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That which Cannot be Said: My Flesh and the Face of the Other in the Poetry of John Donne

Abstract

The article offers an analysis of selected poems of John Donne, viewed through the prism of traditional theological thought (the works of Hans von Balthasar) and current philosophical debates. In particular, the author draws upon the works of Jean-Luc Marion and Richard Kearney who take up the task of scrutinizing the heritage of phenomenological thought. Both thinkers address the questions arising from philosophy's renewed interest in religion initiated in twentieth-century post-phenomenology. The analysis concentrates on bodily pain and love ecstasies as the modalities of human flesh. The author of the paper adapts for the purposes of literary criticism Jean-Luc Marion's concept of a "saturated phenomenon" which surprises and bedazzles the perceiving subject by overflowing his or her intention at the moment of its unexpected arrival. The aim of the article is to highlight the religious and philosophical potential of Metaphysical Poetry.

The poems of John Donne which I intend to analyse in this paper are informed by the same fascination with the circuits of enfleshed pain and love (both human and divine) which characterize the philosophical debates in our times. In my reading of Donne's poetry I will refer to the work of Jean-Luc Marion and Richard Kearney, who take up the task of scrutinizing the heritage of phenomenological reflection, and address the questions arising from philosophy's renewed interest in religion, initiated in twentieth-century post-phenomenology. Introducing Marion's concept of a saturated phenomenon, I shall make use of the phenomenological insights which inform T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. This brief poetological and philosophical introduction will serve as a basis for a reading of three poems by John Donne: "Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse" (336–337), "A Lecture upon the Shadow" (63–64) and "The good-morrow" (7–8).

1. The Threshold of Wonder

The very title of Jean-Luc Marion's work, *The Visible and the Revealed*, reflects the author's involvement in what has been widely recognized as the religious

turn in continental philosophy. The inscription which appears on the title page of the book invites the reader to reflect on the juxtaposition of the two words which refer, respectively, to the philosophical notion of phenomenality (the word *visibility* may refer both to the act of seeing physical objects and to "seeing," i.e. comprehending the world) and to the concept of "revealed religion," where the word *revelation* can be understood in the sense employed in the works of Hans Urs von Balthasar, as "sovereign divine action *pro nobis* that makes God known to his creatures in a manner that they may apprehend" (Chap. 11).[1] The chapter specifically devoted to the investigation of "The Saturated Phenomenon" begins, however, with the apparently very modest and basic claim concerning "the general possibility of phenomena" (2008, 18). Marion proceeds then to anchor his discussion in the apparently simple, but indeed truly revolutionary claim that "the question concerning the possibility of the phenomenon implies the question of the phenomenon of possibility" (19). The reader is invited to recall Kant's reflection concerning the conditions of metaphysical possibility, according to which only that which conforms with "the formal conditions of experience" can be deemed possible. Marion notices in this context that Kant's reasoning leads us to the conclusion that "the possibility […] of a phenomenon is ordered by the measure of the 'power of knowing,' that is, concretely, the measure of the play of intuition and of the concept within a *finite* mind" (20). Appearance is thus governed by and subject to reason; it is reason alone that "makes possible […] the actuality of appearance" (21). This assumption points to the inherent aporia of metaphysical possibility, according to which phenomenality does not belong to the phenomenon, but to reason. The phenomenological breakthrough, initiated at the beginning of the 20th century by Edmund Husserl, consisted in formulating the "principle of all principles" which rendered possible the escape from the above mentioned aporia of the metaphysical system. Marion repeats after Husserl: "everything that offers itself to us originarily in 'intuition' is to be taken quite simply as it gives itself out to be, but only within the limits in which it is given there" (21), only in order to push the issue further by questioning both the explicit and implicit restrictions inscribed in this formula.

The first restriction obviously concerns "the limits" in which experience "is given there." Although Husserl admits that "any lived experience is continually referred to new, as yet unknown lived experiences" (22–23), yet even that which appears to constitute "this irrepressible novelty of the flux of consciousness" proves to be "always comprehended within a horizon, even if these new lived experiences are not yet given" (23). To explain this notion in the language of poetry – which can, as Eliot asserted, be a form of philosophical reflection – we may invoke here two moments from *The Four Quartets*. One of them is a fragment from "East Coker" which coincides with Husserl's description of the constantly changing horizon of consciousness: "The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies, / For *the pattern is new in every moment* / And every moment is a new and shocking

/ Valuation of what have been […]" (189). Upon a careful reading of this passage we are however bound to discover that the "novelty" and amazement implied in this orderly and permanent, although not hard and fast, motion of consciousness resembling a choreographic pattern, remains in fact bound within the limits imposed by the past experience (in the poet's words, by "what have been") or past possibility (as Eliot says elsewhere "What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present"). "The horizon – argues Marion – […] is exerted over experience even when there are only lived experiences that are not looked at, that is, where experience has not taken place" (2008, 23). Eliot seems to share this intuition when he plays with the thought of a stroll through a rose garden, taking the readers by the hand to lead us "Down the passage which we did not take […] / Towards the door we never opened / Into the rose garden," and evokes the memory of the roses which "had the look of flowers that are looked at" (190). The first and most obvious interpretation of this passage directs our attention to the anthropomorphized flowers who, like models in a fashion show, pose in front of the audience, conscious of the attention that they attract. It is however possible to read the same passage shifting attention from the flowers to the invisible eye, whose look is mirrored in the gorgeous appearance of the roses. And again, the first association with the eye of Divine Providence need not exclude another, more mundane perspective of the human perception which not only observes the beauty of the flowers, but takes into account its own activity of seeing; this activity in turn transforms – sheds light on – the flowers, while at the same time being transformed or "illumined" by them. Yet if we take into consideration Jean-Luc Marion's critique of Husserl's formula, then what should interest us is neither how this change could provide – to quote Eliot once again – "a valuation of what has been," nor even how it changes the horizon of the onlooker's expectations, but whether one can see beyond the horizon, i.e. a moving, but nevertheless clearly demarcated frontier of visibility.

