had

inherited" (17). The technique experienced a revival during the Renaissance, used by poets like George Herbert, introducing new shapes including circles, pyramids, and columns (Bohn 16). There was a rebirth once *more* in the use of visual poetics at the beginning of the twentieth century, and writers continue to experiment with visual poetics today. Visual poetry enables writers to present their works in more meaningful ways and also for aesthetic purposes.

Fraser's groundbreaking essay on form, "Line. On the Line. Lining up. Lined with. Between the lines. Bottom line", quotes from *Preparation of Manuscripts on Word Processors and Computers* (University of Illinois Press): "Type headings, excerpted passages, poetry, etc., indented uniformly or flush left. Don't center anything" (in Fraser 141). This is a very distinct and definite regulation that is supposed to define all good writing and writing poetry and composing form. Fraser states that

> [t]he line, for a poet, … is the visual enactment of perspective and difference ... the line reveals a great deal ... [t]he poetic line is a primary defining place, the site of watchfulness where we discover *how* we hear ourselves take in the outside world and tell it back to ourselves ... great poets ... perceived it as a tool for reassembling language to a new order … the frame of the page, the measure of the line, has provided for many contemporary women poets the difficult pleasure of reinventing the givens of poetry, imagining in visual, structural terms core states of female social and psychological experience not yet adequately tracked; hesitancy, silencing, or speechlessness, continuous disruption of time, "illogical" resistance, simultaneous perceptions and agendas, social marginality. ("Line" 141-42)

Fraser sees the poem as a visual field–the space creates the sense of this field of the page, where meaning is created or discovered instead of being portrayed as a given. Closure and definiteness is not the necessity; instead, this space engenders meaning. Fraser's poetry is an endeavor that brings a new dimension which produces multiple meanings, flexibility, and female subjectivity. In her poems, meaning is continuously uncertain, providing the reader with possible interpretations through the visual space, as the poet also re-invents her relation to language out of her necessities. Besides using the page as a visual field, Kathleen Fraser is interested in the collage technique in her poetry. Formulating her own poetic style, she emphasizes how she was inspired by Marianne Moore's construction of her poems using collage techniques. Fraser's technique of collaging different languages, which Cynthia Hogue defines as "a highly intuitive, associative, and frankly subjective process" is unique ("An Interview with Kathleen Fraser" 6).

The spatial inventiveness in Fraser's poems illustrates the relation of language and the material world to the visual. Not only does Fraser experiment with the visual aspect of poetry writing, but she also draws attention to other innovative women writers who experiment with language and visual form. Deeply invested in her predecessors' work, Fraser developed a gendered consideration of the visual field as a place for exploration. H.D.'s poetic work, especially *Trilogy*, is a major influence on Fraser's poems. In her essay "The Blank Page: H.D.'s invitation to trust and mistrust language", Fraser describes how H.D. "refused the finality of the already filled page … [H.D.'s] gift was an ability to see the empty page waiting to be inscribed and to imagine … the blank page would never be a full text until women writers … scrawled their own scripts across its emptiness" (53-4).

In her poem "Locations" from *New Shoes*, Fraser embodies her views on this "retextualization" of the feminine experience.

To give up
finally    to stop holding
the infant idea    how deep
you've been told to hurt,

to dissemble the structure
of wounds which choose
to resemble one another

Someday, because he was an exquisite set
of gestures, you thought
still    you would escape
the yearning to be surprised infinitely

A home inside yourself.
Your body held unto itself.

There were ways of talking.

According to Kinnahan, "only in dissembling 'the structure of wounds' marking the female body can women reclaim their bodies from cultural idealization and degradation" (*Poetics of the Feminine* 191).

Fraser illustrates her thoughts on women's images in texts by male authors and writes against them. In her poem "Flood" (*New Shoes*), she points out her refusal in the line "out of the old/female sleep". The form of the poem represents a moving, flowing female body with the lines arranged down the page, and moving back and forth through white space in irregular distances from the left margin. The poem is actually like the "body/seen/ in motion" as the speaker describes toward the end of the poem. She wants to rewrite this body and it can be seen visualized as breaking in the motion. The spacing and visualization of the poem represents this break, and the speaker remembers Gaugin's woodcut in which he wrote the words "Soyez Mystérieuses" (Be Mysterious).

"Flood"

Dear someone, sometime
in a panic
in your mind
you hide behind
my hot indifference
which you imagine warily
to be conceptually strong
as celluloid intelligence.
But over here, where it's dark out,
I'm just me
feeling uneasy in these nights
cold and black.
I turn the heat up
higher
thinking other people's lives
are warmer,
suffer the suspicion

I'm mediocre,
remembering how
Gauguin whispered
*Be Mysterious.*
Into wood he cut it

Soyez Mysterieuses

above the backside of
a female body
lying perfectly
voluptuous
in mud
or sleeping (was it?)
as if pillowed
and dreamy with her legs
explicitly
not there
but held in darkness
under wild waves curling
where his tool entered
wood
showing us
his choice for her
impacted
in the prolonged watery beat
always sleeping
face sideways
with flesh of body
soft white wanting
to nod out
of what the next cut
might reveal.
The message moves forward
like a Ouija board
with its own hands
*Soyez Mystérieuses.*
You get the joke.
Babyhood becomes us
and is still yours
for one night. I offer it
as evidence
and then it's my turn;
now you be the strong one,
Lady mama, Queen somebody.

The male artist's "phallic" tool cuts the female body, at the same time erasing the feminine as the speaker says her legs are "explicitly/not there". Her legs are "held in darkness/under wild waves curling/where his tool entered/wood/showing us/his choice for her". The poem continues with "You get the joke./Babyhood becomes us"; this is the model of womanhood. From the male gaze, there exists a stereotypical model of the feminine, but asleep. As the speaker says: "always sleeping/face sideways/with flesh of body/soft white wanting/to nod out/of what the next cut/might reveal". Fraser's poem pictures a movement of women out of this sleep–a movement that frees the body.

Aslant,
you appear
in relief
but feel yourself
moving out of the old
female sleep.
You hear the intellect
of cells
turning over,
recognize
in another's gaze
a different subject, not merely
"you" and "me" not even
representational or
seductive
but hungry for breakfast
under waking Pacific sky
and eager to swim out.
I want
to turn this body
over,
show you her face
awake and askew,
imperfectly ready
to re-write
the flood,
nothing in the way,
all of the body
seen
in motion.

As Kinnahan puts it in her analogy: "Fraser's dance, like Isadora Duncan's modernist free-footed dance, choreographs itself in reaction to a specifically male-defined pattern of steps, the male-authored texts of the feminine" (*Poetics of the Feminine* 192). Fraser's focus is on the rewriting of the female body–in particular, on the "awakening" of the body or "flood" of women's language.

Fraser's later poems in the form of journal entries enabled her to explore shifting subjects that she believed were more suitable to her experience as a woman. The "I" in her poems is under constant change and the poet's experiments with possible subjects

brought her to writing the long poem "The Story of Emma Slide (as found in her Accounts Ledger)" in *Each Next* (1980). This poem is written as fictional journal entries and, at the same time, it is carefully constructed by its use of the page space. Fraser also discusses this poem in her 1979 essay, "How Did Emma Slide? Or the Gestate: A New Poem Form for Women". She describes how she "took on the persona of Emma Slide like a costume or mask that expressed some very real part of [her]–some voice that had been too small and baffled to risk its nakedness as *my* voice in my 'regular' poems" (41). In the second entry of the poem, there is an interior monologue in which Emma tries to figure out the inconsistency between the romantic ideal she envisions and the reality of the relationship with her new lover. She questions:

> Is this what she wants? A repetitive nature.
> No, but to grow plant-like
> from the center
> but new.

Fraser urges a renewal–a rewriting of the female body into something new, instead of the previously, male-shaped versions of the feminine. The poet uses the journal form in her poems to demonstrate the possibilities in poetic form, which is attached to the female body and female subjectivity. In doing so, she connects the feminine experience with the elements of journal writing–interruption, circularity, and no closure, refusing the classical beginning, middle and end of traditional poetic form. In her experiments with, Fraser focuses on the changing relationship between the body, the self, and language use.

Throughout her writing in the 1990s, Fraser explored how to visualize inner thoughts and experience. Experimenting with the visual means, she explored how the page, the lineation, typography, white space, and interruptions provide a means to create what Fraser calls "a visual scaffolding on which to construct formerly inarticulate states of being" ("Translating" 175). According to Kinnahan, "this way of bringing forward the 'inarticulate' is particularly relevant to women writing within (but outside of) masculine constructs of expression and experience" ("An incremental shaping"). The focus on the gendered interiority that Kinnahan refers to cannot be represented through conventional frames of vision and grammars of language. This fact, as Fraser claims, results in a "longing to make visible one's own peculiar way of experiencing how the mind moves and how the senses take note" ("Translating" 175).

Instead of focusing on the content and meaning of the poem, Fraser foregrounds formal, visual, and graphic elements of poetry. Furthermore, her investigations of interiority create a connection between language structures and experience of gendered identity and the body. Conventionally, the poem's structure has been considered transparent as the reader focuses solely on the words and content. In Fraser's poetry, the visual–rather than just the words–represents knowledge. The act of seeing is not regarded only as a biological process, but it also involves cultural and historical influences.

In her long poems such as "Etruscan Pages", "Giotto: ARENA", and "when new time folds up", Fraser investigates a spatial, as well as a textual layering of texts. These poems are presented to the reader as visual objects and invite the process of perception. In other poems, the words are scattered on the page or arranged in nonlinear and unconventional style. The page space is the main element in the long poem "WING" (*il cuore* 1997) which is composed of ten sections. Different forms and shapes are

fashioned that illustrate the randomness through the play with word order. The focus is on construction by using the page creatively–the pages are composed in a careful manner representing cubes and an angel's wing in "X. Vanishing point: Third Black Quartet". Fraser also quotes a part of her long poem "WING" in the third part of her book *Translating the Unspeakable* called "Continuum. Contingency. Instability".

> WING
> I. THE UNDERDRAWINGS
> The New comes forward in its edges in order to be itself;
>
> its volume by necessity becomes violent and three-dimensional
> and ordinary, all similar models shaken off and smudged
>
> as if memory were an expensive thick creamy paper and every
> corner turned now in partial erasure,
>
> even bits of pearly rubber, matchstick and lucent plastic
> leaving traces of decision and little tasks performed
>
> as if each dream or occasion of pain had tried to lift itself
> entirely away, contributing to other corners, planes and
> accumulated depth
>
> .
>
> the wing is not static but frayed, layered, fettered, furling and
> stony
>
> its feathers cut as if from tissue or stiffened cheesecloth
> condensed in preparation for years of stagework
>
> attached to its historic tendons; more elaborate
> the expansive ribcage, grieving, stressed, yet
>
> marked midway along the breastbone with grains of light
> .
>
> there are two men, they are tall men, and they are talking softly
> among the disintegrating cubes

Fraser opens her long poem with "The New", describing the outcome of accumulated female common consciousness and the new that is overwritten on the old writings. A cultural palimpsest is composed of the layers of her writing, situated in poststructuralist feminist scholarship, in addition to being initiated by the works of H.D. and other women writers and feminist experimental writing of the 1980s. In her article, "A Tradition of Marginality", Fraser claims the need to read the nonconformist literary foremothers "to reconstruct that pre-existing tradition of modernist women who need us to acknowledge them as much as we need them to fall back on […] so that *we* may set out a light for whatever next unknown voices are laboring in the dark" (26). This new form of poetry writing, "in order to be itself … has shaken off and smudged … all similar models" (26). The poet goes on to give a graphic description of the palimpsest

as writing on which new writing “smudges” and partially erases the earlier writings, while bringing older writings of her predecessors to light again.

In this “new” poetic style, Fraser brings together the palimpsest fragments of thought, quotations, phrases, sentences, and words that are separate from each other. In “First Black Quartet: Via Tasso”, Fraser demonstrates what she describes as “the breaking up of matter and its reformation” (Hogue, “I Am Not of That Feather” 179).

II. FIRST BLACK QUARTET: VIA TASSO

<table>
<tr><td>A cube’s clean volume<br>its daily burnt mark<br>backwards into match<br>day’s oxygen, common<br>the remaining light<br>nothing changed yet<br>have a way of crash</td><td>shatters and reassembles<br>the New is used and goes<br>sticks one struck at each<br>pinched breath and nerve<br>bricked-up Now melt with<br>he persists as does pain<br>ing in on you, swimming</td></tr>
<tr><td>through matter heart<br>are two men turning<br>that one particular<br>to unfold in expand<br>stars: “that which<br>improvised on deep<br>picking, pecking at<br>sent to tell us what</td><td>rate in each cell There<br>their limit of blanket<br>evening appears in reds<br>ing brilliant traces or<br>is known to us” or just<br>kitchen floor meanwhile<br>our skins ghost or angel<br>we didn’t want to know</td></tr>
</table>

In this poem, four cubes are spatially placed and illustrate Fraser’s formal innovations emerging from H.D.’s writing that is shattered and reassembled. H.D. explored semantic innovations in her poetics, and Fraser continues on these with formal experiments. In “Wing”, the spatial relations and use of the page space is the main focus. The lineation constructs forms and shapes that produce accidental and random meanings with word play and word order. Geometric forms and spacing depict the sections of the poem and its construction transforms meaning, while featuring the ancient icon of the angel. In the last section, the angel’s wing is visually composed on the page.

X. VANISHING POINT: THIRD BLACK QUARTET

forward edge itself to be volume by necessity as if partial
edge itself to be volume by necessity as if partial erase
itself to be volume by necessity as if partial erase
to be volume by necessity as if partial erase
be volume by necessity as if partial erase
volume by necessity as if partial erase
by necessity as if partial erase
necessity as if partial erase
as if partial erase
if partial erase
partial erase
erase
of
pearly
lucent
decision
and
little
tasks
of
pain
had
tried
to
lift
to lift
tried to lift
had tried to lift
pain had tried to lift
of pain had tried to lift
tasks of pain had tried to lift
little tasks of pain had tried to lift
and little tasks of pain had tried to lift
decision and little tasks of pain had tried to lift
lucent decision and little tasks of pain had tried to lift

erase
other
corners
planes
accumulate
depth
condensed
in
preparation
stagework
historic
tendons
elaborate
ribcage
marked
midway
with
grains
of
light
talking
softly
among
disintegrating
cubes
the
falling
wing
will
draw
the
mind
as
a
bow

itself the wing not static but frayed, layered, fettered, furling

The palimpsest technique is described in the above poem: partially erased texts are overwritten with new texts, emerging from necessity. This shape represents an angel's wing and it is comprised of fragments of words and phrases that continuously repeat erasure: "forward edge itself to be volume by necessity as if by partial erase" and ending with the line "lucent decision and little tasks of pain had tried to lift". Fraser's experimentation is described in these lines. Furthermore, in her *Afterword* in *il cuore*, Fraser describes how her poetry emerges out of "unplanned accident–covert error leading to unimpeded risk–as by the peculiar emotional resonance or formal design initially intended. Isn't the typo, after all, a word trying to escape its single-version identity? It wants deciphering. Just as the alphabet is 'at large', so it the fugitive identity of the poem … on the prowl, looking for its next escape from the already known" (197).

In her interview with Hogue, Fraser talks about the process of writing this last section which was not planned; it was an experiment with mechanical and formal

repetition that produced the shape of a wing. Through experimentations with language and form and subverting social and cultural hierarchy, Fraser "break[s] boundaries, cross[es] over" ("Line" 156). With a particular, gendered and historical consciousness, she makes the world and word "unfamiliar", since "a woman wants to fly, takes on the male domain in which to attempt it" (159-60). Through "Wing", the poet opens her wings to the possibilities in poetics and to the "New": "itself the wing not static but frayed, layered, fettered, furling". According to Fraser, the "new" in art and poetics is in the form of the angel, who is usually portrayed as a messenger. This new poetics is not independently shaped, but "attached to its historic tendons; more elaborate/the expansive ribcage, grieving, stressed, yet // marked midway along the breastbone with grains of light" (I. The Underdrawings).

In her latest poetry collection, called *Discrete Categories Forced into Coupling* (2004), Fraser represents once more the connection between gendered subjectivity, the body, and the reproduced image in her poem "Perihelion" in the section "You can hear her breathing in the photograph". The poem is based on a postcard photograph of Bernini's marble sculpture called *Apollo and Daphne*, which illustrates the instance when Daphne's body is transforming into a lintel tree, enabling her to escape from the god. The postcard represents the commercialization of high art and the role of the photographer in reproducing an earlier reproduction of a mythic story, resulting in a visual presentation of how that image of two bodies is interpreted differently at different times. In the poem, the speaker envisions Bernini's idea while making the sculpture that displays Apollo's masculinity and self-confidence next to Daphne's restlessness. Simultaneously, the photographer confirms the Greek god's urge to "possess" Daphne– "to hold the thing he knows must be his". The male photographer also displays a wish to "capture" this image in order to emphasize masculine prowess. The female speaker is repelled by this "anatomy of imagined capture", and wishes to "put [the postcard] away in a box", while the image comes up, she asks: "Why must the photograph of the two of them come out of its envelope every year and be pinned to the wallpaper?". The poem ends with Daphne's point of view:

> She did not think–or did she?–running towards herself and having no
> Idea of where the next life might be. Out of sight seemed the place.
>
> She was inside and outside of him and visible, forced too soon by his
> definiteness.
>
> Her indefiniteness was not tolerable to his practiced will.
> She wanted the shape of a lintel.

The ambiguous "he" can possibly refer to Apollo, Bernini, or the male photographer or all three male figures simultaneously. The speaker interprets the visual representation of the power relation between genders and through this, Daphne is made visible. In addition, her "indefiniteness" is a re-reading and interpretation though the speaker's vision–what her eye chooses to see. The point of view is no longer that of the sculptor or the photographer, but of the female speaker who looks at the commercially reproduced postcard. Fraser subverts the traditional, phallocentric mythic narrative of Daphne and Apollo while she also subverts power and authority associated with gender. Different perspectives of the self, history, and culture function through the visual. Fraser presents us with the viewpoint and mind of Daphne, only one of the numerous female mythic characters who are muted, without a story of their own.

Kathleen Fraser's poems illustrate the influence of the visual in the shaping of meaning–the relation of what we see and how. Fraser's poems, with their visual markings, spacing, and relations, prompt readers to explore the visual experience on the page and re-address the mind to think out of the conventional expectations of the language as having transparent and set meaning. The formal experimentation in the poems leads readers to review their visual habits and re-evaluate the ideology behind interpretation of the visual. Fraser's visually experimental poems disturb and blur the "discrete categories" of vision and meaning that have been handed down and taught to us**.** By experimenting with the visual page, Fraser is immersed in an ongoing venture to "translate the unspeakable", to convey the "ignored", the true self.

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# Language and Power Relations in Martin Crimp's *The Country*

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**Abstract:** Martin Crimp takes his deserved place in the great tradition of British new writing due to his originality in language and his innovative attitude towards theatrical form. He continues to push the boundaries of writing and theatrical representation where language is not a means of communication but a veil preventing truth from resurfacing. The scarcity of research in uncovering Crimp's portrayal of the complex and dynamic relationships between language and power is a valuable source of motivation for this essay. In the first place, it explores the vigorous relationships between language and power through the terminology of Barthes, Bourdieu and Foucault. The essay then continues to analyze Crimp's play *The Country* (2000) in the light of the proposed theoretical framework, with particular focus on language which is used as a strong weapon to organize power relations among the characters.

**Keywords:** Contemporary British Drama, Martin Crimp, *The Country*, language, power

## Introduction

Martin Crimp, one of the most innovative playwrights in Britain today, has established his exceptional place in the tradition of British playwriting with his world-renowned dramatic/text-based and postdramatic/non-text-based plays. The audience/readers experience the discomfort and unfamiliarity in theatre as his plays subvert dramatic conventions based on a clear plot structure and orthodox narratives. Crimp uses a difficult theatrical form, and his aim is "to hang on, to insist on what is dark, what is peculiar, what is disturbing" (Sierz, *The Theatre* 171). In this respect, Crimp is regarded as one of the most significant playwrights with his versatile, creative and aesthetically prolific and challenging plays (Middeke et al. 82).

Angelaki labels Crimp's theatre as a theatre of defamiliarization, emphasizing the importance of "subtext, an undercurrent of hidden communication and activity" (1). Indeed Crimp's theatre is "strange", for he deconstructs the formal elements of drama and rediscovers plot, character, setting and staging, dialogue, and theme in unique ways to create aesthetic and ethical effects. Malkin observes that postwar British playwrights are fascinated with the power of language and how "man has become a prisoner of his speech" (1). Additionally, Crimp not only appropriates the postwar tradition of using language as a tyrannical weapon of dominance and destruction but also adapts a postdramatic European perception (İnan 1780). Dromgoole, too, defines Crimp as a truly European writer, "[i]ntellect and image rule the theatre in Europe" (61). Crimp continues to be preoccupied with the sinister tone veiled under banality and politeness, a sense of the dystopic British suburbia, unknowability of the other, and the explosive potential of withheld knowledge. His theatre thus continues to be an enigma and a mystery for contemporary scholars and spectators.

## *The Country*: "The More You Talk, the Less You Say"

Crimp is fascinated with the disjuncture between married couples, and how the alleged intimacy in matrimony turns into a fear of the unknown, an occasion for betrayal, and a place for power games. The selected play is about middle-class adultery.

Richard, a General Practitioner, moves to the countryside with his wife Corinne and his children to escape the city and live a simpler life. One night, Richard comes home with an unconscious woman, named Rebecca, in his arms. As she recovers, Richard's wife Corinne learns that Rebecca and Richard are not only having an affair, but also degenerating each other into drug abuse. The bare stage setting and the language the characters use indicate the barrenness in their exchanges and relationships. The exchanges are mostly short and are characterized by a simple question and answer format. The mechanical and superficial exchanges convey a lack of affection and passion in the couple's marriage. Crimp treats language as sequences of sounding words rather than inert symbols whose only function is to point to their encoded meanings (Campbell and Katz). Angel-Perez, too, comments that in Crimp's plays, "the scene of action is nowhere on the stage" because "the only 'drama' that takes place onstage is speaking".

**The Game of "Scissors-Paper-Stone"**

In the play, the triangular relationship is designed around the children's game of "scissors-paper-stone"–a circular and strategic game in which there is no winner. Regarding the use of children's game, Middeke et al. claim that the five-scene structure of the play is "an ironical echo of the five-act structure of classical tragedy" (93). Crimp disrupts the ostensible order and unity with references to the children's game (Middeke et al.; Escoda Agusti). The play's structure, in this sense, may be defined as a parody of the classical tragedy. Through using one of the three choices in the children's game, the play shows how Richard changes the "linear, progressive narrative of the women's lives and of life in the country" (Escoda Agusti 177). In the first scene, Corinne explains how she has been interrogated by Morris in the afternoon, with an ulterior motive to threaten the bond of complicity between Richard and Morris. Thus, the first scene ends in "scissors", showing that Corinne tries to achieve success over Richard. The fourth scene which focuses on Richard and Rebecca also ends in "scissors" like the first one. While the conversation between Richard and Rebecca initially appears to be gentle, it suddenly turns into violence when Rebecca stabs a pair of scissors into Richard's hand. This scene shows that Rebecca physically takes revenge from Richard through her violent act. On the other hand, the scenes ending in "paper" imply Rebecca and Corinne's desire to escape from Richard's complicity and lies, and to reshape their lives differently from the one Richard presents them. Finally, the scenes ending in "stone" may signify the women's self-awareness, and recognition of the truths that Richard withholds (Escoda Agusti 177). The second scene ends in stone when Corinne finds a needle in Rebecca's purse, and Morris and Richard talk about the old patient they have let die. Escoda Agusti claims that this scene ends in "stone", because Corinne still remains subjected to Richard's desire (177). She cannot invert the terms of the relationship that leaves the wife dependent on the husband yet. Although she suspects that something is wrong at the hospital, she still tries to trust her husband.

**Language and Power Theories, and Martin Crimp**

The vigorous relationships between language and power in the play will be explored through the terminology introduced by Barthes, Bourdieu and Foucault. Crimp's particular use of language to exert power in *The Country*, and the use of language as a strong weapon to organize power relations among the characters will be

analyzed, and a series of resolutions will be introduced from a critical perspective based on the useful terminology coined by Barthes, Bourdieu, and Foucault.

**Roland Barthes and Martin Crimp**

Barthes is one of the most influential French poststructuralists whose linguistic, textual and the reader-oriented critical approach serves as an invaluable medium in interpreting Crimp's work. Barthes introduces a distinction between "writerly" and "readerly" texts, and devotes particular attention to writerly-text. Barthes argues that the "readerly" texts provide predetermined meanings, and force the reader into a passive posture of readerly consumption. The "readerly" texts, thus, do not challenge the readers and do not demand a reconstruction of meaning through reading. Writerly-texts, on the other hand, force the readers mentally, engaging them to produce their own active recreation of the text. Crimp's works are indeed writerly-texts whose readers are expected to make an active effort to produce multiple meanings. In "The Death of the Author", Barthes notes that the author enters his own death when writing begins (142). The writer's death is metaphorical and it leads to the birth of the reader in that it finds its origins in the meaning-making process that is present in the relationship between the writer and reader (Davis and Womack 59). Once the author is metaphorically dead, readers gain a more privileged position in generating meanings from the text; they can interpret a text regardless of authorial intention, and their interpretation move beyond the limitations of an author-centered way of reading (Hitchcock 59). The audience/reader actively participates in the meaning making process in *The Country* because the language that Crimp uses creates a sense of suspicion for the audience/reader who can never be quite sure as to which character will prevail in the intense verbal matches (Angelaki 99).

In "From Work to Text", Barthes suggests that the text practises "the infinite deferment of the signified" (158). Indeed in Crimp's texts the meaning is always postponed. Particular signifiers or words such as "stone", "track", "needles", "job", "solicitous" and "clean" in *The Country* are repeated several times to create a sinister resonance. The audience/reader is also challenged by the signs. As the Royal Court literary manager Graham Whybrow says, "Crimp displays his fascination with the slipperiness of the sign" (in Sierz, The Theatre 144-45). Hence meaning and knowability come under an enormous strain (Sierz, *The Theatre* 145). In the play, the characters' dialogues constantly slip from the certain into the questionable, so the audiences/readers can never be exactly sure what is happening. The readers need to be alert for subtextual implications of the utterances: When Corinne, for instance, comments that Richard is being strangely "solicitous", Richard replies that the word reminds him of the verb "solicit" (*The Country* 349). Yet, Corinne points out that "solicitous" refers to "to care" (348). The high-heeled shoes at the end are also an indication of certain desires that Richard imposes on Corinne– to look young, to win his attention, to be "better" than Rebecca in Richard's eyes. Giving Corinne a pair of high-heeled shoes, Richard dictates a transformation on Corinne's identity; as the stage directions indicate, "there is something unsettling about [the shoes] […] Perhaps, for example, they are a little too high for her" (352). Clearly, the text for Barthes and Crimp is richly questioning and questionable, overflowing with subtextual suggestions. Hence both the characters and the spectators prefer to postpone the act of arriving at a meaning.

**Pierre Bourdieu and Martin Crimp**

Bourdieu's theories on the relationship between language and symbolic power provide us with an insight to decipher twisted meanings and deception in the *The Country*, in which each individual word is exploited as a means of power and a way of demeaning one another. Bourdieu argues that social patterns of behavior reproduce structures of domination. He develops the term *habitus*, which is a set of dispositions and organizing principles that generate and structure human actions and behaviors. His concept of habitus takes into account the power relations that exist between social classes. He infers that the language one uses is designated by one's relational position in a field or social space. Crimp's characters' linguistic interactions are manifestations of their respective positions in social space and categories of understanding, and thus tend to reproduce the objective structures of the social field.

For Bourdieu, language and words can be the source of symbolic violence in the sense that they impose one meaning over another (24). Likewise, in Crimp's plays, words are the source of symbolic violence. The repeated words such as "scissors", "stone" and "water" in *The Country* are associated with cruelty. Bourdieu argues that there are no neutral or innocent words, and that all words convey some form of ideology. In the play, the characters use certain common words strategically to gain power. Rebecca and Corinne, for instance, occupy different positions in the social space within the context of the city/country opposition, and on that account they are endowed with different intentions and interests in their use of the word "history" (323). This word does not possess a univocal meaning for Rebecca and Corinne. When Corinne asks Rebecca to leave the house, Rebecca aggressively responds "Shall I go to Morris? Shall I speak Latin? Shall I talk History?" (330). Rebecca's use of the word "history" is strategic, for she uses this word to underline Corinne's ignorance, and to make her feel threatened because of her inability to compete with Rebecca in the fields of history and Latin. The word "history" represents another threat because it also underlines Corinne's ignorance of Rebecca and Richard's shared past. Hence the word "history" is devoid of its neutral meaning and is used to express dominance and mastery on Rebecca's side. Certain words threaten to take on two antagonistic senses, reflecting the way in which it is understood by the sender and the receiver (Bourdieu 40). Consequently, utterances are not only signs to be understood and deciphered, but also signs of wealth, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and signs of authority in Bourdieu's critical terminology.

