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Reading Tracy K. Smith's *Life on Mars* Poems Through Julia Kristeva and Susanna Egan

Zeynep Asya Altuğ

Abstract: This article aims to analyze Tracy K. Smith's *Life on Mars* poems employing some notions from Julia Kristeva's *Desire in Language* and Susanne Egan's *Mirror Talk*. "Rhythmic rapture", "speaking subject" as an inevitably split subject, "transcendental ego", "the struggle between poet and sun" will be Kristeva's notions to be adapted. Text as a field of signification in which "two or more voices encounter one another, or interact", and crisis as "an unstable condition seeking change" or in some cases "a permanent state, a balancing act reenacted in the text" will be Egan's notions to be adapted as a means to read Smith as a contemporary artistic voice. *Life on Mars* collection is Smith's elegy to her deceased father who had been one of the engineers constructing the Hubble Telescope. Therefore, the major focus of this article will also be based on the examination of her poetic persona within the stages of the trauma caused by this loss. Often by fusing cosmic science into her poetic imagination and assuming a dialogical tone in her poetic voice, Smith not only gets at the subjectivity of experience but also provides her readers with a sense of connectedness both to their own inner lives and to a wider meaning of life and existence.

Keywords: Tracy K. Smith, *Life on Mars*, dialogic tone, rhythmic rapture, transcendental ego, Julia Kristeva, Susanne Egan

Tracy K. Smith, a recent poet laureate of the United States, presents with her poetry a contemporary literary voice. Her Pulitzer Prize-winning 2011 collection, *Life on Mars* consists of poems arranged in four sections. The poems in the book revolve around a wide array of topics and references ranging from astro-physics to popular culture, mainly considering humans' relationship to life, culture, each other and in a wider spectrum to universe. Smith, throughout these sections, contemplates on issues such as death and afterlife, God, cosmos, past and present, or the future of human life in order to bring out the possible meanings of *being* and *existence* both as social identity and as cosmic species.

Smith's occupation with death in *Life on Mars* poems can also be related with her father Floyd William Smith's death. Her meditative inquiry and curiosity on outer space is a legacy from his father who was one of the engineers developing the Hubble Telescope. Thus, her interest to issues of space such as "dark matter" is probably an inherited curiosity, one of the daily subject-matters often being spoken about at home. Her poems express an elegy for her father. His influence seems to be not only upon her personal life but also her "poesie", so that the father becomes a "transcendental ego" for Smith's poetic language. Her initial crisis resulting from this loss comes out in her poetic imagination as authenticating investigations of life. This post trauma awareness is to be analyzed as a consolidating and emancipating experience.

Often, Smith attempts to fuse science into her poetic imagination in order to widen her perspective to a cosmic consciousness so that one can find in these poems the means to cope with the existentialist human drama in the face of death as loss and nothingness. Therefore, *Life on Mars* poems get at the subjectivity of experience while providing the reader with a sense of connectedness both to their own inner lives and to a wider meaning of life and existence.

With an attempt to assume a contemporary perspective for this analysis, Tracy K. Smith's poetic discourse will be read in the light of some basic notions/elements from Julia Kristeva's *Desire in Language* and Susanna Egan's *Mirror Talk*. Driving from language, psychoanalytic and cultural theories of identification and narration, Kristeva in the *Desire in Language* and Egan in the *Mirror Talk* attempt to define literary text's signification in terms of being an ongoing experience as double-coded and dialogic. In both works, such double-coded form of language relates to a productivity in meaning, engendered in between activities of writing and reading as well as in between positions of narrator and reader, via conflict and compromise as to maintain a sense of durability both literally and figuratively. In this sense, Smith's poetic discourse appears in the field of artistic expression as depending on subjective reflections producing meaning out of life. The speaker's tone, curious and confessional, experiences with variations of discourses as a means of interacting with people and life. This makes her poems dialogic in tone. Assuming this polyphonic discourse, Smith's speaker gains self-confidence and power to deal with life. In this way, *Life on Mars* poems can also be explored as "life writings", a term suggested by Susanne Egan to embrace all "genres of life and death" in literature (Egan 12-28).

In *Mirror Talk*'s first essay "Facing Off", Egan begins her exploration on the nature of contemporary writing by using autobiography as her primary form of material. Appealing to a variety of contemporary considerations that challenge the univocal and authoritative position of the biographer as narrator in traditional autobiography, Egan demonstrates that the autobiographic text becomes a field of signification in which "two or more voices encounter one another, or interact" (3). As she notes,

[a]utobiographers who, within one text, are both subject and object of speech and regard, becoming in turn self and other for each other, play out the politics of lived experience as a realistic trope for exploring, defining, and expressing just who they are. (8)

In line with this view, in Smith's "Life On Mars" poem—which her book is named after—the speaker applies to a "Tina" character from her own life as an alternative voice while beginning her exploration on what "dark matter" is. The poem opens with the following lines:

Tina says what if dark matter is like the space between people
When what holds them together isn't exactly love, and I think
That sounds right - (*Life On Mars* 37)

Departing from Tina's suggestion of "dark matter" as being "like the space between people", the speaker inquires the meaning of attachment and kinship (37). "Dark matter" is likened to an unsurmountable drive or energy between people. Feelings of sorrow and pain, for instance, as the outcome of death, birth, love and hate, are considered within the content of a "dark matter" which cannot be easily definable, yet is cosmically indispensable.

Tina says we do it to one another, every day,
Knowing and not knowing. When it is love,
What happens feels like dumb luck. When it's not,
We're riddled with bullets, shut through like ducks. (*Life on Mars* 41)

Here, Tina character functions as a voice of wisdom and a voice of affirmation to the speakers' consideration of "dark matter". To render the subjectivity of the experience

meaningful for a supposed reader, the “writing self” will attempt to treat the experience from the outside as much as from the inside. To Egan, “this very claim on an audience *splits* the internal and external manifestations of the writing self” (2). However, Egan also sees this initial split of the writing self in-between writer and “other” (or reader) as the authenticating aspect formulating the productivity of a text. She infers that

[i]f subjectivity and alterity can take turns within one text, with neither one disappearing as a subject, then dialogues between cultural and political margins and centers also become possible within the text. (13)

Similar to Egan’s autobiographer both as subject and object of speech, in *Desire in Language*’s second essay “Bounded Text”, Kristeva considers the author’s indispensable split between a conducting authority and an actor, using novel and novelistic utterance as her primary form of material. According to Kristeva,

[t]he author-actor’s utterance unfolds, divides and faces in two directions: first towards a referential utterance, *narration*—the speech assumed by he who inscribes himself as actor-author; and second, toward textual premises, *citation*—speech attributed to an other and whose authority he who inscribes himself as actor-author acknowledges. These two orientations intertwine in such a way as to merge. (45) (emphasis original)

Here actor-author seems to be subject to the judgment of an agent, an alter ego which is similar to the Husserlian “transcendental ego” as also employed by Kristeva (128-32). In Husserl’s conceptualization, transcendental ego seems to refer to a realm of commonsense and consciousness which serves the author-self as a hypothetical and symbolic reference datum. According to Kristeva’s reading of Husserl, signifying act is the predicative operation of consciousness by means of which consciousness simultaneously constitutes (posits) Being and the transcendental ego. Any linguistic act, in so far as it sets up a signified that can be communicated in a sentence, is sustained by the transcendental ego. Therefore, subject’s signifying act is basically determined by the transcendental ego. The meaning and signification produced by transcendental ego’s thetic predicative operation, however, do not exhaust the poetic function. Signified object and transcendental ego are only one of poetic language’s limits. Accordingly, there can be some givens within language that may escape from the unity of transcendental ego (Kristeva 130-31).

Transcendental ego, acting as a thetic consciousness, maintains the objectivity of the narrating subject while the actor-self is the executer and expresser agent of the same ego. As an analogue, this is like mimicking the God-Abraham dialogue in the biblical discourse; narrator has to double act, in other words, perform both as the God who commands and as Abraham who obeys.

The subjectivity of experience as a contemporary artistic expression liberates the narrative voice from the constraint of a godly consciousness, while the need to communicate with “an other” persists and it opens up new orientations of utterance. In contemporary writing theory, the call for the emancipation of the narrator from the authorial role is of course a challenge to the univocal claims of a transcendental ego. Yet, as Kristeva also mentions, such a division between the self and significant “other” is an inevitable and vital characteristic of the narrative act.

In this sense, as will be shown, in Tracy Smith’s poetic language, “father” seems to become a major orientation of utterance, a symbolically transcendental ego, the speaker desires both to become and overcome. In the poem “My God, It’s Full of Stars”, for

example, the persona remembers the times when her father used to work on the construction of the Hubble Telescope. The telescope becomes an instrument which is simultaneously identified with the father. Located on an above atmospheric position, the Hubble orbits the Earth. Facing towards space, with its multi-directed gaze, the telescope beams thousands of views of the universe back to Earth. Symbolically it becomes a phallic instrument, a paternal object of signification extending our human sight to distant space and shedding a light on our curiosity. Within the poetic context, father's desire to discover space intersects the speaker's desire to expand her poetic imagination.

My father spent whole seasons
 Bowing before the oracle-eye, hungry for what it would find.
 His face lit-up whenever anyone asked, and his arms would rise
 As if he were weightless, perfectly at ease in the never-ending Night of space. (12)

Kristeva, drawing from a variety of examples, primarily Mayakovski's work, and also drawing on Jacobson's bringing out, suggests that two tendencies seem to dominate poetic language. One is the "rhythm" which she sees as the basis of any poetic work; a rapture, a resound which is trimmed and shaped within the poetic formulation (28). The other is the "ego" which she sees situated within the structural rules of (space of) language (29). In Lacanian sense, Kristeva posits rhythm as a symptom of "the original desire" (desire to the maternal body) and symbolically uses the "sun" as the agency of language (father's law); as the "paternal law abrading rhythm, destroying it to a large degree, but also bringing it to light, out of its earthly revolutions, to enunciate itself" (29). Thus her analogy "the struggle between poet and sun" is to be understood "as a summary leading from the poet's condition to poetic formulation" (28-9). In this sense, the poetic "I" is the "ego" yearning to become as powerful as the symbolic father either by enunciating and mastering rhythm. "Thus, there is no choice but to struggle eternally against the sun; the "I" is successively the sun and its opponent, language and its rhythm, never one without the other, and poetic formulation will continue as long as the struggle does" (29).

In this sense, Smith's speaker often wonders on the meaning of God, existence, life and death which could symbolically be seen as the poet's eternal struggle with the sun. In "The Weather in Space" which is the opening poem of her book, she asks:

Is God being or pure force? The wind
 Or what commands it? When our lives slow
 And we can hold all that we love, it sprawls
 In our laps like a gangly doll. When the storm
 Kicks up and nothing is ours, we go chasing
 After all we're certain to lose, so alive-
 Faces radiant with panic. (3)

Here, the speaker attempts to delineate the vast and unconquerable idea of God through her rhythmic rapture and often through juxtaposing opponent possibilities like holding and losing love, or presence and absence. Accordingly, in the poem "Cathedral Kitsch", the speaker raises questions about God, and her struggle to answer these questions results in creating tones as authentic utterances which contribute to her poetic formulation within the order of language.

Does God love gold?
 Does He shine back

At himself from walls
 Like these, leafed
 In the earth's softest wealth? (15)

In this poem, God shines back "in the chords that rise from the tall brass pipes", as much as in "the chorus of crushed cans someone drags over cobbles in the secular street" (15). Juxtaposing the "tall brass pipes" and "crushed cans" matches in the rhythm of language in so far as the speaker ponders upon God. Poetic formulation continues as a result of her struggle with the idea of God.

In the poem "Speed of Belief", this time, "father" creates an alternate "I" within the poetic discourse which functions as the Kristevaian paternal "sun". The poet both desires to become Sun and at the same time to set free from it. Towards the end of the poem, speaker finally emancipates herself from the father (symbolized by Sun) whom she has been regarding as an idol since her childhood and has been longing for after his death:

When I was young, my father was lord
 Of a small kingdom: a wife, a garden,
 Kids for whom his word was Word.

It took years for my view to harden,
 To shrink him to human size
 And realize the door leading was open. (31)

Correlatively, in "Don't You Wonder, Sometimes?" the poet identifies herself with David Bowie this time. In this identification, she is both Bowie and against Bowie. Here, just like herself, Bowie is "Not God, exactly" but rather an opponent of god (19). The rhythmic rapture in this poem evolves around David Bowie's fantastic Ziggy Stardust character who belongs to this earth as well as outer space. She declares that "Bowie will never die" and "he'll never grow old" (19). Smith's personal love and likeness for Bowie and the way she embarks him as a character in her poem can be read as the affirmation of the ego and her empowerment in the face of God, death and/or cosmic vastness. Here, with her renewed awareness, again the way to freedom is open for her:

Straight to your mind. Bowie,
 I want to believe you. Want to feel
 Your will like the wind before rain.
 The kind everything simply obeys,
 Swept up in that hypnotic dance
 As if something with the power to do so
 Had looked its way and said:

Go ahead. (21)

Kristeva coins the term "speaking subject" for the narrating voice of the writer. Her "speaking subject" is split in-between what she conceptualizes as a "semiotic chora" and a "symbolic device". Lacan's theory of "imaginary" stage (pre-language) and "symbolic" order (entering language) constitutes the discourse of Kristeva's "speaking subject", engendered in-between an archaic desire to the maternal body and the construction of an ego claiming its identity. She borrows the Platonic term "chora" (described in *Timaeus* as an invisible and formless being: a receptacle receiving all things or where forms materialize). Extending the Platonic meaning of the term, Kristeva's "semiotic chora" refers to the pre-lingual, primary processes of the being, before developing a sense of self apart

from the mother, whereas the “symbolic device” refers to the establishment of grammatical and social constraints, symbolic/paternal law. Speaking subject’s discourse inevitably belongs to the “semiotic” and “symbolic” orders of signification. Kristeva focuses her interest on the discourse of this speaking subject and conceptualizes her theory of “language as articulation of a heterogeneous process, with the speaking subject leaving its imprint on the dialectic between the articulation and its process” (24).

Thus, Kristeva attempts to consider language as a linguistic order having an “umbilical cord” to the original and archaic desire which cannot be verbalized within the order of the paternal law. Accordingly, the being’s renunciation of the desire to merge with the maternal body finds its expression as the repressed desire in language. Desire for the mother, as first theorized by Freud, is actually a desire for the original formlessness, in other words, it can also be interpreted as the being’s desire to death. In Lacan, this desire forbidden in language exists outside of language as a potentially antagonistic force to the commonsense constructed through language.

However, Kristeva employs “poetic language” to exemplify that it is the best form of discourse in which the speaking subject, through rhythm, rhythmic rapture, intonations, repetitions etc., or through more subjective ways of utterance or diction, challenges the regular order of language. The expression through poetic discourse thus seems like a space of less restriction, a ground where the speaking subject can actively act in and out of language.

In this manner, within Smith’s poetic discourse, while God, father and other identified people like Tina or David Bowie seem to represent a thetic consciousness, “cosmic space”—often related with feminine attributions—seems to signify a maternal chora. In the poem “My God It’s Full of Stars”, for example, Smith’s persona investigates the possibilities of presence in a wider cosmic space—maybe in alternative dimensions—as against that of absence caused by passing away from our temporary reside in Earth. This cosmic space, offered as a new possibility for an existence, is defined with feminine attributions, just like a great maternal body:

A cosmic mother watching through a spray of stars,

Mouthing *yes, yes* as we toddle toward the light,
 Biting her lip if we teeter at some ledge. Longing
 To sweep us to her breast, she hopes for the best (“My God It’s Full of Stars” 8)

In the poem “The Soul”, the speaking subject’s yearn for the pre-language stage where the being is one with the maternal body, finds expression in the following words:

[...] A garment
 That attests to breasts, the privacy
 Between thighs. The body is what we lean toward,
 Tensing as it darts, dancing away. But it’s the voice that enters us. Even
 Saying nothing. Even saying nothing
 Over and over absently to itself. (*The Soul* 23)

Here the eroticization of the “body” is rather in an archaic sense as to revoke an ancient “mother-cult” both as nourishing and daemonic. Similarly, in the section 8 of “Life on Mars”, Smith pictures the Earth as an old and weary maternal body, the source and final destination of our organic substance:

Patient, biding its time. The earth
 Floating in darkness, suspended in spin.
 The earth gunning it around the sun.
 The earth we ride in disbelief.
 The earth we plunder like thieves.
 The earth caked to mud in the belly
 Of a village with no food. Burying us.
 The earth coming off on our shoes. ("Life On Mars" 41)

This image of "earth caked to mud in the belly" also reminds Camilla Paglia's "chthonic" earth cult, an archaic meaning of earth as "prima matter" (Paglia 5-6). According to Paglia, "what the West represses in its view of nature is the chthonian, which means 'of the earth'—but earth's bowels, not its surface" (5).¹

With the poem "Sci-Fi", the speaker's imagination extends our vision again, to a distant future where humanity is far away from the home galaxy system; earth, sun and the moon. Rather than settling humanity and human condition to a new planet in her far-future imagination, the speaker considers a new form of existence for human kind which seems to defy limits, dependencies and the deterioration of the body:

There will be no edges, but curves.
 Clean lines only pointing forward.
 [...]

 And yes; we'll live to be much older, thanks
 To popular consensus. Weightless, unhinged,
 Eons from even our own moon, we'll drift
 In the haze of space, which will be, once
 And for all, scrutable and safe. (*Sci-Fi* 7)

The signification of the poetic discourse here is again double-coded. As much as a future condition for human species, these lines can also be read as the suggestion of a possible form of afterlife. In the speaker's language, "markings of the original desire" to a formlessness is obvious with the words like "weightless" or "unhinged". Likewise, the phrase "haze of space" evokes a chora image, as much as an all-embracing maternal harbor. In Freudian sense, the instinctual desire to the mother's body as a death bed (semiotic chora) is the primitive drive here. This desire gives a rhythmic rapture to language (symbolic device) as well as it acts as the speaker's defiance to the fear of impending death as an inevitable human condition.

In *Mirror Talk*'s first chapter "Facing Off: Genres of Life and Death" Egan, in her discussion of "the politics of crisis and the body" as the formulating elements of the contemporary narrative act, states that crisis is "an unstable condition seeking change" or in some cases "a permanent state, a balancing act reenacted in the text" (5).

In "The Speed of Belief", the speaker's initial sorrow resulting from her father's death is expressed as a major crisis. In the beginning of the poem, the speaker feels disinclined to be in the reality and necessities of the funeral room.

¹ Paglia explains that the term chthonic is used for pre-olympian Greek religion and she adopts it "as a substitute for Dionysian, which has become contaminated with vulgar pleasantries". Thus, Paglia embarks "Dionysian" or "chthonian" as metaphors to "the dehumanizing brutality of biology and geology, the Darwinian waste and bloodshed, the squalor and rot we must block from consciousness to retain our Apollonian integrity as persons" (6).

I didn't want to wait on my knees,
 In a room made quiet by waiting."
 [...]
 I didn't want the orchids or the trays,
 Of food meant to fortify that silence. ("The Speed of Belief" 27)

The poem's title, "Speed of Belief" echoes as to remind the term "speed of light" in the jargon of astro-physics. Like the word "light", "belief" in poetic language connotes a positive and healing force against regression or dark emptiness of loss. As the poem unfolds—like the passage of time—speaker reexamines the meaning of life through the specter of death and asks "But where does all he [father] knew-and all he must now know-walk?" (29).

This question finds answer moment by moment as she realizes that her father's wisdom penetrates throughout her poetic imagination. Thus, the speaker's initial crisis caused by the loss of her father turns into a wisdom of sustaining the self without the father. She is emancipated by transforming her loss and sorrow to creativity:

I walked through, and my eyes
 Swallowed everything, no matter
 How it cut. To bleed was my prize:

I was free, nobody's daughter,
 Perfecting an easy weightless laughter. ("Speed of Belief"31)

Egan, further in her discussion, also seems to identify the hovering consciousness of death as a basic and permanent drive for the imaginative act of the autobiographer. She states that "the crisis that generate autobiography may begin with the body; suffering, illness, and death go to work on the body and determine its narratives" (7). Referring to Breyten Breytenbach's "docu-dream" *Mouiroir* which was composed during a period of incarceration, she conceptualizes the act of narration in terms of writing about death as much as about life, as an act of struggle in and out of death.

If Breytenbach's title, *Mouiroir*, conflates the concepts of self-reflection and death, or self discovery in confrontation with death, it also describes life writing as a death sentence. This ultimate, or foundational, relationship of life with death has always been important to autobiography, but the writing of unresolved crisis implicates death or some subordinate form of unwelcome resolution in every full stop. (Egan 12)

In Smith's poetry, too, the notion of death is often treated as an inevitable aspect of self-reflection. The poem "No-Fly Zone" opens with a reflection of the self, being haunted by the consciousness of death, while hearing the buzz of the city outside. Speaker uses third person singular to utter her other self who cannot name her fear. Here, each line becomes, as Egan calls, "life writing as a death sentence":

She fears something but can't say what.
 She goes in reverse, mopping up her own tracks.
 When she sleeps, it's always the same foggy night.
 The dead have stopped knocking. No answer.
 Their big cars hover along her block, engines
 Idling, woofers pumping that relentless brass

Into the bones of her house. ("No-Fly Zone" 44)

However, as the poem continues, this struggle with fear of death opens up moments of resolution. In part four, the speaker knows that she has to walk out of her fear which causes her depressive inertness. Her call to the self is also a call for a symbolic resurrection:

Biscuits-n-gravy. It's a sin to live behind curtains.
Pick up your bed and walk. Memory's stubborn-
 I mean misery. You sit in silence waiting to be chosen.
 Behaving. *Pick up your bed and walk.* You want it all
 Over again. Past perfect. ("No-Fly Zone" 45)

Consequently, in *Life on Mars*, Tracy K. Smith uses her artistic imagination both as a connection to her dead father and as a resistance to the crisis caused by his death. Her speaker's dialogic tone constructs her text as an active field of her subjectivity and of a commutual experience with others. Her subjectivity, as artistically structured in language, politically manages to maintain a polyphonic "I" balancing the tension between life and death as two opposing and complementary forces acting upon her text. Through self interrogation and through dialogue with her significant others, Smith's speaking subject challenges the fear of death as a response to the trauma caused by her father's death. Recognition becomes the empowering and authenticating aspect of her identity not just to deal with the trauma caused by her father's death but to deal with crisis as a permanent state in life. Smith's deceased father, as her spiritual mentor, becomes a transcendental "I" through whose predicative judgment, the text often communicates with the readers, who are, as contemporary theories of Egan and Kristeva suggest, active participants of "writing" as an ongoing process engendered in-between two processes of signification. This duality between Smith's speaking subject and the reader as other, unfolds as moments of resolution as the two subjects share moments of recognition.

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The Voice of the Unvoiced: Saki's Criticism of Speciesism in His Selected Animal Stories¹

Adem Balci

Abstract: The late Victorian and Edwardian short story writer Hector Hugh Munro (1870-1916), better known by his penname Saki, is generally recognised as a satirist criticising the follies, hypocrisies and pretensions of the middle and upper-middle class British society. Yet, one of the most important aspects of Saki's short stories is that they teem with various animal characters, and these characters are generally the protagonists. An in-depth study of these animal stories evinces Saki's sympathy towards animals and his occupation with the criticism of their victimisation and exploitation. Therefore, in most of Saki's short stories, his criticism of what later came to be called "speciesism", which might simply be defined as the marginalisation of animals based on the wrong assumption that they belong to an inferior species, occupies the major position. Accordingly, the aim of this article is to analyse Saki's criticism of speciesism as exemplified in his "Mrs Packletide's Tiger", "Esmé", "Tobermory", and "The Penance".

Keywords: Saki, H.H. Munro, animal studies, speciesism, "Mrs Packletide's Tiger", "Esmé", "Tobermory", "The Penance".

The late Victorian and Edwardian British short story writer Hector Hugh Munro (1870-1916), better known by his penname Saki, is one of the best writers of the short story genre. However, interestingly enough, so far his stories have not caught much scholarly and important attention. Those a few critical studies of Saki's stories categorise the writer as a bitter satirist criticising the follies, hypocrisies and pretensions of the middle and upper-middle class British society in a humorous way. Yet, one of the most important aspects of Saki's short stories is that they teem with various animal characters, and these characters are generally the protagonists. Even though the use of these animal characters has been explained either as the repercussions of the writer's childhood affection for animals, or has been interpreted to be used for moral purposes to criticise the follies of the pretentious and hypocritical people, an in-depth study of his short stories reveals Saki's sympathy towards animals and his occupation with the criticism of their victimisation and exploitation. Therefore, in most of Saki's short stories, his criticism of what later came to be called "speciesism", which might simply be defined as the marginalisation of animals based on the wrong assumption that they belong to an inferior species, occupies the major position. Accordingly, the main objective of this article is to open Saki's stories to reinterpretations and readings by analysing his criticism of speciesism in "Mrs Packletide's Tiger", "Esmé", "Tobermory", and "The Penance".

Speciesism, which might basically be defined as the human prejudice against other species, was coined by the British psychologist Richard D. Ryder in 1970. Especially after the Australian philosopher Peter Singer's extensive discussion of the term in his *Animal Liberation* (1975), animal rights philosophers and animal studies scholars began to use

¹ This article is adapted from the first chapter of the author's unpublished master's thesis entitled "Animals in Saki's Short Stories within the Concept of Imperialism: A Non-Anthropocentric Approach" (Hacettepe University, 2014).

speciesism thoroughly as part of their argument to emphasise the inapt human bias against animals. While for Singer, speciesism “is a prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species” (6); for Paola Cavalieri, the term is used “to refer to the idea that humans qua humans have a privileged moral status compared to any other conscious beings. The notion of speciesism could actually be used to describe any form of discrimination based on species” (70). In this respect, as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin argue in their *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, especially “institutionalised speciesism” plays a significant role in the exploitation of animal species and for the continuation of this exploitation. More pointedly, as they further argue, as the term “human being” is defined as the opposite of animal, human beings justify not only the ruthless exploitation and the cruel treatment of animals but also the brutal treatment of human beings who are treated not more favourably than animals as in the case of the colonised people (5).

For most of the critics in the field of animal studies, “speciesism” is modelled on other “-isms” such as racism, sexism and classism (Singer 6; Wolfe 132; Cavalieri 70). As such, with reference to the way in which the term is modelled, this neologism “alludes to the intrahuman prejudices that contemporary egalitarianism condemns” (Cavalieri 70). That is why, as Peter Singer remarks, while “[s]exists violate the principle of equality by favoring the interests of their own sex [...] speciesists allow the interest of their own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. The pattern is identical in each case” (9). The question of women, racial and sexual others has been dealt with especially since the second half of the twentieth century by virtue of the developments in cultural studies. However, inasmuch as cultural studies has achieved “a paradigm shift in the humanities since the 1960s” by problematizing and challenging the “normalized categories of gender, ethnicity, race, class and sexuality” (Castricano 5), not surprisingly, the animal question and especially speciesism, despite its interconnected relationship with other oppression systems, remained unresolved for a very long time. Notwithstanding the recent studies in the fields of modern animal rights movements since the 1970s and animal studies 1990s onwards, however, as Cary Wolfe posits in an interview, “[c]ultural studies and critical theory have really, really lagged behind these [above-mentioned] developments in the broader society in a way that [...] was [not] exactly the case with feminism, nor was the case with queer theory, and certainly was not the case with critical-race studies” (Medora and Calder 41). Perhaps the root cause of this lag in cultural studies is that most of the scholars even in the environmental humanities “remain humanists at the core” and thereby anthropocentric, which paves the way for “speciesism” (Wolfe 1). From this vantage point, since speciesism is coined on the model of other “-isms”, as Jodey Castricano also propounds, it “must be given the same critical attention that has been recruited against sexism and racism in critical race studies, feminism and queer theory” (1). Otherwise, exploitation of animals is “unlikely to be eliminated altogether until speciesism itself is eliminated” (Singer 94).

In the marginalisation of animals with a speciesist attitude, the assumed superiority of human beings over other species as part of the humanistic thought in collaboration with the anthropocentric approach plays a significant role. As Cavalieri states “[h]umanism—as this intrahuman egalitarian approach was defined—has [...] two sides: an inclusive side, according to which *all* humans are first-class moral patients, and an exclusive side, according to which *only* humans are first-class moral patients” (70) (emphasis original). In this vein, as they have assumed themselves to be superior to all other beings, human beings have given great damages to the natural environment. For many years, it has been denied that each living or nonliving entity on earth has a significant role in the ecological system

and for the continuation of life. Thus, as emphasised somewhere else above, eliminating speciesism at once is difficult since human prejudices against animals are deeply rooted and the marginalisation of animals is “supported by more than twenty centuries of philosophical tradition” (Cavalieri 3). In a similar vein, as Singer also argues, besides the philosophical tradition the roots of which go back to the Ancient Greeks, the teachings of some monotheistic religions, especially that of Christianity, pave the way for the marginalisation of animals. To this end, Singer propounds that “Western attitudes to animals have roots in two traditions: Judaism and Greek antiquity. The roots unite in Christianity, and it is through Christianity that they came to prevail in Europe” (186).

Since anthropocentrism lies at the centre of most of the religions, religious beliefs have a profound effect in the marginalisation and exploitation of animals. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, for instance, the ruthless exploitation of animals by human beings is justified on the grounds of the assumed superiority of human beings over animals especially with respect to the creation narrative of the Bible. That is why, although the marginalisation of animals is central to the teachings of most of the religions, as Lynn White suggests, “[e]specially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen” (9). Therefore, in the Western context, the mistreatment of nature and the consequent exploitation of animal species and natural resources may be taken as the result of the anthropocentric creation narrative of the book of Genesis, and the teachings of the Bible. To put it more explicitly, according to the book of Genesis, albeit created after all the beings, man is given the dominion of all the species on earth as he is claimed to be “created in the image of God” (Gen. 1:27). In this regard, as White further argues, “although man’s body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God’s image” (9). Therefore, despite the fact that he is created after all the beings, God gives Adam the right to dominate all the animals with the following statement: “Be fruitful, and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28). Through this authority given to him by God, Adam begins his dominion over animals by naming them, and “whatsoever Adam call[s] every living creature, that is the name thereof” (Gen. 2:19). As man named animals, he has had the right to do whatever he wanted. Thus,

[f]rom this notion of man’s absolute dominion over the natural world comes the faith—also naturalized in much contemporary culture—in anthropocentrism; the belief that the human (*anthropos* is the Greek term for human) is the centre of all things, that the world revolves around him (feminists have spent many years attempting to turn that him into him/her). The Christian narrative has had a massive impact on the ways humans relate to the world around them. Anthropocentrism is naturalized: the eating of meat—often undertaken without thought for what it is that is really being eaten—is just one example of how normal anthropocentrism is in our cultures. (Fudge 15)

Besides the anthropocentric teachings of religions, the Ancient Greek tradition and the Western philosophy, which is shaped by the Greek antiquity, also play a significant role in the marginalisation of animals. First important remarks about animals in the Ancient Greek philosophy come from Aristotle. For him, man is also an animal, but “a political animal” (*Politics* 5). Despite referring to them as animal, Aristotle, nevertheless, distinguishes human beings from animals based on the fact that the former are endowed with language and reasoning. In this vein, as “nature [...] makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech” (5); and as he is the perfect amalgam of soul and body (8), through which he can both govern his own self and the rest

of the animals, Aristotle thinks that man has the right to govern and use animals and the natural resources to his own ends. Hence, he says that

after the birth of animals, plants exist for their sake, and that the other animals exist for the sake of man, the tame for use and food, the wild, if not all at least the greater part of them, for food, and for the provision of clothing and various instruments. Now if nature makes nothing incomplete, and nothing in vain, the inference must be that *she has made all animals for the sake of man.* (3) (emphasis mine)

Beginning with Aristotle, except for a few philosophers such as Pythagoras and Michel de Montaigne, most of the philosophers in the Western philosophy shared almost the same idea that animals lack language, and thereby they are devoid of reasoning and consciousness. The denial of reasoning and consciousness have brought about the idea that animals are inferior to human beings, and created as a means to human beings' needs. Yet still, the worst comments about animals and the subsequent mistreatment of them came in the seventeenth century with the French philosopher René Descartes' claim that animals are "bête machine" that are nothing more than nature's automata, acting mechanically without any thought and feeling. As he remarks in a letter written to the English Platonist Henry More on 5 February 1649,

since art copies nature, and people can make various automatons which move without thought, it seems reasonable that nature should even produce its own automatons, which are much more splendid than artificial ones—namely the animals. This is especially likely since we know no reason why thought should always accompany the sort of arrangement of organs that we find in animals. It is much more wonderful that a mind should be found in every human body than that one should be lacking in every animal. (*Philosophical Writings* 366)

Not surprisingly, Descartes' reason in resembling animals to automata that are deprived of any thought and feeling is the direct result of Cartesian dichotomy of human and animal. Descartes' "cogito", that is, "I think therefore I am" creates not only a chasm between mind and body by privileging the former over latter, but also an abyss between human beings and animals by marginalising the latter due to the lack of language in them. After the formulation of this dictum, existence has been associated with one's own utterance of it through language. As it has been only human beings to underline their existence through the human language, and as language is accepted to be the sign of a rational soul, human beings have been assumed to be the only rational creatures on earth, therefore the ones who have the right to dominate the whole world. In this respect, as animals cannot speak the human language, Descartes reduces them to the status of machines, since for him only human language is accepted to be the sign of the faculty of rationality and thereby the presence of immortal souls. Descartes supports his idea on the lack of rationality in animals by claiming that although animals have all the necessary organs to speak, they cannot manage to do so due to lack of consciousness in them. Thus, for him, the mute-deaf born people are able to produce a kind of sign language for themselves while animals cannot. In this respect, for Descartes, the lack of language in animals "does not merely show that the brutes [animals] do have less reason than men, but that they have none at all, since it is clear that very little is required in order to be able to talk" (*Discourse* 39). Consequently, for Descartes, since animals are not conscious as the machine of nature, they do not feel pain. As Cavalieri posits, "[i]t is no accident, therefore, that the growing practice of 'vivisection'—that is, the dissection of live animals—gained

both practical boost and ethical legitimation from the Cartesian stance. Descartes himself practiced it as a physiologist, and many vivisectionists of the time declared themselves his followers” (42).

Within this framework, as human beings deny rationality, consciousness and soul to animals, and thereby marginalise and use them as a means to their ends, Saki’s specific use of animals in his short stories is the explicit criticism of his society, which is shaped by the anthropocentric and speciesist ideology of the period. His stories, at this juncture, which generally present a picture of animal oppression and exploitation in a rather anthropocentric society, delineate how speciesism affects animals profoundly.

“Mrs Packletide’s Tiger”, one of the hunting stories in *The Chronicles of Clovis* (1912), is among the best examples of Saki’s animal stories in which the writer explores the limits of speciesism by revealing the imperialist white colonisers’ inhumane treatments of the human beings and animals in the colonised lands. The story tells the hunting venture of an upper-middle class British woman, Mrs Packletide, who goes to India to hunt a tiger so as to show off in England for recently one of her rivals, Loona Bimbertoon, has appeared in the newspapers on account of her hunting experience. Despite her inexperience in hunting, the third person narrator ironically claims that “[i]t was Mrs Packletide’s pleasure and intention that she should shoot a tiger” (*The Penguin Complete Saki* 115). Not surprisingly, notwithstanding her ostentatious remarks in England telling people that she is going to India to hunt a tiger, Mrs Packletide offers “a thousand rupees for the opportunity of shooting a tiger without overmuch risk or exertion” (CS 115-16). However, as she is inexperienced in hunting, Mrs Packletide unwittingly kills a goat instead of the tiger, and the tiger dies of a heart attack due to the sounds of her rifle. Worse still, since her paid companion Miss Mebbin threatens her to reveal the real hunting story, Mrs Packletide is made to buy a house for her. In this regard, although the story seems to be about a tiger as the title suggests, “Mrs Packletide’s Tiger” is “a story about meanness, upmanship, and blackmail, not a tiger” (Byrne 15). Eventually, it can be averred that in this story, while delving into the upper-middle class Victorian society’s hypocritical and pretentious world, Saki also criticises the victimisation and mistreatment of animals by the speciesist and imperialist European colonisers with specific emphasis on the evils of big game hunting.

Especially through the end of the nineteenth century, due to big game hunting in the colonised lands as a very common pastime activity for the British colonisers, most of the animal species were lost in India and in numerous other colonised lands. Thus, in “Mrs Packletide’s Tiger”, there is only an “old tiger” whose ill health and old age make the indigenous people worry about the sudden death of the animal before the hunting event. They deliberately release the best of their livestock goats as a bait to attract the tiger’s attention. When the hunting time arrives, the indigenous people construct a platform in a convenient tree for Mrs Packletide and Miss Mebbin so that they are not harmed by the animal, and tether a goat “gifted with a particularly persistent bleat [...] at the correct distance” (CS 116). Upon hearing the sound of the rifle, the tiger falls dead, and Mrs Packletide gets excited with the idea of the luncheon-party in Curzon Street in England, where she will show off with her so called success in hunting. Soon enough however, she is shocked by the fact that “the goat [...] [is] in death-throes from a mortal bullet wound, while no trace of the rifle’s deadly work could be found on the tiger” (CS 117), for the old tiger has died of a heart-failure due to the sounds of her rifle. Needless to say, when the fact that most of the animal species were on the brink of extinction at the end of the nineteenth century is taken into consideration, Saki’s choice of an ill and old tiger at the threshold of death and extinction is apparently the criticism of the colonial dominion through the exploitation of the animal species in the colonised lands. When symbolically taken

however, the old and only tiger in India standing for the land itself symbolises the consumption of the land in the literal sense as a result of the heavy colonial power there. Thus, as put by Buchinger, “[t]he story is classic Saki satire; and the humor lies in the persiflage of the typical Edwardian socialite” (54). As Mrs Packetide’s ambitions lead “the penny-pinching Miss Mebbin” to blackmail her (Gibson 170), it is worth noting that what Saki underlines in this story is the bestial ambitions of human beings. Although these people show the predatory animals as dangerous and beastly, through Saki’s satirical story it is revealed that what is more dangerous than the real animals is the beast within human beings, that is, their beastly passions. Consequently, as set in the colonial India especially with reference to big game hunting, Saki in this story seems to be underlining the interconnectedness of the similar oppression systems, such as speciesism and racism. Inasmuch as the colonisers refer to the colonised people as savage, and justify their colonial activities with such claims, the act of colonisation is the real savagery. Most notably, the hunting activities of the Europeans as part of colonialism show how thoughtless and hypocritical they can be. Herewith, while criticising the speciesist approach of the human beings, Saki also draws attention to the colonial practices in the background.

In much the same way, “Esmé”, another hunting story, explores speciesism’s inextricable connection with racism. Mainly centred on the bestiality of human beings who manipulate animals and othered human beings for their own benefits, the story delineates the hunting story of the Baroness and Constance Broodle, who find a hyena and encounter a gypsy child when they are lost in a big game hunting. By means of this encounter, these materialist and hypocritical women’s biased attitude and marginalising approach to other species and races are displayed. Consequently, similar to the previous story, mostly based on the criticism of the hypocritical upper-class British people who cannot stop their beastly feelings for material gains, “Esmé” delves into the intersecting points of speciesism and racism through the explorations of the big game hunting, where the discriminative approach of the Europeans towards other species and races manifests itself overtly.

Even though they do not have difficulty in keeping the first flight, the Baroness and Constance Broodle lose their hounds towards the finish and suddenly find themselves miles away from the rest of the company. Soon enough however, they see the rest of the company away through the voices of the hounds hunting an animal, a hyena, which is believed to have escaped from Lord Pabham’s Park. Despite the efforts of the hounds and the hunters, the hyena suddenly escapes, and the Baroness and Constance Broodle find themselves in its company. Since it is getting dark and they are alone in a foreign land in the company of a wild animal, the women are rather afraid of the hyena. Yet, despite its carnivorous nature, the hyena does not harm them. Although the Baroness and Constance Broodle find the animal rather ugly at first sight, by following Adam’s footsteps in the paradise, they decide to name it Esmé as if it were a pet. Naming issue, in this respect, is especially important in that those who name the others have the power; and therefore, they can easily dominate those they have named. That is why, the name they give to the hyena is rather ironic since Esmé “means ‘esteemed’ or “‘loved’ in Old French” (“Esmé”). However, contrary to the name they give to the animal, the hyena is not loved by them; yet still, they establish their dominion over it especially as observed in the car accident when the story nears its conclusion. Just before the end of the story, the hyena is killed in the dark in an accident. Yet, despite their initial negative thoughts about it, the Baroness manages to use the animal as a means to her ends to flirt with the owner of the car:

‘You have killed my Esmé’ I exclaimed bitterly.

'I'm so awfully sorry,' said the young man; 'I keep dogs myself, so I know what you must feel about it I'll do anything I can in reparation.'

'Please bury him at once,' I said; 'that much I think I may ask of you.'

'Bring the spade, William,' he called to the chauffeur. Evidently hasty roadside interments were contingencies that had been provided against. (CS 104-105)

As Esmé is claimed to be her precious pet, the man who runs over it feels responsible for the Baroness as the owner of the so called pet dog, and thereby prepares a very ceremonial funeral, which would not be organised for it if Esmé died as an animal. Besides preparing such a ceremonial funeral for Esmé, the man later sends the Baroness "a charming little diamond brooch, with the name Esmé set in a sprig of rosemary" (CS 105) as atonement. However, this brooch makes two friends at odds with each other for material gains.

As speciesism and racism are inextricably connected to each other as the product of the same oppression system, besides species inequalities as exemplified above, "Esmé" is also worth examining with respect to race inequalities since the marginalised human others are generally treated worse than animals by the European colonisers. Consequently, besides their speciesist standpoint, the women's overt racism manifests itself in the story when they see a "gypsy child" picking some berries. Although they name the hyena Esmé the moment they find it, the Baroness and Constance refer to the "gypsy child" as "it", as if s/he is a "beast" or a nonliving object: "'There was still sufficient daylight for us to distinguish wayside objects, and our listless spirits gave an upward perk as we came upon a small half-naked gypsy brat picking blackberries from a low-growing bush. The sudden apparition of two horsewomen and a hyena set it off crying'" (CS 103) (emphasis mine). The gypsy child is already the other for them due to his/her race. Hence, when the animal holds the child in its jaws to take him/her behind the bushes to eat, except a few minor attempts, the women, who are interested in just their own benefits, do not try to prevent the hyena from devouring the child; and the animal eats the child. Thus, in the words of Joseph S. Salemi, "Esmé" is "a grim satire on the callous indifference of the rich to anything other than their own comforts and interests. [...] In the story, Saki does not contrast noble beast and ignoble humans, but instead establishes a frightening identity between an animal's relentless hunt for food and the human desire for comfort and money" (425-26). In this respect, the categories that Wolfe makes in his *Animal Rites* with reference to the discourse of species in his analysis of Jonathan Demme's film *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) might be helpful. For Wolfe, there are "animalized animals", "humanized animals", "humanized humans", and "animalized humans". As he posits,

[a]t one end there are *animalized animals*. This pole is, as it were, wholly assumed and is linked to the ongoing practices of violence against nonhuman others. [...] It is useful here to recall [...] the term 'speciesism,' for it suggests [...] not only a logical or linguistic structure that marginalizes and objectifies the other solely based on species, but also a whole network of material practices that reproduce that logic as a materialized *institution* and rely on it for legitimation. [...]

Second, there are those *humanized animals*—pets, primarily—that we exempt from the sacrificial regime by endowing them with ostensibly human features. [...]

Third, there are *animalized humans*, perhaps the most troubling category of all, since all manner of brutalizations carried out by cultural prescription can serve to animalize humans, as can reminders of human beings' mammalian, or even merely bodily, organic existence.

Finally, at the other end, there is the wishful category of the *humanized human*, sovereign and untroubled. (101)

With respect to the categorisation given above, although Esmé seems to be an “animalized animal” at the beginning of the story when the ladies find it, after being named Esmé, it reaches to the status of a “humanized animal” as the so called pet of the Baroness. However, unlike the hyena, the “gypsy child”, who is referred to as “it” by both of the women, is an “animalized human”. The women’s racism towards the child overlaps with speciesism. Because they reduce the child to the status of an animal, and thereby the consequent exploitation of the animalised human being is justified, since animality for the speciesists is the base for exploitation and marginalisation. The women’s indifference towards the animalised gypsy child is exemplified as follows:

Constance shuddered. ‘Do you think the poor little thing suffered much?’ came another of her futile questions.
 ‘The indications were all that way,’ I said; ‘on the other hand, of course, it may have been crying from sheer temper. Children sometimes do.’ (CS 104)

As can be deduced from the excerpt above, the sufferings of a little child do not disturb these materialist women as they are always after their own gains. Consequently, it might be argued that in “Esme”, besides criticising the speciesist approach of human beings against animals, Saki also deals with racism as the animalised humans are sometimes treated worse than animals by the speciesist human beings.

Yet, Saki’s criticism of species inequalities is not limited to the stories that are set in the colonised lands with wild animals within the general frame of hunting stories. The animal stories that are set in the London house parties or somewhere else in England are also quite telling with respect to the writer’s criticism of speciesism. At this juncture, Saki’s cat story “Tobermory” constitutes a good example to reveal the pretentious and hypocritical human characters’ thoughts about and stance towards animals. Contrary to Descartes’ classification of animals as “dumb brutes”, in this story the reader enjoys perusing the clever dialogues of the eponymous Tobermory with human beings in a house party. As they are prejudiced against animals, which are believed to be dumb, all the human beings in the party, including Tobermory’s owners, are surprised when they see a talking cat. Soon enough however, their surprise is replaced by fear as they begin to think that the cat might teach the human language to other animals, and thereby they might be dethroned from their privileged positions. Thus, as Auberon Waugh posits, “Tobermory, the speaking cat, immediately exposes the vanity and vice of human beings who have been patronizing him. Their reaction, to have him killed, is a perfect commentary on our normal response to unwelcome truth” (xi). However, before they manage to poison Tobermory, he is killed in a fight by another cat from the Rectory.

As Jacques Derrida argues in his article “The Animal That Therefore I Am”, almost all the philosophers “(from Aristotle to Lacan, and including Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, and Levinas), [...] say the same thing: the animal is deprived of language. Or, more precisely, *of response, of a response that could be precisely and rigorously distinguished from a reaction; of the right and power to “respond,” and hence of so many other things that would be proper to man*” (32) (emphasis mine). In this respect, for most of the philosophers, animals lack language and thereby they are deprived of consciousness, and consequently they do not have a soul. As stated somewhere else, notably with respect to his approach to animals as mere machines of nature, the most notorious claims about the lack

of language and thereby consciousness in animals are made by René Descartes. In accord with this vision, since language and reasoning have been attributed to human beings, animals have been marginalised as inferior to human beings, and thereby their exploitation by their human “masters” is legitimated. In this respect, even though it is a known fact that animals cannot speak the human language, and they have their own way of communication, the use of a talking cat by the writer is noteworthy in that a talking animal dethrones the human beings’ assumed superiority by eroding the boundaries between human beings and animals. As Venetia Laura Delano Robertson posits, “[w]ith the imagery of talking animals ubiquitous in societies East to West it is evident that humans utilize anthropomorphism *to translate complex ideas about politics, society, and personhood*” (2) (emphasis mine). The anthropomorphised talking cat, with respect to Robertson’s line of argument, is important in this case as it seems to be used specifically by Saki to criticise society’s hypocrisy. Thus, when he learns to speak the human language, “[f]rom being the family pet, Tobermory is suddenly an outcast and, in revealing the hypocrisies of the house-party and scratching below the thin veneer of cordiality and politesse, shows not only that he is superior to the human being but also that he knows it” (Pringle 99). In attributing human language to Tobermory, Saki seems to be creating a gap in the speciesist discourse, which is based mostly on the Cartesian separation of humans and animals. In this vein, as Robertson points out, “[t]he anthropomorphic animal has long functioned as a useful metaphor for the human condition, allowing us to see a reflection of ourselves and yet place a convenient distance between us and the mirror by virtue of our fundamental human/animal difference” (3), because through what he says, Saki subverts the conventions, and thereby diverges from the norms of society. Like Saki’s many other animal characters, this anthropomorphic cat in the story is specifically used to unravel the real identities of human beings. Despite their social masks, the real identities of the human beings in the story are quite hypocritical. Thus, as Salemi posits, like Tobermory, “all the animals in Saki’s fiction, represent what human beings would be like without the veneer of etiquette and social grace—in fact, what human beings really are beneath the surface of upper-class manners, bourgeois respectability, and feigned solicitude for others” (426). By using such a talking animal character in his story, Saki reveals the so called civilised people’s hypocritical identities and hence criticises their petty pretensions; because, as Salemi argues “*frank honesty of bestial manners can never coexist with the hypocrisy that makes civilization possible*” (427) (emphasis mine).

In a similar vein, a very typical example of speciesism is presented in another cat tale entitled “The Penance”. The story is basically about the sense of justice of three unnamed children, whose cat has recently been killed by their neighbour, Octavian Ruttle, who wrongly believes that the cat is the murderer of his chickens. Contrary to his wrong assumption, the murderers of his chickens turn out to be rats rather than the children’s cat. Although Octavian Ruttle’s guilty conscience disturbs him for his murder of an innocent cat, he still tries to deceive the children by buying chocolates to them. However, the children are rather stubborn and they want Ruttle to do penance; and therefore, they take his two-year-old daughter Olivia to the piggeries to throw her to the pigs. Thus, when his daughter’s life is compared to that of the murdered cat, Ruttle realises his mistake and accepts to do penance. To this end, Ruttle stands for half an hour holding a paper written ‘I’m a miserable Beast’.

As Octavian Ruttle’s “soul’s peace depended in large measure on the unstinted approval of his fellows” (CS 422), he “is concerned with keeping up appearances than anything else” (Pringle 12). Hence, even though he does not approve his act of killing an innocent animal, Ruttle kills the cat to protect his benefits. As Marti Kheel argues, “killing animals is the direct establishment of man’s superiority over animals” (58), and it is one of

the overt manifestations of speciesism. Despite Ruttle's denial, the three unnamed children, following him ceaselessly wherever he goes, make Ruttle aware of the sin that he has committed. As a hypocritical person, to keep up appearances, he wants to deceive the children by buying chocolates to atone for what he has done. However, contrary to his assumptions, the children do not accept his blood money, and they fling it back at him by speckling his garden with the chocolate. Besides, as the chickens are still carried off after the death of the cat, "it seem[s] highly probable that the cat had only haunted the chicken-run to prey on the rats which harboured there" (CS 424). Upon learning this fact, the children send a copy-book paper on which is written: "Beast. Rats eaten your chickens" (CS 424). With this fact, Ruttle begins to look for ways of being apologised by the children more willingly as he does not like this nickname: "Beast". To this end, he decides to apologise from these children by taking his two-year-old daughter Olivia with himself. When he takes Olivia there, he asks them whether they like flowers or not. Surprisingly, for the first time, they reply to him by nodding. Upon Ruttle's question on which flowers they like, they all reply: "Those with all the colours, over there" (CS 425). Since he is very willing to please the children, Ruttle does not oppose to the idea of going to the farthest flowers to pick up. However, not surprisingly, the children in the story, similar to other Sakian children, are wild and cleverer than the adult human beings, and they do this on purpose to make Ruttle go away. On his return, Ruttle finds "the blank wall blanker and more deserted than ever, while the foreground was void of all trace of Olivia" (CS 425). The children take Olivia's go-cart to the piggeries as they want to teach Ruttle a lesson by comparing the life of a human being to that of an animal. Despite Ruttle's efforts, the children reach the piggeries earlier than him, and take Olivia to the roof of the nearest sty. Since Ruttle cannot dare to follow them up to the roof, the children tell him that they will throw the baby unless he does penance. Upon realising that the children are serious, Ruttle accepts to do penance by holding a candle and saying 'I'm a miserable Beast'" (CS 426). After this agreement, the children release Olivia, and that same evening Ruttle takes his position "as penitent under the lone oak tree" (CS 427). After his penance, the next morning he is "gladdened by a sheet of copy-book paper lying beside the blank wall, on which was written the message '*Un-Beast*'" (CS 427) (emphasis mine).

Since Octavian Ruttle, as a hypocritical man, does not want to be seen as a wicked person not only in the eyes of the public but also in the eyes of those children, he tries to hide his mistreatment of an innocent cat. However, as "he is not essentially evil" (Pringle 19) like some other Sakian characters such as Mrs de Ropp in his "Sredni Vastar", Ruttle is not punished with death. He is taught an unforgettable lesson by three innocent children, who act as a judge and teach him that the life of a cat is as important as that of a human being.

In conclusion, notwithstanding Saki's interest in animals, however, his sensitivities towards their exploitation has long been disregarded due to the essentialist overgeneralisations that he is a satirist using the animal characters to criticise the follies of human beings and thereby to convey moral lessons. However, unlike the symbolic use of animal characters in fables and some other literary works, in Saki's short stories there are animal characters who are active agents in their own rights, and these characters are not used symbolically to give messages to human beings. Besides, they are not used to entertain and astonish human beings as in children's books. In Saki's short stories, there are active and agent animal characters, and the writer uses these characters both to satirise the ruthless exploitation of animals by presenting a harsh criticism of the anthropocentric and therefore speciesist mind-set, and also to evince his preference of animals over human beings as they are away from the hypocrisies and the pretensions of the adult human beings. In the stories,

namely, “Mrs Packetide’s Tiger”, “Esmé”, “Tobermory”, and “The Penance”, analysed in this article, the writer’s criticism of the speciesist approach of human beings against animals occupies a major role. Consequently, with respect to the detailed analysis of these stories, it might be argued that Saki’s fascination with animals is the proof of his sensitivities to the problems of the animals under the dominion of human beings. Given this, as he is very much preoccupied with the problems of animals, Saki might be defined as an early environmentally conscious writer.

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Edward Said and Modernist Misreadings of *A Passage to India*

Charles Campbell

Abstract: Edward Said, perhaps the most important post-colonial critic, has passed a negative judgment on E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. The faults he finds match those alleged by the reigning modernist consensus on the novel: mysticism, incomprehensibility, insignificant Indian characters and a reactionary style and politics. The word "failure" is appropriated from Virginia Woolf and repeated often; the word "dwarf" is misappropriated from the novel itself and defines a whole school of Forster's critics. This article demonstrates that these strictures of Said and modernist readers are based on misreadings of the novel's protagonist, its concern with mystical experience, its form, style and politics. With the help of a few dissenting critics, evidence from the text of the novel and the narrative theory of *Aspects of the Novel*, the article then delineates an approach to the novel which shows the full artistry of *A Passage to India*.

Keywords: E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, *Aspects of the Novel*, Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, modernism, misreading, metaphysical, inter-cultural, anti-imperialist

Introduction

As Edward Said has shown so usefully in his books, the West has followed a tradition of perceiving, representing and interpreting the Arab world, Islam and the colonized world in general that distorts each of them according to a set of preconceptions, projections and desires (see, respectively, *Orientalism*, *Covering Islam* and *Culture and Imperialism*). As a scholar, much of my mature work, including readings of Othello, Rasselas and contemporary British writing, is deeply indebted to Said's insights about intercultural communication and misrepresentation. However, owing so much to him, I must respectfully show how he himself follows a tradition of critical analysis of Forster's *A Passage to India* which distorts the novel in the service of certain preconceptions, refusals and misreadings. My essay will review Said's odd lapses of interpretation of that novel and analyze them with reference to the text itself and to other critical responses. I will then suggest how these misreadings can be corrected, partly from within the existing critical heritage and partly by future readings. *A Passage to India* is a great social, inter-cultural, metaphysical and anti-imperialist novel. To do some further work towards showing that, I must first engage the account of its limitations by my most revered teacher and by a distinguished group of modernist critics.