Another reservation formulated by Marion concerns the centrality of the perceiving subject, the eye of an "I" who views the object. Husserl, as we remember. took into consideration "everything that offers itself to us," and Marion highlights the philosophical importance of the apparently casual or redundant phrase "to us" in the quoted formula. In Marion's words, it points to the fact that: "the givenness of the phenomenon on the basis of itself to an *I* at every instant can veer toward a constitution of the phenomenon through and on the basis of the *I*" (23). Marion explains in this context that he does not – as indeed philosophy cannot – aim at a phenomenology without any I or horizon, "for clearly phenomenology itself would then become impossible" (24). At the same time, though, he strives to make most of the founding assertion of phenomenology that "possibility stands higher than actuality" (24). And this radical reading of Husserl's project provides grounds for a *post*-phenomenological reflection. Marion's philosophy can be called the *plus ultra* of phenomenology. The turn is initiated by the following

question: "Could one not envision a type of phenomenon that would *reverse* the condition of a horizon (by surpassing it instead of being inscribed within it?) and that would reverse the [phenomenological – M. G.] reduction (by leading the *I* back to itself, instead of being reduced to the *I*)?" (24).

As we recall, Husserl moved away from the Cartesian "thinking self" to the given as it gives itself; in this way he sought an answer to the question of how we perceive the world through acts of consciousness. Husserl does not content himself with reflection on the objects stamped in the wax of our consciousness, but draws our attention to the "directedness" of our mental states: our deliberate, i.e. intentional turning towards and facing another person, a concrete object, an abstract notion or a proposition. Introducing further distinctions which allow us to define more detailed categories, we may say that "the objects of acts can be […] particular or universal, relatively simple or complex, either immanent mental entities or events, occurring as a stream of consciousness in which they are intended, or transcendent external entities, existing independently of being intended" (Smith and McIntyre 6). Yet what remains the same in all these cases is the role assigned to the consciousness of an I who surveys phenomena from its privileged and constant vantage point, subjecting objects to our eagerness to see them. Marion formulates his critique of this implication in the following way: "Transcendental or not, the phenomenological *I* remains the beneficiary, and therefore the witness and even the judge, of an appearance" (23). Instead, Marion's reflection focuses our attention on the way objects give themselves to us "completely and irremediably" (2002a, 20). This, in turn, makes us aware of the objects which impose on us the way they are to be viewed (for instance anamorphic images make sense only if we find the right angle from which to view the hidden shape), or those which surprise and bedazzle us, overflowing our intention at the moment of their unexpected arrival. In this context Marion introduces the concept of the "saturated phenomenon" which changes the sovereign, autonomous subject, that has the right to claim "*I see*," into a "dative subject" (*adonne*), who cannot say more than "It occurs *to me*," but at the same time enjoys receiving him*self* or her*self* from the gift bestowed on him/her. The saturated phenomenon arrives before we issue an invitation: intuition precedes and overflows intention. The curious, vigilant observer becomes then a captivated recipient of a gift. Marion's list of saturated phenomena includes such categories as the already mentioned anamorphosis, the idol, the icon (which is also the face of another, if we take Levinas's definition of the face), the event, religious epiphany and the flesh.

I shall argue that the speakers in Donne's poems, bewildered by the gifts which exceed their understanding, anticipate the debate in contemporary post-phenomenological thought, initiated by Jean-Luc Marion when he introduced the concept of a saturated phenomenon. I shall pay special attention to the instantaneous "this-ness" of *daily* wonders, miraculously encapsulated in Donne's poetry. In

the poet's account, the wondrous is simply an indispensable part of life, superfluously manifesting itself in the loving and suffering flesh.

2. This-ness of Pain[2]

I have chosen to begin with a poem which focuses attention on the suffering body and reminds us that poetic speech cannot utter pain, abandonment or death. In "Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse" Donne describes the reflections of a person who sets out on a journey into the "undiscovered country / from whose bourn no traveler ever returned" (*Hamlet* 3. 1.). (Let us notice on the margin Shakespeare's ingenious pun on the word "bourn," which in this well-known quotation from *The Tragedy of Hamlet* stands for a goal and a boundary while at the same time pointing to the homophonic birth, "borne," implied in the experience of dying.) The opening stanza of the poem refers, however, not to travelling, but to music. This is the first episode in a series of the speaking subject's transformations, when he undergoes a change into a hymn sung by angels in praise of God:

> Since I am comming to that Holy roome,
> Where, with thy Quire of Saints for evermore,
> I shall be made thy Musique; As I come
> I tune the Instrument here at the dore,
> And what I must doe then, thinke here before. (ll. 1–5)