According to Bourdieu, language should be viewed not only as a means of communication but also as a medium of power through which individuals pursue their interests and display their practical competence (16). Similarly, Crimp's characters pursue strategies which aim at dominating others by using words as a powerful instrument to discredit, criticize, or subordinate other people. The word "job", for example, indicates characters' desire to gain power. Corinne is suspicious from the start, and begins to question her husband about the mysterious stranger: "This person. Is she asleep? When will she wake up?" (292). Richard responds Corinne's suspicious remarks saying that his profession requires him to save the young woman: "It's my job to bring her here" (292). The word "job" is repeated in the same scene, and there is both direct and indirect accusatory questioning when Corinne advises him to inform Morris (Richard's senior colleague) about this unconscious woman: "Your job is not to be concerned?" (294). Corinne's utterances imply that Richard has broken the law and violated the rules of his job, so this particular word is strategically used to make Richard feel threatened and uncomfortable.

In addition, Bourdieu argues that our way of speaking is a compromise between what is to be said and what we are allowed to in our discourses, which are called as euphemisms (78). Euphemism is used as a strategy to soften, diminish or obscure the real meaning of words while still conveying the meaning. The use of euphemisms is precisely the case in Crimp's work. In *The Country*, euphemism enables readers to understand well-preserved and concealed aspects of the relations in which words and expressions can be questioned as a readjustment, concealing the hidden but underlying specific interests of the powerful (Siisiainen); for instance, Rebecca describes her addiction, which Richard has been feeding by supplying drugs, as "treatment" and defines heroin as "medicine" (342).

Bourdieu also points out that the relationship between language and power is not determined solely in linguistic terms, but it also depends upon the social structure present in these interactions (40). In Bourdieu's terms, power does not operate through words alone, and it is ascribed to individuals by social institutions. He clarifies the term institution as follows: "An institution is not necessarily a particular organization–this or that family or factory, for instance–but is any relatively durable set of social relations which endows individuals with power, status and resources of various kinds" (8). Thus, social institutions, which grant some individuals more authority than others in conversations, may also be responsible from the unequal linguistic exchanges between the characters in the play. Each character in *The Country* is empowered by certain institutions: while Corinne as a married woman has the power of the marriage institution, Richard as a doctor gets his power from his profession; his position as a General Practitioner equips him with the power of the state. Rebecca, the mysterious single young woman, acquires her power from her knowledge of history and Latin, and at times her power comes from her status as Richard's mistress. The authority is usually invested by the characters with high social position, which in turn constraints other characters' access to power.

All in all, Bourdieu provides us with appropriate terminology and perspective in interpreting the relations between language and power in Crimp's work. Bourdieu's primary interest in the dynamics of power and the way he contends the use of euphemisms and social status in power games implement enriching angles in clarifying Crimp's intricate text. Evidently, both Bourdieu and Crimp believe that language is not merely an instrument of communication, but also an ideological tool empowered with words that are used to convey symbolic power.

**Michel Foucault and Martin Crimp**

Foucault argues that it is misleading to consider power only in terms of its oppressive aspect of possession (1980). Instead, he argues that power is not "acquired" or "seized" but rather exercised through "mobile relations" in which the individuals thwart complete domination (*History* 94). For Foucault, power is "renewed", "altered" and "challenged" by all the individuals who exercise it (Harrer 78); and power should not be taken as a phenomenon of individuals' consolidated and homogeneous domination, because it circulates between different individuals "in the form of a chain" (Foucault, *Power* 98). This suggests that all individuals take part in this circulation as both oppressors and the oppressed (Hall 43). In Crimp's play, too, power is not exercised only by a single character represented as a "figure of domination"; instead, all the characters take part in a "productive network" in a set of power relations (Foucault, *Power* 119). Moreover, these networks through which power is exercised are not stable.

Power "circulates" and it is "produced from one moment to the next" (Foucault, *Power* 98).

Following this line of thought, Foucault considers resistance as an indispensable part of power, and focuses on the "relational character of power relationships" (*Power* 98). He argues that no power relation is possible without resistance, and clarifies that "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (*History* 95). Foucault's observations on discourse analysis, with particular focus on how power operates through discourse, provide us with a critical perspective in deciphering Crimp's text, in which power relations between the characters cannot be reduced to master-slave or oppressor-victim relations. The characters experience ongoing struggles to sustain or undermine networks of domination. Corinne seems a relatively powerless character in the opening of the play as she attempts to make sense of Rebecca's presence in their home. She realizes that Richard is an unfaithful man, and that there is something Morris and Richard hide from her. Likewise, Rebecca is initially considered as a vulnerable character who has been found lying unconsciously on the roadside. Richard, on the other hand, is initially assumed as a more powerful character who attempts to subjugate both women by concealing the real nature of his relationship with each of them. However, Corinne and Rebecca set up an effective community of resistance, and they help each other remember and resist Richard's power. The play shows Rebecca's and Corinne's attempts to liberate themselves from Richard's subjection and lies, both through violence and by passing on a testimony of resistance (Escoda Agusti 171). The women progressively manage to sever all ties with Richard. Corinne openly revolts against Richard as she discovers a needle in Rebecca's bag, and unmasks Richard's duplicity. Similarly, Rebecca bombards Richard with questions in an attempt to find out what it is he is hiding from her. It is difficult to make a comparison in terms of the dominant and subordinate relationship between the characters. There is not a total control over power, which is fluid and dynamic by nature. One character is dominant for a time, and this dominance is later challenged by another character. In Foucault's terms, there is not a single stable centre of power, but multiple contesting powers (in Mickūnas 110). Accordingly, the characters in the play take turns in establishing power and authority through certain tactics, affirming Foucault's claim that there is not a single master discourse, but equally multiple discourses as strategies for power (in Mickūnas 111). In Crimp's work, utterances are designed as certain tactical elements. The readers reconstruct the characters' expressions by considering how much they reveal and conceal.

### A Barthesian Analysis of *The Country*

Certain words in *The Country* are used to communicate several different meanings to contribute to the quality of a Barthesian writerly-text where both the characters and the audiences/readers are always alert mentally to work out the multiple meanings and subtextual associations of certain repeated words. The audiences/readers need to explore the hidden and unsaid meanings behind the words which is a challenging mental work as Billington, too, underlines the fact that "no exchange is ever innocent" in the play; for example, the word "history" is important for Rebecca as she derives her power from her knowledge of History, which is also her main reason to be in the country. On the contrary, Corinne feels powerless as she does not comprehend History. For Richard taking a "history" of a patient is an important part of his job.

"History" also marks the beginning of his relationship with Rebecca and their shared past. Similarly, the word "track" is used for different reasons: The screeching noise of the shower curtain track, the track in the countryside to mean a rural minor road where Richard alleges to find Rebecca, and the physical evidence of heroin use.

The repeated words give their interlocuters certain power to articulate their resistance. Corinne repeatedly uses the word "job" in order to disturb and tease her husband in an ironic tone: "Your job? It's your job to bring a strange woman into our house in the middle of the night?" (294). The word "lying" also has multiple meanings. Other than the horizontal position of the body, "lying" expresses Corinne's accusation of Richard, who finds Rebecca "lying" on the track. It may also be interpreted as Corinne's accusation of Richard for not telling the truth. "Stone" is another word used with subtextual meanings. Rebecca comes to the country to see a "stone". In Rebecca's descriptions, the arms of the stone imply Richard's arms and the seeping cold of the stone may signify the drug he gives her. In the final scene, Corinne repeats the image of the "stone" to imply that she has taken Rebecca's place. When Corinne says "this road was coercing me", "road" implies Corinne's belief that she has been implicated in her husband's amoral values, and that her life in the country has been based on false and exploitative premises. The word also suggests that Corinne's final collapse leads to self-discovery, her realization of her own complicity with Richard, and her decision to withdraw from him (Escoda Agusti 209). Moreover, the word "watch" also has multiple meanings. Corinne keeps Rebecca's watch and never returns it to her, since, when she loses power in Scene Five, she wears a watch which is not hers and which looks like Rebecca's. The watch may be interpreted as the symbolic confirmation and memory of Rebecca. Again Morris shows the watch to Corinne who denies that it belongs to her. The reason why Rebecca's watch has been found in the country is not revealed. Regarding Morris's discovery of Rebecca's watch, Crimp declares in his interview with Sierz that "some people think the play's a thriller, and that Richard has killed Rebecca. I'd like to point out that this is not the case because he couldn't play the last scene if he was a killer. Morris just finds the watch, that's all. You see, objects have a life of their own in plays. Each has its own little story" (106). The word "dark" is also suggestive of various opinions. Rebecca narrates past events that happened when "it was getting dark" (*The Country* 317). She has foreseen the "dark" side of the country and the potential outcome that Richard would turn out to be an unreliable character. Indeed in Scene Four, Richard assures Rebecca that she can trust him. At the end of the same scene, however, he accuses himself that he should have left her on the road where he saved her life. Similarly, in order to emphasize Richard's unreliable and dark character, the "stone" image is used by both women. The stone Corinne has reached is cold, but at the same time it is comfortable, it has arms like a chair (364). In other words, the stone is both "comfortable" and "violent" like Richard himself. Escoda Agusti observes that while Richard is violent to the old patient and Rebecca, he provides Corinne with comfort and material prosperity (117).

As exemplified above, the audience/reader is constantly mentally involved in detecting verbal clues wrapped around certain words like history, track, job, lying, stone, road, watch, dark–words that acquire a sinister resonance and operate towards deception and infidelity. As a consequence, the readers postpone meaning, since certain words have strong subtextual implications. Due to the unstable meaning of certain words, readers can reach multiple interpretations.

**A Bourdieusian Reading of *The Country***

The analysis of the play in this section is based on Bourdieu's descriptions of habitus and social institution, euphemism, symbolic power, and how these elements provide the interlocutors with power. For Bourdieu, habitus is associated with social institutions. One's habitus produces structures of power, and one's position in a given social space determines one's use of language. Crimp's characters in *The Country* employ language in a certain manner that reflects the specific social space they occupy. Habitus is related to social institutions from which the characters derive power. Corinne is empowered by the institution of marriage, while Richard is given power as a doctor; Rebecca is empowered by her knowledge of history and Latin and thus uses Corinne's lack of knowledge in history and language to her advantage. She is also powerful as Richard's mistress. Corinne wants to dominate Rebecca by using her house, her children and her husband's profession as markers of dominance, and reminds her that she is in a doctor's house. Rebecca could actually possess power temporarily through her resourcefulness and her ability to be "sententious". She tricks Corinne into a dangerous game revealing that she has had a long relationship with Corinne's husband. However, Corinne's habitus gives her power. As a married woman with children, a country house and a doctor as a husband, Corinne's repossessing power is stronger than Rebecca's. She thus feels more powerful than Rebecca who does not own a family. Before the full realization of Richard's constant lies, she defends her husband by blaming Rebecca for accepting Richard's help: "A girl-a woman-a young woman accepts a ride from a man she's never met" (328). Similarly, Richard, with his social status as a doctor, attempts to exchange both Corinne's and Rebecca's silence regarding his duplicity at home and at work.

Euphemism, another term emphasized by Bourdieu, is a manner of adjusting and appropriating speech in certain conditions. It is used as a tactic to soften, pacify, lessen or camouflage the real meaning of words. There are many instances where the characters use euphemisms in order to conceal their hostile intentions and wrongdoings. Certain adverbs are used to obscure the painful reality. The characters constantly use limiting adverbs such as "only", "just", or "simply". When the old patient dies because of Richard's nonattendance, he minimizes the seriousness of the event in his telephone conversation with his colleague Morris: "Because it's simply a thing, Morris (thank you), simply a thing, a thing that–unfortunately–yes–happens" (309). The repetition of the word "simply" betrays Richard's attempt at playing down his responsibility for the death of one of his patients. Again, as husband and wife argue, Richard explains Morris the voices as "just a little domestic" (310). Similarly, when Richard wants to have Morris's support, he says it is not lying but "it's simply a matter of putting these events in some kind of intelligible order" (310). Richard both minimizes and adjusts the order of events in order to get rid of his problem. Similarly, in Scene Four when Rebecca realizes that Richard does not want her in the house and wants to take her back, she grips his hand and hurts him. While he pulls his hand out of her grip, the scissors drop to the floor and cut his hand making a hole in it. Here Rebecca minimizes the violent act by saying "it's only the flesh" (339) and she sucks Richard's wound. Rebecca uses euphemism to take revenge and hurt Richard by giving him physical harm.

Words are never neutral or innocent and they can be the source of symbolic violence and power (Bourdieu 24). In the play, the characters insistently use certain words such as "solicitous", "clean", "track", "rock", "history", "lying" to inflict cruelty and to create ambiguity and confusion in the minds of the characters as well as the

audience/readers. These words are loaded with different meanings by the sender and the receiver. When Richard tells Corinne, for example, that Rebecca has been “lying” next to the track, Corinne wants to be more exact with the word “lying”, and questions its meaning more deeply and intentionally, asking “sprawled next to it?” (293). She keeps asking for further connotations and concludes that she has been “partying” (293). Here Corinne unveils secret information by accumulating the power of words such as “sprawl”, “partying” and “love” in order to assert symbolic power on Richard and to provoke him, affirming Bourdieu’s argument that language is not used for communication but for symbolic power.

Words provide their interlocutors with wealth and authority. When Rebecca speaks in an eloquent and sophisticated manner about Virgil and the order in the countryside, Corinne speaks in a simple way to clarify the fact that they have “come to the country to be happier” (325). Here, Rebecca powerfully rephrases Corinne’s utterances, saying “To strive, you mean, to strive for your/family’s happiness” (325). At the end, Rebecca suddenly disappears, and Corinne and Richard reunite happily, “simulating love” (366).

**A Foucauldian Reading of *The Country***

For Foucault, power in language is related to the “external”, “material” and “tactical forms of power” (Hook 536). Crimp is a genius in emphasizing how language tactics can be used to gain power. His characters use stratagems as interrogations, repetitions, pauses, and faint laughs to maintain their powerful positions and evade from revealing the truth or answering uncomfortable questions.

Interrogation is the most common tactic used in the play. Corinne’s knowledge is superior to Richard’s, and provides her with power over him. In the second scene, having found Rebecca’s watch, Corinne becomes more powerful and resourceful. Richard wants to take the watch back; however, Corinne snaps it in her fist and plays a dangerous game by asking her husband to kiss her. Their game of strength and wit is interrupted by Morris’s phone call which puts Richard at a more fragile and remorseful position as he is interrogated as to why he has failed to visit the old patient. As Richard struggles to find excuses for his neglect, Corinne brings a woman’s bag, demanding an explanation from her husband. Here Corinne gains superiority over her husband. Richard finds himself messed up against his wife and his boss. Similarly, at some point Morris also acts as the interrogator and becomes dominant. When Corinne gives an account of her idyllic afternoon to Richard, she explains that she has met Morris. Morris interrogates her about the old patient that Richard has neglected as well as about other matters: “He squatted right next to me–yes–and asked how we were settling in. Did we miss the city?” (302). Richard also tries to gain power by employing a series of questions over Corinne, as he asks for more details about the conversation between Corinne and Morris: “What did he mean by that?” “Did he expect you to speak for me?” “Paint?” “Doesn’t he have any paint at home?” (302). “Brought what back to him?” (303). Crimp structures the play on a fast-paced question and answer pattern, creating a tense situation. Although Corinne is initially kept “ignorant” of the bond of mutual interest between Richard and Morris, she gradually becomes aware that there has been a problem with the young woman in the house, and steadily unmasks Richard’s cruelty with her successive questions:

> -I thought you'd stopped. I thought you were clean. But if you've stopped why are there needles in her bag? Whose needles are they? Are they yours? Did she pay you for these things? How did she pay you?
> *Pause.*
> Who is she? Have you any idea? You probably don't even know/her name.
> -She got into the car, that's all.
> -I see.
> -She just got into the car.
> -I see. She just got into the car.
> -Exactly.
> -And why was that?
> -Why?
> -Yes, why was that?
> -To see a stone.
> -To see a stone. She got into your car to see a stone.
> -Yes.
> -What stone?
> -I have no idea what stone. (311)

Richard's short replies, "yes" and "why", indicate his powerless position. Her unsatisfactory answers are followed by Corinne's forceful, argumentative and sarcastic utterances: "You probably don't even know/her name" (311), "I see. She just got into the car" (311). These sarcastic expressions imply that a display of superior knowledge will follow. These lines instill a sense of uneasiness and evoke an atmosphere of secrecy about the young woman in the house. In this violent confrontation initiated by Corinne, Richard proves increasingly unable to answer her questions. Corinne's verbal attacks result in the complete subjugation of Richard whose loss of power is reflected in his loss of speech. Corinne's response to Richard's attempt to hide the truth frustrates his desire for triumph. Thus, this conversation leads the audience/reader to conclude that Richard is involved in a situation in which he is the victim rather than the powerful participant. Corinne's forceful and aggressive attitude reduces Richard to the position of a submissive husband.

In addition to interrogations, repetition is another common tactic used in the play. Crimp is brilliant at using repetition to explore the mutating power of language, create both humor and tension, and expand or resolve verbal ambiguities. Repetition becomes a tool of threat rather than amusement. At one point, for example, Corinne and Richard discuss whether or not she can have a shower. They circle around the word "shower": "What kind of noise does the shower make?" (333). In order to reach the shower, Rebecca would have to pass through the children's bedroom. As illustrated in the following exchange, the readers realize that each repeated word may be a threat for Richard:

> -Where did you find that?
> -Where did I find this?
> -Where did you find that? Yes (310)

Repetitions function as power games in which words and their double meanings are used as weapons to subdue the opponent:

> -Then don't look at me.
> -I'm not looking at you.
> -Then don't look at me. (345)

The playwright cleverly withholds information. He ingeniously plays with verbal repetitions with double meaning, using language as a mask. The above dialogues also show how Crimp effectively uses the banal, everyday clichés of conversational form in dialogues, confirming Eugène Ionesco's words: "Nothing seems more surprising to me than that which is banal; the surreal is here, within grasp of our hands, in our everyday conversation" (in Esslin 93).

Along with interrogations and repetitions, the characters use silences, pauses and faint laughs to maintain their powerful positions. Crimp's dialogue has the ability to conceal the truth, and the characters' real feelings. It should also be underlined that, paradoxically, "the more you talk, the less you say" (328), as Rebecca observes in the third act. Thus, the pauses and silences are more meaningful than spoken words (Capitani 145). The characters use silences and pauses to resist domination, submit to subordination, or change the topic. In Scene Five, Sophie calls and tells Corinne that Richard has unexpectedly given her an enormous sum of money. Sophie is terrified by the money Richard has left in her cup, and reacts angrily to it: "A mistake? What kind of mistake?" (355). Like Sophie, Corinne experiences tension, and feels trapped between the impulse to remain with Richard and protect her family, or to be committed to her own ethical values and leave him. Hence, she says "please don't ask me to/feel something" (357-58). At that moment, Richard uses silence strategically, and changes the subject to the design of the house:

> -A telephone, a cooker… So why do I have to feel something? Please don't ask me to/ feel something.
> -I'm not asking you to feel anything.
> -Because I don't. I can't.
> *Silence.*
> -You know what I was thinking: I was thinking that perhaps we could change the …
> -Change the what?
> -The design- the design, actually of the house. (357-58)

Reflecting Foucault's observation that silence and secrecy are a shelter for power (*History* 101), the characters use silences and pauses as shelters to protect their powerful positions. The powerful characters deliberately silence themselves not to share certain experiences with the others. Silence, therefore, is not always a symbol of passivity or powerlessness; it can also be used as a strategic defense against the powerful. Similarly, in Scene Five, Richard and Corinne are aware that their relationship has hit a "wall" (360). Richard asks Corinne to walk with him "along the wall" (360). Corinne, however, states that she has already been out. Richard wonders, and constantly asks questions about her "trip" (361). Here Corinne uses the powerful effect of the pause, and leaves Richard without a satisfactory response: "What trip? Pause. What trip?" (361).

In the second scene when Rebecca asks for her watch, the dialogue between the two women reveals Rebecca's resourcefulness, and the maneuvers she takes with "faint laugh" function as effective tactics to dominate Corinne:

> -We took the watch off. We thought you might damage it.
> -Oh? We?
> -My husband and I.
> -My husband and I? (*faint laugh*) (318)

The “faint laugh” empowers Rebecca, while putting Corinne in an apologetic and defensive position. Rebecca continues distressing Corinne by displaying that she knows too much about her husband, Morris, and the fact that Corinne dislikes Morris. Again in Foucauldian terms, knowledge gives power and Rebecca cleverly uses strategies of knowledge to maintain her command. She releases information leisurely to annoy Corinne. She traps Corinne and annoys her by asking why Corinne hates Morris. Contrarily, Rebecca wants to meet Morris to practice Latin. Corinne is surprised to hear that Rebecca can talk Latin, because previously she has felt insulted by Morris’s speaking of Latin. Now Corinne feels even more inferior. Similarly, in Scene Three, “faint laugh” gives power to Rebecca, who puts Corinne in the position of the powerless participant of discourse. When Corinne apologizes to Rebecca, Rebecca does not accept her apology because she thinks that Corinne apologizes on behalf of Richard: “‘A man she’s never met?’ How can you deceive yourself? And then to apologise to me–on his behalf . . . (*faint laugh*) . . . in your own house?” (329).

As exemplified in the above exchanges, the characters challenge each other and compete to possess power. Rebecca, for example, does not let Corinne to patronize her by her ownership of the country house, land and children. In order to dominate Corrine, Rebecca presents another story that distorts Corrine’s perception. She corrects Corinne, saying that it is not “just for an afternoon” but that her husband has come to the country to be with herself because of his “longing” and “greed” to be with Rebecca (329). At this point, Corinne changes tactics and she dismisses Rebecca and asks her to leave immediately. Realizing that she has gone beyond the limit, Rebecca begs her to stay, but Corinne is unyielding and determined. This instant in the play depicts the ways in which power is “renewed”, “altered” and “challenged” between characters, reminding the strategies employed by Harold Pinter’s characters in *Betrayal*. Similarly, when Richard suggests that he should take Rebecca back, she changes tactics and asks from Richard a position as a maid to help his wife. Empowered by Richard, Rebecca develops resistance and threatens him that she wants to tell his children a story which actually reveals the details about the intimate, corrupt and dreadful relationship between Rebecca and Richard: “But everybody wants to hear a story, don’t they? I could say: Hello. I’m Rebecca. I’m the maid. Let me tell you a story. Would you like me to tell you a story?” (341). Rebecca is a skillful employer of words. She has demeaned Corinne before, and now she patronizes Richard and lectures him on integrity: “There’s not a limit to what can be said, only a limit to how honest we are prepared to be” (343). Here Rebecca may also be referring to his deceits about Corinne and the old patient. At this point Richard cannot challenge her. He is consistently interrupted and his opportunity to speak is consistently denied by Rebecca:

> -Listen, listen, listen. Rebecca. What/we need to—
> -He followed her. He brought his/family.
> -What we/need to— (343).

The interrupted speaker, Richard, can be interpreted as the less powerful character. Richard reveals his fear and powerlessness at the end of the scene when he learns that Rebecca has talked to his wife. Rebecca’s knowledge makes her a potential threat to Richard’s authority over Corinne. To obtain power, Richard has had to conceal his true nature. He fails to occupy his powerful position for long, and consequently loses any control over Rebecca. Although Rebecca initially represents the powerless young girl, she is entirely helpless and totally inactive. She manages to exercise power

and resistance against Richard through the powerful effect of "her story", which she uses to threaten Richard. In Foucault's terms, power has produced resistance. Richard panics when he learns that Rebecca has talked to his wife. Feeling helpless, Richard finds himself in a confusing and confrontational situation, trapped between two women. It is in this scene that the audience/reader can observe the gradual shift of power from Richard to Rebecca. Richard's loss of power is evident in his inability to utter forceful expressions he has used as a powerful weapon against Rebecca until the end of this scene. There is a stark contrast between his early craft in using forceful words to exercise power over Rebecca, and his inability to respond to her violent language.

As evidenced in the exchanges given above, which display a shift of power amongst characters, each relatively powerless and vulnerable character possesses power through certain tactics such as interrogations, interruptions, silences, pauses and faint laughs. The roles of dominant and subordinate characters can change swiftly, disclosing the incontrollable, fluid and dynamic nature of power.

**Conclusion**

In line with the ideas of Barthes, Bourdieu and Foucault on language and power, which provide a valuable perspective in understanding Crimp's inventive use of language that articulate acts of verbal violence, chaos and cruelty; this paper has sought to clarify the rationale behind the characters' utterances, speaking styles and their use of interrogations, interruptions, repetitions, silences, and pauses. With the critical insight provided by these thinkers, the analysis of the relationship between power and language has disclosed the stories veiled under the intricate, desperate and tense bursts of utterances and banters.

Accordingly, a series of affinities between Crimp's critical stance and that of the selected thinkers have been justified. Crimp's text qualifies for the definition of Barthes' writerly-text, which demands constant mental involvement in producing meaning through subtextual suggestions. The reason behind the choice of certain words in *The Country* has been explored through Bourdieu's notion of the symbolic power/profit which authorizes the interlocutors with a degree of power. Bourdieu's argument that words are not innocent and that they are the bearers of ideology have proven to be highly relevant to the characters' command of language in Crimp's play. Foucault's ideas on power as strategy and inducer of resistance have provided insight for the exclusive interpretation of the multiple contesting powers in *The Country*.

Consequently, *The Country* has been examined as a text in which the playwright negates the expectations of audience/readers by subverting dramatic conventions. Crimp suggests that "the theatre is the acid test of language, the test of language we use every day, and it exposes it, enriches it or reveals it" (Devine 90). In almost all his plays, Crimp tests the use of words in the strictest sense. He assesses and analyzes the power of the everyday language in theatre and manifests that language is used not as a means of communication but as a weapon to exercise power, control and cruelty. The analysis of *The Country*, in this respect, may provide significant insignt in interpreting Crimp's other texts as well.

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**Exploration of the Maternal Semiotic for Female Subjectivity in Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe***

**Kübra Kangüleç Coşkun**

**Abstract:** Bernardine Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe* tells the story of Zuleika, a Sudanese girl, and her search for an identity in the white man's world. Zuleika seeks a place in the symbolic by her *avant garde* poetry that transgresses the structural and thematic borders of epic writing. The transvestite Venus character attains a maternal role in Zuleika's journey into the self and guides her into the carnivalesque world of the semiotic realm. Therefore, Zuleika's self-discovery in the semiotic *chora* makes a Kristevan reading possible; Venus's feminine and pre-linguistic world that is abjected by patriarchy can be associated with the semiotic *chora* and becomes the way of resurrection for Zuleika who is an abject figure as a black woman in Roman Londinium. In this paper, Zuleika's crave for an identity, her attempts to form a separate "self" and her poetry as a way of survival will be studied in parallel to Kristeva's theory of subjectivity.

**Keywords:** Bernardine Evaristo, *The Emperor's Babe*, Julia Kristeva, the semiotic *chora*, subjectivity, feminine writing, abject

*The Emperor's Babe* (2001) is a novel-in-verse mostly written in couplets by Bernardine Evaristo. Born to an English mother and a Nigerian father, Evaristo has a first-hand experience of hybrid identity and otherness which become the main concerns of her literary works. For the new generation black British writers, identity formation is "an open, dialectical and dynamic process of permanent renegotiation" and challenges "the existence of rigid borders between different cultures" (Schäffner 70). As a postmodern writer, Evaristo adopts the same politics of identity and regards identity formation as an open-ended process; thus, she replaces history with histories rewritten by marginal characters to question the authority of grand narratives.[1] *The Emperor's Babe* is a typical Evaristo novel, rewriting the history of Roman colonization in London through the individual story of Zuleika, a Sudanese girl, and her search for identity in the white man's world. Using Julia Kristeva's theory of subjectivity as a critical lense, this paper aims to analyze Zuleika's strive for a *unified* self in the symbolic realm associated with the Lacanian law-of-the-father, which stands for syntax, structure and meaning in language. Oscillating between the semiotic and the symbolic not only as a teenager but also as a black woman with an urge to give birth to her *self*, Zuleika inscribes her *abject* status into her anachronistic, grotesque, hybrid and poetic narrative. Her attempts at writing poetry, in this respect, can be analyzed as a reflection of her process of achieving subjectivity, while her *avant-garde* art can be read as her strategy to infiltrate into the paternal sphere to shatter it from within.