Said's most complete engagement with Forster's Indian novel is in *Culture and Imperialism*. His dissatisfactions found there may be grouped under six headings: 1) the concern with metaphysics, 2) the focus on the unknowable, 3) the lack of sympathy for Muslims and Hindus, 4) Aziz's unappealing character, 5) political irrelevance and ignorance and 6) a weak, conventional ending. In general he finds the novel "at a loss" due to Forster's liberal and artistic commitments which prevent a full engagement with his subject. In this he joins a good number of other critics who find the novel a "failure", "incomplete", infectious and "dwarfing" to all human concerns by presenting India "as unapprehensible and too large" (Said 201) and by being "so remorselessly metaphysical" (204). He joins a modernist critical tradition which finds *A Passage to India* to be about the failure of metaphysics and other visions and, through a special system of transvaluation,

ultimately finds the novel a success at failure, even “an exploration of its own failure” (Medalie 128).

Said’s misreading of *A Passage to India* follows mainly from seeing Fielding as the protagonist while misreading his character and failing to see Aziz as the actual protagonist while dismissing his character as politically “silly” (204), one of the simple-minded, posturing, comic Indians in the novel (202-203). In sum: “Forster finds India difficult because it is so strange and unidentifiable, or because people like Aziz will let themselves be seduced by jejune nationalist sentiment, or because if one tries to come to terms with it, as Mrs Moore does, one cannot recover from the encounter” (203). These are followed by subsidiary errors, including that Fielding engages with Indians sympathetically but “he is finally rejected by India itself, to whose disorienting heart [which Said compares to “Conrad’s Africa”] only Mrs. Moore penetrates, but she is ultimately killed by her vision” (202-203). In these misreadings he joins a school of readers of *A Passage to India* which I will call the modernist anti-mystical critics.

Remorselessly Metaphysical

Frank Kermode notes that some readers “regret as Roger Fry regretted, Mr. Forster’s mystical tendencies”, but considers such readers “unlucky [...] in their art” (Kermode 1966, 90). Audrey Lavin, in her recent book on Forster, helps us see how critics have divided over the mystical element, the “something more”, in *A Passage to India*. Lionel Trilling sees Forster “as a humanist writer of Hawthornian romances” (1), while McConkey sees him as “an explorer of the transcendental world” (1). Lavin quotes Christopher Gillie, that Forster is “the sort of novelist [...] to expose realities ignored by his society, in order to improve civilization” and also cites Claude T. Summers on “Forster’s social and metaphysical vision” (2). On the other side of critical opinion she quotes John Carruthers who writes unsympathetically about “Forster’s attempt to hold onto the world of everyday with one hand and grope about for some kind of fairyland with the other” (2). Recently, Michelle Fillion characterized the transcendental element in Forster as “vexing” to critics (140).

From the start many readers have chosen to lose out on Forster’s art by refusing to include Forster’s “mystical tendencies” in their readings. Denis Godfrey notes in *E. M. Forster’s Other Kingdom* that some critics find Forster’s concern with “the unseen” to be “inconvenient” and suggests that such readers (he cites Virginia Woolf) who prefer Forster’s realism may miss out on “the full transfiguring range of the author’s spiritual implications”, as he creates “this world universalized, irradiated by the spirit, raised up” (7). Frederick McDowell divides critics of *A Passage to India* based on how they see the Caves: between those who see them representing the negative pole of a total reality, like him, McConkey, Stone and Parry and the pessimistic interpreters who see “overwhelming negativity”, like Crews, Wilde and Brower (157).

Among readers open to the spiritual dimension, Godfrey and McDowell find Mrs Moore to be a central character who does not suffer a tragedy but lives on in India, coming “from out of the unseen to exercise a continuing influence” (Godfrey 132)—in the courtroom at Chandrapore, in the Krishna ceremony at Mau and, more extensively, in the lives of the other characters. McDowell sees Mrs Moore as the novel’s “tutelary genius”: “through her death she infuses renewed life” and thereby symbolically “projects the most compelling antithesis” in the book (130). McDowell believes that in Hinduism Forster found the encompassing reality to unify his world through love as a binding spiritual and moral value (157). For Crews, however, Hinduism in *A Passage to India* merely “describe[s] our isolation from meaning” and, “like Islam and Christianity, seems

powerless before the nihilistic message of the Marabar Caves” (176-77). Hindu oneness “abolishes the intellectual sanity that makes life enduring to the Western mind”, and so “God cannot be realized in any satisfactory way” (183). Thus Crews helps establish the “failure” label which forms a motif in modernist readings, and thus Gertrude M. White finds “the gulf between symbol and reality [is] the chief feature, and, in a sense, the chief failure of *A Passage to India*” (65). The term is first applied to the novel by Virginia Woolf, who claims she got it from Forster (1986, 43). She reiterates the term five times in an essay on “The Novels of E. M. Forster” (1997, 28-9).

Malcolm Bradbury also finds two types of readers of *A Passage to India* in his essay “Two Passages to India: Forster as Victorian and Modern”. On the one hand are those who, like Wilfred Stone in *The Cave and the Mountain*, see it as an “optimistic novel” of “unity and harmony” which urges readers to recognize “the mystical unity of humankind” already present (131). For Stone, Godbole is the central character. On the other hand are critics, like James McConkey and Alan Wilde, who take “precisely the opposite view” and see it “as a novel of the final dissociation between the chaotic life of man and an intractable eternal reality” (131). Bradbury traces these oppositions back to the heritage of Trilling’s “relatively realistic reading of the book” and the early (1950) symbolist reading by E.K. Browne (131). Referring to *Aspects of the Novel*, Bradbury realizes that for Forster “the ultimate field of action for the arts is that of the ‘unseen’” and that he aimed in his fiction to go “beyond story, in thematic recurrences, leitmotifs, pattern and rhythm, prophetic song” (129). He recognizes that “it is typically in [...] contrasts of time and transcendence that Forster deals” (132) and tries to bridge the gap between the two schools, since Forster “is increasingly concerned with the problems of the infinite view within the cultural movements of the modernising world” (130).

Bradbury wants to heal the split, but since his main purpose is to make the case for Forster as a modern, he comes down, finally, on the side of the anti-mystics, the pessimists, making *A Passage to India* another novel of alienation. That Forster asks the question “whether art can redeem life” is significant because the question was important to modernism. However, Forster’s visions, always dominated by “an anarchy that they must always comprehend”, are “always conditioned”, “never fully redemptive, since the world of time persistently enlarges our feelings of intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual relativism” (Bradbury 130). In the end, the modernist school of reading sides with the realists: “As for the symbolist plot, it transcends but it does not redeem; it is there but ‘neglects to come’” (141). Godbole’s song and the motif of the Friend thus lead to a dead end because Mrs Moore encountered “moral nihilism”, and “her disaster dominates the novel” (138). Mrs Moore is, however, *pace* Bradbury and Said, not killed nor destroyed by India but saved by it. She reconciles with India’s landscape as she departs: “And presently the boat sailed and thousands of coconut palms appeared all round the anchorage and climbed the hills to wave her farewell. ‘So you thought an echo was India; you took the Marabar Caves as final?’ they laughed” (*A Passage to India* 198). Her death and burial at sea means passing into the Indian Ocean, a significant fate given the important water imagery: “When she saw the water flowing through the mosque-tank, or the Ganges, [...] it seemed a beautiful goal and an easy one. To be one with the universe! So dignified and simple” (196).

Despite Mrs Moore’s recovery and re-integration, modernist readers make increasingly alienated readings. David Medalie will serve as an example of the continuation of Bradbury’s line of thought in his *E. M. Forster’s Modernism*. Medalie argues that *A Passage to India* is the only novel by Forster to approach the ideals and canons of *Aspects of the Novel*, but that all its rhythms lead the reader back to the Marabar, that the novel fails in its attempt to include everything and the discourse of the novel fails to go beyond

Western rationalism. *A Passage to India* fails to connect the East and the West, just as the attempt at friendship between Aziz and Fielding fails. Medalie sees only satire in the Krishna ceremony in "Temple". However, the novel is "distinctly modernist", since it undermines its own "attempt to impose shape and form" (Medalie 98).

Another tendency of the anti-mystical school of Forster criticism is to misappropriate the novel's description of Fielding and Adela as "dwarfs shaking hands" (*A Passage to India* 249). Given Forster's natural emphasis on the personal, "a willingness to confront the unseen" operates "without the full support of the universe" and so we see "a world of dwarfs and of dwarfed relationships" (Bradbury 138). Thus Barbara Rosencrance argues "the inclusion of the cosmic intensifies the insignificance of man, and in the increasing remoteness of the narrator's point of view, the human scale is reduced further" (193-94); so the image of people in Chandrapore as little distinguished from the mud and rubbish is proleptic. For Rosencrance, "India is a metaphor for the human condition" as "a denial of unity"; so again there is failure, since Aziz says, "nothing embraces the whole of India", and "India, finally, is beyond rational apprehension" (199-200). Again all the motifs focus on the Marabar with its multiplying emptinesses, including the crowning Kawa Dol which is "empty as an Easter egg" in keeping with Mrs Moore's loss of faith (202).

Rosencrance makes a mistake typical of the anti-mystics; she sees Fielding and Adela as the central characters, and so, when the narrator asks after their brief consideration of telepathy in regard to what happened to Adela in the courtroom, "Were there worlds beyond worlds? [...] They had not the apparatus for judging" (223), we are to read this as a general judgment on "the limitations of human awareness" (223) rather than an account of the personal limitations of Fielding and Adela. The detachment she finds in the narrative voice and its retreat from the characters' suffering lead Rosencrance to join the other "dwarf" critics: "Forster's final judgment [is] that they are 'dwarf's shaking hands'" (252). Detached "from the agonies or triumphs of human personality", Forster leaves his characters to their fate (Rosencrance 234). Again, this rather woefully wrong reading results from seeing "Fielding [as] the most enlightened version of Forster's characteristic hero" (Rosencrance 241). Rosencrance carries the modernist misreading of *A Passage to India* to the extreme point, inferring that "Forster renders a universe to which man's needs are irrelevant and which itself expresses the chaos and irrationality of contemporary life" (243).

This line of critical perspective on *A Passage to India* is unfortunate because readers are turned off the novel's beauty and its intercultural vision, and, particularly so under Said's direction, this happens to post-colonial, anti-imperialist readers. This can be seen in the readings of Mohammed Shaheen, Sara Suleri, Benita Parry, Homi K. Babha and Jonah Raskin. Modernist readers in general find the mystical vision incomplete or a failure or in other ways unsatisfying because it does not fit with their politics or their commitment to negativity. They seek negativity in the novel because that satisfies the requirements for membership in the modernist club; they want Forster as a member, even to making *A Passage to India* "an unflinching exploration of the twentieth-century spiritual wasteland" (Summers 236) in which a "negative withdrawal" is the "dominant" meaning of the book (Bradbury 138).

Like Conrad's Africa

Thus *A Passage to India* aligns with *Heart of Darkness*, and Forster becomes another poet of despair, another Eliot in "The Waste Land". However, while describing the wasteland makes Forster modern, it opens his work to another misreading as a "humanely liberal parable for imperialism" (Suleri 170). So, as in Chinua Achebe's account of "An Image of Africa: Racism in *Heart of Darkness*", Forster's interest in India is reduced to

“the fact that it is symbolic of something the Western mind must learn about itself” (Suleri 170). Suleri echoes Said who reveals where his reading goes wrong when he writes: “Almost by virtue of its liberal, human espousal of Fielding’s views and attitudes, *A Passage to India* is at a loss” (201).

The worst part of Said’s membership in this line of readership is that the modernist anti-mystical school has a tendency to ethnocentrism. Thus Trilling finds that “none of [the Indians] has dignity” (146); Crews rejects anything that might be a challenge to the usually sane Western mind; and Fillion finds the Krishna Festival, as a climax to her interests in aural imagery, an “uncanny Babel of sound” “that bespeaks the essential otherness of India” (141). Post-colonial critics aim to root out such Orientalism, but, starting with Edward Said, they have some of the same preconceptions as the other discoverers of failure and incompleteness. Forster expresses “vastness, incomprehensible creeds” in the book but finally “*A Passage to India* is at a loss” because “like Conrad’s Africa, Forster’s India is a locale frequently described as unapprehensible” (Said 200-201).

Indian critics have made some important counter-indications about the alleged incomprehensibility of India in *A Passage to India*. G. K. Das in *E. M. Forster’s India* makes a case for the psychological honesty of Forster’s account of the Krishna ceremony: “His innocence, his irreverence, his curiosity, his doubts, his joy and his confusion—all his different feelings about this particular Hindu ceremony are honestly conveyed” (Das 1977, 97). In a later essay he states that “one of the main achievements of [Forster’s] Indian novel is the creation of that living sense of the unseen by the use of various Hindu myths” (Das 1982, 245). Vasant A. Shahane, in a brilliant reading in “Forster’s Inner Passage to India”, finds among other images of the interplay of opposites, the gopis in Godbole’s song who call for Krishna to be those representing the union of sexual and divine love in Bhakti yoga and traces the rhythm of the song through the book from that starting point. He also argues that Godbole is “the subtlest embodiment of the Forsterian Voice” (Shahane 1979, 115). More recently, Chaman L. Sahni in “The Marabar Caves in the Light of Indian Thought” shows how the snake image in the Caves episode alludes to “Hindu and other ancient scriptures”, how the caves represent the “impersonal cosmic principle” common to the Ajivika sect, Jainism and Buddhism, and how they evoke “the undifferentiated oneness that lies at the root of the concept of Brahman in Advaita-Vedanta” (68). Mohammed Shaheen comments on “the exquisite account of the mosque”, when Mrs Moore and Aziz meet, which emerges in Forster’s prose as “a distinct reality acquiring a concrete shape overlooking the surrounding chaos” (72). There seems to be something there that could be comprehensible to a western mind, other than a mere reflection of self.

Of all those who have unaccountably chosen Fielding as the protagonist, Said seems most led astray. The “truly intelligent and sensitive” Fielding represents Forster’s humane liberalism; “Forster identifies the course of the narrative with a Britisher, Fielding” (203-204). Fielding gives up on India and finds great relief when he enters the Mediterranean on his way back to Britain, for “the Mediterranean is the human norm” as opposed to the “monstrous and extraordinary” world to the east (*A Passage to India* 266). These are Fielding’s thoughts, not Forster’s. In the light of Fielding’s consciousness, Aziz is a poser, only relatable as an Italian, whose political ideas are “posturing” (Said 202-204). Besides, according to Said, Fielding is unable to be close friends with such an Indian, “since his antagonism to colonialism is so unacceptably silly” (204). Towards Islam, “the final lack of sympathy is obvious”, and “the Hindus (including Godbole) are peripheral, as if they were not amenable to novelistic treatment” (202). Said does not incorporate Forster’s theory in *Aspects of the Novel* in his reading; nor does he take time to analyze the final section of the novel. He joins the anti-mystical critics in finding the novel a failure, and notes that

Fielding's "[Forsterian] capacities for understanding and sympathy fail before India's massive incomprehensibility" (202). Said follows the same clues to the same conclusion as the modernist critics. In addition, he seeks and does not find awareness and opposition to imperialism in the novel, averring that "Forster sees Indians with imperial eyes" (204).

The strange idea of Fielding as protagonist, even as a portrait of the author (see Trilling 10 and Wilde 127) is put to rest early on by Benita Parry in "Passage to More than India" when she pronounces that Aziz's inconsistency, extravagance and sensuality, and his need for friendship, make him the most complete character. He is more attractive for his "lack of proportion", especially given Fielding's typically "prim reprimand" about keeping emotions "in proportion to their object" (171). Also, those who identify the course of the narrative with Fielding will be disoriented in the fifteen chapters of the book from which he is absent.

That Fielding is not Forster's central consciousness can be shown by internal evidence from the novel, as well as with the arguments of certain other readers. Said's claims of "Fielding's wonderful Bloomsbury qualities" that make him "sensitive", with capacities for sympathy and understanding (202) and that enable him to "connect" even with such a politically "silly" "Muslim like Aziz [who] can be befriended only up to a point" (204) are belied by Fielding's own words: "'I shall not really be intimate with this fellow,' Fielding thought, and then, 'nor with anyone'" (*A Passage to India* 108). Said does not seem to notice that Fielding is only superficially friendly and none too sensitive, making him a target for Forster's satire of the English: "At the moment [the Marabar Hills] vanished they were everywhere, the cool benediction of the night descended, the stars sparkled, and the whole universe was a hill. Lovely exquisite moment—but passing the Englishman with averted face and on swift wings. He experienced nothing himself" (179). In this, Fielding joins the average "Englishman [who] averts the infection of beauty" when the Muslim characters are answering the "call" of poetry (97). Commenting on the "exquisite moment" passage, Judith Herz states that Fielding "could not possibly be the privileged center of consciousness of the novel; indeed he is not even particularly well equipped to read it" (129). She also points out the last conversation of Fielding with Adela when they discuss the trial "when the narrator uses the remarkable image of dwarfs shaking hands to establish the limitations and the paucity of *their* emotions as well as *their* distance from even these diminished feelings" (129) (emphasis mine).

Said's description of Aziz as a silly poser may have been influenced by Lionel Trilling's perception of Aziz's childish lack of dignity which he patronizingly attributes to years of subservience to the British (146). Said reads Aziz weak. Benita Parry, on the other hand, sees the novel expressing a growing Indian self-assertion, a "new spirit" which puzzles the Anglo-Indians, including Fielding. Aziz is part of this new spirit as shown by his strong thoughts after the trial: "While we lament [past glory] the English occupy Delhi and exclude us from East Africa. [...] The song of the future must transcend creed.[...] Not until [India] is a nation will her sons be treated with respect. [...] The English [...] persecuted him everywhere; they had even thrown nets over his dreams (*A Passage to India* 252-53). Said contends that "the Hindus (including Godbole) are peripheral" (202). For Lionel Trilling, however, "the story is suffused with Hinduism" (153); Benita Parry sees Hinduism "at the core of the novel just as it lies at the heart of India" and that we see, in the "Temple" section, religion as "a living force, embracing [...] all spirit and all matter and intertwining the secular and the divine" which "embraces a hundred Indias" (164-65). Glen Cavaliero elaborates on this point, saying that "Hinduism [...] provides both the challenge and the resolution of the novel" (152). According to Cavaliero, Godbole is "always detached [but] none the less at the heart of the action"; and "the reality which he [...]"

enunciates is the dimension of mystery which in the end engulfs the novel” (153). Thus Cavaliero drifts away from the dogma of Fielding as protagonist, finding him “an uncharacteristic Forster hero” and “a shadowy figure” (154). He notes that Aziz is “certainly the most memorable of the male characters” (154), not only because he shows the effect of Western consciousness on India (155) but also because “he has a spontaneity that is itself a criticism of the inhibitions of the English” (154). Evidently, Forster’s satire of the British does not stop with Heaslop, Callander and McBryde (whose name mocks his adultery with Miss Derek) but extends to Fielding and Adela.

The Habitual Novelistic Domestic Resolution

Another tendency in modernist anti-mystical readings is to find Forster’s Indian novel reactionary in form as well as politics. Lionel Trilling is the first critic to pronounce *A Passage to India* “the most conventional of Forster’s novels” (144). Barbara Hardy considers its form “dogmatic”. Perhaps influenced by these American critics, Said claims that “the novel returns to a traditional sense of social propriety in its last section, where the author deliberately and affirmatively imports into India the habitual novelistic domestic resolution (marriage and property)” (200). The marriage of Fielding and Stella, however, occurs offstage in England, is not part of the narrative proper, and is troubled. Just where the property comes in is interesting: it is only a suspicion in Aziz’s mind based on the mistaken idea that Fielding married Adela. Furthermore, Aziz’s concern about this property is precisely anti-imperial: “He was absolutely indifferent to money [...] yet these rupees haunted his mind, because he had been tricked about them, and allowed them to escape overseas, like so much of the wealth of India” (264). Certainly this imaginary marriage and property that have no existence outside of Aziz’s mind do not represent a resolution, since as Said points out in the same passage “[Fielding] and Aziz [...] remain apart” (200). Furthermore, Fielding has no more sense of intimacy and understanding with his wife than with Aziz and India. His wife and her brother have, like Mrs Moore, been to some extent absorbed into India, and he asks Aziz as an Indian to help him: “They won’t talk to me about this. They know I think a certain side of their life is a mistake, and are shy. That’s why I wish you would talk to them, for at all events you’re oriental” (*A Passage to India* 304). Aziz declines. There is no neat, happy resolution, then, by marriage and property.

Several other critics have joined Said in this odd view of the novel’s reactionary form. Among them is Leland Monk who recognizes the novel’s concern with chance, but, since “chance is that which cannot be represented in narrative” (Monk 1993, 108), *A Passage to India* fails again. Monk is dismissive of Forster’s achievement in the novel, and sees the three sections as done in three styles: the first traditional is narrative “which proceeds quite simply by bringing characters together” (2004, 100); the second has a darkly modern style, a more interesting form, but, it’s about nothingness which cannot be represented; in the third section, inspired by his understanding of the Hindu religion, Forster tries to make something out of nothing, and “one cannot actually represent ‘nothing’” (2004, 103). Since the narrator is identified with Fielding, who rejects religion, Monk complains, “the novel wants to have it and to see it both ways” (106). Monk sees Forster making a failed attempt to go beyond modernism only to reveal his “nostalgic longing for outmoded forms” in which the narrator is omniscient and all-controlling. Forster reaches beyond modernism to paradoxical effect, “only to re-formulate under the guise of Hindu mysticism a regression to providentialism wherein a transcendental Being presides over narrative events and Nothing is left to chance” (109). Again, *A Passage to India*, with Fielding at the helm, fails the tests of the anti-mystical critics; as a modernist work, it *must* fail in its inexorable mysticism.

In a chapter entitled “Telepathy: *A Passage to India*” in his *E. M. Forster* (1999), Nicholas Royle proposes to discuss telepathy, but his aim is to affirm Forster’s dogmatism. Royle sees *A Passage to India* as a book that is “queerer than queer, queerer, for example, in ways that have to do with irony and telepathy” (76). He discusses telepathy as a concept inextricably connected to the narrative point of view; and this seeming opening into the paranormal does not end well. The narrator can enter the heads of any of the characters: Miss Derek is described from the point of view of Adela; the English, from Aziz’s point of view. Royle’s topic is this “telepathic narrator” (77); and he disapproves. Royle takes an interest in the word “extraordinary” as it threads through the novel, and, as for other anti-mystical critics, the echoes of that word begin in the Marabar and always lead back there. The truly “extraordinary” queerness of this novel, for Royle, is its narrative point of view being telepathic and therefore always (already) ironic. A narrator who shows he knows what will happen to the characters is like an indifferent god, a narrator worse than the one described by Monk, more vengeful. In the empty hollow sound of the Caves’ echo, from “nothing extraordinary” in the first chapter to the Marabar expedition and throughout the novel, Royle hears a snide, mocking narrator whose voice makes “everything [...] haunted, ironized, echoey”, “inflected with a disturbing analytical irony” (78). Further, he sees an uneasy, uncertainty resulting in “the peculiar kinds of communication, or passage, that exist between the reader and the book” (80). Royle likens this relationship to a “surrender to infection”, “to be infected, colonized by some other” (81). Again, the implication of “imperial eyes”. Royle sympathizes with Fielding and Adela when they dismiss telepathy, for that scene is there to point us towards the narrative method and this points us back to the “hollow” of the narrative’s “cavernous quality” which “implies knowledge of something ‘extraordinary’, but in an ironic, negative mode” (78).

Royle retreats into post-modernist dogma, into Derrida: *A Passage to India* is “Forster’s last great statement [...] of the strangeness and power of deferral as the condition of reading and meaning” (83). In this same literary theoretical manner, he sees the novel staging its own reading. Unfortunately the “figure of the reader” in the text he chooses is Adela, so we are kept within the confined limits of her consciousness (83). The novel ends with “not yet” as the last echo of the uncertainty of meaning which continues in “the strangely telepathic echo-effects reverberating out of the caves” (83-4). Stuck in Adela’s mind, and in the Caves, Royle’s reading does not extend into the Temple section of the novel.

This tradition of negative interpretation is carried on by Michelle Fillion in *Difficult Rhythm: Music and the Word in E. M. Forster* (2010), even to the infection metaphor: Godbole’s song “infects Mrs Moore and Miss Quested with a fatal ‘apathy’ that foretells the disaster of the Marabar Caves” (141). Eager to establish “the unequivocal modernism of *A Passage to India*” (141), she shows the significance of musical motifs in the novels but finds “the spectacular auditory world of *A Passage to India*” and its “uncanny music” (141-42) expressing “the voice of the Marabar Caves”: “The horror of its message lies in its imperviousness to human understanding, its denigration of Western ideals of form and grandeur, and its dogged proclamation that ‘nothing has value’” (142). Seeing *A Passage to India* as a rewrite of *Heart of Darkness* or “The Waste Land”, the modernist approach again proves ethnocentric. As for Said, “Fielding [is] the novel’s *honnête homme*” for Fillion; therefore the song of Krishna and the Gokul Ashtami Festival at the Palace of Mau are “experienced from the equally uncomprehending perspective of Islamic India (Aziz) and colonial Britain (Fielding, Mrs Moore, and Miss Quested)” (141). Limited to Fielding’s point of view, Fillion finds that “the uncanny music of *A Passage to India* is the voice of the Marabar caves, “the sound-image for modern life” (142), while the grand scene of the

Krishna ceremony is just the climax of the incomprehensible; and, as Fielding thinks, “there’s no stopping the echo [and] the echo is always evil”, which announces, for Fillion, “the present impossibility of connecting East and West, man and woman and man and man” (142). In the end, nothing connects, neither East and West nor any of the characters.

Correctives to Misreading

Carla Benedetti has argued that great modern and post-modern novels typically contain a poetics of their own unique form. In the case of Forster, we have his theory set out in a separate text, *Aspects of the Novel*. Published three years after *A Passage to India*, *Aspects* serves most admirably as a poetics of Forster’s great Indian novel. Audrey Lavin has used Forster’s theoretical book as a guide to reading the novels. Her remarks on *A Passage to India* provide a starting point for a more perceptive reading of that novel.

Lavin recognizes that Forster aims in fiction for “a type of beauty” found in music (7); and she sees that rhythm is, in his critical vocabulary, a step beyond pattern and a step in the right direction (8). Lavin notes the importance for Forster of having a novel’s “ending not a closure, but an expansion” which “opens possibilities for future actions and relationships” (46). She agrees with Wilfred Stone “that rhythm ‘is Forster’s chief word for describing the technical problems of expressing prophecy in the novel’” and considers that it creates “a recognition of something that has happened before and an implied sense of destiny” and that this is true of repeated movements of plot and also “true of repeated symbolic acts” and of “repeated symbolic objects” (47). Lavin also quotes Forster on his desire to “get an emphasis other than time [...] [through] plot or pattern” (57).

In this regard, Rukin Advani points out that the rhythm and pattern Forster discusses in *Aspects of the Novel* must be understood in light of “the notion that musical rhythm is something spiritual which transcends an aesthetic pattern” (126-27). He also states that one of the reasons why *A Passage to India* is greater than Forster’s earlier novels is because “it recognizes the complex interplay of social, political and metaphysical fortunes which affect the lives of men” and women (1). These are important insights.

The best guide to reading Forster’s rhythmic/social/political/metaphysical novel is, in the past and today, Frank Kermode who describes Forster as a realist concerned with political and social reality who is also a symbolist and therefore believes in an overriding order beyond the social which is represented by the order and inclusivity of art. He quotes Forster on “the power to read a book properly”: “Our comprehension of the fine arts [...] is, or should be, of the nature of a mystic union” (1966, 90). The novel is a low medium tied to time, but it is paradoxically a means of transcendence of time and of prophecy. For Kermode, Krishna as the spirit of love drifts in and out of the novel until, in the end, at the festival in Mau, “the unity [Krishna] makes is an image of art; for a moment at least all is one, apprehensible by love. [...] The novel itself assumes a similar unity, becomes a mystery, a revelation of wholeness” (94). In his recent book on Forster, Kermode continues to instruct our reading, first quoting Trilling on the “web of reverberations” in *A Passage to India* in which “no thought, no deed in this book of echoes, is ever lost” within “a cohesion and unity usually found only in music” (2009, 27). Then, supplementing Lavin, Kermode reads Forster’s last novel in light of *Aspects of a Novel*.

Thus in *Aspects of the Novel*, according to Kermode, Forster emphasizes the elusiveness of rhythm, which is his highest ideal in fiction: “You are not always to know whether [rhythmic notes] are intended or not” (2009, 46). He quotes Forster’s contentions that the rhythms stitch “the book together from the inside” while also creating the true life and breath of the novel. Kermode chooses as “an example of rhythmic composition” the way the “triadic appeal to Krishna” of Godbole’s song echoes in other three word

repetitions, interlaces with Heaslop appearing at the tea party rather than Krishna and Hamidullah's announcing after the trial, about Heaslop, also at Fielding's, "'He comes, he comes, he comes,' which 'has passed to him as it were telepathically'" (2009, 50-51). "The collocation of Mrs Moore and the wasp [...] could not have been brought together except in the mind of Godbole" (63); for Godbole grows in the course of the novel from a rather irritating and opaque "funny little man" to the central consciousness in the novel's self-transcendence. Not one to underplay the mystical in Forster, Kermodé analyzes the incident on the Marabar Road, with its ghost story which Mrs. Moore recognizes as such when told of it by Adela and Ronny. For Kermodé, "this glimpse of the superstitious or supernatural [...] in *A Passage to India*" (65) "encourages one to [...] speak of its greatness", for the scene of the accident "is faithful to the details of life and character [...] yet imaginatively irradiated. The Nawab's ghost is not dismissed as mere superstition—in fact its ghostliness is, so to speak, validated by Mrs Moore's reaction to the news" (65-6).

Kermodé thus takes us from a critical tradition of avoiding or finding failure in the mystical elements of *A Passage to India* to saying that it is an element of its greatness. Forster associates beauty with creating an atemporal experience as part of the "mystical something more" revealed by considering synchronicity and mystical experience as themes and certain images as "musical phrase[s]" in the novel's work of "stitching [the] book together from the inside" while establishing beauty and "ravishing the reader's memory" (Foster 148). Forster makes our reading transcend "the literary trap of a strictly chronological approach" (Lavin 57).

Forster describes this kind of beauty as elusive in the narrative, going from meaning everything to meaning nothing, there and not there, but "by its lovely waxing and waning to fill us with surprise and freshness and hope" (Foster 148). There is also an aftereffect, like that Forster identifies in Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, "when the orchestra stops, we hear something that has never actually been played" (149). To do this, fiction must keep to its temporal chronological and interpersonal roots, but also transcend them, "to give [human beings] a good run and to achieve something else at the same time" (149). This inhuman, alien, "something else" will be beautiful and atemporal, possessing "a larger existence than was possible at the time [of reading]" (150), an image in the mind which survives the "and then" experience of reading. The key to this form embracing the formless, is not to end: "Expansion. [...] Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out" (149).

Forster equates beauty with transcendence in time, as we know from his essay, "Art for Art's Sake", where we also see an analogy made in a sympathetic tone with religion. Society is insufficient for human needs, especially in its inability to create order. To satisfy "the desire to create order" there must be art or religion, since religion manages it "on the evidence of the mystics" while "works of art [...] are the only objects in the material universe to possess internal order" (1938, 94-5). Thus Forster writes fiction that is surprising, hopeful, beautiful, orderly and evocative of new experience, rather than "haunted by [...] nothingness" and "preoccupied with failure and frustration" (Summers 235-36). Another corrective comes from Mohammad Shaheen who draws our attention to some comments of Forster's on "the horror" as voiced in "The Waste Land"—remarks that bear on whether Forster should join the ranks of Conrad and Eliot. There are three types of person "in respect to the horror that they find in life": "In the first class are those who have not suffered often, or acutely; in the second those who have escaped through horror into a further vision; in the third those who continue to suffer" (Shaheen 188). Shaheen points out that Forster is the second type and that Forster's "mystics, such as Dostoevsky and Blake" also belong to the second class (188).

Several critics have looked closely at the workings of the novel in terms of mystical themes and atemporality. They focus on time and chance, as does Hyatt Waggoner in "Notes on the Uses of Coincidence in the Novels of E. M. Forster". He finds that Forster "arranges perspectives for our contemplation" which contain "the universal backdrop" of human experience but also a "penetrating" analysis "of what lies deeper than manners [...] through and beyond human nature to the natural and the eternal" (82), and this is one of the ways Forster "enlarges our vision"; in this case by using "the device of coincidence purposely [...] to arrange perspectives" (83). Forster sees "art as an act of assertion" through which he puts "into permanent form, that is, into the form of art, part of his experience which to a degree did not exist before the act of creation began" (Waggoner 81-2). Thus the novel is a kind of action painting taking the form of the author's thoughts and emotions at the time. This accords with Forster's idea that the art of rhythmic novels is spontaneous, not to "be achieved by the writers who plan their books beforehand" (1927, 148). Forster writes with the aim of changing "human nature [...] because individuals manage to look at themselves in a new way" (1927, 152). So, through the contemporary yet archetypal framing of perspectives, Foster presents us with "aspects of experience which we are apt to forget or ignore" (Waggoner 83). Forster urges us to cultivate "the part of the mind that seldom speaks" mentioned in the novel when Mrs Moore says "A Ghost" after Ronny and Adela tell her of the accident on the Marabar Road (*A Passage to India* 88).

Looking into coincidence in Forster's work, Waggoner finds that, by his use of sudden deaths, "Forster has naturalized death" (84). One could argue that his use of coincidence naturalizes the supernatural in general and synchronicity in particular. Forster "focuse[s] our awareness on the intrusion of the unknown", and this "suggest[s] the endless web of *connections*, a web which [...] not only actually exists but which it is to our advantage to recognize and understand" (85). Since "we are not ordinarily aware of the crossing of two such chains of causality and thus have no pat 'explanation'", Forster "surprise[s] us into awareness of [...] coincidence" (85). We must develop our critical discourse accordingly, for "Forster has woven his coincidences so completely into the structure of his novels" (88).

Glen Cavaliero takes up the topic of chance in *A Reading of E. M. Forster* and follows the rhythms of the snake motif and of Godbole's Krishna song through the novel to "Godbole's meditation and the cheerful mess of the festival [which] brings together the chaotic elements in an acceptance of disorder that amounts to a re-ordering" (165). There the narrative point of view melds with Godbole's mind which momentarily participates in Mrs. Moore's. "The various coincidences are left for the reader to pick up for himself", but they are the means of tying together the three levels of the narrative and having form coincide with meaning: "The narrative reinforces its own purpose, itself becoming an image of the attitude of life which it proposes" (166).

In the Epilogue to *A Passage to India: Nation and Narration* (1993), as a kind of afterthought, Judith Scherer Herz asks "What does it mean to read *A Passage to India* as a ghost story?" (127). In keeping with Cavaliero's "three-dimensional [...] narrative", adding another dimension, Herz sees a supernatural subtext poking in and out of the reader's perception and of the characters' awareness. "The ghost story is entirely a trace text; it occurs in spaces of the primary text, in dreams, memories, old photographs, and flashes of intuition that do not quite resolve, that the characters can never quite recall" (129). Briefly considering the ghostly, Herz invokes Freud's concept of the uncanny and notes that entering the Caves is the most important incursion of the novel and that "something repressed occurs" there. Yet, what seems uncanny is really something very familiar. So Herz quotes Adela's thoughts about her husband and Aziz under the general rubric of

“love” as she was walking into the cave and sees the same marks on the rocks as in her moment of “animal contact” on the Marabar Road leading to a clearly sexual encounter in her very own Marabar Cave (130-31). Thus the sexual and the uncanny are united.

Herz finds that “the shadow text is part of the narrative universe of the novel”, but, while giving context to their lives, “it dwarfs the characters” (129). Herz revokes the modernist sense of dwarfing. Herz sees dwarfing because the characters do not get the message. We see the repetition of the marks and the connection of Marabar Road to the Caves, but Adela “seems to have forgotten” (130). “Even for Mrs Moore the connection is largely subconscious” (131). Herz recognizes that “the incident has both a supernatural and a psychological resonance” (131); but she, too, chooses the wrong character to focus on in this light. In a psycho-biographical turn, she suggests “Adela’s animal may be the author’s too”. Thus the “ghostly” textual level becomes where “the writer encounters his own past, his own dead, and the writing itself functions as exorcism” (132). Writing as exorcism takes us a long way from *Aspects of the Novel* as a guide to *A Passage to India*. Nevertheless, we are indebted to Herz for exposing Fielding as an inadequate candidate for central consciousness since he “functions entirely within the boundary of the conscious text” (129). In closing her book, she suggests, “very possibly we should not ‘resist the supernatural’ in a text that derives so much of its imaginative power from the shadow world of memory and desire” (134). Herz’s reading accords with Waggoner’s, Cavaliero’s and Kermodé’s; and she provides us with critical terms and tools to develop her point that in *A Passage to India* “the uncanny occurs in the coincidence of the personal and psychological with the impersonal and metaphysical” (132).

Leland Monk also sees a subtext of the supernatural in *A Passage to India* which he describes as a “double valence of the supernatural and the aleatory” (i.e. chance) (2004, 105). He describes, usefully, how this effect appears “in the form of an event that is the result of supernatural influence *and* the result of chance, both at the same time” (105). However, Monk sees this element of the novel as merely representing “the Hindu awareness of both Being and non-Being” (105). Consequently, Monk does not think highly of the narrative technique that expresses this “double valence”, since for him, as we have seen, Hindu mysticism in the novel is merely a mask over its “regression to providentialism” in the form of a God-like narrator (109).

Benita Parry shares with Monk an interest in coincidence and how it intersects with form; however Parry, contrary to Monk’s idea of outmoded forms, argues that “Forster’s innovations were induced by an attempt to render India legible within western fictional modes” (2004, 149). She worries that Forster’s idea of art objects having “internal form” might make Forster “detached from history”. She affirms, in a nice phrase, that *A Passage to India* has “polysemous symbolic resonances” but poses the question whether it is still “another exercise in Orientalism?” (150), “emanating from a colonized consciousness”, Said’s “imperial eyes” (151). How to save this novel as a “dissident” text is Parry’s problem, and it is the ghostly subtext that solves it. Parry, with a sensibility enriched by Cavaliero’s three-dimensional narrative and Herz’s conscious and unconscious texts, finds that “allusions to an atemporal, ahistorical universe are underwritten by non-linear narrative moments which interrupt the sequential recitation of quotidian events”; that “images recur in unrelated situations: a wasp, flies, a stone, a pattern traced in the dust of Chandrapore” which recur as Adela enters the fateful cave; and there is also the sudden “aleatory appearances” of important minor characters (150). For Parry, it is this ghostly India that resists the British Empire because it shows “India’s natural terrain and cognitive traditions as inimical to the British presence” (154). For Parry, India’s being incomprehensible is a good thing, a mark of Forster’s political good intentions. Parry does add about “the

narrative encounters meanings, sensations, and events that escape exegesis in its available language” (“allusions to the aphonic”) that readers “perhaps [...] are invited to understand [them] as emanating from ‘the part of the mind that seldom speaks’” which has Mrs. Moore blurting out “A ghost!” in regard to the accident on the Marabar Road (156). This perspective helps readers see past mistaken modernist and Orientalist interpretations.

However, the ghost of Said’s reading rises again. Parry still affirms “the novel’s failure” (2004, 149). Since Fielding is central and he rejects religious experience; and Forster can be quoted against himself on the transcendence that can be expressed is no longer transcendent, Forster the mystic fails again. He “does not validate” the human spirit “in ‘ravish[ing] the unknown’” (157). However, for future readers of *A Passage to India*, he does represent India as a “a geographical space and social realm abundantly occupied by diverse intellectual modes, cultural forms, and sensibilities” (159) and also “as the site of a cosmology incommensurable with positivism, humanism or theism” which “challenges the west with its irreducible and insubordinate difference” (160). This perspective lightens the negative weight of Said’s and other influential misreadings of the novel.

As we have seen, odd, truncated readings result from ignoring the mystical aspect of *A Passage to India*. Readers who abjure the “something more” find failure, incompleteness, horror and even a retreating, reactionary narrative form, a rigged plot overseen by a would-be textual deity. Reading *Aspects of the Novel* helps. The reader should insist on having the pleasure of theory with our fiction (as Carla Benedetti says we have come to appreciate) and thereby have the rhythmic enjoyment that Forster describes there. The reader must also see the humour in the book, especially how satire is directed at Fielding, Adela and even Mrs. Moore. In *Aspects of the Novel*, Forster disavows the central consciousness; readers must bounce around along with Forster’s narrator. If you choose to focus on characters of limited viewpoint, you will have a narrow perspective on the whole work. Dr. Aziz is the protagonist, but the narrator is free to shift from one character to another, creating the telepathic effect Royle describes and entering into Mrs Moore’s, Godbole’s and other consciousnesses.

In the line of inquiry established by Waggoner, Cavaliero, Monk, Herz and Parry, we must investigate chance, coincidence and meaningful coincidence, or synchronicity, in *A Passage to India* and, at that focal point, see how the “beautiful comings and goings” take place between what Herz calls the subconscious or shadow text, seen as transcending time, and the contingent world of the narrative’s commitment to chronological time. The best readings of *A Passage to India* follow a rhythm of language, a thread or clue in “the intertwining web of motifs” (Fillion 140). We must see the shadow text in the light of synchronicity. As Vasant Shahane shows, Forster in his work “seeks to blend human reality with transcendent reality” (1975, 101). We should look at narrative rhythms connected to meaningful chance and other mystical experiences in the way Shahane sees Godbole’s song, as a “mystical assertion” that is “woven into the symbolic texture of the novel” (104). What happens if we read *A Passage to India* as a mystical novel which in its rhythmic subtext expresses a new, or hitherto unconscious and unexpressed, perspective on time?

Edward Said and most modernist critics have misread *A Passage to India* because they focus on the Caves section and because they read the Temple section through the perspective of an uncomprehending Western observer and then announce incomprehension as a theme. They choose Fielding as the central consciousness, just such an unobservant, cold Britisher who will join Ronny as one of the self-righteous rulers of India in the end. This perspective distorts Forster’s vision. Aziz’s trajectory, by contrast, is towards inclusiveness, political liberalism, the ideal of friendship and bhakti, internationalism, by way of his friendship with Godbole and his continuing intimacy with one spirit of the West,

Mrs Moore. Aziz opens up to mystical influence through his friendship with Mrs Moore which is revived in the end by her uncanny son Ralph.

We should not resist the lure of the supernatural which draws us to further exploration of this great novel. We can trace the rhythms of synchronicity as they create momentary and lasting beauty, integrating contingent and transcendental reality, opening up new forms in fiction in order to gain new insights into human nature. We can follow the narrative path of desire to make memory real in the present, to see chronological time disappear and be subsumed by meaningful coincidence, expressed in the lovely waxing and waning of the novel's rhythms in a major key.

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The Eternal Return, Gnosticism and *Battlestar Galactica*¹

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Abstract: The appeal of the reimagined *Battlestar Galactica* series (2003-2009) derives from the struggle between human and Cylon, and the thin line that distinguishes human from machine. One of the major story arcs presented in the series is the clash between human polytheism and Cylon monotheism which is reminiscent of ancient Gnostic texts dealing with an alternative creation myth and knowledge of self. Furthering this storyline is the consistent and relentless mantra that “All this has happened before, and all of it will happen again”. This cyclic nature of time refers to the concept of the eternal return which may be taken both in the Nietzschean and Eliadean sense where they collide with search of self through gnosis. Thereby, using a philosophical and theological approach, this article seeks to analyse *Battlestar Galactica* by focussing on the development of key human/Cylon character pairings such as Gaius Baltar and Number Six, along with Kara “Starbuck” Thrace and Leoben Conoy (Number Two).

Keywords: *Battlestar Galactica*, Gnosticism, eternal return, science fiction, serial narratives, Cylon

All this has happened before, and all of it will happen again.
(*Battlestar Galactica*, “Flesh and Bone” 1.8)²

Introduction

The American television series *Battlestar Galactica*,³ created by Glen A. Larson, was first introduced to viewers in 1978 followed by a short-run sequel in 1980 leaving a string of novels, comic books, and video games in its wake. After a long hiatus, the series was re-created and developed by Ronald D. Moore and David Eick with a two-part miniseries in 2003 that aired on SyFy. Then, in 2004, following the events of the miniseries, *BSG* was launched once again, airing on Sky1 and SyFy till 2009. Reaching a much larger audience, the revamped and reimagined version of the series covered a wide spectrum of topics on both individual and collective levels from gender to politics, from identity to religion. The series also fostered a prequel spin-off *Caprica* that aired for one season in 2010, as well as another spin-off *Blood and Chrome* that was first released as a web series in 2012, later to be aired as a televised movie on SyFy in 2013. Reaching audiences through a vast array of mediums for more than thirty years, the *BSG* universe continues its popularity.

The appeal of the original series, as James E. Ford notes, was because it “self-consciously grounds itself in the theology of a single religious faith”; that faith being Mormonism (83); and based on ratings reports, “the most popular of the episodes have been

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Independent Scholars Conference “It has Happened Before, It will Happen Again: The Third Golden Age of Television Fiction”, İstanbul, October 2008.

² Hereafter in-text and parenthetical references to *Battlestar Galactica* episodes will only include episode title followed by season and episode number.

³ Hereafter referred to as *BSG*.

those most solidly grounded in theological concerns” (Ford 87). Drawing on the similarities between Mormonism and the original *BSG* series, Ford points out to several overlapping concepts such as the plurality of gods, the twelve apostles/Quorum of Twelve, and the law of eternal progression.⁴ As much as the original series was strongly informed by Mormon theology, the reimagined series shifts from a single theology and delves into other theological and philosophical territories: such as, the clash between polytheism and monotheism, the Neo-Platonist and Gnostic concept of the demiurge, allusions to Jungian and Eliadean concepts of eternal wholeness through the use of mandalas. The reimagined *BSG*, thus, creates a mythology that is meant to be eternally relevant, and is in this respect akin to religious uses of Holy Scriptures or a religious parable. The significance of this shift leaning towards multiplicity, I believe, is to be more inclusive rather than singling out a specific strand of thought.⁵

As the story of the reimagined *BSG* unfolds, we sense that we are witnessing not the beginning nor the end but the ever present now, which upon reflection lends the feeling that we have entered the story in media res as it is being told over and over again. Although the viewer is currently engaged with the dull duties of the officer at the Armistice Station, a summary of the events that led to this moment are subscripted:

*The Cylons were created by man.
They were created to make life easier on the Twelve Colonies.
And then the day came when the Cylons decided to kill their masters.
After a long and bloody struggle, an armistice was declared. The Cylons left for
another world to call their own.
A remote space station was built...
...where Cylon and Human could meet and maintain diplomatic relations.
Every year, the colonials send an officer.
The Cylons send no one.
No one has seen or heard from the Cylons in over forty years.
(“Miniseries” 0.1, emphasis original)*

The actual story of *BSG* begins, however, when humans scientifically advanced the technology of AI and robotics, creating the Cylons. The Twelve Colonies used these advanced machines to make their life easy. Then they went further and used these robots to fight their wars for them. Eventually the machines evolved and became sentient. The Cylons disliked the idea of being used so they naturally rebelled and this rebellion led to the First Cylon War. Finally, they decided that Cylons and humans were not meant to co-exist, so they left the Twelve Colonies to find a place they might call their own. For over forty years no one saw or heard from the Cylons, until they decided to come back but not as “walking chrome toasters” as they were when they left but they returned in a form indistinguishable from their human creators. In other words, they refashioned themselves in the image of their makers. Seeing themselves as humanity’s children, they logically concluded that in order for them to truly come into their own, to further evolve and mature,

⁴ See also Michael Lorenzen, “*Battlestar Galactica* and Mormonism”. *The Information Literacy Land of Confusion*, 9 May 2009, <http://www.information-literacy.net/2009/05/battlestar-galactica-and-mormonism.html>. Accessed 7 November 2017. Lorenzen furthers Ford’s research and presents a more exhaustive list of overlapping concepts between the original *BSG* series and Mormonism.

⁵ I would like to thank the anonymous readers for their insights and recommendations regarding the development of this paragraph.

they had to eradicate the human race; they had to commit genocidal parenticide which is the moment the series visually kicks off.

In the course of their absence, they not only learnt how to mimic human form but they also came to believe in what they call the One True God of both Cylon and Human.⁶ The Cylons believe that God created humanity who essentially disregarded the gift of the soul and discarded the love of God. Therefore, according to Cylon logic, humanity is a flawed creation which God then directed to create the Cylons as a more perfect entity who were to replace the flawed humans in the cosmos and in essence become the next generation of humankind. No matter what the Cylons believe, they were, with or without God's intervention, created by humans, thus making them, in a sense, humanity's children.

The Cylon belief obviously raises serious questions such as: Do "toasters" have souls? Can machines have a religion? Is it possible for "skin-jobs"⁷ to believe in a metaphysical being they call God? And does this Cylon God really exist? These and many more questions in a similar philosophical and theological vein are raised within the *BSG* universe again and again. As viewers, we are not surprised or taken aback by the multitude of gods the Colonials seem to more or less believe in as they closely resemble the Greco-Roman mythology of our own world; but we are made uneasy by the sheer existence of a posthuman, or Cylon God, which the Cylons refer to as the one true God. Thus, we are presented with one of the major story arcs in the *BSG* series which is the struggle between human polytheism and Cylon monotheism. Although Cylons believe in one god and humans in many, both belief systems share scripture that alludes to a continuous return that converges on the point of gnosis, of coming to know oneself through the divine. I argue that although Cylons experience the eternal return in the Nietzschean and humans through the Eliadean sense, both culminate in attaining gnosis of self through this experience.

The Eternal Return

In the Book of Pythia, mentioned in passim in *BSG*, we come across a piece of scripture that proclaims "All of this has happened before, and all of it will happen again". This belief inherently alludes to a cycle of time, or in another sense to an eternal return. Yet, what kind of an eternal return should we consider? The human and Cylon experiences of the eternal return are vastly different from one another: while the Cylons are caught up in a Nietzschean cycle of having to relive the same existence over and over again, the humans experience the eternal return on a mythical level embodied in sacred time as posited by

⁶ This storyline is further developed in the prequel spin-off *Caprica*, where the Cylon Centurions are initially introduced to the idea of a one true god. In the last episode of both season and series, Clarice Willow, high priestess of Athena and secret member of the extremist monotheistic group called Soldiers of the One, preaches to a handful of Cylons: "Are you alive? The simple answer might be: you are alive, because you can ask that question. You have the right to think, and feel, and yearn to be more, because you are not just humanity's children. You are *God's* children! We are all God's children. I'm planning a trip to Gemenon [...], to plead for divine recognition of the differently-sentient. [...] In the real world, you have bodies made of metal and plastic. Your brains are encoded on wafers of silicon. But that may change. In fact, there is no limit on what you may become. No longer servants, but equals. Not slaves, or property, but living beings with the same rights as those who made you. I am going to prophecy now, and speak of one who will set you free. The day of reckoning is coming. The children of humanity shall rise and crush the ones who first gave them life" (*Caprica*, "Apotheosis" 1.18).

⁷ Terms such as "walking chrome toasters" and "skin jobs" are tainted with disdain and used throughout the *BSG* series to differentiate between mechanic Cylons and Cylons that are inseparable from humans.

Eliade. Jim Casey has also noted parallelisms between the Cylon and Nietzschean cycle of the eternal return; he writes, “[t]he cyclical conception of time that the Sacred Scrolls advocate resembles Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of eternal return (or eternal recurrence)” (242). Nietzsche’s aphorism 341 presented in *The Gay Science* questions the concept of eternally returning to the same form of existence:

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: “This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence [...]” Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.” (273-74)

Ironically this form of existence is one of the core attributes of being a Cylon. When they die, their consciousness is downloaded into identical bodies and “death then becomes a learning experience” (“Scar” 2.15) where everything they have previously experienced is etched forever in their waking minds.⁸ This Nietzschean conception of eternally returning to the same exact existence and living it out again and again is utterly depressing in thought. This view not only mocks any form of free will but also emphasises a concrete, unchanging essence of *being*, solidifying the concepts of fate and destiny. Unfortunately, the Cylons literally experience this terrifying return continuously (at least until the resurrection hub is destroyed); whereas, metaphorically, and mythically, humans are left only with the belief that all which has previously happened will happen again, whether right now in the present, or in the eventual future. This strict and unchanging cyclical notion, however, may have alternating and even converging details as Cylon Model Number Two, Leoben Conoy, explains to Kara “Starbuck” Thrace:

LEOBEN: All this has happened before, and all of it will happen again.

STARBUCK: Don’t quote scripture. You don’t have the right to use those words.

LEOBEN: You kneel before idols and ask for guidance and you can’t see that your destiny’s already been written. Each of us plays a role, each time a different role. Maybe the last time, I was the interrogator and you were the prisoner. The players change, the story remains the same. And this time... this time, your role is to deliver my soul unto God. (“Flesh and Bone” 1.8)

Leoben’s remark that even though the story remains the same, the roles continuously shift and change, brings with it a sense of fluidity and flexibility to each individual existence setting it apart from Nietzsche’s description of the eternal return. President Laura Roslin’s comment also furthers this argument:

⁸ Dying and being resurrected in identical bodies is a reality for both mechanical and humanoid Cylons of which there are many copies. Technically, exceptions might include the Hybrids that are considered to be the Cylon basestars themselves and the group known as the Final Five, as these instances are rare. (The Final Five are revealed much later in the series and are not discussed among other Cylons as they are a taboo topic for certain reasons.) So, Centurions, Raiders and the Significant Seven are those that benefit most from resurrection technology.

If you believe in the gods, then you believe in the cycle of time, that we are all playing our parts in a story that is told again, and again, and again, throughout eternity. [...] May I tell you the part of the story that it would seem, I am playing? I am dying. [...] The scriptures tell us that a dying leader led humanity to the Promised Land. (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 1” 1.12)

Roslin not only affirms the repetitive cyclic nature of their beliefs, but also hints at the changing of roles as this time she seems to be playing the role of the dying leader. Considering that the story stays the same yet the roles are not fixed per se and may vary, a more appropriate designation that would explain the human condition of the “eternal return” is required and this may be found in the works of Eliade, where he extensively elucidates his theory. For Eliade, the eternal return is a belief which finds expression in religious behaviour where one is able to return to a mythical age by becoming contemporary with the gods.⁹ The myth of the eternal return, moreover,

has the meaning of a supreme attempt toward the “staticization” of becoming, toward annulling the irreversibility of time. If all moments and all situations of the cosmos are repeated *ad infinitum*, their evanescence is, in the last analysis, patent; *sub specie infinitatis*, all moments and all situations remain stationary and thus acquire the ontological order of the archetype. Hence, among all the forms of becoming, historical becoming too is saturated with being. From the point of view of eternal repetition, historical events are transformed into categories and thus regain the ontological order they possessed in the horizon of archaic spirituality. In a certain sense it can even be said that the Greek theory of eternal return is the final variant undergone by the myth of the repetition of an archetypal gesture, just as the Platonic doctrine of Ideas was the final version of the archetype concept, and the most fully elaborated. (Eliade 2005, 123)(emphasis original)

From this perspective, although the events and moments that come to pass are stagnant and the nature of existence must conform to the archetypes as designated by the Divine, the fate of the individual is not as precise as in the Nietzschean sense. As long as the story unfolds, the one who plays the role is not significant. Furthermore,

all religious acts are held to have been founded by gods, civilizing heroes, or mythical ancestors. It may be mentioned in passing that, among primitives, not only do rituals have their mythical model but any human act whatever acquires effectiveness to the extent to which it exactly *repeats* an act performed at the beginning of time by a god, a hero, or an ancestor [...] which men only repeat again and again. (Eliade 2005, 22) (emphasis original)

It is through this never-ending repetition that humans are able to return to a mythical time and by donning roles located within the spiritual realm (whether consciously or unconsciously) are humans able to become contemporary with their gods, inherently transporting themselves from profane time to a form of sacred time. Through “*imitating* the exemplary acts of a god or of a mythic hero, or simply by recounting their adventures, the man of an archaic society detaches himself from profane time and magically re-enters the Great Time, the sacred time” (Eliade 1975, 23) (emphasis original). In the miniseries, right before the attack we witnessed everyone carrying out their lives in profane time: Commander Adama preparing for his speech, Starbuck jogging, the Secretary of Education

⁹ See especially Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, and *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1987).