The text explicitly states that the man's destiny in afterlife is not to perform music, but to be music; not to play an instrument, but to become one. The reference to "tuning" reminds the reader of the common theme of seventeenth-century painting, where musicians are caught not in a moment of performance, but preparing the instrument. In an allegorical sense this well-known theme points to the broken harmony of the universe, disturbed by the doubts raised by New Philosophy, and repeats the lesson of mortality, derived from late medieval *ars moriendi* and informing Baroque vanitative art. "Unstrung" instruments which feature both in Hans Holbein's portrait of *The Ambassadors* and, later, also in the poetry of another Metaphysical Poet, George Herbert, symbolize the inherent imperfection of all creation, which is a mark of the Fall and the reason for the vanity of all worldly treasures. Herbert also connected this motif with the patristic tradition of divine lute and harp made of the wood of the cross and of Lamb's sinews stretched on the Cross. In Donne's "Hymne," the poem itself becomes a canvas on which we see the instrument, the sensible body of a man, who through suffering learns how to become God's instrument and God's music. Like somebody who sees a painting devoted to music and ponders on the border of silence which the painted tune cannot break, we do not hear the music which resounds in the speaker's mind,

but the reader is invited to anticipate its peaceful, perhaps even joyful, ascending tune, beginning on earth and completed in eternity. This is, then, the first step towards the *plus ultra* of human experience, indicated by means of the metaphor which suggests a mysterious return of musical harmony from concrete sound to an abstract pattern.

The poem offers a sequence of rapidly changing metaphysical conceits which 'metaphorise' the speaking subject first into a piece of heavenly music; then, the dying man becomes an abstract map of the world while at the same time he speaks of his solitary struggle against the wild tempests of the semi-mythical Anian/Bering Strait at the farthest end of Asia, sailing through the Northwest Passage and the Straits of Magellan between the Atlantic and the Pacific, in order to come to the direst of all straits, death; then again, he becomes one with Jesus on the Cross and into Christ Resurrected and triumphant. This restless progression of images well renders man's apprehension in the face of the unknown, unsettling his plans to "think here" before he is forced to cross the dreaded threshold, catching him at every instance off guard, surprising him – and us together with him – with ever new associations and comparisons. But perhaps even more important in this context is the focus on change itself, which reminds us of the alchemical motifs frequently featuring in late Renaissance reflections on death, as for instance in Ariel's song: "Full fathom five thy father lies; / Of his bones are coral made / Those are pearl that were his eyes; / Nothing of him that doth fade / But doth suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange" (*The Tempest* 1. 2), or Donne's conceit in his "Elegie on the Lady Marckham" where the poet praises a woman's body undergoing a blessed transformation after being drowned in the "sea of death" in the image and likeness of the making of precious porcelain: "As men of China, after ages stay, / Do take up Porcelane, where they buried Clay, / So at this grave, her limbecke, which refines / The Diamonds, Rubies, Sapphires, Pearls, and Mines, / Of which this flesh was, her soule shall inspire / Flesh of such stuffe, as God, when his last fire / Annuls this world […]" (ll. 21–27, Donne 255; see McDuffe 93–94).

Yet these gradual, unhurried transformations of the body in the grave turned into an alembic, the alchemists' "womb" nurturing renewed life, which are described in other poems, stands in contrast with the restlessness of "Hymne to God my God," where we witness a hectic transfiguration, rather than peaceful and piecemeal transformations of the speaking I. I have deliberately chosen to speak of transfiguration here, although the surprise and bedazzlement involved in the event at Mount Tabor, when Jesus let his disciple see him clad in full glory, seems a far cry from the bedazzlement of Donne's poetic persona in his "Hymne." Yet to some extent the remembrance of this miracle, which Jean-Luc Marion chooses as a perfect example of "the revealed" inscribed in his definition of the saturated phenomenon (2008, 152), may help us understand the inherent ambiguities of the "Hymne," encompassing both the kenosis and the exaltation of the Cross, the Fall

and the Redemption of man, sin and forgiveness, agony and ecstasy, the terror of death and the foretaste of the soul's ultimate communion with God. To be even more accurate, we should say that the poem aims at portraying the transformation of despair into hope and affliction into ascent. On the one hand, we seem invited to view its restless pursuit of conceits as a product of a feverish mind, while at the same time this truly amazing restlessness may have also been rooted in the poet's understanding of the "holy impatience" and hastiness characteristic of many Pauline epistles, suggesting that the speaker earnestly looks forward (and upward) towards the consummation of the hope anchored in the memory of the Resurrection.[3] The speaker in the poem lies flat on his bed, but at the same time his thoughts hasten away from the visible and the intelligible world (or should we rather say that the world hastens away from him?), towards a more profound luminescence which erupts suddenly within him, while its arrival transforms his perception and informs his sight from within in the moment of death. The agony of death is informed by the sense of awe, rather than dread as the speaker proceeds towards the divine Light which alone can enable him to "see light" (Ps. 36:10). We may thus say that the poem describes the experience which overwhelms and submerges the horizons of the speaking person, and – together with him – we also participate in these transfigurations of the speaking and the listening I, in the course of which the poem appears to us less as an object of critical analysis, constituted by an act of reading and rooted in our subjectivity, than a phenomenon whose givenness constitutes us as the reading subjects (Westphal 26–35). Indeed, we become the speaker's doubles and involuntary co-sufferers of his death. He, on the other hand, points to his own metamorphosis in the course of which his suffering body becomes a word or a sign; a poet becomes a song, a traveller becomes a map and a preacher becomes a sermon.