[1] The term "grand narrative" is coined by Jean-François Lyotard in his work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), and it refers to the totalizing narratives based on the so-called "universal truths". Postmodernism favors minor narratives written by individuals over against the grand narratives.

The novel narrates Zuleika's biological and emotional maturation against the backdrop of her unhappy marriage. When Zuleika is eleven years old, her father forces her to marry the old but wealthy Roman merchant, Felix. With the support her friends, Venus and Alba, Zuleika refuses to bow to the tragic fate of a child bride. Thus, she sets out to transgress both the mental and the sexual borders of the Roman world, and starts writing poetry while exploring her sexuality during her illegitimate affair with Emperor Septimus Severus. However, the Emperor's sudden death and Felix's discovery of his wife's secret affair result in Zuleika's death, disconnecting her from the semiotic realm and terminating her identity-formation process. Zuleika's gradual exploration of her feminine identity through her love poetry and the subsequent structural changes in her poetry-writing can be discussed in parallel to Kristeva's theory of subjectivity which relates the psychic maturation process of an infant to his/her linguistic development.

Kristeva, in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), defines the semiotic and the symbolic as linguistic modalities, associating the semiotic with the maternal and the symbolic with the paternal sphere. For Kristeva, these modalities are inseparable from each other in the signifying process, since meaning is created through their cooperation. The symbolic function "encompasses everything to do with communicative discourse, especially utterances with propositional content which *say* something (*to* someone)", while the semiotic function is "the nondiscursive aspect of meaning and subjectivity" and is responsible for "the less visible role of tone, gesture, and rhythm" (Beardsworth 25). Kristevan semiotic lies beyond the symbolic order, for it is not based on words and sentences. Instead, it depends on the nondiscursive corporeal elements like sound, intonation and gestures that are related to "the sounds and rhythms of the maternal body" (Oliver 96). As opposed to her predecessors like Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan who argue that subjectivity starts with the infant's entrance into the linguistic system attributed to the father, Kristeva draws attention to the maternal role in the process of subjectivity by associating the semiotic *chora*[2] with the maternal womb and marking it as the starting point for the self.

The semiotic *chora* is a pre-linguistic stage but it does not fall outside the language system, because the mother is already a speaking subject in society; namely, she is a member of the symbolic. Therefore, the position of the *chora* is ambiguous. As argued by Kristeva, the *chora* "is not yet a position that represents something for someone (i.e., it is not a sign); nor is it a *position* that represents someone for another position (i.e., it is not yet a signifier either); it is, however, generated in order to attain to this signifying position" (*Revolution* 26). Kristeva's statement not only emphasizes the preparatory role of the *chora* in the process of signification, but also highlights the ever-lasting signifying process that transforms the *chora* into a dynamic place without any fixed signs and meanings. It is evident that there is "articulation" in the semiotic *chora* but no "representation", since it is composed of bodily drives; thus, it is "deprived of unity, identity, or deity" (25). Still, the *chora* has an "ordering" effect on the infant as it is associated with the mother's body acting as a mediator between society and the infant (26). Kristeva situates the "concrete operations" before the acquisition of language and

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[2] In *Timaeus* that is Plato's dialogue about the origins of the universe, the character Timaeus refers to the classes of being including "forms", "sensibles" and "the receptacle" which is hard to explain. *Chora* that covered the four elements inside before the creation of the universe is the receptacle and exists starting from the very beginning. Plato defines it as "the receptacle, and in a manner the nurse, of all generation." In this respect, Kristeva interprets it as a maternal womb and uses it in her theory of two linguistic modalities.

charges them with an ordering function in the "preverbal semiotic space" (27). Therefore, the mother who prepares the infant for the linguistic order through her semiotic *chora* cannot be excluded from the symbolic (culture) as argued by Freudian psychoanalysts.

In *Powers of Horror* (1980), Kristeva focuses on the corporeal dimension, rather than the linguistic dimension of the infant's psychosexual development, and points out the process of abjection as another significant step of human development. Throughout human history, the maternal body that covers the other inside is always considered "impure" and "filthy," because it transgresses the border between the self and the other. This transgression of the border shatters the basic dichotomies of object/subject, inside/outside and ego/not ego that are related to the formation of human civilization. Thus, Freudian psychoanalysts regard the heterogenous nature of the maternal body as a threat against the paternal "culture" that is founded through the exclusion of "impure" maternal body from the site of civilization (*Powers* 2-13, 56-64). Similarly, Kristeva argues that the infant must abject the maternal body by drawing a boundary between the self and the (m)other in order to create its own subjectivity. However, the process of abjection is not easy and cannot guarantee the removal of the abject mother from the symbolic. Referring to Kristeva's theory of abjection, Elizabeth Gross claims that the abjected material "can never be fully obliterated but hovers at the border of the subject's identity, threatening apparent unities and stabilities with disruption and possible dissolution" (86). By way of explanation, the subject's early memories about the semiotic *chora* and the process of abjection do not fade away but always haunt him/her by causing semiotic eruptions in language, and these eruptions expose themselves in an adult's language through "rhythm, prosody, word-games, the no-sense of sense, laughter" (in Turkle).[3] In this respect, Kristeva does not regard the semiotic energy associated with the maternal body as a completely negative component. On the contrary, the haunting abject (m)other coming from the infant's semiotic pastis the backbone of poetry and art, as can be understood from Kristeva's own words: "[i]f one wished to proceed farther still along the approaches to abjection, one would find neither narrative nor theme but a recasting of syntax and vocabulary–the violence of poetry, and silence" (*Powers* 141). In other words, each subject comes into existence in the maternal womb, and his/her experience of the semiotic *chora* can be turned into generative power if used as a source of inspiration for arts. It is evident that Kristeva, as a post-structuralist psychoanalyst, celebrates the threatening nature of the abject (m)other by considering it a challenge against the center defined by the patriarchal world system. Therefore, the abject (m)other represents all marginal identities intimidating the unified self favored by the symbolic.

In *The Emperor's Babe*, Zuleika comes from a Sudanese immigrant family. Her father arrives in Londinium with "a thin purse and a fat dream" (3) and the family try to survive in a foreign society as socially-marginalized people; to put it into Kristevan terminology, as "abjects". Zuleika is doubly marginalized because of her double burden as a black woman in the white man's world. Thus, her identity crisis has both individual and racial levels which double the pain of her subjectivity process. In line with Kristeva's theory of subjectivity, the mother figure preparing the infant for the symbolic realm becomes much more important for Zuleika. However, Zuleika's mother is an emotionally absent character and there is a deep generation and cultural gap between the

[3] Kristeva's original article entitled "Sujet dans la langage [sic] et pratique politique" is only in French and included in the book *Psychanalyse et Politique* edited by Armando Verdiglione.

two. Zuleika mentions her mother in detail only in the chapter entitled "Ab Asino Ianam" (Wool from an Ass) and portrays her as a passive figure that barely speaks in the presence of her husband. In this respect, she is deprived of her semiotic essence and cannot present her womb into the service of her daughter. Besides, the fact that the mother can adapt herself neither to Londinium life nor to her new language disturbs her daughter. As a second-generation immigrant, Zuleika casts a critical eye on her mother's "adopted" language full of mispronunciations that symbolizes her outsider status in Britannia (19). Different from her mother, Zuleika is a Londinium citizen by birth; thus, the bond between the mother and the daughter is geographically and culturally broken from the very beginning.

As argued by Katherine Burkitt, family is used as a metaphor of nation. Zuleika's family ties are broken, since the cultural gap between the first and the second-generation migrants prevents any interfamily communication (84). Under these circumstances, identification with the mother figure cannot become possible for Zuleika who challenges her mother's indistinct presence as craving for subjectivity and recognition in the Roman Empire. The healty development of Zuleika's identity is blocked by the emotional absence of the mother figure, her failure in preparing Zuleika for the symbolic as a speaking subject, and Zuleika's denial of identifying herself with her mother. She, therefore, feels an urge to find a substitute mother figure. At this juncture, the transvestite character Venus replaces Zuleika's passive mother. Venus's transvestite hybridity can be associated with the image of the womb that fosters the other inside. In a similar vein, Zuleika draws a maternal portrayal for Venus and defines her as "alma mater" which means "nourishing mother" in Latin (*Emperor's* 43). Venus listens to Zuleika's problems and gives her advice about her private life. In this way, she substitutes Zuleika's mother by providing her with maternal comfort. Zuleika explicitly appreciates Venus's maternal support as can be understood from her own words: "Venus took my chin in her hand, her motherly/gesture–she had several" (211-12).

Zuleika's first encounter with Venus takes place in the Londonium streets when she and her friend Alba join a group of people pelting stones at Venus. Venus easily catches these two "stinkin' little ragas" but lets them go; still, these two girls who are fascinated by Venus's appearance begin to follow her wherever she goes (47). Venus, from then on, protects these two girls. It must be noted that Venus is a Kristevan "abject" figure in the sense the abject "neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them" (Kristeva *Powers* 15). Similarly, Venus's female spirit inside the male body reflects the heterogeneity of her existence and exposes the *other* within the male body, and does not conform to the standards of patriarchal Roman society. Ironically, there is a parallel between Venus and the multicultural structure of Roman Londinium.

Like the multicultural Roman Londinium where the racial and the social borders are transgressed, Venus lets the semiotic energy flow over her body, which thus remains outside the symbolic realm. Therefore, both Londinium and Venus fulfill the preparatory role of the semiotic *chora* for Zuleika who is endeavoring to achieve her unified self in the symbolic. Before her marriage, Zuleika explores the Londinium streets with Alba and defines the city slums as "swarming with immigrants", full of "carnal experience" and with "devastating odour of sex" (*Emperor's* 10-11). It is the city which shatters the sexual barriers through private gay parties hosting rich and powerful men (46-7). Besides, it is the city of opportunities as can be observed in the

case of Zuleika who climbs the social ladder by marrying a rich Roman man. Londonium is, thus, a carnivalesque place; it blurs the boundaries between the high and the low, and turns all the hierarchy upside down as the "far-flung northern outpost of empire" (41). The city's peripheral status in relation to the source of power–namely to Rome–liberates it from oppression and opens its territory to new experiences, causing it to be labeled as "the wild west" by the residents of Rome (26). Due to its distance to the centre of power as well as its chaotic and multicultural structure, Londonium is "abjected" by the center. It is an abject place in the same way as the maternal body, which enables the abject figures like Zuleika, Alba and Venus to freely stroll in its streets. As well-defined by Susanne Gruss, Londonium is "an urban habitat that allows everyone to invent him–or herself–despite his or her race or gender" (331).

As the novel proceeds, Zuleika gets obsessed with power and becomes aware that she needs words to be heard in the logocentric Roman Empire. When she marries Felix and begins to live in luxury in his Roman villa, Felix gives her two white girls as slaves, reversing Zuleika's social status as a black woman and creates a great irony in the text (Toplu 25). Although she becomes a master rather than a slave, she is secondary to white citizens. The Roman villa in Londonium stands for the symbolic realm–the Roman Empire –in the microcosmic level; and she physically steps into the symbolic through her marriage to a Roman man. However, she lacks the power of words; in other words, she cannot exist as a speaking subject in the symbolic. When Felix's sister Antistia comes to their visit, she points out Zuleika's skin color to emphasize that she is not a real Roman. Moreover, she highlights Zuleika's status as a black mistress by reducing her into a sex object: "'Felix will never/take you to Rome, Little Miss *Nooobia*,/he has his career to think of'" (*Emperor's* 53). While writing down her conversation with Antistia, Zuleika claims that her "tongue became wood" and she "could never speak in her presence/or to Felix's cronies, who spoke as if they owned the world" (53). Antistia's words arouse a feeling of inferiority in Zuleika as she suddenly realizes that she is Felix's slave, rather than the master of the house. Gendusa draws attention to the "sexual objectification" of black woman's body, and claims that "Zuleika's body [...] is clearly constituted through the white man's gaze (that is Felix's gaze)" (53). Accordingly, Zuleika is not a speaking subject but merely an object of desire in the symbolic represented by Felix's world. As Antistia claims, Felix never takes Zuleika to Rome–to the center–but keeps her as a mistress in his villa in peripheral Londinium. In this context, Felix's villa turns into a prison for Zuleika while the Londinium streets associated with Venus's hybridity embody the semiotic *chora* that is necessary for Zuleika's psychosexual development. Zuleika's world, in this context, is torn between these two spheres.

Zuleika spends most of her time in the villa, and she always meets Alba and Venus outside. This particular function of the outside in Zuleika's conduct metaphorically situates these two women outside the symbolic. During their meetings, their primary conversation topics include sex, love and marriage, and it is these two radical characters that encourage Zuleika to explore sexual desire in an extramarital affair. In this respect, Alba and Venus stand for the semiotic energy attributed to female sexuality; yet, this semiotic energy is suppressed by the symbolic and can circulate only in the carnivalesque streets of Londonium. Zuleika's world is constructed by Felix on one side and by Alba and Venus on the other. As Zuleika oscillates between the semiotic and the symbolic, both realms "create" and then "negate" Zuleika by turning her into a subject-in-process. In Felix's world, Zuleika does not have the power of the words and can exist only as an object; yet, she is liberated from her fixed identity in the

symbolic and explores her *self* during her meetings with Venus and Alba. At this point, poetry, which is the creative endproduct of the oscillation between these two realms, becomes her sole tool to constitute a real *self* in the symbolic, since writing "allows one to recover" and "is equal to a resurrection" for an abject figure (Kristeva, *Powers* 26).

After their marriage, Felix hires a tutor for Zuleika's education. As part of this educational scheme, she reads the works of great epic writers including Homer and Virgil. This reading experience triggers Zuleika's dream of being a poetess. Patriarchal authorities, however, attempt to discourage her by defining literature as a male occupation. The tutor "[s]ays all the notable poets were men," and claims that she cannot write poetry as she knows nothing about "war, death, the gods/and the founding of countries" (*Emperor's* 85). In line with the Kristevan argument that regards *avant-garde* literature as a product of semiotic eruptions in the symbolic, Zuleika as an "abject" figure can construct her *self* only through writing poetry. Calling herself "a thoroughly modern miss", she decides to write her own epic "about Nubians in Londinium, about men/who dress up as women, about extramarital/peccadilloes, about girls getting married/to older men and on that note,/in the words of the great god Pliny" (85). Since the entire novel is the result of Zuleika's endeavor to write her own epic, her poetic narrative challenges the male epic tradition through its concentration on a teenage girl's daily routine as well as its use of unrhymed couplets and anachronism that mixes the twenty-first century London with Roman *Londinium*. Moreover, Zuleika's *avant-garde* style, shaped by her mixture of the real with the unreal, the high with the low, and the present with the past, creates a postmodern text, appropriately reflecting the heterogeneous nature of the semiotic *chora* where there is no fixed sign. From very beginning, Zuleika is never satisfied with her identity imposed by the white man; thus, she tries to take control of her life by becoming the author of her own text. Her return to the semiotic *chora* embodied by Venus to explore her real *self*, and her oscillation between the semiotic and the symbolic initiate the necessary dynamic process for her challenge against the patriarchal center. Her female epic undermining the male epic tradition becomes a part of her identity formation process.

During Zuleika's process of artistic creation, Venus becomes both a mother and a muse for her; for instance, when her poetry party ends up in a fiasco (it turns into an orgy party because of the guests' sexual attraction to each other)[4], Venus comes to her help and says "Zuleika, that's silly,/poetry's your lifeline, who cares if they don't clap,/it's not about that, it's about the art" (*Emperor's* 211). Aware of the fact that Zuleika's poetry is her only reason to survive although it has no place in the symbolic associated with the paternal, Venus protects Zuleika from the devastating effects of her *abject* status. She, therefore, encourages Zuleika's artistic performance, so that Zuleika can use her *abject* power to create her unique *self* by rejecting and then reconstructing language. Venus's support can be considered to reflect the Kristevan argument that religion and art are the "various means *of purifying* the abject" (*Powers* 17). In other words, Zuleika who is a marginalized character as a black woman in white man's society can "purify" her abject status and turn into a speaking subject in the eyes of the white man only through her art. Nonetheless, male authorities that represent the symbolic deny her feminine identity which she has redefined through her *avant-garde*

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[4] Turning the poetry party into an orgy, Evaristo establishes a link between art and sexuality, both of which are the results of the eruptions of semiotic power.

art. In this context, Venus as the symbol of the maternal womb becomes Zuleika's only place in which she can explore her subjectivity.

Indeed, Venus discharges Zuleika's semiotic energy twice by protecting her from a possible neurosis caused by patriarchy that allows a woman to exist only as an erotic object. Firstly, she supports Zuleika's poetry-writing against the male-dominated world of literature; secondly, she guides Zuleika to discover her sexuality during her affair with the Emperor. While expressing her love for the Emperor, Zuleika makes a pun by citing the name of the Roman goddess of love: "Venus, who sprang from the foam of the sea/ (as you do), who was forced to marry Vulcan,/who had finally cast her spell on me./After all these years, I had discovered/amore nihil mollius nihil violentius:/nothing is tamer or wilder than love" (*Emperor's* 140). Zuleika's words are obviously a reference to the Venus character of the novel, verifying her guiding maternal position as a muse goddess in Zuleika's life.

It can be argued that Evaristo's association of poetry writing with feminine *jouissance* opens the text for a Kristevan reading based on the interpretation of the semiotic. In this context, love scenes need to be analyzed with reference to Zuleika's identity formation process which evolves in parallel to her poetry writing. The sex scenes of Zuleika and Felix, for example, are deprived of love and are more like rape scenes; whereas Zuleika's sexual intercourse with the Emperor Severus stems from love and turns into a paragon of semiotic flows. Therefore, only after her first encounter with Severus can Zuleika write her first love poem. She includes her first work into her narrative, saying "[i]t wasn't exactly my magnum opus,/but, as I'd never written a love poem/before, I forgave myself, and started again" (115). Since her love for Severus is her own choice as opposed to her marriage arranged by Felix and her father, she can create her actual identity only through this illegitimate love affair. Moreover, she identifies herself with Severus who is also of African origin. Despite his black skin, Severus is at the top of the power pyramid and he accordingly occupies the center created by the symbolic. Zuleika's search for a *self* through her affair, which is also the source of inspiration for her poetry, can clearly be understood from her conversation with the Emperor who wants to learn about her greatest dream. Zuleika answers the Emperor, saying: "To be with you,' . . . /'To leave a whisper of myself in the world,/my ghost, a magna opera of words" (159). As her answer reveals, Zuleika regards her affair with the Emperor as her passport to enter the symbolic, because she knows that her poetry can be promoted by the symbolic only through the Emperor. Besides, she cannot carry on her extramarital affair in public–in the symbolic realm–but can inscribe it into the symbolic only through her poetry. Thus, poetry turns into an obsession for Zuleika, becoming the only defining characteristic of her identity.

From the perspective of Kristeva's theory of subjectivity, although the semiotic and the symbolic must coexist in continuous interaction, the agency of a loving Third Party– namely, the "imaginary father"–is required for this interaction (*Tales* 26). It means that an infant can abject the maternal body only after identifying himself/herself with an imaginary father who is a loving figure, rather than a tyrant one. In this context, the Emperor seems to be fulfilling the role of an imaginary father in Zuleika's psychic development. Likewise, Zuleika dreams of being Severus's wife and going to Rome–the place she has no access during her affair with Felix. Evidently, Zuleika's love affair with the Emperor empowers her as can be understood from the final love scene where she physically dominates the Emperor and slaps him, asking "[w]ho's the boss now?" (224). Her mastery, however, is restricted to their sexual life and does not provide her with the position of a speaking subject in the symbolic. As can be inferred from the

Emperor's depiction of Zuleika as a "desert girl in Londonium" (220), her object status remains the same in her affair with Severus who sees her as an exotic body to be explored. Like Felix, the Emperor is not interested in Zuleika's poetry and disregards her endeavor to become a speaking subject in the symbolic, which negates Zuleika's subjectivity encouraged by Venus and blocks her entrance into the symbolic as a subject.

It is evident that Zuleika cannot shatter gender boundaries even though she manages to transgress the social and economic ones by climbing the social ladder. Yet, her passion for a position in the symbolic does not diminish. While accompanying him to watch the arena games, for instance, she thinks of having a public sex with the Emperor to attract public attention. She says, "I'd sho nuff go down in history den,/sprawled all over the *Daily Looking Glass*: ZULEIKA-THE WOMAN WHO SHOCKED A NATION./It wasn't fair. We hadn't spoken all day./I wanted recognition, I wanted commitment./A tantrum stirred in my feet, but I checked myself" (174-75). Evidently, Zuleika craves for public recognition that will testify her existence in the symbolic. It is noteworth that this recognition would not come via her poetry but her scandalous act. The Emperor's sudden death, however, interrupts her exploration of the *self* as she loses her only chance of passing into the symbolic. In the final scene, Zuleika's ambition to become a speaking subject in the symbolic is punished by Felix who poisons her because of her infidelity. Still, Zuleika is not a passive victim of patriarchy, but "[w]ithin the limitations imposed by the cultural conditions that characterize her environment, she makes her own decisions and takes her risks" (Acquarone 163). In other words, she does not follow her mother's footsteps but even risks her own life by returning to the semiotic *chora* to initiate her female subjectivity.

In conclusion, although Zuleika's identity as a black woman poet cannot find a place in the symbolic, she manages to direct her semiotic energy stemming from her abject status into poetry. Humiliated by the symbolic from the very beginning, she is courageous enough to create a separate *self* by returning to the maternal *chora* represented by Venus's semiotic and chaotic nature as well as by identifying herself with the black emperor, Severus. Her *avant garde* poetry becomes her only way for resurrection during her journey into the self, although it fails to meet the expectations of the male-dominated literary circles of the Roman world. Deprived of recognition, she is stuck into the abject phase of her identity formation process, and in the final scene where she is poisoned by her husband, her voice as an abject is silenced by the symbolic, symbolizing the black woman's inevitable failure in the Roman world. Nevertheless, her existence persisting for centuries is marked by the "Epilogue" part of the novel where Evaristo identifies herself with Zuleika, saying "I slip/ into your skin, our chest stills, drains/to charcoal. You have expired, Zuleika,/and I will know you, from the inside" (no pag.). Under the lens of postmodernism that celebrates multiculturalism and anarchy, Zuleika's poetry can be cherished as a successful confrontation against the center, since her non-rhymic couplets dealing with her everyday life undermine the serious nature of epic as a literary genre and goes down in literary history as a "post-epic" (Burkitt 69).

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**Non-Essentialist Conception of Migrant Identity in ZadieSmith's *White Teeth***

**Deniz Kırpıklı**

**Abstract:** In a century when the idea of multiculturalism is celebrated, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* satirises its outcomes in a humourous way and problematises it by pointing at the fact that migrant communities are still marked by otherness in a globalised city like London. The novel introduces a critique of essentialist understanding of identity, displaying the inevitably porous borders of cultural identities against a narrative background populated by characters who hold on to the essentialist idea of purity sought in religion, race and nationality. The novel, in this respect, raises questions about identity on various levels, and depicts the difficulties experienced by migrants in their endeavours to face the "othering" attitudes in society. This article aims to discuss how *White Teeth* challenges essentialist definitions of identity, presenting non-essentialist views on identity, culture and nation by redrawing them as heterogeneous categories.

**Keywords:** Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, multiculturalism, identity, migrant, essentialism

With the dissolution of the British Empire after the Second World War, the colonies gained independence and the post-war mass migration to Britain began with the arrival of the migrant groups, such as the Windrush Generation, who were in search of a better life. The difficulties faced by the migrants, however, have raised questions about the promises offered by multicultural societies. Set in multicultural London of the late twentieth century, Zadie Smith's debut novel *White Teeth* includes a wide range of characters from different social, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, and refers to the century as a marker of "great immigrant experiment" (*White Teeth* 326). Smith mocks the illusion of the "pleasant libertarian land of the free" (*WT* 465), disclosing that both the white English society and the migrant hold an essentialist understanding of identity that attribute a set of inherent characteristics and core qualities to categories of identity, culture, and nation. Negating essentialist, homogeneous, monolithic and stable definitions of identity, the novel conveys the idea that identity is constantly shaped and reshaped by historical events, tradition, religion, class, and individual experiences and resistance.

The cultural atmosphere of Britain, especially London, has dramatically changed with the increasing rate of immigration from ex-colonial territories in the aftermath of the Second World War. Multiculturalism, as defined by Walkowitz, relies on "the belief that individuals as well as societies benefit from contact with different cultural, ethnic, and linguistic traditions, and from allowing themselves to be transformed by contact" (232). According to Brah, however, "British 'multiculturalism' carries the distinctly problematic baggage of being part of a 'minoritising impulse'" (229). The "minoritising impulse" noted by Brah stems from the conventional notion of Englishness that depends on whiteness as racial category, and has led to the marginalisation of immigrants. With regard to contemporary diasporas, Brah, deriving from Tölölian's explanations, states that "the term [diaspora] now overlaps and resonates with meanings of words such as migrant, immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker or exile" (186). The minoritising attitude towards migrants, or diasporas, implies the existence of an invisible social division and operates through the process of othering, shattering the illusion of "Happy

Multicultural Land" (*WT* 465). Similar to what Brah argues, Anthias claims that a "basic problem in the construction of multiculturalism is the assumption that all members of a specific cultural collectivity are equally committed to that culture. It tends to construct the members of minority collectivities as basically homogenous, speaking with a unified cultural voice" (38). The migrant voice, categorically defined by the essentialist vocabulary of the dominant discourse, is rendered "other". Moreover, in Brah's words, "in contrast to the white immigrants, these groups were constructed as racially different" (228). As a result of their conjugated position as "coloured people", the migrants suffer from discrimination and inferiorisation.

As Smith also illustrates in the novel, not only the migrants are ethnically and culturally racialised, they are also expected to internalise a given definition of British identity and culture, which is "imagined"as a homogenous whole based on the codes of the essentialist mind-set. Contrary to the essentialist point of view, however, identity is not a stable category but is socially, culturally and ideologically constructed. As Brah points out, "identity is always plural, and in process" (194), and identity in the context of multiculturalism is associated with a process of identification without any fixed origin or pure essence. This process leads to the development of hybrid cultural identities, in the sense that there is no *pure* identity to be assigned to a specific nationality. As similarly inferred by Triandafyllidou, "the coexistence of different nations or ethnic groups within the same territory requires the identity of each group to be constantly reproduced and reaffirmed if the sense of belonging to the group is to survive" (11). Understanding of identity as a homogenous whole, in this respect, confines its definitions within the discursive space of imagined communities. Brah comments further on the homogeneous misconceptions of identity, saying that "the identity of the diasporic imagined community is far from fixed or pre-given. It is constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life" (183). In other words, identity formation is an unstable process which incorporates multiple factors.

Stuart Hall, in his essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", explains the contingency and constructedness of identity, and provides two approaches of cultural identity. The first approach "defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self' hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (223). This definition rests on an essentialist conception of identity, emphasizing the similarities in a given group of people. According to the second approach,

> there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather—since history has intervened—'what we have become.' We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness about 'one experience, one identity', without acknowledging its other side—the ruptures and discontinuities. (225)

The second definition, unlike the first one, emphasizes the differences along with the similarities in a cultural group. Hall's ideas on the concept of culture underline the fluid character of cultural identity. As he further states,

> [c]ultural identity …is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". … It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything

> which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture, and power. (225)

Along with similarities and differences in cultural communities which reflect multiple points of view, Hall also highlights the importance of hybridity in the description of diaspora identities: "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (235). As they interact with a multitude of cultures, the migrants become sites for the creation of hybrid identities. They create new cultural hybrids through constant renewal of identity. There is, therefore, no monolithic category that can encapsulate migrant identity, which is not fixed and stable.

*White Teeth* exemplifies the second approach Hall mentions, which emphasises the importance of transformative power of experience in the formation of identity. In "New Ethnicities", Hall points out that '"black" is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category" and "the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experience of black subjects inevitably entails a weakening or fading of the notion [of] race" (443). Accordingly, new ethnicities are associated not only with race but also with diverse categories like class and gender. In *White Teeth*, the characters experience identity crisis and a sense of in-betweenness because of the British society's essentialist approach to the racial categories. Essentialist understanding of identity in the British national context is based on racial hierarchies and hegemonic conception of Englishness, which is, as suggested by Hall, "marginalising, dispossessing, displacing and forgetting other ethnicities" ("New" 447). Essentialist ideology, by unifying the experience of ethnically diverse people, assumes a collective unitary identity for the migrants to label them as others. Nullifying this categoric notion, each of the migrant characters in the novel has distinct and unstable identities. This anti-essentialist diversity manifests Smith's critique of given definitions of identity as barers of homogenous and pure essences.