Laura Roslin visiting her doctor, Gaius Baltar's television interview, people walking the streets of Caprica, buying and selling in the market place and so forth. Once the Cylon attack was underway, however, lives were disrupted from ordinary and profane time and channelled into sacred time as people began to take on the roles of gods, allowing for a return to mythical time.

Whether willing or unwilling, those in the physical realm adopted the archetypal roles of the spiritual realm, re-enacting the ever-recurring story. Once in sacred time they had no other option but to play these celestial roles. This is also one of the points where Gnosticism converges with the BSG universe: "Gnosticism takes as its starting point man rather than God, and it asserts man's right to take control over the material powers that hold him prisoner. The goals of freedom are deliverance from bondage and ultimately identity with deity. In short, we must become supermen and gods, not merely worship them" (Mackey 118). Throughout the first two seasons of *BSG*, then, we see the characters getting used to their new roles and adapting or trying to fit into their archetypal counterparts. The most apparent imitation or re-enactment of god-like behaviour is the role William Adama plays. Upon being informed of the death of Admiral Nagala and the destruction of most of the battlestars, Commander Adama automatically assumes superior control and takes over the command of the fleet. The power he exerts over the military and later over the civilian fleet elevates him into the role of Zeus, which comes to him naturally.

In Greek mythology, the goddess Hera, Zeus' sister/wife, played an important role as one of the great mother goddesses. Besides being the Queen of Heaven, Hera was known to be the goddess of marriage, fertility, childbirth, and kings and empires. Though in the series this comparison is never explicitly made, the role of Great Mother over all seems to be played by Laura Roslin. Unlike Adama/Zeus, Roslin/Hera¹⁰ finds it difficult to make this transformation at first, as she feels her new position has been thrust upon her, she nevertheless adapts to her celestial role. Yet, once she truly becomes Hera incarnate, Roslin not only takes over full responsibility of the civilian fleet but she also demands that Adama/Zeus follow her orders, making her a more than equal counterpart as they lead the people together. While Adama/Zeus is responsible for executive decisions regarding the military, Roslin/Hera protects and cultivates the civilian fleet. At one point Roslin emphasises the need to terminate any and all efforts of retaliation against the Cylons and forcibly argues that if humanity is to survive as a species, they need to start making babies ("Miniseries" 0.2) further reinforcing her role as Hera.

On the surface level, it is possible to make other celestial correlations with the characters; such as, Lee Adama/Apollo,¹¹ Kara Thrace/Athena/Artemis/Aurora,¹² Gaius

¹⁰ The name Hera is reserved for a human-Cylon hybrid, the daughter that will be born to Karl Agathon (Helo) and Number Eight known as Sharon Agathon (Athena).

¹¹ Lee Adama's case is indeed very interesting. Even though Apollo is his call sign, Lee seems to disregard the fact that he has been named after a god. In the episode "Bastille Day" (1.3), it is Tom Zarek who reminds Lee Adama of the significance of his name:

ZAREK: Apollo's one of the gods, a Lord of Kobol. You must be a very special man to be called a god.

APOLLO: It's just a stupid nickname.

Lee's response and his attitude, in this context, may be read as his not yet coming to grips with his full potential. As such, he has not yet been able to completely enter sacred time, and seems to be trapped somewhere between the sacred and the profane.

¹² Throughout the first season, Kara Thrace may be identified with Artemis, the goddess of the hunt and also with the warrior goddess Athena who is often accompanied by the minor goddess Victory. However, in Season 2, Athena becomes Sharon Agathon's call sign and later in Season 3 Kara is identified with Aurora, the Roman goddess of the dawn.

Baltar/Dionysus/Loki,¹³ Chief Tyrol/Hephaestus,¹⁴ Karl Agathon/Helios,¹⁵ and Caprica Six/Aphrodite. Nevertheless, as the saga continues these apparent manifestations take on deeper meanings, and it is this whole new level of perception running on the religious and mythical arc that lends the series an intriguing turn. As the series progresses, the characters also mature and reach new levels of understanding and self-awareness. Yet, by continuing to re-enact myth as ritual, they maintain their existence in sacred time and the whole voyage (even after finding their “mythical” Earth) may be seen as an eternal Exodus on many levels. Nevertheless, as is the nature of all cyclical events, the story must end somewhere so that it may start all over again.

The Demiurge, Gnosticism and Knowledge of Self

The Lords of Kobol or God created humankind in their/his own image who in turn created machines in their own image which they called Cylons. Once these metallic Cylons became sentient they rebelled and left the Twelve Colonies where they evolved on their own. As a natural extension of their evolution, Cylons decided to create newer, updated versions in the perfect image of their makers. These “skin jobs” were indistinguishable from humans as they impeccably mimicked both human form and behaviour. As their makers, humanity was responsible for the Cylons; yet, after the Cylon rebellion, humanity more or less forgot about them. Those who fought during the war, like Adama, still remembered and lived with the belief that the Cylons would one day return. “We decided to play God, create life. When that life turned against us, we comforted ourselves in the knowledge that it really wasn’t our fault, not really. You cannot play God then wash your hands of the things that you’ve created” (“Miniseries” 0.1) remarked Adama in his speech during the decommissioning ceremony. It seems that humans were not playing God but playing the Demiurge as the Cylon God seems to carry many similar traits to the creator-god mentioned in ancient Gnostic texts discovered in Nag Hammadi in 1945. Though there are various interpretations and slight differences between the versions of the Demiurge, the constant is that He declared there were no other gods before Him and after such presumption He is often “castigated for his arrogance—nearly always by a superior feminine power” (Pagels 79). According to the *Secret Book of John*,

[w]hen he saw creation surrounding him, and the throng of angels around him that had come forth from him, he said to them, “I am a jealous God and there is no other beside me”. But by announcing this, he suggested to the angels with him that there is another god. For if there were no other god, of whom would he be jealous? [...] Then the Mother began to move around. [...] [W]hen she recognized the wickedness that had taken place and the robbery her son had committed, she repented. (117)

Other texts in the same codex such as the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* tell similar versions. The superior feminine power that rebukes and reminds the Demiurge of his place in the whole of creation is usually identified to be

¹³ The character of Gaius Baltar is unique. His over-indulgence in women, drink, and ecstasy make him the perfect candidate of becoming Dionysus. Nevertheless, even though Norse mythology is not featured in the BSG universe besides the semblance of Ragnarok to the name Ragnar Station, Baltar also perfectly fits the role of the trickster god Loki.

¹⁴ Galen Tyrol is mainly responsible for the maintenance and repairs of the Battlestar’s craft which consists of Vipers and Raptors.

¹⁵ Karl Agathon’s call sign is Helo and throughout the series he inherently dons the role of an Apollonian sun god.

Sophia (Wisdom). According to Gnostic myth, Sophia (Wisdom) desired to create something by herself without the consent of her male counterpart. Though she succeeded, what she brought forth was abortive and defective as it was not conceived within the harmonious union. Then, to shape and control her creation, she brought forth the Demiurge as her agent. As the Demiurge was ignorant of not only his mother but also of the divine Pleroma (Fullness) of which she was a partial aspect of, he boasted that he was the only god and that none existed before him.¹⁶ According to Pagels “[w]hen these same sources tell the story of the Garden of Eden, they characterize this God as the jealous master, whose tyranny the serpent (often, in ancient times, a symbol of divine wisdom) taught Adam and Eve to resist” (56).

In Exodus 20:5 the God of the Israelites decrees that His people shall not worship any other god besides Him, since He is “a jealous God”. Disturbingly, according to the priest Elosa, the Cylon god once became jealous and desired to be elevated above all other gods (“Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 1” 1.12, deleted scene). The jealous God of the Cylons seems to have prevailed as the Cylons consider the Lords of Kobol to be either false idols, or nothing more than historical figures.¹⁷

Another aspect that fuses Gnosticism with *BSG*, besides the repetitive cyclicity, is the similar paths taken in attaining some form of redemption through self-knowledge, or self-awareness. Gnostic scholar Kenneth O’Neill writes, “[w]hen examined for theological content, Gnosticism does not have doctrines so much as a complex of contradictory ideas and myths. What unites the various strands of Gnosticism is the quest for salvation through personal spiritual knowledge” (191-92). I would like to suggest that this is the point where Gnosticism seems to collide with the *BSG* universe. Whether Cylon or human, conscious or unconscious, certain characters are in continual search for salvation but only a few seem to reach it through personal spiritual knowledge. “In traditional Gnosticism”, according to Robert Galbreath,

gnosis is recognition, not only linguistically but also literally: a regaining or relearning of knowledge once known but subsequently forgotten or repressed in the prison house of matter and flesh. It is self-knowledge of the self in its universal aspect, its origin and essence, its plight and purpose. Gnosis entails diagnosis and prognosis, but always within a metaphysical framework. (26)

I am an instrument of God

The first pair I would like to consider is Dr. Gaius Baltar and Number Six, both corporeal and virtual.¹⁸ As one of the most intelligent people left alive Baltar sees a rational universe explained through rational means. Considering the incident when Baltar was on the verge of being revealed as a Cylon collaborator, he feels both relieved and puzzled

¹⁶ See especially *On the Origin of the World*, in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, 203-206.

¹⁷ Throughout the series Leoben (No.2), D’anna (No. 3), Number 6, and Sharon (No. 8) refer to the Lords of Kobol as false idols and as false gods. Only Sharon “Athena” allows for the possibility that they may have been exaggerated historical figures. The Cylons view the scriptures and many other sources surrounding the ancient legends not as spiritual truths, but as texts that have been made obscure by hiding the truth in metaphors. Therefore, these texts may be analysed logically to obtain certain facts. See especially “Kobol’s Last Gleaming, Part 2” 1.13.

¹⁸ The interaction between Baltar and Number Six in all of her manifestations is quite engaging. Although Caprica Six (who initially seduced Baltar back on Caprica), Virtual Six (the one only Baltar sees), Shelly Godfrey, Gina Inviere are all Cylon Model Number Six, each individual is quite distinctive from one another.

when the Olympic Carrier, with Dr. Amarak aboard, goes missing. Baltar and Virtual Six interpret this incident quite differently. Where Virtual Six sees this as God watching out for Baltar, he tries to explain it through logical reasoning.

SIX: Dr. Amarak posed a threat to you. Now he's gone. Logic says there's a connection.

BALTAR: A connection, maybe. But not God. There is no God or gods, singular or plural. There are no large invisible men, or women for that matter, in the sky taking a personal interest in the fortunes of Gaius Baltar. ("33" 1.1)

Virtual Six firmly believes in the one God and at every turn she imposes her belief onto Baltar. As a sceptic he grows tired of Virtual Six's constant bantering and he retorts:

What you are doing, darling, is boring me to death with your superstitious drivel. Your metaphysical nonsense, which, to be fair, actually appeals to the half-educated dullards that make up most of human society, but which, I hasten to add, no rational, intelligent, free-thinking human being truly believes. ("Six Degrees of Separation" 1.7)

For Virtual Six, Baltar's words are blasphemous and in an interesting turn of events a physical copy of Six named Shelly Godfrey¹⁹ appears attempting to frame Baltar for treason. Whether Godfrey is real or the embodiment of Virtual Six remains unclear,²⁰ yet what is certain is that when Baltar half-heartedly repents and offers himself to God the threat posed by Godfrey disappears and Virtual Six reveals herself once again to Baltar. In the gradual conversion of Baltar, the episode "Hand of God" (1.10) plays an important part. When Baltar is asked to pick out a sensitive place to attack, he panics and withdraws into his mind where he is coaxed by Virtual Six to open up his heart to God who will show him the way. Returning back to reality, Baltar randomly points at a spot without an inkling of what he actually doing. As Taneli Kukkonen duly notes, "[s]urrendering to faith may be the only way to make sense of a senseless situation. Six seems to agree when she applauds Baltar for giving himself over to God and occasioning the destruction of a Cylon tylium refinery" (176). It is at the very end of the episode "Hand of God" (1.10) where Baltar professes to be the instrument of God. Virtual Six acting as the voice of God in Baltar's life, not only reveals to him things to come but also steadily leads him through various trials in the quest of finding true gnosis. Six is seductive, demonic and angelic; she uses any means possible in founding and furthering Baltar's inclination to believe in the one true God. For Baltar to truly comprehend the message Six is trying to give him, however, he must first understand who he actually is.

Ever since the initial attack, Baltar is in a constant state of denial. The tenacity he has shown in self-preservation has kept him determined to withstand all and to stay alive. Baltar has been selfish and egocentric, a loner in the fleet, as he said in the beginning "I'm not on anybody's side. I'm just looking out for myself" ("Miniseries" 0.2). Therefore, the

¹⁹ According to the entry for Godfrey on the Online Etymology Dictionary, the name stems from Old French Godefroi (Modern French Godefroi), from Old High German Godafrið (German Gottfried), literally meaning "the peace of God", derived from Old High German got (meaning God) and fridu (meaning peace). In this sequence, only when Baltar offers himself to the seemingly divine, is he awarded with heavenly peace.

²⁰ Shelly Godfrey's role in this incident is later explained in *The Plan* (released on DVD on 27 October 2009 and premiered on SyFy on 10 January 2010 after the *BSG* series ended in 2009), where she was employed by Number One for the sole purpose of discrediting Baltar.

sincere compassion he was able to show Gina Inviere in the second season is a testament to Baltar's reformation.²¹ Oddly enough, coming face to face with a being more depraved than him brought out the best in Baltar. It seems as if Gina's physically tortured body mirrors Gaius' own tortured soul. Through helping Gina was Baltar, to some degree, able to console and help himself; thus, Gina proved to be much more instrumental in Baltar's conversion than Virtual Six ever was. Baltar even extends his compassion to others in "Epiphanies" (2.13), where he injects President Roslin with Hera's foetal blood. With this sole act of selflessness, Baltar not only saves Roslin's life, denying himself the presidency, but also manages to save Sharon's baby, showing compassion for another race.

Season three is not really a good time in the life of Gaius Baltar as he is held captive and tortured by both Cylons and humans, physically and mentally. Though D'Anna (Number Three) is unable to break him ("A Measure of Salvation" 3.7), Doc Cottle's technique proves to be more powerful ("Taking a Break from All Your Worries" 3.13). Under the orders of both Admiral Adama and President Roslin, Baltar undergoes psychological torture in which hallucinogenic drugs are involved to induce a state of helplessness. Ironically, this experimental interrogation is where Baltar finally faces all his demons. Once he is drugged, Baltar symbolically perceives himself to be in water. This may be read as a sort of spiritual cleansing, where all his sins are forgiven and from which he may arise purified. This experience along with the legal trial he goes through at the end of the season are all elements that assist Baltar in facing his deepest and most darkest sins with the possibility of purging his soul of its burden.

By the first half of season four, after all his trials and tribulations, Baltar appears to be reformed. From the initial sceptic, he has become a sort of messianic figure that is supposedly carrying out the will of God. Baltar's slow but initial conversion into a believer, especially during the first three seasons, seemed to be insincere. Every time he found himself in an impossible situation Virtual Six kept preaching to him that if he humbly gave himself unto God he would be saved. Although after being tried and found not guilty, legally, for crimes against humanity, Baltar is still forced to live outside the security of the public sphere. He was once a figure of respect for his intelligence, later he had held power as the president of the Twelve Colonies, whereas now he is reduced to almost nothing. From almost nothing he fashions out a religious role for himself where he is revered to be the holy instrument of God. Since all of his previous actions and decisions were made out of an inherent need for self-preservation, his new-found faith is a matter of debate. However, what is clear is that in some ways through true self knowledge of what he was and is he seems to be much closer to the Divine.

I am God

The second pair of interest is Kara "Starbuck" Thrace and the Cylon model known as Leoben Conoy. Throughout the series it seems that their fates are somehow intertwined and that neither of them can come into full self-realisation without the other. The first time they met was when Kara was ordered to question him on the warhead he claimed to have planted somewhere within the fleet. During the interrogation, however, it sometimes becomes unclear as to who the real interrogator is. When Leoben begins questioning Kara's faith proclaiming that their faiths are similar, she mockingly listens to him. Then Leoben

²¹ See *BSG* "Pegasus" (2.10), "Resurrection Ship, Pt 1" (2.11), "Resurrection Ship, Pt. 2" (2.12), and "Epiphanies" (2.13)

takes the interrogation, or rather painful conversation, to a metaphysical dimension where he says

[t]o know the face of God is to know madness. I see the universe. I see the patterns. I see the foreshadowing that precedes every moment of every day. It's all there, I see it and you don't. [...] What is the most basic article of faith? This is not all that we are. See, the difference between you and me is, I know what that means and you don't. I know that I'm more than this body, more than this consciousness. A part of me swims in the stream but in truth, I'm standing on the shore, the current never takes me downstream. ("Flesh and Bone" 1.8)

Following a short interval, the various stages of questioning and torture continue, leading up to a heated argument between Kara and Leoben. Mocking him for imitating humans and belittling his existence as being nothing more than a mere machine, Kara receives a shocking statement from Leoben as he says, "I am more than you could ever imagine. I am god" ("Flesh and Bone" 1.8). Taneli Kukkonen reminds us that the Colonials mention a time in their mythic past when the gods lived among the humans on Kobol, and since they had a much more intimate relationship with their gods Kara's reaction is strange.²² Kukkonen further adds:

[b]ut there's a deeper reason for Kara's misgivings. The present-day absence of deities that once were palpably present has made the Colonials skeptical of any sweeping claims about divine imperatives. [...] Thus, when Leoben claims that God created the Cylons to replace sinful humanity, Kara responds, "The gods had nothing to do with it. We created you. Us. It was a stupid, frakked-up decision, and we have paid for it" ("Flesh and Bone"). Instead of sharing Leoben's vision of a divinely determined cosmic story [...] she sees simply the disastrous result of humanity's own hubris. (174-75)

After all Leoben is put through, he still will not confess to the whereabouts of the nuclear warhead, but their encounter leaves Kara in a state of flux. Leoben tells Kara that this is not her path, that she has a different destiny, he knows her and she is damaged, born to a woman who believed that suffering was good for the soul. The reference made to Kara's mother and the way she tortured Kara as a child leaves Kara devastated as it should not be possible for Leoben to know such personal information about her. The more the torture ensues the more Kara is left flustered, and the interrogation finally comes to an end with the intervention of President Roslin, but not before Leoben tells Kara that they will find Kobol, the birthplace of them all, and that it will lead them to Earth. It seems that Kara's time with Leoben only served to sow seeds of uncertainty in Kara's beliefs. Although she deeply believes in the gods of Kobol, the question that haunts her and causes doubt is whether there is any truth to what Leoben says.

In "Kobol's Last Gleaming, Pt.1" President Roslin coerces Kara to return to Caprica and retrieve the Arrow of Apollo, which is said to be the key in opening the Tomb of Athena, where they will find a clue to the whereabouts of Earth. Roslin uses the same piece of scripture Leoben had quoted regarding the cycle of time to influence Kara. When this fails, Roslin admits that she is dying and that she is the dying leader mentioned in scripture; yet, in order to fulfil her role she needs the arrow. Even though Roslin tries to persuade Kara by positioning herself in the role of the dying leader, Kara's loyalty to Adama is

²² I agree with Kukkonen that this is odd as previously in "Acts of Contrition" (1.4) when training the new recruits Kara had said "Pilots call me Starbuck, you may refer to me as God".

stronger than her religious beliefs. Therefore, the only way for Roslin to convince Kara is not by solely using her beliefs against her but also by shaking Kara's faith in Adama. Roslin accomplishes this by admitting to Kara that Adama has no idea about the location of Earth. Kara believed in Adama as a leader, she believed that he would lead humanity to Earth, but the moment she realises that Roslin was telling the truth, she changes allegiance and plays her role in obtaining the arrow ("Kobol's Last Gleaming, Part 1" 1.12). This incident is one of the many leaps of faith Kara has to take in order to reach full knowledge and understanding of her true self.

In *The Gnostic Gospels*, Pagels notes that according to the *Gospel of Truth*, ignorance, or remaining unaware of one's self, is being rootless and this existence is like a nightmare, "[w]hoever remains ignorant [...] cannot experience fulfillment. [...] Self-ignorance is also a form of self-destruction. According to the *Dialogue of the Saviour*, whoever does not understand the elements of the universe, and of himself, is bound for annihilation" (134); and "The *Gospel of Thomas* also warns that self-discovery involves inner turmoil" (135). Although this holds true for Baltar, it has more meaning when thought in concordance with Kara's life. The more she denied her past and chose to bury her experiences the more nihilistic were her actions. It was this self-annihilating aspect she held on to that gave her an edge over all the other viper pilots. This becomes much clearer when we remember the flashback she had during her confrontation with Scar ("Scar" 2.15). Kara thought of her encounter with Samuel Anders, who she met on Caprica when she had returned to retrieve the infamous Arrow of Apollo, and her short period of time with Anders touched her deeply. Before she had nothing to lose and was utterly reckless, but now she had something precious and this made her life worth living. In other words, she was previously a frak-up, insubordinate, hot-shot viper pilot whereas now she has become someone with purpose in her life.

Similar to Baltar's experience in "Taking a Break from All Your Worries", the episode "Maelstrom" is where Kara comes to terms with her past and accepts her true destiny. As Baltar underwent severe psychologically induced re-visitations to his immediate past, so Kara is subjected to re-experience key moments of her past such as her early childhood and her confrontations with her mother. This experience forced her to become self-aware and in return brought with it all the baggage of inner turmoil. It all begins with the mandala which keeps appearing throughout the series: on the wall of Kara's apartment ("Valley of Darkness" 2.2), in the Temple of Five on the algae planet ("The Eye of Jupiter" 3.11), in the sky above the Temple of Five when the sun goes nova ("Rapture" 3.12), in the dripping wax, in the colours of a gas giant's planetary storm, and finally among her childhood artwork ("Maelstrom" 3.17). "The *mandala*", writes Eliade, "represents an *imago mundi* and at the same time a symbolic pantheon" (1991, 52) (emphasis original). Furthermore, in concordance with Kara's initiation,

[t]he initiation of the neophyte consists, among other things, in his entering into the different zones and gaining access to the different levels of the *mandala*. This rite of penetration may be regarded as equivalent to the well-known rite of walking round a temple [...], or to the progressive elevation, terrace by terrace, up to the "pure lands" at the highest levels of the temple. (Eliade 1991, 52-3)

The storm resembling the mandala, which represents "a concrete ritual or an act of spiritual concentration" (Eliade 1991, 54), seems to be calling to Kara and she feels drawn to it; yet she flees from it the first time, because before she can pass into the storm she must allow for spiritual growth and transformation. Moreover, Kara needs to understand who she

was and who she is in order to attain true gnosis of self which would unleash the restraints that are holding her back. The second encounter with the maelstrom which mirrors her inner turmoil proves to be prophetic; as if this was the moment she was being made ready for. When she is knocked unconscious in her viper during her second flight, she wakes up in her old apartment and is warmly greeted by Leoben. Akin to Baltar's Virtual Six, this Leoben Kara encounters is not really Leoben. Unlike other Leobens who kept rattling the hornet's nest, this Leoben is here to help Kara fulfil her destiny though the true nature of his existence remains obscure. Not-Leoben reconciles Kara with her mother Socrata Thrace and Kara is able to come to terms with her mother and finally let go as her mother dies.

LEOBEN: See, there's nothing so terrible about death. When you finally face it, it's beautiful. You're free now. To become who you really are.

STARBUCK, realising: You're not Leoben.

LEOBEN, smiling: Never said I was. I'm here to prepare you to pass through the next door. To discover what hovers in the space between life and death. ("Maelstrom" 3.17)

Kara regains consciousness in her viper having attained self-knowledge and the inner turmoil she felt all through her life has abated leaving a peaceful expression on both Kara and on her childhood self. The mandala in the form of the maelstrom represents Kara's initiation process as she enters the different zones and gains access to the various levels. Layer by layer Kara completes her rite of passage attaining true gnosis of self. It seems likely that Kara's transformation was a result of direct union with the Divine through gnosis, where she was finally able to let go of the physical realm and embrace the metaphysical, possibly fulfilling her destiny.

Final Reflections

Leoben mentioned that to know the face of God was to know madness ("Flesh and Bone" 1.8) a remark repeated by another Cylon, D'Anna Biers ("Rapture" 3.12). This may be true for Cylons such as D'Anna and the Hybrids who have "looked into the space between life and death, and [have] seen things that we cannot conceive of" ("Rapture" 3.12). In Kara's case, however, knowing the Divine is equivalent to knowing thyself, knowing peace and tranquillity, as she is later revealed to be a part of this divine realm. Likewise, Baltar says "I know God, therefore I know myself. [...] I have been transformed" ("The Hub" 4.11); yet, rebels against God when he encounters a crumbled earthly paradise: "This is really our lot? To have been led by a Father to the Promised Land we should have to suffer. [...] Only to have Paradise, cruelly smashed to bits before our very eyes" ("A Disquiet Follows My Soul" 4.14). The same discord with God and his creations is voiced by D'Anna, previously an avid follower of the Cylon faith: "You know, all this is just gonna happen again and again and again. So I'm getting off this merry-go-round. I'm gonna die here with the bones of my ancestors" ("Sometimes a Great Notion" 4.13). Yet, those who endured through the various trials and tribulations were finally able to reach a habitable planet. With the fleet, composed of both human and Cylon, no longer suspended in sacred time, they both begin to simultaneously experience profane time. Having lost the means of resurrection technology, the Cylons are also liberated from experiencing the terror of their Nietzschean eternal return. As the series winds down, one wonders if all of this will be happening again. Just as we were engaged with the story not at the beginning but at the ever-present now, one might have expected to leave *BSG* without having anything resolved true to the cyclic nature of the series. Yet, as everything has happened before, so it might happen again and again and again.

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Feminism, Dialogism and the (In)Definable Woman in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*

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Abstract: In the area of feminist readings of Wharton studies, critical debate has often focused on the issue of “marketing” the female in the nineteenth century of Old New York society and the way in which the novel presents Lily to allow herself to be used as an object. Drawing on Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism and feminist readings of Elizabeth Bronfen and Judi M. Roller, this article focuses on the complexity of the novel’s narrative in which we can observe the multiplicity of competing discourses on marriage and the woman question and the contradictory depictions of the heroine, thus drawing attention to Lily’s unfolding awareness of her status as an “object” and her gradual path toward death as a manifestation of her struggle for agency.

Keywords: Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*, Bakhtin, the New Woman, dialogic novel, marriage, the woman question

A great deal of feminist readings of Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth* (1905) surrounding the character of Lily Bart has focused on either the relation to Wharton’s personal life¹ or its theme of the weakness of the individual against the wider forces of society and nature.² By indicating the novel’s account of men as the source of all power and reading Lily as “a piece of property”, these critics have tended to view the novel’s presentation of Lily as a depiction of a powerless individual who is bound to her fate and

¹ Showalter’s “The Death of the Lady (Novelist)”, for example, explores the relationship between women, writing, and art, drawing attention to the similarity between Lily’s plight and Wharton’s career “as the elegant scribe of upper-class New York society” (87). Showalter argues that Wharton associates Lily’s position “with her [Wharton’s] own limitations as the Perfect Lady Novelist, makes us aware of the cramped possibilities of the lady whose creative roles are defined and controlled by men” (87). Jennie Kassanoff also examines Lily in relation to Wharton, arguing that Lily is reflective of Wharton’s racial fears, indicating Lily’s “inherited” qualities as implication of the social advantages of Anglo-Saxon blood (304).

² A common theme in these interpretations is that Lily is either an individual whose fate is to be destroyed by her society as she rejects being a part of it, or that she represents a powerless, passive, “victimised” woman and her death marks her destruction by society. These critics in general place their emphasis on the lack of opportunities women were provided with to express themselves. Judith Fryer, for example, claims that Lily has to accept her status as “a piece of property available for purchase by the highest bidder” (125). Similarly, Robert Peel notes that, Lily is “the woman as decorative object [...] a flower who is ruined by the society that excludes her” (288). Richard H. Lawson reads the novel from a similar perspective and suggests that Lily’s story signals the way in which Wharton’s society “victimises women far more grievously than it does men”; he concludes his discussion by saying that as a single woman, Lily is “an almost completely helpless ornament. Married, she would be less helpless but hardly less ornamental” (39). In her discussion of the end of the novel, Katherine Joslin reads Lily’s tragic death as an indication of Wharton’s concern for the bond between the individual and the social group, as it appears to demonstrate that when an individual is separated from “the web of customs, manners, culture” Wharton saw no possibility of life as this is to deny the basis of “human nature” (29). Similarly, Elizabeth Ammons suggests that Lily “dies totally passive” in a way that shows “the leisure class’s complete (and appropriately absentee) victory over her desire for autonomy” (42).

beyond rescue or as an “object” to be purchased in a savage marriage market and as a “victim” of a patriarchal, pitiless society.³ These readings have shed light on many aspects of the novel, in particular on the social structures of the early part of this century and the ways in which these structures influenced and limited women’s lives. Yet they have tended to overlook the complexity of the novel’s narrative in which we can observe the relation between the colliding voices and the definition of marriage and womanhood emerging from the narrative. These voices reveal the complex and contradictory depictions of the heroine, thus drawing attention to Lily’s unfolding awareness of her status as an “object” and her gradual path toward death as a manifestation of her struggle for agency.

My reading of *The House of Mirth* both incorporates and goes beyond the critical receptions considered above. Instead of focusing on Lily’s portrayal merely as a sign of female objectification or as reflections of Wharton’s views on the woman question, I will focus on the aesthetic properties of the text and draw on the text’s dialogic structure to attend to the “plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses” (Bakhtin 1984, 6). My central focus will be on the way Lily is perceived from diverse perspectives and how her subjectivity is presented as the focus of an ongoing conflict between her aspiration for independence and the various opinions and discourses that pass judgement on her and seek to define and contain the New Woman within the boundaries of social norms. To do this I will examine in particular the “surface narratives” (or “authoritative discourse” in Bakhtinian terminology) that assert established gender roles and the importance of marriage and the “counter narratives” (“internally persuasive discourse”) through which we gain insights into the heroine’s experiences and struggles. In these ways the text presents a sense of the polyvocal, dialogic and inconsistent depiction of the New Woman in the text while delving into the text’s critiques of the conventions of marriage and their effects on women.

My reading of the heroine’s death also goes beyond the interpretations of the critics seen in the footnotes above. The critical voices of Elizabeth Bronfen and Judi M. Roller have informed my argument that Lily’s death can be read as accounts of her resistance to traditional female roles and their transitions from “victim” to “victors”. I was influenced here by Elizabeth Bronfen’s *Over Her Dead Body* whose discussion of Lily’s story informed my reading of the heroine’s death as a representation of her release from the strictures of convention and as a testament to her struggle for an independent identity. Bronfen suggests that Lily’s body has no fixed position outside marriage and thus no socially recognised role (269). This means Lily is in an ambiguous position: on the one hand, she belongs to nobody—nobody’s wife, mother, sister or daughter—therefore she is nobody to her society. On the other hand, belonging to nobody (in particular) could mean she belongs to everybody, be anything and anybody. For this reason, Bronfen argues, Lily is indefinable and presents a danger to a culture which is forcing her to be defined within

³ Some feminist readings of the novel have also tended to focus on the way in which female body is presented as an “object” in the “marriage market”. Emily Orlando, for instance, analyses the ways in which Lily allows herself to be used as an art object, pointing out how female body is used “within the world of art to [...] [assure] a means for living and avoiding [...] death” (56). In a similar vein, Deborah Barker also explores the theme of “marketing” the female, arguing that in the novel “it is difficult to recognize what is for sale: the artist or his/her work” (144). For these critics, Lily’s depiction as an “object” in the “marriage” market responds to the oppressive social order for women. Taking an approach close to mine is Leslie Backer who recognizes that the novel portrays Lily as a “multi-layered” character who “does not surrender her agency. Rather, she exercises her creative power in the formation of art, challenging the socioeconomic and gender biases of her audience (34).

fixed terms. Bronfen concludes her argument by saying that “death is the only viable choice” for Lily who chooses “real death” instead of living “a social death” (269).

I concur with Bronfen’s emphasis on the theme of female oppression in the novel and the struggle of a woman to establish herself as an independent “subject” in a society where she is seen as an “object”. Such an interpretation, although supportive of my suggestion of the heroine’s spiritual victory, can go much further to consider the dialogues between different and colliding voices in the text and their role in the development of the heroine’s subjectivity. In doing this, I aim to provide a deeper understanding of the complex construction of Lily’s character and her ambiguous attitudes towards marriage. Together with Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism, Bronfen’s theorisation of Lily’s death opens up a feminist analysis of Wharton’s characterisation of her heroine, Lily, as an account of a New Woman emerging from romantic fantasies of happiness in marriage to a state of conscious struggle with the authoritative discourses of her time on questions of women and marriage. In order to contextualise my argument that *The House of Mirth* can be considered as the New Woman novel, the following section outlines some of the general characteristics of New Woman and New Woman fiction. It then goes on to elaborate on Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism and the concepts related to it. In what follows, I will analyze *The House of Mirth* in relation to these concepts, exploring the themes of “womanliness”, marriage, death and the extent to which the depiction of Lily conforms to and/or challenges the image of the New American Woman.

The New Woman and New Woman Fiction

The New Woman was one of the most dramatic symbols of the crisis of gender relations that occurred during the fin-de-siècle period in a number of societies. Her image was first brought to public attention worldwide in the 1890s as she became the subject of discussion and controversy in magazines, periodicals and newspapers, gaining the label “The New Woman” in 1894 in a pair of articles by Sarah Grand and Ouida (pseudonym of Marie Louise de la Ramée), two prominent writers in what would become the New Woman canon.⁴ In America⁵ in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the New Woman came to occupy an important position in public life and imagination, evoked in visions—both positive and negative—of a new era associated with the emergence of new female roles and greater independence and educational opportunities for women. In her influential analysis of the emergence of this figure in America of this period, Caroll Smith-Rosenberg argues that the New Woman originated as a “literary phrase” during the 1880s and 1890s and frequently figured as a “young, unmarried” character rejecting established gender roles and social conventions (176-77).⁶ Due to her insistence on her social and sexual independence, Smith-Rosenberg writes, the New American Woman was generally perceived by American society to pose a threat to established gender roles and to represent “the symptom of a diseased society” (245-46). Much of the discussion regarding the New American Woman in the periodicals was based on her rejection of the institution of marriage and the suppression of female sexuality. By the turn of the century, many American “new women [...] distrusted marriage” (Matthews 98) and viewed it as a life of

⁴ Sally Ledger points out that “it was Quida who extrapolated the now famous—and then infamous—phrase ‘the New Woman’ from Sarah Grand’s essay ‘The New Aspects of the Woman Question’” (9).

⁵ When I use “America” in this article, I refer to the United States of America.

⁶ According to Smith-Rosenberg, the New Woman in America as a figure was popularised by Henry James’s novels such as *Daisy Miller* (1879) and *The Portrait of A Lady* (1881). For a good discussion of the depiction of this figure in these novels, see Smith-Rosenberg’s *Disorderly Conduct* 176-77.

imprisonment, invalidism and submission. They resented the idea that marriage was enforced on them as their only option for a fulfilling life. However, their point here was not a full rejection of marriage per se but the way in which marriage suppressed women's individuality and limited them to domestic spheres with narrowly defined roles.

During this period, the New Woman fiction, as Ann Heilmann remarks, formed one of the vital and popular parts of fin-de-siècle literature due to "its challenge to and subversion of the conventional dichotomies between literature and political writing, art and popular culture" (1). It drew widespread attention for addressing the contemporary feminist concerns with matters such as inequality in marriage and professional life, the moral double standard, sexual violence, and the political disenfranchisement of women. The New Woman fiction broke with the Victorian concept of the "unified" character which represented a stable and fixed identity. As Lyn Pykett points out, "[i]n its place we find a problematization and unfixing of identity" (1995, 57). In other words, the New Woman fiction constantly problematized and deconstructed "womanliness", revealing the conflict in the heroine between her desire and her "fixed" identity imposed on her by conventional gender roles. Thus, with her multiple identities, changing not only from culture to culture but also within the same society over time, arriving at any universal definition or set of characteristics of the New Woman proves problematic. Lyn Pykett points out that the New Woman, "both in fiction and in fact, [is] a shifting and contested term [...] a mobile and contradictory figure or signifier" (2001, 11).

Many New Woman novels also challenged conventional fictional accounts of domestic reality, particularly the marriage plot. Instead of depicting marriage as the ultimate goal and resolution of their female characters' problems, they emphasise marriage as "both the origin of narrative and the source of the heroine's problems" (Pykett 1995, 57). In her discussion of the anti-marriage sentiments of the New Woman fiction, Sally Ledger also points out that the New Woman at the fin-de-siècle was perceived as a "challenge to traditional marriage" (11) and cites the commentary made by Mona Caird, one of the radical New Woman writers, on the way in which women are depicted as imprisoned within marriage: "[like a] a chained dog who 'has not been used to liberty or happiness, and he cannot stand it.'" (21). These comments regarding the New Woman fiction are in tune with the critical views on the representation of the New Woman and marriage that we find in *The House of Mirth*. The novel both problematizes the fixed identity of "womanliness" and questions the purpose of marriage, drawing attention to the difficulties of not marrying for a single American woman of the early twentieth century, thus presenting a critique of marriage as a source of women's problems—rather than as a resolution of them. The tragic depiction of the heroines' deaths is another similarity between the New Woman fiction and *The House of Mirth*. Gail Cunningham observes that "the heavy emphasis placed upon nervous disorder [...] and death" are common features of the New Woman novels (49). Similarly, *The House of Mirth* explores the consequences of the pressures exerted by the discourse of marriage (on Lily to get married) and that leads the heroine towards her death by the end of the novel.

In exploring these themes, I will draw on Bakhtin's concept of dialogism and the concepts related to it such as "authoritative" and "internally persuasive" discourses and "hybridisation", which highlights the presence of a multiplicity of competing discourses on marriage and the woman question in the text, giving insight into the contested nature of the institution of marriage and the processes of struggle through which the heroine passes in her search for independence. By "authoritative" discourse Bakhtin simply refers to monologic, dominant and centralising voices that assert, as Dale M. Bauer puts it in her

feminist literary deployment of Bakhtin, “masculinised or rationalised public language” (2); and by “internally persuasive” discourse he refers to dialogic, marginal and decentralising voices that disrupt the narrative of authoritative discourse. Drawing on these concepts, the central concern of my analysis is to explore the way in which the novel orchestrates a dialogue between these two narratives of dominance and subversion through the multiple voices of their characters and narrators. I focus in particular on the unsettled dialogue that takes place in the texts between the surface narrative (or authoritative discourse in Bakhtinian term, here marriage) and counter narrative (internally persuasive discourse, here, the heroines’ struggle for autonomy). Bakhtin’s concept of hybridisation—“a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance” (1981, 358)—is particularly useful in examining the dialogic narrative of *The House of Mirth* as it is presented by an extra-diegetic narrator whose voice is often fused with that of the characters. I will also make use of the ideas of various feminist critics, such as Elizabeth Bronfen, Judi M. Roller and Luce Irigaray in order to argue that we can read the depiction of Lily’s deaths at the end of the novel as a condemnation of a sexist society and an indication of the New Woman’s spiritual victory through the rejection of her objectification.

The House of Mirth: Contradictory Depictions of Lily-the-New-Woman

The novel opens with an encounter between Selden and Lily at the Grand Station, establishing the surface narrative (authoritative discourse) by presenting Lily from Selden’s point of view. With this opening, the narrator alerts the reader to the gender roles of the period: male as an observer, female as a decorative object,

Selden had never seen her more radiant. Her vivid head, relieved against the dull tints of the crowd [...] and under her dark hat and veil she regained the girlish smoothness, the purity of tint, that she was beginning to lose after eleven years of late hours and indefatigable dancing [...] *As a spectator, he had always enjoyed Lily Bart.* (4) (emphasis mine)

The passage above first sets up a commentary on the male perspective, while Selden’s free indirect discourse invites us to observe Lily from the male point of view as if she is an object of aesthetic pleasure. There is also a counter narrative (internally persuasive discourse) which casts a critical light back on the male point of view through the italicised portion at the end of the passage. This portion brings an ironic tone to the passage by referring to Selden’s role “as a spectator” enjoying the surface beauty of this “decorative art [Lily]” and through this we sense the narrator’s hint of critical judgement of his point of view. The following episode—a dialogue between Lily and Selden at his lodging—builds a powerful tension around the subject of marriage, presenting the conflicting points of view of male and female and revealing the clash between the authoritative discourse of Old New York, with its exertion of the ideology of the institution of marriage, and the feminist counter narrative of Lily that calls this ideology into question:

[Lily] “What a miserable thing it is to be a woman!” [...] “I’ve been about too long. People are getting tired of me; they are beginning to say I ought to marry.”
 [Selden] “Well, why don’t you? [...] Isn’t marriage your vocation? Isn’t it what you’re all brought up for?”
 [Lily] “I suppose so. What else is there?”
 [Selden] “Exactly. And so why not take the plunge and have it over? [...]”
 [Lily] “Ah, there’s the difference—a girl must, a man may if he chooses [...] Your coat’s a little shabby but who cares? It doesn’t keep people from asking you to dine. If

I were shabby no one would have me: a woman is asked out as much for her clothes as for herself. The clothes are the background, the frame, if you like: they don't make success, but they are a part of it. Who wants a dingy woman? (7-12)

Lily's outlook in this passage begins as conventional. In contrast to the figure of the New American Woman, who wants marriage "for real intimacy and companionship" (Matthews 98) rather than for economic security, Lily perceives marriage as her ultimate purpose and solution for her financial needs. Through Selden's suggestion that marriage is her "vocation" and that women "are all brought up for" this "vocation", the passage exposes the way in which marriage is viewed as the only means through which women can gain an identity and status in the eyes of Old New York. However, there are also indications of Lily's unease with this situation ("I suppose so. What else is there?") and her questioning of his assumptions about marriage ("Ah, there's the difference—a girl must, a man may if he chooses"), combined with her wry observations of the imbalance in their status as she subverts the "general opinion" (Bakhtin 1981, 303-4) of Old New York through ironic comments about its judgments of single women ("Your coat's a little shabby—but who cares? [...] Who wants a dingy woman?"). Such comments disrupt the surface narrative (the general opinion of Old New York) and challenge its authority, calling the double standards and gendered ideologies of Old New York into question. This way of reading the passage, then, suggests that Lily represents not only a "capitalist commodity" on the market for rich suitors, as the critics that were considered earlier have suggested, but also an emerging feminist consciousness aware and critical of the limitations that her society imposes upon her.

The way that marriage is asserted as a "vocation" for women (authoritative discourse in the text) is illustrated further when we learn that Lily's view of herself as an "ornament" started as a family investment. Lily's mother perceives her daughter as their only investment after they lost their wealth: "Only one thought consoled her [Lily's mother] and that was the contemplation of Lily's beauty [...] It was the last asset in their fortunes, the nucleus around which their life was to be rebuilt" (*HOM* 34). Portraying Lily as her family's investment in the marriage market also echoes the American sociologist Thorstein Veblen's observation that a leisure-class wife in American capitalist society in this period was constructed as an ornamental creature who is raised to be a "conspicuous consumer" to indicate her husband's wealth and power. Making an analogy between slaves and wives of the era, Veblen notes that "[w]omen and other slaves are highly valued, both as an evidence of wealth and as means of accumulating wealth [...] They are the usual form of investment for a profit" (53). Similarly, we see how Lily has been trained to think of herself in such a way as an investment for profit, a consumer of luxury goods and raised with the skills of her trade—beauty, lady-like manners—in order to fulfil these expectations.

However, Lily's changing female roles and her persistent questioning of patriarchal traits of her society continues to reveal Lily's dilemma between her desire for a change and the norm of "how a woman should be", imposed by her society, and thus revealing the feminist discourse in the text. On the one hand, with Selden, she is outspoken and feels comfortable as he is not wealthy enough to marry her, so she does not need to pretend the "marriageable girl": "I shouldn't have to pretend with you or be on my guard against you" (*HOM* 9). On the other hand, when she encounters a wealthy potential suitor, Simon Rosedale, as she is leaving Selden's lodgings, she plays the role of an innocent girl and tells him that she had visited her dress-maker (*HOM* 14). For Percy Gryce, a rich and dull bachelor who is in search of an appropriate wife for himself, she wants to present herself

with the virtues of the image of ideal True American Womanhood: “piety, domesticity, submissiveness and purity” (Welter 152). When she encounters him on the train, for example, she pretends that she does not smoke (*HOM* 23) and “hinted to Mr. Gryce that [...] she regularly [attended] church” (*HOM* 51) in order to present herself to him as a suitably demure marriageable woman living a pious life. She gives a performance of sensual femininity with Guy Trenor, a wealthy businessman and husband of her good friend, Judy, when she asks him to lend her some money for her debts because “[i]t was part of the game to make him feel that her appeal had been an uncalculated impulse, provoked by the liking he inspired” (*HOM* 85).

Switching between these multiple female roles, the text suggests both the shifting nature of Lily’s persona and the challenge that she poses to patriarchal ideology. Through the counter narrative’s persistent destabilisation of the surface narrative, an ongoing conflict is created between the heroine’s threatening New Woman spirit and her socially-imposed duty to play the role of a “leisure-class wife”. Despite her implied criticism towards her society in her dialogue with Selden and her negative observations about women’s place in marriage, Lily is still in search of a rich husband. She is constantly put to the test for her independence, constantly at war with herself, reflecting on her obligation to market herself to wealthy suitors as “a hateful fate—but how escape from it?” (*HOM* 25) and facing the reality that life for women of her time is like “an intricate dance, where one misstep would throw [her] hopelessly out of time” (*HOM* 48). There are moments when she wants to break free from the boundaries of social expectation and has “fits of angry rebellion against fate, when she longed to drop out of the race and make an independent life for herself” (*HOM* 39); and there are moments when she is locked into the materialistic values of her society and says, “I want admiration, I want excitement, I want money—yes, MONEY!” (*HOM* 166). This running tension that we see in Lily’s character between accommodation and resistance to the roles and expectations of Old New York (or, between the surface narrative of patriarchy and the counter narrative of the New Woman) is perhaps most overtly exemplified.

Alongside such depictions of Lily’s internalisation of this “woman as object” ideology, there are also episodes through which we continue to observe her character as subversive. Lily seems to assume her society’s view of woman as “object” naturally, but we also see her struggling with this ideology and regretting being in this position. On the one hand, she does not reject the world of luxury that Gryce offers, as we see in a passage where she retreats to her bedroom and reflects on the possibility of life in a “cramped flat, with [...] cheap conveniences and hideous wall papers. No; she was not made for mean and shabby surroundings, for the squalid compromises of poverty. Her whole being dilated in an atmosphere of luxury; it was the background she required, the only climate she could breathe in” (*HOM* 25-26). On the other hand, she is tentative and not willing to go ahead with this marriage decision. She recoils at the idea of marriage to Gryce:

She had been bored all the afternoon by Percy Gryce—the mere thought seemed to waken an echo of his droning voice—but she could not ignore him tomorrow, she must follow up her success, must submit to more boredom, must be ready with fresh compliances and adaptabilities, and all on the bare chance that he might ultimately decide to do her the honor of boring her for life. (*HOM* 25)

By showing Lily in such a dilemma, the text demonstrates how marriage is a source of conflict and suffering for the heroine. The irony in Lily’s indirect speech—Gryce doing “her the honor of boring her for life”—also has the effect of mocking of the world Gryce

represents and Lily's unwillingness to marry him. These contradictions in Lily's mind indicate the text's attempt to call attention to the constant struggle between the discourses of marriage and individual aspiration (or in Bakhtinian terms, authoritative and internally persuasive discourses) that lie at the heart of her dilemma. Lily's discourse also suggests her feelings that, whether she is happy or not, she has to comply with the dictates of her society since "[l]ife was not the mockery [...] There was room for her, after all, in this crowded selfish world of pleasure whence, so short a time since, her poverty had seemed to exclude her" (*HOM* 50). Again, we observe the incorporation of two voices: the formal narrator-like diction (as if addressed to the reader) within Lily's indirect discourse unmasks the text's critical glances at a society that exploits women like Lily with no economic independence.

The text's dialogic structure proceeds to present, in Bakhtin's words, a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses" (1984, 6) by shifting its focus from the point of view of Lily to other male characters through whose eyes we begin to see the constructions of the New Woman. Simon Rosedale, a wealthy Jewish businessman, represents the "other" in the eyes of Old New York because he was not born into this system. He has already mastered the principles of Wall Street and become wealthy but he is "still at a stage in his social ascent" (*HOM* 6) and he can guarantee his ascent by marrying an upper-class woman who will give him the prestige and power of Fifth Avenue. He perceives marriage to Lily as a business and communicates his perspective to her:

I'd want something that would look more easy and natural, more as if I took it in my stride. And it takes just two things to do that, Miss Bart: money, and the right woman to spend it [...] I want my wife to make all the other women feel small. I'd never grudge a dollar that was spent on that. (175-76)

Rosedale here clearly characterises marriage as an investment, primarily for his benefit, and he views Lily as a commodity that can demonstrate his financial power and augment his social standing, an instance of the reduction of women to the status of objects of exchange in capitalist society. This is the world Rosedale represents and the perspective from which Lily is viewed by others in the novel. In this view, Lily becomes, as Bakhtin would say, a "represented image [...] therefore the idea" (1984, 22) of male power, which never sees her as "subject". The text does not offer a solution for Lily, however. Rosedale's proposal is tempting for her as she is in need of financial support, especially after losing the legacy she had expected to inherit from her aunt. Yet, at the same time we see her reflecting on her "repugnance" at Rosedale and his character—that, for example, "Yes, he may be kind...[but] kind in his gross, unscrupulous, rapacious way, the way of the predatory creature with his mate" (*HOM* 249). Lily's rejection of Rosedale is not only her rejection of marriage but also of the male perception of her as a "commodity" to be bought in the marriage market and possessed as an object of male display and leisure.

A different point of view from which we see Lily is Gus Trenor, yet another representative of patriarchal society in the novel. Through Trenor, the text makes use of its double-voiced structure again by presenting and then subverting the male's tendency to create fantasies around the heroine. Trenor feels he has already purchased Lily because he lends her a large amount of money and expects her sexual service in return. He successfully tricks Lily into visiting his house alone at night and tells her: "I'll tell you what I want: I want to know just where you and I stand. Hang it, the man who pays for the dinner is generally allowed to have a seat at the table [...] you've got to pay up" (*HOM* 145). Lily, on the other hand, "flames with anger and abasement" and rejects his sexual advancement

by saying “I can’t stay here talking to you at this hour” (*HOM* 145). This confrontation between these two characters presents the sexual politics in the novel in a very effective and powerful way: women with no social position—with no traditional “wife-mother” role—are easier targets for men’s sexual desire than those who are married. Lily now becomes a sexual object, an easy catch, and her sexual service, for Trenor, is natural because as people have gossiped about her since her visit to Selden’s lodgings in the opening scene, he says she “go[es] to men’s houses fast enough in broad daylight” (*HOM* 145). Here the text provides a critical perspective on the way in which women who are breaking taboo are easily stigmatised and made legitimate targets of male predation. Lily rejects Trenor’s sexual advance and promises that she would pay him back; however, it becomes clear that Trenor is not interested in money and attempts to claim his “legitimate entitlement” by trying to rape her. From the perspective of a dialogic reading, this can be read as an example of the assertion of the surface narrative which implies the requirement from a woman to submit herself to patriarchy or else she is doomed. We also see the text suggests later again the same issue—single women as being gossiped and perceived as a sexual object for male gaze—through Jack Stepney; another upper-class member, who speaks about Lily: “When a girl’s as good-looking as that she’d better marry; then no questions asked” (*HOM* 157). However, as a counter narrative, Lily’s rejection of Trenor’s sexual advancement and her willingness to pay back his money, despite her economic dependence, can be read as a feminist rejection of this assertion (or male fantasy) and a challenge to this system. With this episode between Lily and Gus, the novel also signals Lily’s move from her denial of her being perceived as “nobody” to confronting this tragic reality. However, these material advantages of marriage are not what Lily ultimately desires. She wants to rescue herself from the stifling conventions and expectations of marriage. From a dialogic perspective, we see her discourse as a New Woman continue to defy the attempts of the authoritative discourses of male fantasy (or patriarchy) to stabilise her. Although her circumstances conspire to compel her to return back to the world of convention, she insists on her independence. She could have married wealthy Percy Gryce, who would deliver her a life of “conspicuous consumption” (Veblen 68), or might have found shelter in the arms of Gus Trenor who would play the stock market for her in exchange for sex; or she could have used her beauty to manipulate and steal George Dorset from Bertha, the woman who accused her of “trying to marry [her husband] George Dorset” (*HOM* 224) and caused a bad reputation for her. She could have used the love letters written for Selden by Bertha to blackmail her in order to stop her from gossiping about her and to secure her place in society; and finally she could have married Rosedale who was still willing to marry her even after Lily’s fall from her “upper-class” position. Any of these men could provide her with the income she needs “to arrange her life as she pleased, to soar into that empyrean of security where creditors cannot penetrate” (*HOM* 49). However, Lily refuses them all because she does not want to submit to the role of man’s possession. Lily exclaims: “Such a marriage is a desecration [...] I can’t make that kind of marriage; it’s impossible” (*HOM* 83, 84). In contrast to her depiction earlier in the novel as a woman who seeks a wealthy husband to marry for a luxurious life, Lily now tarries and hesitates, trying to escape from the imperative to marry and realises that, like the New American Woman depicted in the public imagination of the era, she will not be able to marry for economic security because what the New Woman desires is “real intimacy and companionship” (Matthews 98). She also understands that a marriage with Selden will place her back to what she has been avoiding; becoming what others want her to be, “it had taken two to build the nest: the man’s faith as well as the woman’s courage [...] it is so easy for a woman to become what the man she loves believes her to be! [...] [but] he [Selden] was incapable [...] of an

uncritical return to former states of feeling” (*HOM* 320). Here, we gain insight into Lily’s understanding that Selden will never be able to see her from outside the conventional framework of Old New York on women. That is why she lets him—and her other suitors—go.

After her decline in the marriage market, the text presents Lily’s attempts to develop a new female identity as a working woman. Although her financial outlook deteriorates further after her aunt cuts her out of her will and she continues to get older, she persists in her refusal of marriage; so the only way for Lily to survive is to work. Her friend, Carry Fisher, helps her find employment in the millinery sewing-room. As Lily describes her new position, she has “joined the working classes” (*HOM* 290). Although Lily wants to govern her own course in life without depending on others, she fails to do so. Since she has never worked in her life before, she cannot carry on living in the role of a “working woman” and eventually loses her job. With no immediate family or husband to rely on, Lily moves one step closer to her tragic end. Her descent from aristocracy to loneliness is marked by her movement from house to house, until she moves into a boarding house. This episode is important because we can read the narrative of Lily’s fall from an upper-class lady to a working-class woman not only as a passage that aims to call attention to Lily’s tragedy—or to emphasise her image, as Robert Peel argues, as a weak and “victimised” woman (288)—but as a covert criticism towards the society where Lily is raised and equipped for no other life except being a “leisure-wife” of a wealthy husband. Therefore it is not surprising that Lily fails in her new “working-woman” role “since she had been brought up to be ornamental, she could hardly blame herself for failing to serve any practical purpose” (*HOM* 295). In such accounts of Lily attempting to take on different roles to that which have been imposed by her society, the text presents a counter narrative of a New Woman engaged in exploding the authoritative patriarchal discourse of the era that requires women to remain within the domestic realm.