Yet the imperative sentence in the penultimate line of the poem: "*Be this my Text, my Sermon to mine owne*" can also be read as a brilliant foreshadowing of the twentieth-century reflection on the self-affectivity of the flesh, which in fact runs in the opposite direction, riveting poetic speech to the suffering body; in Jean-Luc Marion's words, this act resembles riveting something "to the ground," or else "*earthing*" our experiences in the sensible clay of our bodies (2002a, 92). Instead of offering a description of death, an account of the speaker's experience, this poem performs suffering. In other words, Donne's poem does not so much speak about suffering, or shows a suffering body, as bears witness to the speaker's (and ours) receiving himself (ourselves) from his (our) immanent flesh (see Gschwandtner 97; Grzegorzewska 15–28).

The imagery of the second stanza redirects our attention to the horizontal dimension of the speaker's journey, suggesting the terror of dying rather than rejoicing in the hope of Salvation. Significantly, the experience of the speaker is rendered visible by the inquiring gaze of his physicians, rather than communicated directly in his own words:

> Whilst my Physitians by their love are growne
> Cosmographers, and I their Mapp, who lie
> Flat on this bed, that by them may be showne
> That this is my South-west discoverie
> *Per fretum febris*, by these streights to die, (ll. 6–10)

However, the enjambment at the end of the last stanza does not let us dwell in Narcissistic melancholy, but leads back to hope and joy of new life:

> I joy, that in these straits, I see my West;
> For, though theire currants yeeld returne to none,
> What shall my West hurt me? As West and East
> In all flatt Maps (and I am one) are one,
> So death doth touch the Resurrection. (ll. 11–15)

"Touching" each other, death and life become so tightly knit together that one cannot disentangle any more the antithesis turned in the following stanzas into a paradox of Christ's Cross turned into another Tree of Life, Calvary turned into man's Paradise, and the first Adam's sweat miraculously soaked up by the saving blood of the last Adam, Christ. The poem develops thus through ebbs and flows of despair and hope, pain and joy, until it reaches its own destiny, the concluding stanza. Here we come across a puzzling deictic phrase which opens a number of different interpretations:

> So, in his purple wrapp'd, receive mee Lord,
> By these his thornes give me his other Crowne;
> And as to others' soules I preach'd thy word,
> *Be this my Text, my Sermon to mine owne*,
> Therefore that he may raise the Lord throws down. (ll. 26–30; emphasis mine)

"This" may point in the direction of the concluding line, the one-line sermon which captures in a nutshell the idea of the "blessed fall" (previously elaborated in *The Holy Sonnets* and forcefully articulated in the poem "Batter my heart, three-person'd God"). It can also be understood as self-referentially pointing to the entire poem, the speaker's last public oration (some say the most appealing sermons are first and foremost addressed to the preacher himself). Still more importantly, one may imagine the index finger of the speaker pointing directly at his body undergoing the terror of agony and dying. Keeping in mind the poem's portrayal of physicians turned into "cosmographers" leaning over the "flat map" of the patient's body – in the image and likeness of Rembrandt's doctors reading the atlas of the human body in the course of a post-mortem examination – we may discern in the quoted fragment a reference to the feeling and suffering flesh itself,

the inexpressible and indescribable core of the poem's message beyond words and images. The enigmatic "this" of poetic deixis would then be the only appropriate way of rendering that which escapes the medium of the arts in general and poetry in particular: the phenomenon of enfleshed pain or love, agony or ecstasy. The message seems reduced to pure sound, for instance in the remarkably harsh consonance of "these his thorns." (On the other hand, if the reader wishes to recall the name of the Runic character for the sound of the voiced "th," which was precisely a "thorn," he will also be able to visualize the "thorniness" of this line on the page. This effect may have not been intended by the poet, but it certainly matches the sound of the poem.) Moreover, the repetition of possessive pronouns (my, my, mine) – which echoes the existential and intimate note in the title of the poem "Hymne to God *my* God, in *my* sicknesse," where both divinity and suffering are not addressed in the abstract, but closely connected with the speaking subject who specifically invokes *his* Master in *his* tribulation – resounds here with the pain of helpless stammering, suggesting an obstacle which isolates the sufferer from the rest of the world and from us, who accompany him on his solitary way into the unknown country of death.

We can say that Donne experiments with re-*presenting* the ineffable: his text does not describe or thematize illness, but makes it happen here and now, at the moment of reading, which miraculously transforms the body of the poem into the flesh of the speaker; word is made flesh when we, the brothers and sisters of doubting Thomas see the speaker put his fingers into the open wounds of his speech. In and through this mute gesture, the poem suddenly becomes a space of unexpected encounter, as the reader is taken by surprise in the moment of an abrupt disclosure which forces him to repeat after the speaker: "Be this *my* Text, *my* Sermon to *mine* owne." In this way, the poem tells us that in the act of reiterating the quoted line we become one with the suffering "I" of the speaker. In other words, the poem gives the reader to himself/herself. The moment of recognition appears to be simultaneous with the gesture that elicits it; an even more accurate way to define the experience rendered in the poem would be to say that both time and experience are somehow miraculously elided through and in an act of recognition.