Smith introduces fluid identities that are formed as a result of a process of hybridisation and contain a potential of change. Through the multicultural set of relationships among three different family households, the novel challenges the traditional conception of identity and reveals how identity emerges as a porous subjectivity that depends on individual experiences. The migrants in the novel try to ascertain and define their own identities. Some believe they have fixed identities rooted in their national and racial inheritence. Samad, for example, try to adopt an identity which he considers essential for his ethnic background. Characters like Poppy and Joyce ascribe fixed identities to people from different ethnicities. Contrary to these characters' conceptions, however, identity is shaped by the experiences of the individual as represented by the second generation migrant characters in the novel. In this sense, ethnicity, class, religion, and national background play an important role in identity construction.

In *White Teeth*, which demonstrates the constructedness of identity, the first generation of migrant characters suffer from a sense of displacement that leads them to hold on to their national and familial roots. The second generation, on the other hand, is confused about the essentialist views of race, nation and cultural stereotypes, since they they are not familiar with the cultural or national roots shared by their parents. Through negotiations of identity between different generations in migrant community, Smith

highlights the significant role of nation, religion and class in shaping identities, and shows that it is not only the past that shapes the present.

As Paul Gilroy suggests, "black political culture has always been more interested in the relationship of identity to roots and rootedness than in seeing identity as a process of movements and mediation that is more appropriately approached via the homonym routes" (in Jay 158). While roots signify continuity based on a stable past, routes signify identity "based on travel, change and disruption" (153). In the novel, the characters with an essentialist point of view tend to hold on to their national and ethnic roots. Samad, for instance, seeks his identity in familial and national roots: "to Samad … culture led to roots, and these were good, these were untainted principles" (*WT* 193). Samad, having served in the British army during the Second World War, fears corruption and assimilation; therefore he struggles to remain connected to his Bengali roots. Besides, his devotion to his roots stems from the difficulty he experiences in integration into London's multicultural society. He says, "this belonging, it seems like some long, dirty lie . . . [It is a country] where you are never welcomed, only tolerated. [...] Like you are an animal finally house-trained. [...] it drags you in and suddenly you are unsuitable to return, your children are unrecognizable, you belong nowhere" (*WT* 407). His feelings of insignificance, frustration, and lack of sense of belonging lead him to hold on to his nationality and to glorify his familial past. After the war he gets confused about his identity: "What am I going to do, after this war is over, this war that is already over what am I going to do? Go back to Bengal? Or to Delhi? Who would have such an Englishman there? To England? Who would have such an Indian?" (*WT* 112). Feeling displaced, excluded and invisible, he sees nothing but disappointment for himself in England, and takes refuge in his national heritage and ancestry.

For Samad, the glory he finds the glory he seeks in the actions of his heroic great-grandfather, Mangal Pande, who "shot the first bullet of the mutiny" in 1857 (*WT* 99). In a way, Samad tries to come to terms with the history of his family by revising Mangal Pande's history to find solace: "The story of Mangal Pande is no laughing matter. He is the tickle in the sneeze, he is why we are the way we are, the founder of modern India, the big historical cheese" (*WT* 221). To display his pride, he hangs Pande's picture on the walls of the pub where he meets his friends. He also feels that his Bengali identity is threatened by the white English traditions and history. He resents the fact that official British history does not present Mangal Pande as a respectable person. While Pande's executioner Havelock has a statue at Trafalgar Square, Pande is presented as a traitor in the official British history. As a reaction to the white English and their way of comprehending the world, Samad tries to achive greatness like his ancestors and associates this ancestral glory with purity encoded in the discourse of nationality and practices of tradition. He overreacts when Archie addresses him as Sam: "Don't call me Sam, he growled, in a voice Archie did not recognize, I'm not one of your English matey-boys. My name is Samad Miah Iqbal. Not Sam. Not Sammy. And not God forbid Samuel. It is Samad" (*WT* 112). Creating an imagined community in his mind, he ascribes certain characteristics to Englishness and Bangladeshi, two identities that cannot coexist. Anderson points out that "[community] is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). Samad clings to this sense of imagined community because of his fears and anxieties of assimilation and invisibility. His act of cutting his finger to write his name on a bench at Trafalgar Square and his wish to restore his grandfather's

reputation as a great hero stem from the notion of glorious Bengali identity in his mind. It is his way of making himself visible, because he can fulfil his selfhood only through recognition of his nationality.

Despite Samad's claim for purity, it turns out that his Bengali identity is a hybrid one, as Alsana announces when Samad accuses her of not acting like a true Bengali: "My own culture? And what is that please? And what is a Bengali, husband, please?" (*WT* 236). When he looks it up in an encyclopaedia, he discovers that "the vast majority of Bangladesh's inhabitants are Bengalis, who are largely descended from Indo-Aryans who began to migrate into the country from the west thousands of years ago" (236). Contrary to her husband's essentialist ideas, Alsana embraces a more hybrid identity although she also has prejudices against different ethnicities. She rejects the essentialist views of her husband because she believes there is no pure Englishness. Yet, she is also worried about the cultural assimilation of her children. The novel, in this sense, illustrates the porous borders between different nationalities and ethnicities. The efforts of the characters to hold on to their supposedly national roots are presented in a humorous way as they fail to do so throughout the novel. With regard to the notion of Englishness, Alsana announces, "it's still easier to find the correct Hoover bag than to find one pure person, one pure faith, on the globe. Do you think anybody is English? Really English? It's a fairy tale! (*WT* 236). Alsana's mind set reflects non-essentialist view of cultural identity, and shows the possibility and even inevitability of slipping into others' culture. Obviously, Smith ironically mocks binary oppositions like impurity and purity of cultural identity, and underlines the futility of searching for pure origins.

Even the relationships among the migrants reveal that there is no unified concept of identity. Although Clara and Alsana do not embrace essentialist views, they are prejudiced against each other. Clara offers to make some curry for the Iqbals but Archie gets offended, saying "For God's sake, they're not those kind of Indians" (*WT* 54). Clara and Archie have a fixed concept of Indian identity in their minds. Alsana is prejudiced also against different races. She talks about Joneses, complaining "Who are they? … I don't know them! You fight in an old, forgotten war with some Englishman…married to a black! Whose friends are they? These are the people my child will grow up around? Their children half blacky-white?" (*WT* 61). Both Samad and Alsana have anxieties about their sons' cultural assimilation and corruption as a result of living in a multicultural society, and Samad sends Magid to Bangladesh.

Magid rejects the identity forced upon him by his father because he wants to be a part of the imagined white community, and he becomes "more English than the English" (*WT* 406). Magid becomes even more British after being sent back to Bangladesh, and Samad's efforts to make him adopt native Bengali identity come to nothing. Magid is sent away to be saved from cultural corruption, but comes back as a secular man shaped by the colonial education in Bangladesh. He cannot identify himself with his father's roots. As for Millat, he takes interest in Western popular culture and fundamentalist Islam, and he becomes "a street boy, a leader of tribes" (*WT* 218). He constantly appropriates his identity in accordance with the surrounding influences; for instance, he joins a group of teens called Raggastani, which is "a hybrid thing" (*WT* 231). On the one hand, he is part of the multicultural community of London, and on the other, he is attracted to fundamentalist Islamic culture and his father's Bengali roots. His identity is built upon the hybrid culture he was raised in, rather than his ethnic belonging. Accordingly, the problem with Samad and other characters with essentialist views is that they are unable to come to terms with the idea that one can be both English and Bengali. This kind of hybrid identity confuses Samad, so he tries to impose an

assumed identity on his children. There is, however, no identity in the novel that has remained "uncorrupted" in the process of globalisation. Smith refutes the idea of a pure, fixed essence by upsetting Samad's plans about the twins.

As Bentley states, the novel "emphasizes that multiculturalism should accept a mixing of ethnicity identified at the level of the individual rather than the nation" (53). In line with Bentley's observation, Smith criticises the superficiality of those with essentialist views in their relationship with the migrants, mocking the idea of a homogenous nation in the scenes where the Chalfens patronises Irie and Millat. Although they are migrants as well, the Chalfens's attitude towards the children suggests that they have internalised the "Englishness" and its codes of essentialist superiority. It is ironic that the Chalfens culturally mark Iqbals and the Joneses as stereotypes as if they have a common stable identity shared by the members of all Bengali or Jamaican communities. The Englishness of the Chalfens is as hybrid as the Bengali identity of the Iqbals, for they are the "third generation, by way of Germany and Poland, née Chalfenovsky" (*White Teeth* 328). This supposedly liberal family seems to embrace diversity but their attitudes towards the migrants reveal their essentialist set of mind. Their own son Joshua, on the other hand, rejects the artificial creed Chalfenism created by his parents, showing that identity formation does not necessarily depend on familial or national roots.

Smith also criticises the shallowness of the liberal attitude towards the migrants. Even the characters such as Poppy Burt-Jones and Joyce Chalfen, who acknowledge diversity, regard the migrants as strangers. Their understanding of Englishness is based on whiteness, indicaiting the presence of an invisible social division that disrupts the illusion of happy multicultural society. Brah's observation that "British 'multiculturalism' carries the distinctly problematic baggage of being part of a 'minoritising impulse'" (229) reflects the tendencies of assimilation and the process of othering in British society. Although the migrants are British citizens, their national belonging is questioned due to their ethnicity. Marcus, for example, thinks that Indian children are "quiet" and "subdued" (*WT* 320), and Joyce questions Millat's origins, asking"You look very exotic. Where are you from if you don't mind me asking?" (*WT* 319). With a similar notion of ethnic origins, Poppy is excited by their Eastern identity. She has an orientalist fascination with Samad and exoticises him. These liberal characters have essentialist notions of identity that clash with the idea of hybrid cultural identities of the migrants. These clashes indicate the lack of a genuine intercultural relationship in the society, where the migrants occasionally face orientalist judgements. Poppy supports Samad's request for more Muslim events at the school only because it "would be so much more […] colourful" (*WT* 133). She also asks "what music do you like, Millat?" (*WT* 159), thinking that this migrant family only listens to Bengali music, and gets surprised by Millat's answer that he listens to Bruce Springsteen. Like most of the white English, she assumes that these children's hobbies and lifestyle have to conform to their parents' ethnicity and national traditions. Assumptions about the migrants' way of life show how superficial the liberals are in their understanding of multiculturalism.

Alsana's identity is also labelled by the white English as a passive submissive wife from the East. Although she comes from a wealthy Bengali family, in London she sews leather garments at home for a shop in Soho. Seemingly liberal two women at school, Janice and Ellen, look at her "with the piteous, saddened smiles they reserved for subjugated Muslim women" (*WT* 131). Smith satirises this preconceptions of fixed

identity by presenting a Muslim woman like Alsana who does not conform to the expectations. When Samad slapped her, for instance, she "hooked him in the stomach and then followed up with a blow to the left cheekbone" (*WT* 200). Her reactions to Samad's hypocrisies and her opinions about nationality show that she is a character who challenges the assumptions of the white English. Clara, on the other hand, experiences different negotiations of identity. Although Joyce adopts a liberal attitude towards Clara, she questions Clara's skin colour and origin. In her conversation with Joyce, Clara mentions her English heritage which she traces back to Captain Charlie Durham but she does not boast about it. She does not seek to construct her identity on her ancestral roots or historical past of her nation. As it is stated by Svanström, "Clara plays her part as the immigrant and feels inferior to Joyce, as if she does not belong to the country where she lives" (11) because the white English's assumptions about race plays a significant role in the appropriation of migrant identity. Regardless of their citizenship, as McLeod argues, being "fictionalised by others as an outsider" makes the migrants feel like they are not "permitted to belong to Britain" (41).

Regarding the migrants' sense of unbelonging, Mardorossian contends that "the migrant's identity undergoes radical shifts that alter her self-perception and often result in her ambivalence towards both her old and new existence" (16). Therefore, the migrants think of going back to their "homeland" but are unable to do so because they will be strangers there too. The dichotomy between the imagined homeland and the present land is a constructed one which causes the emergence of the notion of a fixed migrant identity. The migrants' urge to hold on to their roots may be explained by Tew's observation that "migration is about a sense of location that rejects the past in practice, however much that lost location may be idealized" (64). In their search for identity in their ethnic "roots", Samad and, to some extent, Irie tend to idealise the lost location. As Brah states, "'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'" (192). Samad's idealisation of home refers to a desire to return to national roots. However, Irie needs a blank space away from essentialist labellings and assumptions about her hybrid origins. She is also attracted to the idea of home; she discovers a new space when she visits her grandmother Hortense and learns about Jamaica, but the novel raises questions whether this imagined space is really home. What Irie considers home is just an imagined version of Jamaica that is free from the burden of the past. Hortense, who is a Jamaican immigrant, is a hybrid whose mother Ambrosia was abused by an English colonialist. However, Hortense is also obsessed with the idea of racial purity and is resistant to change. She is against Clara's marriage to Archie because "black and white never come to no good…when you mix it up, nuttin' good can come" (*WT* 385). Yet, no matter how much the characters insist on the idea of racial purity, Smith shows the invalidity of this notion.

Irie cannot find the peace she seeks in her search for roots, since Hortense's views are as essentialist as those of the white English's. Irie is tired of the burden of historical, racial and ethnic presuppositions, so she desires to attain a neutral place where she can be herself, free from the prejudice and judgements of people. She conveys this desire as follows:

> What a peaceful existence. What a joy their lives must be. They open a door and all they've got behind it is a bathroom or a lounge. Just neutral spaces. And not this endless maze of present rooms and past rooms and the things said in them

> years ago and everybody's old historical shit all over the place…Really, these people exist. …And every single fucking day is not this huge battle between who they are and who they should be, what they were and what they will be. … As far as they're concerned, it's the past. (*WT* 514)

Through Irie's search for a blank page, the novel also questions the possibility of occupying a "neutral" space free from the burden of the past. For Irie, the Chalfens occupy a non-problematic position of Englishness, but she later finds out that she she is indeed mistaken. It is also evident that while Irie celebrates the idea of rootlessness, in Samad's case, escaping from his roots is unacceptable. Such explorations suggest that migrant identity is distinctive and depends on the experiences of the individual.

As exemplified in the novel, migrant identity cannot be contained within stable categories of definiton. Due to various cultural elements, each individual has a hybrid cultural identity. This hybridity is brought to the foreground especially in the case of the second generation migrants who were born and raised in England. As suggested by Jay, the second generation migrants confront similar challenges: "how to imaginatively construct English identities that are both rooted in–and routed through–the complex histories of their families and the nations that produced them" (160). While their parents embrace rootedness, the children follow routes. In this sense, problematising the essentialist point of view, the novel reveals that all identities are under the influence of multicultural factors. Regarding the issue of hybridity in this multicultural society, Moss argues that

> hybridity is no longer an exception to a concept of identity based on some kind of unity… Cultural and racial hybridities are becoming increasingly ordinary. The significance of this ordinariness lies in the pivotal notion of a tolerance or acceptance of diversity in opposition to the potential fear or prejudice that comes out of a desire for purity. (12)

The sense of in-betweenness the second generation migrants experience is in fact their unrecognised hybrid identities. "Millat was neither one thing nor the other, this or that, Muslim or Christian, English or Bengali; he lived for the in-between, he lived up to his middle name, Zulfikar, the clashing of two swords" (*WT* 351). However, the conception of race as an assumedly pure category causes them to remain on the margins. Their hybridity is determined as a complicated otherness by the white English. Therefore, Irie, who is also racially hybrid, half white and half Jamaican, realises that she is not regarded as English since she is black. She hopefully imagines the dark lady in Shakespeare's sonnet to be a black woman, but her teacher firmly rejects this idea. Therefore, she begins to feel embarrassed of her body, thinking that it does not conform to the English ideals of beauty. When Irie looks around her and sees "England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection. A stranger in a strange land" (*WT* 266), she feels alienated and invisible because she receives no approval from the society. She considers herself disadvantaged because of her body and tries to change at least her hair style but fails. Thus, Irie's identity negotiation is on racial and national grounds, leading her to embrace a hope for neutrality.

Brah maintains that "it is generally assumed that there is a single dominant Other whose overarching omnipresence circumscribes constructions of the "we"" (184). The dominant group's othering attitude reflect universal constructs that are based on binary oppositions like black/white, or Hindu/Muslim. The twins and Irie are from migrant

families but they are born in England, which they consider as their home. While they are going for a visit to J.P. Hamilton, an old passenger on the bus says: "'If you ask me,'[…]'they [the migrants] should all go back to their own...' But this, the oldest sentence in the world, found itself stifled by the ringing of bells and the stamping of feet, until it retreated under the seats with the chewing gum" (*WT* 163). In a similar manner, the children are exposed to racism by J.P Hamilton who is surprised when he sees "three dark-skinned children" at his door (*WT* 168). He mentions his experiences of killing "niggers" and refutes the fact that the twins' father has served in the British army (*WT* 175). The power dynamics behind the othering attitude determine the essentialist understanding of racial and ethnic identities that cause the discrimination of the migrants. Therefore, racism, represented by Hamilton, designate a distant home for the migrants.

Besides nationality and ethnicity, class is an important factor that contributes to the construction of identity. In the last decades of the twentieth century, English society faced major economic changes. The migrants began to work in low-paid jobs and create a space of migrant labour in London. As for Samad, although he has received university education in Delhi, he cannot find work in London and has to work as a waiter in a restaurant owned by his cousin. Feeling invisible and insufficient, he wants his identity to be acknowledged and recognized, so he bears an imaginary placard as follows:

> I AM NOT A WAITER. I HAVE BEEN A STUDENT, A SCIENTIST, A SOLDIER, MY WIFE IS CALLED AL SANA. WE LIVE IN EAST LONDON BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO MOVE NORTH. I AM A MUSLIM BUT ALLAH HAS FORSAKEN ME OR I HAVE FORSAKEN ALLAH, I'M NOT SURE. I HAVE A FRIEND ARCHIE AND OTHERS. I AM FORTY-NINE BUT WOMEN STILL TURN IN THE STREET. SOMETIMES. (*WT* 58)

This placard reveals how frustrated and inferior he feels because of his subjugated position as a migrant and as a waiter. Even in the army he resents the inferior position he is assigned: "I should not be here…I mean, I am educated. I am trained" (*WT* 87). He is a scientist but no one cares about his education because his identity is labelled as other. Although Marcus Chalfen is also an immigrant, just because he is from the middle class and white, his studies are followed and taken seriously by the society. Poppy, for instance, regards the Chalfens as "nice people—intellectuals" because they are from the middle class (*WT* 132).

In Irie's case, her admiration for the Chalfens is related to the class issue. She wants to be a part of the community of middle-class intellectuals: "she wanted to merge … to be of one flesh; separated from the chaotic, random flesh of her own family and transgenically fused with another" (*WT* 372). Also, during her stay at the Chalfens she becomes aware of "how class differences shape her identity" (Jay 166). The Chalfens, who regard the twins and Irie as "brown strangers", feel themselves superior to these disadvantaged children and their families. In Svanström's words, "in this contrasting relationship, prejudices are confirmed; fair children versus dark-skinned … unproblematic children versus problematic children, the West versus the East, British versus non-British, right versus wrong" (16). In other words, the Chalfens are sure about their Chalfenism which is an identity constructed by them upon essentialist ideas about race, nationality, and class. They present themselves as a normal, white, successful family by making implications about how faulty and disadvantaged Irie's and Millat's families are. The same attitude can be seen on the part of the teachers at the

school who send these migrant children to Chalfen house to study. In this regard, these stereotypes portrayed in the novel are called into question. Irie and Millat feel displaced and confused in the process of their identity construction. Irie at first desires to be one of them when she first meets the family: "She'd never been so close to this strange and beautiful thing, the middle class, and experienced the kind of embarrassment that is actually intrigue, fascination" (*WT* 328). In a way, she begins to contrast the order in the lives of the Chalfens with the disorder in her own family. Unlike her parents' hybrid origins and past, the Chalfens represent whiteness and an unproblematic belonging to Englishness.

Religion is another element in the formation of identity. Clara, who was raised by her mother to become a missionary for the Jehova's Witnesses, thinks that religion is a "nasty disease" (*WT* 399). It is also ironic that Hortense converts Ryan, Clara's ex-boyfriend, to religion but Clara loses her faith. Unlike her mother, Clara does not align her identity with a religious belief; on the contrary, she escapes from religious identity by marrying Archie, who is living a secular lifestyle. As for Samad, who sees traditions as pure essence on which he can build his identity, in spite of his essentialist assumptions and supposedly Islamic identity, he himself engages in adultery and it is his own moral decay that makes him send his son to Bangladesh. He thinks that his sons' "westernization is a penalty for his renunciation of his own Bengali identity" (Jay 161). In this regard, as Mirze states, "religion is a coping mechanism, uniting those marginalised Muslims living in Britain who are systematically ostracized from the center" (187). Samad seems to be divided between his religious duties and secular forces; a Muslim appalled by a western, secular lifestyle that reveals the inevitability of staying away from cultural interaction. He is one of the characters that uses religion as a reminder of his national roots and a weapon against assimilation and corruption he fears. However, he faces a dilemma between absolutism and secularism. To cope with this, he soothes himself and justifies his impure actions as he reveals in the maxim "to pure all things are pure" (*WT* 137), but he commits adultery, eats forbidden food, and drinks alcohol. His attempt to maintain a religious identity because of his anxiety about assimilation is presented by Smith in a humorous way: "The deal was this: on 1 January 1980, like a New Year dieter who gives up cheese on the condition that they can have chocolate, Samad gave up masturbation so that he might drink. It was a deal, a business proposition that he had made with God" (*WT* 139). However, even Shiva, one of the waiters in the restaurant, knows that Samad "should never have got religious" and his clinging to his faith is something he does to protect his national roots. Thus, he is just pretending to have morality.

On the other hand, Samad's wife Alsana represents hybridity of religious experience because "she was really very traditional, very religious, lacking nothing except the faith" (*WT* 64). Maczynska claims that "her individualistic approach to religion represents the novel's preference for heterodox solutions and identities" (131). Her flexibility is foregrounded when her lack of faith is juxtaposed with Samad and Millat's fundamentalism. Millat's interest in Hollywood mafia heroes and his later engagement with fundamentalist religious groups are all consequences of his identity negotiation. He takes part in the protests against Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* without having read the book at all. The Islamic fundamentalist group he is parted with is named the Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation, or KEVIN, which is a hybrid organisation that uses religion as a marker of social belonging. As he feels invisible

among the white society, he thinks he belongs to this group, but like his father's religiosity, this one is also a performative act:

> Millat knew nothing about the writer, nothing about the book…But he knew other things…that he should go back to his own country; or stay here and earn his bloody keep…he knew he had no face in this country, no voice in the country, until the week before last when suddenly people like Millat were on every channel and every radio and every newspaper and they were angry. (*WT* 233-34)

Tancke interprets Millat's actions as "a helpless counter-reaction, fuelled by a diffuse anger, to the sense of alienation" (34). It is a way of claiming identity and making his voice heard. Similar to Irie's sense of invisibility, Millat feels that "he had no face in this country" (*WT* 234). Racism and the alienating attitude of the white English make him feel estranged from society. Similarly, the Butcher Mo, who has been beaten by the racist people, is also provoked by the same attitude to join KEVIN: "He wanted a little payback" (*WT* 473). Smith reveals that the migrants are not accepted as part of the society even if they are born within it, therefore they are marginalised and form identities in line with these experiences. It is the anti-migrant attitude of the white English that contributes to the radicalisation of these people:

> Despite all the mixing up, despite the fact that we have finally slipped into each other's lives with reasonable comfort (like a man returning to his lover's bed after a midnight walk), despite all this, it is still hard to admit that there is no one more English than the Indian, no one more Indian than the English. There are still young white men who are angry about that; who will roll out at closing time into the poorly lit streets with a kitchen knife wrapped in a tight fist. (*WT* 327)

Millat believes that violence is the only way of visibility, so he holds on to it. As he does not have a cultural and national memory about his roots, he establishes a sense of belonging, which is different from his family's, in the religious community.

The narrator makes it explicit that "[t]his has been the century of strangers, brown, yellow and white. This has been the century of the great immigrant experiment" (*WT* 326). The English society is now a multicultural society that is constituted by the British-Jamaican Joneses, The Bangladeshi Iqbals, and the Jewish Catholic Chalfens. As one of the possible endings offered by the narrator suggests, Irie's baby, whose father (Magid or Millat) is genetically untraceable, will have white British, black Jamaican, and Bengali heritage, and it will be raised by Irie and Joshua Chalfen. Therefore, connecting various communities, the child, without a designated origin, will disrupt the monolithic assumptions about identity. Regarding Irie's baby, Perfect states that "to be born in London at the very dawn of the new millennium, the child represents a new, twenty-first century, decidedly multicultural generation of Britishness" (82). Furthermore, the child represents "familial convergence of both working-class and upper-middle-class white Britishness with Britain's two largest immigrant populations of the twentieth century" (Perfect 82). Thus, the novel celebrates the sense of rootlessness as an indicator of acknowledgement of hybrid identities in the society.

To conclude, the novel, offering a critique of the idea of happy multicultural land, reveals the difficulties and conflicts that the migrants experience in constructing identity in a multicultural society. Smith's critical stance is conveyed to the reader through the use of light-hearted satire on the essentialist views of identity, nature, and culture. The novel effectively demonstrates that identity is a construct, which depends

on external and internal factors. Therefore, categorisations that rely on essential characteristics are rejected and the notion of essentialist identity is challenged by the novel's non-essentialist construction of identity.

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# Foreignizing Subtitling Versus Domesticating Dubbing: *Finding Nemo* in German

**Susanne Klinger**

**Abstract:** Dubbing is often regarded as more domesticating than subtitling as it erases the foreign audio, negating the viewer any direct access to the original dialogue, while subtitling supplements the foreign audio instead of erasing it. Furthermore, the translation method (dubbing or subtitling) has an impact on the translation discourse, as both methods confront translators with technical constraints which they need to accommodate. Proceeding from the hypothesis that subtitling constraints call for foreignizing translation strategies, while dubbing more easily allows for domesticating translation choices, this essay will examine if and to what extent the translation discourse of the German subtitles of *Finding Nemo* tends to move the viewer towards the film, while the translation discourse of the German dubbing version tends to move the film towards the viewer, to adopt (and adapt) Schleiermacher's famous metaphor.

**Keywords:** *Finding Nemo*, audiovisual translation, subtitling, dubbing, foreignization, domestication

## Introduction

In Germany major film productions often get dubbed as well as subtitled, both for theatrical release (cinema) and DVD (Digital Versatile Disc). Dubbing is generally seen as the more domesticating of these two translation methods as it erases the foreign audio, negating the viewer any direct access to the original dialogue, while subtitling is seen as the more foreignizing method as it supplements the foreign instead of erasing it. Contrary to dubbing, subtitling never conceals being a translation. Furthermore, the translation method (dubbing vs. subtitling) has an impact on how domesticating or how foreignizing the translation discourse is or can be. Both subtitling and dubbing confront translators with technical constraints, and these constraints have an impact on micro-level translation strategies as the translator will need to accommodate them. However, as the nature of these constraints differs according to the translation method chosen, it follows that accommodating these constraints will call for different translation solutions. Proceeding from the hypothesis that subtitling constraints tend to call for foreignizing translation strategies, while dubbing more easily allows for domesticating translation choices, this paper will examine if and to what extent the translation discourse of subtitling tends to move the viewer towards the film, while the translation discourse of dubbing tends to move the film towards the viewer, to adopt (and adapt) Schleiermacher's famous metaphor. To this purpose, I will, after a brief outline of the main differences between both translation methods, compare the German dubbing version with the subtitled version of *Finding Nemo* available on DVD (Disney/Pixar)[1]. As I will illustrate, the German dubbing version of this film features domesticating

[1] The German dubbing script was prepared by FFS Film-und Fernseh-Synchron GmbH, Munich-Berlin (Disney/Pixar), while the DVD subtitles were prepared by Technicolor Creative Services, London (personal communication with D. Navarro-Ros, Project Manager at Technicolor Creative Services, London, March 2005).

translation choices that are not available to the subtitler who has to work within different technical constraints. What this essay will not attempt, however, is to engage in the perennial debate on the pro and cons of subtitling versus dubbing and draw conclusions about what method is preferable, as eventually any preference will be merely personal. I maintain that both methods complement each other, instead of excluding each other.

**Subtitling**

**Constraints in Subtitling**

Subtitling provides viewers of audiovisual material with added information. Subtitles can be intra- or interlingual; mono- or bilingual; live (also called online or real-time) or pre-prepared (also called offline); open (forming part of the film or broadcast, for example laser-engraved subtitles on a film print) or closed (subtitles that do not form part of the film or broadcast but can be voluntarily added for example via teletext, by means of a decoder or by selecting them from a DVD menu) (for a detailed discussion of the classification of subtitles see Díaz Cintas and Remael 13-28). This essay focuses on the peculiarities of pre-prepared interlingual subtitling.