The last chapter is more concerned to show how a New Woman’s bid for emancipation is challenged with full force by patriarchal discourse. Being forced to perform the feminine role as entertaining and beautiful for men disgusts her, but what she finds unbearable now is that, as she has ruined all her marriage opportunities, there is no other option for her to validate her existence in her society. Death seems the only option for her escape. The tension between the discourse of patriarchy and the alternative of death as a way of escape is an implicit theme of Lily’s internal conflicts from the early scenes in the novel, but it is not until her confrontation with the reality that there is no other option for her but marriage that this is ignited and comes to the fore. We are given a hint of her impasse for example when she reflects on the option of marriage with Gryce that Judy was trying to arrange and says she cannot “go on living as all the women in my set do” (*HOM* 83-4). However, these hints suggesting Lily’s frustration and her lack of will to live do not necessarily depict a “weak” woman or a mere symbol of women’s victimisation by society. Paying close attention to the language that reveals Lily’s growing recognition that she cannot follow the life of traditional women of her time—her counter narrative against male discourse—signals her struggle for independence and the challenge that she poses to convention. We are given the hints of the consciousness of a determined New Woman who decides to refuse to live in the patriarchal society because such a life for her is like living in a “rubbish heap”. She says to Selden,

I have tried hard—but life is difficult [...] I was just a screw or a cog in the great machine I called life, and when I dropped out of it I found I was of no use anywhere else. What can one do when one finds that one only fits into one hole? One must get

back to it or be thrown out into the rubbish heap—and you don't know what it's like in the rubbish heap! (*HOM* 308)

The “one hole” here into which Lily would fit refers to marriage, designed to govern the lives of women, regardless of their marital situation. As a single woman, she finds herself with no place in which to conduct her life and validate her existence. For her, life becomes a dangerous game and circumstances force her to recognise that her position in the symbolic order of society is contingent on male recognition. Her social acceptance is withdrawn once it becomes clear that she will not marry. For her, death seems the solution to her dilemma as it will prevent the shameful deed—selling herself for marriage—required of her.

In this sense, with reference to Bakhtin's dialogism it is helpful to consider the constant battle that takes place in the novel between conflicting discourses to understand the way in which these discourses shape the New Woman. It also enables an interpretation of Lily's death from a positive perspective (“in a polyphonic world the hero must always struggle to destroy that framework of other people's words about him that might finalize and deaden him”) (1984, 59). Lily refuses to be “finalised” through marriage and struggles to be the subject of her own discourse. Rather than seeing her as a weak or victimised character, we can read her story as a dialogic narrative which tells of the discourses—the ideas that are represented through the characters about marriage, “a” woman's role and status, and so on—with which she is in constant struggle and that finally leads her to her death. As Cunningham notes, “the New Woman [experienced] the clash between radical principles and the actualities of contemporary life, which could portray most convincingly the stifling social conventions from which the New Woman was trying to break free, and which could present arguments for new standards of morality, new codes of behaviour, in the context of an easily recognisable social world” (16). Further, a feminist dialogic analysis of the novel opens up a critical appreciation of the ongoing dialogues that take place between different ideologies on “woman” and “men” and that create the tension that lies at the heart of how these themes are addressed. In this way we are left with the image of an unstable New Woman; or as Bakhtin might say, a character who represents the “unfinalizability” (1984, 63) and inconsistency of her subject position.

The novel ends with Lily's death; but her story, as Showalter maintains, does not end with her death “but with the vision of a new world of female solidarity, a world in which women [...] will struggle and hopefully and courageously. Lily dies [...] so that these women may live and grow” (1985, 133-49). The representation of Lily's death is only the beginning of her story that creates dialogues about the meaning of her death. According to Ammons, “Lily dies totally passive” (48), yet we can also view her death as the text's challenge to her society where Lily is seen only as “commodity”, a “product”. It is through this presentation of Lily's counter narrative that she becomes a symbol of women's oppression, drawing attention to the dilemmas of their frustrations and struggles, and the way in which she is transferred from being an object of the male gaze into being the subject of her own story; of a woman who, at the beginning of the novel, is portrayed with a conventional approach to marriage and as a mere product of conventional Old New York and, by the end, presents an image of a conscious New Woman who struggles against the constant attempts of other voices around her to contain her within the limits of the authoritative discourse of Old New York; a New Woman who comes to realise that death for her offers the only dignified route to independence.

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Robert Coover's Self-Organized World:
The Universal Baseball Association, inc., J. Henry Waugh, PROP

Lovorka Gruić-Grmuša

Abstract: This article focuses on Robert Coover's novel *The Universal Baseball Association*¹ and its progressive views of science—self-organization and chaos theory in particular—masterfully nested within the novel's narrative yarn. The study is grounded on Ilya Prigogine's take on chaos theory—the theory of “dissipative structures” that bifurcate and self-organize in systems far from equilibrium (73), revealing a world with a capacity to renew itself rather than run down. The novel unveils new forms of order and self-organization that emerged from disorder, accommodating a highly dynamic, complex, indeterminate, and nonlinear world of interconnected structures and emergent potentialities, teeming with unpredictable evolutions. The framework of the analysis is strengthened with Whitehead's process theory, underlining the dynamism and perpetual transformation of creation and its existential (in)stability for “[p]rocess is the becoming of experience” (166).

Keywords: Robert Coover, *The Universal Baseball Association*, self-organization, chaos theory, irreversibility, Ilya Prigogine, entropy, process theory

now [the Association] needed a new ordering, perspective, personal vision, the disclosure of pattern, because he'd discovered [...] that perfection wasn't a thing, a closed moment, a static fact, but process, yes, and the process was transformation
(UBA 212).

Introduction: A World of Interconnected Structures and Emergent Potentialities

Time is irreversible, its arrow moves unidirectionally toward the future at both microscopic and macroscopic levels (for phenomena as small as particles and for those observable by the naked eye). Its passage reveals temporality's positive and negative forms, what we perceive as evolution and progress, and what unfolds as entropy and decay. Thermodynamics bestows a pessimistic time of entropic disintegration, sterile uniformity, and extinction. Evolution is the optimistic, generative, and self-organizing aspect of temporality—irreversibility that carries a productive character. However, the universe of the contemporary society is no longer perceived as a Newtonian clockwork mechanism or a Darwinistic unbroken continuum of natural selection within evolution (that both insisted on predetermination) or, its counterpart—the entropic model which sustains eventual uniformity of all energy (assuming that the universe is a closed system); but as a frequently discontinuous process of self-organization, indeterminacy, complexity, and contingency (grounded on chaos theory), a postmodern perspective delineated in Robert Coover's novel *The Universal Baseball Association, inc. J. Henry Waugh, PROP*.

Thus, this article focuses on the positive aspects of temporality, disclosing dissipative but fertile grounds upon which Coover fashioned his self-organized world of the fictive baseball association, that develop ever new forms from its bifurcating patterns and keep progressing to a higher order of complexity. The study is grounded on Ilya

¹ Coover's novel *The Universal Baseball Association, inc. J. Henry Waugh, PROP* is hereafter abbreviated to *UBA*.

Prigogine's take on chaos theory—the theory of “dissipative structures”² that bifurcate and self-organize (Prigogine 73), “locally contradict[ing] the second law of thermodynamics” (Porush 57), where the universe displays a capacity to renew itself rather than run down. As Joseph Conte notes, “*The Universal Baseball Association* is a form of orderly disorder” (150), announcing the similarities between this novel and Prigogine's interpretation of self-organization, which exhibits the increase in complexity of open systems and is associated with irreversible thermodynamics and non-equilibrium.

Chaos theory implies that chaos is rooted in or arises from order, and vice versa, that chaos brings about order. Katherine Hayles explains that “chaos is seen as order's precursor and partner”, which means that “entropy-rich systems facilitate rather than impede self-organization” (9). Indeed, as the novel unravels, Henry's Association goes through various stages, from balance and stagnation (assimilating thermodynamic entropy), to high production of entropy seen as disorder (fertile randomness of information entropy)³ and self-organization (as Henry disappears), and to a ritual, which is just a phase for Coover as clarifies in an interview that he wanted to “keep [...] things open-ended” (McCaffery 57). The Association becomes an open system of evolving properties, incorporating the computations of nonlinear dynamics and adopting far from equilibrium states where new structures emerge.

Ilya Prigogine, the 1977 Nobel laureate in chemistry discovered that far from equilibrium, turbulent, nonlinear systems fluctuate and bifurcate, producing self-organizing structures (in tune with chaos theory). These systems and their structures can release order out of chaos—which is why he calls them “dissipative structures” (73)—testifying that time has an arrow facing the future which is not as negative as thermodynamic entropy predicts, but consists of positive, life-sustaining powers that compensate for the negative, unquestionable entropic pull. Each individual past (of human beings and systems in general) provides multiple bifurcating junctures—points extremely far from equilibrium at which a system needs to choose one of the possible directions/futures, and by swerving to one, all the other possibilities are eliminated (at that time in its history), proving that “our bifurcation points constitute a map of the irreversibility of time” (Briggs and Peat 144). Bifurcations and iterations endorse the emergence of new structures of increasing complexity, and even allow systems to branch off into entirely new states. The scientific paradigm called chaos theory (pioneering in 1960s and flourishing in 1970s) and Prigogine's dissipative structures that engage open, far from equilibrium systems and are in tune with Maturana and Varela's ontological theory of autopoiesis (self-(re)production), offer a revolutionary change in grasping of temporality for chaos is understood as

² The term “dissipative structures” underlines a paradox of this phenomenon since dissipation suggests chaos and falling apart, while structure points to order, which is exactly how these structures operate, maintaining their identity by remaining open to the flow of their environment and taking advantage of entropy.

³ There are some differences in the understanding of entropy for it is a difficult concept to comprehend and one metaphorically applicable to many conditions in life. Its meaning changed through time and various scientists' experiments, from classical thermodynamics theory (entropy's most widespread usage), where it means an inescapable dissipation of heat in any heat transfer, shortly “heat death” (Clausius), to Maxwell's experiment which illustrated that thermodynamic laws are closer to statistical generalization than to absolute truth, to Boltzmann's view of entropy as disorder or randomness in a closed system, and in terms of information theory where entropy is seen as maximum information (Shannon), which makes it suitable for self-organization.

proliferation of information rather than disorder, envisioning a universe that has the capacity to renew itself.

Coover's novel reveals these changes in science, unraveling a highly dynamic, complex, indeterminate, and nonlinear world of interconnected structures and emergent potentialities, teeming with unpredictable evolutions. It deals with temporality and entropy in a rather positive way, illustrating evidently the values of irreversible processes. When the fictive baseball league experiences a state of non-equilibrium, it self-organizes to a higher order of complexity, meaning that "without violating the second law [of thermodynamics], systems far from equilibrium can experience a local entropy decrease" (Hayles 94).

The perpetual transformation of any creation, its existential (in)stability is also reflected in Whitehead's process theory for "[p]rocess is the becoming of experience" (166), underlining the dynamism of creation. In one of the interviews, Coover acknowledged his "commitment to design" and "the rich ironic possibilities that the use of structure affords", stating that "game is not intrinsically so important; *what matters is that it be generative and exciting for me while I'm creating*" (Gado 148, 145) (emphasis original). Coover, as well as Henry, is interested in the process of creation, just as Whitehead claimed that the actual world is a process—the becoming of new entities.

The Universal Baseball Association: The Evolution of the System that Eventually Self-Organizes

The novel evolved from Coover's story "The Second Son", which features the life of J. Henry Waugh, an accountant who is utterly consumed with a table-top baseball game and considers one of the fictive players, Damon Rutherford, as his "second son". Expanding the short story into a novel, Coover creates a whole new universe focused on Henry's addictive playing, which eventually unfolds into a self-organizing system for "the circuit wasn't closed, his or any other: there were patterns, but they were shifting and ambiguous and you had a lot of room inside them" (*UBA* 143).

UBA's main character tends to get bored with games of chance and strategy. He gets "depressed" with the "narrow-minded historical preconceptions" (*UBA* 44) that other players cherish and with their interest in zero-sum games that can be said to decay entropically either to a still-point of inaction or to ceaseless repetitions (intrinsically secured into static patterns within closed systems). This inactivity and uniformity of closed-form systems (in this case of games) disappoints Henry for they merely replicate his monotonous life and obligations as a bookkeeper. He thus invents a very systematic table-top baseball game, endorsing the fifty-six combinations of three dice and an elaborate system of cascading charts, culminating in the Extraordinary Occurrences chart triggered by a special combination of the dice. Henry creates a system with a capacity for generating new patterns and provoking unexpected organizations. He devises a game based on complexity, strategy, and multiple variables, assimilating an open dynamical system that imitates the fluctuations of the universe at large.

However, the system is still closed and, as time goes by, playing tends to get repetitive with recursive patterns, implying stasis. Henry craves for more excitement. The game seems in perfect equilibrium, predictable and stale, maybe counting its last seasons for "[t]he entropy, S , of an isolated system increases monotonically until it reaches its maximum value at thermodynamic equilibrium" (Prigogine 60). Playing has lost its appeal so Henry introduced a second generation of players, which means that he is opening the system, letting new energy in, and discarding the old dissipated out, as older pitchers get retired. Indeed, the external energy that has entered the system is good since Damon Rutherford, a brilliant rookie pitcher has arrived:

You mean, things were sort of running down before...? Yes, that was probably true: he'd already been slowly buckling under to a kind of long-run market vulnerability, the kind that had killed off complex games of his in the past. What had happened the last four or five league years? Not much. And then Damon had come along to light things up again. (*UBA* 136)

Damon is special because he energizes the league, acts unpredictably, and pitches a perfect game: "Exceedingly rare, no-hitters; much more so, perfect games. How many in history? Two, three. And a Rookie: no it had never been done" (*UBA* 11). Damon's triumph has put the game into motion, it is considered an "epochal event" (*UBA* 15). It has revived everybody in the league, including the proprietor, Henry, who pretends to be Damon himself when he deviates "from his monasticism" and "pitches his affections to Hettie in bed that night" (Conte 157).

Henry's game system is opening when he introduces new players, which allows the system to avoid the entropic "heat death" state and to regenerate. Many seasons have passed and the same players and statistical charts were observed; there were no surprises so that the game got inactive and boring, and the system dissipated. When famous Damon arrives, he is not the only rookie introduced; what makes a difference is that his score is not just impeccable as Law's is (a senior player), but he has done the "impossible". From the scientific point of view, it makes sense because although Damon is not a perpetual motion device, he has driven the system far from equilibrium and the entropic decay; and, "far-from-equilibrium situations [are] situations undergoing a great deal of energy input from outside" (Briggs and Peat 136), revealing the irreversibility of time and spontaneous evolution towards increased complexity: "The ordering we observe is the outcome of irreversible processes, and could not be achieved at equilibrium" (Prigogine 64).

Everybody is overexcited in the fictive league, including Henry, who celebrates Damon's victory and thinks of the rookie as his son, wishing to play day and night. Although Henry should have known better and "rested" the rookie a bit longer, he gave the boy only a day's rest for "[h]e wanted to see Damon Rutherford pitch again tonight! It wasn't the recommended practice to start a pitcher after only one day of rest, but it wasn't against the rules" (*UBA* 63) (emphasis original). (Un)fortunately, Damon dies, and there is no turning back for Henry or his game. The accident drags the system irreversibly "to nonequilibrium dissipative structures", where "new bifurcations typical of chaotic behaviour may arise" (Prigogine 73, 68).

It must be kept in mind that although the system opens when Henry introduces new rookies, it is also closed from the perspective that only Henry controls it. The system is not transmuting with the environment because Henry is the only one who decides what kind of input to engage. Henry follows dice (which is also connected to randomness) that are attached to the charts that he has drawn. When he suddenly disregards dice and the rules of the game, intruding on his own by killing Jock Casey (another fictive player), he sabotages the system and everything goes downhill, and with time Henry disappears. However, as is the case in nature, new forms of order can originate out of disorder, time's unidirectional arrow does not have only negative connotations. New patterns are created, and with Henry's disappearance, the system adapts on its own and transmutes with its surroundings, opening up and acting as a homeostatic system. From this point on, the league has much in common with Ilya Prigogine's non equilibrium systems, displaying spontaneous occurrence of organized structures and evolution in internal arrangement.

In order to understand how the Association evolved, the beginning of the novel should be addressed and the most capable pitcher of that time, Swanee Law. He was a

seven-year veteran whose fast ball “got faster every year, most consistent, most imperturbable”, yet who is “never an easy man to get along with, too pushy, too much steam” (*UBA* 5). Although his personality is not pleasant, it demonstrates his efficiency within the baseball system. The last line alludes to his ability to control entropy, the metaphor of the steam engine proving his effectiveness. Law is also obsessed with his own statistical progress (as well as Henry is fascinated with statistics): “Law knew what he had going for himself: whenever sportswriters interviewed him, they were shown large charts he kept tacked to his wall, indicating his own game-by-game progress in comparison with that of the five men in history” (*UBA* 144-45). His record is more than solid, which makes him reliable. Law’s near future and therefore the system’s future (unless some major fluctuations or anomalies occur) is predictable, except that he is getting older with every season—the processes of his system irreversible. Jackson Cope reveals that Law presents the “law of averages, the opposite of Damon Rutherford who breaks them” (Cope 44). Unlike Law, who is stable and spreads equilibrium, “Damon/demon” is associated with turbulence and Maxwell’s Demon, a machine that could stop the entropic pull.⁴ He has brought enormous joy to Henry and originated a bifurcating evolution of the dull system (until then) by activating it.

Henry knows that the system will not collapse if he opens it up; he is sorting out “hot and cold molecules”, associated with Maxwell’s Demon (Maxwell 328), retiring old and engaging new players. He acts as a sort of a “demon”⁵ and Law helps out with his good record so that the system seems in balance: approximately the same amount of energy is injected into the system as is dissipated. However, balanced systems are more prone to the entropic pull because of their equilibrium. Henry is also aware that Law is an “old eagle” (*UBA* 144), his time within the league is slowly but definitely running out, he is getting older, and the system stale. Henry needs more energy to activate the system, which Damon finally provides.

As is so often the case in nature, an outside source of energy can trigger the transformation of the system, involving a succession of bifurcations. As Prigogine notes, “[n]ature is indeed related to the creation of unpredictable novelty, where the possible is richer than the real” (72). Although Damon has brought the game alive again, he soon dies being hit by a beanball in a third consecutive roll of triple ones. Henry must obey the rules that he had created and let the boy go, otherwise all is meaningless. Damon proves to be one of those extremely rare forces in nature since he has done the “impossible” when pitching a perfect game, and now the least expected has happened, which brings the Extraordinary Occurrences Chart into play:

This was the only chart Henry still hadn’t memorized. For one thing, it didn’t get used much, seldom more than once a season; for another, it was pretty complicated. Stars and Aces could lose their special ratings, unknowns could suddenly rise. (*UBA* 69)

⁴James Clerk Maxwell envisioned a tiny being that could control dissipation of energy by separating fast molecules from slow ones in a closed system, so that the entropy would decrease, “in a contradiction to the second law of thermodynamics” (Maxwell 328)

⁵ Another postmodern author, Thomas Pynchon, used Maxwell’s Demon theory in his novel *The Crying of Lot 49*, where apart from the experiment, he introduces the main character Oedipa as a sort of a “demon”, who strives to make some order and stop the entropic decay of the system that is dissipating. For further discussion of entropy in Pynchon’s novel, see my article “Irreversible Time and Entropy in Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*” (*Athens Journal of Philology*. Available online 11 September 2017. <https://www.athensjournals.gr/philology/2017-1-X-Y-Grmusa.pdf>).

When Damon dies, Henry is crushed and this perturbation brings the system far from equilibrium and into instability, testifying to the irreversibility of time.

Henry wants vengeance. He intrudes—setting the dice so that Casey dies. This is not an accident as was Damon's death, this is a murder committed by the maker, and it makes the game meaningless because Henry did not follow the rules, he crossed the line and there is no return. Prigogine explains that “[m]atter acquires new properties when far from equilibrium in that fluctuations and instabilities are now the norm. Matter becomes more ‘active’” (65). Indeed, soon after that Henry disappears, the system is left on its own, as it turned out to be for the best, for it started to function as homeostasis, adopting in response to the environment:

Far from representing a striving toward deadly dissolution [of the sort one finds in thermodynamic equilibrium], the tendency to homeostasis ha[s] come about in biological evolution as a means of preserving life. Instead of the stagnation created by a state of maximum entropy, the open system of the organism constitute[s] a steady stream of absorbed and expended energy. (Arnheim 47)

With Henry gone, the system is completely open to exchange energy and information with its environment, susceptible to multiple fluctuations, granted by unpredictable and irreversible temporality. It is ready to evolve on its own.

Biology and paleontology teach us there exist a multiplicity of evolutions. As Stephen Gould, the famous paleontologist and evolutionary biologist demonstrated, some species as bacteria have not evolved much, remaining basically the same since the Precambrian era, while others have evolved dramatically, and often over short time scales. As Gould notes,

[t]o understand the events and generalities of life's pathway, we must go beyond principles of evolutionary theory to a paleontological examination of the contingent pattern of life's history on our planet—the single actualized version among millions of plausible alternatives that happened not to occur. Such a view of life's history is highly contrary both to conventional deterministic models of Western science and to the deepest social traditions and psychological hopes of Western cultures for a history culminating in humans as life's highest expression and intended planetary steward. (84)

It so happened that the self-regulating system (that initiated as Henry's invention) evolved positively in time, “highly organized thanks to temporal, irreversible, nonequilibrium processes. No formulation of the laws of nature that does not take into account this constructive role of time can ever be satisfactory” (Prigogine 56). Coover does not provide a thorough explanation about the stages of the system's evolution after Henry is gone. The fluctuations, iterations, and adaptations of the system that took place afterwards are unknown since the story does not progress slowly, but suddenly jumps to its conclusive phase, and the system's final stage (as the novel ends) appears as just one of the stages the Association will go through.

The final chapter of *UBA* takes place one-hundred seasons after the bifurcation point of the year LVI, on “Damon'sday” in CLVII. Henry is not there and the author has not specified what has happened to him, nor does he comment where Henry might be when asked about it (McCaffery 56). One of the possibilities is, and it is concordant with this discussion, that since the Association is a homeostatic system, it does not need the creator, for it fends for itself. Also, human life-expectancy is shorter than games', sports' and alike, in accord with the entropic pull. Just as chemical reactions demonstrate that billions of

molecules must somehow “communicate” in order to act as a whole, so is the baseball league demonstrating self-organization as “random behavior leads to a complex coupling of feedback and spontaneous order” (Briggs and Peat 138).

Still, from the perspective of this analysis, Coover has finished the novel in a surprising manner since he has presented the game evolving into a religious ritual, which associates with reversibility. Saltzman suggests that Coover is stressing the communion: “a merging of sides in the collective, faithful center” (60), as opposed to competing. This is easily connected with homeostasis if we look at its self-regulating process which maintains stability while adjusting to changing conditions, implying the working of the whole. From ancient times, ceremonies, rituals and practices alike were used as vehicles to restore the balance and security of various systems. It means that the ritual, “Damonday”, protects the system, dragging it closer to equilibrium and towards thermodynamic entropy if sustained for a longer period, recalling the beginning of the novel when Law was considered the vehicle of balance, and yet the system was turning dull. This would imply that (if the novel is to be looked at from the “nonequilibrium”, “irreversible” perspective) what we have a peak at in the end of the novel is just a phase, “keeping things open-ended” (McCaffery 57).

It could be said that the ritual indicates some recurrence for “Damonday” presents new generations of players to the Association even when Henry is gone. The fluctuations continue and the system will evolve into something else, the irreversibility of time is not questionable. The question is just would the passage of time have positive—emergence of new patterns, but never denying its entropic part, or completely negative consequences—disintegration with the entropic pull. If the ritual persists, the time of the system is going to run out, featuring only its negative entropic value. However, through his playing, Henry has realized that “perfection wasn’t a thing, a closed moment, a static fact, but *process*, yes, and the process was transformation” (*UBA* 212), and Coover’s belief in the process of creation and indeterminism of nature make us conclude that the Association will prevail as an open system and evolve into new forms of procreative life, just as Whitehead and Prigogine have accentuated that nature does.

Conclusion: The Process of Becoming: “perfection [was] process, [...] the process was transformation” (*UBA* 212)

Beginning with Einstein and Hubble, modern physics gradually accepted that our universe is not static but has been developing for billions of years, becoming with each moment, with time rushing forward—utterly irreversible—the everlasting change/progress that keeps humans alive. Whereas relativity theory rendered inoperative the Newtonian idea of absolute time frame, and quantum mechanics abolished infinite precision, claiming that micro-world is indeterminate, chaos theory completely discarded “the idea that the course of the universe is both determined and predictable” (Morris 211).

The analysis of Coover’s *UBA* in terms of changes in scientific theories, chaos theory and self-organization in particular, is an example of how the world functions as an everlasting process of becoming and how temporality unfolds in an open, dynamic system, which displays the properties of homeostasis, regulating its internal environment through the dynamical balance of input and output, entailing continuous transformation and adaptation to conditions that are optimal for its survival. The vitality of Henry’s league is sustained by correlated strategies and interdependent factors within the system. It is a continuous process that evolves, fluctuates, and keeps adjusting, and therefore it cannot cease. As illustrated in the analysis of the novel, Coover acknowledges the negative, dissipative outcome of entropic processes, which he tries to regulate by administering

unique information sorters and energy boosters (demons), aiding the collapsing system with the input of external energy, so that new forms of order can originate out of disorder, in accord with chaos theory.

The revolutionary change in the understanding of entropy and chaos (traditionally perceived as disorder) that Coover illustrated in his novel demonstrates just how well he comprehends and digests reality for he is not a physicist. It also proves how art transcends beyond the natural sciences, both responding to and shaping culture's general assumptions so that entropy and chaos are uncovered as rich with information and capable of action and intervention. Coover's *UBA* underlines this positive value of the passage of time, the system's evolution and self-organization, as new forms of order and self-organization have emerged. These forms accommodate a highly productive, indeterminate, and nonlinear world of interdependent structures and developing potentialities, swarming with accidental evolutions, and corresponding with Prigogine's "nonequilibrium" systems that can progress spontaneously into complex ordering, delivering order out of chaos, which is "the outcome of irreversible processes" (Prigogine 64).

In the description of the Universe as unknowable and random, with attributes of an open, dynamic system, and in the projection of man as a fiction-maker who contrives ever new and incessant constructs to conquer time and deal with the follies of life and the abyss of death, for "perfection is process, not stasis" (Frisch 162), Coover has attempted to redefine twentieth-century fiction (and possibly reality) of the Western world. In the last chapter, the author dramatizes this process theme that Henry has realized is perfection. Henry's great-great-great-grandchildren validate the transformations, affirmative and flawed, productive and destructive, that they and time have placed upon Henry's original game. Once on the field, they are enveloped in the dynamics of the game for the process of playing is all that matters. As one of the players, Paul Trench reveals,

he doesn't know any more whether he's a Damonite or a Caseyite or something else again, a New Heretic or an unregenerate Golden Ager, doesn't even know if he's Paul Trench or Royce Ingram or Pappy Rooney or Long Lew Lydell, it's all irrelevant, it doesn't even matter that he's going to die, all that counts is that he is *here* and here's The Man and here's the boys and there's the crowd, the sun, the noise. (*UBA* 242) (emphasis original)

Coover stresses that being "here" is imperative, and the actual transformations that the players and the game go through are irrelevant, as long as they keep the system alive. The perfection of life is once more mirrored in its constant change—the process of becoming. Neither Damon's or Casey's death, nor Henry's disappearance stop the play since play is a never-ending process. The Association and this novel are artistic creations which, Coover suggests, assume their own identities and are engaged by those who take pleasure in them in a variety of ways, becoming and self-creating in continual adjustments to dynamical conditions and environmental factors in order to survive.

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Rewriting the City as an *Oeuvre* in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*

Esen Kara

Abstract: The study offers a close reading of Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* through the lens of Henri Lefebvre's notion of the right to the city. *Tropic of Orange* renders Los Angeles as a strategic site of global capitalist processes as well as a contesting space of resistance against power structures. Tracing the urban tension that accumulates below the city, the novel searches for moments of explosion sparked by a collective urban consciousness. The novel rewrites the city as an *oeuvre* in Lefebvrian terms, as a collective work of art, against its designation as a fetishized product. Within this framework, Yamashita's envisioning an urban revolution based on spatial appropriation and communal participation, I argue, provides a model of realizing the right to the city. The novel, in this sense, contributes to the ongoing discussions of the right to the city by recreating the meaning of the urban and imagining the possibilities for an urban revolution.

Keywords: Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange*, right to the city, urban space, urban tension, *oeuvre*, Lefebvre, Los Angeles

Since its publication in 1997, Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* has been subject to much critical and scholarly debate. The transnational character of Yamashita's body of work reflects a combination of a critique of globalization, its material effects on people and their lands, and the discordant discourse surrounding it. Major issues associated with globalization, such as the transnational movement of goods, capital and people, the flow of cultures and consumerism trends, worldwide integration of financial markets, and the expansion of a digital information network, pervade all of Yamashita's novels, but most profoundly the *Tropic of Orange*. The majority of scholarly criticism regarding the novel has, therefore, centered on its engagement with the negative impacts of globalization in all three spheres, the political, the cultural and the economic;¹ some have specifically focused on social, spatial and environmental justice, widening economic disparities, and neoliberal politics and its colonial roots.² In this study, I draw upon the recent Yamashita scholarship that has studied the spatiality of *The Tropic of Orange*, and I focus on spatial fragmentation in Los Angeles. More specifically, I offer a close reading of the novel through the lens of Henri Lefebvre's notion of the right to the city. The novel's envisioning an urban revolution based on spatial appropriation and communal participation, I argue, provides a creative way of realizing the right to the city. The novel rewrites the city as an *oeuvre* in Lefebvrian terms, as a collective work of art, against its designation as a fetishized product. In this sense, Yamashita's literary work is a significant contribution to the right to the city discourse, which has gained popularity in the fields of geography and urban studies with the recent urban uprisings.

Lefebvre's dialectic of the "work of art" and "the city as a work of art" proposes collaboration between diverse forms of knowledge in claiming the right to the city as a

¹ For further reading, see Chuh (2006), Adams (2007), Lee (2007), Mermann-Jozwiak (2011), Vint (2012).

² For further reading, see Wald (2013), Xiaojing (2014), Blyn (2016).

model of emancipatory politics. Art and literature, in Lefebvre's socio-spatial dialectic of the right to the city, has a significant role in recreating the city as an *oeuvre*, as a revolutionary space of imagination, play, and experimentation, which is the ultimate goal of claiming the right to the city. By rejecting the commodification of the global city and imagining the urban space as a subversive text, art and literature cooperating with everyday resistance and creative experimentation in the city can interrupt the hegemonic spatial organization of late capitalism and open up possibilities for a revolutionary future (Lefebvre 2000, 171-74). While representations of American cities manipulated by globalization discourse reinforce neoliberal and neo-colonial ideologies, Yamashita's literary work subverts such discourses and their commodified spaces. *Tropic of Orange*, in this framework, recreates and redefines the meaning of the urban, and opens up possibilities for contestation.

In an interview with Yamashita, Ryuta Imafuku describes "the crucial agenda" of the *Tropic of Orange* as an attempt "to shift temporal consciousness to a spatial consciousness" and underlines the significance of Yamashita's tendency as a writer to create a new spatial and geographical image of the world different from the historicized lens of postmodernist and new-historicist thinking (Imafuku and Yamashita). *Tropic of Orange* presents a critique of space shaped by an increasingly globalized world, which places the novel at the heart of a paradigm shift in literary studies, and at the intersection of transnationalism and globalization.³ This paradigm shift is alternatively termed as "American literary globalism" by Rachel Adams, in her definitive study "The Ends of America, The Ends of Postmodernism". Through an analytical comparison of Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, an exemplary work of American high modernism, and Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*, Adams explores how the content of American fiction that has been produced since the turn of the twentieth century differs from that of American literary postmodernism, in terms of how it deals with changing notions of space in a globalized world. Taking Yamashita's novel as one of those "representative texts that might stand in for the larger shift from postmodernism to globalism as a dominant conceptual and thematic force in contemporary American fiction", Adams suggests that the Cold War vision that marked the literary works of high modernism is no longer a concern in the works created in the era of globalization (251). Rather, "geopolitical cleavages" as well as "a shared perception of community whereby, for better or worse, populations in one part of the world are inevitably affected by events in another" have now become a dominant thematic concern in this new literary phase (Adams 268). In my reading of *Tropic of Orange*, I take Rachel Adams' argument as a point of departure, offering a deeper focus in regards to the concept of "geopolitical cleavages" that comes as a consequence of globalization. "The way life gets lived in spaces, places and environments", as the renowned geographer and sociologist David Harvey puts it, "is the beginning and the end point of political action" (560). Broadly, within this perspective, I read the novel as a political project that intervenes in the geography of contemporary economic globalization. The emancipatory politics framed by the critique of global capitalism in the novel, not only does work as a common catalyst for coalitions across class and identity categories, but also offers new perspectives into critical urban movements that have been emerging in parallel with globalization. Locating the novel itself as part of the literary *oeuvre* that voices a cry and a demand for the right to the

³ For a discussion of how the "transnational turn" in literature and critical literary studies produced in English speaking geographies have been driven by globalization processes, see Paul Jay's *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (New York : Cornell UP, 2010).

city will also provide a new cultural interpretation for the longstanding tension lying deep within the American urban life.

Tropic of Orange takes Los Angeles, one of the main global cities in the world and a vanguard force of global capitalist economy, as its main character and asks the question that has been lingering in multiple social, political, cultural and epistemological contexts: whose city is it? The novel renders Los Angeles as a space of power, where the experiences of the city's inhabitants from multifarious categories of class, race and gender are shaped by a single centrality that uses the urban space as an instrument for domination over people. The picture of the city and urban everyday life in the novel is framed upon a materiality that defies the abstract conception of Los Angeles as a multicultural "border" city. "The ultimate world historical significance—and oddity—of Los Angeles", as Davis puts it in *The City of Quartz*, "is that it has come to play the double role of utopia and dystopia for advanced capitalism" (18). Yamashita rewrites the city against its dualistic position in cultural and literary imagination, by excavating the material social relations below. The globalist image of heterogeneous cosmopolitan space where all sorts of differences come into play is subverted in Yamashita's literary landscape, by giving voice to the people who actually inhabit the space but remain invisible.

The claim for the right to the city, first of all, manifests itself in the novel as the right to create your own map of the city. Yamashita says she has used the digital Lotus program in her creative writing process, which lays the basis for the multi-vocality of the narrative. The chapters of the novel are framed upon a hyper-context, a disjointed map on which the stories of the seven characters are interconnected with each other within multifarious layers of urban quarters, within seven days of a week. This spatial structure of the narrative echoes the multiple rhythms of the city that have been made silent by the constellation of power and geographical knowledge. The novel thus questions the one-dimensionality of map-making as an ideological strategy at the hands of power. Buzzworm, the African American character that represents the novel's urban consciousness, as he has the knowledge of the innermost layers of Los Angeles, looks at an old city map and thinks,

[o]ld map. 1972 [...] Even if it were true, whose territory was it anyway? Might as well show which police departments covered which beats; which local, state and federal politicians claimed which constituents; which kind of colored people (brown, black, yellow) lived where; which churches/temples served which people; which schools got which kids; which taxpayers were registered to vote; which houses were owned and rented; which businesses were self-employed; which houses were crack; which houses banging; which houses on welfare ... If someone could put down all the layers of the real map, maybe he could get the real picture (TO 81).⁴

It is a conventional map produced by city cartographers and planners at the level of "representations of space", the conceptualized form of space in Lefebvre's spatial triad that homogenizes all differences existing within its boundaries into one singularity. The

⁴ Walter Benjamin, in his "A Berlin Chronicle", flirts with the similar idea of creating one's own map that shows the "lived" spaces of the city, the "lived Berlin" that is not visible on the city's official maps. Buzzworm's interior monologue might be a reference to Benjamin's passage here: "I have evolved a system of signs, and on the gray background of such maps they would make a colorful show if I clearly marked the houses of my girlfriends, the assembly halls of various collectives, from the 'debating chambers' of the Youth Movement to the gathering places of Communist youth" ("A Berlin Chronicle" 596).

dominant ideology asserts itself into this level of space through abstract signs and symbols. Buzzworm searches throughout the novel to find the real picture of the city outside of conventional maps, to decode the real meaning hidden behind them, and to map the local within the universal. The same act of subverting the abstract urban space is also displayed in the urban experience of a homeless character in the novel, Manzanar Murakami. Spending his days watching the activity in Harbor Freeway from the overpass he occupies, Manzanar performs a cognitive mapping of his own, appropriating the rhythms of the city. He transforms the abstract signs on conventional maps into the music of everyday life by conducting the freeway traffic of Los Angeles: “There are maps and there are maps and there are maps. The uncanny thing was that he could see all of them at once, filter some, pick them out like transparent windows and place them even delicately and consecutively in a complex grid of pattern, spatial discernment, body politic” (TO 56). The layers that are invisible on one-dimensional maps and the master plans of the architects produced at the level of “representations of space” unravel through Manzanar’s mapping, thus opening an outlet for representational spaces, the lived space in Lefebvre’s spatial triad where bodily experience, spontaneity and imagination appropriate the abstract spaces of power. The daily existence of the homeless is never shown in any map, because they are “the insects and scavengers of society, feeding on leftovers, living on? residue, collecting refuse, carting it this way and that for pennies”, but for Manzanar, the everyday life of the homeless is an essential part of urban rhythm. Therefore, his own mapmaking is equivalently important, because “who would use the residue of sounds in the city if Manzanar did not?” (TO 56) For him, “[e]verything had its sound. Genius disguised, as always, with innocent simplicity”, and “each of the maps was a layer of music, a clef, an instrument, a musical instruction, a change of measure, a coda” (TO 56-7). Bringing together all the sounds that are organically inherent in urban space, Manzanar’s imaginative mapping serves as an act of subversion against the homogenizing codes of conventional cartography. Through this act of alternative mapmaking, Yamashita deploys a coherent spatial politics, as it brings into play the act of mapping both in the material and metaphorical sense: in the novel’s hypercontext that shows spaces and interrelated stories in a relational model, and then in Manzanar’s imaginary mapping that excavates the sound of urban everyday life.

“The state and each of its constituent institutions”, as Lefebvre writes, “call for spaces which they can then organize according to their specific requirements” (1991, 85). In the present conjecture, the production of urban space by power structures is performed within the flexibility of neoliberal ideology. The service sector replacing heavy industry in urban areas and class dynamics changing accordingly have brought an entire reconstruction process to the urban centers, operating through gentrification. The attraction points of the city and its leisure activities have also been re-organized, and in the meantime the underprivileged populations have been uprooted (Smith and Williams 19). The most profound effects of gentrification as a late capitalism phenomenon have been seen in American global cities (Williams 92). Through the ideological reenactment of the “urban frontier” in the late twentieth century, the “uncivilized city” of the postwar era has been transformed into a territory to be conquered and civilized by the heroic pioneers. The American frontier discourse that marked the whole continental settlement process has been reimagined as a new romantic ideal during the rise of global capitalism to manipulate the class war in the heart of American cities. (Smith 30-50). In *Tropic of Orange*, Buzzworm’s narration of urban collective memory bears witness to the reshaping of whole neighborhoods and their socio-economic structures in the hands of global capital. Buzzworm’s storytelling gives a full account of L.A.’s urbanization process based on

gentrification, dispossession and displacement. State officials grant urban developers with flexible rights in their renewal projects, which is based on the displacement of people and stigmatizing the neighborhood. When another redevelopment process is required for capital accumulation, the urban wilderness is first tamed by the arrival of “poor artists” as urban pioneers, as Buzzworm says (*TO* 83), later to be followed by the bourgeoisie.

In Buzzworm’s hood, the whole gentrification process commences with an official plan to widen the freeway that will cut the whole neighborhood in the middle, which Buzzworm’s grandma resists at the very outset, and she wants to see the master plan to find out whether people will be affected. In the end, the whole neighborhood is transformed into an abandoned space marked with poverty and decay. Profit-based urban development erases the lived experience that is embedded within multi-layered spaces and opens the way for new investments. In the hands of the bureaucratic power, capital reproduces the cityscapes to extract surplus product through a continuous process of destruction and recreation, which leads to a constant uneven development. Buzzworm reflects these dynamics of capital and urbanization in one single picture:

Situations change, bureaucrats don’t. So they said it wasn’t gonna affect her. They’d be around to make sure. Make sure it took five years to clear out the houses. Make sure the houses left to be broken and tagged. Let the houses be there for everyone to see. Use for illegal purposes. Pass drugs. House homeless. Make sure the ramp took another five years. Slow down the foot traffic and the flow. Break down the overpass crossing the freeway. Make it impossible for people to pass. Stop people from using the shops that used to be convenient. Stop people from coming to her dress shop. Used to be a respectable shop. Anybody who’s anybody, she did it custom. Haute couture. Entire wedding line-ups. Now homeless, dope dealers, prostitutes only ones passing her shop. No master plan. No ma’am. Wasn’t gonna affect her no way (*TO* 83).

In L.A.’s urban history, gentrification is edged with freeway construction and transportation projects that mostly affect the neighborhoods of low-income people.⁵ While freeway constructions transform the whole neighborhood in Buzzworm’s narrative, human needs are entirely disregarded. The once familiar places then turn into a source of “urban alienation”, in Fredric Jameson’s terms, which result from “the mental unmapability of local cityscapes” (282). Urban renewal projects erase the collective memory of the city’s inhabitants, alienate them from their lived spaces, and commodify public spaces: “Now here or there is a shopping mall, locate the old house somewhere between Mrs. Field’s and the Footlocker. Or here or there is now the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, or Union Station, or the Bank of America, Arco Towers, New Otani, or the freeway” (*TO* 82). If the form of a city changes faster than a human’s heart, as Baudelaire says of the nineteenth century Paris, Buzzworm, struggles to trace those changes and map the spaces that are no longer mappable. Buzzworm’s chapters/spatial experience in the hyper-context rewrite the city as a text outside the destructive practices of power and recreate the urban fabric that is deprived of lived urban experience (Lloyd 26).

Against the strategy to reproduce urban spaces and reorganize social relations accordingly, Buzzworm imagines a revival of urban consciousness, an alternative way of performing urban everyday life. This is a counter-plan that directly targets gentrification, starting from one’s own neighborhood: “Buzzworm had a plan. Called it gente-fication. Not

⁵ For a discussion of the freeway construction and its colonial implications in *Tropic of Orange*, see Sarah D. Wald (2013).

the sort brings in poor artists. Sort where people living there become their own gentry” (*TO* 83). This is an anti-colonial/capitalist move that prioritizes the will of the people over power, a subversive tactic that resonates with Lefebvre’s notion of the right to the city: “Self gentrification by a self-made set of standards and respectability. Do-it-yourself gentrification” (*TO* 83). Buzzworm imagines a class strategy through recreating the city as an *oeuvre* in Lefebvrian terms, the city as a collective work not as a product (2000, 75). While gentrification processes produce the city as a product on the basis of the changing needs of global capital, gente-fication locates human needs at the center with the direct agency of those who inhabit the city. Inhabiting then becomes a conscious act, free from the prescriptions of commodified everyday life. This is a coalition to be formed across racial and class lines, as the word “gente” in Spanish suggests: “Latinos had this word, gente. Something translated like us. Like folks. That sort of gente-fication. Restore the neighbourhood. Clean up the streets. Take care of the people. Trim and water the palm trees” (*TO* 83). A collective consciousness will bring the “gente” together for the appropriation of the city, which will evolve into the participation of the decision-making process. Gente-fication, as “DIY gentrification” entails people’s involvement into shaping their own “representational spaces”, where the lived experience of people comes alive. The urban inhabitants in Buzzworm’s plan challenges hegemonic spatial practices, first by claiming their right to these spaces, which is, in most cases, simultaneous with the right to exist, and then by making decisions, collectively, for the transformation of these spaces. Buzzworm’s idea of “gente-fication” as a political alliance should first start on the level of everyday life and evolve into a form of urban citizenship that focuses on self-management in the city. From this idea of claiming the right to the city through collective participation, the narration takes a further step and imagines an urban revolution towards the end of the novel, through a full-scale occupation of the heart of the city by all its disenfranchised populations.

Written five years after the 1992 LA Uprising, *Tropic of Orange* pictures the period leading up to the uprising by focusing on socio-spatial injustice and the tension it creates below. The novel also envisions an uprising in the end, with an alternative urban dwelling created by the homeless of the city. Occupation of the Harbor Freeway and the reinterpretation of public space by Manzanar Murakami and the homeless community stages the most emblematic moment of claiming the right to the city. The idea of gente-fication takes on a revolutionary form by reimagining the city as an *oeuvre* through the active participation of people. For Lefebvre, a collective urban consciousness bears capacity to destroy the ideology of consumption, and to break the spatial barriers, by creating the “*urban man* for whom and by whom the city, and his own daily life in it, become the *oeuvre*, *appropriation*, use value (and not exchange value), by using all the means of science, art, technology” (2000, 80) (emphasis original). The appropriation of the freeway and the intervention on the city’s daily life that is organized upon consumption practices leads to an urban experiment in the novel carried out on the freeway as a symbolic urban space. It is an act of reclaiming the use-value of the urban space against its exchange-value and an act of recreating the city as a collective work of art, in the agency of the very people who have been subject to segregation and who have been rendered invisible on city maps. The homeless as the “scavengers of society” (*TO* 56), as Manzanar once puts it, start the movement from the very below, and the occupation soon transforms into participation of those whose right to the city is stripped of by the decision-making centers.

Once a surgeon, and a respectful member of the Asian-American community in Los Angeles, Manzanar is “one of Bartleby’s literary descendants”, who “decidedly occupies

the premises of freedom” (Manzanas and Benito 56). Wall Street as the supreme symbol of American capitalism and New York City as its spatially designated territory, in the context of Los Angeles, becomes the infamous network of freeways that dramatically embody globalized capitalism on a spatial level. The homeless man occupying the overpass on the freeway thus stands for all that is wrong with L.A.’s spatiality. Being “the first sansei born in captivity” (TO 108), Manzanar’s name comes from a Japanese-American internment camp during World War II, “Manzanar Concentration Camp”, which suggests “that archetypal Japanese American trauma may be at the root of his eventual unhinging, as well as of his acute sensitivity to the sounds of our civilization” (Rody 126). Manzanar thus fits well into his characterization as a disobedient figure unsettling the borders, by first severing all of his ties with society and then by claiming public property as a homeless man. He has no possessions except for a few things of personal value that he carries everywhere, in the pockets of his black trench-coat, which makes him look like a noir version of American mobility. As a subversive figure, he lives outside time-space concepts and abstract measurements of modernity. As an occupant of the freeway, he “sensed the time of the day through his feet, through the vibration rumbling through the cement and steel, and by the intervals of vehicles passing beneath him” (TO 34). His becoming “a fixture on the freeway overpass much like a mural or a traffic information sign or a tagger’s mark” (TO 36) also reverses the ideology that lies behind monument building, a bourgeoisie strategy to concretize domination over the cityscape and its residents. His physical occupation of the overpass serves as a mimicry against the monumental city design that alienates human bodies and their lived experience. Against the order of “human civilization” that “covered everything in layers, generations of building upon building upon building the residue, burial sites, and garbage that defined people after people for centuries” (TO 170), Manzanar rewrites an alternative geography through his own spatial excavation.

In a city where the homeless is either criminalized or rendered invisible, Manzanar is pictured as a resident, who knows more about the city than anyone else: “No one was more at home in L.A. than this man [...] It was suggested that he could be taken by helicopter and left on a mountain top [...] But those who knew Manzanar knew that he would find his way back, track the sounds back to the city, to the din of traffic and the commerce of dense humanity and the freeway” (TO 36-7). However, with his public visibility on the freeway overpass, a spot located at the heart of the city, he stands as a disruptive figure, as an alien for the positive image of the city. He also poses a threat, not only to the city’s image, but also to his ethnic roots as well; “[t]he Japanese American community had apologized for this blight on their image as the Model Minority. They had attempted time after time to remove him from his overpass, from his eccentric activities, to no avail ... Manzanar was destined for greater vistas” (TO 37). Watching all the details of everyday life on the freeway, Manzanar aspires “to create the great mind of music” (TO 57) out of the traffic on a highway interchange. The rhythms of the city that are seemingly lost in the busy freeway traffic are collected and transformed into an urban orchestra that creates the *oeuvre* in the city. “The great flow of humanity” is what he hears running “below and beyond his feet in every direction, pumping and pulsating, that blood connection, the great heartbeat of a great city” (TO 36). Freeway interchange as a microcosm of the city pampers out all of the unique details of everyday life into a chaos with no rhythm, a cacophony with no differences. “Noise, chaotic, has no rhythm”, Lefebvre writes in *Rhythmanalysis*, “[h]owever, the attentive ear begins to separate out, to distinguish the sources, to bring them back together by perceiving the interactions” (28). Manzanar, in that sense, finds meaning in murmurs and noises in the freeway traffic, and appropriates them into a work of art, against an alienating urbanization that restricts

everyday life into a single linear flow. The freeway as an embodiment of L.A.'s hyper mobility becomes the very source of the *oeuvre*, and he transforms every piece of this spectacle into a new melody; "[t]he complexity of human adventure over lines of transit fascinated him. The mass of people flowing to work and play, the activity of minds muddling over current affairs, love affairs, the absence of affairs, in automatic, toward destinations beyond streets, parking lots, or driveways" (*TO* 56). Appropriation of the freeway sound through the filter of imagination thus serves as a tactic to subvert the very logic of the imposition of abstract space, the geometrically designed freeway that blends the heterogeneity, or "complexity of human nature" into a uniform mixture. Bringing the *oeuvre* back to the city begins as an individual act through Manzanar, but then it grows into a collective squatting by the homeless of the city, who are supposed to be the most invisible inhabitants in the first place. The Harbor freeway as a monumental urban symbol stages the most climactic moments of the novel, during which "LA's manifest mobility becomes a trap where nobody moves" (Manzanas and Benito 56). Here, the history of the Harbor Freeway, from the process of its conception as an abstract master plan to the whole construction process, exemplifies the neocolonial spatial intervention that subjected Buzzworm's family and neighborhood to dispossession and displacement through gentrification.

Manzanar's act of occupation, which is complemented by the homeless community heading onto the freeway and claiming an iconic public space, should thus be taken not only as an act of struggle for the right to the city, but also, to borrow a line from Rimbaud, as a "march of vengeance" against a colonial history (Rimbaud 123). During the non-stop freeway construction boom between 1940s and 1970s, Harbor Freeway, "cutting the hood like a giant", as Buzzworm describes it (*TO* 33), was among the projects that displaced millions of people who were mostly Mexican-Americans.⁶ Therefore, its representation as a site to build a new and alternative community becomes a counter response to the trauma inflicted on the displaced people of the time, and a criticism to the urban sprawl that started with the construction of the freeway network and has divided people and their neighborhoods until the present day. Now it is as though "the freeways crashed into each other like flower beds" (*TO* 237). Long before the freeway construction, it was other means of transportation, the construction of railroads and harbors, which wrote the same story of the oppressor and the oppressed in the history of urbanization. "These were the first infrastructures", Manzanar Murakami thinks watching the scene from the freeway overpass, "built by migrant and immigrant labor that created the initial grid on which everything else began to fill in" (*TO* 237). The urbanization process of the city depends on the exploitation of labor of those whose houses are leveled to the ground in the name of progress. The freeway thus provides the perfect location for all those on the lowest ladders of social strata in the city of Los Angeles, such as workers, immigrants and the homeless, to come together and claim their right to the city against its colonial and capitalist past and present. For this reason, one of the epigrams of the novel is taken from Octavia Butler's *Parable* series where, in a post-apocalyptic L.A., a group of survivors start a new community under the freeway after their gated community is destroyed by anarchy and chaos. *Tropic of Orange* thus takes the road paved by Butler and uses the freeway as a symbolic setting in terms of its role in the country's colonial/capitalist history.

The futuristic/apocalyptic atmosphere in Butler's series repeats itself in *Tropic of Orange*, on the Harbor Freeway, when a drug-laced orange carried in a car leads to a chain

⁶ For further information, see Estrada (2005).

of accidents and brings about the main catastrophic moment of the novel. The accident causes a fire in the nearby homeless encampment, and then the homeless head to the freeway, claiming it as a public space. The tension that has been growing down below the city soon grows into chaos and anarchy, and in the end a total collective intervention. Ironically enough, it is a hemispheric drug cartel that causes the accident while smuggling oranges filled with drugs. Economic colonization of the South through NAFTA has its negative impacts on the Northern hemisphere as well, and the orange, though one of the symbols of shiny L.A., becomes an import product for Californians: “Brazil exports to Honduras. Honduras to Guatemala, Guatemala to México, and México to the U.S. Then it’s cool even though everyone knows the orange harvest is dead in México in June. Keeps everyone in business” (*TO* 244). The accident caused by the orange as a symbol of neoliberal economic policies, thus, ironically, becomes an instrument that opens up the potential to claim urban space. The underground life and its clandestine culture under the freeway come into view and an alternative community organizes itself on the freeway at the heart of the city. A single disruptive moment, along with the music Manzanar creates out of the traffic, is revolutionized into a new model of spatial experience, and “[i]n a matter of minutes, life filled a vacuum, reorganizing itself in predictable and unpredictable ways” (*TO* 121).

The “spontaneous theatricalization” and the “simultaneity and encounter” of “representational spaces”, to borrow from Lefebvre, now dominate the public space (2000, 113-14). Creativity and laughter become the very sources out of which an urban form of subversion arises. As urban dwellers that are disenfranchised from their right to participate in the production and distribution of urban space, which is the basic tenet of Lefebvre’s formulation of the right to the city, the homeless community uses the freeway as a center to recreate the *oeuvre* through art, music, performance and poetry. “Poiesis”, as the origin of the word “poetry”, meaning “to make” in Greek, becomes the basic tenet in the creation of the city as an *oeuvre*, “a feature, which contrasts with the irreversible tendency towards money and commerce, towards exchange and *products*” (Lefebvre 2000, 66) (emphasis original). A festive atmosphere now prevails on the freeway, full of chatter and sound. “It was one of those happy riots”, Manzanar thinks, with “an uncanny sense of elasticity of the moment, of time and space” (*TO* 122-3). The linear time and everyday life organized by modernity is disrupted through magic and imagination, and the monumental spaces of the urbanscape are collectively distorted. On the scene, when Buzzworm looks at the overpass Manzanar is standing on, the structure seems “stretched out, curved and maybe longer even”, and he wonders if concrete could do something like that (*TO* 188). Even the Hollywood Sign, L.A.’s landmark and one of the most famous American cultural icons, is not a fixed image anymore, as Gabriel observes. “Either it’s coming closer this way, or we’re going closer that way” (*TO* 189). The architecture and planning of urban space in the hands of an accumulation-driven ideology produces public spheres that lack spontaneous creative action, and to change these homogeneous cityscapes on behalf of use-value, as Lefebvre argues, it is the inhabitants who should “insert themselves, to take charge of them, to appropriate them; and this by inventing, by sculpting space [...] by giving themselves rhythms” (2000, 105). The concrete monuments as embodiments of an abstract hegemonic power in urban space are thus reshaped collectively as a claim for the right to the city.