3. Surprised by Love

In "The good-morrow" John Donne illustrates the sudden experience of being surprised by the joy of love, to invoke C. S. Lewis's well-known phrase. The title of the poem not only welcomes the beginning of the day, but may also denote a moment of awakening or spiritual illumination in a sudden shaft of light. The poem originates in the face, and more precisely the icon, of another. The speaker begins with an exclamation of astonishment which, paradoxically enough, is not rooted in the present moment, but instead wonders at the futility of all past

experiences. This abrupt, dramatic opening situates us in the middle of a love scene. The speaker's confession can be encapsulated in the English colloquial phrase: "something dawned on someone":

> I wonder by my troth, what thou, and I
> Did, till we lov'd? were we not wean'd till then?
> But suck'd on countrey pleasures, childishly?
> Or snorted we in the seaven sleepers den?
> T'was so; But this, all pleasures fancies bee.
> If ever any beauty I did see,
> Which I desir'd, and got, t'was but a dream of thee (ll. 1–7).

The speaker draws a sharp distinction between the childish past (which was, however, not entirely innocent, as one can gather from the crude term concealed in the reference to primeval, Arcadian "country" pleasures)[4] and the overwhelming, inexpressible present. The past is not without blame (and even such references as the one here to helpless infants fed from the breast can be turned into powerfully erotic images, as readers of *The Faerie Queene* would agree, remembering Sir Guyon asleep in Acrasia's lap), while the lovers find their Paradise here and now, in the excess of the present moment. The sense of wonder which stems from this unexpected change of perspective can only be rendered in the hiatus between "t'was so," and "But this, all pleasures fancies bee," marked by the telling use of the semicolon in line 5. The immediacy that follows the awakening of love (and also the awakening of the lovers' souls) stands in sharp contrast with the "childish" ignorance of "countrey pleasures" and fancy slumber "in seaven sleepers den," yet at the same time it also involves bedazzlement, perhaps even blindness, caused by the excess of light and apophasis, implicating the excess of meaning. First and foremost, it decentres the subject, placing him or her on the threshold of wonder. The amazement implied by the questions preceding this awakening, in fact stems from the crushing experience that affects the speaker in the abundance of the present; as if true love's light were so dazzling that it must annihilate everything else, rendering all previous fulfilments null and void. At the same time, it is so astounding that one cannot do it justice in words; instead the speaker withdraws into the deictic "this" with no meaning at all, except the meaning riveted to his sensible flesh or the sensible flesh of the recipient of the poem.

The poem undoubtedly communicates a sense of wonder, but the colloquial opening "I wonder" expresses less of amazement, shock or admiration, than of plain disappointment with the imperfect shadows of love which preceded the arrival of the genuine wonder; that which is truly "wonderful" proves too powerful, too overwhelming and too awesome to be contained in the casual, informal exclamation which opens the first line of the poem. Paradoxically, everything that

the speaker "wonders at," is *but* a wonder (it gives all one can expect from love *but* its unnamable "this-ness," it includes all pleasures other than the real joy of love). He leaves it behind without any regret, deeming it but misleading fancies and insubstantial dreams. In this way, Donne evokes the conventional figuration of Eros primarily in terms of lack (signalled by the apparently trivial "but") and death (recalled in the image of a long sleep). Accordingly, the moment of revelation brings out the inherent vanity of all previous loves, which now amount to insignificant moments of transient pleasure. This is in fact how one can, at first glance, interpret the beginning of line 4: "t'was so; *But* this" (it could have appeared all, but in fact it gave us everything *save* / *except* what we experience now […]). Only when looking at it again can we construct "but" as a conjunction, used to stress the contrast between what has already been mentioned and what is to follow, between groping in the dark and gazing into the sun, between night and the light of day which transforms and transports the lovers into another world. In effect, the moment of transition brings one more surprise because instead of simply discarding the erotic, the poet seems to move beyond the conventional dichotomy of carnal and spiritual desire, and beyond the established association of desire with lack and death (Costa 56).

Unlike in "Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse," which dealt with pain and death, Donne attempts here to capture the transfiguring ecstasy of love. Both extremes, death and love, have one thing in common: they meet in the abyss where human words die and where the speaking "I" learns to listen. They both give themselves "in excess," superfluously, beyond our capacity to grasp them. "The good-morrow" obviously draws on the Platonic distinction between the Real and its imperfect, transient shadows, but even more importantly it locates the Real in the actuality of the present moment bestowed on us as a gift, a present, indeed.

At first glance it may be argued that "The good-morrow" describes a transition from "carnal" to "spiritual" love. The mention of Seven Sleepers Den brings to mind Plato's cave, and the "awakening" of the lovers seems to echo the experience of a man brought from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge. The rude innuendoes of the phrase "suck'd on country pleasures" – with the long "s" in print easily confused with "f" and the insulting world implies in the adjective "country" – seem perfectly fitted to dismiss carnal desire and sexual depravity. The apparently insignificant reference to "snorting" taints the image of sleeping lovers with the memory of a filthy carnivalesque body. Childhood in this poem is less an emblem of innocence than a symbol of blameworthy immaturity and reliance on animal instincts. The allusion to a "weaned child" on the one hand matches the poem's initial preoccupation with the flesh, pointing to the image of a breast-feeding woman, while at the same time it may be also associated with the Psalmist peaceful account of a soul which rests in God: "as a child that is weaned of his mother, my soul is even as a weaned child" (131:2), thus pointing to the lovers' new-found confidence in each other.