The constraints interlingual subtitling (also called translation subtitling) imposes on the translator are several. Firstly, there is the shift of medium, as spoken dialogue gets transferred into written dialogue.[2] Secondly, there are constraints of time and space. Monolingual translation subtitles usually do not exceed two lines (ECI; Díaz Cintas and Remael 82; Ivarsson and Carroll 158) with a character limit of approximately 40 characters per line in the case of DVD subtitling[3] (Díaz Cintas and Remael 84; mbc). As far as the duration of the subtitles is concerned, the subtitler has to take into account the reading speed of the average viewer, which is considered to be approximately two seconds for a one-line subtitle and four seconds for a two-line subtitle for adult viewers and slightly below this for a younger audience (ECI; see also Díaz Cintas and Remael 95-96 on reading time).[4] Furthermore, in order to aid speaker-identification, the subtitles have to be synchronized with the audio. Ideally, the subtitle appears on screen in exactly the same frame[5] as the utterance sets in and does not stay on screen longer than one second after the character stops speaking (ECI; Ivarsson and Carroll 72-73). Additionally, shot changes have to be taken into account in order to adhere to the rhythm of the film and make the subtitles as inconspicuous as possible and avoid the optical effect of "jumping subtitles" (ECI; Ivarsson and Carroll 75-76; see also Díaz Cintas and Remael 91-92). Thirdly, convention has it that translation subtitles have maximum one speaker per line; hence, a two-line subtitle can transcribe the verbal exchange of not more than two characters (ECI; Ivarsson and Carroll 93). The shift of medium and the constraints of space, time and number of speakers make editing and condensation necessary. Research shows that subtitling tends to condense the original

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[2] As regards film translation, there is usually a double shift of medium: the written dialogue of the film script is translated into spoken dialogue by the actors and then again translated into written dialogue by the subtitler.

[3] Figures refer to the Roman alphabet. The character limit can vary depending on media and subtitling software used (see also Ivarsson and Carroll 100).

[4] Conventions vary from subtitling company to subtitling company, country to country, and media to media. The figures here are taken from the 'Style Guide of the European Captioning Institute' (ECI) and represent their policy. For a more detailed discussion about reading speed see Ivarrson and Carroll 63-71.

[5] In the case of DVD/PAL, one frame corresponds to 1/25th of a second.

dialogue by 20-40% (Lomheim in Gottlieb). This demands creative solutions from the translation subtitler as a one-to-one reproduction of the original dialogue is neither feasible, nor desirable.

**Subtitling–A Foreignizing Strategy**

In order to avoid confusing the viewer and to facilitate the comprehension of the subtitles, the content of the subtitles should correspond to the content of the audio as far as possible (Ivarsson and Carroll 158). Any discrepancy between what viewers hear and what they read disrupts their viewing experience and undermines their trust in the translation (Ivarsson and Carroll 73-74). Ideal subtitles are therefore source-oriented. This is particularly true for English-language productions as most viewers will have at least some knowledge of the original language. Gottlieb, in “Language-political implications of subtitling”, furthermore points out that there is a tendency in subtitling to adopt English-sounding constructions as the audience of subtitled films can easily spot when the translation deviates–or seemingly deviates–from the audio, and practice shows that in the eyes of many viewers a translation that stays close to the source as regards lexis and syntax is a good translation.

With the advent of DVD and multi-language subtitling, content synchrony becomes an even bigger issue for the translator. As the process of determining exactly in what frame a subtitle should appear and disappear is laborious (the technical term for this process is “timing” or also “cueing” or “spotting”) using a template or master file is common practice in modern DVD subtitling, where one production often gets subtitled into several different languages at the same time.[6] In other words, a timed subtitle file with the transcribed and edited original dialogue gets prepared and then translated into several languages, without allowing the translator to alter the duration[7] or the number of subtitles (for a more detailed discussion of this method see Sánchez 15-6). Accordingly, translators cannot edit, merge or split the subtitles as they deem necessary given the language they are working in, but rather have to adapt their translations to a given format. This implies that if a sentence is split over more than one subtitle, translators might feel obliged to alter the syntax of their translation in order to follow the syntax of the original, either by opting for a less natural sounding word order, or by shifting the emphasis in order to create a natural sounding sentence that mirrors the word order of the source text. The constraints of synchronization between audio and subtitle content, therefore, imply that translation subtitles tend to be foreignizing in Schleiermacher’s sense insofar as sentences are often shaped to mimic the foreign sentence structure, especially if the translator works with a template file.

Therefore, due to the constraints mentioned above, subtitling is source-text oriented, but it is this orientation towards the source text that ensures that viewers accept the subtitles. For this very reason, Zlateva (29) criticizes Toury’s definition that a “translated text can be located on an axis between the two hypothetical poles of adequacy (source text oriented) or acceptability (target culture oriented)” (34). Toury’s concept “seems to exclude the possibility that a translated text could ever be both adequate to the original and acceptable in the target language” (Zlateva 29). However, as is the case with subtitling, adequacy and acceptability are not necessarily mutually

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[6] This is also the method employed when producing the German DVD subtitles for *Finding Nemo* (personal communication with D. Navarro-Ros, Project Manager at Technicolor Creative Services, London, March 2005).

[7] Unless a conversion from one format to another becomes necessary (e.g. NTSC to PAL or vice versa).

exclusive: "the acceptability of a translated text in the target language should be considered part of the adequacy of its translation" (Zlateva 29).

## Dubbing

### Constraints in Dubbing

The term dubbing, when used in a broad sense, refers to any technique of "covering the original voice in an audio-visual production by another voice" (Dries 9) and therefore includes voice-over; when used in a more restricted way, it refers to lip-sync dubbing, a technique in which "the foreign dialogue is adjusted to the mouth movements of the actor in the film" (Dries 9). Chaume Varela calls dubbing in the latter sense "interlingual sound postsynchronization". According to Chaume Varela, the three generally accepted conventions for sound postsynchronization are lip synchrony (synchrony between the lip movements of the screen actor and the dialogue of the voice artist), kinetic synchrony (synchronization between the dialogue and the head, arm or body movements of the screen actor) and isochrony (the exact timing of the screen actor's opening and closing of the mouth and the deliverance of the dubbing dialogue). While subtitling prioritizes the synchronization of audio content, dubbing therefore prioritizes visual synchronization. In dubbing, content becomes less important than form, as the visual constraints of lip sync, kinetic synchrony and isochrony demand that the reproduction of formal elements takes priority over a close rendering of semantic meaning. As in subtitling, the dubbing translator has to be creative in order to find translation solutions that respect the constraints imposed by the medium.[8]

The German dubbed version of *Finding Nemo*, although it falls into the category of lip-sync dubbing, shows one peculiarity: as it is an animated film, the dubbing does not have to follow the mouth movements of real actors, but merely the "mouth" movements of the animated characters on screen. As these are far less precise than the speech articulations of real humans, even in close-up shots there is no necessity to make sounds visually coincide.[9] The dubbing translator of animated films, therefore, faces less constraints as only kinetic synchrony and isochrony need to be respected.

### Dubbing – A Domesticating Strategy

Attention is often drawn to the fact that dubbing carries with it the risk of censorship, as the erasure of the original verbal exchange means that the viewer has no longer direct access to this exchange.[10] Due to this negation of direct access "a text can be censored to conform with local morals or political viewpoints, without the audience having the least suspicion" (Ivarsson and Carroll 36). This view is supported by the fact that countries with totalitarian governments tend to prefer dubbing to subtitling (Bassnett 136), a tradition that then often lives on even after the country has become a democracy, as is the case in Italy and Germany (Ivarsson and Carroll 6) or Spain (Gambier 173). However, even if no drastic censorship (a particularly accentuated form of domestication) is involved, dubbing remains a domesticating strategy, as the foreign language is supplanted by the target language, usually the dominant language of the target audience. Indeed, Gambier sees dubbing as an instrument "of the protectionist use

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[8] For a detailed description of the dubbing process see Martínez 2004.

[9] For an in-depth analysis on how the illusion of synchrony in lip-sync dubbing is achieved, see Fodor 1976.

[10] Nevertheless, censorship can be found not only in dubbing but also in subtitling, where technical constraints can likewise "be used as means of removing material deemed unacceptable" (Bassnett 136).

of culture, violating ethic principles to some extent by erasing traces of the other" (179). Gottlieb, on the other hand, takes a more positive stance, factoring in translation direction, and sees in dubbing a way to challenge the supremacy of the US media industry ("Language-Political").

Dubbing certainly allows for more domesticating translation choices in the sense of Schleiermacher's idea of moving the text towards the audience than subtitling does, as content synchronization is not a crucial factor in dubbing. Dubbing translators therefore are free to translate proper names, not to adhere to the syntax of the original dialogue, or even to alter entire sentences, for example to make the dialogue more idiomatic or more entertaining. Furthermore, as they are working in a spoken medium, they can easily introduce dialects, sociolects and accents of the target language to enhance the domesticating effect. In a sense, domestication is the ultimate goal of dubbing; lip-sync dubbing gives viewers the illusion that they are watching a domestic production.

### Foreignization and Domestication in *Findet Nemo*

The following will analyse certain aspects of the dubbed and the subtitled version of *Findet Nemo*–namely the translation of proper names, cultural references, puns and idiomatic expressions–in order to establish whether the translation discourse of the subtitled version tends to stay closer to the original dialogue as regards lexis and syntax and therefore tends towards foreignization, and whether the translation discourse of the dubbed version tends to move the reader further away from the original dialogue, thus showing a tendency towards domestication.

### 3.1 The Translation of Characters' Names and their Characterization

| English original | German subtitles | German dub |
|---|---|---|
| Marlin | Marlin | Marlin |
| Coral | Coral | Cora |
| Nemo | Nemo | Nemo |
| Bob | Bob | Knut |
| Ted | Ted | Alois |
| Phil | Phil | Urs |
| Mr. Johanssen | Mr. Johannsen | Herr Johannsen |
| Sheldon | Sheldon | Egon |
| Mr. Ray | Mr. Rochen | Herr Rochen |
| Sandy Plankton | Sandy Plankton | Sandy Plankton[11] |
| Dory | Dorie | Dorie |
| Bruce | Bruce | Bruce |
| Anchor | Anchor | Hammer |
| Chum | Chum | Hart |
| Peach | Peach | Bella |
| Jacques | Jacques | Jacques |
| Bloat | Puff | Puff |
| Deb (& Flo) | Deb (& Luv) | Lee (& Luv) |
| Chuckles | Chuckles | Gluckser |
| Barbara | Barbara | Barbara |
| Nigel | Nigel | Niels |

[11] Plankton has the same meaning in German and English.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Gerald | Gerald | Gerald (German pronunciation) |
| Gill | Kahn | Kahn |
| Crush | Crush | Crush |
| Squirt | Racker | Racker |
| Darla | Darla | Darla |

A comparison of how the character names are translated in the subtitled and the dubbed version shows clearly that the degree of domestication is higher in the dubbed version: for example, the characters named “Bob”, “Ted” and “Bill” in the English original as well as in the German subtitles, are named “Knut”, “Alois” and “Urs” in the German dub. Furthermore, Knut, Alois and Urs not only have domestic names, they also speak with a domestic accent: Knut, who has a typical Northern German name, speaks with a High German accent; Alois, who has a typical Bavarian name, speaks with a Bavarian accent; Urs, carrying a Swiss name, has a distinctively Swiss accent.

It is interesting to compare this acculturation with the translation of the names of Crush and Squirt. The exact location of the reef where Bob, Ted and Bill live has little relevance for the plot and therefore relocating them geographically creates no problems. Crush and Squirt, on the other hand, are Australian sea turtles who show Nemo and Dorie the way to Sydney. It is therefore crucial that they remain Australian also in the German versions; both in the dubbed and in the subtitled version they are named “Crush” and “Racker”. [12] In the dub, Crush and Racker speak German with an Australian accent, enforced by the use of Anglicisms (Dude, cool) and surfer slang in particular (Cutback, Wall, jumpen, carven, floaten). The subtitled version, however, uses fewer Anglicisms in the characterization of Crush and Racker. At first sight, it might seem that in this regard the dubbed version is more foreignizing than the subtitled version. In fact, a comparative study of three US feature films and their subtitled and dubbed versions into Danish conducted by Gottlieb (“In video veritas: Are Danish voices less American than Danish subtitles?”) showed that there were twice as many Anglicisms in the dubbed versions than in the subtitled versions. However, subtitling, unlike dubbing, can rely on the original soundtrack to convey elements of atmosphere and characterization. Furthermore, commonly understood slang words like “dude” or interjections like “hey” are often omitted in the subtitles due to time and space constraints.

Another two character names were domesticated in the dubbed version but not in the subtitled version, namely the names of two of the sharks, “Anchor” and “Chum”. While the subtitles keep the original names, the dubbed version names them “Hammer” (*hammer*) and “Hart” (*hard*). In so doing, the German dub gains an element of humour, as combined they form the word “hammerhart” (*hard as a hammer*), semantically roughly equivalent to the English slang word “awesome”, a lexical choice in key with the social stereotype they portray. Furthermore, their names underline the notion that they are a team. Thirdly, the fact that Hammer is a hammerhead shark (*Hammerhai*)

[12] “Racker”, pronounced with an Australian accent in the dub, is a colloquial German expression meaning “rascal”, and therefore particularly suits Squirt, Crush’s cheeky little son. “Squirt” was probably perceived as too foreign for a (young) German audience by both subtitler and dubbing translator. By the time a feature film gets subtitled for DVD, a dubbed version produced for theatrical release usually already exists. Often the script of the dubbed version is available to the DVD subtitler, so I assume the subtitler has copied some of the character names from the German dubbing script (cf. Kahn, Puff, Luv).

adds another comic element. And last but not least, it allows the translator to translate the play on words “A little chum for Chum, eh?” (see point 3.2 further below on the translation of puns).

Furthermore, the dub employs a well-known German comedy duo for the voices of Hammer and Hart: Erkan and Stefan. Erkan (whose mother is Turkish) and Stefan are both born and raised in Munich, but became popular as comedians impersonating the stereotype of Turkish youngsters growing up in Germany. Their trademark is their language–a mixture of ungrammatical, Turkish-inflected German and Bavarian, replete with slang words like “fett, krass, checken”. In their roles as Hammer and Hart they stay true to their trademark language. Having two sharks speaking with the (stereotypical) sociolect of German-speaking Turks is a highly domesticating choice; a choice that builds upon and relies on the familiarity of the German-speaking audience with this particular comedy duo and its type of humour.

Another domesticating choice that builds upon target-culture humour is illustrated by the following example. In the English source text, Bob calls Marlin “Marty” in three instances. The subtitles reproduce “Marty”, but in the dubbed version Marlin is called “Manni” in these instances. In the 1980s and early 1990s jokes about Opel Manta drivers where very popular in Germany. This trend culminated in the release of the movie “Manta, Manta” in 1991. In many of the jokes the driver is called Manni, a common nickname for Manfred. “Manni Manta” became the embodiment of the cliché of a macho motorsport freak with limited intelligence, little formal education and low social status. This allusion to domestic popular culture and the connotations that go with it adds a further element of humour to the dubbed version, an element present neither in the subtitles, nor in the original.

### The Translation of Cultural References

| **English original**[13] | **German subtitles** | **German dub** |
|---|---|---|
| BLOAT<br>Yeah, you know,<br>like I’m from Bob’s Fish<br>Mart. | 343 01:25:31:15 01:25:33:19<br>Ja, ich komme<br>zum Beispiel aus Bobs Fisch-<br>Shop. | PUFF<br>Ja, ich zum Beispiel komme aus<br>Vronis Fischstübchen. |
| GURGLE<br>Pet Palace.<br><br>BUBBLES<br>Fish-O-Rama. | 344 01:25:33:21 01:25:35:08<br>- Zoopalast.<br>- Fisch-O-Rama. | SUSHİ<br>Zoopalast.<br><br>BLUBBEL<br>Fischer’s Fritz. |
| DEB<br>Mail order.<br><br>PEACH<br>eBay. | 345 01:25:35:10 01:25:36:20<br>- Mail-Order.<br>- eBay. | BELLA<br>Quelle Katalog.<br><br>LEE<br>eBay. |

[13] 25th film minute.

While the subtitled version translates literally and creates hybrids (Bobs Fisch-Shop; Fisch-O-Rama; Mail-Order), the German dubbed version domesticates and includes allusions to realities familiar to the German audience. “Vronis Fischstübchen” (*Vroni’s fish place*[14]) is the name of a fish restaurant or take away, fictitious or not; “Fischers Fritz”[15] is the beginning of a well-known tongue-twister[16] as well as the name of a fish restaurant in Munich[17]; “Quelle Katalog” is a popular mail-order catalogue. The dubbing thus displays more creativity, moving further away from the original dialogue, and German viewers can probably appreciate the humour more than the (foreign) humour of the subtitles. On the other hand, due to the time constraints, translating for example “mail order” with “Quelle Katalog” in the subtitles would pose a serious challenge for the viewers who have 35 frames (less than 1.5 seconds) to take in the written verbal exchange (Quelle Katalog.– eBay.) simultaneously with the audio (Mail order.–eBay.) as well as the visual images. This span of time would be too short for most viewers to cope with the seemingly contrasting information of “mail order” and “Quelle Katalog”, as the brain needs time to elaborate that “Quelle” is indeed a mail-order company, time that is not available to the audience as the verbal exchange between the characters in this scene is extremely quick.

| **English original**[18] | **German subtitles** | **German dub** |
|---|---|---|
| PEACH<br>Potty break! Potty break! He just grabbed the Reader’s Digest! We have 4.2 minutes. | 635<br>Pinkel-Pause mit Reader’s Digest. Wir haben 4,2 Minuten. | BELLA<br>Klopause! Er hat sich was vom Lesezirkel geschnappt. Wir haben 4,2 Minuten. |

While the subtitles keep “Reader’s Digest” in English, the dubbed version replaces it with “Lesezirkel”. “Lesezirkel” supplies its subscribers with magazines and journals on a rental basis and is very popular with GP and dentist surgeries as it is a cheap and convenient way to provide waiting patients with reading material. As the scene is set in a dentist surgery, this allusion seems appropriate. Nevertheless, the dentist surgery is in Sydney and “Lesezirkel” a relia firmly belonging to the cultural context of Germany and Austria. As Elena Di Giovanni points out, it is a common strategy in Disney productions set in “faraway lands or times” to scatter “through the narration a number of elements and expressions which belong to the contemporary Western and American culture” in order to achieve familiarity (213). This same technique is used here in the dubbing, inserting German cultural elements in an Australian context.

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[14] “Vroni” is a Bavarian short form for “Veronika”.

[15] Literally “fisher’s Fritz” or “Fisher’s Fritz”, as “Fischer” can be both a surname or the profession; German surnames often derive from professions.

[16] Fischers Fritz fischt frische Fische, frische Fische fischt Fischers Fritz.

[17] FFS Film- und Fernsehsynchron, who prepared the dubbing script, is based in Munich.

[18] 46th film minute.

| English original[19] | German subtitles | German dub |
|---|---|---|
| DENTIST<br>Well, Mr. Tucker, while that sets up I'm going to see a man about a wallaby. | 380<br>Während das fest wird, verschwinde ich mal kurz. | ZAHNARZT<br>Tja, Mr Tucker, während das fest wird, geh ich mal kurz für kleine Kängurus. |

Another linguistic strategy Disney employs to define otherness and achieve familiarity at the same time consists of adapting cultural references "to fit in with modern, Western expressions: exclamations and other fixed phrases, for instance, have one or more elements modified or replaced by others which refer to the culture portrayed" (Di Giovanni 213). This strategy was also employed in the transformation of the fixed expression "going to see a man about a dog" into "going to see a man about a wallaby". The wallaby is of course endemic to Australia and thus closely associated with it, similar to the kangaroo. The German dub has imitated this strategy, equally exchanging the noun in the idiomatic phrase "für kleine Jungs gehen" (literally, *to go for little boys*) with the German word for kangaroo (*Känguru*). The subtitles instead translate with an unmarked expression, without any attempt to adapt it, although there would have been enough space and time to permit a similar strategy ("Während das fest wird, geh ich mal für kleine Kängurus"). In a way the German dub could be seen as more foreignizing than the subtitled version in this instance, as by imitating Disney's strategy it stays closer to the source than the subtitles do. On the other hand, it echoes a strategy Disney employs to assimilate foreign cultures and therefore is domesticating in the sense of bringing the foreign culture closer to the domestic audience.

### The Translation of Puns

| English original[20] | German subtitles | German dub |
|---|---|---|
| CHUM<br>Oh, thanks, mate. A little chum for Chum, eh? | 267<br>- (...)<br>- Danke. Ein kleiner Trost für mich. | HART<br>Hey, merci, Bruder. Hey, weißt schon, bin ich hart, aber herzlich. |

The subtitles do not attempt to translate the pun. As the subtitler has left Chum's name untranslated, there is little he or she can do to render the pun here. The German dub instead creates another pun around Chum's German name "Hart". "Hart, aber herzlich" is a common German expression as well as the German title of the TV series *Hart to Hart* starring Robert Wagner and Stefanie Powers and literally means "hard but warm-hearted". Slang words ("merci", "Bruder") indicate Hart's social background as does the non-standard grammar ("weißt schon", "bin ich hart").

[19] 27th film minute.
[20] 20th film minute.

| **English original**[21] | **German subtitles** | **German dub** |
|---|---|---|
| MARLIN<br>The question is, Dory, are you hungry? | 615<br>Hast du Hunger? | MARLIN<br>Präg dir mein Gesicht gut ein, Dorie! |
| DORY<br>Huh? Hungry? | | DORIE<br>Dein Gesicht, warum? |
| MARLIN<br>Yeah, 'cause you're about to eat my bubbles! | 616<br>Du schluckst jetzt meine Luftbläschen. | MARLIN<br>Weil du von jetzt an nur noch meine Heckflosse siehst.<br>(Back-translation: Have a good look at my face, Dorie!-Your face? Why?-Because from now on you will only see my tailfin.) |

The subtitles translate literally, keeping the image (hunger/eat my bubbles), while the dub changes the imagery of the pun. The term "Heckflosse" (*tailfin*) plays on a double meaning, the tailfin of a fish or of a car respectively, and thus underpins the association of the character Marlin with the stereotype of "Manni, the Manta driver", a distinctively German reference.[22]

| **English original**[23] | **German subtitles** | **German dub** |
|---|---|---|
| MARLIN<br>So just then, the sea cucumber looks over to the mollusk and says, "with fronds like these, who needs anemones?"! | 1115<br>Dann mustert<br>die Seegurke die Muschel und sagt:<br>1116<br>"Mit solchen Fransen braucht man keine Anemone". | MARLIN<br>Und da dreht sich die Miesmuschel zu dem Heilbutt um und sagt: "Wenn du Schuppen hast, musst du dir die Haare waschen".<br>(Back-translation: And so, the mussel turns over to the halibut and says: "If you have *scale/dandruff*, you must wash your hair".) |

The subtitles translate literally, while the dub replaces the pun with another one, alluding to a well-known German "Häschenwitz" (*bunny joke*)[24] and playing on the double meaning of "Schuppen" (*scale, dandruff*). Again, the dubbing uses a strategy typical for Disney seen already in another example above: "elements and expressions which belong to the contemporary Western and American culture" are inserted into the narration (Di Giovanni 213). It is interesting to note that the dub here employs this strategy although it is not present in the source text at this point. The reason for this could be either that the translator felt the need to compensate for an instance of this strategy not translated at another point, or the translator has assimilated Disney's

[21] 44th film minute.
[22] "Heckflosse" is also the nickname of a particular type of Mercedes.
[23] 87th film minute.
[24] Trifft Häschen einen Fisch und fragt: "Hattu Schuppen? " Fisch: "Klar! " Häschen: "Muttu Haare waschen!" (Häschenwitze). [Little bunny meets a fish and asks, "Do you have scales/dandruff?" Fish, "Of course" Little bunny, "Wash your hair!"]

strategies to such an extent that he or she employs them even if they are not present in the source.

### The Translation of Idiomatic Expressions

| English original[25] | German subtitles | German dub |
|---|---|---|
| ANCHOR<br>Hold it together, mate! | 305<br>- (...)<br>- Reiß dich zusammen. | HAMMER<br>Cool down, Bruder! |

German has an equivalent idiomatic expression for "holding it together" and the subtitles use this expression. Nevertheless, although an equivalent expression exists in the target language, the dub opts for another solution (*Cool down, brother!*), translating the English expression with another English expression. Is the dub therefore more foreignizing than the subtitles in this instance? Not necessarily. The expression "cool down" is commonly used in German and in key with the sociolect of Hammer and Hart. If the intent was to foreignize, the translators could have chosen to keep "mate" for example or use "brother" instead of "Bruder".

| English original[267] | German subtitles | German dub |
|---|---|---|
| CHUM<br>Don't fall off the wagon! | 321<br>Werd nicht rückfällig. | HART<br>Bleib eisern, Alter. |

While the subtitles translate the meaning of the idiomatic expression with an unmarked expression that repeats the image of "falling", the dubbed version replaces it with a colloquial idiomatic equivalent in German.

| English original[27] | German subtitles | German dub |
|---|---|---|
| PEACH<br>That's the shortest red light I've ever seen! | 1142<br>Das war<br>die kürzeste rote Ampel meines Lebens. | BELLA<br>Die Ampel hätten sie ruhig länger schalten können. |

| English original[28] | German subtitles | German dub |
|---|---|---|
| DORY<br>Little red flag goin' up.. | 575<br>- (...)<br>- Die rote Flagge geht hoch. | DORIE<br>Meine Alarmglocken läuten. |

In the dubbed version, both utterances reproduced above are translated by substituting the source-text expressions with idiomatic German expressions that are semantically equivalent. In the subtitled version, on the other hand, the source text's idiomatic expressions are translated literally, although no such idiomatic expressions exist in German. The subtitler clearly gave content synchronization priority over

[25] 22nd film minute.
[26] 23rd film minute.
[27] 88th film minute.
[28] 42 film minute.

fluency. However, as pointed out above, the aim of content synchronization is to facilitate comprehension. In the two above-cited instances, however, the opposite is the case– comprehension is made difficult by following the English original too closely. This is especially true for the last example, as a linguistic hybrid is created that is only intelligible to someone who is familiar with English.

**Conclusion**

This essay set out to illustrate how the different constrains present in subtitling and dubbing impact on the translation discourse, favouring a discourse that tends towards foreignization in subtitling and towards domestication in dubbing. In dubbing as well as in subtitling, the constraints derive from both the visual image and the original audio.[29] While the reading of subtitles is disrupted when there is a mismatch–or an apparent mismatch–of audio content and subtitle content, the viewing experience of a dubbed film is disrupted when the formal criteria of visual synchronization are not respected. For this reason, subtitles do not enjoy the same freedom as does dubbing when it comes to deviating from the lexical and the semantic content, the syntactic structure and the cultural connotations of the source text.[30]

The examples from *Findet Nemo* discussed above illustrate that the translation discourse of the dubbed version tends to move further away from the source text, while the discourse of the subtitled version tends to follow the source text more closely. One might argue that the subtitles, when read on paper, may sometimes seem uninspired compared to the dubbed version. However, one has to keep in mind that the synchrony between audio and subtitle content is one of the prime priorities of the translation subtitler. The dubbing script is often available to the DVD translation subtitler as the subtitles are usually produced at a stage when the dubbed version has already been released. The German translator of the DVD subtitles for *Finding Nemo*, too, must have had access to the dubbing script as the identical translation of some of the character names suggests (cf. Kahn, Puff, Racker, Luv). The fact that he or she nevertheless opts for an alternative solution–instead of simply copying the dubbing translation–underpins the assumption that these choices are not explained by a lack of inspiration or creativity on the part of the subtitler, but are deemed necessary. Furthermore, unlike dubbing, subtitles do not need to convey the entire semantic load of the original dialogue, as they can rely on the original audio to convey elements like accent, intonation, mood and so on. Subtitles, contrary to dubbing, are not a substitution of the original, but an addition to the original.

According to Schleiermacher, domestication and foreignization fulfil a different purpose: while foreignization is a tool to enable an audience with limited knowledge of the source language to appreciate foreign literature, a tool that would become futile if ever the audience acquired sufficient knowledge of the source language to access the

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[29] As regards the original audio, in subtitling these constraints are based on acoustic content; in dubbing they are based on the visual expression of the articulation of the acoustic content, that is, the synchronization of mouth movements and sound.