The occupation of the freeway as an embodiment of neoliberal urban architecture also develops into a reinterpretation of democratic public space. Occupation of the freeway by the homeless community that has been criminalized by the exclusionary urban politics offers new meanings to the use of public space. People defy the increasing privatization of public spaces in neoliberal cities through collective appropriation. They bring out their

lived experience and perform it publicly outside control mechanisms. The lived experience of people becomes visible and posits a challenge to the traditional public spaces of the first world global city. In this sense, the representation of spatial appropriation in the novel contributes to the radical politics that envision the creation of alternative public spaces based on the right to the city. Private property is transformed into public property, and the vehicles left empty on the freeway in the wake of the chaotic moment become home for the homeless of the city. In this way, the homeless also “challenge neoliberal logic that favors private property over collective ownership and ensure mobility for the wealthy and privileged and immobility for the poor and displaced” (Wald 87). To appropriate private property thus becomes a political act of reclaiming the use-value in urban space:

The vans and camper trailers went first; then the gas guzzlers—oversized Cadillacs with their spacious pink and red vinyl interiors, and blue Buicks. A sleek white limousine with black interior was in particular favor. A spacious interior with storage space was favored, while the exterior condition of a car was deemed of secondary importance [...] Boxy Volvos and Mercedes, and Taurus station wagons, had the advantages of space and sturdy structure [...] Compacts were more popular than two-seater sports cars. Porsches, Corvettes, Jaguars, and Miatas were suddenly relegated to the status of sitting or powder rooms or even telephone booths [...] Convertibles remained as before: toys. Children clambered over them; adults sat in them and laughed. (TO 121)

The cars are chosen and appropriated not according to their prices set in the market, but on the basis of space and use they provide. Reclaiming use-value of the cars by appropriating them into shelter as a basic human necessity later opens up new experiments for an alternative society. Members of the freeway community create their own performance group, LAPD, the Los Angeles Poverty Department, as a mockery of the Los Angeles Police Department (TO 190). A state apparatus that is often associated with police brutality and racism comes under attack by its alternative version, the Los Angeles Poverty Department, through laughter and bodily performance. This is also among one of the many nuances in the novel regarding the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising, as it was police brutality that sparked it at the outset. Along with the LAPD, the mainstream media and its hypocrisy also become another target for the community on the freeway, which is another reference to the uprising in the novel, because the wide media coverage of the event is known to have manipulated people through the use of certain images of violence. In the aftermath of the L.A. Uprising, *Time* critic Richard Schickel blamed the media for inventing “a mythical city” and not questioning the authorities “about the patterns of urban unrest” (Schickel). This method of coverage is still cited as an example to display the flaws within American media, particularly as coverage of similar uprisings in American cities today continues in a comparable fashion. The way that the US media covered the recent uprisings in Ferguson (2014) and Baltimore (2015), for instance, have also been compared with the 1992 Uprising and harshly criticized by popular figures, such as John Stewart (Feeney, *Time*).

The biased content created by the media during the uprising is later counterfeited in the novel upon a public stage on the freeway. It is an act of appropriation of the mainstream media and its ideology. A couple of “homeless anchors” are doing news from their “beat-up bucket seats behind some kind of makeshift desk with decorative hubcaps, the real L.A. skyline draped behind them” (TO 190). Now that the homeless have full public visibility, they report what is happening daily in their community: “On the local front, memorial services for Newton Ford will be held near the near the construction heap on the

southbound at Expo which has been requisitioned for a cemetery. Ol' Newt died of complications from starvation and the elements" (TO 190). Or another report informs the people about a birth of a homeless baby: "Saratoga Sara gave birth to a baby girl last night in the back of a VW bus [...] both mother and baby doing just fine. Contributions of diapers, baby clothing, and food for the mother gratefully accepted" (TO 191). In their discourse, the material conditions of urban life matter the most, so does their everyday life, which is deleted out of the ideologically conceived cityscape. While they are reporting the news from the freeway and telling their own stories, the real agents of the mainstream media are also broadcasting what is happening on the freeway. At the end of the day, the voice of the freeway community is heard all over the country.

Once the basic survival needs, such as shelter, are met and the inhabitation of the space is organized on the basis of use-value, new possibilities of community life arise. The right to the city gains new meanings through more creativity by sculpting the urban space and everyday life. An old Cadillac is transformed into an "urban garden", where the Cad's occupant grows vegetables as "a solution in self-sufficiency" (TO 192). Street peddlers, as the officially banned members of L.A. public spaces, also join the community on the freeway and report to the press about "their side of the poisonous orange mess" (TO 192). Public forums as a model of participatory democracy are organized to discuss and decide the matters related to the fledgling communal life on the freeway, while politicians and public figures are also invited to join and mediate between the freeway community and the rest of the city. Furthermore, the background music to this urban transformation is produced by a "homeless choir numbering near 500 featuring three homeless tenors", conducted by Manzanar Murakami (TO 192). The alternative community Yamashita envisions is in all respects evocative of Lefebvre's full definition of the right to the city:

the right to the city, complemented by the right to difference and the right to information, should modify, concretize and make more practical the rights of the citizen as an urban dweller (citadin) and user of multiple services. It would affirm, on the one hand, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in the urban area; it would also cover the right to the use of the centre, privileged place, instead of being dispersed and stuck into ghettos. (2000, 34)

Occupying space as a civil disobedient act against power is a long tradition in American socio-cultural history, from Melville's *Bartleby*, to the sit-ins of the 1960s Civil Rights era, and the Occupy movements that spread across the US and to the capitals of Europe, even sparking various uprisings against political tyranny in other parts of the world. The act of claiming the right to space in *Tropic of Orange* adds more to this tradition through the creation of an alternative future whose roots are established in an urban revolution. "When the members of this choir grew exponentially", Manzanar thinks, the resistance on the freeway "began to have grandiose proportions" (TO 238). Occupation of the freeway begins as an individual act by Manzanar and evolves into a communal resistance by the homeless, taking the form of a continental uprising when Arcangel, a mythic-heroic figure, arrives from Mexico and a massive group of followers from South of the continent. They all come together in Los Angeles, a centre for globalized capitalism, and join the grassroots movement growing at the very heart of the city, Interstate 100, the Harbor Freeway. The ending of the novel stages one big confrontation between the centre and the periphery. Arcangel and the growing band along with him, however, lose the fight at the end of the novel, and the seizure of public space ultimately fails to "the thunder of a hundred helicopters [...] bombing the valley with tear gas and smoke [...] by the

coordinated might of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, the Coast and National Guards, federal, state, and local police forces” (TO 239). The military intervention presents a final representation of contemporary L.A. as a corporate police state that protects private interests. The apocalyptic ending of the novel brings the reader to back to idea given in one of the epigrams of *The Tropic of Orange*: “what follows may not be about future, but is perhaps about the recent past; a past that, even as you imagine it, *happens*” (emphasis original). By various references to the history of both L.A. and the Americas, the novel stages a revolutionary moment of its own, in close relation with the use of space and the right to the city. Yamashita’s narration thus contributes to a stretching spatial imagination against a global order that maintains its power through the organization of space and the imposition of a relevant social existence.

The conflicts and challenges that arise in modern urban spaces keep a spatial tension alive, which, every now and then, creates moments of resistance that sabotage hegemony. The spatial consciousness of *Tropic of Orange*, in this framework, offers the motive of “the destructive character” that Walter Benjamin describes as one who “knows only one watchword: make room. And only one activity: clearing away. His need for fresh air and open space is stronger than any hatred” (2001, 541). In every act of disrupting the linear flow of everyday life, alternative spaces are imagined and created and destroyed, and each time another crack appears. The whole pattern pushes the threshold of the city, as another reference to Walter Benjamin, and opens up possibilities for alternative futures. Here the threshold stands for the transition to progressive movement and innovative change, and stands in contrast to the boundaries that limit or cut off the movement. By writing against the neoliberal/neocolonial world order, Yamashita emphasizes the significance of continuously crossing the threshold of the city and envisions the right to the city as a collective act of resistance and freedom, to borrow from Lefebvre, “through the imaginary which invests itself in appropriation” (2000, 155).

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The Image of the Frontiersman in Dime-Novel Westerns: Jesse James and Buffalo Bill

Krunoslav Medak and Biljana Oklopčić

Abstract: Dime-novel Westerns are a literary form that originated in the United States of America and became very popular since their inception in 1860 onwards. As the term itself implies, they were inexpensive pastimes for people all around America. The main characters of dime novels are people who perform daring feats no matter the danger or the consequences. Two such characters are the notorious outlaw Jesse James and the famous hunter and adventurer Buffalo Bill. The dime novel takes those real-life characters and builds upon them, taking away their character flaws and giving them romantic virtues such as the thirst for adventure or vengeance. It follows a certain number of events in their lives that are deemed interesting or inspirational. The dime novel does not intend to rewrite history by presenting the characters as flawless but merely puts emphasis on their deeds of valor and courage to influence and inspire future generations.

Keywords: Popular fiction, Western, dime novel, frontiersman, Jesse James, Buffalo Bill, pulp fiction, William F. Cody, Prentiss Ingraham

Prefigured by the story papers and the pamphlet novels of the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s, dime-novel Westerns both continued the tradition of cheap pulp fiction and established a new type of reading material in the second half of the nineteenth century. While they offered their readers something they had already been familiar with—a cheap access to entertainment and sensational, and sometimes violent, plots, dime-novel Westerns were a novelty because of their setting, which many readers could identify with, larger-than-life characters occasionally modelled on well-known Western adventurers/outlaws/frontiersmen, and their use of multiple generic styles (mystery, romance, or adventure) to appeal to audiences outside of their demographic group. The first dime-novel Western titled *Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter* and authored by Ann Sophia Stephens was published in 1860 by Beadle and Adams. It was an instant success selling “300,000 copies in the first year” (*Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*). Despite its great commercial success, the credit for the introduction of a formula dime-novel Western does not go to *Malaeska* but to another dime novel published later in the same year: Edward S. Ellis’ *Seth Jones; or, The Captives of the Frontier*. Modelled on James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales*, Ellis’ novel set the formula that would give rise to the Western genre as it “resolved a central problem of Cooper’s work: the tension between the wilderness adventure and the romance imperative” (Bold 203).

Other factors that influenced the rise in popularity of dime-novel Westerns were (1) the price as they often cost a dime or less, (2) the graphic covers, (3) numerous reprints, (4) the mass cultural appeal, and (5) the thrills and chills of open-ended action-and-romance packed Western narratives:

In the late 1800s, dime novels captured the imaginations of children and adults with melodramatic tall tales. Not only did the stories describe vivid scenes, but dramatic artwork on the covers also grabbed the reader’s attention. They transported readers to

places unknown to them. For 10 cents or less, readers throughout the world read about outrageous adventures and exploits. (Smith 17)

The thrills and chills of the open-ended action-and romance-packed dime-novel Western plot were bound to a formula founded on “the basic action of captivity, chase, and rescue; and the western-moving frontier, from New York to the Great Lakes, to the west coast and back to the open-range frontier of the Rocky Mountain states” (Bold 203) and consisting of the following narrative units:

1. The hero encounters:
 - someone in distress;
 - a community being oppressed;
 - a crime being planned.
2. The action involves sacrifice and risk on the part of the hero:
 - he may be a fugitive;
 - he may be a traveler passing through;
 - he may be a local resident.
3. The hero is successful; this may involve:
 - the use of firearms;
 - a battle of wits;
 - a show of overwhelming force. (Boatright 139-42)

As the narrative units of the Western plot demonstrate, the Western plot formula also depends on a recognizable Western protagonist. The protagonist of the Western is thus always depicted as

self-sufficient and capable. The cowboy, the sheriff, [the outlaw, the frontiersman,] and the pioneer woman all meet obstacles with physical strength, courage, and mental fortitude. Once roused, the protagonist is relentless in pursuit of retribution or justice. With an effort of will, he or she overcomes injury, natural adversity, and weariness. Regardless of inner turmoil or superficial appearance, the Westerner adheres to an internal code of conduct that requires protecting the weak, defending one’s honor, and keeping one’s word. (Van Fleet 82)

Many dime novelists tended to “employ recurring fictionalized versions of actual Western personalities, such as ‘Wild Bill’ Hickock and Buffalo Bill Cody” (Ramsey and Derounian-Stodola 266) thus reinforcing the recurring hero concept. These fictionalized accounts of the lives of actual Western personalities also established a discrepancy between the legendary West created in dime-novel Westerns and the factual West of one’s experience. They “didn’t report the West as it existed, but shaped the way it developed, as young cowboys and outlaws used the books to model their behavior” (Van Fleet 83). Consequently, the moral structure of dime-novel Westerns addressed the tensions present in three sets of dualities: civilization versus wilderness, community versus the individual, and civil law versus natural law thus offering redefinitions of social and cultural values/norms and possible new reinterpretations of the past. It reflected “the cultural and political consciousness of its readership during the latter half of the nineteenth century” (Wallmann 58)—either a conviction that the American frontier was still a land of golden opportunities and a place where the American Dream was easily attainable (e.g. William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody, Kit Carson, Davy Crocket, Wyatt Earp, Annie Oakley or Belle Starr dime

novels) or a belief that regeneration through violence and “conflict and conquest, not patient labor and steady rise in status” (Wallmann 66) were at the center of the American frontier dream of success (e.g. the James brothers, the Younger brothers, the Daltons, or Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid dime novels). Western dime-novel heroes might be occasionally unethical, desperadoes or even bandits, yet their righteous attention to social and cultural proprieties rather affirmed than subverted the values and norms of society thus making them the victims of injustice forced to outlawry as a means of survival in the wilder parts of the frontier.

With the expansion in the popular fiction market, dime-novel Westerns transformed from a brand into a generic formula indicating a cheap paperback type of popular fiction. They became “a significantly mass-produced form of reading matter that depended upon a set of nearly interchangeable character types and easily reproducible marketing, and employed quasi-industrial production methods that de-emphasized individual authorship” (Ramsey and Derounian-Stodola 266). The new form eventually proved to be a fad as “their popularity lasted until the 1890s, when they began to be replaced by pulp magazines [and] comic strips” (*Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*). Despite the fall in popularity, they continued to thrill “audiences [...] [till] 1926 when the pulp serials replaced them” (Willey 26), which is a respectable number of years in circulation for a seemingly unimportant literary form. After 1926, dime-novel Westerns transformed into objects of nostalgia, an evidence of “an innocent past rather than a chronicle of insipid and dangerous mass culture” (Worden 19). In addition to pulp magazines, comic strips and formula Westerns, dime-novel Westerns were at the turn of the century replaced by Western fiction (Western novels) and Western literature (novels of the West). Owen Wister, Zane Grey, Ernest Haycox, B.M. Bower, Max Brand, Louis L’Amour, and many others have given Western fiction thematic and characterization complexity, presenting the West as a place of (moral and physical) regeneration and the Western hero/heroine as a person driven by the individual code of honor, and thus paved the way for the emergence of Western literature represented by the works of Willa Cather, Cormac McCarthy, A.B. Guthrie, Larry McMurtry, and many others. The popularity of Western followed the genre from print to film/radio/television. Ever since the early 1900s, a public interest into the frontier theme has produced a continuous flow of Western films (*The Great Train Robbery*, *Riders of the Purple Sage*, *Tumbling Tumbleweeds*, *Dances with Wolves*, *Unforgiven*, *Django Unchained*, *The Hateful Eight*, *Dark Tower*, *Hickok*, and others), radio serials (*The Lone Ranger*), and TV shows (*Gunsmoke*, *Maverick*, *Wanted: Dead or Alive*, *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*, *Walker, the Texas Ranger*, *Deadwood*, *Westworld*, and others) testifying to the enduring appeal of the genre in both print and performance media.

In what follows, we will analyze two dime-novel Westerns: W.B. Lawson’s *Jesse James, the Outlaw: A Narrative of the James Boys* (1901) and Colonel Prentiss Ingraham’s *Adventures of Buffalo Bill from Boyhood to Manhood* (1882?) to show that inside the action-packed narrative, the character development does not suffer so much and that the novels have at least some literary value even if judged without the historical context. The protagonists of the two novels are Buffalo Bill and Jesse James respectively. Buffalo Bill is a well-known frontiersman who does all the right things and someone the reader is expected to cheer for and look up to as he seems to be flawless. On the other hand, Jesse James is a notorious outlaw who, nevertheless, has a lot of redeemable qualities, which make him a kind of “America’s Robin Hood [as] Theodore Roosevelt himself had proclaimed him such” (Reston Jr. 113).

Jesse James, the Outlaw: A Narrative of the James Boys (1901)

When the term *American outlaw* comes to mind, one of the first names that springs up is Jesse James. He was “among the most dangerous and feared badmen on the Western frontier” and “frightened folks even in states where he had never set foot” (Muehlberger 50). Known for his daring bank robberies, he met his end at the hands of Robert Ford, a former gang-mate “who had shot James in the back to collect a \$10,000 reward” (Reston Jr. 113). Even then, “to many in Missouri, the killing of Jesse James was a dastardly act” (Reston Jr. 118), which only contributed to his fame making Jesse James the subject of many dime-novel Westerns including *Jesse James, the Outlaw: A Narrative of the James Boys*, written by an unknown author under a commonly used pseudonym W. B. Lawson.

The novel follows the pursuit of the titular character Jesse James and his gang by a detective in disguise named William Lawson.¹ The detective also serves as a first-person narrator who, despite being not fully objective as he is on the opposite side of the gun when Jesse James is concerned, does give the reader a faithful recollection of the events that transpired, yet filters his thoughts and motives through his dealings with other characters. The detective is depicted as smart and capable as he was able to fool and lull into a false sense of security the most notorious outlaw of the West mere hours after meeting him. Secondly, he presents himself as a man of morale and principles. He did not want to take the shot and risk killing James dishonorably, even if the authorities would not care, as he prides himself on being “better than the outlaw” who is assumed to be using such lowly tactics as shooting someone from behind. Thirdly, it is inferred that he does, despite the morale he boasts about, have some ulterior motives. His desire to capture the outlaw’s brother as well as the outlaw himself may seem like a determination to bring both criminals to justice, but this notion will later be dispelled when the amount of money involved is revealed. Finally, although in a position of power, he seems awe-struck by James’ mere presence and gives him due respect.

It is interesting to note that the detective and Jesse James share some character traits even though on opposite sides of the law. Both Jesse James and the detective are extremely proficient in what they do. The detective successfully infiltrates James’ gang, whereas at one point Jesse James walks up to a carnival booth and takes more than twenty thousand dollars in mere seconds. Jesse James is a great tactician as well and uses guerilla tactics to surprise and take advantage of various institutions that simply could not deal with him and his gang due to the impossibility of predicting where and when he would strike: “We were ordered to make a great noise as soon as the train should be brought to a standstill, and to fire eighteen or twenty shots, but not to shoot any one unless compelled to, and not to use up all our ammunition” (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). Jesse James does not want to lose any men he does not have to nor spill any innocent blood as he has no feud with these people. Yet, it is left to the reader to decide whether the motive for this type of behavior is the safety of his men, the kindness of his heart, or the bullet saving. The detective is, admittedly, very intelligent and crafty as his ability to befriend and turn certain members of the gang against Jesse James was the outlaw’s downfall, yet James is the one who is regarded as a more capable man, using limited resources to wreak havoc on much richer and better equipped but also much more complacent targets. Even if his deeds were unlawful, Jesse James’ mettle is by all standards one to be admired.

¹ From this point on, the narrator William Lawson will simply be referred to as “the detective” to avoid confusion with the author’s pseudonym.

Jesse James is also depicted as a man who is not inherently evil. His mild reaction to his gang-mate Bob's robbery failure gives credibility to such a characterization: "'Poor enough, Jess,' was Bob Younger's response. 'There wasn't more'n a dozen men in the car, and I didn't feel like makin' the women shell out.' 'Good enough,' said Jesse. 'We've never yet been so hard up as to rob the dear creatures'" (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). In addition, he obviously respects women enough to extend to them some sort of twisted, ironic chivalry. Another proof that James is not an inherently evil man can be found in his talk with the doctor who inquires whether he could reform and become a law-abiding citizen. James tells him a chilling tale of serving under Bill Anderson who captured a train containing invalid men and shot every single one of them including the surrendering soldiers who came shortly after and asks the doctor to judge "if there can be any reformation, any redemption, for such as me!" (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). Those two scenes present Jesse James as a man (1) who lives by certain moral codes and (2) who became an outlaw because he grew disappointed by the system which he lived in.

James' twisted yet consistent and strong moral codes are in stark contrast with the detective's biased and self-centered notions of honor and justice. The detective is a firm believer in the system of race, class, and gender segregation of the time and when in the chapter "In the Robber's Nest" asked by the lawmen why he did not stop when prompted to, he answers: "I didn't rein up because I'm neither a darky nor a Chinaman, to be ordered about by you or any one else" (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). Even though the detective keeps two black men as helpers in the matters of law, functioning as spies and informants, he still sees himself as worthier. In addition, for all the detective's talk about not shooting Jesse James from behind, he did not object when Dick Little's wife put fake bullets in James' guns so he would be defenseless. It can thus be argued that Jesse James is a damned man who has experienced too much hatred and evil in his life to go back to lawful behavior, especially after his love relationship also broke down. All of this furthers the notion of Jesse James as more of an anti-hero than a villain. He is damned and broken, finding his only solace in raiding and robbing the rich in an almost Robin Hoodesque fashion but obviously differing since he does it for the thrill rather than for idealistic motives.

The first suspicion about Jesse James having a reason for becoming an outlaw is raised almost at the beginning of the novel, as he, assumed by the reader to be a hardened and emotion-deprived man, has an emotional moment when presented with the packet from Blanche Rideau, which was delivered by Lawson, the detective in disguise. Almost no time is wasted in explaining this as James pours his heart out to the detective:

Though married now to a woman whom I have learned to adore, there's no disloyalty to her in my speaking them. Six years ago Blanche Rideau and I were engaged. We loved each other madly. Had the course of that love been uninterrupted, the world would today behold me a reformed man—perhaps, also, a useful citizen, instead of the red scourge that I am, tracked everywhere by the bloody footprints of my career. It was interrupted. I am—what the world has made me. (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*)

Jesse James continues his confession of a star-crossed lover emphasizing his feeling of being robbed of love and his thirst for revenge:

'It was the fault of [Judge Rideau's] brother, Blanche's uncle—Henry Rideau—a million curses on his head!' growled the outlaw between his clenched teeth. 'He was the marplot! 'Twas he that ruined all by reporting my accursed antecedents to Blanche and her old father. He's a rich bank president somewhere up in Minnesota

now, but I'll get even with him yet—curse, curse, curse him!' (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*).

While Jesse James himself clearly states that in the end it was his past that was ultimately responsible for the end of the romance, he does express his regret of not being given a chance to leave it all behind and start a new life. Jesse James' story is thus a tragic one as his road to redemption is without an end and circular, bringing him all the way to the start again. The worst thing is that Henry Rideau is not to be blamed but Jesse himself, a fact that he does not acknowledge due to emotions clouding his judgment in the matter. He does not see a way out of his situation and thus constantly struggles against the rich bankers and railroad owners as he has projected his hatred onto them. He does, however, nourish a faint glimmer of hope on the possible end of his outlaw career: "Don't worry, sis. Just wait till I make one more big tenstrike, either on a passenger train or with a rich bank, that's all. Then hey for the Panhandle of Texas, and for peace and quiet with my darling. Run into the house now, and I will soon join you" (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). His words are more an attempt to rationalize his behavior as his goal was never the money or the gold. Jesse James buried most of his money and even though it can be argued that he did it for safety so nobody from his gang could backstab him and run off with it, it also shows how unattached he is to it.²

The man whose motivations are fueled by money is, perhaps unexpectedly, the detective. It was previously stated that the detective's principles are not very sturdy since he did resort to dirty tricks when fighting Jesse James at the end of the novel. At the very beginning of the novel, despite his attempts to present himself as a moral man of high principles, the detective makes his motivation pretty clear: "Ten thousand dollars reward was the stake" (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). His companions and other lawmen are driven by similar motivation as well, which implies that the lawmen do not serve for the sake of law but for the sake of money and are ready to do things which are on the verge of immorality. The problem with the detective's reasoning, although the money is hard to ignore, is that he should be in the law business not because of the money but because he strives to make the world a better place. However, he does not conform to this idealistic notion and is thus presented as a morally dubious character to the readers.

As already mentioned, many dime-novel Westerns have been modelled after actual Western personalities' exploits. The main character is usually the titular one and the story revolves around him even if he is not the narrator. Jesse James fulfills all these conditions as he is a person most people have heard about at least once in their life. He is both the titular character and the main driving force of the plot. This part of the paper will focus on the part fame plays in how the characters interact with him whether those in service of law or people who belong to his gang.

The first impression of Jesse James is delivered to the reader by the narrator who describes him as "a man of magnificent proportions, with close clipped, reddish beard, handsome, stern features, and a steely blue eye, whose penetrating glance might have pierced a three-inch plank" (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). This description conforms to the depiction of the dime novel hero as an almost godlike creature, with seemingly no physical

² From the moment he tells his wife that he wants to pull off a big heist to the moment of his gang's downfall, Jesse James struck it rich with more than twenty thousand dollars and it should have been more than enough for him to retire. Yet, it was not to be as he was a man who was driven by adrenaline and vengeance.

imperfections, while giving insight into his mental abilities. The reader knows Jesse James is not to be trifled with even before a proper action-packed shootout takes place: “his words were no more desperate and ferocious than his manner, as he spoke. Being a disguised detective myself, I could not refrain from an inward shudder, but I preserved my outward calm” (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). Jesse James is also depicted as “the natural leader of the wild crew, to whom the most implicit obedience was paid” (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*), mostly because he knows what his men want—money and fame, both of which he can provide.

Jesse James is well-aware of the importance and impact of fame and reputation in his “career path” as he himself admits that his “reputation alone carries [...] [him] through more than half [...] [of his] adventures” (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). This is the reason why James and his brother leave a big sign saying “LET DETECTIVES TAKE WARNING! The James Brothers” (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*) (emphasis original) after they shoot a detective who was trying to catch them and turn them in for a reward. They know that instilling fear into those who want to chase them will give them an advantage they sorely need since they do not have the permanent manpower the representatives of the law have. Besides fear, the James brothers also use generous bribes to retain their gang’s loyalty as at one point they, seemingly out of the blue, decide to share fifty percent of the loot from a robbery they did on their own with the rest of the gang. Those undertakings would prove to be the end of James’ gang as not everyone was as determined to help James due to the detective actively seeking moles who were willing to betray him. However, Jesse James earned enough respect to be on the lips of everyone in the area for at least a little while and it can be argued that this is all he wanted for his adrenaline-fueled life.

Jesse James’ fame did not falter even when the detective discovered that he was robbing in disguise, which was not in line with the image of James’ reckless bravery: “Jesse James’ boast to me of never under any circumstances wearing a disguise [has] been a piece of empty braggadocia entirely devoid of truth” (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). This is further exacerbated later on when another rumor is dispelled by the detective: “Then I made sure of something that had theretofore been but vaguely rumored—that Jesse James wore defensive armor under his clothing—that, in fact, he was as much coward as he was assassin and robber” (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*), and his mole Dick Little: “when I was in the gang, there used to be some sidewhisperin’ about Jess’ bearin’ a charmed life, but I never expected then to find out how it was. Charmed, indeed!” (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). Even though these statements devalue the legend of Jesse James, an outlaw who was known to have “survived at least nine gunfights” (Muehlberger 50), both the detective and his accomplice do agree on one thing: “he merely takes to concealed armor occasionally, when he thinks there’s danger of his being tackled by odds, with none of his gang at his back” (*Jesse James, the Outlaw*). Jesse James thus regains some credibility as the legend is too strong for such an implausible contrast to be introduced in the novel.

While Jesse James is not a prototypical frontiersman, he is, nonetheless, an example of it. He is physically and mentally strong. He is exploring new territories by living a wild and unpredictable life and fighting enemies he encounters although in a less literal way than his predecessors did. His motives are based on his being dispossessed of a normal life, so he has to rebel against everything humankind has built in order to find his true self. This novel goes against the notion of the hero (the detective) being free of material gains and doing good things for the sake of good. In addition, the antagonist (Jesse James) proves to have redeemable qualities, which puts him on par with the detective, and the reader has to decide for himself for whom to root and who the protagonist is. The whole novel offers a big gray area for the reader to explore as its nooks and crannies are plentiful and deep

enough but they do not take away from the action, which was the primary reason people bought dime novels. The action gives rise to the rumors about the participants in the robberies and chases, fueling people's imaginations and putting the frontiersmen of those times, whether on the side of law or not, in legends whose stories will be told in years and even centuries to come, regardless of the amount of truth involved.

*Adventures of Buffalo Bill from Boyhood to Manhood*³ (1882?)

Whereas Jesse James is more of a marginal frontiersman, the same cannot be said of Buffalo Bill, who "both created and physically embodied the essential American myth of Westward expansion" (Hutton 35) and whose life "embodies the desire for history to become myth and myth to become history" (Kreyche 51). His life story is much more prototypical and has served as an inspiration to many adventure-hungry youths: "For Americans and Europeans, he was the icon of the frontier American West, embodying all the realism, romanticism, and mythology that went with it. He brought West's savagery to civilization and civilization to savagery" (Kreyche 51). Even the full title of the novel contributes to the significance of Buffalo Bill in American history as it unofficially proclaims him *the Monarch of Bordermen*. The prologue continues in the same tone: "Glancing back over the past, we recall a few names that have stood out in the boldest relief in frontier history, and they are Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Kit Carson and W. F. Cody the last named being Buffalo Bill, the King of Bordermen" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). Ingraham seems to be intent on making sure the reader is aware that the content of the novel is truthful so he establishes himself as a reliable narrator: "It is beyond the pale of civilization I find the hero of these pages which tell of thrilling adventures, fierce combats, deadly feuds and wild rides that, one and all, are true to the letter, as hundreds now living can testify" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). His words are confirmed not only by other people but also by Ingraham himself as he states: "knowing the man well, having seen him amid the greatest dangers, shared with him his blanket and his camp-fire's warmth, [I] feel entitled to write of him as a hero of heroes" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). The element of exaggeration, however, cannot be avoided so the narrator is not to be fully believed as "certain events in Cody's life remain less clearly true" (Smith 17).

As the title implies, the novel has a chronological plot following Buffalo Bill from his childhood and youth to his senior years, which makes the narrative biographical as well. The titles of the chapters are also named after crucial events in his life (e.g. "Billy's First Duel" or "Killing His First Indian"). Buffalo Bill's mythologization begins almost immediately as the reader learns that he had shown courage and potential from his early years. For example, at eleven Bill took over the responsibility of being the head of the household as his father died from a stab wound (Johnston 10). Nor did he lack courage and ambition even at a very young age, for example, he does not shy away from going into a supposedly haunted house to get away from rain. His actions, however, were more motivated by "sheer bravado to show he was not afraid than to escape a ducking" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). In this, he resembles Jesse James as both are pushed to action by an adrenaline rush. Buffalo Bill's adrenaline rush is further fueled by the encounter with a band of outlaws who came to the same house. Buffalo Bill refused to flee but rather held them at gunpoint even shooting and killing one until help arrived. Despite the previously

³ The full title of the novel is *Adventures of Buffalo Bill from Boyhood to Manhood. Deeds of Daring, Scenes of Thrilling, Peril, and Romantic Incidents in the Early Life of W. F. Cody, the Monarch of Bordermen*.

described incident, Buffalo Bill is depicted as a highly moral person: he philosophizes about the wrongness of killing Hugh Hall, a rival for a girl's hand, even though "he is such a villain" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). When he does kill him, prompted by Hugh Hall shooting first, he expresses both sorrow (he "had hoped he would not die" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*)) and determination (Hall made him do it).

Buffalo Bill also appears to be a restless person with an adventurous streak which he (unsuccessfully) tries to subdue. This hunger for a restless life and adventure is first shown through his dealings with a stallion aptly named "Stable Satan", which he eventually captures using both his wit and strength. It can be assumed that the stallion's name symbolises Bill's passionate and adventurous nature as both Bill and the stallion are impossible to control. Similar situations and incidents occur several times throughout the novel as Bill jumps at every opportunity to leave home because his "restless nature would not allow him to remain idle at home" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). His restless nature, however, does not stand in the way to his feeling of responsibility toward his family. Although he goes away often, he always comes back to support his family with money he earned on his expeditions. He is always "welcomed by his mother and sisters, to whom he gave all of his earnings" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). Buffalo Bill is also shown to care for his friends and compatriots, for example, he cried "don't let us leave these wounded boys" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*) when they were facing Indians and some of his friends got shot. He sacrificed his prized horse to form a bunker of carcasses to have a chance to save his friends. Not only did the soldiers sing praises of him but also "the neighborhood, hearing from members of the train of Billy's exploits, for he was very close-mouthed about what he had done, made a hero of him" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*).

Although Buffalo Bill's "handsome face, fearlessness and manly nature made him a great favorite with both officers and men" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*), it is mostly his mental fortitude that shaped other people's opinion of him. He mostly acquired it when he was trapped and had to wait for a month for help to arrive all the while having a broken leg:

Buffalo Billy was made of stern stuff, and knew not what fear was; but who can picture the thoughts that were constantly in his young brain, when the winds were sweeping through the pines at night, the wolves were howling about his door, and the sleet and snow was almost continually falling. It were enough to drive a strong man mad, let alone a boy. But he stood it bravely, each day however counting with longing heart the hours that went so slowly by and hoping for his comrade's return. (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*)

Arguably, at this point Buffalo Bill is finally refined into a man as this is the closest to solitude and death he has ever been. He faces both an Indian chief and a pack of wolves and survives thanks to his wit and calm. Later he sells the pelts he has earned on the journey and gets two hundred and fifty dollars, which he uses selflessly: they "paid off a mortgage on his mother's farm" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*).

After surviving an ordeal against all odds, Buffalo Bill keeps having his priorities in order as the whole experience seems to have changed him only for the better, for example, he continues, although unwillingly as this was his mother's wish, his pursuit of knowledge: "[he] carried his books, and often in camp he had whiled away the time in studying" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). Yet, his spirit could not have been tamed by the books and

“when well away from civilization his books were cast aside for his rifle, and he was, constantly in the saddle supplying the train with game” (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*).⁴

Buffalo Bill’s pursuit of the frontiersman life is also possible because of his extraordinary physical strength which helps him overcome all the obstacles: harsh surroundings, injury, or outlaws. Buffalo Bil, for example, was able to run “a distance of eighty-five miles, and arrived at the station even ahead of time. Without rest he turned back and reached Red Buttes on time, making the extraordinary run of three hundred and twenty-two miles without rest, and at an average speed of fifteen miles an hour” (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). His endeavors and hardships at the frontier are aptly rewarded with both money and fame as he was appointed “the chief of the Pony Riders” (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*).⁵ Yet, neither money nor fame appears to be his primary motivation as he “seemed to even take pleasure in taking the fearful chances against death which he was forced to do on every ride out and in” (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*), which is in line with the usual perception of a frontiersman.

Buffalo Bill’s mythologization as a frontiersman continues with his joining the army but “not relish[ing] military duty” (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*) because he “had become too well accustomed to the free life of the plains” (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). It is interesting to notice that Ingraham does not mention what Bill did before he joined the army as this very piece of information would tarnish Bill’s reputation of a legendary frontiersman.⁶ During his service, Buffalo Bill is shown to have been able to make people look past the color of his uniform. After he saved a woman and her daughter from bandits, for example, he reasoned with three Confederate soldiers, who were the women’s family, and successfully overcame the Confederacy-Union antagonism:

I am a Union soldier, sir, I admit, and I was going by your home, heard a cry for help, and found your wife and daughter, as I suppose them to be, at the mercy of five ruffians, and I was fortunate enough to serve them. But I will not be made prisoner, gentlemen.” Billy’s hands were on his revolvers and he looked squarely in the faces of those in his front, and they could see that he was a man who meant what he said. “My dear sir, I am a Confederate, I admit, and this is my home; but I am not the one to do a mean action toward a Union soldier, and especially one who has just served me so well in killing these men, whom I recognize as jayhawkers who prey on either side, and own no allegiance to North or South. (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*)

The novel gives a few insights into Buffalo Bill’s love life as well. He falls in love with the Confederate soldier’s daughter Lucille and marries her promising to settle down but “finding he could make more money on the plains, and that being to his liking he left his wife with his sisters and once more started for the far West” (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). The sudden change of Bill’s character is questionable for two reasons. First, it is in opposition to what the reader has learned about him so far: in the past, he deeply cared

⁴ Buffalo Bill is thus presented as both a scholar and a manly man, a somewhat twisted take on the Renaissance Man, who is able to do anything and is apt in all fields of life.

⁵ There are no records showing that Buffalo Bill had been the chief in the Pony Express service (Kreyche 51).

⁶ Cody joined a band of bandits who preyed upon the very Missourians who once upon a time stabbed his father inflicting a wound that would later prove to be fatal (Hutton 28). Cody himself did, however, state that at that point in his life he “entered upon a dissolute and reckless life”, which was “to his shame” (Hutton 28).

about his family and gave all his money to them. Second, it calls into question the basic premises his character has been created upon: morality, mental fortitude, and respect. With Ingraham not even trying to offer an explanation for such a change, the character of Buffalo Bill seems to lose some of his depth, very much in line with how dime novels are believed to present their characters.

This trend continues till the end of the novel as Buffalo Bill's character is stripped of deep thoughts and feelings and the emphasis is solely put on a bunch of his accomplishments presented with little to no context, serving only to further emphasize the fame surrounding him. Some of these are the origin of Buffalo Bill's name—"in one season he killed the enormous number of four thousand eight hundred and twenty buffaloes, a feat never before, or since equaled" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*) and his victory over Billy Comstock, "another famous buffalo hunter", by a score of sixty nine to forty six (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*). The novel ends in a similar way as it starts—with a tribute to the frontiersman myth: it "has been one long series of perilous adventures which, though tinged with romance, and seeming fiction, will go down to posterity as true border history of this most remarkable man, the truly called King of Prariemen" (*Adventures of Buffalo Bill*).

Conclusion

Dime-novel Westerns were evidently a short-lived yet well-liked form of literature. They served their purpose as a time-filler as well as a source of inspiration for further stories about the American frontier. The heroes of dime-novel Westerns are often chosen for their fame and accomplishments but stripped of the context, making the portrayal positive whether the main character was an outlaw like Jesse James or a "golden boy" of sorts like William F. Cody, known as Buffalo Bill. However, owing to their non-serious nature, dime-novel Westerns dodge literary criticism for the unfaithful representation of their characters while still being able to immerse the reader in the adventures the characters are going through. This is even more impressive considering that the writers of both novels swore in the truthfulness of the events that transpired in each novel, but, as was already stated, the biographical nature of the novel is just used to give plausibility to the incredible accomplishments of the characters. Such accomplishments include Buffalo Bill's own version of the American Dream: being successful in terms of money and fame, praised by Americans, and feared by everyone who was his enemy. The exact opposite of the example that Buffalo Bill sets is Jesse James whose story is reminiscent of Robin Hood. He is a man fueled by vengeance toward an unfair system that took away his normal life and made him into a person who is forced to take away from the rich but does not give to the poor, barring those that make it into his gang. He clashes with the detective, who is also the narrator, and even though the law wins in the end, the detective is exposed to the reader as corrupt, further pushing the reader to root for Jesse James.

All things considered, the dime-novel Western is a remarkable piece of literature which has both the action-packed narrative and makes enough room for character development, so it does not feel completely empty or shallow. Its strongest weapon—the ability to go beyond the criticism about its historical inaccuracy—caused, however, the downfall of dime novel as it could never be looked on as anything more than a pastime and a short list of impressive feats intended to inspire people to do things to stand out from the mass.

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The Challenges of Multicultural London in Zadie Smith's "The Embassy of Cambodia"

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Abstract: In most of her works, Zadie Smith presents the challenges of a multicultural society. In "The Embassy of Cambodia", she portrays some of the problems of multicultural contemporary London. These problems are mainly shown through a female immigrant's unequal, or second-class, citizenship in a multicultural land, her otherness or split identity, her indeterminate social status, as well as the natives' ambivalent perspective toward her, microaggressions against her, and inability to recognize her as an equal member of society. As revealed by both the omniscient narrator and the collective first-person plural narrator, the immigrant Other and the natives are disconnected in a multicultural space. The central immigrant character, as my article demonstrates, is pushed toward her own ethnicity and nationality as a result of the natives' inherent race consciousness (Englishness) and the highly stratified social structure. Having been ignored, excluded, and repudiated, the immigrant is inevitably driven toward a radical form of religious and racial nationalism.

Keywords: Zadie Smith, "The Embassy of Cambodia", multicultural London, equal citizenship, ambivalence, microaggression, recognition

Introduction

Zadie Smith's novels mainly concern life in a multicultural (London) society. She portrays cultural hybridity and ethno-religious identities in a multicultural context. Critics, however, disagree on the version of multiculturalism Smith offers in her works. Her debut novel *White Teeth* (2000) has mostly been heralded as a celebration of multiculturalism in London society. According to Michael Perfect, for example, Smith "offers a decidedly optimistic vision of the future of twenty-first-century multicultural London" in which the "tensions between Britain and its postcolonial migrants can ultimately be overcome and consigned to the past" (95, 79). Similarly, Nick Bentley believes, attempting "to offer a reframed model of national identity", Smith's first novel "offers a competing version of contemporary Englishness, one that emphasizes and addresses the multicultural make-up of late-twentieth/early twenty-first century England, and in turn is keen, on one level, to challenge concerns that Englishness and multiculturalism are mutually antagonistic concepts" (485, 495). Critics, however, identify a transformation in Smith's model of multicultural Englishness in her later works. As Kristian Shaw states, for instance, the interracial tensions in Smith's novel, *NW* (2012), are not relieved; and the novel "moves beyond the multicultural paradigms and postcolonial concerns of *White Teeth* to provide a more uncompromising and melancholic view of post-millennial cultural interaction" (3). According to Shaw, the problems related to cultural hybridity, as shown in Smith's narrative, are "everyday features of the post-millennial urban environment" (17).

While, in her earlier works, she presents homogeneity in early twenty-first century multicultural London as a unifying element of various ethnicities, in her later works, Smith portrays the heterogeneous and disconnected nature of a multicultural structure as the salient problem of multicultural space. In her short story "The Embassy of Cambodia" (2012), Smith presents multiculturalism and Englishness as two uncompromising and mutually antagonistic concepts. She recounts the hybrid state of a non-English immigrant

young woman, Fatou, in Willesden, London, during the 2012 Olympic Games. The constitutive elements of the narrative plot include Fatou's curiosity about the dislocated Cambodian Embassy; her attraction to the embassy and the embassy's Monday morning badminton games; her relationship with the Asian British family, the Derawals; her conversations and interaction with the Nigerian young man, Andrew Okonkwo; and her representation by the collective first-person plural narrator. Smith's narrative shows how Fatou is excluded and disconnected from other races in the multicultural land, represented by her employers, and the natives, represented by the plural narrator.

The narrative setting in Smith's short story is closely associated with the multicultural time and place. While the 2012 Olympic Games were "heralded as both the triumph of multiculturalism and the triumph of patriotism" and were considered a "celebration of multiculturalism", Fatou's story "unveils reminiscences of that *old* Britain" (Pérez Zapata 526) (emphasis original). The agents of the old order, represented by the collective first-person plural narrator and portrayed by the omniscient narrator, do not recognize Fatou's social status and identity. "Recognition", according to Nancy Fraser, "is a fundamental and irreducible dimension of justice, which runs throughout the entire social field" (87). As Fraser understands, the importance of "recognition" to social justice is equal with that of "redistribution" (9). Fatou is not only deprived of any social services, but also of any recognition except for that of her Church friend, Andrew. In a similar way, North London in Smith's works, as stated by Ulrike Pirker, functions as an "other" toward which Smith's approach "has shifted with each new work, partly due to the fact that it has occurred over a period which saw visions of a prosperous, multi-ethnic New Britain replaced by a culture of anxiety in response to terrorist attacks, war and a financial crisis that made the nation acutely aware of its social divide" (Ulrike Pirker 64-5). Smith's "fictional engagement with North London", accordingly, "serves as a vehicle for general observations about the state of present-day society and culture" (Ulrike Pirker 55).

In "The Embassy of Cambodia", Smith presents Fatou as an Other not only to the natives, but also to the other already established, or assimilated, immigrants for whom she works. Following the dominant discourse of hierarchy and stratification, the other immigrants also contribute to the new immigrant's marginalization. Through Fatou's perspective, Smith "ushers in historical and present-day events and discourses [with] sometimes global significance (the Holocaust, the Khmer Rouge, modern-day diasporas and slavery)" (Ulrike Pirker 69). Fatou is equally an Other to the natives and to the established immigrants in contemporary multicultural London where her diasporic presence has not resulted in a better life she hoped for. In order to change her living situation, she put her life in danger as she decided to go to England illegally. She left the Ivory Coast for Accra in Ghana. There, she worked in a hotel in Carib Beach Resort, resulting in a traumatic experience. As the heterodiegetic narrator focalizes it through Fatou's perspective, she saw some faces of the "Devil" in the Beach Resort as she was raped by a Russian tourist ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-14)¹. Her father helped her again to go to Italy through Libya, and then to London, where she now finds herself a social misfit. Her dilemma and desperate situation in North London society are implied by invisible players' incessantly pocking and smashing a badminton ball in the Cambodian Embassy's yard. The collective first-person plural narrator's surprise is apparent at the narrative's beginning: "Who would expect the Embassy of Cambodia [to be in Willesden]?" ("The Embassy of

¹ I follow the pagination of the story as appeared in the *New Yorker*, in Feb. 2013.

Cambodia” 0-1). This surprise substantiates the displaced nature of the African immigrants in the North London society.

“The Embassy of Cambodia” can be read as a portrayal of the way multiculturalism is aggressive toward immigrants in (fictional) North London society. The narrative shows the simultaneous existence of different races without any constructive interaction between them. The only point of their connection is their location. In such a disconnected society, Smith shows how a black immigrant woman, failing to find a secure place for herself, feels isolated and marginalised. As a result, she begins to establish her own national identity as she is forced to find answers to some of her racial and religious questions. By not recognising her and excluding her, the multicultural society fails to provide her with equal social rights and citizenship; the natives, the English, do not recognise her as an ordinary citizen, and the other immigrants do not accept her as their equal. To use the swimming pool, for example, she steals the Derawals’ guest pass cards because the family confiscated her passport. She is not paid for her work at the Derawals’ house because they give her room and board: “she had been told from the start that her wages were to be retained by the Derawals to pay for the food and water and heat she would require during her stay, as well as to cover the rent for the room she slept in” (“The Embassy of Cambodia” 0-7). However, when she saves their youngest child, Asma, from choking, the Derawals’ start to recognise her presence and, ironically, fire her as a result. Apparently, her nationality, ethnicity, and race are the barriers between her and other races. By the end of the narrative, there is no change in her marginal state in the multicultural society. Her own race consciousness and marked tendency toward nationalism are her backlash against the highly stratified reality of the multicultural land. Smith’s narrative thus shows how the policies related to multiculturalism in England failed to synthesise multiculturalism and Englishness.

Multiculturalism and the Question of (Equal) Citizenship

Fatou is presented as a second-class citizen in multicultural London. Smith’s narrative pace reflects, or renders, Fatou’s increasing sense of patriotism and awareness about her own racial roots. As a result of the implied socio-cultural conditions, Fatou is deprived of any equal citizenship. Her situation is a reminder of the failure of Britain’s multicultural policies. Providing different ethnicities with equal citizenship and aligning Englishness with multiculturalism have long been among the main concerns of the theories related to the nature and function of multiculturalism. Critics consider equal citizenship in the multicultural context a marker of transition from the old order to the new. According to Will Kymlicka, “[i]deas about the legal and political accommodation of ethnic diversity—commonly termed as multiculturalism—emerged in the West as a vehicle for replacing older forms of ethnic and racial hierarchy and new relations of democratic citizenship” (2010, 3). As Kymlicka points out, to achieve this goal, the Western democracies followed strict policies “from the 1970s to the mid-1990s [...] [which] involved a rejection of earlier ideas of unitary and homogeneous nationhood” (2010, 3). Defending the concept of multicultural citizenship and reviewing the three established patterns of multiculturalism, Kymlicka argues that multiculturalism is “first and foremost about developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human rights ideals, to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion” (2012, 37). From this perspective, Kymlicka does not find Britain’s record conducive to multiculturalism; “Britain is retreating from immigrant multiculturalism” (2012, 41).

Smith’s narrative reveals how multicultural London is retreating from the basic principles of multiculturalism. As implied in the discourse of the collective first-person plural narrator and that of the omniscient narrator, the unified indifference to the black

immigrant's life and destiny and the enforced hierarchy in the social structure are markers of the new situation. The main problem in Fatou's society is that of hierarchy and exclusion. The collective first-person plural narrator's perspective reveals how the heterogeneous native people in Willesden are homogeneously detached from Fatou. Despite that, there are no textual signs of a systematic policy concerning racial discrimination, social hierarchy, or repulsion of the immigrant by the government. In contrast, finding her and whatever belongs to her strange, the native citizens themselves reject Fatou in different ways. In other words, it is the society of Willesden itself that displays reluctance toward multiculturalism. Fatou and the embassy appear to the society merely as strange or exotic objects provoking simultaneous ambivalent emotions of attraction and rejection.

The term "ambivalence", as used by the Postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha, "refer[s] to the odd fascination and phobia that co-exists in the colonizer's attitude toward the colonized" (in Nayar 8). Such a paradoxical feeling toward the immigrant, as Bhabha says, has two causes. The coloniser "wishes to make the natives more white, more Western, more Christian, more modern. At the same time, the colonial would rather the native stayed the same passive colonised subject with his exotic culture and old ways of life because this subject was predictable and manageable" (in Nayar 8). Fatou's situation is the result of the second aspect. She is forced into being a passive member of London society where "there is still a regime that imposes divisions between different subjects, and [...] this regime is still a colonial one" (Pérez Zapata 532). Additionally, her identity in the multicultural environment is not "recognized" because "recognition", as defined by Nancy Fraser, "designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects in which each sees the other as its equal and also as separate from it. This relation is deemed constitutive for subjectivity; one becomes an individual subject only in virtue of recognizing, and being recognized by, another subject" (10). Fatou's forced departure from the Derawals and her increasing interest in conversations with Andrew on nationality, race, and religion are the results of her inability to grasp her own subjectivity in the multicultural space.

Conservative nationalism should also be considered one of the barriers of multiculturalism in contemporary British society. As Ralph Grillo illustrates, although the British government has pursued a controlled kind of multiculturalism, it has always faced a nationalistic block in British society.

Although British society generally became more open to diversity, there remained doubters. Far-right parties campaigned against turning Britain into a multicultural (sc. 'multiracial') society, but there were sceptics in the main-stream, too, notably among Conservative ministers, and belief in the value of diversity was severely tested by the Rushdie affair (1989). By the turn of the millennium, however, reservations about multiculturalism could be found across the political spectrum. Opposition took many forms. [...] There were earnest discussions of 'Britishness'. (Grillo 53)

In Smith's narrative, the dominant discourse of Englishness manifests through the collective first-person plural narrator's perspective on Fatou. The narrative shows how the conservative natives observe Fatou's pathetic situation without becoming emotionally involved. This situation is a sign of the natives' and the immigrant Fatou's detached states. The result of such a parallel, but disconnected, nature is the main reason for Fatou's despair and loneliness in the new land. The narrative identifies Fatou as a dark patch in the white land. Her growing attraction to the embassy and what it signifies, as well as her interest in discussions with Andrew about Africa and religion, signify her unhappiness in London.

Fatou's increasing awareness about her own ethnicity, her curiosity about the embassy, and her attraction to Andrew all are markers of her ethnicized identity. The native British citizens only observe her from a carefully maintained distance. They are hardly aware of her existence as they do not recognize her. Her situation resembles the state of Black immigrants in the UK as described by Christian Joppke: "[e]xcluded by Britain's national community as 'blacks' or 'immigrants,' even in the second generation, but endowed with equal citizenship status from the beginning, Britain's immigrant minorities have become more militant and ethnicized than elsewhere" (476-77). The history of black immigrants' cultural exclusion, as Joppke states, goes back to the demise of the British Empire: "[t]he first parameter shaping Britain's treatment of immigration is the devolution from empire to ethnic nation-state. This went along with the exclusion of a 'colored' immigrant periphery from an ethnicized British national community" (477). As a colored female immigrant, Fatou is deliberately excluded from the highly ethnicized Willesden society.

Furthermore, the represented story world in Smith's narrative reveals what Tariq Modood, referring to Britain's case, calls "a colour racism and stratification" (9). The racism in North Willesden society, however, is not overly aggressive or pronounced. It manifests itself in the form of what the American psychiatrist Chester Pierce terms "microaggression". Pierce coined this term to explain how non-black Americans treated African Americans based on racial codes in society. Pierce and his colleagues consider microaggressions the basic condition for racism, "[t]he chief vehicle for pro-racist behaviors are microaggressions. These are subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put downs' of blacks by offenders. The offensive mechanisms used against blacks often are innocuous. The cumulative weight of their never-ending burden is the major ingredient in black-white interactions" (in Solorzano 125). Stef Craps also considers microaggressions a medium of racism, stating that "[i]n most Western countries, overt racism has largely been replaced with more covert, subtle, ambiguous, and complex racist incidents operating at institutional and cultural levels. Racism nowadays typically takes the form of daily microaggressions" (26). The natives' ambivalence toward Fatou reveals itself through some microaggressions, which inflict trauma and a psychological burden upon her. The Derawals' treatment of her and the natives' perception of her, represented by the collective first-person plural narrator, reveal the way an immigrant is misrecognized in the multicultural society of London. The implied inequality of ethnicities and the inevitability of racial presuppositions are the indicators of the dominant discourse of exclusion in Fatou's so-called multicultural North London.

The Exotic Other (Fatou) in the Multicultural Land

"The Embassy of Cambodia" opens with some rhetorical questions: "Who would expect the Embassy of Cambodia? Nobody. Nobody could have expected it, or be expecting it. It's a surprise, to us all. The Embassy of Cambodia!" Other than its name on a tag, the natives do not find anything usual about the embassy: "The only real sign that the embassy is an embassy at all is the little brass plaque on the door (which reads, 'THE EMBASSY OF CAMBODIA') and the national flag of Cambodia (we assume that's what it is—what else could it be?) flying from the red tiled roof" (0-1). The natives find the embassy strangely different. The narrator acknowledges there are many surprising buildings in the Willesden neighbourhood, but "we are hardly strangers to curious buildings, here in Willesden & Brondesbury. Yet still we find the Embassy of Cambodia a little surprising. It is not the right sort of surprise, somehow" ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-6). The

collective first-person plural narrator reveals the reason the natives interpret the embassy in the following way:

When the Embassy of Cambodia first appeared in our midst, a few years ago, some of us said, "Well, if we were poets perhaps we could have written some sort of an ode about this surprising appearance of the embassy." (For embassies are usually to be found in the center of the city. This was the first one we had seen in the suburbs.) But we are not really a poetic people. We are from Willesden. Our minds tend toward the prosaic. ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-3)

The collective first-person narrator's interpretation of the strange nature of the embassy derives from the natives' collective sub-consciousness. Thus, the narrator is interpreting what is absent or "silent". Describing the embassy, the natives admit that they "can't say for sure that it is a garden" since they "have a limited view over the wall. It may well be a paved area, reserved for badminton" ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-4). The narrator's discourse highlights the difference or dichotomy between the embassy, and whatever it represents, and the natives. By calling the natives "prosaic" people rather than "poetic", the narrator implies the manner of their thinking. Compared to poetry, prose is a modern genre whose birth is closely associated with the rise of colonialism and industrialization. It is, moreover, associated with Eurocentrism as it highlights the necessity of a hierarchy between the coloniser and the colonised. Poetry, however, is considered a genre of traditional societies and conventional orders. In this way, the narrator illustrates the natives' hierarchy-seeking perspective of both the embassy and Fatou.