Yet a closer look at the argument does not let us dwell on the dichotomy of the body and the soul, forcing us to take into account yet another aspect of the lovers' transfiguration. I wish to argue that Donne also foreshadows the importance of the distinction between "body" and "flesh," which is explained in Jean-Luc Marion's illuminating diagnosis of the place of love in contemporary culture. Marion says:

> […] flesh is missing from the situation in which contemporaneity has placed love (or what stands for love). Bodies lack flesh, and this is why bodies cannot accede to any other whatsoever, nor propose themselves as real others, as bodies of flesh. Without flesh, no body can accede to love, for it remains unaffected by another person, or even any other sort of other. Restricted to bodies without flesh, contemporary eroticism slides inevitably into solipsism, an eroticism without other. (2002b, 158–159)

In view of this observation it appears more accurate to argue that Donne postulates a progress from self-centred myopic eroticism to the genuine enfleshed love which allows two people to view each other not as *objects* of desire but as *real* others. "The good-morrow," unlike most love poems, does not refer to the situation when a man tries to persuade his mistress to requite his love or, even more boldly, to grant him "that" which he desires most (and which in another poem by Donne is equally cleverly, even if far less subtly, indicated by deictic demonstratives: "*this* flea is you and I, and *this* / Our marriage bed and marriage temple is"). Instead, the speaker in "The good-morrow" refers to the "time after." In an intriguing and almost impossible manner the poet praises love fulfilled, but not exhausted; satiated, but still desiring; tranquil and confident, but not negligent or careless. In fact, however, the moment of fulfilment is only indicated in the first stanza, and then deliberately obfuscated by the opening of a new horizon. Perhaps, then, instead of focusing on the sense of achievement, one should look for another formula to account for the lover's experience in "The good-morrow"? Perhaps the reader of the poem could take advantage of St. Paul's wonderfully dialectical account of his love adventure with divinity? Paul says: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12). This context, as I shall argue, seems well fitted to the inherent aporias of erotic love in Donne's poetry.

4. Time After

The paradox of "The good-morrow" becomes even more striking when we compare this poem with "A Lecture upon the Shadow," where Donne ponders pessimistically on the shadowy side of love, arriving at the conclusion that love's

"first minute, after noon, is night." Unlike "The good-morrow," which offers the prospects of an adventurous future and infinite discovery, "A Lecture" brings the voyage of love to a standstill. The poem begins with an address which is to the speaker's silent interlocutor; since the reader does not get a chance to hear the woman's voice or know her thoughts, she too is a shadow in this poem about shadows:

> Stand still, and I will read to thee
> A Lecture, Love, in loves philosophy. (ll. 1–2)

The use of diaphora in the second line, where the word "love" is first used as a form of address to the beloved woman and then as an abstract noun, seems perfectly suited to the context of the poem. It may serve here as a reminder that love involves a meeting of two people. At the same time, the reader of the poem gets the impression that time really stops when he sees (or hears) what in another context might have been a tautological repetition: "Love, in love," as if the speaker did not want to let the spoken word depart from him, as if he wished to play on its different grammatical configurations, tasting its sweet sound over and over again. In some mysterious way, he even manages to make "love" resound in "philosophy," not only because we remember the meaning of the Greek *filein* ("to love"), but because of the alliteration: lecture/love/philosophy, which strengthens the consonance in the phrase: "*l*ove's phi*l*osophy."

The contrast between the shadowy past and present illumination at first glance does not differ much from the situation described in "The good-morrow," where the world is suddenly flooded with light and all illusion, all misleading appearances, all ignorance and all darkness must give way to "brave clearness" which, nonetheless, does not imply an expansion of the self, but a radical contraction of "all things" conceived by the lovers:

> These three houres that we have spent,
> Walking here, Two shadowes went
> Along with us, which we our selves produc'd.
> But, now the Sunne is just above our head,
> We doe those shadowes tread;
> And to brave clearnesse all things are reduc'd. (ll. 3–8)

The contrast between "infant loves" which were fostered in the course of the past three hours and the present moment does not imply that the shadows which used to float away from the beloved and disappear behind them are now completely gone. Instead, they suddenly return to bother the couple who were hoping to part with them forever, and threaten to grow again, this time ahead of them:

So whilst our infant loves did grow,
Disguises did, and shadowes, flow,
From us, and our cares; but now 'tis not so. (ll. 9–11)

In fact, the returning shadows symbolize a different, more portentous fear. No longer concerned with public opinion and others knowing of their love ("That love has not attain'd the high'st degree, / Which is still diligent lest others see" ll. 12–13), the lovers now face the test of mutual trust and loyalty:

Except our loves at this noone stay,
We shall new shadowes make the other way.
As the first were made to blinde
Others; these which come behinde
Will worke upon our selves, and blind our eyes.
If our loves faint, and westwardly decline;
To me thou, falsely, thine,
And I to thee mine actions shall disguise. (ll. 14–21)

Thus, the shadows of the morning grow shorter every hour, until they disappear in the full brightness of noon; those which come after stretch longer and longer, until they merge with the all-encompassing darkness at the end of the day. The former wear away, the latter quite literally foreshadow death and decay:

The morning shadowes weare away,
But these grow longer all the day;
But oh, loves day is short, if love decay. (ll. 22–24)

The concluding couplet of the poem is a forceful assertion of the inevitable proximity of love and dying, joy and pain, gain and loss. It shatters all the hopes which were fostered at the break of the day; the definitive, conjunctive "and" in the last line of the poem surprises us with a paradoxical juxtaposition of "light" and "night":

Love is a growing, or full constant light;
And his first minute, after noone, is night. (ll. 25–26)