[30] To what lengths this freedom can go is illustrated by an experiment shown at the dubbing workshop of the German ZDF network during a conference on dubbing and subtitling in 1987: a scene showing a policeman aggressively interrogating a criminal was dubbed "reversing the roles, playing the scenes as pure farce, putting lines from Shakespeare into the mouths of the actors, etc." (Ivarsson and Carroll 36). According to Ivarsson and Carroll (36) all dubbed versions managed to maintain the illusion of authenticity.

source directly, domestication instead is a luxury, as it produces texts for the purpose of entertainment, but these texts do not fulfil a need and are not translations in a strict sense. From this perspective, the dubbing version can therefore be seen as pure luxury, its purpose being the entertainment of its audience. Thanks to the existence of a subtitled alternative, the dubbed version is freed from any pressure to remain close to the source text. Subtitling, on the other hand, does not have to live up to the same expectations as dubbing as far as easily accessible, thought-free entertainment is concerned. Needless to say, this argument is not universally valid. The German audience is in a privileged situation as they often can choose between the dubbed or the subtitled version of a feature film (or view both). The buying power of the German-speaking population is most likely the main reason for this wealth of choice, while smaller or less wealthy countries often produce only subtitled versions[31] as these are ten to twenty times less expensive than dubbing (Ivarsson and Carroll 36); in Eastern Europe, voice-over versions are customary (37).

While subtitling is a very visible form of translation, dubbing is often seen as an invisible translation practice. According to Gottlieb ("Language-Political" 36-7), the professional viewpoint is that "the criterion for good synchronization is met when the original actor appears to be actually speaking the translated dialogue, in other words, when translation is invisible". As Kahane puts it, "the ultimate goal is credibility, complete *make believe*" (in Gottlieb, "Language-Political" 39). These criteria seem to coincide with the criteria Venuti associates with domesticating translation; domestication conceals "the translator's crucial intervention in the text" (Venuti 1) and gives the illusion of transparency, the illusion that the reader has unobstructed, direct access to "what is present in the original" (Venuti 5). Put in a nutshell: the more domesticating the translation, the more invisible the translator. However, is the translator of the subtitled version of *Findet Nemo* really more visible than the translator of the dubbed version? True, the subtitles are clearly visible on screen and never deny being a translation. However, the ultimate aim of the synchronization of audio and subtitle is to attract the viewer's (conscious) attention as little as possible. Highly domesticating choices like the use of dialects (Alois, Urs) or sociolects (Hammer, Hart) seen in the dubbing instead, in my opinion, do draw attention to themselves. Whenever translation choices draw attention to themselves, the viewer, or at least the adult viewer, will be reminded that they are watching a translated product. That the awareness of reading (or, in our case, viewing) a translated product can fluctuate during the reading or viewing process has been suggested for example by Munday as well as Hermans. Hermans has argued that the reader's awareness of reading a translation becomes acute whenever something in the translation cannot realistically be attributed to the source-text author; in some cases, this awareness can become mandatory for the comprehension of the text. The illusion of transparency is clearly disrupted when the Bavarian of Alois or the Turkish-German of Erkan and Stefan (who lend Hammer and Hart their voices) display the gap between what the viewer is hearing and what can and cannot be present in the original. The translator becomes visible and viewers are invited to reflect on the role of translation and their expectations. As regards text-external visibility in the case of *Findet Nemo*, neither the translator of the dubbing script nor the translator of the subtitles is credited at the end of the film, as regrettably is often the case.

[31] "In all former Western European speech communities with less than 25 million speakers, foreign-language films and TV programs are subtitled rather than dubbed. One exception to this rule is Catalonia" (Gottlieb "Language-political implications of subtitling" 83).

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# The Spirit of the Carnival:
# Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Constantinople

**Hediye Özkan**

**Abstarct:** Virginia Woolf chooses Constantinople as a critical place where Orlando's sex change occurs as well as his true identity is revealed. Constantinople functions as a carnival, and a center of feast where Woolf and Orlando free themselves from both literary and gender boundaries, and regulations. The heterogeneous and pluralistic structure of the city challenges the rigid gender roles and hierarchy, which Woolf subverts by satirizing and parodying through *Orlando.* Destabilizing the past and tradition, Woolf constructs the startling transformation of her character through an experimental modernist style. Through its organic and chaotic nature, the city serves for her aesthetic, social and political desires by offering an alternative space fostering freedom, tolerance and diversity. Woolf plays with literary and gender conventions within carnivalesque to liberate not only herself from the dominant culture but also her character from the limitations of gender.

**Keywords:** Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, Constantinople, carnival, gender transformation

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* presents more than three hundred years of life of an imaginary character Orlando who becomes a woman at the age of thirty in Constantinople. The city appears in most of Woolf's works as a mystic and spiritual place covered with mist, yet reveals its magnificent beauty intertwined with a chaotic nature when "the mist" disappears (*Orlando* 84). The mist blurs the boundaries between seen/concrete and hidden/tangible. Inspired by the mist hiding the city behind its shadows, Woolf chooses Constantinople as a critical place where Orlando's sex change occurs as well as his true identity is revealed.

Woolf's enigmatic choice of location for such a dramatic transformation is scrutinized by many critics who pose the question of why did Woolf choose Constantinople? According to Karen Lawrence, Orlando's sex change is "deliberately 'orientalized'" since "English soil is inimical to the emergence of female subjectivity and sexuality" (255). On the other hand, Julia Briggs explores the significance of the city for Woolf through *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway* by associating the city with religious conflict, intolerance and violence. Briggs argues that Constantinople in *Orlando* is explicitly related to women and the love between the two women, Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf. Parallel to Briggs, David Roessel asserts that Woolf's choice of location for the sex change of the main character in *Orlando* is not arbitrary (398). According to Roessel, Constantinople symbolizes Sapphic love, war, and death as the three main forces in Woolf's life. Taking another direction, Zeynep Atayurt examines the significance of Constantinople in terms of not only its geographical and aesthetic space allowing Orlando's sex change, but also of its non-gendered position dissembling the normative regulations of gender (119).

Although the relationship between Woolf, Orlando, and Constantinople has been discussed by many scholars from various perspectives, Constantinople's carnivalistic mise-en-scène remains as a topic that is not paid enough attention. This essay aims to fill the gap by addressing the carnivalistic nature of Constantinople which, I argue, is

the reason behind Woolf's choice of the city for Orlando's transformation. I would argue that in *Orlando* Constantinople functions as a carnival, and a center of feast where Woolf and Orlando free themselves from both literary and gender constraints, boundaries, and regulations. Discussing Woolf personal accounts and diary entries from her visit to Constantinople in 1906, along with the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "carnival", I will examine how Constantinople serves as a critical location for Woolf's aesthetic desires to craft Orlando's sex change within hectic, organic and chaotic aura of the city.

In *Rabelais and His World* published in 1965, Mikhail Bakhtin defines carnival as a composition embracing diversity;

> [i]n fact, carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators.... Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. (7)

Carnival is explored by Bakhtin as a medieval festival and social ritual, which functions to diminish the gender and class boundaries, hierarchies and differences by equating people living the experience. It brings unlikely people together without leaving anyone outside, and creates a space where diverse voices are heard by allowing an open interaction and communication. It is a kind of performance where the boundaries between actors and audiences are removed with the contribution and participation of both actors and spectators. This forms a communal activity rather than individual endeavor. Carnival creates an alternative social space fostering freedom, equality, and spiritual opulence. Rank is revoked during carnival and everybody is considered equal.

During her first visit to Constantinople in 1906, Woolf describes the city in terms of its carnivalesque structure that provides liberation and embracement. She writes in her diary,

> [n]ow in the purlieus of Constantinople a great deal of the Gorgeous East still runs warm; a vine was laced across the road, a various torrent of red fezes, turbans, yashmaks, European respectability came pouring down it, like a turbulent Highland water. But no one stopped to look at us, the eccentrics of all our dresses seemed but part of the ordinary composition. (*A Passionate Apprentice* 353)

The city brings together Woolf, a Western woman, and all other people rushing within the crowd. Woolf takes the role of spectator of people and the city through her observations and notes. However, as she mentions, without being realized as different and the "other", she is accepted as part of the organic composition of the city. The city and people are not simply observed but experienced. The boundaries between Woolf and people of Constantinople are abolished by forming a community that erases rank and differences, and promoting equality in diversity like a carnival. "During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is the essence of carnival, vividly felt by all its participants" (Bakhtin 7). Life is a living organism in which individuals feel the collectivity and growing together; they change, mutate, and transform by renewal. Carnival is a moment when life escapes laws and official bounds, offering an idealistic

freedom. It is a form of life between real and ideal, yet, it is vibrant and colorful as a festive.

As an active participant of Constantinople's vigor, Woolf notes in her dairy, "If [Constantinople] is superficial, it is also vivid… the streets and bridges are crowded with men and women, horses and carriages; here is an English diplomat and here a lean native, who propose to start a pilgrimage in a fortnights time for Macca. A sleek merchant hustles him on his way to his office" (*A Passionate Apprentice* 357). Constantinople brings an English diplomat, a lean native, a pilgrimage, and a merchant together under the spectrum of an unlikely structure. It offers a universal and collective body which often converts from one state to another, and is constantly renewed. Eliminating the barriers of hierarchies, the city offers equality and freedom for everyone including Woolf.

The carnival mise-en-scène of the city also permeates the constructions and buildings in it. One of these buildings is the Suleiman Mosque, which was completed in 1557 and mentioned by Woolf in her diary. She describes the mosques, emphasizing the embracing nature of the place.

> You raise a great leather curtain, so admit yourself to a sight that is as strange as it is beautiful. The mosque is none other than a vast empty drawing room, you might dance in silk here, or drink afternoon tea, or merely live a gentle life…The place invites you to come in and sit on the floor at your ease; you will think cheerful thoughts, they will be thought of high wholesome things. (*A Passionate Apprentice* 352)

Mosque transform into a space where Woolf can not only liberate her body like a dancer but also her thoughts and talents like a philosopher or painter. It offers both physical and intellectual emancipation from restrictions and creates communal space, inviting individuals for unity. She continues describing people inside as follows:

> The strong voices of men praying were not unlike the voices of those same men in the market place; a child ran in fearlessly, clapping his hands, crying aloud, as though he pursued some outdoor game within the temple, found it as good as playground as any and saw no reason to cease his joy. (*A Passionate Apprentice* 353)

Mosque brings the unlikely of people together as a community cherishing the moment. While men are praying, a child runs and Woolf watches the view by joining the interaction. Once again, the gender and class boundaries are abolished. Besides being a place where religious rituals takes place, the mosque plays the role of uniting a diversity of people under its dome. Woolf, thus, experiences the liberation it offers, so does the child who moves freely in this "vast empty drawing room" as if it was a playground. Men feel the spiritual freedom through praying, the child though running, and Woolf through observing and seizing the moment. Bakhtin states that "[c]arnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions" (10). The mosque welcomes Woolf, a European female tourist, the same way it accepts a child who is crying, running, and playing and men who are there to pray. The hierarchy between these people disappears as the social roles are left behind the "great leather curtain". The dominant discourse and social roles lose their privileges. Celebration encompasses the ambiance through direct contact among people rather than

isolation and alienation. The colorful interior design of the mosque contributes to the vivid setting of the celebration: "The round pillars are laid with the white tiles upon which are painted patterns in blue; there are panels of green and other colors, so that the whole place, based upon glowing carpets of many hues gives forth a radiant tide of light" (*A Passionate Apprentice* 353). Blue symbolizes sky, while green is the color of grass in spring. The mosque ceases to be a construction of brick, and symbolically turns into an open-air theatre where the distinction between actors and spectators is abolished as in carnival time. Woolf is separated from position as a spectator by sharing the moment with other people and being a part of the group.

As a location for Woolf to escape from constraints in her diary, Constantinople provides the same liberal environment for Orlando's sex change. The history of Constantinople, its conversion from Byzantine Empire to Ottoman in the fifth century and from Ottoman to Turkish Republic in the beginning of the twentieth century points out in its versatile position. In addition, being a bridge between East and West, a colorful mosaic reflecting diverse civilizations, religions, cultures, and standing at the largest center of Eastern Mediterranean sea, aesthetic, Roman, Greek and Ottoman architectural masterpieces, Constantinople represents a place where Woolf can escape from the gender constraints in Europe and construct the startling transformation of her character. The heterogeneous and pluralistic structure of the city challenges the rigid gender roles and hierarchy, which Woolf subverts by satirizing and parodying through *Orlando* which is first published in 1928. Her depiction of the city in *Orlando* parallels with the depictions in her diary penned twelve years before *Orlando*'s publication. It manifests that the portrayal of the city in *Orlando* is based on her trip to Constantinople, memories and personal experiences as she accounts in her diary.

Orlando's first encounter with Constantinople echoes Woolf's depictions in her accounts. He wakes up around seven, stands, and gazes "at the city beneath him, apparently enhanced. At this hour, the mist would lie so thick that the domes of Santa Sofia and the rest would seem to be afloat" (89). The first thing he sees is the domes of Santa Sofia which is also mentioned in *A Room of One's Own*, in which Woolf describes novel as "leaving a shape on the mind's eye, built now in squares, now pagoda shaped, now throwing out wings and arcades, now solidly compact and domed like the Cathedral of Santa Sofia at Constantinople" (78). She draws a structural parallel between novel and the glorious temple. However, not in *Orlando* but in her diary, Woolf describes the interior structure of Santa Sophia and illuminates what is under that glorious dome. She notes,"Here was St. Sophia; here was I, with one brain two eyes, legs and arms in proportion, set down to appreciate it" (*A Passionate Apprentice* 349). Her impression is described as "fragmentary and inconsequent; as does strange rays of light, octagonal and colorless; windows without stained glass; no screen across the church; was it a church?" (349). The interior design confuses Woolf about Santa Sofia's identity, as it was still a mosque in 1906. Hagia Sophia has experienced many paradoxes since it was built by Emperor Justinian of Byzantine Empire in 537. (Marinis 11). Along with the transition from liturgical rites in the Great Church of Constantinople by the ninth century, Hagia Sophia was converted into a mosque, Aya Sofya, after the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Empire in 1453. After the conquest, it was remodeled with the "addition of the minarets and the tombs of the sultans" and converted into a museum in 1934 by the Turkish Republic (Nelson xvii). Santa Sofia, which stands as a solid image in front of Orlando and is described as "fragmentary" by Woolf, has a similar fate with Orlando whose gender transformation parallels with the historical and architectural conversions of this masterpiece.

Santa Sophia also resembles Suleiman Mosques where Woolf experienced freedom from boundaries. In Santa Sophia, she sees "men in turbans squatting together at one end; they rose and went away, talking loudly, when their conclave was finished" (*A Passionate Apprentice* 350). In addition, "there were many single figures wandering up, down the great space, reflectively; there were one or two who, seated at the side, rocked their bodies rhythmically to the tune of the Koran spread open, upon their knees. Here is a group with white turbans from Bokhara—[a city in Uzbekistan]" (*A Passionate Apprentice* 350). Like Suleiman Mosque, Santa Sophia as a universal space unites a diversity of people. It offers human emancipation through the coexistence of various groups under the same dome.

Santa Sophia is also mentioned in Woolf's lover Vita's poem tittled "Morning in Constantinople". Like Orlando, Vita Sackville-West relishes the lively view of Hagia Sophia as opposed to the hidden city under the mist:

> She has an early morning of her own,
> A blending of mist and sea and sun
> Into an indistinguishable one,
> When Saint Sophia, from her lordly throne.
>
> Rises above that opalescent,
> A shadowy dome and soaring minaret,
> Visible though the base be hidden yet
> Beneath the veiling wreaths of milky shroud. (*Collected Poems* 201)

Standing in a liminal space between earth and sky, Hagia Sophia allows viewers to identify themselves with its glory, multiple identities, and complicated history. Displaying Santa Sophia's domes and minarets first, Constantinople becomes visible only when the mist disappears. As Orlando observes,

> [g]radually the mist uncover them; the bubbles would be seen to be firmly fixed; there would be the river; the Galata Bridge; there the green turbaned pilgrims without eyes or noses; begging alms; there the pariah dogs picking up offal; there the shawled women; there the innumerable donkeys; there men on horses carrying long poles. (89)

The city appears as a diverse composition of dwellers composed of not only humans but also other living beings like animals. The borders of hierarchy vanishes as pilgrims, pariah dogs, shawled women, innumerable donkeys, men and horses share the same environment as a lived and constantly renewed collective body. The city offers equality and freedom to all genders, classes, and living beings. The festive appearance of the city enhances Orlando. In a while,

> [t]he whole town would be astir with the cracking of the whips, the beatings of gongs, cryings to prayer, lashing of mules, and rattle of brass-bound wheels, while sour odours, made from bread fermenting and incense and spice, rose even to the heights of Pera itself. (89)

Sounds, odors, tastes, colors, and shapes are intermingled as if it was a festival. Woolf describes a similar view seen from Pera during her visit to Constantinople. She notes that the most impressive thing in Constantinople

> is the prospect of the roofs of the town, seen from the high ground of Pera. For in the morning a mist lies like a veil that muffles treasures across all the houses and all the mosques; then as the sun rises, you catch hints of the heaped mass within; then a pinnacle of gold pierces the soft mesh, you see shapes of precious stuff lumped together. (*A Passionate Apprentice* 351)

Woolf reflects her experience in Constantinople through Orlando's eyes. They both watch the city from Pera, and observe the mist hiding the city under a veil that covers the colors and shapes. The mist mentioned in Woolf's diary, in Vita's poem and in *Orlando* symbolically masks the Sapphic love between Woolf and Vita. Furthermore, it blurs the boundaries between earth and sky, and the real and metaphysical by providing a surreal space similarly blurring the normative regulations of gender to construct Orlando's transformation. The mist functions as a veil in both Woolf and Vita's description, attributing to the city not only a gender but also an oriental identity. D. A Boxwell associates the orient Woolf observes with "gender transgression and transitivity for the indomitable" (314). When the veil disappears, the face of the city becomes visible, rejecting one single identity and gender definition by gaining cosmopolitan and multinational character. Orlando with "English root and fibre" is drawn into these features of the city, and

> [s]hould yet exult to the depths of his heart in this wild panorama, and gaze and gaze at those passes and far heights, planning journeys there alone on foot where only the goat and shepherd had gone before; should feel the passion of affection for the bright, unseasonable flowers, love the unkempt, pariah dogs beyond even his elk hounds at home, and snuff acrid, sharp smell of the streets eagerly into his nostrils, surprised him. (89)

He desires for an escape in order to feel passion and disorder, and be free from concerns, constraints, and restrictions of norms and systems. Constantinople provides an alternative vision, in which Orlando can experience the utopian freedom he wishes. The city transforms into a force that draws Orlando into a space of transcendental realm, connecting him not only to the nature but also to the self. Furthermore, the flexible ambiance promises the possible conditions for his transformation. After seven days of sleep, Orlando wakes up as a woman and "the change seemed to have been accomplished painlessly and completely and in such a way that Orlando herself showed no surprise at all" (103). He wears a Turkish coat and trousers "which can be worn indifferently by either sex; and was forced to consider her position" (103). Orlando's transformation parallels with the historical sociological, cultural, and political transformation of Constantinople through the centuries, specifically in the beginning of twentieth-century when Constantinople became İstanbul after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. After the World War I, İstanbul left its Ottoman identity behind, entering into a secular and modern period with a set of revolutions.

Likewise, after thirty years of his life, Orlando becomes a woman in Constantinople which possesses the appropriate conditions for such a dramatic and revolutionary change. Orlando's fate goes hand in hand with the fate of Constantinople in terms of being transferred from one state to another. After the transformation, Orlando for the last time looks at her Ambassadorial wardrobe full of "several of emeralds and pearls of the finest orient", and "the Ambassador of Great Britain at the court of the Sultan" leaves Constantinople "attended by a lean dog, riding a donkey, in company of a gypsy" (104). She walks away from her position and possessions, which

confine her within certain responsibilities, roles, and obligations. Along with physical transformation, Orlando also experiences a spiritual transformation by giving up all earthly ties and living her life as a gypsy. Constantinople provides a natural setting for transition from physical to spiritual, manhood to womanhood, and aristocracy to commoners. Although Orlando's identity does not alter, his sex change is accompanied by class change which she experiences in an alternative community in Broussa.

Before visiting Constantinople, Orlando travels to Broussa with gypsies, to an old capital of Ottoman Empire, and lives in a society where he feels "the pleasure of having no document to seal or sign, no flourishes to make, no calls to pay" (104). In Broussa, he does not need to follow any procedures or instructions. She "milked the goats; she collected brushwood; she stole a hen's egg now and then, but always put a coin or a pearl in a place of it; she herded cattle; she striped vines; she trod the grape; she filled the goat-skin and drank from it" (104). There are no constraints, rules, or regulations in this community of people. Despite a complete lifestyle change, Orlando is contented, and "laughed aloud" by comparing "how, about this time of day, she should have been making the motions of drinking and smoking over an empty coffee cup and a pipe which lacked tobacco" instead of asking "for a puff from old Rustum's pipe, filled though it was with cow dung" (105). The gypsies accept Orlando "as one of themselves" and "were willing to help her to become more like them; taught her their arts of cheese-making and basket-weaving, their science of stealing and bird-snaring, and were even prepared to consider letting her among them" (105). Disregarding his Englishness, this utopic community rejects hierarchy, laws, and class and gender difference between Orlando and themselves. Idealizing their primitiveness and positioning Orlando among the unsophisticated society, Woolf draws attention to the separation form the past, tradition, history, and institutions.

Gypsies represent a social structure completely different from the social space in which Orlando was born and raised. The blurred gender roles in this utopic community of gypsies are in stark contrast with the rigid gender roles of Victorian society. Situating Orlando within this community, Woolf also aims to question the constraints of Victorian values and aesthetics as well as aristocracy, class structure and politics of British Empire. Her intention is reflected through Orlando, looking "from the gypsy point of view," understands that a Duke "was nothing but a profiteer or robber who snatched land and money from people who rated these things of little worth, and could think of nothing better to do than to build three hundred and sixty-five bedrooms when one was enough, and none was even better than one" (109). This statement indicates Orlando's spiritual transformation. Different from the one he experiences when he leaves his position and office in Constantinople after the sex change, this time Orlando's thoughts about her lineage are revealed by the narrator: "She could not deny that her ancestors had accumulated field after field; house after house; honour after honour" (110). In addition to literary traditions, and social and cultural issues, Woolf criticizes the imperial policies of British government through colonization for centuries. The gentry were controlling the slave, and sugar trade in the eighteenth century West Indies, and obtained considerable wealth in order to have fields and build houses.

Questioning and rejecting the past and tradition, Orlando embodies Woolf's modernist ideas, her strong reaction to Victorian culture, and her desire for destabilizing tradition, which is revealed not only in content but also her choice of narrative style. While she chooses Constantinople to question and overstep boundaries in content, Woolf uses an experimental modernist form in *Orlando*, challenging literary norms, genres, and regulations. Unlike conventional biographies, *Orlando* disrupts expectations

through its grotesque style. This structure corresponds to the carnival spirit including laughter, and parody as a suspension of certain norms, barriers and prohibitions as Bakhtin argues (13). Through parody, mockery, and irony, Woolf turns *Orlando* into a carnival and subverts the norms of official culture by creating a new type of discourse. Within this new discourse, Woolf explores "the grotesque concept of the body" which is "unfinished, outgrows itself and transgresses its own limits (Bakhtin 26). After the sex change, Orlando has a woman's body which she explores either through non-gendered Turkish pants, "the dress of a young Englishwoman of rank", or through her sexuality (113). As Orlando frees himself in Constantinople, Woolf emancipates herself in *Orlando* through her unorthodox style. Juxtaposing male and female body, feminine or masculine characteristics, and gender roles in *Orlando*, Woolf plays with literary and gender conventions by using the carnivalesque as a means to liberate not only herself from the dominant culture, but also her character from the limitations of gender.

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# Özdemir Asaf's Translation of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*: A Bermanian Approach

**Ceyda Özmen**

**Abstract:** Following Antoine Berman's analytical path, this essay will attempt to develop a descriptive, interpretative and critical approach to Özdemir Asaf's translation of Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. Rather than focusing on the differences between the source and target texts to detect the "defects" of the translator, the discussion focuses on the translation project and the conditions that ensure the success of the translation in carrying out the project. In the first part of the article, Berman's hermeneutic approach to translation criticism is revisited. Three hermeneutic categories Berman employs for the analysis of translation on macro level–translating position, translation project and translating horizon- will be critically reviewed. The second part of the paper is devoted to the critical evaluation of Asaf's translation of the ballad. The analysis follows the steps outlined by Berman. It first centres on the "position" of the translator, the "project" surrounding the translation, and "horizon" from which it sprang (Berman 1995). This macro analysis, which aims to provide an understanding of the parameters that define Asaf's translation, is followed by a contrastive analysis of the source and target texts.

**Keywords:** Antonie Berman, translation criticism, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*

## Introduction

*The Ballad of Reading Gaol* is Oscar Wilde's most popular autobiographical work (Pascual; Buckler). The penal system is criticized from the perspective of a murderer in prison who was sentenced to death penalty. The murderer, his psychological state in prison, the challenging conditions of the prison, and the wardens' treatment to prisoners are impressively depicted in the ballad. Written as a literary work in rhyme, the ballad becomes a general assessment of and a protest against the cruel and inhumane system (Epifanio; Montgomery Hyde, *Oscar Wilde: A Biography*). This aspect of the ballad makes it a "propaganda leaflet in rhyme" or an "antiprison propaganda" piece (Nassaar 179). The ballad, which was first published in 1898 in London, was introduced to Turkish readers by a prominent Turkish poet, Özdemir Asaf (1923-1981). Asaf's translation remained the one and only translation for 35 years in the Turkish literary repertoire until the retranslations of the ballad were done by another poet-translator, Tozan Alkan (2003)[1] and Piyale Perver (2014)[2]. The first translation by Asaf appeared in 1968, published by Yuvarlak Masa Yayınları–Sanat Basımevi-, a publishing house founded by Özdemir Asaf himself. This edition also provided the Turkish readers with the autobiographical story behind the ballad. Asaf's translation was reprinted posthumously without any editorial alteration by Broy Yayınevi and Epsilon in 1998 and 2006, respectively. The latest reprint of Asaf's translation was published by Kırmızı Yayınları in 2011.

[1] published by Artshop Press.
[2] published by Dedalus Press.

This essay aims to provide a critique of the latest reedition of Özdemir Asaf's translation on the basis of the analytical path suggested by Antoine Berman (1995). This reprint was selected for analysis, for it is the most comprehensive project on Wilde's ballad in Turkey and its curious resistance against time and retranslations. While a Bermanian perspective serves to develop a descriptive, interpretative and critical approach towards the translation of the ballad, the intricate nature of Asaf's work provides an opportunity for revisiting and critically reviewing Berman's "form of approach" to literary translations (5), and the methodology attached to it. In the first part of the article, Berman's hermeneutic approach to translation criticism is revisited, and his theoretical and methodological considerations are reviewed. The second part is concerned with a critical and extensive analysis of Asaf's translation of the ballad.

**Antoine Berman and Translation Criticism**

The definition and the scope of translation criticism have long been a controversial field. While some analyses lack an autonomous form and methodology which make them inconsistent in different contexts; some others, though they are characterized by certain form and methodology, remain deficient in some other ways. These methods are either too subjective, remaining value judgements reflecting the writers' own tastes, intuitions, likes or dislikes and do not go further than a source text-target text comparison abstracted from its surroundings *or* too ambitious to be descriptive, neutral analyses-rather than critical- which systematically focus on the conditions affecting translation practice (Berman, 1995, pp. 32-48). Being inspired on the one hand by Paul Ricœur and Hans Robert Jauss, on the other hand by Benjaminian critical perspective, Berman employs a hermeneutic approach for the purpose of "bringing out the truth of the translation" instead of error spotting or glorifying without any reason. (3). He aims, for his analyses, to form a productive criticism which will prepare grounds for a new translation. Taking first translation both as "an introduction and translation", Berman particularly points to the necessity of retranslations–successive or simultaneous–where translation is "played out" (67), and thus underlines the role a productive criticism may take in the future translations. Besides a micro analysis which focuses on textual differences, Berman lays emphasis on a macro level analysis which addresses diverse parameters–both social and personal–that give rise to those differences. Such a holistic approach towards translation avoids fruitless discussions revolving around the issues of 'faithfulness' or 'fidelity'.