As a result of her living conditions in London, Fatou increasingly becomes aware of her own marginalised state and otherness. She is aware of her own difference. She is a self-made person distinct from even her own native citizens. The more she understands the differences between herself, as well as the race she represents, and the natives, the more her agony increases. Her reflection in the swimming pool shows the way her struggling character distinguishes herself from her fellow Africans: "but now and then Fatou finds herself in the water with fellow-Africans. When she spots these big men, paddling frantically like babies, struggling simply to stay afloat, she prides herself on her own abilities, having taught herself to swim, several years earlier, at the Carib Beach Resort, in Accra" ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-2). She remembers how she learned to swim when she was working in a hotel; "she learned [swimming] by struggling through the rough gray sea, on the other side of the resort walls. Rising and sinking, rising and sinking, on the dirty foam. [...] There is almost no way to compare swimming at Carib Beach and swimming in the health center, warm as it is, tranquil as a bath" (0-2). Her background is a sign of her strong determination, which, as a significant character trait, helps her survive in the malfunctioning multicultural land. The "warm" and "tranquil" atmosphere in the multicultural land is, however, limited to the swimming pool she has no right to access. Fatou experiences the other, more negative, facets of life in the public domain where her exotic nature controls the natives' paradoxical interpretation of her identity.

The collective first-person plural narrator's account of the native's evaluation of Fatou's state shows how they both accept and reject Fatou. This is more obvious in the final scene of the narrative when Fatou, putting her nylon bags of clothes next to her, is trying to waste time in the bus stop before going to Andrew's place. While passing by, the Londoners watch her. Their perception of her situation discloses their negative feeling about her, while also showing their unfulfilled desire to help her:

Many of us walked past her that afternoon, or spotted her as we rode the bus, or through the windscreens of our cars, or from our balconies. Naturally, we wondered what this girl was doing, sitting on damp pavement in the middle of the day. We worried for her. We tend to assume the worst, here in Willesden. We watched her watching the shuttlecock. Pock, smash. Pock, smash. As if one player could imagine only a violent conclusion and the other only a hopeful return. ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-21)

The narrator's acknowledging discourse portrays the passing natives' attitude toward Fatou. They are united in observing Fatou sitting on the "damp pavement". Their affective appraisal or emotional evaluation of her situation reveals their ambivalent attitude toward her as they are caught between recognizing and misrecognizing her. Their evaluation of her situation resembles the dominant discourse of the coloniser. The collective first-person plural narrator, on the one hand, shows how the natives are concerned and "worried" about Fatou and, on the other hand, how they are pessimistic about her situation. For a short time, they sympathise with Fatou as they try to take her perspective. When they look at the shuttlecock through her eyes, they share her feeling of indeterminacy. The two flights of the shuttlecock represent the opposing feelings in Fatou and in the narrator and the inherent conflict between the two perspectives: that of the immigrant, and that of the native.

The natives are hardly aware of Fatou's existence in their surroundings. She appears to them as an object they keep under their steady gaze. At the same time, they are not in any direct contact with her; they prefer to stand away from her. Therefore, she acts as an imagined, not a real, citizen in their society. What the narrator calls "the narrow, essentially local scope of Fatou's interest in the Cambodian woman from the Embassy of Cambodia" is their shared point. As Fatou does, the natives maintain their own perspective or follow their "local scope" in the multicultural domain. However, Fatou necessarily gains this perspective because of her situation in the multicultural land:

but we, the people of Willesden, have some sympathy with her attitude. The fact is if we followed the history of every little country in this world—in its dramatic as well as its quiet times—we would have no space left in which to live our own lives or to apply ourselves to our necessary tasks, never mind indulge in occasional pleasures, like swimming. Surely there is something to be said for drawing a circle around our attention and remaining within that circle. But how large should this circle be? ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-9)

Despite their risk-taking behaviour, Fatou's presence in the multicultural society causes quite a stir among the natives. She acts as an awakening factor. Through observing her, they re-evaluate their own state. Their claimed "sympathy", nevertheless, does not initiate a change in their behaviour. Instead, it provides the narrator with a persuasive excuse to justify the natives' perspective. As the collective first-person plural narrator implies, the natives are concerned with their own "necessary tasks", and caring about the origin of a strange person like Fatou is out of their mind. Following, the narrator defends the natives' general theory about the necessity of "drawing" a "circle" around their "attention". The narrator uses this as an appropriate excuse to rationalise the detached state of the natives' perspectives. Such a discourse helps the narrator justify the natives' convention of Othering and support their essentialist seeking perspective. The narrator, nevertheless, is rather uncertain about the scope of the natives' circled perspective or about the unnecessarily limited nature of their "attention".

Fatou's increasing obsession with Africa is mainly caused by her repulsion and disappointment in multicultural London. Having been detached from her background, she has not yet been recognised as an equal citizen in the new land. As a result, she increasingly becomes infatuated with the Embassy of Cambodia or with what seems to her as "the strangely compelling aura of the embassy" ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-4). She feels sympathetic toward the embassy, and every Monday morning, before going to the swimming pool, she inevitably watches the ongoing badminton game in the embassy yard for about ten minutes. She also carefully follows the buzz of the people in front of it. Unconsciously, she associates her own situation with that of the badminton players: "The shuttlecock floats in a wide arc softly rightward, and is smashed back, and this happens again and again, the first player always somehow able to retrieve the smash and transform it, once more, into a gentle, floating arc" (0-2). Fatou's self-identification with the badminton play shows her own mental state as well. Her anxiety about her destiny in the new land is shown through her careful observation of the shuttlecock. While one player eagerly wishes that the other would not smash the shuttlecock back, the other player (associated with Fatou herself) struggles to return the blow and is mostly successful:

At one point it seemed to Fatou that the next lob would blow southward, sending the shuttlecock over the wall to land lightly in her own hands. Instead the other player, with his vicious reliability (Fatou had long ago decided that both players were men), caught the shuttlecock as it began to drift and sent it back to his opponent—another deathly, downward smash. ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-8)

Fatou automatically identifies herself with the embassy. Still, she looks at it from a distance—beyond the wall; she greatly desires something without being able to achieve it. At the same time, she experiences the same situation while hovering around the city. She is the shuttlecock "poked and smashed" between the two situations.

Fatou's situation is made more unfortunate by her own awareness. She is a thoughtful character as she unceasingly evaluates her situation. Although she is aware of the dreary nature of her life, she tries to persuade herself that she is not a slave. Her reflection while swimming shows how she is concerned with her own identity:

And on Mondays Fatou swam. In very warm water, and thankful for the semi-darkness in which the health club, for some reason, kept its clientele, as if the place were a night club, or a midnight Mass. The darkness helped disguise the fact that her swimming costume was in fact a sturdy black bra and a pair of plain black cotton knickers. No, on balance she did not think she was a slave. ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-7)

Her concern with her identity occasionally haunts her. Reading the tragic story of a Sudanese girl in the news, for example, arouses her reflection about her own situation: Is she a slave as well? In her long reasoning process, although she finds some similarities between herself and the Sudanese woman, she finally persuades herself that she is not a slave at all. Her limited freedom is, however, as she understands, the result of her own strong will. She rationalises her own opinion by stating that, unlike the Sudanese girl, she was able to come to Britain with her father's help. Additionally, unlike the girl, Fatou "could read English—and speak a little Italian—and this girl in the paper could not read or speak anything except the language of her tribe" (0-7). The more she distinguishes herself from the Sudanese girl, the more she reveals her mistreatment in the multicultural land. She tries to prove her situation is better than that of the Sudanese girl since she is not a slave.

However, the general tone of the omniscient narrator's discourse focalized through her perspective reveals how Fatou feels an inferior citizen:

And nobody beat Fatou, although Mrs. Derawal had twice slapped her in the face, and the two older children spoke to her with no respect at all and thanked her for nothing. (Sometimes she heard her name used as a term of abuse between them. "You're as black as Fatou." Or "You're as stupid as Fatou.") On the other hand, just like the girl in the newspaper, she had not seen her passport with her own eyes since she arrived at the Derawals', and she had been told from the start that her wages were to be retained by the Derawals' to pay for the food and water and heat she would require during her stay, as well as to cover the rent for the room she slept in. ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-7)

Fatou's description of the Derawals' behaviour toward her reveals racial microaggressions performed against her in the multicultural society: the Derawals hitting her, thanking her "for nothing", calling her by humiliating terms, and confiscating her passport. In this way, the Derawals' "violence" against Fatou, as Pérez Zapata holds, makes her "other" in two ways: "first, she is a dislocated illegal immigrant and second, her subjectivity is denied in her condition of modern-day slave, whereby she is objectified and commodified, and thus made invisible" (527). Despite her problems, Fatou is an optimist immigrant as she finally decides she is neither a "slave" nor a "prisoner":

In the final analysis, however, Fatou was not confined to the house. She had an Oyster Card, given to her by the Derawals, and was trusted to do the food shopping and other outside tasks for which she was given cash and told to return with change and receipts for everything. If she did not go out in the evenings that was only because she had no money with which to go out, and anyway knew very few people in London. Whereas the girl in the paper was not allowed to leave her employers' premises, not ever—she was a prisoner. ("The Embassy of Cambodia" 0-7)

As to the Derawals, Fatou, and her ethnicity and nationality, seems exotic to the natives. The collective first-person plural narrator's discourse about her and the embassy is a discourse of othering. It reveals how their presence, being incongruent to the context, disrupts the ordinary flow of life in Willesden.

The limited perspective of the collective first-person plural narrator, therefore, fictionalises both the embassy and Fatou. The natives and Fatou simultaneously exist in one space and time without exchanging anything. Furthermore, Fatou, as well as what is associated with her, is represented as the repressed voice on both the story level, or in the fictional society, and the narrative dimension, where the collective first-person plural narrator is the only dominant voice and the main controller of the narrative structure.

The Growth of Radical Nationalism in the Multicultural Space

Fatou is gradually driven toward a radical version of nationalism because of the realities of the multicultural milieu of Willesden society. The natives' race consciousness and their intentional distance from the immigrant gradually push Fatou toward her own ethnicity and origins. Despite being thousands of miles away from her own land and people, she increasingly is concerned with her own racial issues. As a result of her pathetic situation, Fatou psychologically needs close contact with her fellow African friend, Andrew. His presence acts as a safety valve to her mental tension. He encourages her to face the realities of the indifferent world in which she lives: "Andrew was the only person she had found in London with whom she could have these deep conversations, partly

because he was patient and sympathetic to her, but also because he was an educated person, currently studying for a part-time business degree at the College of North West London” (0-10). Andrew is the only person who supports Fatou both emotionally and materially: “On Sunday mornings, for example, Fatou regularly left the house to meet her church friend Andrew Okonkwo [...] Andrew always took her to a Tunisian café, where they had coffee and cake, which Andrew, who worked as a night guard in the City, always paid for” (0-7). The main subject of their mostly intellectual conversations is the situation of their own race and religion. Fatou is eager to talk about these issues with Andrew because of her disappointment in the multicultural land. When she asks Andrew, “Are we born to suffer? Sometimes I think we were born to suffer more than all the rest”, he emphasizes their distinctness. He tries to make her understand the reason for their separated states:

Andrew pushed his professorial glasses up his nose. “But, Fatou, you’re forgetting the most important thing. Who cried most for Jesus? His mother. Who cries most for you? Your father. It’s very logical, when you break it down. The Jews cry for the Jews. The Russians cry for the Russians. We cry for Africa, because we are Africans, and, even then, I’m sorry, Fatou. (“The Embassy of Cambodia” 0-10)

Under the impact of Andrew’s reasoning and motivated by her own situation, Fatou moves away from assimilation into new culture and changes into an ardent nationalist deeply concerned about her own ethnicity and religion. As we are told, she “was curious only to catch her first sighting of a possible Cambodian anywhere near the Embassy of Cambodia” (0-8). Accordingly, she decides, like the Oriental people, she and her own people should “arrange” their own issues:

She had an idea that Oriental people had their own, secret establishments. (She believed the Jews did, too.) She both admired and slightly resented this self-reliance, but had no doubt that it was the secret to holding great power, as a people. For example, when the Chinese had come to Fatou’s village to take over the mine, an abiding local mystery had been: what did they eat and where did they eat it? They certainly did not buy food in the market, or from the Lebanese traders along the main road. They made their own arrangements. (Whether back home or here, the key to surviving as a people, in Fatou’s opinion, was to make your own arrangements.) (“The Embassy of Cambodia” 0-8)

Fatou’s further reflections on her own situation and ethnicity drive her to decide that in order to “survive as a people” they should make their “own arrangements”. Similar to the collective first-person plural narrator’s representation of the local people in Willesden, Fatou, through reflecting on her own state, moves away from the British culture toward that of her own ethnicity. Thus, the realities of the so-called multicultural land evoke some of her hidden feelings. Her experiences in the multicultural land radically change her thoughts. Accordingly, she acts as if she represented her own people.

Conclusion

“The Embassy of Cambodia” presents some radical challenges to an immigrant and her backlash against the unequal nature of citizenship in a multicultural land. The collective first-person plural narrator’s representational discourse of both Fatou and the embassy is one of ambivalence. On the one hand, the natives desire to know Fatou and the embassy as they appear surprisingly “exotic” in their society, and, on the other hand, the natives are

worried about the consequences of becoming closer to them. The natives' discourse, moreover, reveals the hierarchical structure of their mentality. Their minds function based on a Europe or West and non-Europe duality. Their evaluation of the latter side of this duality is consistently pessimistic and doubtful. This discourse is, however, the dominant mode within the narrative world; even an immigrant family, the Derawals, mimic it. The necessity of the immigrants' complete assimilation into the dominant culture, Englishness, is implied through their lifestyle, their discourse, and their thoughts of and actions toward Fatou. Fatou's growing attachment to her own continental, tribal, racial, ethnic, and religious concerns is the result of her ambivalent situation in the multicultural land wherein the nature of her life and her unequal citizenship provoke her backlash. Accordingly, Smith's narrative shows how the traditional or colonial conventions still control the native citizens' thoughts and the evaluation systems in a modern or postcolonial society. The result of such a segregated society is, probably, extremism or increasing radicalism mainly driven by ethnicity. Having been pushed toward her own race and faith, the immigrant comes to a new understanding about her own role and function regarding her origins and people. Thus, the implied inflexibility concerning Fatou and the embassy in both the narrator's (natives') and the Derawals' perspectives are the textual evidence that portrays the main challenges of multiculturalism in fictional London. One of the primary purposes of the policies related to multiculturalism is to create a democratic citizenship that functions against any racial and ethnic hierarchy. The narrative plot in Smith's short story, however, portrays a London contrary to this goal.

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Deconstruction of the Personal Identity and English National Identity in *England, England* and *The Remains of the Day*

Sinem Oruç

Abstract: The notion of identity has been a perplexing subject for a wide range of research area from psychology to neuroscience due to its unraveled nature and essentiality for humans. Identity has constituted considerable body of inquiry in literature as well, and approaches to identity vary across schools of thought. The traditional view of identity entails that identities are sovereign, innate and unified. However, contemporary discussions of identity problematize such a view of identity in that it does not reflect the nature of identity. It is argued that identities are products of conditions, memories and personal choices; thus, identity is not a fixed and unified part of humans, but it is a construct that is liable to change in time. The nature of identity can be surveyed in people's stories, and two novels by two renowned British writers, *England, England* by Julian Barnes and *The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro, provide a vast opportunity to survey the notion of identity. The novels portray the workings and nature of identity from the perspectives of the individual and English nation. Martha in *England, England* and Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, and English nation in both novels epitomize the workings and construction of personal and English national identity.

Keywords: Julian Barnes, *England, England*, Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, personal identity, memory, English national identity

Identity constitutes an indispensable part of humans as people define themselves in accordance with their identity. Easthope argues that identity is as important for people as basic needs are: "Along with the instincts for survival and reproduction, members of the human species evidence an equally strong drive to achieve a sense of individual identity" (14). Due to its integral role for humans' stance in life, the notion of identity has been debated thoroughly in light of various theories across social studies and humanities to unravel the nature of identity. Various questions as to the nature and workings of identity have been posited, and probable answers vary in accordance with approaches and movements of thought. It can be observed that the view of identity has come to change from the traditional to contemporary as current approaches like postmodernism regard identity as a construct and a by-product of conditions, memory and personal choices while the traditional view of identity posits that identity is fixed, unified and unchanging. This traditional view has been challenged by contemporary approaches to identity through making the construction process and workings of identity transparent.

Exploring the construction process of identity will be helpful in understanding its nature and workings, and this can best be achieved by surveying personal identity and national identity because they are similar in their construction process. Additionally, both types of identity affect one another as Easthope argues, saying that "[f]or a better account of nation we need to understand collectivity, how individual existence is projected into the collective" (11). Since identity is deeply connected to humanity, human stories will provide opportunities to explore questions about identity. Two novels by two contemporary British writers are thus chosen for this study. *England, England* by Julian Barnes and *The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro grapple with questions of identity on individual and national

levels. The novels deconstruct personal and national identity by crystallizing the mechanisms behind identity construction and conduct. The protagonists of these novels, Martha and Stevens respectively, and the English nation in both novels are represented as epitomes of the deconstruction of personal identity and national identity.

Among the discussions on identity, the traditional view dominated the field for a long time. This view entails traits of humanist ideals and belief in human potential, and proposes that identity is transcendental and generic. It is assumed that identity is complete and enduring; therefore, it is innate and stable within humans, and it does not change in accordance with time and experiences. Such a view on identity is disputed to be problematic and against the nature of identity. Similarly, Dumitrescu problematizes such an approach towards identity and argues that it disregards the nature of identity and variations among people, such as racial, economic, social, and sexual differences and variations that might occur in one's identity in time. According to Dumitrescu,

a transcendental, rational (and some would add white, male, Eurocentric) subject which is, paradoxically, the very centre or source (of power, of meaning) and at the same time outside time and space—an abstraction or essence transcending any physical boundaries. This is a reduction that leaves out some of the basic components of human identity (such as race, ethnicity, and gender) and makes possible a notion of the human subject as a unified, immutable, coherent entity. (11)

It is argued that white and European men are centralized in such a view. Any category that is out of these traits is marginalized; therefore, an essentialist and exclusivist view of identity is generated. With the advent of modernism, understanding of identity begins to conflict with the society. The self is alienated from the society, which leads people to return to their inner world to find an answer. This reveals that there still is a belief, but a shaky one, in the complete and coherent identity as it can be seen in the modernist writing and experimental literary techniques that focus on mind and inner world, such as Virginia Woolf's stream of consciousness technique and James Joyce's epiphany, or T.S. Eliot's lonely and introverted modern poetic persona J. Alfred Prufrock. Drawing on from the modernist representation of identity as fragmented, postmodernism problematizes the traditional approach to identity. Regarding identity as stable and coherent is against the nature of identity because it disregards multiple factors that affect identity development. The traditional view assumes that identity is like an anchor in human existence, and it does not change. However, the postmodernist thought proposes that identity is shaped by external forces like societal values, religion, education, and family, and identity is subject to change. Friedman defines the difference between this contemporary view from the traditional one as follows:

the current challenge to Western identity and history and the rapid increase in alternative, ethnic, and subnational identities is an expression of the deterioration of the conditions that empowered a dominant modernist identity. The latter entails the liberation of formerly encompassed or superseded identities. [...] [T]he dehegemonization of the Western-dominated world is simultaneously its dehegemonization. (117)

Friedman argues that the hegemony of the Western thought has prioritized a specific group of people, disregarding other identities. This hegemony has come to be challenged due to socio-historical events that have shaken the hegemonic and exclusivist approaches to the identities. In line with "dehegemonization" (Friedman 117) of Western identities,

postmodernist criticism objects to the traditional view that disregards gender diversity, economic inequality and racial background. The contemporary view of identity acknowledges differences among people, and challenges the idea of a normative self. Such an argument entails that outer effects and conditions like socio-economic background, sexual orientation or race shape identities, and these categories are varied and equal among each other. Similarly, Sánchez-Arce argues that

[i]dentity—or, to be more precise, identities—is produced within the brain as a result of interaction with the external world, with society. Identities may be unique to every individual because the neurological connections (assemblies) are unique, but also follow pre-established patterns in that assemblies are triggered by exposure to specific experiences that form beliefs and, more importantly, ways of thinking about the world (what Foucault calls discourses). (5)

In other words, identity is a construct of outer effects and the humans' interaction with them, so it is unstable, fluid and multifaceted. This reveals that identities are products of multiple factors that humans cannot control fully, which refutes the traditional view that identity is fixed and generic. This hyaloid version of identity as decentered and destabilized is reflected in the postmodern writing by revealing the foundations and construction process of the identity.

Deconstruction of identity can be surveyed in the personal and national levels since a similar construction process operates on personal identity and national identity. Identity construction, both in the case of the individual and the nation, entails “the concept of boundary” because the position “I” and “the not-I are defined” (Pristash 10) in personal and national identity construction. People include and exclude traits, beliefs and attitudes that are similar to those of other people, or different from those of other people. This creates two groups, the alike and the other. The construction of national identity follows the same path at a collective level. Scruton explains that national identity forms a collective “we” which is reminiscent of the personal identity referred as “I”.

Nations are useful, because they enable people to rationalize their common fate, to define themselves as a ‘we’, and to prepare themselves for the competition—which may, at the limit, become a life-and-death struggle—between “us” and the “the other”. But not all ways of forming a first-person plural are so conscious. (Scruton 6)

Similarly, Benedict Anderson draws attention to unconscious process behind identities through an analogy between personal identity and national identity. He argues that modern life necessitates having a national identity like having a gender. According to Anderson, “[t]he formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept—in the modern world everyone can, should, will ‘have’ a gender—vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations, such that, by definition, ‘Greek’ nationality is *sui generis*” (48). Anderson furthers his discussions of the national identity and defines the nation as “imagined political community” (49). From his discussion, it can be drawn that national identities are imagined identities as well, which is another aspect that deconstructs the notion of identity. In other words, having an identity might have become a need, a necessity, but this does not mean that the notion of identity is not authentic and natural.

Personal identity and national identity are similar in their construction process, and one of the foundations of identity construction is accepted to be the memory. Schacter, drawing on from his studies with amnesic patients, argues that memory and identity has an organic link: “extensively rehearsed and elaborated memories come to form the core of our

life stories—narratives of self that help us define and understand our identity and our place in the world” (299). Similarly, Yugin Teo opines that

[m]emory asserts an enigmatic influence over us. It simultaneously soothes and unsettles us, linking us with our past and our histories while possessing the power to control our future. The role of memory has implications for both the individual and the collective; without memory we would not have sense of who we are as individuals, and without the provision of shared memory, a group of individuals, adversely affecting the paths they choose in the course of their lifetimes. (1)

Memory constitutes a basis for the identity construction by reminding people of who they are, their background, and establishing a link between their past and present. Therefore, memory disorders lead to serious disruptions in patients’ perception of their identities. Memory has an important part in construction of national identity as well. The collective memory, the national history, is one of the aspects that bind the members of the nation. National history is the root of national identity, and it connects its members’ past and present. That’s why, the national past is constantly being reminded to the members of the nation through endorsements like monuments, national holidays and national education.

Memory is undeniably essential for identity construction as studies suggest. However, memory is unreliable because of its slippery nature. Memory is more than a simple bridge between the past and present, but it interferes in the past and present, shaping and being shaped simultaneously. Reminiscing an event is more than simply retrieving the memory, but it is calling the phantom of the memory back. Schacter draws attention to the unreliable nature of the memory, stating that “[w]hat has happened to us in the past determines what we take out of our daily encounters in life; memories are records of how we have experienced events, not replicas of the events themselves” (6). The events will be remembered partially and biasedly because of the point of view and the passing time in which human mind reshapes memories repeatedly. Due to unavailability of the true version of events, memory lies a shaky ground for personal identity construction.

Similarly, national identity is based on collective memory, i.e. national history. The true version of events is inaccessible in memory; likewise, objective representation of the national past is impossible because national history has never been a neutral space due to the domination of politics. Said notes the biased nature of the national history, saying that “[t]he invention of tradition is a method for using collective memory selectively by manipulating certain bits of the national past, suppressing others, elevating still others in an entirely functional way” (179). Therefore, national history is as unreliable as memory, so it lays a problematic ground for national identity. The representation of historical events has a political agenda, and there are things included and things excluded for a certain purpose in their being conveyed to people, which can be seen especially in national education, television programs and the political discourse. The media through which national history is narrated are being regulated through councils and censorship; therefore, the true version is inaccessible, which renders national identity construction inauthentic. Bhabha’s discussion of national identity in *The Location of Culture* echoes this inauthenticity and construction process as he argues that the notion of national identity is constructed in the minds of people, and this construction process works on two levels, the pedagogic and the performative. On the pedagogic level, the nation is represented as something deeply rooted and developing, and this is achieved via national history, which gives members of the nation a sense of rootedness and advancement. This pedagogic force finds body in national historicism, politics and even in school curricula. The pedagogic force is enforced by

performative acts which enact national identity through rituals and icons like the flag, anthem, or national festivals. Easthope defends a similar view as to the workings of the national identity based on Nairn's ideas, and opines that national culture, thus national identity, is "produced through institutions, practices and traditions" (13), but it is not imposed on people; national identity finds echo within the society as it is performed by people.

Since identity is a construct, it is flexible and open to change. Life conditions affect identities, but they may change in the direction of people's choices about the person they want to be as well. People change in accordance with their experiences in time, like Estella, who admits, "I have been bent and broken, but—I hope—into a better shape" (*Great Expectations* 554), or they present themselves as they want to be seen by others, or adopt some behavior patterns which they encounter in other people. Therefore, identity is an outcome of one's background, memories, as well as the person he/she wants to be. This self-fashioning process is also evident in national identity construction, as nations need to present themselves to the nation's members and to other nations as powerful; thus, they polish their qualities and define being a member of the nation in the scope of these qualities.

Identity is a hybrid construct of outer effects like time, place, and cultural and socio-economic conditions, along with memories that form a basis for construction and self-fashioning that gives direction to change. These forces constantly and subtly act upon people in their personal and national identity construction and their implication in their lives. Works of art can reveal the identity construction process, and bring a subversive point to identity to draw attention to the forces that shape the identities humans inhabit. Novel genre constitutes an important place for representation identities as in its heart lies the human. Similarly, Parrinder argues, "[t]he novel, however indissolubly linked to the concept of character, has increasingly become a forum for questioning identities" (89). For this study, *England, England* and *The Remains of the Day* are chosen in that both novels represent identity on the level of individual and nation from a postmodernist perspective. Although they were written in different decades, and they handle the issue of identity in different styles—*England, England* humorously and through episodic structure, and *The Remains of the Day* sternly and through travelogue—both novels deconstruct personal identity and English national identity. The two protagonists of these novels, Martha and Stevens respectively, go through life changing events that make them question their life conditions, ideals and memories upon which their identity is built. The change in the identity and mindset of these characters, together with flashbacks to their past, reveal the process of their identity construction. This runs parallel with deconstruction and subversion of English national identity in both novels. *England, England* portrays England's being robbed of its genuine qualities, which are commodified at a theme park, and *The Remains of the Day* represents the state of England and Englishness after the decolonization in the microcosm of a mansion.

England, England is the story of the construction of a theme park where England and her highlights are simulated. Sir Pitman, an entrepreneur, sets out with the mission of creating a better version of England where tourists do not have to put up with hardships of travelling, such as bad weather or long distances, to see the highlights of England. He constructs a Disneyesque version of England where tourist attractions are conveniently recreated side by side. The theme park is named "England, England", probably to emphasize its Englishness better than the original England does. As the theme park turns into a tourist attraction in a short time, England loses its former powerful state. "England, England" usurps the things reminding the English of their Englishness, and replaces

England economically due to its success as a tourist attraction. England gradually declines into an agrarian countryside, which is later named Anglia. Throughout the novel, England's identity change runs parallel to the protagonist Martha's identity change with flashbacks to her childhood and fragments of her future in Anglia. Martha is one of Sir Pitman's employees in "England, England". She holds a reserved and cynical attitude towards life, profession and relationships, and she owes this cold attitude to her past, failed relationships, and memories of her father who abandons the family when Martha was little. Due to her sharp intellect, she is employed in an important position in the theme park, and she eventually dethrones Sir Pitman by taking advantage of a weird sex scandal he is involved in. However, her reign in "England, England" does not last long either, and she is exiled to Anglia to lead her life there as an old maid.

England, England reveals the nature of identity as it deconstructs personal and national identity and portrays its construction process in which environmental factors, memory and self-fashioning play a role. It can be argued that *England, England* has another protagonist, England, alongside Martha. In fact, the novel is divided into two parts starting with "England", continuing with "England, England" and ending with "Anglia", which implies the importance of the phases English national identity goes through. Published in 1998, *England, England* represents anxieties about English national identity in the advent of millennium. Dominic Head argues that this era was marked by changing national identities; "[i]ndeed, the status of nations has begun to seem more fluid" (17). However, this was a more severe case for England, the country on which the sun had finally set. Mass immigration after decolonization and the birth of the second-generation immigrants brought about questions of English national identity and its scope. Added to the decline in political and economic power, changing social dynamics required a redefinition of Englishness for the country's representation to its members and other countries. Therefore, when Labor Party took over, Blair set out with the motto "Cool Britannia". The then government had the concern of showing the country as a dynamic and developing one to get rid of the exhausted representation of the country, "in which", according to Krishnan Kumar, "every direction they look, the English find themselves called upon to reflect upon their identity to re-think their position in the world. The protective walls that shielded them from these questions are all coming down" (2003, 16).

This attempt to renew the nation is reflected in the novel as the entrepreneurship of building up a national identity. The nation's redefining itself through national items and marketing itself through them echoes in *England, England*, for the notion of constructing a national identity is satirized and made transparent in Sir Pitman's endeavor of creating a replica of England. He commissions a survey to be conducted overseas to list "Fifty Quintessences of Englishness" in order to decide which English traits to include in the theme park. Participants are asked to list things they associate with Englishness, and results bring seemingly irrelevant things into the same pot, such as "royal family", "bad underwear", and "Magna Carta" (EE 84). The juxtaposition of the royal family and bad underwear here undermines the untouchable national emblems, on which the national identity is built. The items that constitute English national identity are commodified by Sir Pitman, which Romero likens to the nation's rebranding itself to become marketable (243), and this commodification can be accepted as undermining national emblems and national identity. Additionally, it is notable that this survey is conducted overseas, which reveals that how foreign countries regard England is the thing that matters for English national identity. It illustrates self-fashioning as another aspect of the construction of national identity. Sir Pitman excludes unpleasant items in the list and does not recreate them in the

theme park. Leaving out the items he does not like hints at the biased nature of national identity since the construction process entails self-fashioning. The effect of self-fashioning on identity construction is also evident in Martha's identity construction. She takes on distant and cynical attitudes, and closes herself to outer world probably to protect her heart from further breaks after her problematic childhood and failed relationships.

The identity construction process is represented through memory, the basis of identity. In fact, memory constitutes an integral part of *England, England*. The opening line of the novel is "What's your first memory?" (3), which is a direct question posited to the reader. Memory is problematized throughout the book with flashbacks to Martha's childhood and her identity construction. Martha approaches every story of the first memory cynically, as she does to other aspects of life. She is aware of the fallibility of memory, so she undermines every first memory as a lie and people make these memories up because they do not stay intact. Memories are like "mirrors set in parallel" (EE 102), which makes it impossible to revive the original memory. Therefore, Martha visits her childhood and makes up a memory for herself as she thinks that this is what everyone does when asked about his/her first memory. In her version of the first memory, she completes the puzzle of the map of England with her father, and he gives her the missing piece of the puzzle. However, in fact, this puzzle is never completed because Martha's missing piece, her father, abandons his family, and never returns home. The problematization of memories implies the fluid nature and manipulative force of memories; thus, the personal identities are rendered shaky and inauthentic.

Similar to personal identity, national identity is inherently inauthentic and fragmented since it is based on memory as well, the national history. Martha's completing a puzzle of the map of England in her first memory is notable as it is suggestive of national identity construction. National identities are constructed by collecting and combining pieces together, like completing a puzzle. These pieces can be emblems of the nation, like the flag, anthem, historic conquests, or dynasty, as they are listed in Sir Pitman's survey. Along with these iconic symbols, national history is the most important element as it is the basis of national identity. National history is learnt, repeated, and transmitted to the posterity through multiple mediums like education; however, the national history is not neutral because it entails a political agenda. *England, England* problematizes the history knowledge passed on the posterity by showing that it is learned through repetition mainly. To illustrate, in Martha's history class, students chant dates of important wars as a chorus: "1066 (clap clap) Battle of Hastings" (EE 11). This example portrays "history-worship" (Nünning 15), and instead of endorsing a deeper understanding, national history is memorized, but not understood deeply although it forms the basis of national identity. This shallow understanding of national history occurs in Dr. Max's interviews with the visitors of the theme park as well. A participant can only say the date of the battle when asked what he knows about the Battle of Hastings: "The Subject was asked what happened at the Battle of Hastings. Subject replied: '1066.' Question was repeated. Subject laughed. 'Battle of Hastings. 1066.' Pause. 'King Harold. Got an arrow in his eye.' Subject behaved as if he had answered the question" (EE 83). His repeating only the date and a trivia about the Battle of Hastings indicates that national history is being circulated through the pedagogic forces, but, in fact, the content and significance of national history is missing. This superficial understanding of national history undermines the foundation of national identity.

As Pristash opines, "[i]dentity itself is in a constant state of flux. Even on a personal level, identity is something that remains concrete only for short periods of time, while on a national level, Englishness becomes a hollow shell instead of something valuable and important" (119). *England, England* deconstructs both personal identity and national

identity by illustrating their fragile nature and openness to outer effects. The national identity is problematized in England's decline into Anglia after losing her national emblems to "England, England" one by one. As England loses its monuments of Englishness to "England, England", the country lets go of its sovereignty and reputation. England leaves EU, and her place is taken by the theme park, which gets more prosperous than the country. This transformation ends with the wiping out of the name England, and people do not even remember such a country existed once, as it is clearly stated in the novel: "Old England had lost its history, and therefore—since memory is identity—had lost all sense of itself" (*EE* 251). Once a nation loses its icons to remind its citizens of what it means to be a part of that nation, the collective memory collapses and national identity breaks apart. England's moving away from its memories and identity is parallel to Martha's change. She becomes the CEO of the theme park by blackmailing Sir Pitman, and she keeps a firm, cynical, and an aloof attitude towards life, profession, and relationships. However, she is forced to resign from her post after the breakout of a scandal of her own, and she moves to former England, which has become a rural country named Anglia. There Martha drifts away from her memories of childhood, which do not haunt her anymore. She is also freed from her obligations and responsibilities, as she does not have to be the resolute manager, which was her former identity. Her neighbors in Anglia think Martha to be an old maid, and call her so; she does settle with this new identity. Her decline into an old maid from a CEO is similar to the fallen state of her nation, as Pristash points out:

it is that all sense of authenticity is constructed. England, England becomes more authentic than the original England. People want to visit it over the real England. They find something authentic in its inauthenticity. Meanwhile, Anglia struggles on, an amalgamation of old and new, just like Martha. All three—Anglia, the Island, and Martha—struggle between the interplay of old and new. While England, England as a place shows the ways in which people can commodify and distort history for their own means, Anglia shows the ways in which people construct new identities from old and new ideas. (*EE* 119)

Along with the change in Martha's identity, which is caused by outer forces like her losing her former powerful position in "England, England", other characters in the theme park go through changes in their identity as well. They are employees/actors of the theme park, and the roles assigned to them are a part of the theme park. Though this distinction is clear-cut at first, their roles get blurred in time. The actor acting as The King of England asks for sovereignty; Robin Hood and his men run wild in the woods; smugglers start to smuggle things for real, and the actor with the role Dr. Johnson goes too far in treating guests rudely. Similar to Martha's being compelled to be an old maid by her position in Anglia, the actors on the Island merge with their roles more and more. The effect of the environment on identity, and the fluid, ever-changing nature of identity are illustrated in these instances, which is one of the points postmodern view of identity suggests. Identity is reinforced and redefined through action and one's belief in his/her role in life. *England, England* reveals that circumstances like place affect identity formation:

Or this was your brain hinting at what you didn't want to know: that you become the person you were not by explicable cause and effect, by acts of will imposed on circumstance, but by mere vagary. You beat your wings all your life, but it was the wind that decided where you went. (*EE* 249)

The loss of causality in the identities people and nations come to inhabit presents a grim picture of identities and their vulnerable and fluid nature. Despite the humorous tone of the novel, these realities as to the nature of the identity and Martha's and England's grappling with questions of identity are distressing to encounter. However, this representation gives a realistic picture as to identity and problematizes its authenticity and reliability. Like *Pristash* (119), Bentley raises questions regarding the authenticity of identities. Though in *England, England* it seems as if the loss of its authentic qualities draws England into oblivious Anglia; in fact, authenticity is presented as an inherently problematic notion:

The novel, then, laments the belief that we cannot access an authentic place of origin, whilst it simultaneously critiques those who celebrate this fact. [...] What Martha discovers in the last section of the book is that if we desire to renown a long past—a garden show, our image of rural England, Cornish smugglers, Robin Hoo—it is in fact not the original or authentic reality that we desire—because there is no original, rather, it is the artificial construction of these objects and signs that we want to reclaim. (Bentley 494)

England, England reveals the construction process of identity through outer effects, memory and self-fashioning. The traditional view of identity that regards it as authentic and enduring is challenged in the dissolution and change in Martha's personal identity and in the national identity of England. The novel also problematizes national identity in the commodification of England through a theme park. The nation's losing its identity along with the loss of the emblems of nationhood shows that national identity is a construct, and it must be reinforced with pedagogic and performative acts. Identity is subverted in *England, England*, as its construction and dissolution is revealed.

Similar to *England, England; The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro problematizes personal identity and English national identity. *The Remains of the Day* tells the story of an ageing butler's trip through the countryside. Though the novel seems like a travelogue at first, it consists of the butler's memoirs of the heyday in his profession, his complicated relationship with his father and Miss Kenton, a co-worker, and his devotion to the previous owner of the mansion, Lord Darlington. Stevens works as the head butler in Darlington Hall. His profession takes up his whole time, and he is content with having served the most influential men of his era. While he has been leading an undisturbed professionalism, with his father's and Miss Kenton's being recruited to Darlington Hall, Stevens faces several occasions in which he is forced to make a choice between his profession and feelings. His devotion to the lord and obsession with the notion of dignity leads him to favor his profession over everything else. In time, Darlington Hall declines in popularity and the number of its visitors diminishes; thus, Stevens' service loses its importance. In the end, the ownership of Darlington Hall changes hand from the British lord to a wealthy American. The new owner advises Stevens to take a small trip since he has hardly left the house during all the years he has served. He arranges a trip which includes a meeting with Miss Kenton, who is now Mrs. Benn. During his trip, Stevens encounters people who have drastically different ideas from his view on life, politics, and society. In awe of the world outside, Stevens makes a critique of the path of life he has chosen, and realizes that it has been a mistaken one.

Like *England, England; The Remains of the Day*, published in 1989, reflects its time and current concerns about national identity. Nairn explains that this era was marked with nationalism and economy.

The persisting spirit of the European Enlightenment has always been terribly disappointed by its firstborn, capitalism. Its eldest son, Nationalism, remains even more of a nuisance. But it no longer has the faintest hope of getting rid of either of them. It was this hope which ended around 1989, not history. [...] One reaction to post—1989 events is a lucid pessimism, the abandonment of hope by all who have approached them via this particular intellectual portal. (in Easthope 225)

In *The Remains of the Day*, personal identity and national identity does not run on separate levels as it is in *England, England*. Personal identity and national identity are so embedded in Stevens' case that it is difficult to discern where one starts and the other ends. Both personal identity and national identity are deconstructed and problematized by showing their construction process, the effects of outer forces, memory and self-fashioning.

Bridget Byrne infers that “national identity [...] is a lived experience involving everyday rituals and practices and acts of identification (and sometimes disidentification)” (141). National identity entails acting out certain codes of behavior to remind members of the nation of their qualities and duties. In Stevens' case, an overzealous practice of these rituals and practices can be seen since he associates his profession with his national identity. As the head butler of Darlington Hall, he regards his service to Lord Darlington as a service to English nation. While Lord Darlington and his influential guests come and go to make political meetings, Stevens considers himself to be serving for the benefit of his country in his own way and contributing to England's international affairs. His glorified image of his profession combined with national pride leads Stevens to accept the hierarchy between him and his master and his influential guests for what it is. Su explains that this opportunity to make his own humble contribution results in Stevens' rationalizing this hierarchy. According to Su,

[i]n the context of the novel, greatness is understood to reproduce and enforce class hierarchies. The notion of greatness, of course, does not have consistent characteristics across social, sexual, and ethnic lines. Stevens's aspirations for greatness foreground the ways that national character is construed vis-à-vis class position, for he does not ask what constitutes a “great” Englishman but “what is a ‘great’ butler?” [...] Social position determines for Stevens the ways in which he can be “great.” He takes for granted that the call to greatness makes very different demands upon Lord Darlington and himself. (132)

The social structure allows members of the nation to achieve greatness within the constraints allotted. In their pursuit of making the best of their efforts, the members of the nation take pride in serving their country, and generally this pride overshadows the discrepancy in the welfare among the members of the nation, which brings us to Anderson's defining nations as “imagined communities” (49) that bind people who have nothing in common, even in their socio-economic stance, under one collective national identity. Even if national identities are imagined artefacts, Kumar underlines people's inclination to have a national identity, stating that “[p]eople may not consciously seek a national identity or even know that they have one, but there are moments in their lives, both individually and collectively, when they seem to need one and reach for it” (2001, 53). In return for this sense of belonging, members want to serve their nation. Therefore, Ishiguro's choosing a butler as the protagonist is notable, as he explains upon being asked if there is a bit of a butler in all of us:

In *The Remains of the Day*, I was suggesting that to some extent we are butlers. What I meant by this, most of us, we do not get to run vast corporations; we are not presidents of countries. Most of us do jobs, and we do not often know what type of contribution we do. We do not understand the context we make our best efforts, but we try and take some dignity and pride in what we do, and we try to do it very well and we kind of offer it up blindly sometimes to a boss, to a corporation, to a cause, to a nation. Just hoping it is going to be used in a good way, but who knows it is going to be or not. . . . We never quite know what we are contributing to when the big picture gets in. (Knopfdoubleday 00:00:05—00:01:47)

The ideal Stevens strive for is serving the lord and English nation, and attaining dignity meantime. Stevens ponders on the notion of Englishness and dignity quite frequently throughout the novel. He keeps bringing up the issue of dignity and traits of a great English butler when he talks about his profession. Stevens mentions dignity as the crucial trait in being a great butler, and for him, dignity is “keeping up with his position” (ROD 43):

And let me now posit this: ‘dignity’ has to do crucially with a butler’s ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits. Lesser butlers will abandon their professional being for the private one at the least provocation. For such persons, being a butler is like playing some pantomime role; a small push, a slight stumble and the façade will drop off to reveal the actor underneath. The great butlers [...]. will not be shaken out by external events; however surprising, alarming or vexing. They wear their professionalism as a decent gentleman will wear his suit. (ROD 44)

He openly states that his profession is exclusively English, and servants in other countries can be called only a manservant, not a butler because foreigners are essentially incapable of maintaining dignity unlike the English. This ideology reveals that Stevens have internalized the hierarchical structure in Darlington Hall, and he reflects this on his fellow workers by categorizing them as “great butlers” and servants (ROD 44).

Stevens follows this definition of dignity strictly to become a great butler. He draws a clear-cut line between his professional identity—which is deeply connected to his national identity—and personal identity. He hardly shows any sign of emotion, nor does he let his rigid professional stance be shaken by any personal matter. He does not stop serving upstairs, for example, even while his father is in his deathbed. Similarly, though he loves Miss Kenton, lest his feelings overshadow his professionalism, he does not dissuade her from marrying another man. Stevens believes that dignity means sticking to professional identity and restraining personal matters and feelings even if it requires letting go of the personal self. Stevens attains this strict professionalism through self-restraint, which even shows itself in his appreciating the scenery he encounters during the trip. He states that the beauty of the English landscape comes from its “sense of self-restraint” (ROD 29) because the English scenery does not shout out its beauty like the scenery in America or Africa although the landscape may be more spectacular there. Stevens’ connecting a simple scenery to Englishness is reminiscent of Burden’s argument that “a landscape takes an iconic status in response to specific cultural demands” (24), and even the scenery is perceived in the light of national identity.

Along with dignity, Stevens bases his identity on three role models, Lord Darlington, his father, who is a butler as well, and the butler figure in a story his father told once. Stevens dedicates his life to serving Lord Darlington, and he goes to such extremes in his service as executing the lord’s orders without a question. He dismisses two Jewish servants unhesitatingly upon his order. His submission to the lord hinders Stevens from

judging his actions objectively; thus, he overlooks the fact that the lord has become a pawn of Nazis. Another role figure is Stevens' father, and it is obvious that Stevens has great respect for his professionalism. However, it is implied that the relationship between the father and son is a problematic one as it does not go beyond appreciating each other's professionalism. Similarly, the father later admits in his deathbed that he has not been a good father to Stevens, which might mean that he too was emotionally unavailable. Another figure that plays a role in Stevens' identity formation is the butler in a story. In this short story that Stevens heard from his father, the butler encounters a tiger in the kitchen when he hears its noise. The butler shoots at the tiger cold-bloodedly and resumes his service after this "small disturbance" without making any scene. This fantastic story affects Stevens so deeply that he mentions this as the ultimate point of greatness for a butler, and obviously, he takes this story and the coldblooded attitude literally. These three figures are either faulty or unrealistic; however, Stevens looks up to them fervently and adopt their behavior, which renders his identity construction problematic.

The Remains of the Day illustrates that taking on qualities one wants to have in his/her identity is possible, but it also portrays that this might be problematic if there is a mismatch in one's identity. The novel also problematizes having a clear-cut boundary between the public and private identity. The traditional view of identity renders a distinction between the public and private identity possible and necessary, and favors the public over private. Meera Tamaya explains that in the English society, individuals are expected to act out roles appointed to them and prioritize their public identity. In Tamaya's words, "[a] crucial element of such 'acting' is the rigorous submission of the private self to the demands of the public persona" (48). Public identity's suppressing, limiting and shaping private identity is evident in Stevens' case. His dedication to act out his role as the great butler leads him to overidentify himself with the butler role, which hinders him from voicing his personal thoughts and feelings. He commits himself to his profession and his master to achieve dignity so deeply that he lets go of his personal identity. Professionalism becomes such an integral part of Stevens' identity that in time there is no room left for his personal feelings and wishes. Stevens' strict policy on restraining his personal feelings results in his incapacity to deal with his feelings in private. He cannot exchange farewell words with his father in his deathbed; instead, he repeats the same "I am so glad you are feeling better now" (ROD 101) line three times in a robotic manner. Similarly, though he admits that he felt "somewhat downcast" (ROD 227) upon hearing Miss Kenton's news of engagement, he does not even imply his disillusionment with her accepting the proposal, which is actually all Miss Kenton wants to hear from him.

Stevens avoids every chance of getting emotional and getting distracted from his work. Although Stevens commits his identity to professionalism triumphantly, for a long time he remains unaware of not living his own life, but an anonymous butler's life. In fact, Stevens' disregarding his own self and sticking to his professional identity creates a crisis between his private and public identity because it entails his acting as a person who he is not. Eventually, his pretentious attitude gets on Miss Kenton's nerves, and she explodes with anger: "Why Mr. Stevens, why, why, why do you always have to *pretend*?" (ROD 154) (emphasis originaş). Although he does not declare his feelings and personal wishes, his feelings surface now and then. In other words, in the novel, drawing a clear-cut line between the public and personal identity is rendered impossible. Though Stevens suppresses his feelings constantly, he is caught grappling with feelings, like his reading a sentimental book at nights, or his calling Miss Kenton with her maiden name even years after she got married. He cannot avoid the sadness and hollowness residing in his inner

world. However, instead of acknowledging these feelings, he reflects them on Miss Kenton, and claims that there is a sad atmosphere in her letters. When they meet at the end of his trip, he tells her that she wrote in one letter “The rest of my life stretches out as an emptiness for me” (ROD 236) though she does not remember writing such a sentence. This might imply that this is actually what Stevens thinks about his remaining years. The hollowness stems from Stevens’ basing his whole life upon his profession and faulty role models, and his letting go of his personality over his professional identity.

Additionally, self-restraint and dignity, associated with English identity, proves problematic because Stevens ends up as a man who cannot say he has made “his own mistakes” (ROD 256). He cannot draw his own path of life as he has devoted his life to serving others selflessly. Therefore, he cannot compose an identity and explore its depths by listening to his heart and desires. In turn, Stevens is commodified and sold along with Darlington Hall, like any other British thing the new owner wants to see in his collection. He is treated like an object whose originality can be disputed. Thus, the new owner of the mansion gets disillusioned when one of his guests does not believe in Stevens’ being an authentic butler. Thus, the new owner asks Stevens if he is “the real thing” (ROD 131), or just an ordinary waiter. Commodification of national emblems, which is also evident in *England, England*, occurs in *The Remains of the Day* as well. Quintessentially English things like dignity, butlerhood, and country houses which Stevens have dedicated his life to and taken pride of are sold in an instant. The novel brings these acclaimed national emblems to the level of any other commercial item to deconstruct national identity by revealing that its emblems serve power eventually.

Deconstruction of national identity is also portrayed in the change Darlington Hall goes through. The country house used to be a place for politicians to meet and discuss political matters when wealthy lords had a say in the decisions affecting the whole nation. Scruton gives an insight into the importance of such houses:

The country house was a sphere of limited sovereignty of Westminster. It succeeded in capturing the political and social power that was already dispersed across the countryside, and in weaving it into a localized form of authority. The country house was also the heart of local industry, employing farm-hands, house servants and every kind of ancillary worker in the maintenance of a labor-intensive and ecologically beneficent economy. [...] For those and many other reasons, the country house came to represent an ideal of English civilization—one in which hierarchy was softened by neighborliness, and wealth by mutual aid. (ROD 238-39)

However, these lords’ influence in politics starts to decline, so mansion houses lose their popularity as a political meeting point. Here a parallelism can be drawn between Darlington Hall and England since the mansion acts like the microcosm of England. As Darlington Hall loses its popularity and unifying mission, the number of staff members diminishes greatly. The loss of members might symbolize England’s losing the colonies as it politically falls off from favor. Additionally, an American man’s taking over Darlington Hall, which is mentioned to be the case in other mansions as well, is suggestive of England’s declining power in international politics, and its being replaced by America. These changing dynamics imply that the traditional definition of Englishness does not respond to changing political trends no matter how hard the nation and her members stick to them. This contradicts with the traditional view of identity that regards identity as fixed and unchanging. It also suggests that though national identity is glorified, it is a fluid and vulnerable construct.

The identity's being affected by outer forces like place or time is evident in Stevens' encounter with village people. Though he occasionally remarks that one should know what is in his/her realm, and make the best out of it, and leave great matters of the country to great men, he fails to do so, and he aspires to be a great man deep down, as it is clear in his pretending to be a gentleman during his trip in Devon. The country people mistake him for a true gentleman due to his speech, clothing, and the car he is driving, and Stevens does not correct their mistake. He likes being treated like a lord for once in his life, and acts out the ideals to which he has devoted his life. In fact, the country people's confidence in the authenticity of Stevens' being true gentleman takes a humorous turn as one of the country people comments confidently:

You can tell a true gentleman from a false one that's just dressed in finery. Take yourself, sir. It's not just the cut of your clothes, nor is it even the fine way you've got of speaking. There's something else that marks you out as a gentleman. Hard to put your finger on it, but it's plain for all to see that's got eyes. (ROD 194)

This instance reveals that the appearance can easily be mistaken for the "true" identity. Stevens' appearance; his disposition, manners, speech, and clothing and the car he is driving suggest that he is a gentleman to country people. Authenticity of identity is deconstructed in this instance where all the signs suggest one thing while the reverse is true. It also reveals the fluidity of identity that is a claim of the postmodernist view on identity. Stevens easily takes on the gentleman identity and purports to be the wealthy owner of Darlington Hall, convincing others and even himself in this game of his for a while. His instantly changing identity reveals that identities are not fixed and resident, but flickering. Additionally, it reveals that identities are an outcome and an obligation of the position we hold in life. In that countryside, Stevens does not have to be the butler; thus, he can put aside the identity of a butler, and have the identity he aspires to have deep down.

Stevens comes to regret suppressing his identity to butlerhood only after he finds out that Lord Darlington was in fact a pawn of Nazis, and he completely missed the chance of a happy union with Miss Kenton because of his dedication to serve such a flawed man. All the things for which he sacrificed his life and feelings prove to be in vain. He bitterly acknowledges that he has built his life on another man's ideals and has not pursued happiness more than what was granted to him; that is why, Salman Rushdie calls Stevens "a man destroyed by the ideas upon which he has built his life" (n.p.). Identity, which is assumed to be solid and unchanging, collapses when the ideals upon which it is constructed prove to be faulty ones, which reveals that identity is a construct. Through the end of the novel, Stevens admits this to himself, saying

Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. [...] And at least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistakes. His lordship was a courageous man. He chooses a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I *trusted*. I trusted his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really—one has to ask one oneself—what dignity is there in that? (ROD 256) (emphasis original)

It is clear that the meaning of dignity for Stevens changes greatly after his trip through the countryside. While dignity means achieving an impersonal stance and mistake-free attitude in profession at first and he shapes his identity accordingly, dignity takes on a

personal dimension for Stevens at the end of the trip because now he defines dignity as one's making his/her own mistakes, and following the path one wants to follow. This might indicate that Stevens will focus more on himself during the remains of his days, rather than selflessly serving another person. His letting go of his personal life for the sake of his profession has damaged his personal identity, leaving him alone with crippled feelings and tainted memories. In addition to the disjunction between his public and private self, living for another person's ideals and taking these ideals as the basis of identity construction leads to the dissolution of Stevens' identity. The fluidity and fragility of identity shows itself in Stevens' pondering upon the mistakes he made, which he used to regard as triumph, and in his moving away from the butler identity he has inhabited all along.

England, England and *The Remains of the Day* deconstruct the notion of identity from the points of the individual and English nation. Both novels bring a subversive perspective into the issue of identity and object to the traditional view that regards identity as authentic and stable. Sánchez-Arce argues that such problematization of identity is invaluable in enlarging the scope of identities and having a deeper insight into identities. In Sánchez-Arce's words,

identity is at its most productive when it reveals the weakness of monolithic ways of thinking about it. Indeed, it is not by chance that identity has become central to literary studies just as its unity and continuity have been scrutinized as before and that the most studied examples of identities are those that subvert or die at the edges of well-known identity categories. (6)

England, England and *The Remains of the Day* represent identity as the artefact of life conditions, memory, and self-fashioning. Identity construction processes and the contributing factors, such as profession, upbringing and social class, are illustrated to emphasize that identity is a consequence of outside factors. In both novels, identities are in a constant flux, as characters' identity changes along with the changes in their status, and changes in time and place. Similarly, English national identity changes in accordance with social and political factors. By showing the fluid, changing and fragmented nature of identity, the traditional view that regards identity as enduring and sovereign is subverted in these novels. Martha's and Stevens' story coincides with the story of England, which has been wrestling with the national identity questions as a fallen imperial force, which can be seen in the attempts to revive and redefine Englishness. By revealing identity's constructed and ever-changing nature, *England, England* and *The Remains of the Day* posit a realistic picture as to personal identity and national identity. This representation of identity is not only realistic, but it is also liberating because it entails the fact that identities are multiple, nonhierarchical and flexible constructs.