The abrupt ending may refer to the concept of "small death," but the unexpected arrival of darkness may also open this explicitly erotic poem to subtle theological undertones, directing our attention to the hour of Christ's death. Then we could find in Donne's poem another justification for the paradox of night at noon, and conversely, of Love's death overcoming the night of sin and establishing a new "rhyme" between "night" and "light." However shocking this suggestion may ap-

pear at first, we ought not to forget that Donne's poetry is full of unexpected connections between carnal and spiritual aspects of love. It is then not at all unlikely that the speaker's rational argument about the wayward paths of human love suddenly crossed paths with the mystics' discourse on the dark night of the soul, and the "light" shining in "darkness" which "comprehended it not" (John 1:5). This lack of understanding, this myopic hostility, or perhaps simply our insufficient capacity to receive Love, was the cause for the crime committed at the hour of darkness, the hour of Passion, which befell at noontime (Luke 23:44).

5. Love Seen in a Rear Mirror

It is for the reader to decide whether he or she reads the two poems in chronological order: first the one about a morning, then about high noon; proceeding from "The good-morrow" to "A Lecture upon the Shadow," which may, as I have sought to show, be read as a poem of the biblical sixth hour of the day (noon), the time when Christ hung on the Cross, and His three hour agony. But if we take into account the theological undertones of "A Lecture upon the Shadow" (granted that they need not seem obvious to everybody), it seems even more logical to proceed from the melancholic remembrance of darkness which envelops the earth at high noon on Good Friday, towards the morning of the Resurrection. The natural, chronological order has the advantage of recognizing love's growth from infancy to maturity (as the poet writes in "A Lecture upon the Shadow": "whilst our infant loves did grow, / Disguises did, and shadows, flow / From us"), but the price for accepting this commonsense perspective is the painful transience of love: "oh, loves day is short." Read in the reverse order, as if from the perspective of eternity, the two poems become a fascinating story of human love, yearning for and straining towards everlasting life.

The second stanza of "The good-morrow" contains an oblique allusion to the Augustinian warning against the temptations of a wanton, greedy and possessive gaze, but the speaker replaces this threat with the ideal of sight refined by love, which "controls" the "love" of "other sights." And although the following argument which continues in lines 7–13 hinges on an elaborate cartographic conceit, comparing the faces of the lovers to world hemispheres represented on cordiform, heart-shaped maps, which might suggest that love for Donne remains unavoidably connected with conquest and possession, the issue at stake in this poem seems the wonder of discovering another human being. We may even say that the experience of love in this poem verges on mystical ecstasy, when the face of another "appears more than any object will ever appear […] withheld from any synthesis and from the least act that could constitute it as an object. It escapes prediction because no quantity can predict its sum from its parts. It surges forth without equal" (Kessler and Sheppard, 3). What is important in "The good-morrow" is not the visible

beauty of the woman's face: her coral lips, teeth like pearls, radiant eyes, as in the Petrarchan blazon. Instead, our attention focuses on that which proves so excessively apparent and so imposingly present in the face of another that it can neither be mapped, nor described in words, nor grasped in any other way:

> And now good morrow to our waking soules,
> Which watch not one another out of feare;
> For love, all love of other sights controules,
> And makes one little roome, an every where. (ll. 8–11)

Jean-Luc Marion describes the moment of love's refreshing bewilderment in the following manner: "The ego no longer ensures any foundation […] it finds itself always already preceded by the being-given of the other, whose unobjectifiable counter-intentionality it suffers" (2008, 61). In Donne's poem, the sense of wonder is inscribed in the immediacy of the lovers' exchanged gaze. It offers a near fulfilment of Saint Paul's promise: the speaker who once saw love "through a glass, darkly" (in more modern translation: "as in a mirror, dimly"), knowing it only "in part," now meets it face to face, and therefore "knows even as he is known" (1 Cor. 13:12):

> My face in thine eye, thine in mine appeares,
> And true plain hearts doe in the faces rest,
> Where can we finde two better hemispheares,
> Without sharp North, without declining West? (ll. 15–18)

One reservation, however, must be made in the context of this theological transfiguration of Donne's erotic poems. The mutual response of gazes in "The good-morrow" can be described as a moment of recognition, when one person finds herself envisaged by the gaze that proceeds through the icon of the face of another person, while at the same time a movement of her gaze ascending to the worshipped image is also envisioned. Yet this moment borders dangerously on the solipsistic: the lovers are so preoccupied with each other, so thoroughly submerged in mutual contemplation, that they forget about the world and shut out the fellowship of others, opting for perfect isolation. And if this choice must seem natural in carnal love, it becomes far more problematic when referred to divine love, which embraces and espouses the entire humankind in embracing every individual whom it invites to mystical union.

Yet it goes without saying that the density and the totality of the gaze described in "The good-morrow" breaks the frame of poetic conceit and takes us back to the all-too obvious and therefore tongue-tied "this-ness" of love. Instead of becoming a fitting object of poetry, it stubbornly and helplessly points in one direction, towards this person and no one else; it takes place here (in "one little

roome" of the poem which becomes "an every where") and nowhere else; it happens neither before nor after, but "now." Paradoxically, however, the ending of the poem seems to rule out sexual satisfaction: "If our two loves be one, or, thou and I / Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die" (ll. 20–21) As we all know, the verb "die" in seventeenth-century English was frequently used to denote sexual orgasm, and "slacken" is equally revealing in this context. This paradox, I wish to suggest, points to the elusive gist of wonder in Donne's poem, precariously placed in-between expectation and fulfilment, possessions and movement, longing and belonging, remembrance and hope, loss and anticipation, at the dawn of "*long* love's day," to contrast the message of "A Lecture upon the Shadow" with the memorable phrase borrowed from another Metaphysical poet, Andrew Marvell.