Berman advocates a close reading of the target text before turning to the source text. This is to avoid bias which may be held against the translation after reading the original. It is also significant in sensing whether the translation "stands" on its own in the target language (50). During close reading of the translation, "textual zones", which appear to be problematic, are reserved for in-depth analysis (50). The reading of the source text may lead to the detection of new zones where literary work condenses. After laying the foundations of the micro analysis, Berman does not hasten to start contrastive analysis. He proposes to centre on the translator–his/her "position", "project" and "horizon". "Translation position" refers to the conception and perception of the practice of translating by the translator and the way s/he has "internalized" the contemporary discourse on translation (the norms) (58). Taking the translator both as a "pre-structured" and "structuring" agent, Berman emphasizes both autonomous and controlled motivations behind a translation practice. The "translation project" is defined as the "articulated purpose" according to which a translator is going to perform a

translation task, to choose a "mode" of translation and translation "style" (60). Although it is undoubtedly true that the evaluation of a translation on the basis of its project contributes much to a critique, there are some points in Berman that need to be addressed. First, not every purpose or project is openly articulated, which makes it harder to find out the driving force behind translations. Second, Berman's positioning the translator as the only responsible agent for the project passes over the roles played by diverse agents such as publishing houses, publisher, editor and reviser in the realization of the literary transfer and, thus, fails to take account of the network the translator is part of. Third, Berman's conceptualization of the project precludes the possibility of the non-contemporariness of the translation project and the act of translation. It is postulated that the planning of the project always precedes the act of translation and translation goes "where and up to the limits of where the project leads" (61). It appears that Berman does not observe the reeditions of the translated texts which may well be published posthumously through different projects by different publishers, as is the case in point. In such cases, it becomes necessary to analyze the project and the act of translation separately. Rather than taking translation practice directly as the realization or outcome of the project, the critic may dwell on the compatibility between the project and translation.

Finally, Berman defines the "translating horizon" as "the set of linguistic, literary, cultural and historical parameters that determine the ways of feeling, acting and thinking of the translator" (x). In Berman, the horizon is taken to be influential on both the translation position and project. However, the long history of some reeditions and the non-contemporariness of the translation and project may, once again, complicate the analysis of the translating horizon. In such a case, the critic may choose to focus on the period in which translation is done or may address the periods of translation and project separately. After the analysis of the translation position, project and horizon, Berman suggests continuing with the comparison of the texts. The comparison is carried out at four levels: comparison of selected passages, comparison of the problematic textual zones, comparison with other translations, and finally comparison between translation and project to reveal what the project has resulted in.

Although, as mentioned above, there are some points that require reconsideration, it is apparent that Berman's "form of translation analysis" (32) promises more than naively comparing, confronting or merely describing translations, and thus brings a new impulse to translation criticism. His analytical path paves the way for a systematic analysis of translations and helps to base *critique* on valid and rigorous data.

### ***Reading Zindanı Balladı*** **[The Ballad of Reading Gaol] by Özdemir Asaf**

Having remained as the one and only translation for thirty five years and having been republished several times at different periods under different projects–despite retranslations being available, Özdemir Asaf's work appeared to have become successful in capturing the attention of Turkish readers. In this part, the whys and hows of Asaf's work will be scrutinized.

### **Özdemir Asaf's Translating Position**

According to Asaf, poetry is an idiosyncratic way of interpreting life. He puts special emphasis on rhetoric and defines the aim of poetry as "creating insoluble reactions" While he considers words as the tools of a poet, he subordinates formal beauty, line symmetries and rhyming. His style is distinctive in many ways. The most

outstanding characteristics of his poetry is his plain, condensed and paradoxical language (Ünlü and Özcan 361). Asaf skillfully uses words and their phonetic characteristics in his own poetry. To emphasize the linguistic and phonetic aspects of words, he also draws upon colloquial language, which may well be related to his aim: to impress readers. He often violates linguistic rules and does not abide by the rule of sound change in vowels when the Turkish suffix "-yor" –a suffix used for present continuous tense–is used in the negative form after a vowel. He misspells some words, and assigns different meanings to words (Ekinci). It is also known that he paid meticulous attention to his work while writing and publishing his poems. He was never in a hurry to publish his poems but let them ripen for a while. Yıldız Moran explains the reason for this as follows: "This postponement is not so that he can improve on what he has written. He does not wish the personal ups and downs to reflect in the poetry. For poetry he has a loftier fate in mind. In poetry a condensed expression is the respect for the reader" (Moran n.pag).

In the early 1940s, Asaf started translating poems in order to improve his own poetry. Different from his other poetry translations which were published in periodicals, he published the translation of Wilde's ballad in book form. Asaf's daughter, Seda Arun, points out that he was deeply influenced by Oscar Wilde and his poetry (13). Asaf's admiration for Oscar Wilde makes Doğan Hızlan, a literary critic, suggest categorizing his poetry translations under two groups: those from Oscar Wilde and others (12). Asaf, too, expressed his pleasure in translating Wilde as follows: "I did well to translate the one who wrote what he lived and lived what he wrote"[3] (in Arun 16). Asaf explains the strategy he adopted while translating the ballad as follows:

> Since we do not have a ballad tradition in Turkish, sticking to the metre and rhyme would be a futile effort and would require divergence from the meaning. Meter of the translation is as follows: (7+7+7). ("Balladın Öyküsü" 196)
>
> *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* which is composed of 645 lines (109 sestets) was transferred into Turkish as a poem of equal value to the original. ("Oscar Wilde'ın Hayatı" 125)

These statements reveal that Asaf does not perceive poetry translation as a slavish adherence to the source text. Working on the poem meticulously[4], he attaches priority to the meaning and impact of words without totally leaving formal characteristics aside. Since he thinks that every poem speaks for itself and thus does not need further explanation (Hızlan 10; Ekinci 43), he prefers not to use annotations in his translations, including the ballad. Such an approach is also shared by Wilde who states that "[i]t is a mistake to ask a poet what he means by any obscure phrase in a poem, because he may mean one thing or several things. The answer is that it means what it says in the poem. […] You should know" (Montgomery-Hyde, *Oscar Wilde: The Aftermath* 171-72).

### The Translation Project

Özdemir Asaf's translation was first published in 1968 by his own publishing house, Yuvarlak Masa Yayınları. This first publication included both the ballad and

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[3] All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

[4] On the draft he worked, Asaf took many notes about Oscar Wilde and his ballad (Wilde 20).

story behind it. The following posthumous publications in 1998 and 2006 do not differ in the way of presenting the work; the translation of the ballad is accompanied by its story and Oscar Wilde's biography. Such an approach is not without reason. Asaf writes that

> *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* is a work of an author who was sentenced to hard labour for two years between 1895-1897. He started to write it in Bernavel and finished in Napoli. The publication process of the book should be considered with reference to the relationship between the author and society and should be analyzed in conjunction with the story underlying it. ("Balladın Öyküsü" 175)

It is in the 2011 edition that Asaf's translation is offered in the widest context. The title of the project is "The Life of Oscar Wilde and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* from the Pen of Özdemir Asaf". The translation of the ballad and its story are accompanied by prologues written by Doğan Hızlan and Seda Arun, Wilde's life from the pen of Asaf, Wilde's chronological biography, Asaf's opinions on Oscar Wilde and informative texts on the publication processes of the work in England, France and Turkey. It can be understood from the prologues that all the materials surrounding the translation of the ballad were prepared by Asaf beforehand. Arun, as the editor of the project, underlines their fidelity to Asaf's work and states that they did not change even a word in the translation but provided readers with contemporary Turkish words in parenthesis[5] (16). Considering the breadth of the project dated 2011, it may be safely stated that the project parallels Asaf's own translation project (1968); it can even be said to further the previous one by providing supplementary materials which place the ballad in a wider context for readers' understanding. Such a project is compatible with the purpose of the translator who thinks that Oscar Wilde, as a world-famous author, should be read and fully understood by Turkish readers (Asaf, "Balladın Öyküsü" 195).

However, the 2011 edition by Kırmızı Yayınları differs from the initial project in certain respects. It appears that the publication of the translation serves more than one purpose. The emphasis on Asaf in the title and the prologues imply that the project not only aims to reintroduce Oscar Wilde and his ballad to Turkish readers but also to present Özdemir Asaf as a distinguished poet by drawing attention to the splendour of his poetry and style in the translation he did. In the prologue, Hızlan notes that

> [i]n his translations, Özdemir Asaf drew upon the words he used in his own poems. His poetry manifests itself in translation. He did not need to make a special effort. The rich lexicon of his poetry was sufficient. […] Being Wilde in the first place, you are going to read translations of many poems, that belong to various good poets, from a good poet. (12)

The purpose of presenting Asaf as a preeminent poet in the Turkish repertoire leads to different descriptions of the work Asaf performed. While some agents, like Hızlan above, call it "translation", the editor–Seda Arun–and publisher of the project deliberately avoid referring to Asaf as the translator: "It is understood that he [Asaf] did not translate the ballad but 'transfered' it into Turkish as a poem of equal value" (15). However, in the accompanying texts, Asaf himself does not hesitate to name his work as "translation" ("Balladın Öyküsü" 16, 195). Such a divergence between the translator and other agents in the project may have arisen from their conceptualization of

[5] Such a strategy brings forth another translation practice (intralingual translation) which may be addressed in another essay.

translation. It appears that, unlike Asaf, the editor and publisher of the 2011 edition consider translation as a derivative activity and introduce a hierarchical relationship between the attributes of *author* and *translator*. They may have thought that referring to Asaf as translator may have come to mean underestimating his own capacity as a poet. That is why they opt for presenting the ballad with phrases such as "Türkçesi" [in Turkish] or "Özdemir Asaf'ın kaleminden" [from Özdemir Asaf's pen] rather than explicitly defining the work as translation. The restricted conceptualization of *translation* on the part of the editor and publisher also manifests itself through the presentation of the "paratexts" (Genette) surrounding the translation of the ballad. Although most of the presentational materials accompanying the ballad are the outcome of a translation process, no concern was shown for the translational status of these texts.

**The Horizon of the Translator**

The asynchronicity of the act of translation and the project forces an analysis of the horizon from different angles. Due to practical reasons, this section will focus merely on the horizon of the translator. The parameters that determined the ways of feeling, acting and thinking of Asaf will be investigated both from ideological and literary perspectives. Such an approach is also required by the very nature of Wilde's ballad as it is an indictment of the penal system and thus an "amalgamation of poetry and propaganda" (Epifanio 207).

The penal system, the treatment towards prisoners, and prison conditions have long been subject of complaint and debate in Turkey, too. Although Asaf is known to have had an apolitical stance, his satirical poems address issues such as human rights, freedom and injustice (Ekinci 174, 268). The translation of Wilde's ballad may have been a unique opportunity for him to raise awareness and voice criticism concerning the inhumane imprisonment conditions in Turkey. It is also apparent that Asaf continued to address the issue in his own writings. In his poetry book entitled *Yuvarlağın Köşeleri* [The Corners of Circle], for example, he expresses his ideas on crime, penalty and related law, echoing Wilde's perspective. Moreover, in one of his poems, "Evrensel Balad" [Universal Ballad], Asaf touches upon the inhumane conditions Wilde experiences and puts particular emphasis on humanism.

Asaf's poetry and translations were shaped by different set of parameters that can be grouped under two different literary movements in Turkey: the First and Second New Movements. Although Asaf did not play an active role in these movements, he was influenced by both (Ekinci). In the early 1940s, the First New Movement, also called "The Garip Movement", gave a new impulse to Turkish poetry.[6] "Garip" poems had no rhyme and meter, drew upon colloquial language, covered diverse topics and bore the trace of surrealism (Özdil). The Garips idealized articulatory beauty and refused to use conventional patterns in poetry. In the 1950s, the Second New Movement arose as a reaction to the Garip Movement. Contrary to the previous one, the Second New Movement moved away from reality, meaning and life. Pushing the limits of poetry, this movement advocated obscurity rather than intelligibleness, abstractness rather than concreteness.[7] Asaf's translating and publishing the ballad cover both literary

[6] The name "Garip" (Strange, Peculiar) also signals the break with the conventional, decadent style of Turkish poetry and literature at the time.

[7] Cemal Süreyya, Edip Cansever, İlhan Berk, Turgut Uyar are the leading names of this movement.

movements. However, his choice of source text and the strategy he followed during the translation process illustrate his inclination towards the First New Movement. Asaf chooses to translate a work from Oscar Wilde, an author-poet who prefers using simple, colloquial language, places importance on the impact of words and directness of the message, and sometimes resorts to surreal elements (Buckler). While translating, he gives precedence to meaning and impact over form and uses colloquial language.

**Confrontation**

*The Ballad of Reading Gaol* focuses on a prisoner who stabs and kills his wife. The ballad is a combination of both realistic and romantic elements. The coexistence of imaginary and factual events generates further tension and sharpens the impact of the work. The story is told from two different perspectives: there is a he-plot where the feelings of the murderer are described and an I-plot where Wilde voices his own ideas regarding the murderer, murder, and prison conditions in general. The autobiographical aspect of the ballad differentiates it from the traditional ballad form, which is often impersonal and characterized by the presence of dialogue (Buckler; Pascual). However, there are some sections–particularly the third section–where the subject shifts from "I", "he" to "we" in order to emphasize the unity and solidarity among the prisoners. The quadrimeter-trimeter lines rhyming *abcbdb* and two additional lines different from the regular four-line stanza are other distinguishing aspects of the ballad. The story mostly develops "through abrupt flashes of rapid, contrasting tableaux" (Epifanio 216). Wilde uses simple and colloquial language and draws upon the impact of words, particularly adjectives, in order to give a vivid expression of feelings. Wilde's paradoxical way of thinking throughout the ballad, as illustrated in the sextet starting with "Yet each man kills the thing he loves", strikes the reader and forces him/her to reflect on its meaning. The ballad is also characterized by extensive phrasal and clausal iteration[8] and the use of internal rhymes which increases markedly as the poem moves into a surreal climax in the third section of the third part. The use of phrases is varied: there are both end-stop[9] and run-on lines. In addition to these, time clauses such as "when", "as", "before", "while", "till" are often used to emphasize the significance of the time spent in prison. The frequent use of the conjunction "and" ensures the continuity of the meaning and enables the poem to be read as a narration in verse. The capitalization of the initial letters of some common nouns related to issues under criticism, such as religion, imprisonment and murder, helps to highlight Wilde's point.

The notes taken by Asaf, and a multitude of sources he resorted to during the translation[10] indicate his diligence as a translator. Besides Wilde's other works and those written about Wilde, Asaf is also informed about the translations of the ballad in languages other than Turkish; for example, he is aware of the defectiveness of the French version which was harshly criticized by Wilde on the grounds that the translator (1) misunderstood most of the idioms, (2) took words at face value and (3) failed to reflect the prison jargon accurately ("Balladın Öyküsü" 195). Asaf primarily focuses on meaning rather than formal beauty. However, he does not totally lay aside the form. Sacrificing neither aesthetic taste nor propagandist efficiency, he translates the ballad in

[8] In traditional ballads, thematic development proceeds through incremental repetition (Epifanio 211).
[9] The syntactic unit (phrase, clause or sentence) in a poem which corresponds in length to a line. Its opposite is enjambment (run-on lines), where the sense runs on into the next line.
[10] All these are provided in the project published in 2011.

verse; which was in fact thought to be impossible even by Oscar Wilde himself. As is the case in his own writings, Asaf ignores some rules in Turkish[11] and he creates new words[12] while translating the ballad. Drawing on the colloquial language, he produces plain but condensed expressions. Asaf's translation of the ballad bears the linguistic and aesthetic traits of his own poetry, which interestingly parallels the style of Wilde. Regarding this, Hızlan writes, "Should there be a spiritual kinship or unity in terms of world-view between the poem translated and the poet-translator? It is difficult to provide a definite answer for the question but it can be claimed that there is such a union between Özdemir Asaf and Oscar Wilde" (12).

The first outstanding point in Asaf's translation is its adherence to the scenic sequence which was deliberately arranged by Wilde in order to generate tension and sharpen the impact of the story on readers. Although comforming to the line sequence of a source text may be compelling due to the structural differences between languages; Asaf skillfully overcomes it and produces a poem which is both in scenic sequence and intelligible even in the first reading. See the first stanza of the ballad below:

> Kırmızı ceketini giymeyordu o artık,
> Çünkü şarap kırmızı ve kırmızıydı kan da,
> Ellerine de şarap, bir de kan bulaşmışdı
> Ölünün başucunda onu bulduklarında,
> Sevdiği kadıncağız, sevgilisiydi ölen,
> Öldürmüştü kadını vurarak yatağında.
>
> He did not wear his scarlet coat,
> For blood and wine are red,
> And blood and wine were on his hands
> When they found him with the dead,
> The poor dead woman whom he loved,
> And murdered in her bed.

This is just one among many sextets where the scenic sequence and increasing tension can be easily perceived throughout. The ballad begins with these shocking lines where Wilde explains the murder to readers. Proceeding step by step, he shocks the reader with the last line "murdered in her bed". Asaf, who is well aware of the significance of sequencing, follows the lines as arranged by Wilde and does not break the spell.

Since Wilde's ballad is a critique of a penal system which seems to have abandoned its sense of justice, the words and linguistic structures used in the ballad appear to have been deliberately chosen to evoke certain desired feelings and ideas in readers' minds. Wilde's shocking metaphors and emphatic words are successfully translated into Turkish by Asaf. The words and linguistic structures preferred in the translation contribute to the overall effectiveness of the ballad. Without setting aesthetic considerations aside, Asaf transfers the propagandist aspect of the poem through sharp and impressive expressions[13]:

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[11] e.g. ignoring the rule of "consonant assimilation" (Asaf writes "olmuşduk" in stead of "olmuştuk") (Wilde 137).

[12] e.g. "ürkü" (Wilde 144), "yılgı" (Wilde 143), kıvıl-kıvıl" (Wilde 146).

[13] To draw attention to the translator's strategy, I underline some of the words and phrases in the target text.

Avluda süklüm püklümdökülerekdolaşan
Bir deli Sürüsüydük!
Umursamayorduk hiç, biliyorduk ki bizler
Şeytan'ın Sürüsüydük:
Kabak kafamız, ağır adımlarlarımızla biz
MaskaraSürüsüydük.

With slouch and swing around the ring
We trod the Fool's Parade!
We did not care: we knew we were
The Devil's Own Brigade:
And shaven head and feet of lead
Make a merry masquerade. (Part III, 7th stanza)

In this stanza, the words "süklüm püklüm" [embarrased and bashful], "dökülmek" [walk around timidly], "sürü" [herd], "kabak kafa" [baldheaded], "maskara" [fool] connote negative images in readers' minds and help to depict the scene of the prisoners' ordeal. These word choices contribute towards making readers empathise with the prisoners, they manifest the inhumane conditions of the prison and sharpen the ironic expression created by Wilde. Asaf's use of reduplication such as "süklüm püklüm", recurring words such as "sürüsüydük", recurring sounds such as "d" in "dökülerek dolaşan" or "k" in "kabak kafa" is in keeping with the traditional ballad poetry which is characterized with incremental repetitions and internal rhymes. The breach of linguistic rule in "umursamayorduk", which is one of the characteristics of Asaf's poetry, also complements the irony and emphasis formed through phonetic elements. Moreover, capitalization of the initials of common nouns in the source text is also kept in the translation. The words which mostly relate to religion, people working in the prison and the system are left in capital letters by Asaf. However, in some cases– as mentioned above, Asaf himself adds some other capitalizations which do not contradict the usage in the source text.

The use of linguistic structures, conjunctions and repetitions in cementing the aesthetic and propagandist aspect of the poet can be exemplified through the most well-known and striking stanza of the ballad:

Ama gene de herkes sevdiğini öldürür,
Bu böylece biline,
Kimi bunu kin yüklü bakışlarıyla yapar,
Kimi de okşayıcı bir söz ile öldürür,
Korkak, bir öpücükle,
Yüreklisi kılıçla, bir kılıçlaöldürür!

Yet each man kills the thing he loves
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword! (Part I, 7th stanza)

Kimi insan aşkını gençliğinde öldürür,
Kimi sevgilisini yaşlılığına saklar;
Bazıları öldürür Arzu'nun elleriyle,
Altın'ın elleriyle boğar bazı insanlar:
Bunların en üstünü bıçak kullanır çünkü
Böylelikle ölenler çabuk soğuyup donar.

Some kill their love when they are young,
And some when they are old;
Some strangle with the hands of Lust,
Some with the hands of Gold:
The kindest use a knife, because
The dead so soon grow cold. (Part I, 8th stanza)

The stanzas above constitute one of the most provocative parts of the ballad. Particularly the first one, which starts with a shocking, paradoxical assertion "sets the mind in wondering in what sense it may be true and the degree to which one may or may not assent to it" (Buckler 38). In Asaf's translation, this shocking, assertive tone which leads readers to reflect on its meaning is kept. The frequent enjambments throughout the ballad, by which one line requires the following one to make sense, enable readers to read the poem as a prose narrative. The use of inverted sentences and phrases, which characterizes the colloquial language, enhances lyricism and fluency of the translation. The repetition of words such as "öldürmek" [to kill], "kılıç" [sword] or sounds such as "k" in "kimi" [some], "kin" [grudge], "kılıç"; "a" in "arzu" [lust], "altın" [gold] contributes to the aesthetic merit of the translation and reiterates the emphasis on content. However, it is also apparent that Asaf manipulates the source text with the additions he makes–for example "kılıçla , bir kılıçla" [with a sword, with a single sword]. Such additions are also carried out in some other parts of the poem with the aim of showing emphasis or of keeping the meter. In the following didactic stanza which harshly criticizes the system, Asaf reiterates the word "law" three times, although in the source text it is mentioned only once. Such a choice lays stress on the thing being criticized and contributes towards making readers focus on the point:

Bildiğimce, her Yasa
İnsanın İnsan için yaptığı o Yasalar,
Kardeşini öldüren o ilk insandan beri,
Acılar dünyasının başlamasını sağlar,
Buğdayları savurur oysa sapları saklar
En kötü elekleri kullanan o yasalar.

But this I know, that every Law
That men have made for Man,
Since first Man took his brother's life,
And the sad world began,
But straws the wheat and saves the chaff
With a most evil fan. (Part V, 2nd stanza)

The internal rhymes and repetitive sounds Asaf uses in part three and four place particular emphasis on the hallucinatory climax of the ballad. Consider the following examples:

Garip ince gölgeler gelip-gelipgittiler,
El-ele tutuşdular:
Dönüp-dönüpdurdular, karman-çormangölgeler
Ağır bir dansdı sanki:
Biçimsiz görüntüler hecin dansı ettiler Kumlarda rüzgar gibi!

With mop and mow, we saw them go,
Slim shadows hand in hand:
About, about, in ghostly rout
They trod a saraband:
And the damned grotesques made arabesques,
Like the wind upon the sand! (Part III, 21st stanza)

Tıpkı maymunlar gibi, palyaço kılığında,
Çizgiler çarpık çurpuk,
Döne dönedolaşdık, sessiz-sessiz, avluda,
Kaygan asfalt üstünde boyuna gezdik durduk;
Dönüp dolaşıyorduk, sessiz-sessiz, avluda,
Birimiz konuşmadı hepimiz birden susduk.

Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb
With crooked arrows starred,
Silently we went round and round
The slippery asphalte yard;
Silently we went round and round,
And no man spoke a word. (Part IV, 7th stanza)

However, Asaf, who prefers condensed expressions in his own poetry, not only adds to but also omits some parts due to similar reasons mentioned above. The strategies Asaf opts for help him create his own way of saying things without compromising the aesthetic and propagandist appeal of the poem.

Kireç, bir an durmadan
Eti yer, kemiği yer,
Kemiği geceleyin,
Gündüzleri eti yer,
Bir eti bir kemiği,
Ama her an yüreği.

And all the while the burning lime
Eats flesh and bone away,
It eats the brittle bones by night,
And the soft flesh by day,
It eats the flesh and bone by turns,
But it eats the heart always. (Part IV, 12th stanza)

From the target and source texts above, it is clear that by using fewer words but with a profound impact, Asaf says more by them. His ingenious use of language avoids losing the essence of what has been said in the source text.

One of the outstanding parts of the ballad is where the narrator experiences and expresses mind-bending hallucinations. Since the prisoners are never allowed to have conversations with each other, the prison is quiet as the grave. The voices of the phantoms the narrator hears in the prison are given as follows:

"*Oho*!" they cried, "*the world is wide,*
*But fettered limbs go lame!*
*And once, or twice, to throw the dice*
*Is a gentlemanly game,*
*But he does not win who plays with Sin*
*In the House of Shame*." (Part III, 23rd stanza)

In these parts the strategies, such as the use of exclamation mark, italics and internal rhymes, serve to draw readers' attention to a different world, a spiritual hell-like world, where the prisoners are exposed to terrible experiences (Pascual 264). In his translation, Asaf takes these into consideration. Besides internal rhymes, he draws upon punctuation. Moreover, only these lines are written in bold letters in the translation to emphasize their reference to an extramundane origin:

> "Oho" diye bağırıp, "dünya geniş ve büyükdür,
> Kıskıvrak bağlanırsa topallaşır insanlar!
> Şans tanımak gerekir bir iki kez insana
> Büyüklük gereğince
> Hiç bir şey kazanamazlar Suçlarla oynayanlar
> Utancın bu Evi'nde".

Some images are often emphasized through repetition in the ballad. Among examples of these there are 'blood', 'wine' and 'red'. Since it was because of wine that the murderer killed the woman he loved; "blood", "wine" and what they have in common, "redness", are deliberately highlighted in some stanzas. In the translation, utmost care is taken in order not to omit or pass over these elements. Consider the following examples:

> Kırmızı ceketin giymeyordu o artık,
> Çünkü şarap kırmızı ve kırmızıydı kan da.
>
> He did not wear his scarlet coat,
> For blood and wine are red. (Part I, 1st stanza)
>
> Anladım ki dünyanın bir yerinde o sabah
> Tanrının korkunç günü başladı kırmızıdan
>
> And I knew that somewhere in the world
> God's dreadful dawn was red. (Part III, 28th stanza)
>
> Ne şarap kırmızısı, ne de beyaz bir gülün,
> Yaprakları düşecek,
>
> So never will wine-red rose or white,
> Petal by petal, fall (Part IV, 17th stanza)

Asaf is also attentive to the autobiographical aspects of the ballad. His deep knowledge of and interest in Wilde's artistic and private life enabled him to go behind the lines; for example, the stanza in which Wilde feels empathy with the hanged murderer provides clues about Wilde's own story and the reason for his imprisonment. The two lines at the end emphasize the double life Wilde had to live: on the one hand, the life he had with his wife and sons; on the other hand, the life that he shared with a young man:

> And all the woe that moved him so
> That he gave that bitter cry,
> And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats,
> None knew so well as I:
> For he who live more lives than one
> More deaths than one must die. (Part III, last stanza)

Wilde's empathy with the murderer, his emphasis on double death as a result of a double life and the autobiographical references are given in Asaf as follows:
Ve onu öylesine sarsan bütün acılar
Acı haykırışında,
O sonsuz pişmanlığı, döktüğü kanlı terler,
Kimseler bilmez bunu benim bildiğim kadar:
Bir yaşamdan fazla bir yaşamla yaşayanlar
Ölürler birden fazla

As mentioned previously, the "I", "he" and "we" plots serve to reflect the situation from different perspectives in the source text. The use of "I" subject implies the empathy felt by the poet for the prisoner. The "he" subject enables a distance to be kept between the poet and the character. The collective "we" subject creates a sense of togetherness and underlines the identification of the poet with the character, for example, in the following lines, which come after the first stanza told with "he" subject, the poet's empathy for the murderer is established with the use of "I" plot. The emotional transition of the poet's attitude towards the hypnotic effect of the murderer is given with a subject shift. In translation, Asaf observes the subject shifts:

Ki hiç görmemiştim ben böyle bakan bir adam
Bu kadar içdenlikle güne gözleri dalan

But I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye (Part I, 2nd stanza)

Ben hiç görmedim, böyle, böyle bakan bir adam,
Böyle dalmış gözleri

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye (Part I, 3rd stanza)

The last point which will be dealt regarding Asaf's translation is his use of some target culture specific terms such as "secde"[14] and "horon"[15]. It is noteworthy that all these terms are used particularly in the third part, which is the climax of the ballad, ending with the execution of the murderer. It is also heavily loaded with hallucinatory elements furthering tension. In order to keep the tension and intensify the impact of the lines, Asaf may have opted for using target culture specific terms which, he may think, would facilitate the identification of the readers with the murderer and thus would become more striking. At this point the surreal elements in the source text allow, or even promote, such a strategy, since they call for elements of surprise or unexpected depictions:

Yerde gri biçimler, çömelmiş dua eden,
Secdeye varmışlardı, şaşkınlıkla gördüler

And wondered why men knelt to pray
Who never prayed before. (Part III, 17th stanza)

[14] Sajdah or sujud: prostration to God in the direction of the Kaaba at Mecca which is usually done during the daily prayers of the Muslim.
[15] A folk dance peculiar to the eastern Black Sea region in Turkey.

Görünüp kayboldular, kaybolup göründüler,
Sisde yolcular gibi:
Kıvıl-kıvıl bir cümbüş
Hızla kayıp geçdiler, sanki horon tepdiler,
Hiç durup-dinlenmeden, bir ara vermeden
Korku görüntüleri düğün-bayram ettiler.