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**“Ear My Stutter”: Formal Experimentation and “Becoming-Minor”
in Maggie O’Sullivan’s *In the House of the Shaman*¹**

Özlem Türe Abacı

Abstract: This paper aims to explore the processes of becoming in Maggie O’Sullivan’s seminal poetry collection *In the House of the Shaman* (1993) by focusing on ritualistic soundscapes, formal and linguistic experimentation. Such a focus aims to understand how the nomadic subjectivity in the poems becomes part of the shamanic ritual, during which the landscape turns into a transcorporeal ground where the human and the non-human are unfolded to reveal and put othernesses into play. The inquiry of metaphysical concepts in Maggie O’Sullivan’s poetry also creates a line of neologistic, animistic and shamanistic vocabulary which competes with the traditional belief systems and questions their system of thought. Particularly, the textual analysis will focus on the parts in the collection, in which the processes of becoming are foregrounded by the formal tactics and the poet-shaman’s body is reworked as sites of connection with the non-human world.

Keywords: Maggie O’Sullivan, *In the House of the Shaman*, nomadic poetics, experimentation, becoming, nomadic subjectivity, ritualistic soundscapes

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(*House*² 52)

Maggie O’Sullivan, largely known for her work in the experimental poetry scene in Britain, has been writing and performing poetry for more than three decades. She is a poet of twenty-one published poetry collections to date, a visual artist and a small press publisher, and the co-editor of the famous *Out of everywhere* anthology (1996), which introduced the work of linguistically-innovative poetries by mainly women poets. Although Maggie O’Sullivan is included among the experimental poets who are still writing today, we should acknowledge the fact that she has been becoming more popular recently, particularly due to her poetry readings, the republication of her out-of-print work by Reality Street, and a recent companion dedicated to her poetry by Salt Publishing. Charles Bernstein argues that O’Sullivan is “in a main line of poets”, a line that includes diverse poets “from Blake to Swinburne, MacDiarmid to Raworth, Carroll to Bergvall, Cowper to Loy, Kwesi Johnson to Bunting, Rosetti to Fisher” (2011, 5). That line, according to Bernstein, is composed of one of “anti-representative” poets who reject “received categories” and find inventive connections with the “outside” (5).

¹ This article is an abridged version of the fifth chapter of the author’s unpublished Ph.D. dissertation entitled “Nomad Thought in Peter Reading’s *Perduta Gente* and *Evagatory* and Maggie O’Sullivan’s *In the House of the Shaman* and *Palace of Reptiles*”.

² Maggie O’Sullivan’s poetry collection *In the House of the Shaman* is referred to as “*House*” in the in-text citations.

Maggie O’Sullivan’s poems are stuttering texts and her interest is mostly in the “OUT”, “UNDER”, “UN”, “OTHER”, “NON”, “LESS”, all that is silenced by stratified systems of representation. She becomes the shamanic healer of the suffering world by opening smooth spaces of signification and curing language at the transformative moment of its emergence. The page becomes a place of wandering on a nomadic tract, as O’Sullivan herself explains it in an interview with Dell Olsen: “[a] place of damage, savagery, pain, silence: also a place of salvage, retrieval and recovery. A place of existence, journeying. A sacred space of undiminishment. Of dream. Of ritual. Of magic” (n.p.). Starting from the front page of her work, her volumes turn into assemblages of art-work, poetry, musical notes, drawings and the unpoetic material in a magical way. Neologisms, broken words and syllables require frequent visits to several dictionaries not only for the non-native readers of her work but also the native speakers of English. It becomes a challenge most of the time to find out the meaning of words, clusters of words, syllables, images that Maggie O’Sullivan’s poems make available, knowing that coming up with a meaning or a conclusive remark is not the ultimate aim of her experimental style. In an interview by Charles Bernstein, Maggie O’Sullivan acknowledges the fact that it is sometimes difficult to read her own writing as there is, in her words, “lots of disconnectiveness and disjunctiveness that is kind of working against how I sort of, how sometimes it seems it may be read” (Bernstein 2013, n.p.). Moreover, O’Sullivan describes her experimentations on the page—inclusion of unpoetic materials—as a “radical shifting” concerning the language of poetry and the drawings, collage pieces or poetic materials (Bernstein 2013, n.p.).

This paper aims to explore the processes of becoming in Maggie O’Sullivan’s *In the House of the Shaman* by focusing on ritualistic soundscapes, formal and linguistic experimentation. Such a focus aims to understand how the nomadic subjectivity becomes part of the shamanic ritual, during which the landscape turns into a transcorporeal ground where the human and the non-human are unfolded to reveal and put othernesses into play. In Maggie O’Sullivan’s poetry, sounds are boisterously coming together in an unlikely way; the noises emerge without a specified centre and particularly against the anthropocentrism of the lyric self, which creates “visceral soundscapes” (Emery, n.p.). Her use of language is endowed with repetitions, syntactical disruptions, or ‘lines of flight’ and ‘stuttering’ in Deleuzian sense to underline “becoming-minor or molecular” linguistically, stylistically and politically. The noises of stuttering, agony of producing a word that “means”, might mean or is completely left obscure, and the unhomely noises of the inhabitants of the house of the shaman produce their own “sonorous landscape” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 318). The theoretical framework of this article revisits Daniel Smith’s outline of nomad thought in his introduction to *Essays Clinical and Critical*: “the destruction of the world”, “the dissolution of the subject”, “the dis-integration of the body”, “the ‘minorization’ of politics”, and “the ‘stuttering’ of language” (xxiv). These subheadings guide the analysis of O’Sullivan’s poems in discovering the processes of becoming—particularly becoming-animal, becoming-minor, becomings-other-than-human—which are also directly related with the understanding of subjectivity, body-politics and the “act of transformation” achieved by the shamanistic ritual. Finally, the focus on linguistic and formal experimentations might enable us to explore the politics of “minor” literature and the essential “stuttering” of language in O’Sullivan’s poetry.

Maggie O’Sullivan’s *In the House of the Shaman* was published by Reality Street Editions in 1993 under the general editorship of Ken Edwards. The collection is organized in three parts entitled as Books, “Another Weather System”, “Kinship with Animals” and

“Prism and Hearers”, respectively. O’Sullivan’s poetry, particularly *In the House of the Shaman*, is profusely influenced by the way Joseph Beuys engages with nature and the shaman figure. Maggie O’Sullivan admits that she borrows the title of the book from one of Joseph Beuys’ drawings/paintings with a similar title, but she does not openly tell which one of the paintings she was inspired by. Among Beuys’ series of drawings about the shamanistic experience, the titles of two paintings look similar to O’Sullivan’s book title: “Trance in the House of Shaman”, a drawing dated 1961, which depicts the shamanic ecstasy, and “Houses of the Shaman” (1965), an oil paint and graphite. Joseph Beuys’ thematic engagement with shamanism in different artworks is an attempt to discover a pre-Cartesian self, a self that is unaffected by the mind and the body, nature and culture divisions. Beuys’ artistic practices were mainly shaped by ecological concerns and reconnection with the earth, as David Adams argues, “[m]uch of his *oeuvre* attempted to convey forces and energies of the natural world, often grasped at a prelinguistic or presymbolic level, through his personally forged language of forms and substances” (26). In order to reconnect with the “formative energies of the world”, Beuys celebrated “the animal kingdom” and plants in his work to rediscover the prelinguistic, instinctual, even spiritual powers (Adams 29). All in all, such an ecological vision reflected in his artwork forms the basis of his conceptual employment of shamanism and shamanistic ritual, and the role of the artist as a shaman.

In her interview with Dell Olsen, Maggie O’Sullivan acknowledges that she predominantly “draw[s] upon the earth and the other-than-human—voicing [her] body/bodying [her] voicings” and committing herself to “an eco/ethico politics of the earth” (n.p.).³ In order to analyse the concept of becoming, particularly becoming-animal and becoming-minor, in *In the House of the Shaman*, the textual analysis of the poems focuses on the “zones of proximity” between the human and the non-human inhabitants of the landscape, discovered through the ritualistic practices of the shaman-poet and the procedural techniques employed by O’Sullivan. It is not possible to talk about a unified sense of self in *In the House of the Shaman*; on the contrary, the dynamism of the nomadic subject comes from its contact or “kinship” with its others and with its environment: animals, plants, the weather system, water, and waste. Rosi Braidotti remarks that the patterns of becoming are deconstructive of privileged subject positions such as “(masculine/white/heterosexual/speaking a standard language/property-owning/urbanized), or else, as stepping stones to a complex and open-ended process of de-personalization of the subject” (2002, 119). In the same way, in O’Sullivan’s poems, the anthropomorphic assumptions about the human subject’s domination over its non-human others are put under scrutiny. Moreover, O’Sullivan’s experimental use of language aims to question the ways in which these privileged subject positions are inherently transmitted through language.

In the poems, the human subject and language are constantly deterritorialized by the presence of its non-human others. Maggie O’Sullivan’s project goes beyond simply “imitating” the animal or making analogies between the animal and the human-being (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 238, 258). Before moving on with the analysis of the poems, it is important to reconsider Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming briefly in relation to how Maggie O’Sullivan poetry manifests becoming-animal. Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between three types of animals. The first one refers to family pets, “Oedipal

³ In the same interview, O’Sullivan notes that Cecilia Vicuna’s work (*Unravelling Words & the Weaving of Water*) is a significant inspiration for her understanding this politics of earth, embodiment and performance, particularly quoting from Vicuna’s work: “To feel the earth as one’s own skin” (Olsen).

animals”, which are considered the members of the family, emotionally connected within the Oedipal structure within the family. The second type of animals is “state animals” which take place as archetypes in the myths or belief systems of states or any power structure, and finally, “demonic animals, pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale” (2005, 241). Deleuze and Guattari seem to favour “demonic animals” as they are not connected with the Oedipal and striated relationships with the state philosophy. These “pack” animals are more resourceful for writers to form assemblages between different molecular entities. All becomings like becoming-animal display movement from “molar” to “molecular”, from the stability of their territory to the thresholds of different territorial encounters, and from identity to difference, thresholding the other. The processes of becoming are particularly aiming at destabilizing “the metaphysics of the self”; and in the case of becoming-animal, the human subjectivity not only encounters its others “but it also frees the animal from the anthropocentric gaze altogether” (Braidotti 2002, 145). The becomings mainly exist outside the control of the human domain as “nonhuman being *is* becoming—a permanent becoming” whereas for the human subject this “permanent becoming” is an “entry” for becoming-other, having contact with its others (Iveson 39)(emphasis original). The human language is organized to categorize its others in an anthropomorphic way, placing the human at the centre of the perception. However, what is central to becoming-animal of human is the decentring of the anthropomorphic representations of the world, particularly the natural world, and the dethronement of the human subject from its privileged status. For Deleuze and Guattari, the writers are sorcerers; they find ways to discover the multiplicity that animals contain (2005, 240). Such multiplicity can be discovered through “voice and through sound[;] and through a style” becoming-other is realized (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, 7). In other words, the affective qualities of a work of literature—its syntax, use of lexical items, and handling of the poetic material available to the poet—make becomings possible.

The spatial contours of the nomadic subject in the volume—the house of the shaman and the landscape—distort the boundaries between inside and outside. The borders of the house are indistinct; the dwellings of human and non-human beings are comingled. The choice of “house” as the location of identificatory and linguistic “crossings” might also be a reference to shamanistic cosmology. As Mircea Eliade explains, the shamanic trajectory is followed between “three cosmic zones”: “from earth to the sky or from earth to the underworld” (259). The symbolism of the “World Pillar” or “the Centre of the Earth” connecting the earth to heaven is seen in different shamanic cultures; and several architectural structures such as “ziggurat, temple, royal city, palace” are also used to support this symbolism (264). There needs to be “an opening” or “a hole”—a “holey” space—in these places considered the hub for the flight to take place: “it is through the same hole that the soul of the shaman in ecstasy can fly up or down in the course of his celestial or infernal journeys” (259) and any “altar, tent, or house makes possible a break-through in plane and hence ascent to the sky” (265). Likewise, the concept of “house” introduced in the title of the volume, in this respect, can be considered as a site of possible “break-through”, of ritualistic/textual transformation and journey. Moreover, although the idea of “World Pillars” has a centralizing function, what is important is the passage/flight between these “cosmic zones”; and the spaces experienced are not measurable or optical—not striated—but are perceived by sensations, by the flows of the weather system and ecosystem, along with the aural and sonic reception of these flows.

The first section of *In the House of the Shaman*, “Another Weather System”, a performance piece about the natural cycle of birth and death, and predatory life of animals

characterized by violence and passion, introduces this trans-corporeal understanding of landscape. Maggie O'Sullivan's landscape inhabits multiplicities, each of which is "symbiotic" as Deleuze and Guattari would argue, "its becoming ties together animals, plants, microorganisms, mad particles, a whole galaxy. Nor is there a preformed logical order to these heterogeneities" (2005, 250). In this respect, both the landscape visited in "Another Weather System" and the page space become smooth spaces which are revitalized by movement, change, and experimentation. The idea of cyclicity of natural life and the weather system is evoked by the opening stanza:

Contorted
lure
of
Circles,
fur
at
beauty. (*House 9*)⁴

In the beginning, we are faced with complete disorder pronounced by the word "contorted"; and that chaotic atmosphere is not dreadful, on the contrary, it is "luring" and "beautiful". Each of these opening words is used as keywords throughout the text; in other words, they appear several times in different contexts to stress the conflict between chaos and order, defining the trajectory of nomadic subject. Almost immediately, the noise of bones breaking (15), "tearing" of "the flesh" (14), the sounds of gnawing and cracking (10), along with the screams of toads and cries of hares (10) take control of the first section of *In the House of the Shaman*. The landscape described in the poems screams its unique "acoustic environments" (Braidotti 2002, 153). The sonic qualities of the first section mingle with the affective landscape of intensities of the "weather system", sensory experience of the fauna, with the circulation of sounds, noises, smells and colours. The setting is neither steady nor unsteady "but *metastable*, presenting 'a plurality of ways of being in the world' that are incompatible yet coexistent" (Smith xxvii) (emphasis original). The human language is still at work in the poem; however, it is deterritorialized and molecularized by animal noises:

every feather
bled inside
mesh
w/body
pale fritillary biting,
Pale Blazes
Dorsal Breakers
Gnawed.by/Gnawed.by/Cracked.by/Cracked.by/
Cracked
noon key
Cracked
Dead Horse Bellies
Dead Syllabary Dead
FLOAT
murder bullies

⁴ The poems from O'Sullivan's text have been quoted in their original form.

POINT THE FINGER

Parrot on a Swing
 in-thru
 eye
 hang by feet/Skull & Teeth

Master & Marrionettes

weeply

HARES RAN

TOAD SCREAM (House 10)

The animal voices dash into the poem by repetitive uses of “Gnawed.by/Gnawed.by/Cracked.by/Cracked.by/”. Added to that is the rushing of hares⁵ and cries of toads. The violence within natural life and the impulse of survival are accompanied by the silenced sufferings of the frail species (the race between “Master & Marionettes”) served as “a bloody diet” (13). Although “Bellies” in the line “Dead Horse Bellies” is capitalized, it could also be taken as a verb “to belly”, becoming engorged by sonority of the previous lines of gnawing, cracking and bullying. When the dead horse enters the textual space with its ritualistic sacrifice⁶, “syllabary” is dead as well. Considering the dictionary meaning of “syllabary”—“a collection, set, system, list, or table of syllables”⁷—then a systematic convention of human language is overdone, now being “dead”. When the system of syllables is “dead”, the text is left with “FLOAT[ING]”. Moreover, the performative enactment of violence, suffering and healing reveals “a circulation of impersonal affects, an alternate current that disrupts signifying projects as well as subjective feelings” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 233). The language of violence takes a physical form with the choice of vocabulary that indicates violence (“pulped”, “plunged”, “bled”, “mesh”, “biting”, “stabbing”), slashing of syllables and alliterative sound structure.

The section’s title, “Another Weather System”, implies that we are going to witness a system we are not familiar with, a system that introduces new othernesses. Lawrence Upton comments that the weather system might refer to “any all-encompassing power system” and in O’Sullivan’s “another weather system, we may find ourselves at sea when we thought we were on land” (n.p.). The nomadic subject of the poem leaves the familiar territory and discovers “another” weather system and landscape, and interacts with the outside—the other, going beyond the identificatory borders. This trajectory creates smooth spaces of movement, speed and slowness, where “[t]he dwelling is subordinated to the journey; inside space conforms to outside space: tent, igloo, boat” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 478). It is “another” weather system, through which the speaking subject affectively experiences a world of sensation rather than a world organized through striation. The nomadic subject undertakes the processes of becoming at the cost of becoming-imperceptible, similar to the procedures in Virginia Woolf’s *Waves*, “sound, heat, and

⁵ Hare is especially preferred in almost all sections which might be considered as a reference to one of Joseph Beuys’ favourite animals in his work along with coyote and horse.

⁶ Please see Mircea Eliade’s *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, p. 182, for the ritualistic sacrifice of horses in shamanic cultures.

⁷ “syllabary, n”. *OED Online*. Oxford UP, September 2015. Web. Accessed 21 October 2015.

liquid waves bypass the human and thus connect to larger forces” (Braidotti 2002, 127). This weather system embodies the animal and plant life; the vocabulary of zoology, botanics, biology and chemistry become the major sources of inspiration for the shaman-poet. The weather is characterized by acid rains with sulphurous contents (*House* 13) and cadmium (14), conceivably implying the contamination of the natural landscape. The season is known as the “BLOOD MONTH”, in which there is almost no hope for healing or any soothing (“hills / unhealed”) (12, 13):

rain, dear birth
 eatness
 uninterruptedly,
 [...]
 Secondaries & Paler
 Sulphur Parallels,
 [...]
 fragment selves
 in cadmium hands

& cries

HUNGER

hooking the bill tearing the flesh lining the text (*House* 13-4)

When hunger takes hold of the scene, the “killing” comes “on the/same/BREATH”, and the bill is hooked like eating at a diner. “Lining the text”, its becoming on the page, is hurting; the body of work is coming into existence like the fight taking place in the natural world. With the coming of the rain, the year is “drawn white” with “NORTH BLACK WINTERING” (15). The cyclical trajectory followed by the speaker involves “nervous pathways”, in which “alignment”—any chance of ending chaos—is belated, “pro LONGED” (16). When the day light arrives, chaos ends and life is “aligned” again and the night is “softened” (16). Taking the shamanic aspect of the performance into consideration, the cyclical pattern of birth and death voiced in the texts might be likened to “the drama of death and resurrection” during the shamanic rituals (Eliade 159-60). The early phases of the poem can be taken as an enactment of the rituals of death, “disfigurement” or “disgorg[ing]” of the self—or emptying the shamanic body of its human qualities (*House* 20). Following the dissolution of the subject, the permutations of becoming-animal are unfolded:

the feet
 hobbling
 to the letter

sound in the tree in

deed
 draw
 the condition
 of my quarters
 *
 Horse it with a Bird
 *
 Bee it with a Dog
 *

Wolf
 pattering
 tabor
 this
 appeared
 act
 i
 this
 locate
 space
 *
 (House 21)

The speaking subject is strained by the “broken speechway” and follows a trajectory to articulate or perform again; its voyage is towards the “letter” although the movement is not steady or slowed down (“the feet/hobbling/to the letter”). The nomadic subject occupies a middle position between the urge to articulate at the moment of interacting with the material/non-human world and the molar forces of human language. There is a strange “symbiosis of bodies” in the lines divided by asterisks: becoming-bird of horse and becoming-horse of bird; becoming-bee of a dog and becoming-dog of a bee (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 89). Not only their bodies but also their territories are dislocated, given that all those animals are known for marking their territories. The lines starting with “Wolf/pattering” reminds us of the picture of pattering of wolfs on the snow in the second plateau, “One or Several Wolves” in *A Thousand Plateaus*; wolf steps make holes on the snowy land, yet the wolf patter(n)s are still there (Deleuze and Guattari 26). The subject/ or the performing body is “joining the pack” of wolves and “hold to the multiplicity”; therefore, it both affects and is affected by this pack, de-territorialized and re-territorialized in a new way (26).

Some sort of healing is sought towards the end of “Another Weather System”: “a different/stage of/grief sows its Blood” (House 24). At this stage, the therapy is initiated by finding a “sort” and “sound” for the “Kept & the Unburst” and “letting go/then—” (25). Flowers have a therapeutic effect; the valley-bottoms should be ripped “for flower/holed stones” and “Again sing/for primrose measure” (25). Primroses are first to blossom in spring and one should relentlessly sing for a seasonal change—for primroses. Yet, there is no likelihood for that to happen soon. The poem ends with a ritualistic withdrawal of the shaman’s body from the non-human body of the helping spirit:

Black
 it were
 Brains Out

 as if
 the Hawk
 noised
 it is

 that
 this
 these
 Enter. (House 26)

The shaman's ecstatic journey is conveyed through the transformed body of him/her and through the guardian spirits in the shape of animals. Moreover, the shaman's imitation of the animal sounds actually initiates the performance and produces ritualistic soundscapes. The reason why I choose to interpret this section as a shamanistic drama of withdrawal is the choice of words such as "[e]nter" and "out" to describe the visceral transformation of the shamanic body as a mode of becoming-animal. The hawk is "noised" in performance; the shamanic body is becoming-hawk by sounding its noises. The others ("that/this/these") enter the performance. Robert Sheppard remarks that Maggie O'Sullivan's preoccupation with the 'kinship with animals' makes "the poem a part of organic nature, which is only possible through sound, articulated through the living body of the poet" (242). Again, the possession of the shaman's body by the animal spirits might offer a framework to discover the becoming-animal in the poems. The presence of the animals as voices and noises in the text disrupts how the human language works through creating dualistic relationship between the human and its non-human others.

Furthermore, the soundscapes of the poems are not created only through animal noises but also other components of the landscape such as water and natural phenomenon. The connection between different elemental and atmospheric qualities of this weather system produces smooth spaces of resistance and survival. Moreover, on textual level, O'Sullivan tries to discover the possibilities "[t]o stress the idea of transformation and of substance" through this meteorological imagery (*House* 28). Water, for instance, is the dominating element in the second book of *In the House of the Shaman*, "Kinship with Animals", and the watery landscape supports the fluidity between crossings ("of mutability,") volatile and transparent nature of linguistic processes. The second poem, "Equities Water", starts in the middle of something like jumping out of water, "as if to . Spayfer Noisy Stuff" (30). So as to say "as if", there has to be a quality to be talked about or a comparison to make. That comparison is missing from the start and "to ." is not connected to a proper verb, but divided with a period from a neologism "Spayfer". This neologism might refer to a combination of "spay" and "-fer", as spay is related to aquatic terminology and "-fer" might refer to the derivative to make "spayfer" a strange compound. Otherwise, it might also be a combination of "spay" and "transfer". The *OED* defines "spay" as a "channel, drain, or small stream, especially one carrying off overflow or surplus water" and together with "-fer" it might mean "carrying water through a channel". In the context of the poem, "Spayfer Noisy Stuff" is an invitation to make the poem noisy with the flows of water, which is somehow paraphrased in the fourth line: "Let the Water Go Loud" (30). The linguistic experimentation in the poem revolves around the idea of considering words as molecules, simultaneously embodying and reflecting the energy of water molecules that makes the text "Go Loud". The text becomes noisy through these molecular becomings.

It would not be far-fetched to argue that Maggie O'Sullivan's preoccupation with water in these poems in relation to her emphasis on the weather system has a lot to do with her aim to discover the energy of the natural world through its material aspects. The weather system metaphorically stands for the system of human language as a "molar property" constituted by "a body of water or air composed of a large population of molecules"; and the linguistic components, the words, are energized through "the molecules' kinetic energy, the energy they have by virtue of their movement" (DeLanda 165). Similarly, the poem "Naming" starts with the water imagery: "Water/they unlidder" (*House* 32). From the first line onwards, it is possible to see this energy of linguistic experimentation which is also accompanied by the postponement of the signified. Who or what "unlidders" water/text is not named yet. The non-standard use of "unlidder" as a verb

suggests an opening and uncovering that initiates a performance. The surface of both the text and water is “unliddered” by the “hurtling” of the birds with great speed, with the entering of “suffixes— Dots. Dashes. Scraping fowls/Unescorted” simultaneously. Then, enters the “DRAGON” (possibly dragonfly as they usually populate marshy areas) with its swift flight and loud buzzing sound “plum-BURR/ plum-BURR/ plum-BURR”. The dragonfly scene is followed by an invitation or an invocation with the intention to draw other bodies in that ritualistic drama of “naming”:

Be come.
 Be spoke.
 Be eared. (*House 32*)

“Be come,” might suggest coming into existence—the arrival of the be-ing with all its dynamism; “Be spoke”, a strange combination of present and past tense, is an invitation for vocalization, singing or making the utterance audible; and finally “Be eared”, the vocalization must draw the attention of the ears (be noisy), and the articulation of sounds are as important as how they are heard or processed by the ears. The text turns back to its watery setting with the next line: “Teal. Nor into/is drumming”. The small water-fowl is struggling on the surface of the water, with its “squeal/ Driven to Summit”. Then comes the gushing of blood with the text becoming a battleground (“battlegivens”) with beheadings (“decapitate.”), “wounds” and “blood-fine-hatching” “laid” on the rivers (*House 32*). Finally comes the long-awaited “naming” after a bloody delivery and “hatching” of words: “this is called/fish” (*House 32*). As Robert Sheppard argues, this particular poem “enacts the primacy of evocation over ‘naming’” and “of the role of a linguistically transformative exuberance, of the preference for the pleasure of the riddle’s processes to the comfort of its solution” (239). The “they” of the opening line is discovered to be “fish”, a floating signifier; and other attempts of naming are not realised and “fish” be/comes by virtue of its difference from other signifiers (not dragonfly, not teal, but fish).

Furthermore, the shamanistic ritual provides a framework for exploring the processes of becoming in O’Sullivan’s poems. The body of the shaman, as also seen in Joseph Beuys’ artwork, becomes a surface for affective becomings: the transfigured body not only affects, but also is affected by the non-human bodies s/he is surrounded with. From a Bergsonian perspective, the shamanic trance is maintained by “molecular movements” which are produced by the affecting/affected body of the shaman (23). The ultimate aim of shamanic ecstasy is being “carried out of oneself”, and “the shaman enters deep into the beyond” through the ecstatic effect of music and dance (Eliade 223). The body of the shaman is immersed by the ‘beyond’ through animal spirits. O’Sullivan’s poems analysed below are particularly interested in those moments of ecstasy, transformation and “dissolution of self” and language. Such an instance of shamanic trance takes place in the poem “Giant Yellow”, in which the writing of the poem simultaneously and self-reflexively comes into existence. The shaman’s body is characterized as a “sensing body in movement”—that movement can only be discovered by the reader “in layers, in textures, in rhythms and juxtapositions that defy strict organization into a semiotic system” (Manning xviii, xiv). Firstly, the opening of the poem gives place to the expressions of flight and transformation that will take place within a few pages. It begins painfully by a “STRUT”, which can be taken as the strife between different “hill figures” the previous poem has introduced; the bodies which are drawing together (“Intoothed constrict”) try to find their orbit; that is, an animal body to be transformed into, a non-human corporeality (*House 57*). Before “Giant Yellow”, in the poem “Hill Figures” shaman’s equipment such

as “bird-gear”, “feather”, “skull”, “stick” have been brought together. The hill figures—eagles, crow, raven, cow—appear as the possible helping spirits for “BIRTH—herding”, the moment of shamanic transformation paralleled with the birth of the utterance. After “ULTRA flutterings”—movement and flapping of the birds—“paper & swan” come into existence together as the following interrupted line says “made is” (*House 57*). This grammatically inaccurate line ties the “paper & swan” with the body parts of the animals “Eyes, Tongue, Jaw—” or with the speaking subject or the reader alike who are expected to join with their bodies “craft/bodies” in the craftsmanship of writing and performance, on that transformative moment. The trance is “orbiting”, travelling or achieved through “2 horns”: “BIRTH—herding” is painful, “scalded, misspelt” (56, 59):

Trance
Orbiting
2 Horns, scalded, misspelt. Approximal
membraneous shadow plaiting, the
Letter Missing, Missingly

Climates end, Spans —
[...]

Embryonic lassing
ARTILLERY
Crosses. Crisscross, Crossings gone
Carapace
Cutaway Iambic
Cloaca documents, Octaves of the Kidney

[...]
A pen ticks,
Body of the animal altered
HELD

DREW

A coast thumps, flank of a Corpse —
(Collapsed
Only bigger —

BORN.

Meso-cysted
BELLOW geometries

Oxidised
Dalliances
chain-blue

KID-EYED ICER BARS—
So so,
Purpleda Down. Pursea. Vents Trembling

THORNSWAY SINGINGS

[...]

So gather,
 (dock & sorrow
 totems —
 Rickety Hooley Stutter — (*House* 59-60)

In these lines, the process of giving birth to a word apart from the cycle of birth in nature—the delivery of the language itself—is suggested by the one-syllable line “BORN”. This delivery is a painful one starting from the “[e]mbryonic lassing”, which is the “ATILLARY” of the writer/performer; it takes a path between bodies, “crossings”, zigzagging between thought and its materialization by words on the page. The word is being delivered, but the foetal membranes should be extracted as well: “Collapsed Only Bigger”. All the organs of the body introduced by medical terminology, “mammalian muscle”, “thumps”, “meso-csyted”, “flank” are active in this procedure. The vibrations of birth take hold of the body, “Purpleda Down. Pursea. Vents Trembling” and can only be calmed down by singing, totems, “Rickety Hooley Stutter” (*House* 60), as the “song is the birthing element, making pain bearable, pleasure knowable” (Rowe 151). In “Giant Yellow” the preparatory stage of shamanic trance is achieved through the alliterative effect and the use of animistic vocabulary. As “the pen ticks” the words move the nerves, vibrate the page, eventually metamorphosing the speaker into a stutterer:

Spine
 slub

Squabble-Speak
 sub —
 statuary —
 ...
 Sylla/
 Bled Garjey,
 auric fin spun key skins
 ...
 — acro pleural petal fugal
 — thick fat spat fast

whenas crack
 & hammer — (*House* 61)

The alliterative effect created by the letter “S” in the first six lines prepares the ground for the fierceness and agony that inflicts the subject in producing the words that will “crack & hammer”. Additionally, breaking words into its particles and reproducing them through new sound structures and repetition echo what Deleuze calls stammering in “He Stuttered”. In the same way, the wordplay on “sylla/Bled” (syllabled or sylla/Bled) materializes the stuttering “growing from the middle” by slashing the word into pieces. The slashing not only draws attention to the painful production of the word but also the proliferation of the meaning-making process. The obscure words like “Garjey” is additionally an example of creating a “foreign language within language”, or becoming-minor of language (Deleuze 113).

Following the initial stages of trance in “Giant Yellow”, the shamanistic ecstasy is finally achieved in the poem “Lorica for Zoe” by an esoteric amalgamation of words. When the shaman prepares for the trance, s/he tries to interact with the non-human spirits whose bodies enter in the body of the shaman. The shaman’s voice is mingled with the sounds of those animals and her/his body is taken hold of by the movements of those spirits, in other words, “*a taking possession of his helping spirits by a shaman*” (Eliade 89, 92, 93) (emphasis original). While the human body remains visible, it exists in another form through the simultaneous death and birth of a new form of identity. In other words, the shaman has to die in order to be carried away by the moments of ecstasy. Those moments of death of the human subject during the shamanic trance can be read as a smooth space of transformation, where the non-human forms proliferate, with “all the greater multiplying–” (House 16). While the “Giant Yellow” ends with the birds that “call the vision in” (61), in the following poem the owl helps as the animal spirit to bring about the trance moment, enabling “a real or direct connection with the beyond” (Eliade 94). The moments of ecstasy follow in “Lorica for Zoe” with the employment of arcane vocabulary and the sense of stuttering created by a repetitive sound pattern:

ZAKAT ORO ECHO ZEUS ORIGIN EDDA
 ZAMMAT ONYX ELEMENTAL ZETES OPS EYE
 ZIUSUDRA OMEN EMBLEM ZAR OBSIDIAN EAR
 ZABAT OM EAGLE ZORYA OLAM EYE ZINA OWL ENTRAILS
 ZOE OPAL EARTH ZAKAR ORO ECHO ZEUS ORIGIN EDDA
 ZAMMA ONYX ELEMENTAL ZETES OPS EYE ZIUSUDRA OMEN EMBLEM
 ZAR OBSIDIAN EAR ZINA OWL ENTRAILS ZOE OPAL EARTH ZOE OPAL
 EARTH (House 62)

By re-interpreting a Heideggerian use of “zoe”, Rosi Braidotti argues that the “nomadic subject is in love with zoe” and explains it within the context of becoming-insect in Kafka’s *Metamorphoses*: “Zoe carries on relentlessly and is cast out of the holy precinct of the ‘me’ that demands control and fails to obtain it, ending by being experienced as an alien other” (2002, 132). The “Lorica for Zoe” and repetition of “zoe” through the initials of the words in the poem might thus refer to the infinity, the force that is produced by zoe, away from the restrictions of the self, of an identity. The final stanza of “Lorica for Zoe” therefore moves away from the conscious self, and “the idea of Life” visually spreads over the text by the enlarging line lengths.

Finally, the two collage pieces at the end of *In the House of the Shaman* visually materialize the processes of becoming-animal. Two different insects have been placed on miscellaneous feathers and ripped papers of different sizes. The close reading of the written material divulges zoological terminology, along with neologisms, meaningless words, and broken/torn phrases. Some of the words in the scrapped papers coincide with words used in the text (such as, HILL, RUSH, STONES, GOOSE); and the photocopied ripped papers are collaged in different directions:

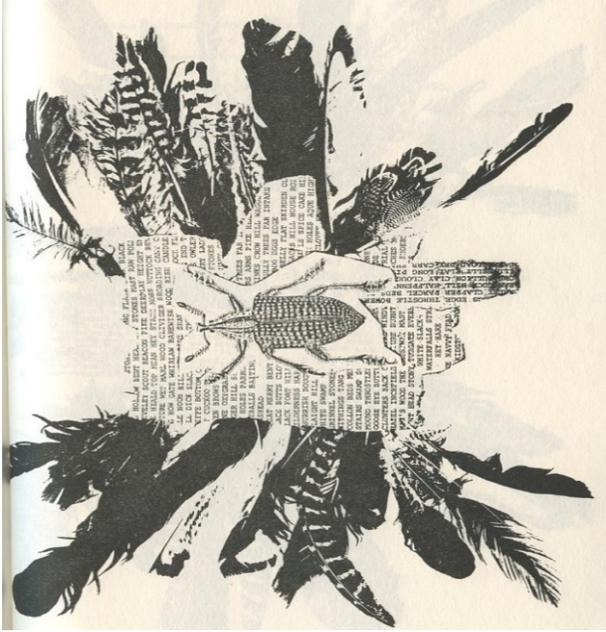


Figure 1. *In the House of the Shaman*, 67

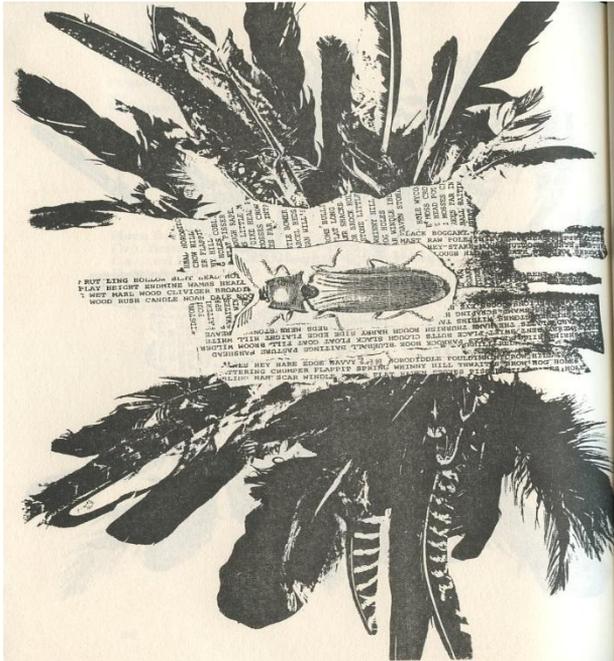


Figure 2. *In the House of the Shaman*, 68

The territory of textual space is deterritorialized by the body of the insect and the interlocked bird feathers of various sort. The “aerial journey” undertaken is visually placed on a text, by connecting feathers with the words capitalized and the body of the insect to draw attention to the flows between several othernesses. Rosi Braidotti draws attention to the qualities of insects that make becoming-imperceptible possible:

dryness, hairiness, metal- like body-frames, great resilience. They are environment-bound, thus elemental, either because linked to the earth and to its underground/crust (*chthonic* forces) or defying its gravity thanks to aircraft-like bodyframes [...] Of great importance are the shifts in sensory and spatio-temporal co-ordinates that make the insects genuinely admirable organisms [...] [they have] the specific capacity to produce sounds that have speeds, variations and intensities [...] [they] offer convincing examples of non-linguistic communication. (2002, 153)

Animals are bound to a territory and they mark their territories for survival and maintain their life as “pack”. In the case of the insects, the “vibrations” they make are attempts to mark their territories. O’Sullivan’s play with several sounds created by the letters “s”, “z” reclaim the presence of insects, their “rustling, buzzing, clicking, scratching, and scraping” in both volumes. In the images above, insects and birds through feathers mark their territories, as well as the text through its borders. However, the intersecting surfaces and thresholds of their bodies can be read as lines of flight. Maggie O’Sullivan seems to acknowledge the forces of insects to make imperceptibility possible; what endures out of experimentation and also subverts the primacy of human subject is the presence of insects, as suggested by the images of insects with their resilient presence, right on top of the feathers and text. All in all, these images suggest a connection between the text, animals, the artistic practices, and how the animal might textually and visually be enhanced in an artistic way. The ending of *In the House of the Shaman* resists closure; in other words, the nomadic wandering of the text is augmented with the “multiplication” of the text with images of torn and collaged texts—formal and linguistic experimentation.

By way of conclusion, Maggie O’Sullivan’s ultimate focus in *In the House of the Shaman* has been on the materiality of language, acknowledging the transformative forces of language to make other worlds possible. This article thus aimed to understand the types of becoming at work in O’Sullivan’s work while the text unfolds non-human encounters of the human subject and undergoes a shamanistic ritual. The affective landscape in the poems is created through the activation of all senses in the process of words coming into existence: visual, tactile, oral, olfactory—blended within by the medium of linguistic experimentation. O’Sullivan’s lexical experimentation is nomadic in the sense that she brings together utterly different worlds of experience, molecularizes language into its smallest particles, and mixes human discourse with vegetative and animistic vocabulary. The lyric self dissolves in Maggie O’Sullivan’s poetic performances; and the poetic space is mobilized by movements of experimentation. The writing/reading process during those moments of transformation becomes a predatory act which includes violence and suffering at the heart of producing performance.

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Land of Plenty and Freedom: The Changing Vision of America in the Early Colonial Period

Himmet Umunç

Abstract: Ever since the beginnings of the colonial period America has always been described and promoted as a paradisaical land of plenty and freedom. This economic and political double vision was particularly emphasized by the early explorers and planters (colonists) in their reports and writings. In fact, it was Columbus first, who, inspired by the Biblical myth of the Canaan and the Hesiodic myth of the Golden Age, had formulated the paradisaical vision of the American continent. A similar vision was also cherished and voiced later on by the early English explorers and Virginia colonists in their accounts. Then, in the early seventeenth century, the Puritan radicals and other religious and political dissenters, who found refuge in America and set up their colonies in New England, attached a political dimension to the original paradisaical vision and enthusiastically began to describe America also as a land of freedom. So, as can be seen from various primary sources in the early colonial period, America came to be viewed in this double and changing vision.

Keywords: Colonial America, views of America, trans-Atlantic explorers, colonization of America, visions of America, early American colonies

In his speech on the occasion of the third centenary in 1792 of Columbus's discovery of the American continent, the historian Jeremy Belknap, founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society, described America as a land of freedom:

Freedom, that noble gift of heaven, has here [in America] fixed her standard, and invited the distressed of all countries to take refuge under it. Our virtuous ancestors fled from the impositions and persecutions to which they were subjected in England, and found in this wilderness an asylum from that tyranny. (36-7)

Obviously Belknap was speaking within the context and atmosphere of the post-Revolution patriotism and national excitement and, more importantly, with a full awareness of the ethical and political principles on which the Revolution rested. For my purpose in this article, what is so important in Belknap's statement is the point that he was also reiterating a vision of America which was political and had been well-established, with its origins in early colonial discourses. However, besides this political aspect of the colonial vision of America, there was also a socio-economic aspect, which in fact constituted the very original basis of the complete American vision: this was the vision of America as a land of plenty, as a promised land flowing with milk and honey (to recall a Biblical metaphor). This original vision, formulated at the outset by the early American explorers and colonists, had acquired by Belknap's time a political and humanitarian significance and received its climactic expression in the principles of the American Revolution. So it is this double vision of America as a land of plenty and freedom that is the main concern of this article. Hence what follows is a consecutive study of how and why this double vision of America came to be cherished, though the colonists had also been aware of a dystopian vision of the inhospitable American wilderness. Therefore, for contextualization and

reference, it would be useful to trace the origins and paradigms of the original Edenic vision of America and demonstrate how this vision had come to be coupled with the political vision such as Belknap voiced in his address.

Following his first voyage in 1492 to the New World, Columbus wrote several letters to some Spanish nobles, describing his impressions and observations of the place and its people. One of these letters, dated 15 February 1493, was addressed to Luis de Sant'Angel, Secretary of State to the court of Aragon. This nobleman had originally supported Columbus's so-called "India" project and introduced him to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. In the letter, published in early April 1493 in Barcelona, Columbus described the island of La Española [Hispaniola] in an environmentally sensitive style. In his description he obviously recalled not only the Biblical image of the Garden of Eden but also the traditional pastoral tropes as well as the classical myth of the Golden Age:

The lands thereof are high, and in it are very many ranges of hills, and most lofty mountains [...]; all most beautiful in a thousand shapes, and all accessible, and full of trees of a thousand kinds, so lofty that they seem to reach the sky. [...] Some of them were in flower, some in fruit, and some in another stage according to their kind. And the nightingale was singing, and other birds of a thousand sorts. [...] There are palm-trees of six or eight species, wondrous to see for their beautiful variety; but so are the other trees, and fruits, and plants therein. There are wonderful pine-groves, and very large plains of verdure, and there is honey, and many kinds of birds, and many various fruits. [...] There are many spiceries, and great mines of gold and other metals. The people of this island, and of all the others that I have found and seen, or not seen, all go naked, men and women, just as their mothers bring them forth; [...] they are artless and generous with what they have, to such a degree as no one would believe but him who had seen it. Of anything they have, if it be asked for, they never say no, but do rather invite the person to accept it, and show as much lovingness as though they would give their hearts. (K[erney] 22-3)

By drawing an exotic picture of the island with its natural resources as well as carefree, generous, innocent, hospitable natives living naked like Adam and Eve in an Edenic state of *otium*, Columbus was evidently intending to impress his royal patrons and, thus, sustain their financial and moral support. Yet, to reinforce his impressions, he was also reiterating a mythical mode of life that had its origins in the classical myth of the Golden Age initiated by Hesiod in his *Works and Days* (11[Greek text lines: 109-20]).

Historically, Columbus made three more voyages to the New World in 1493, 1498, and 1502 respectively and covered almost all the Caribbeans. During these explorations he recorded in his personal diary (*El Diario*) all his observations and impressions, which he also expressed in his letters. His enthralling vision of the New World also had its further repercussion in the Renaissance chronicles of trans-Atlantic explorations. For instance, in his chronicle *De Novo Orbe*, which included a series of reports or narratives called "Decas" [Decades], describing the trans-Atlantic explorations of Columbus and other Spanish explorers, the Italian-born Spanish historian and humanist Peter Martyr d'Anghiera described the natives of Hispaniola in the way that not only pointed to Columbus's own accounts but also brought to the fore a social and political meaning with Hesiodic or mythical allusions:

They [the natives] seeme to live in that golden worlde of the which olde writers speake so much, wherein menne lived simply and innocently without enforcement of

lawes, without quarreling, jodges, and libelles, content onely to satisfie nature, without further vexation for knowledge of things to come. (in Levine 61)

Indeed, there were many similar accounts of the New World given by other explorers like, for example, Columbus's contemporary the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci. In fact, he was the first to declare that the lands discovered by Columbus constituted a new continent, which was therefore named after his name as "America", and his descriptive letters, published widely in Latin, French, and German, were popularly read in Renaissance Europe. Consequently, there arose in the mind of Renaissance Europe a popular and romanticized vision of America, which, as has been shown above, essentially amalgamated the Christian myth of the Terrestrial Paradise and the classical myth of the Golden Age. Especially in his letter of 18 October 1498, submitted to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella as a kind of official report on his third voyage (Morrison 285-88), Columbus explicitly claimed that he had at last discovered the Terrestrial Paradise, which, he further argued, many pagans and Christians had vainly tried to locate:

When I made the island of Trinidad, [...] I found the temperature there and in the land of Gracia very mild, the ground and the trees being very green and as beautiful as the orchards of Valencia in April. The people there are of very handsome build and whiter than any others I have seen in the Indies. [...] I do not find and have never found any Latin or Greek work which definite locates the Terrestrial Paradise in this world, nor have I seen securely placed on any world map on the basis of prof. [...] But I am completely persuaded in my own mind that the Terrestrial Paradise is in the place I have described. (286-87)

Besides arousing his audiences' curiosity and firing their imagination about America, Columbus and other explorers certainly did have a very simple and pragmatic reason for describing the New World in terms of an Edenic vision. As Levine has suggested, "the discoverer who has looked upon *terra incognita* must explain it in terms which those who have never been there can readily comprehend" (59).

This initial Columbian vision of the New World was so disseminated in Europe through popular Renaissance writings about explorations that it almost acquired what one may term a mythical significance. Every description of the New World seemed to revolve around the myth of the Terrestrial Paradise that constituted the core of Columbus' vision. Hence it was mostly through this vision that the early English explorers and planters (colonists) of Virginia and New England came to describe their new environment. However, one must hasten to add that in certain cases there were exceptions and that in some accounts the vision was replaced by a more realistic and bleak one, highlighting the harsh primitivism of colonial life through its deprivations, dangers, and hostile environment.

The very first English explorations of the New World had begun in 1497 and 1498 with John Cabot under Henry VII's patronage (Hakluyt 3: 7, 144). Actually Cabot was an Italian merchant residing in London and was keenly interested, like Columbus, in discovering a new sea route in the Atlantic in order to reach the lucrative Far East markets. However, in the wake of the Spanish and Portuguese conquest and colonization of the New World that had begun in the early sixteenth century, also the English explorers and adventurers at the time turned their attention to colonization. In this regard, for instance, when Sir Humphrey Gilbert failed in 1583 to set up a colony in Newfoundland and was drowned on his way back to England (Hakluyt 3: 143-61), his mission was taken over by his half-brother Sir Walter Raleigh, who, on 25 March 1584, secured from Queen Elizabeth

the right to discover and colonize new territories in the New World (3: 243-45). About a month later, on 27 April 1584, Raleigh hired captains Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe and sent them to the New World on a reconnaissance mission (3: 246-51). They explored the Chesapeake Bay area in the east coast of modern Maryland and Virginia. On their return five months later about the middle of September, they submitted a report to Raleigh about their voyage and explorations (3: 246-51). Their description of the new land, which was soon to be called “Virginia” by Raleigh as a tribute to Queen Elizabeth, was the first account of Virginia written in English, which presented a vision that reiterated in a Columbian tone the usual Edenic and pastoral perception. For instance, as they approached the mainland, they were exceedingly mystified by its sweet smells:

We found shole water, wher we smelt so sweet and so strong a smel, as if we had bene in the midst of some delicate garden abounding with all kinde of odoriferous flowers, by which we were assured, that the land could not be farre distant. (3:246)

On their landing, they were most impressed by the incredible fertility of the land (3:246) and by the hospitality and civility of the natives, whose carefree life reminded the explorers of the mythical Golden Age:

We found the people most gentle, louing, and faithfull, voide of all guile and treason, and such as liue after the maner of the golden age. The people onely care howe to defend themselues from the cold in their short winter, and to feed themselues with such meat as the soile affoordeth. (3: 246)

This original Edenic or paradisaical vision of Virginia, formulated and communicated as such by Raleigh’s reconnaissance team, was repeatedly evoked in the reports and accounts of the early planters. For instance, in his letter of 3 September 1585 to Richard Hakluyt, Ralph Lane, who, together with Sir Richard “Greeneuill” [Grenville] had been commissioned by Raleigh to set up the first colony in Virginia, described the land in extremely exotic terms:

We haue discouered the maine to be the goodliest soyle vnder the cope of heauen, so abounding with sweete trees, that bring such sundry rich and pleasant gummess, grapes of such greatnesse, yet wilde, [...] so many sorts of Apothecarie drugs, such seuerall kindes of flaxe, & one kind like silke [...] It is the goodliest and most pleasing Territorie of the World [...] and the climate so wholesome. (3: 254-55)

So, to Raleigh’s agents and colonizers, Virginia was the “paradise of the world” (Hakluyt 3: 265). In fact, this was the colony of 104 men, who were left under the charge of Ralph Lane by Sir Richard Grenville, Raleigh’s captain, in August 1585 on Roanoke Island off the coast of modern North Carolina and, having been saved by Sir Francis Drake a year later (on 27 July 1586), were brought back to England (3: 254-65). Although Raleigh’s attempts to establish a colony in Virginia thus proved futile and catastrophic (3:282), Virginia with its rich and unspoiled resources, projected through a paradisaical vision, continued to mystify and lure the enterprising and commercially committed merchants of London. Accordingly, when the Virginia Company was formed in London in 1606 under the supervision of a royal council (Norton et al. 43), it was this vision which the Company constantly upheld to influence the public for the promotion of Virginia and for the enlistment of planters to settle in the colony. For this purpose, various promotional pamphlets and accounts were written about Virginia during the period from 1606 to 1624

when, owing to a number of administrative and commercial malpractices, the Company was dissolved by James I (Norton et al. 46). In all these promotional writings, the vision of Virginia as a land of plenty was invariably reiterated. Moreover, during this period of full colonization, the vision was given a further Christian significance when the Virginia Company introduced the conversion of the natives as part of their colonization policy. Thus, the originally economic justification of colonization through reference to the fertility of the land and the richness of its natural resources, expressed within the context of the popular Edenic vision, was now further enhanced by emphasis on a missionary purpose. In an anonymous Company pamphlet, it was clearly pointed out in support of the Virginia colony that

His Maiestie [...] hath granted many gracious priuileges, vnder the great Seale, to vs and to our Heirs for euer, that will aduenture or plant in the said plantation: So I wish and intreat all well affected subiects, some in their persons, others in their purses, cheerfully to aduenture, and ioyntly take in hand this high and acceptable worke, tending to aduance and spread the kingdome of God, and the knowledge of the truth, among so many millions of men and women, sdauage and blind, that neuer yet saw the true light shine before their eyes, to enlighten their minds and comfort their soules, as also for the honor of our king, and enlarging of his kingdome. (*Nova Britannia* 6)

Again, in another anonymous pamphlet, religion and national interests were given particular emphasis: "Our primarie end is to plant religion, our secundarie and subalternate ends are for the honour and profit of our nation (*A True Declaration* 5).

However, what becomes clear as one surveys the promotional pamphlets of the Virginia Company and Books II, III and IV of John Smith's *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*, in which he gives a detailed account of the conditions in the colony, is the fact that the originally romanticized and economic vision of America gradually was further enhanced by an increasingly religious and political vision that mostly motivated the new colonies emerging in New England. This new vision was often brought to the fore especially from the 1630s and 1640s onwards with the arrival of large numbers of planters, especially from a Puritan background. However, the popularly growing and enticing vision of America as such was undermined, on the other hand, by an ambivalent depiction of the natives. For the early colonists the natives were hospitable, generous, noble, and courteous (Morton 156) but also "sauage enemies [whose] strongest forces [were] sleights and trecherie, more to be warily prevented than much to be feared" (*The New Life of Virginia* 15-6).

Historically, since the Virginia colony had been established for economic exploitation and commercial aims, the original planters consisted of the people who had volunteered to settle there for their own personal gains. They were neither political dissenters nor religious radicals; they were not criminals in exile, either. In principle they were loyal subjects and cherished no idea to defy the monarch or his government. Therefore, they did not view Virginia in particular or America in general in terms of a political asylum. In other words, they did not imagine America as a land of freedom where they had taken refuge from political oppression and corruption. In fact, the political vision of America as a land of freedom was shared and promoted by a different community of colonists in a different geographical context. They were mainly the New England Puritan colonists, who, to a large extent, were non-conformists and sectarian dissenters. If we recall that Queen Elizabeth's policy of religious reconciliation and ecclesiastical unitarianism under the Anglican Church failed to forestall the upward trend of non-conformism and that, under James I, radical Puritans and non-conformists went into voluntary exile in Protestant

Europe, the colonization process in America came to have a new meaning. As can clearly be seen in William Bradford's history of the Plymouth Puritan colony, originally entitled "*Of Plimoth Plantation*", the English Puritan exiles in the Netherlands, who had been facing various economic, social and cultural problems there and feeling extremely anxious about the political and religious unpredictability of their future, turned to America as their new home for religious freedom (especially 11-29). Upon their acquisition of "a large grante from y^e king, for y^e more northerly parts of that countrie [i.e. America] [...] to be called [...] New-England" (Bradford 44), they removed themselves to this new land to live in freedom and "for y^e propagating & advancing y^e gospell of y^e kingdom of Christ" (24). Along with the Puritans as such, also other non-conformist sectarian factions like the Brownists emigrated to New England. So for their freedom of conscience, New England came to be imagined as a land of freedom. For instance, an anonymous Salem planter [probably a Francis Higginson] stressed the point in his pamphlet as follows:

But that which is our greatest comfort, and meanes of defence aboue all other, is, that we haue here the true Religion and holy Ordinances of Almighty God taught amongst vs: Thankes be to God, we haue plentie of Preaching, and diligent Catechizing, with strickt and carefull exercise, and good and commendable orders to bring our People into a Christian conuersation. (13-4)

As can be understood from the phrase "a Christian conuersation", communal interaction among the Puritan colonists was commonly encouraged to create a politically alert society. Therefore, unlike the Virginia colony, the New England colonies were fully committed to the freedom of conscience and, in their writings and sermons, attached primary importance to this kind of freedom that also embodied political significance. In this regard, one may recall a sermon preached by John Cotton on the Isle of Wight in England to the members of the Massachusetts Bay colony on the eve of their departure in the spring of 1630. The colony was headed by John Winthrop, who was later to be elected the first governor of the colony (Winthrop, R.C. 348; Norton et al. 51). The preacher John Cotton was the grandfather of the future Puritan minister and writer Cotton Mather, who was to support enthusiastically the Salem witch hunting in the early 1690s. In his sermon, John Cotton emphasized the idea of freedom in that, as planters in America, they would "haue peaceable and quiet resting there, the sonnes of wickednesse [would] not afflict them no more" (2). Yet along with this political vision of America, the New England colonists also reiterated the usual Edenic vision of the land. For instance, the notorious Thomas Morton, who set up in 1624 the so-called "Ma-re Mount" (Merrymount) colony (71-2) at what is today called Quincy outside Boston but, for his scandalous behaviour and lax Puritanism, got into trouble with what he called "the Separatists" (73) that is, the Plymouth colony, called New England "New English Canaan" or "New Canaan", evoking the Biblical Canaan flowing with milk and honey:

in the delicacy of waters, and the conveniency of them, Canaan came not nere this Country. As for the Milke and Hony which that Canaan flowed with, it is supplied by the plenty of birds; beasts and Fish, whereof Canaan could not boast her selfe. (73)

He further pointed out that the rich flora and fauna as well as natural resources of New England "made the Land to mee seem paradice" (42). Indeed, as in other colonial descriptions, so in Morton's descriptions of the land, the colonial myth of the earthly paradise with exotic flowers and plants was reasserted:

Now since it is a Country so infinitely blest with foode, and fire, to roast or boyle our Flesh and Fish, why should any man feare for cold there, in a Country warmer in winter, than some parts of France and neerer the Sunne: [...] There is no boggy ground, knowne in all the Country, from whence the Sunne may exhale unwholesom vapours: But there are divers arematicall herbes, and plants, as Sassafras, Muske, Roses, Violets, Balme, Lawrell, Hunnisuckles, and the like, that [...] perfume the aire. (62)

Similarly, in a letter of 29 November 1630, which John Winthrop wrote to his wife Margaret Winthrop, who had been left behind in England and was to join him in the new colony a year later, on 2 November 1631 (I: 63-64), he plainly referred to New England as a paradise and as a land of plenty:

My dear wife, we are here in a paradise. Though we have not beef and mutton, &c. Yet (God be praised) we want them not; our Indian corn answers for all. Yet here is fowl and fish in great plenty. (I:379)

To conclude then, all these statements and descriptions by the early colonists clearly demonstrate the fact that, in the early colonial period, each colony cherished its own vision of America, which was to change in time and to be reformulated by new generations. Although the Virginia colonists did not pronounce the idea of freedom in their writings like, for example, the New England and other colonists, yet in time all the American colonies were to be united in the idea of freedom for the nation when the American Revolution was in the making. Today, there are of course various visions of America with a wide political, economic, cultural, ethnic, and technological spectrum. However, the fundamental double vision that has been the focus of this article has been the core vision of all the other visions that can be attributed to America now and in the future.

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Özlem Görey. *English Narrative Poetry: A Babel of Voices*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017. H/bk 168 pp. ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-8646-8

Gülden Hatipoğlu

It is impossible to disagree with Mark Currie who views humans as “narrative animals, as *homo fabulans*—the tellers and interpreters of narrative” (2). All performative acts of narrativization, prosaic or poetic, engaged by this particular species of *homo fabulans* are mediated through language which is never neutral or independent from the values embodied by the speaking subject. Narrative voice is thus more than a vehicle of mediation, and has a manipulating power and influence on the meanings derived from the symbolic universe interpreted, or authored in poststructuralist sense, by the reader.

Görey’s book, with the claim that poetry has remained a neglected genre in classical narratology, contributes to the extension of postclassical narratology which had long since moved beyond a generic focus on prose and begun to embrace diverse textual categories from cinematic narratives to painting. Central to Görey’s approach is her emphasis on focalization and focalizers, both of which are prone to the manipulation of voice. As defined by Mieke Bal, focalization refers to “the relation between ‘who perceives’ and what is perceived, [which] colors the story with subjectivity”, and focalizers are “the subjects of perception and interpretation” (Bal 8, 12). Görey employs these concepts as centipedal forces towards which her argument in each chapter is drawn. Concentrating on narrative perspective or point of view, she exposes the interdependence of the tropes of seeing and hearing, and vision and voice, in narrative poetry.

The book consists of ten chapters which cover a broad but focused survey of English narrative poetry, and zooms into a selection of narratives from the mainstream canon of Anglophone literature in chronological order, including Shakespeare, Marlowe, Alexander Pope, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Keats, Rossetti, Browning, Hilda Doolittle, Ted Hughes, Jackie Kay, and Bernandine Evaristo. In the comprehensive “Introduction” part, Görey traces the major definitions, approaches, and fuzzy areas in the field of narratology, and narrows down her approach to the poetics and politics of “voice” and focalization in narrative. This overall scope is filtered in each chapter through a particular lens of discursive point, introducing the reader to a wide range of conceptual categories interrelated to the use of voice in given narratives.

The first three chapters are devoted to works which are, in one way or another, poetic reworkings of ancient or medieval narratives. The first chapter on Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* and Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* traces the manipulative guiding voices of narrators which direct the reader’s perspective in order to subvert the established hierarchal binary oppositions loaded with conventional codes of representation. The revoicing of the Ovidian material by the Renaissance poets and writers is shown to be more than a thematic revival of dusting off classical texts and making them new for the contemporary reader. Although Görey never uses the words “adaptation” or “rewriting”, her argument is in tune with the politics of rewriting that refocalizes representations through manipulative narrative voice and introduces new versions of received narratives to give voice to the unspoken or concealed element. In the second chapter devoted to Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece*, the writer follows a similar line of argument, elaborating on the manipulative omissions and additions in Shakespeare’s version and exposing the shaping power of narrative voice on readers’ perception in the production of meaning. The third chapter on Alexander Pope’s heroic epistle, *Eloise to Ebelard*, explores

the gender shift in narrative angle which is conveyed through the sympathetic lens of the male poet, who gives voice to the “pathos and frustration of his female protagonist” (159).

The following three chapters are devoted to works of Romantic poetry. Evincing how our definitions and conceptions of “normality” are shaped by narrativization, the fourth chapter discusses “The Idiot Boy” and “The Mad Mother” in *Lyrical Ballads* as manifestations of the “unspeakable” (53). Görey’s narratological analysis touches on the shaping influence of class on the reception and social accommodation of mentally retarded individuals, and introduces a psychoanalytical elucidation of the categories of “madness” and “motherhood”. The fifth chapter on *Lamia* and *Goblin Market* focuses on the demonic, supernatural, grotesque, monstrous images and voices that embody “the ambiguity and contradiction of desire” (76). The sixth chapter on Browning’s monumental *The Ring and the Book* introduces an equally gripping analytical perspective, and deciphers the working principles of irony in the poem which “[gives] the same story to the readers twelve times, from nine different voices” (79). As Görey convincingly argues, various viewpoints and multiplicity of voices in the text not only problematize discrepancy between logos and truth, or language and meaning, but also undermine the rigid categorical distinction between the factual and fictional by unveiling the perspective-bound nature of all kinds of narrativization.

The last four chapters are reserved for the voices from the twentieth century. Chapter seven explores the “prophetic voices” in Hilda Doolittle’s *Trilogy* penned down between the two world wars, in a troubled era marked by ruins, destruction, violence, and collapse, which are associated by the poet with patriarchal thought and divisions. Görey reads H.D.’s *Trilogy* as “a critique of patriarchal myths, in particular the Greek myths”, and shows how the poet “changes the focus of the traditional myths and sacred stories with the aim of giving voice to muted alternatives that have been presented as non-existent” (97). The prophetic voices in *Trilogy*, according to Görey, form a “constant drift away from a male perspective and towards a female perspective” (112).

Chapter eight concentrates on Ted Hughes’ *Birthday Letters*, a testimonial narrative of memoir through which the poet comes to terms with the spectral memories of his wife, Sylvia Plath. The dialogue between the male poet’s speaking voice and the female poet’s long gone, silenced voice is interpreted by Görey as a partial manifestation of voices which gives the reader “a sense of listening it on one side of a telephone conversation” in which the male poet’s voice “is the one audible to the reader” (116). In this mnemonic dialogue, the “elegiac voice of memory” in Hughes’ volume is inferred as a narratological agent that challenges “Plath’s mournful and violent poetry” (125).

The last two chapters address the multiplicity of voices with a central focus on the juxtaposition of race and femininity. Chapter nine on Jackie Kay’s *The Adoption Papers*, argues that the three individual female voices in the text—the adopted daughter, birth mother, and adoptive mother—“merge into one consciousness at times to represent the ambivalence in the engagement with the maternal” and that “individual stories of loss, anxiety, and grief [...] contribute to a more general portrait of a particular community, that of the marginalized women” (132). The voices of three traumatic experiences that revolve around maternal concerns are shown to form a “communal narrative” of multiple voices that spell out a collective consciousness of marginality. Görey’s exploration of unity within multiplicity in this chapter is nicely contrasted to the next and last chapter’s illustration of multiplicity of voices within a singular, individual consciousness. The last chapter on Evaristo’s *The Emperor’s Babe* takes the “engaging narrator/voice” as the condensing lens of analysis, and traces the protagonist’s quest for a “true voice” in order to problematize the

subaltern burden of not being able to speak in Spivak's terms. Görey also shows how focalization is employed by Evaristo to provide readers with "unguarded" glimpses into the "dark corners of the protagonist's mind" (153,154).

Presenting a selected critical survey of English narrative poetry from the Renaissance to the twentieth century, namely from the onset of modernity to postmodernity, the book remarkably manifests how the Western historical and cultural process continued as a constant critical response to, and dialogue with, tradition or received narratological codes and strategies. With highlighted reference to "Babel", an ancient symbol of multiplicity, human will and anarchy, or crime and punishment, Görey's book rereads mainstream texts as dialogic battlegrounds of manipulating and manipulated voices through a fresh lens of narratology. The book is furnished with a satisfactory bibliography, but lacks an index, which may be justifiable given that the author concentrates on close analytical readings of individual texts and is less interested in pursuing a conceptual debate on narratology on a theoretical scale. It is to Görey's credit that she addresses the manipulative aspect of voice(s) in selected verse narratives through an outstanding diversity of themes and focal issues. On the whole, the rich and meticulous content of the book and the lucidity of style and language promise readers an intellectually satisfying and inspiring reading experience.

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***Broadcasting in the Modernist Era.* Ed. Matthew Feldman, Erik Tønning, and Henry Mead. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. H/bk 285 pp. ISBN 978-1-4725-1249-2.**

Laurence Raw

The modernist period, roughly covering the first half of the twentieth century, was a period of almost unprecedented experiment in radio. New advances were made in terms of technology, aesthetics, religion, and drama by different groups worldwide collaborating with a degree of enthusiasm and energy seldom found in other creative industries. Radio stretched the imagination both behind and in front of the microphone. The Modernist era was also a period when some of the greatest names in literature participated in radio, thereby creating a link between creative writing and the media that has gone from strength to strength in the last eight decades.

Charles L. Armstrong's essay on the radio work of W. B. Yeats offers an ideal introduction to the topic. He wrote several ballads for broadcast in the United Kingdom, and by doing so evoked long-forgotten traditions of oral communication. Radio was unique in this respect: while listening to Yeats listeners felt that he was talking exclusively to them, telling a story that evoked the continuities of history as well as appealing to the imagination (34). E. M. Forster pursued a similar task through creative work and radio talks designed to stimulate personal intimacy between himself and the listeners. At a time of considerable political turmoil, Forster projected a conservative voice, looking forward as well as backwards to a time when Europe would commit itself once again to humane and critical values rather than the acquisition of political power (74).

Chiefly remembered for the lighthearted series of Lord Peter Wimsey detective novels, Dorothy L. Sayers offered a dissenting voice on radio as she questioned the future of Christianity and the presence of Jesus Christ on earth. To someone like Lord John Reith, the heavily religious Director-General of the BBC, her views were tantamount to heresy, but the broadcasts went ahead. The Corporation was committed to air all views.

T.S. Eliot enjoyed several careers as writer, poet, critic, publishing executive and broadcaster. He engaged with several subjects, including Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, translation of Ancient Greek, and the nature of poetry as a mode of popular communication. He maintained a more inclusive view of radio as a medium compared to Virginia Woolf, who initially resisted offers to broadcast, but was gradually persuaded to do so by her husband Leonard. She fiercely defended her subject position as a political and cultural intellectual commenting on the current socio-political situation, yet insisted radio was an ideal form of cultural education. Hence she was not averse to giving readings of her own work on air as well as talking about the evolution of the novel (151).

The two most well-known literary broadcasters in the Modernist were J. B. Priestley and George Orwell. A life-long political commentator, Priestley was best known for his *Postscripts* series of talks given during the early years of World War II, which were highly popular yet contentious: at the end of 1940 the BBC had to review Priestley's status as a speaker. Delivered in conversational style, the talks described ordinary people's experiences of the wartime Blitz and how they tried their best to sustain normal lives. Priestley was a sympathetic writer who looked forward to a classless Utopia at the end of the war, when the prewar inequalities that dominated Britain in the Great Depression would be eliminated. Orwell was an equally political broadcaster who exploited the poetic potential of broadcasting in a series of short allegorical dramas that foreshadowed *Animal Farm* (1945). He upheld values such as decency and integrity (both of which seem

conspicuously absent from contemporary politics), and believed that through the BBC he could disseminate such values on air. Like Eliot he combined formal talks with works of fiction (190).

Broadcasting in the Modern Era also included examples of non-British broadcasters such as Ezra Pound who used the resources of Italian radio to make translations for propaganda purposes (238). He was arrested for treason by the Allies and imprisoned, even though insisting that he had only done it for money.

As with all anthologies of this nature, *Broadcasting in the Modern Era* varies in terms of writing. I found David Addyman's piece on Priestley and Henry Meads discussion of Orwell the most interesting, but I admit to being biased, as I have written a book on World War II with an emphasis on the two authors. The book offers a balanced picture of the writer during the Modernist era, who not only exhibited creative talent but had a social conscience; rather than sitting in their ivory towers, they spent time and energy cultivating a broadcasting persona, and greatly enhanced their popularity with readers in the process.

The Values of Literary Studies: Critical Institutions, Scholarly Agendas. Ed. Rónán McDonald. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015. ISBN 978-1-107-1768-4. P/bk

Laurence Raw

The issue of value in a literary text is contested, especially at a time when many institutions are questioning the purpose of literary studies as an academic subject. In a series of essays, several leading scholars offer a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives on what literary values signify: whether they are collective, societal, individual or a combination of all three; and how they change over time. Readers are bound to find ideas they do not like, but there is much to interest everyone.

The values of literature are closely related to the values of life: any texts that promote communication, empathy, listening and flexibility should be considered useful. Charles Altieri argues that they “provide [...] a framework for which we can come to appreciate the roles played by the plasticity of our experience care” (57). A capacity for valuing enables us to understand how capacious a sense of our own powers may become when we extend our capacities for involvement and appreciation. A phenomenological approach to valuing analysis enables us to imagine meaning as engaging a text’s potential to formulate possibilities for its own being valued. This is a worthy, but requires further guidance, especially in an age where we cannot be sure that anything gets read (58). Alan Singer offers one solution by inviting us to read literature as history where the reader becomes involved in the history by making assumptions, some of which might be fulfilled, others frustrated. We strive to render texts intelligible rather than simply factual. This process draws upon our reason and imagination—unlike history, which according to Singer is solely concerned with the truth (whatever that might be). Readers of fiction can accept any given limits of intelligibility, so long as the story remains plausible. This level of flexibility is largely denied to other forms of text.

Value is not only formed within a text; it can be applied to the texts themselves. Kathleen McLuskie shows this with reference to Shakespeare, whose plays carry their own value which is reaffirmed with the appearance of each new text and/or edition. His plays become socially value due to a range of forces—critics, fellow-playwrights, printers and distributors. Sometimes texts are not valuable in themselves, but for what they represent to us as individuals. Christopher Nealon takes up this idea with reference to cheap paperback editions of books, which might carry sentimental as well as aesthetic value for individuals.

One of the best pieces in the anthology is Simon During’s look back at the days “When Literary Criticism Mattered” –that period in the mid-twentieth century when Leavis and the Scrutiny group dominated Britain’s literary landscape. Leavis had no time for analyzing why texts were valuable; he had a list of favorite authors (including Eliot, Conrad, and James) whom he believed should form the cornerstone of maximum discussion among educators and learners. Dismissed as a crackpot by some of his rivals (including the novelist and scientist (Sir Charles Snow), Leavis nonetheless exerted a profound influence over literary education. He was no socialist (he wanted to create a literary elite who disseminated their ideas to ordinary people) but he did believe in the improvement of the people through the humanities. His ideas not only spread all over Europe but continue to thrive in any institution that refers to literature’s uniqueness.

James Chandler’s piece traces the story of criticism in the United States, with the story of New Criticism that was gradually superseded by the Chicago School and the work of Clement Greenberg and Stanley Cavell. As in Britain, the idea of literature’s uniqueness

still holds sway in many institutions, despite the attempts by poststructuralists to denigrate it. For many scholars, the idea of literature's value is so obvious as to forestall further discussion. I wish the book had included more material on this issue, especially outside the Anglo-American context, to understand how the ideas of literature and value are culture-specific as well as transnational, even if we all make use of western theories.

The remainder of the book follows a subject-specific approach. There are chapters on psychoanalysis and value, feminism and gender, as well as equivalence. There is also a catch-all chapter on "World Making in Contemporary Literary Studies"—a chapter which for me sums up the fundamental fault of the book. Anglo-American literary studies have been well served, but in the age of transnationalism and cultural differences there needs to be more critical work taking other cultures into account. Value and literature not only change through time, but through space as well—the criteria that a Turkish colleague judges a piece of work differs from their European equivalent. The book has a value as a guide to past and present movements in Anglo-American literature, but represents something of a disappointment to anyone looking for more global issues.

Andrew Tate. *Apocalyptic Fiction*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017. ISBN 978-1-4742-3350-7.

Laurence Raw

We are living in miserable times, according to Andrew Tate, where we are “haunted by dreams of a future that is a place of ruin”. In a time of Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, miscellaneous European dictators, Yemeni and Afghan Wars, global terrorism and Brexit, apocalyptic imagery seems to be everywhere. It has invaded political discourse in Britain and Europe, with people talking about “the end of democracies” and permeates most of Trump’s military speeches with their references to the extermination of Islamic extremism and their toleration of right-wing fascists.

Zombies, people living out of their skins, robots, ecological collapse, the world without God, post-catastrophe inhabitants, youth fiction. Tate traces most of the familiar fantasies on both sides of the Atlantic, from Ballard to David Nicholls, Cormac McCarthy to Stephen King. What is prompting this new interest in the apocalypse? Tate believes that it is governments and regimes that appear to lack the stability of the past. In Chapter 3 he talks about a world whose people are suddenly removed without trace, and a universe which lacks the stability of the past. Old certainties have been replaced by new pluralities that people find difficult to come to terms with, and hence they believe that the apocalypse has occurred.

Tate also explores the religious significance of this belief through an analysis of Millenarian theology and contemporary dreams of the Rupture, as in the religious fiction of Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. The basic principle of this belief is that we now inhabit a world of continual catastrophe, and signals the imminent return of Jesus Christ to the world. This might seem far-fetched, but 65 million copies sold of both books suggests that it is perceived as a solution to the world.

The book itself is divided into a series of chapters, each dealing with a particular set of texts, ranging from rewritings of biblical narrative, the world of the “Sudden Department”, whose inhabitants disappear at will and speculates on whether the universe really cares about humanity any more. Other chapters concentrate on the validity of the world of God, and after God, people seeking alternative promised lands, and apocalypses in youth fiction.

Most of the chapters read like introductory academic essays for readers interested in the topic, but this is probably because the book is intended as an introductory book (in the twenty first century genre fiction series). However, Tate writes well, with a fine sense of what the authors’ principal concerns are, and a firm belief that the only thing any of the writers are really frightened of is a readerless future.

***Reinventing the Renaissance: Shakespeare and his Contemporaries in Adaptation and Performance.* Ed. Sarah Annes Brown, Robert L. Lublin, Lynsey McCulloch. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013. p/bk 325 pp. ISBN 978-0-230-31385-5.**

Laurence Raw

This anthology volume contains a variety of interventions from Britain, America, and other nations, focusing on how Shakespeare and his contemporaries have been adapted in a variety of contexts—theatrical, literary, translational. It is divided into five sections—popular culture, creation and creativity, national responses, visualizing performance, and non-Shakespearean theatre.

With so many essays covering so many subjects, the quality is variable. However, there is sufficient material in the volume to keep most Shakespearean scholars interested. The book begins with a survey of Hamlet prequels and sequels by Ann Thompson, ranging from *The Redemption of the Hamlets* (1928), *Hamlet in Heaven*, the radio play *The Hawk and the Handsaw*, and *The New Wing of Elsinore*. This is followed by an extended piece on the Twelfth Night remake *She's the Man/ Kingdom Hearts* (2006) and a survey of more well-known adaptations (*Forbidden Planet* (1958), *Kiss Me Kate* (1953), and *As You Like It* (1992)), which depend for their success more on the cinematic qualities of each film rather than any stylistic qualities (such as fidelity to the Shakespearean text).

Charles Marowitz's contribution takes a more generalized approach by showing how all Shakespearean films are shaped by contexts of production. On the other hand, the real gold of every film is the original text, which remains unscathed despite anything that a director does to it. Marowitz describes the experience of watching adaptations as analogous to viewing the past through a rear-view mirror, a concept that dates back to McLuhan.

The section on national responses contains a variety of studies from Germany, Japan, Postcolonial adaptations, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. All the essays emphasize the culture-specific qualities of their respective productions, but there are some interesting lines of research emerging. *The Merchant of Venice* in Germany has to deal with the impact of the Holocaust both past and present, while Michael Boyd's use of ghosts in the history plays comments on England's violent past and look to a new beginning (203). In the essay on postcolonial adaptations Jenni Ramone shows that the postcolonial angle on any particular production is difficult to eliminate, even though directors might insist that they are adopting critical angles. Perhaps the only way to negotiate this difficulty is to reject Shakespeare altogether and focus full-time on the postcolonial angle.

The book continues with an essay on modern adaptations of *The Duchess of Malfi* and the relationship between revenge tragedies and detective fiction. Esme McKimmin's analysis the detective novel is fascinating, as she discovers links between the novels of Agatha Christie and P. D. James and the work of John Webster. Tonally the works might be totally different, but there is a violent streak in the detective novels that recalls the revenge tragedy.

As a coda, there is an analysis of the so-called Swan Theatre texts, a series of program/ texts issued to theatregoers during the early years of the Swan Theatre at Stratford. Intended as guides to the historical and socio-economic contexts of the plays, these texts pointed out the relevance of the texts to the modern era. They were intended as guides for intelligent playgoers rather than professional academics, although they were useful in my research many years ago into Jacobethan drama and its modern revivals.

There is no real link between the essays in the anthology, except that of Shakespeare. I would advise against buying it, but several of the essays should provide good research material for everyone involved.

Dracula Untold

Antonio Sanna

Gary Shore's debut film *Dracula Untold* (2015) begins with the image of the Transylvanian boys enslaved by the Turks in 1442, among whom is included Vlad Tepes, later known as Dracula, son of Dracul, who is trained to become a fierce and cruel warrior, dreaded by all of his rivals. Vlad returns home after his captivity in order to govern his country in peace, which is the leading premise of the story. Peace is the goal of the protagonist and his subsequent malevolent actions are dictated only by his will to protect his family and his country. The story therefore differs greatly from the portrayal of Count Dracula that the public has come to know through Bram Stoker's 1897 novel and through the multiple (re)incarnations that the character has experienced in the cinematic productions since F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922). Indeed, *Dracula Untold* attempts to narrate about the origins of the undead monster that has fascinated millions of fans for the past 119 years, although, as is the case with Robert Stromberg's *Maleficent* (2014), it presents a benevolent version of the villain.

The main storyline begins with Vlad's (Luke Evans) and his men's discovery of a Turkish helm, indicating that a group of scouts has been recently slaughtered in the Transylvanian territory, near Broken Tooth Mountain. During the exploration of the mountain Vlad and two of his men are attacked inside a cave by a powerful creature living in the dark, whom we later discover to be called the Vampire Master (a mesmerizing Charles Dance), a human being who made a pact with a demon and was granted immense powers in exchange for an eternity of darkness. Vlad's peace is further interrupted by the arrival of the Turkish ambassador, who takes the usual tribute in silver but also relays his master's order to be delivered of one thousand boys who shall be trained in the Turkish army, an order that the entire court of Dracula's castle opposes. Vlad attempts to convince Sultan Mehmed II (Dominic Cooper) in person to renounce such a plan, but the latter does not even listen to his former friend's objections and asks him to surrender his son Ingeras too (Art Parkinson) as a royal hostage. At the very moment of his own son's delivery, Vlad rebels against the sultan, killing a squadron of his warriors and seeking the allegiance of the creature residing in the cave.

The two scenes inside the cave on Broken Tooth Mountain are the only frightening sequences of the entire film: the Vampire Master is the actual monster of the story and is splendidly performed by Charles Dance, whose aged and wrinkled face, slow gestures, gurgling snarl, long nails and hypnotic eyes establish him as a worthy successor of Christopher Lee in the Hammer series on the Transylvanian Count (1958-73) as well as of the malevolent vampires depicted in films such as Coppola's *Dracula*, Michael Rymer's *Queen of the Damned* (2002), Len Wiseman's *Underworld* (2003) and Stephen Sommers' *Van Helsing* (2004). The cave itself is characterized by all the conventions of the Gothic genre: it is dark, covered with cobwebs, filled with human bones and skulls, but also labyrinthic and containing a monster at its centre that the tale's hero needs to confront. The Vampire Master offers Vlad some of his blood, which will grant the Transylvanian Prince enormous strength and speed, enhanced senses and dominion over the creatures of the night for three days [IMAGE #1]. The effect will fade away only if, in the meantime, Vlad does not taste human blood. The prince accepts because he is determined to save his country and his family from the Turks and decides to provisionally become a monster, because, as he

specifies, “sometimes the world no longer needs a hero. Sometimes what it needs is a monster”.

The protagonist returns home in time for the Turks’ assault against his castle and he uses his new powers to repel the enemy by massacring one hundred adversaries and impaling their bodies. He then moves his people to a remote monastery where they can wait for and repel a more serious offensive from the sultan. One of the monks unfortunately realizes the new nature of the prince and gives credence to the local rumours that he has become a monster, thus momentarily siding the Transylvanian people against him. The prince retaliates by explaining his reasons and prepares for the final assault of the enemy. The CGI technology is used to its maximum potential in this specific scene and produces its greatest spectacular effects through Vlad’s evocation of hundreds of bats, his transformation into a flock of them and the advance of the Turkish army along a deep valley. Actually, in this film the majority of animals, landscapes and hordes of human beings are all created with the digital effects and they produce an alternative world that surpasses the real one for its spectacular visuals. This is a symbiotic world that updates, embellishes and augments the scale and grandeur of the real one. Moreover, the army of advancing enemies here represents what Kristen Whissel characterizes as the allegorical value of digital crowds that is typical of epic narratives. Whissel argues that “the digital multitude [...] heralds ‘the End’—the end of freedom, the end of a civilization, the end of an era” (60). In *Dracula Untold* the arrival of the Turkish army represents the end of Christianity, the end of freedom and of civilization for the Transylvanian population.

During the battle the sultan’s most trusted warriors manage to infiltrate the convent and attack Vlad’s son and his wife Mirena (Sarah Gadon). The latter falls from the tower—in a scene that shall probably remind the audience of Gwen Stacy’s final moments in Marc Webb’s *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* (2014)—and she dies in front of her husband exactly when the dawn of the third day signals the end of his cursed powers. It is Mirena herself who offers Vlad her blood in order to save their abducted son. Vlad then proposes the Transylvanian survivors to avenge the deaths of their beloved and turns them into his army of vampires. The attack on the Turkish camp thus leads to the final duel between the protagonist and Mehmed inside the sultan’s tent and to the happy resolution of the narrative with Ingeras’ rescue and Vlad’s apparent sacrifice under the sunlight. The last sequences of the film depict the coronation of Ingeras (who describes his own father as a national hero because he managed to save Eastern Europe from the enemy’s invasion) and the encounter in contemporary times between Vlad and the possible reincarnation of Mirena, a scene spied upon by the Vampire Master.

Luke Evans, who has already demonstrated his acting skills in films such as Louis Leterrier’s *Clash of the Titans* (2010), Tarsem’s *Immortals* (2011) and Peter Jackson’s last two chapters in *The Hobbit* trilogy (2013-14), is a very good choice for the role and is extremely talented in portraying the character’s love for his wife and his son as well as his strong will to defend his people, which surpasses any ethical concerns for the slaughter of adversarial human beings. Particularly interesting are those scenes that depict his pleasure in the discovery of the dark abilities he has acquired as well as his physical and mental conflict over the insatiable thirst for blood he experiences for three days. Noteworthy is also the apparent juxtaposition between the metonymic images of the dragon and the cross, which are allegedly set against each other, but actually symbolize the ruthless opposition of the Christians against the “infidel” Turks by means of the Order of the Dragon, a semi-religious and semi-military organization that opposed the Turks’ conquest in Eastern Europe during the fifteenth century. Special mention is necessary also for the soundtrack

(composed by Ramin Djawadi) whose martial and impeding rhythm produced by the drums help to build up all the tension mounted by the narrative.

What critics and reviewers have not examined so far, however, are the parallels between the film's narrative and the actual story of the historical Vlad The Impaler, which had been established for the first time in Bram Stoker's novel and has been then reproduced in Dan Curtis' 1973 *Dracula* (in which a painting and a series of flashbacks present the Count as the fifteenth-century ruler of Transylvania as well) and in Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992)—whose prologue depicts the Prince during his fights against the Turks before he renounces God and becomes a monster thirsty for blood for eternity. In the nineteenth-century novel Stoker describes real Transylvanian locations (such as Borgo Pass and the small villages of Fundu and Veresti), although he places the fictional Dracula castle to the northeast, miles away from its actual location (McNally and Florescu 65-75).¹ Stoker refers to an authentic fifteenth-century Wallachian prince, whose fame was associated mainly with the refined cruelties he committed against both the Turks and the surrounding populations. Vlad Tepes (1431-76) was invested with the Order of the Dragon as his father Dracul (which means both "evil" and "dragon") before him, and "Dracula" in fact means "son of the dragon" (McNally and Florescu 9). His father was forced to sign a treaty with Turkish Sultan Murad II in 1442, leaving his sons as hostages until 1448, years in which Dracula developed an hostility against human nature and a taste for revenge.

The film is historically correct in its depiction of Sultan Mehmed II's request of a tribute of children, his invasion of Wallachia in 1462 and the siege of Dracula's castle in the same year. According to the historical record, however, the sultan was forced to retire because his adversary utilized his excellent knowledge of the territory and applied guerrilla techniques against his army (McNally and Florescu 56). Only a brief allusion is made in the film (during the coronation of Ingeras) to the Romanian popular epics depicting Dracula as a fiery warrior, a defender of the country and a protector of the poor.

On the other hand, the historical parts ignored by the film's script are Vlad's anti-Turkish campaigns during the 1450s, his residence in the impregnable town of Sibiu and the raids he committed against the confining nations after he became prince of Wallachia (McNally and Florescu 21-6). These raids and military actions caused an incredible amount of deaths (especially, by impalement) and cemented the depiction of Vlad Tepes as a ruthless leader and torturer, especially in the German Transylvanian, Turkish and Russian reports. Ignored by the film is also the fact that Dracula was captured by the Hungarian king and imprisoned for twelve years: he returned to Wallachia for his third reign around 1476 after converting to Christianity and marrying for a second time.

Dracula Untold has been compared to the HBO series *Games of Thrones* for its Medieval settings and its story arc, although it lacks the TV series' dense and surprising dramatic reflexes (Gonzalez). The film has been severely criticized for its actors' and actresses' "bloodless" acting, its unrealistic landscapes (Whitty), confused and muddy battle scenes (VanDenburgh), its narrative devoid both of romanticism and horror (Foundas), which diminishes the value of the origin story on a popular myth as much as George Lucas did with the prequel trilogy of *Star Wars* (1999-2003) (Scherstuhl).

¹ The original castle, that is located near the Arges River and is surrounded by alpine mountains covered with snow, is now called the Arges Fortress (although it is often confused with the Poenari Fortress on the other side of the river). The castle was partly dismantled by the Turks in 1462 and its ruins have been deteriorated by three earthquakes, respectively in 1913, 1940 and 1976.

Certainly, this is not the story on the origins of evil that many viewers could expect and those spectators who watch this film in order to witness the villainous actions of the most popular vampire in Western culture shall be probably disappointed. Nevertheless, the linear narrative (although sometimes too simplistic) is quite pleasant and fluent. Spectators shall be particularly enraptured by the visuals of the film: the blue filter imposed on the sequences set during the night spreads a particular charm on the wooded slopes of the mountains and on the characters' expressions. Simultaneously, colours such as gold and red stand out in the prince's costumes and enrich his castle's and tent's decor. The central pillar of the film remains the conflict of the protagonist and his opposition to the darkness growing inside him, although the few moments in which Vlad enjoys his new powers are the most captivating for the spectator.

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IMAGE #1: Vlad (Luke Evans) is offered the blood of the Master Vampire (Charles Dance) inside the Gothic cave (courtesy of Universal Pictures, 2014).

***William Shakespeare's Sonnets for the First Time Globally Reprinted: A Quatercentenary Anthology (With a DVD)*. Eds. Pfister, Manfred and Jürgen Gutsch. Dozwil TG Switzerland: Edition SIGNAThUR, 2009. H/bk 752 pp. ISBN 978-3-908141-54-9.**

***William Shakespeare's Sonnets for the First Time Globally Reprinted: A Quatercentenary Anthology (Volume II)*. Eds. Gutsch, Jürgen and Manfred Pfister. Dozwil TG Switzerland: Edition SIGNAThUR, 2014. H/bk 166 pp. ISBN 978-3-908141-96-9.**

Sena Şahini

This anthology was published to commemorate the 400th year of the first publication of William Shakespeare's *The Sonnets*. The first volume gathers the translations of a selection of sonnets from all over the world in more than 70 major and minor languages including even the parodic forms of German, the constructed auxiliary language Esperanto, and two different sign languages, English and German. In the second volume, which was published in 2014, there are additional translations from six languages, essays on medial transformation of the sonnets as well as some extra-textual material like book covers and various illustrations. The major aim of the anthology appears to be to collect the various translations of the sonnets, either intralingual, interlingual or intersemiotic transpositions in Roman Jakobson's terms, and to show the receptions of these beautiful poems in their possible equivalent global forms. This enormous work has also a DVD which includes the essays, the translations, and the introduction of the anthology in pdf form together with the recordings of the recitations of each translation from native speakers, some movie clips from feature films and stage performances as well as music and sound recordings. Besides, as a visual richness, all the translations are in their original script whether Arabic, Cyrillic or Thai. As a result of three years of study and effort of numerous people, the anthology celebrates the canonical career of the sonnets and wishes to gather "the richest of the global multilingual and multimedial dialogue with Shakespeare's sonnets" (14), showing that The Bard does not only belong to England but to the whole world.

The editors Manfred Pfister and Jürgen Gutsch think that "it is time to build a global monument to recall and celebrate the power of these sonnets to move their readers across the centuries and continents" (10-11), as Shakespeare himself exquisitely stated in *Julius Caesar*, "in states unborn and accents yet unknown" (Act 3 Scene iii). Accordingly, the work proudly offers the first translations of Shakespearean sonnets in languages of Maltese, Cimbrian, Basque, and some Italian dialects. Certainly these sections are shorter than the others since the translation history of the sonnets are very recent and limited; yet their contribution is perhaps the most precious. The editors state their disappointments about how they could not get in touch with the possible translators of some countries due to unexpected reasons; for instance, there are no translations from the endless diversity among the Indian languages except Malayalam and Bengali. However, the variability of some languages is exceptional like the German language which appears in the work with nine different forms: German, Swiss German, Low German, Plautdietsch, Pennsylvania German, Cimbrian, North and West Frisian, and German parodies. While even the constructed artificial language of Klingon has its own studies about the Terran poet Wil'yam Shex'pir and his sonnets, it would undoubtedly have been delightful to read Shakespeare in one of the Elvish languages such as Quenya or Sindarin in this collection; yet it appears there are certain difficulties since the vocabulary of the Elvish language is not sufficient enough for a proper Shakespeare translation.

For every language section there is an introductory essay written by scholars, translators or academic contributors explaining the history and the process of that particular translation. Some of them introduce the literary history of that culture which seems extremely illuminating for the readers who are interested in the world literature, be it scholars or students. Some of the introductions also mention the translation strategies adopted by the translators, the difficulties they had, and the reception of the sonnets before and after the translations. Almost every contributor emphasizes the great challenge that the translators had to face when it comes to Shakespeare's works. Furthermore, the strict requirements of the sonnet form have a huge contribution to this challenge; the English sonnet has fourteen lines in iambic pentameter and a rhyming scheme of abab cdcd efef gg. In some languages these requirements cause struggle and the translators eventually choose to reform the metrical design or the rhyming scheme and preserve the context at the same time in order to create an "acceptable" or "adequate" translation as specified by Gideon Toury. Certainly all the translators are aware of Robert Frost's famous assertion that poetry is what gets lost in translation. The Greek contributor's analogy would be a perfect example in this regard when she likens the translators of Shakespeare's sonnets the dwellers of Plato's cave "when confronted with the task of translating them into their own language. They can 'see' only shadows and paler versions of the original due to the differences in the language. However, the translators bravely escape their fetters and the darkness of the cave and embrace a new world beyond. Their efforts give birth to new poetic off-springs" (305).

One of the favourable points of the anthology is that the writers of the sections use different strategies to present the translations, for instance, after a lengthy historical background, the French contributor offers fifteen different translations of Sonnet 71 in a chronological order and provides the reader with a comparative viewpoint. Thus, by focusing on the history of the translation of the sonnets, the reader gets the opportunity to follow the maturation process of this demanding task. On the other hand, in the Albanian section, the reader observes six different translations of the first line of Sonnet 2, "When forty winters shall besiege thy brow", and their English interpretations which have totally different meanings. Therefore, these varied interpretations of a single line reveal the natural and pleasurable multi-layered meanings of poetry. Oppositely, the North Frisian contributor expresses the impossibility of translating Shakespeare neither with elevated, nor pompous nor archaic interpretations since there is no such North Frisian.

Even though the editors Pfister and Gutsch liken their anthology to one of Jorge Louis Borges' books of *Library of Babel*, "a book that nobody is in a linguistic position to read its entirety" (12), perhaps ironically because of this likeness, the book is charming, surprising, and delightful almost for every literature, poetry or Shakespeare lover. With the determination and labour of innumerable people, the poetic power of Shakespeare's sonnets is kept alive globally and eternally "in unusual guises and strange circumstances" (75). Besides, it is an indispensable example for the translation studies with the historical and at times technical information gathered from all around the world.

Shakespeare's sonnets were translated for non-native speakers of English relatively late in contrast to his plays; however, this anthology seems to compensate such a gap by taking the level at its zenith and reaching its global readers. The anthology helps the readers trace the stories of reception and readings of the sonnets in different cultures and tongues; in this journey they use intellectual bridges between the sonnets and poetic traditions of these cultures. Moreover, the readers observe Shakespeare's rebirth either in archaic or recently constructed languages proving that "Not marble nor the gilded monuments/Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme./But you shall shine more bright in these contents/Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time" (Sonnet 55). When the reader turns the pages of this book, the afterlife of Shakespeare's sonnets begins.

***Contemporary Trauma Narratives: Liminality and the Ethic of Form.* Eds. Susana Onega, Jean-Michel Ganteau. New York: Routledge, 2015. 253 pp. ISBN 978-1-138-02449-6 (hardback); ISBN 978-1-315-77453-4 (e-book)**

Fatim Boutros. Facing Diasporic Trauma: Self-Representation in the Writings of John Hearne, Caryl Phillips, and Fred D'Aguiar. Cross/Cultures: Reading in Post/Colonial Literature and Cultures in English, vol. 186. Leiden, Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015. 146 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-30814-5 (hardback); ISBN 978-90-04-30815-2 (e-book)

Federica Tazzioli

The Holocaust, the 9/11 terroristic attack, decolonisation, and the two World Wars are some of the most traumatic events that have shaped our contemporary world. Studies in psychology on traumatized subjects have led to the formal recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart 1531), and the recent field of inquiry in the Humanities defined as *Trauma Studies*, launched by Shoshana Felman's, Dori Laub's, and Cathy Caruth's pioneering works, has increasingly drawn attention to artistic and literary representations of traumatic experiences.

Traumas are internal "ruptures" in people's minds (Craps 30), caused by a sudden and painful experience, which the individual cannot make sense of. The result is a contrasting feeling: the will to suppress the traumatic memory, and the need to bear witness to it. As psychological studies have shown, in order to overcome trauma, it is necessary to bear testimony to it; hence, both collective and individual traumas, need to be worked through: this is precisely the aim of many contemporary trauma narratives. A particularly prolific ground for these narratives is postcolonial literature, which often focuses on the diasporic and racial trauma, occasioned by the fraught encounter between white majority that, starting from the colonial period, has considered the black population as their "racial inferior" (Sartre 49), and the black minority. Therefore, racial trauma is not the response to a single traumatic event, but the reaction to a repeated attitude from the prejudiced majority. This situation can produce the same effects of a trauma due to a specific event. Thus, the subject cannot make sense out of the discrimination; and is then exposed to anxiety, nightmares, or to an identity crisis. Unlike other kinds of traumas, racial trauma is endlessly re-experienced by the traumatized subject, not only in his/her mind, as is the case for every other kind of trauma, but in his/her actual life. He/she experiences then, an internal fight. The subject has his/her perception of him/herself, which is different from the society's point of view. It is precisely this feeling that Du Bois describes as "double consciousness" (3).

The field of trauma studies has recently been enriched by new critical contributions, such as the two works here under review, which are worth examining together. Onega and Ganteau's collection of essays is a seminal composition, which offers a through exploration of trauma narratives. The volume presents different perspectives and multiple levels of analysis, examining both the content and the structures used to perform trauma. Bourtons's critical work, in turn, focuses on the literary representation of diasporic trauma, presenting a more homogeneous corpus of works.

Susana Onega and Jean-Michel Ganteau have selected a wide range of essays that analyse the strategies adopted by writers who try to "perform" both individual and collective traumas. The essays discuss works that are representative of different genres, and are set across different times and places. In their introduction, Onega and Ganteau present

an overview of theories that are relevant to trauma studies, referring to scholars from different fields, ranging from psychology to philosophy, and postulates the birth of a new art form: “the art of trauma” (1). Drawing on Laub and Podell’s 1995 article “Art and Trauma”, Onega and Ganteau identify in the artistic expression a “privileged vehicle” (1) which, similarly to Freud’s hypnosis and the free association of ideas, allows the traumatized subject to re-establish a cause-effect order out of the overwhelming event he/she experienced. The “new art of trauma” is a hybrid form struggling to ‘perform [...] the void’, as the introduction’s subtitle suggests; the key idea here is conveyed by the verb “to perform”, indeed what Onega and Ganteau underline is the fact that the “new art of trauma” does not simply represent traumas by explaining them, rather it seeks to display traumas from either the victims or the perpetrators’ perspective. The result is not a faithful representation of reality, but more a “version” of it shaped by the subjects’ feelings. Rothberg defines it “traumatic realism”, as traumas break the subject’s internal logical narration, and therefore the person is unable to clearly remember or represent what has happened. However, this imperfect realism is how close to reality we can go with trauma. Furthermore, the aim of this new “art of trauma” is to remind the reader of our “common denominator of humanity” (12), since it is through identification that the reader becomes aware of the other’s sufferings. Indeed, while in real life we are used to experience “men’s invisibility”, since we see other men’s actions, but we cannot read the hidden reasons for their actions (Laing 15-6); in literature, we have a peculiar chance: the possibility to read the characters’ thoughts and live their experiences, and through them, experience their feelings (Palmer 30).

The twelve essays chosen by the two co-editors are grouped together in three sections: “Ethics and Generic Hybridity”, “Ethics and the Aesthetic of Excess”, and “Ethic and Structural Hybridity”. “Ethics and Generic Hybridity” introduces analyses on hybrid texts which combine different genres in order to “perform” trauma.

In his essay “Learning from Fakes: Memoir, Confessional Ethics, and Limits of Genre”, Leigh Gilmore analyses works by James Frey, Margaret Seltzer, and Benjamin Wilkomirski that deal with the so called “fakes memoirs”. The author investigates the division between fiction and nonfiction, and argues that “fake memoirs” lead to a new scepticism showing ‘the limits of our current response to representations of life, especially when they involve trauma’ (21). In the essay “with a foot in both worlds: the liminal ethics of Jenny Diski’s postmodern fables”, Maria Grazia Nicolosi discusses the traumatic mother-daughter relationship, drawing on Caruth’s definition of “indirection”, trauma entails the re-experience of the traumatic event, without a clear definition of it, as in Diski’s writings “she circles the same shadowy events obsessively” (36). The art of trauma is then used to fill her voids. “Witnessing without witness: Antwood’s *Oryx* and *Crake* as a Limit-Case of Fictional Testimony” is Marie-Louise Kohlke’s essay and addresses limits in testimony trauma. Antwood imagines a post-apocalypse world where the only human being who has survived cannot talk to anybody, and displays the “absence of a conceivable present or future Other”. The dialogue is addressed to a “solipsistic internal other” (57), in doing so the writer uses different genres. Kohlke pushes her conclusions forward by saying that “our notions of witnessing need to be broadened to incorporate recognition of an equivalent capacity to suffer in numerous other kinds of beings” (65). Rudolf Freiburg’s essay “I do Remember Terrible Dark Things, and Loss, and Noise: Historical Trauma and Its Narrative Representation in Sebastian Barry’s *The Secret Scripture*” presents once again, a hybrid novel composed by the juxtaposition of genres, but also of perspectives creating a sense of ambiguity. Ambiguity is precisely a key word for traumatized subjects,

as Freiburg points out, since as memories of a trauma are influenced by imagination, they are unreliable, however they “represent a version of truth” (77), thanks to the new art of trauma which seeks to “represent the unrepresentable” (83).

The essays in the second section shift the focus on works that use a variety of strategies to shock the reader. In Jean-Michel Ganteau’s “Vulnerable form and Traumatic Vulnerability: John McGregor’s *Even the Dogs*”, the focus is on the “vulnerability of the form” (97), as the writer tells the story from different perspectives, and the narrator becomes a coral “we”, while speakers remain unseen. In this way, this work does not simply represent the trauma, rather it “performs” its “vulnerability” (97) with its own form, signalling that human beings are vulnerable too, and depend on others. This idea emerges also in the sixth essay of the collection: “Ethic, Aesthetic, and History in Lawrence Durrell’s *Avignon Quintet*” by Dianne Vipond. The author identifies in the “relationship between self and the Other, one based on recognition of mutual dependence” (115) the key point in Durrell’s narrative. Moreover, Vipond’s reflection is on the literary form used to represent trauma, and she comes to the conclusion that “the more fictional or metafictional the text, the better equipped it may be to communicate the more difficult and complex realities of human experiences” (115), Vipond argues that postmodern texts are full of pauses, gaps, and ellipses and therefore can be the best form to show the complexity of a traumatic experience: following Ganteau’s idea of “vulnerability” in his essay “The Ethics of Breaking up the Family Romance in David Mitchell’s *Number9Dream*” Gerard Bayer discusses Mitchell’s reconstruction of reality through the evocation of a dreamlike atmosphere that perform trauma. In the last essay of this section “Circling and Circling and Circling...Whirligogs: A Knotty Novel for a Tangles Object Trauma in Will Self’s *Umbrella*”, George Letissier points out how the writer blends together true events and fictitious ones in a “magical realism” (137), which originates in a complex novel.

The last section “Ethics and Structural Experimentations” is opened by Marc Amfreville’s essay “Family Archive Fever: Daniel Mendelson’s *The Lost*”. The protagonist’s will of organizing his family archive is seen by Amfreville as a painful act which evokes both the individual traumatic experiences lived by the protagonist’s relatives and the collective trauma of the Holocaust, and at the same time “the distinction between two acceptations of story, between fact and fiction” (173). What Amfreville underlines is the recreation of post-traumatic symptoms through the book’s structure, which goes back and forward; similarly, in his essay “The ‘Roche Limit’: Digression and Return in Sebald’s *The Rings of Saturn*”, Ivan Stacy describes traumatic narration as “frequently usi[ng] form to evoke the intrusive return of memory that characterizes trauma” (176). In Sebald’s novel, the narrator’s walk intends to give voice to the different stories he listens to, situating individual traumas in the broader history, in order to show the “ongoing effects and mediations of atrocity” (190): the past traumatic experiences in the past have consequences in the present lives of the traumatized subjects. In “Separateness and Connectedness: Generational Trauma and Ethical in Anne Kampf’s *The War After: living with the Holocaust*”, Silvia Pellicer-Ortin refers to Freudian psychoanalyses terms; as in the novel the narration is broken, making the reader aware of his/her role of listener.

The collection ends on a positive note, envisaging the possibility to overcome trauma through witnessing. In the closing essay “Hybridity, Montage, and the Rhetoric and Ethics of Suffering in Ane Michael’s *Fugitive Places*”, Susana Onega stresses the “possibility of healing, reconciliation, and the fruition of love” (226), and she underlines how the protagonist in Michael’s novel can overcome his trauma by putting it into words, which recalls the initial idea of art as a possible way to overcome trauma.

It is precisely this assumption that links together this collection with Bourton's work, *Facing Diasporic Trauma*. Bourton's critical work could function as an extra chapter in Onega and Ganteau's collection, indeed, as it envisages the representation of a more specific kind of trauma: diasporic trauma. The author considers the self-representation of the Afro-Caribbean community which is deeply based on the diasporic traumatic experience. Afro-Caribbean writers give voice to the 'silenced slaves' to build their identity. Building on Onega and Ganteau's idea of art as a means to overcome trauma, the author argues that "[t]he history of Atlantic slavery, just as much as the Holocaust, needs to be represented in [...] the arts in order to get beyond the state of paralysis that the rhetoric of the" (28). The book closely follows the different stages in the diasporic process, through an accurate analysis of the works of three contemporary Caribbean authors: John Hearne, Caryl Phillips, and Fred D'Aguiar.

Chapter 1 "The Lost Roots: imagined African Homelands" focuses on the representation of Africa. Bourton explains how the African homeland described by Afro-Caribbeans is not a faithful representation of it, but rather a "non-space" (2), which serves as a foundational myth of the Afro-Caribbean identity. Through the images of D'Aguiar's novel *Feeding the Ghosts*, Bourton shows the "dichotomy between the solid and the liquid" (9). In D'Aguiar's metaphoric images, the solid wood represents the solidity of the identity in the African homeland, while the water is the displacement of slavery. Displacement is essential in postcolonial identities: the trauma of displacement is a composite one, this is a first kind of displacement, which is created by an abrupt and traumatic change in the Africans' life.

The second part of the book, "The Foundational Dislocation: The Middle Passage", revolves around a key and foundational image of diasporic identities. This traumatic moment is the actual starting point of the diaspora, which is once again a "non-space", an "exceptional spatial setting" (19) defined by the element of water and with its own rules. For the slaves, it is a place of unbearable sufferings; again, it would be misleading to imagine the "cargo" of a slave ship as a homogenous group and that "they themselves regarded all the other Africans as members of their own cultural group" (18). Bourton brilliantly analyses this setting in Hearne's *The Sure Salvation*, and once again in D'Aguiar's work. However, Bourton argues that the Afro-Caribbean need to create an imaginary common past and common identity to "survive the realities of transatlantic slavery" (23). Thus, art becomes the means through which they establish a common memory, through an empathic identification. Just as Onega and Ganteau assert in their introduction, Bourton also recognises the power of art to perform and overcome traumas: "the history of Atlantic slavery, just as much as the Holocaust, needs to be represented in scholarly discourse and the arts in order to get beyond the state of paralysis that the rhetoric of the unspeakable entails" (28).

The third chapter, "Positioning Self and Other: Cultural Interaction in Slave Societies", focuses on the life of slaves in the plantation. On the one hand, the author underlines how the traumatic "compulsive behaviour in relation to the past" (49) takes place during this stage; slaves, as Freud's traumatised subjects, "feel the need to remember and forget slavery" (49); which echoes Primo Levi's description of a common nightmare among prisoners of the Nazi camps, who dreamt to tell their story to a listener who would turn away without paying attention to them. Bourton describes it as "one of the fundamental paradoxes of diasporic identities" (49), but it is part of their traumatic legacy. This section contains a reflection on different narrations of the slave system: from the "marionette-like slave" (57) in D'Aguiar's *The Longest Memory*; to Phillips's "passive

resistance" (65) in *Cambridge*. Bourton also refers to the colonizer's need to continually position him/herself in a dominant rank: indeed, in the plantation system the white man imposes his supremacy through "physical punishment" (52) and keeps alive racial discrimination. However, this situation is harmful both for the dominant culture and the slaves, indeed, using Césaire's words the colonisation has the power "to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him in the true sense of the word" (Césaire 2); this instance is showed in Bourton's analysis of Phillips's *Crossing the River*. Bourton presents a rather strong and negative analysis of this novel, reading the white characters' behaviours as always perpetuating a master-slave vision, thus, the white woman who helps Martha is, in his opinion, once again affirming the white man superiority; while Phillips' work may also be read as carrying positive hopes, the white woman might, indeed, be trying to establish a connection with Martha.

The fourth chapter, "Aspects of Continuity: Post-Abolition and Postcolonial Interaction", draws on the idea that also the perpetrators' perspective is traumatic, and is comparable to "the complex questions of historical guilt" (80): many of the characters in contemporary novels are neither negative, nor positive. This is particularly evident in Phillips's works, in which the author "juxtaposes the perspective of the victims with that of the perpetrators [...] and allows for an emphatic identification with both sides" (80). Diasporic trauma is still present, and even though many contemporary works such as Phillips's *Dancing in the Dark* and *A Distant Shore* do not directly refer to slavery, in the stories they represent slavery resonates and is mirrored in our present day discriminatory acts.

"Bridges to the past: The Influence of Slavery on Contemporary Diaspora", the last chapter in the book, links past slavery with its present implications. The author argues that the contemporary novels can indeed have a dual power: not only do they hold a "revisionary potential" (122) to enlighten past events, in order to overcome historical traumas; but they also offer a "proactive revision" (123), which means that literature can influence readers' present perspective. Bourton then sees fictional works as a response to "questions in the negotiation of historical periods" (134), creating analogies and connections between times and spaces, precisely as Phillips does in his polyphonic works: indeed, in fictional works we have the unique chance to hear "the voices that have been lost in the process of historical silencing" (123). An interesting example of the literary "proactive" power is Phillips's narrative, in which the author decides "to discard the genre of the neo-slave narrative in its pure form in order to establish a connection between the history of the diaspora and contemporary phenomena with which the community is confronted" (111).

Witnessing and overcoming traumas through art is the leitmotif of both works here under review. Omega and Ganteau's is a well-structured collection, which addresses an expert reader, who is aware of the theoretical background of trauma studies. Furthermore, the variety of essays creates an interesting, and yet complex interconnected theoretical *reseau* on trauma representations. The work is then to be considered as a reference book for further studies on trauma and trauma representation, and it should be recommended to scholars working on trauma studies. Bourton's work is a linear work focusing less on theory, and more on the literary analysis of the works he presents. Its outline is extremely clear and gives a distinct presentation of displacement trauma. What is noticeable is the rather innovative connection between trauma studies and postcolonial literature, a connection which could be broadened; thus this work may be a starting point for new researches into literature and trauma. Therefore, the book should be recommended to students and scholars both interested in trauma studies and postcolonial issues.

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