They glided past, they glided fast,
Like travelers through a mist:
They mocked the moon in a rigadoon
Of delicate turn and twist,
And with formal pace and loathsome grace
The phantoms kept their tryst. (Part III, 20th stanza)

## Conclusion

The analysis of Asaf's republished, or rather recontextualized, translation cannot be regarded as complete without accompanying inquiries into (1) its reception by readers, (2) the translating horizon that corresponds to the period the project (2011) was developed, and (3) the retranslations of the ballad in the Turkish repertoire. However, the present study may be regarded as the first step towards achieving a holistic view of Asaf's translation. A Bermanian approach has proved useful in understanding why Asaf translated *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* the way he did and determining how the project was realized. It has become clear that the strategies Asaf followed throughout the translation cannot be considered separately from his conception of translation and poetry, as well as the set of linguistic, literary, ideological parameters which determined his thinking. Although the act of translation and the project in focus took place in different periods, their separate analyses have revealed that the project and translation are compatible. While the project contributes to the formerly *articulated purpose* of the translator, the translation succeeds in carrying out the project to present Asaf's poetic excellence. The textual analysis has illustrated that Asaf's translation reflects the aesthetic and propagandist appeal of the source text and *stands on its own*. Its defiance of the years and retranslations are a testament to this. The popularity and success of this first translation also pose a challenge to Berman, who claims that retranslations are an improvement on first translations, which he defines as "imperfect" and "defective" (67).

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# The Trope of Sight in North American Whiteness Studies

**Klara Szmańko**

**Abstract:** The trope of sight has been the central metaphor in North American whiteness studies since its very inception, that is, already before whiteness studies emerged as a separate field of study. The centrality of the trope stems not only from a particular applicability of the sight metaphor to render subject-object relations, but also from the unique presence of "sight" in the very relations between racial groups in the United States, in particular African Americans, and whites. Originally, minorities were cast as objects of the gaze, while white people as subjects of the gaze, exercising the power to look, survey and pass judgment. Apart from exposing practices of looking employed by whites, whiteness studies scholars reverse visual power dynamics, shifting white people to the object position of the gaze. The metaphor of the gaze features as central in Toni Morrison's seminal work *Playing in the Dark* published in 1992 and effectively inaugurating contemporary literary whiteness studies. Morrison reaches for the gaze metaphor to illustrate the main objective of her study: "My project is to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject, from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers, from the serving to the served" (90). Averting the gaze in *Playing in the Dark*, Morrison analyzes the construction of whiteness and blackness in canonical and non-canonical works of American literature by white authors.

**Keywords:** whiteness, sight (vision), invisibility, visibility, visual exchanges, Du Bois

The trope of sight has been the central metaphor in North American whiteness studies since its very inception, that is, already before whiteness studies emerged as a separate field of study. The centrality of the trope stems not only from a particular applicability of the sight metaphor to render subject-object relations, but also from the unique presence of "sight" in the very relations between racial groups in the United States, in particular African Americans, and whites. Originally, minorities were cast as objects of the gaze, while white people as subjects of the gaze, exercising the power to look, survey and pass judgment. Apart from exposing practices of looking employed by whites, whiteness studies scholars reverse visual power dynamics, shifting white people to the object position of the gaze. The metaphor of the gaze features as central in Toni Morrison's seminal work *Playing in the Dark* published in 1992 and effectively inaugurating contemporary literary whiteness studies. Morrison reaches for the gaze metaphor to illustrate the main objective of her study: "My project is to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject, from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers, from the serving to the served" (90). Averting the gaze in *Playing in the Dark*, Morrison analyzes the construction of whiteness and blackness in canonical and non-canonical works of American literature by white authors.

Closely connected to the problem of sight in whiteness studies is the question of visibility and invisibility. One of the main goals of whiteness studies is to make whiteness visible and defamiliarize it in order to contribute a heterogeneous definition of whiteness, whiteness revealing its many faces, whiteness stripped of its self-assumed esoteric, mystique and indeterminacy. Ruth Frankenberg was the first scholar to explicitly use the term–the invisibility of whiteness. The invisibility of whiteness is two-

fold. White people often construct themselves as invisible by marking others, the process on which hinges the invisibility of whiteness: "whiteness makes itself invisible precisely by asserting its normalcy, its transparency, in contrast with the marking of others on which its transparency depends" (Frankenberg 6). This mode of invisibility rests on the paradox created by whiteness, which casts itself as an "'empty' but simultaneously normative space" (Frankenberg 64). The invisibility of whiteness is also a recurring trope in other whiteness studies scholars' research and it is essential to acknowledge at least some of those researchers who consciously reflect on white invisibility, emphasizing the need to undermine it. Frances Maher and Mary Kay Thompson note that whiteness "is the often silent and invisible basis against which other racial and cultural identities are named as 'Other,' measured and marginalized" (139). Annalee Newitz claims that whites "imagine themselves as racially invisible" and that "their self-image as whites is thus both underdeveloped and yet extremely presumptuous" (132). In a similar vein, Valerie Babb presents whiteness as a matter of fact thing, a non-marker, almost a non-race in the 1970s and 1980s (1). According to Babb, white people were unmarked by their race because it was never mentioned in relation to them. Race was mentioned only in relation to non-white people. Babb's observations dovetail with the color-blind rhetoric of the 1980s as well as the attempts to obfuscate the history of discrimination against non-white people, closely linked with whiteness. Michael Vannoy Adams observes that "the category 'people of color' excludes whites on the dubious basis that whiteness is colorless–while blackness, redness, brownness and yellowness are colorful" (14). Ironically, the optic definition of color provided by Naomi Zack and cited by Adams undermines the definition of whiteness as colorless because "white" is the "perceptual experience of the presence of all colors" (14). A very powerful statement on the tendency of whites to unmark themselves and mark people of other colors comes from Richard Dyer, who notes that "[t]here is no more powerful position than that of being 'just' human" (2). According to Dyer, white culture is overwritten with the "assumption that white people are just people, which is not far off saying that whites are people whereas other colors are something else" (2). Postmodern whiteness studies scholars reverse this dyad, placing whites in the position of others, but at the same time exposing whites as subjects of oppression and exploitation.

White invisibility is firmly related to the invisibility of racial minorities. Both types of invisibility depend on each other, yet both are also diametrically different. Racial and ethnic minorities in the United States were metaphorically invisible because of the negative marking attributed to them by whites. As illustrated above, whites rendered themselves invisible by unmarking themselves and marking others. Still other type of white invisibility consisted in the masking of its own privilege and practices of oppression. The white apparatus of power often conspired to make structures of oppression invisible, for example on the surface it had nothing to do with redlining in the real estate industry, which effectively barred minorities, especially African Americans from certain neighborhoods. Yet if we look deeper into the issue, we will find anti-integration legislation.[1] Additionally, the white apparatus of power conspired

[1] Before the Nixon administration there were certain positive signs on the road leading to desegregation. In March 1968 the Kerner Commission named segregation as a main cause of the problems haunting the ghetto, including the riots (Massey and Denton 59). The Commission advised the construction of federal housing outside the ghetto. April 1968 witnessed the passing of the Fair Housing Act outlawing redlining in the sale and rental of housing. Following Johnson's administration, consecutive administrations, starting with Nixon, retracted from the

to hide its own role in inciting the hostilities inside and between marginalized racial and ethnic groups. Whenever tensions flared–as was the case during the Rodney King rebellion of 1992 and during the Latasha Harlins incidents of 1991–the white apparatus of power removed itself from the picture, creating an impression that the conflict was solely between minorities.

While the emergence of contemporary whiteness studies dates back to the beginning of the 1990s, the first sociological commentary on whiteness goes back to at least the first half of the 20th century. The trope of sight was as central in the first criticisms of whiteness as it is in postmodern whiteness studies. Sight appears in the earliest criticisms of whiteness usually in two ways: first as a part of a visual exchange between whites and representatives of racial and ethnic minorities, usually African Americans, and secondly as a kind of prescience, a special attribute of ethnic minorities usually contrasted with the blindness of whites, who in real life encounters could exercise the power to look, survey, assign meanings, and express their view of the people in a subordinate position, yet overall they were cast as incapable of seeing or unwilling to see the full picture of interracial and interethnic relations in the United States. Most often visual exchanges were completed only in writing because looking back in real life encounters would have been an act of defiance, a clear sign that one was not willing to subordinate to the dictate of white power. In her 1992 study *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, bell hooks claims that black slaves and servants were not allowed to observe whites or look at them (166). Looking at whites was an act of visual trespassing. An illustration of the situation depicted by hooks can be traced in Sterling A. Brown's poem "Old Lem" (1937), in which the African American I-speaker observes with resignation in the face of visibly overpowering whiteness: "our eyes must fall" (333). People traditionally cast as objects of the gaze may not have looked back or answered back in direct encounters with whites, but some of them did it in a written form.

Except for rendering power relations in American society, the very metaphor of sight, of seeing or not seeing properly has served in the works of American minority authors as a vehicle for the expression of anguish and rage. The exclusion from American society brought instant connotations of being overlooked or being seen in an improper, distorted light. To see someone means to acknowledge them, to recognize and respect their existence. An eighteenth century empiricist philosopher, George Berkeley argues that "to be is to be perceived" (254). In a similar way, psychologist William James reaches for a visibility, invisibility metaphor in his discussion of the social self in the 1890 book, *Principles of the Self*. According to James, visibility is the cornerstone of human social self, because all humans crave for recognition from other human beings. Without such recognition they are not fully fulfilled and do not entirely belong to society:

> we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favorably, by our kind. No more fiendish punishment could be devised, were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be turned loose in society and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof. If no one turned round when we

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road leading to the dismantling of the ghetto and eventual integration (Massy and Denton 227). The climax of the inner city collapse occurred during the Reagan administration (James Kyung-Jin Lee xiv). His policies proved the most disastrous for the people virtually incarcerated inside urban ghettos. It is during the Reagan administration that the exodus of business from inner cities and the withdrawal of funding reached the greatest proportions.

> entered, answered when we spoke, or minded what we did, but if every person we met "cut us dead," and acted as if we were non-existing things, a kind of rage and impotent despair would ere long well up in us, from which the cruelest bodily tortures would be a relief; for these would make us feel that, however bad might be our plight, we had not sunk to such a depth as to be unworthy of attention at all. (293-94)

James preponderates the power of sight over that of other senses, for example touch: "The cruellest bodily tortures would be a relief" from the plight of being unseen. If a white, privileged man attributes so much importance to being seen, to being noticed by his fellow-citizens, it is easy to imagine how much more weight visibility carried to those who were socially invisible. This is hardly surprising that their literary representatives employed sight metaphors so eagerly to speak of their exclusion.

In the 1945 Introduction to *Black Metropolis*, Richard Wright cites James's statement on invisibility, concluding that

> the American Negro has come as near being the victim of a complete rejection as our society has been able to work out, for the dehumanized image of the Negro which white Americans carry in their minds, the anti-Negro epithets continuously on their lips, exclude the contemporary Negro as truly as though he were kept in a steel prison, and doom even those Negroes who are as yet unborn. (xxxiii)

Wright concentrates on the distorted vision of white people and their warped perception of African Americans. He also draws the reader's attention to the hypocrisy of white Americans quick to see the hardships of people in foreign lands, but failing to acknowledge the adversities confronting African Americans living around the corner. According to Wright, America had its consciousness split. In a sense he extends the elements of W.E.B. Du Bois's double consciousness formula to white people. If in *The Souls of Black Folk* Du Bois speaks of "unreconciled strivings", "the double-aimed struggle", "the waste of double aims" in reference to African Americans, Wright accentuates the division in the white racial consciousness, the clash between whites' self-assumed air of righteousness and their attitudes to African Americans:

> when the Negro problem is raised, white men, for a reason which as yet they do not fully understand, feel guilt, panic, anxiety, tension; they feel the essential loneliness of their position which is built upon greed, exploitation, and a general denial of humanity; they feel the naked untenability of their **split consciousness**, their **two-faced** moral theories spun to justify their right to dominate. (xxv) (emphasis mine)

It is crucial to emphasize that both states of mental bifurcation are different. If African Americans' double consciousness is underlain by separation from the world of privilege, white people's split consciousness is triggered by the fear that their privilege may be lost or significantly compromised.

The hypocrisy of the white world also becomes the focus of Du Bois's "The Souls of White Folk", published in 1920 in his autobiographic *Darkwater.* The hypocrisy of white people consists in their moaning of atrocities committed in foreign lands, but at the same time committing similar crimes at home. Citing examples of white colonization in various parts of the globe, Du Bois unfolds a vision of suffering

triggered by the white quest for power, profit and cheap labor.[2] While Du Bois's double consciousness formula revolves mainly around the altered perception of African Americans, "The Souls of White Folk" highlights the sharp sight of black people. The clairvoyance of "dark" people, their ability to see clearly is emphasized throughout the essay. Du Bois does not concentrate solely on "dark" people closest to him–African Americans, but also underlines the sharp perception of "dark" people living in other countries: Africans, the Hindus, the Chinese, and the Japanese. According to Du Bois, all of them can see very clearly and all of them are wise to the ways of the "white man":

> **We have seen**, you and I, city after city drunk and furious with ungovernable lust of blood: mad with murder, destroying, killing and cursing: torturing human victims because somebody accused of crime happened to be of the same color as the mob's innocent victims and because that color was not white! **We have seen**, -Merciful God in these wild days and in the name of Civilization, Justice, and Motherhood, -**what have we not seen**, right here in America, of orgy, cruelty, barbarism, and murder done to men and women of Negro descent […] **We looked at** [the white man] **clearly and saw** simply a human thing, weak and pitiable and cruel […] But what of **the darker world that watches**? Most men belong to this world. With Negro and Negroid, East Indian, Chinese, and Japanese they form two-thirds of the population of the world. ("The Souls of White Folk" 925, 927, 936) (emphasis mine)

People of color are placed by Du Bois in the position of the subjects of sight, whereas whites are the objects of their perception. In the double-consciousness formula African Americans look inside themselves. Here they look outside at the perpetrators of racial crimes. The blindness and arrogance of the white world contrasts sharply with the clear vision, wisdom and experience of the darker world. What does the darker world see? It sees primarily the cruelty, exploitation and avarice of white people. Du Bois notices that in whites' view, their whiteness entitles them to "the ownership of the earth" (924). He also speaks about the "divine right" of white people to "steal" (935). Through an oxymoronic phrase "a human thing" Du Bois puts the humanity of white people into serious doubt. In the above cited portrayal whites do not engage in any constructive actions but murder, plunder and grabbing of the earth's resources that originally did not belong to them. It is interesting that Du Bois represents whites as weak. Why weak? Perhaps because, in Du Bois's rendition, they do not apply their power to any productive ends, but use it as a tool of victimization. On the other pole of humanity Du Bois places representatives of the "darker world" who apart from being the objects of victimization seem to stand on the sidelines, "watch" and brace for action. If the white world engages in thoughtless, brutal, random killing and plunder, the darker

[2] In "The Souls of White Folk", Du Bois also compares the examples of atrocities committed in Europe with those taking place in the United States. According to Du Bois, the crimes against African Americans surpass some of the human rights violations in Europe. It is worth taking into account that Du Bois utters these words in 1920, already after World War I, but still before the formal constitution of fascist governments: "Can you imagine the United States protesting against Turkish atrocities in Armenia, while the Turks are silent about mobs in Chicago and St. Louis; what is Louvain compared with Memphis, Waco, Washington, Dyersburg, and Estill Springs? In short, what is the black man but America's Belgium, and how could America condemn in Germany that which she commits, just as brutally, within her own borders" (926). It is interesting that Du Bois often employs the term "black man", barely ever mentioning black women.

world contrasts with the white world in its dignity and repose. As in his other works, Du Bois hints at the dormant potential of the "darker world" whose representatives outnumber whites.[3] In the remainder of the passage he presents "darker" people as prospective agents of change and saviors of humanity. They are the ones who can "uplift" humanity. Implicitly the uplift of humanity accomplished by the "darker nations" is conditioned on interracial and interethnic solidarity in line with which black, brown and yellow people unite against white oppression. Idealistic as this vision is, Du Bois does not devote any place to different hostilities, animosities, frictions and stripes of oppression inside the darker world itself. Whiteness was not the sole source of oppression for the "darker" nations often locked in bitter competition with each other and struggling with diverse forms of exploitation inside their own societies.

"The Souls of White Folk" distinguishes between two kinds of seeing and looking: the collective seeing by people of color and the narrator's own prescience. Just as the narrator of *The Souls of Black Folk* often rises above the veil, the narrator of "The Souls of White Folk" also places himself above. Looking down from above, he still assures the reader that his knowledge is that of an insider, not an outsider or a foreigner. "White souls" are the object of his gaze. They intrigue him the most:

> Of them I am singularly **clairvoyant**. I **see** in and through them. I **view** them from unusual points of vantage… I **see** these souls undressed and from the back and side. I **see** the working of their entrails … they clutch at rags of facts and fancies to hide their nakedness, they go twisting, flying **by my tired eyes** and I **see** them ever stripped, - ugly, human. (923) (emphasis mine)

The above description is a semi reversal of a slave auction scaffold scene. During the slave auction it was African Americans that were on display, often naked and shivering, while whites engaged in the inspection of their bodies. No clairvoyance was required for that. Rather than survey the bodies of white people, Du Bois places on the scaffold their souls. Through his clairvoyance, he peers inside them to see their baseness and the ulterior motivation which propels them. Du Bois may speak about "white souls" with an air of superiority, placing himself above on the scale of humanity and morality. Yet emotionally he does not remain unaffected by the subjects of his investigation. The emotions that he grapples with are primarily suffering and pity: "a vast pity–pity for a people imprisoned and enthralled, hampered and made miserable for such a cause, for such a phantasy!" (926). Once again whites are portrayed as morally and spiritually handicapped, privileged as they are in strictly material terms.[4]

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[3] The already fulfilled potential of "darker" people recurs in Du Bois's other works. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, one can read of "the shadow of a mighty Negro past flit[ting] through the tale of Ethiopia the Shadowy and of Egypt the Sphinx" (6). In "The White World" section of *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois presents people of color as pioneers in the realm of science, art, religion, acknowledging that Europeans initiated the modern system of production: "I hand the first vast conception of the solar system to the Africanized Egyptians, the creation of art to the Chinese, the highest conception of religion to the Asiatic Semites, and then let the Europeans rave over the factory system" (659).

[4] In Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, the Invisible Man notes that the discrimination to which African Americans were exposed might have "exhausted …some - not much, but some - of the human greed and smallness" (434). Remembering his grandfather's advice to "agree'em [whites] to death and destruction" (19-20), the Invisible Man concludes that there must be some deeper meaning to his message. Saying yes, African Americans were to rise above violence, to

Throughout "The Souls of White Folk" Du Bois is quick to emphasize that the phantasy of white superiority also has a significant material motivation –namely "It pays" (933). The highlighting of the material motives behind the discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities anticipates a much more pronounced streak of research in the future postmodern whiteness studies–the analysis of whites' vested interest in their whiteness. The most influential critical examinations of white privilege are: Cheryl Harris's "Whiteness as Property", George Lipsitz's *Possessive Investment in Whiteness* and Paula S. Rothenberg's *White Privilege*.

Du Bois's portrayal of white people as incarcerated reverses the metaphor which he employs in *Dusk of Dawn* (1940) to illustrate "caste segregation" (650). Both types of imprisonment stand in stark contrast to each other. Whites are prisoners of their own white privilege to which they cling so desperately, while people of color are imprisoned because of their exclusion from the world of privilege. Conveying the force of caste segregation in *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois constructs the metaphor in which people of color are imprisoned inside a "dark cave" behind "invisible but horribly tangible plate glass":

> It is as though one, looking out from a dark cave in a side of an impending mountain, sees the world passing and speaks to it; speaks courteously and persuasively, showing them how these entombed souls are hindered in their natural movement, expression and development; and how their loosening from prison would be a matter not simply of courtesy, sympathy, and help to them, but aid to all the world. One talks on evenly and logically in this way but notices that the passing throng does not even turn its head, or if it does, glances curiously and walks on. It gradually penetrates the minds of prisoners that the people passing do not hear; that some thick sheet of invisible but horribly tangible plate glass[5] is between them and the world. They get excited; they talk louder; they gesticulate. Some of the passing world stop in curiosity; these gesticulations seem so pointless; they laugh and pass on. They still either do not hear at all, or hear but dimly, and even what they hear, they do not understand. Then the people within may become hysterical. They may scream and hurl themselves against the barriers, hardly realizing in their bewilderment that they are screaming in a vacuum unheard and that their antics may actually seem funny to those outside looking in. They may even, here and there, break through in blood and disfigurement, and find themselves faced by a horrified, implacable, and quite overwhelming mob of people frightened for their own existence. (*Dusk of Dawn* 649-50)

"The invisible but horribly tangible plate glass" in *Dusk of Dawn* corresponds to the veil in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Both stand for everything that separates minorities from the world of privilege. The glass may be invisible to white passers-by outside the

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affirm "the principle on which the country was built" (433). Their yes may be a sign of greater maturity and understanding that human relations should be based upon the principle of reconciliation.

[5] At one point the Invisible Man also represents invisibility in terms of being looked at through the "mirrors of hard distorting glass" (7): "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me... it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination–indeed, everything and anything except me... That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their *inner* eyes" (7). The "inner eyes" make the Invisible Man's environment "look through him" rather than at him.

cave, but people imprisoned behind the glass see it and feel it all too well. The invisibility of the glass may also symbolize the invisibility of the structures of oppression. People behind the glass are initially both invisible and inaudible to the passing throng. They never become audible and the visibility which they finally achieve is not meaningful. If the prisoners talk "evenly and logically", "the passing throng does not even turn its head" (649). Only after showing signs of frustration, do they manage to elicit some response, inadequate as it is. The prisoners' despair arouses merely curiosity, but no empathy. Dispassionate bemusement of the passing throng contrasts with extreme agitation of the prisoners. While in *The Souls of Black Folk,* the representation of white people as blind is much more nuanced, in *Dusk of Dawn* Du Bois speaks overtly of white blindness. The cave metaphor at least partly inverts the Platonian cave because the prisoners can see the reality outside without any distortion. It is the outside world that suffers from impaired vision, seeing only the shadows of the anguish suffered by people imprisoned inside.

Du Bois also reaches for visual metaphors to render the attitudes of the white world in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Acknowledged as Du Bois was by the broader scholarly community, he still characterized his relations with whites as underlain by palpable tension and a communication gap. Displaying hesitation and ambiguity, they fix him with a curious or compassionate gaze, in this way compounding his sense of difference: "Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question … They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately … instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem?" (3). Recalling real life exchanges, Du Bois remembers his own tension and reluctance to speak out: "To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word" (4). As in the case of other interracial exchanges, this one is completed only in writing. The narrator of *The Souls* makes an exception for the readers, granting them a privileged insight into the eponymous souls of the black folk.[6] Unlike in "The Souls of White Folk", in *The*

[6] In "The White World" section of *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois is much more critical about the attitude of the white world and his own position in the American world dominated by whites: "I lived in an environment which I came to call the white world. I was not an American; I was not a man, I was by long education and continual compulsion and daily reminder, a colored man in a white world; and that world often existed primarily, so far as I was concerned, to see with sleepless vigilance that I was kept within bounds. All this made me limited in physical movement and provincial in thought and dream. I could not stir, I could not act, I could not live, without taking into careful daily account the reaction of my white environing world" (653). What emerges from the above passage is a clear sense of being circumscribed, "bounded," and stifled. Reflecting on what aspects of his life are controlled by whites, D Bois proceeds to enumerate virtually all most basic and essential ones, starting with freedom of movement and ending with his writing-the content of his writing: "How I traveled and where, what work I did, what income I received, where I ate, where I slept, with whom I talked, where I sought recreation, where I studied, what I wrote and what I could get published–all this depended primarily upon an overwhelming mass of my fellow citizens in the United States, from whose society I was largely excluded" (653). A sense of being in the minority and the image of the predominantly white American society contrast with the global proportions which he presents in the passage of "The Souls of White Folk," where "darker" people all over the world belong to the overwhelming majority and whites find themselves in the minority. Du Bois's eventual emigration to Ghana and the relinquishing of his American citizenship seems to indicate that he never gained a sense of full of belonging to the state and was in the end exasperated with the slow pace of change in racial relations. Symbolically, Du Bois passed away on the day of March

*Souls of Black Folk* the focus falls on the blurred sight of African Americans rather than the blindness of the white world. The double-consciousness formula presents black people as "born with a veil and gifted with second sight" (5). Aside from symbolizing the invisibility of African Americans and their alienation from the world of privilege, the veil stands for the impaired vision of black people. Du Bois acknowledges that the hostility and discrimination to which they are exposed may distort their own self-perception, leading to the internalization[7] of the racism of the outside world. However, the blinding power of the veil[8] is counterbalanced by second-sight representing the clairvoyance of African Americans. Second sight gains a semblance of a visionary quality. Once African Americans discover and appreciate their gift of second sight, they can turn double consciousness into an asset. Second sight allows blacks to tap vast resources of knowledge stemming from their invisibility. All their experiences have an enlightening power. Invisibility sensitizes them to the complexities that may escape the attention of other people. Themselves exposed to exploitation, they also have a much a better grasp of power relations. Invisibility sharpens their vigilance, making them more wary of the deceptions of the outside world.

The above analysis traces the appropriation of the sight metaphor in North American whiteness studies both before and after the formal institutionalization of the discipline. All of the afore-mentioned appropriations render particular power relations, exclusion and inclusion, subjectivity construction and most often commentary on whiteness. Most of the appropriations of the sight metaphor before the formal inauguration of the discipline are characterized by a higher level of directness: stating what one can see and how one can see whiteness. The probing of whiteness conducted by the authors of these studies usually indicated a kind of prescience on their part. The appropriations of the sight metaphor that came after the institutionalization of the discipline were most often characterized by a higher degree of refinement, being composed in a different language, the language suffused with postmodern jargon. After the formalization of whiteness studies, the authors of the studies in question changed as well–no longer almost exclusively people of color, predominantly African Americans, but also to a great extent whites taking an analytic and critical look at themselves.

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on Washington, August 27, 1963, for which he undoubtedly helped to pave the way through his activism.

[7] Writing from the perspective of 1986, Carl Degler speaks in *Neither Black Nor White* of "internalized racism" often experienced by African Americans: "A number of studies of Negro children in the United States show that they often prefer white skin …. they have been forced to recognize themselves as inferior. Few if any Negroes ever lose that sense of shame and self-hatred" (161-62).

[8] Donald B. Gibson claims that Du Bois "inverts the meaning of the folk notion of being born with a veil" (xv). Traditionally, being born with a caul augurs well, whereas in the double consciousness formula it becomes an ominous sign as if the fate of African Americans was sealed from birth. The veil signifies blindness rather than clairvoyance.

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## ARTICLES


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Aycan Akçamete | 1 | The Burst of the Real and the Law in Philip Ridley's *Mercury Fur* |
| Hüseyin Altındiş | 15 | "The world will go on living": Resistance to Eurocentric Epistemology in Linda Hogan's *Power* |
| Rinni Haji Amran | 29 | "Moving without Comprehensible Purpose Toward No Discernible Destination": The Sensation and Spectacle of Flight in William Faulkner's *Pylon* |
| Libby Bagno-Simon | 41 | Stronger Alone?: Bridging Gaps and Reaffirming Sisterhood in *Sense and Sensibility* |
| Ahmed Muhammed Faleh Banisalamah | 55 | Gender, Reason, and Androgyny in the Role of Righteousness in Marie de France's "Bisclavret" |
| William C. Boles | 65 | Staging Economics and Math in Lucy Prebble's *Enron* and David Hare's *The Power of Yes* |
| Ufuk Gündoğan | 75 | Translating the Self: Palimpsest and Visual Poetics in Kathleen Fraser's Works |
| Dilek İnan<br>Ayşe Didem Yakut | 91 | Language and Power Relations in Martin Crimp's *The Country* |
| Kübra Kangüleç Coşkun | 107 | Exploration of the Maternal Semiotic for Female Subjectivity in Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe* |
| Deniz Kırpıklı | 117 | Non-Essentialist Conception of Migrant Identity in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* |
| Susanne Klinger | 129 | Foreignizing Subtitling Versus Domesticating Dubbing: *Finding Nemo* in German |
| Hediye Özkan | 143 | The Spirit of the Carnival:Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Constantinople |
| Ceyda Özmen | 151 | Özdemir Asaf's Translation of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*: A Bermanian Approach |
| Klara Szmańko | 167 | The Trope of Sight in North American Whiteness Studies |
| | 177 | **CONTRIBUTORS** |