When we hear the speaker greet the beginning of a new day: "And now good morrow to our waking souls," the poem places us precisely on the threshold of wonder, capturing the arrival of love, not its high noon. It captures the future that lives in the lovers, perhaps still "without [their] fully knowing it," as we could say after Proust. The poem is still a promise, even though it also celebrates the assurance of finding and being found. Face to face, so intimately close that they can see the picture reflected in the eyes of the other "half," Donne's lovers fore-*shadow* the joys of erotic union and spiritual communion. Remembrances and recollection of their past, imperfect loves are now replaced by the foretaste of Paradise which opens in front of them, and stretches into infinity. The present moment in the poem is temporalized by the past and future, liberated from the shadowy figures of myopic self-centred love. This reading brings us back to the already mentioned Epistle to the Phillipians: "Forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth […] unto those things which are before, reaching forth unto those things that are before" (3:13). Whatever happened "before" proves "but a dream" of the present joy, but this present appears so abundant that it turns out to be further marked with the movement defined as *epektasis*: it makes the lovers draw ever onwards. Gregory of Nyssa, echoing St. Paul, described the disposition of the soul heading towards infinity: "I press towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:13). (The name "Jesus Christ" points both to the historical man Jesus, and to the fulfilment of the future which His coming entails: he is the Messiah, the beginning and end of time). Similarly, the lovers in the poem also move "beyond the stage [they] have reached to make a further discovery."[5] That throws new light on the allusion to maps and mapmaking, which here seem to have nothing in common with the desire to conquer and colonize. Instead, the poem seems to point beyond the horizon of the lover's sight, maybe even to Love greater than any earthly joy, although experienced in my flesh and discovered in the face of another?

The reader participates in the lover's amazement, prompted to ask: "How is it possible that a text, so obviously set in the present moment and the concrete,

confined space, can at the same time be so dynamic, traversing infinite space, beyond the yet undiscovered corners of the earth?" My answer to this puzzle is that Donne does not define love which "is," but points instead to love which "is given" (as if the Heiddeggerian surprise with the sense of wonder implicated by the apparently most ordinary, everyday German phrase *es gibt*); moreover, this love gives itself constantly and abundantly. The memory of the past gloom, expressed in the implicit reference to Seven Sleeper's Den (perhaps also Plato's cave, deprived of the sun of intellect, and the darkness of sin which enveloped the world after the Fall), is introduced only in order to celebrate the light which has already arrived and which will shine now and through eternity. The moment the lovers decide to go "beyond themselves," they find infinity within themselves.

Contrary to what Donne preaches in "A Lecture upon the Shadow," true love never stands still; she is more appositely defined in the words referring to wisdom/spirit/logos, and borrowed from the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon: "more moving than any motion," she inspires "alterations of the turning of the sun, and the changes of seasons; / the circuit of the year and the position of stars; / the natures of living creatures, and the furies of wild beasts: the violence of winds and the reasonings of men; the diversity of plants and the virtues of roots" (7:24,18–20). The New Testament shows the urgency of Love in the accounts of Jesus's hasty sojourn to Jerusalem: "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; *and Jesus went before them*: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid" (10:32; emphasis mine). The disciples' apprehension, one may easily guess, is caused by their Master's feverish determination, which clearly foreshadows some yet unknown and for them apparently inconceivable, but certainly crucial event; the completion of his task; the consummation of His love for them, due in a little while.

Conclusion

In contemporary philosophy, this association of *epektasis* with Jesus's "eschatological impatience" informs, for instance, Richard Kearney's brilliant portrayal of divine Love as a form of never ending motion. Kearney defines *epektasis* as "A cleft in the body of God which ensures that the promised kingdom is a place of perpetual desire, of *dunamis* rather than *stasis*, of the endless giving and receiving. And it is precisely this cleft which enables hosts to become a guests and guests hosts in circles of endless motion […]. What is imagined here is open-ended *eros*" (193). Viewed in this light, the impetuosity and urgency clearly discernible in Donne's "The good-morrow" can thus be seen as incorporating more than the conquistador's zeal, and pointing instead to the frenetic, all-encompassing and never-ending pursuits of divine *eros*. The impatience of the opening line: "I wonder by my troth, what thou and I / Did, till we lov'd," allows no further

waste of time, no delay. This is not an expression of regret, but rather an impatient call for speedy action. Not, as Marvell says in "To His Coy Mistress": "to devour time," but rather, as Eliot wishes in "Burnt Norton," to "redeem it." The moment of discovery in this poem is just a beginning of the endless journey of discovery; the given is only a promise of infinitely greater gifts to come; the lovers look forward towards the blessed future, but they also already live in that future and already rejoice in it.

One may find this last conclusion far-fetched, but Donne's unswerving preoccupation with the "this-ness" of the present certainly does not confine his lovers to their bedchamber which in one instant becomes equal with the entire universe, perhaps even with infinity: after all, their love-bed becomes "an every where." The wonder bestowed on them urges them to move on. It is the threshold of infinity which begins already here and now, in the epiphany of the face. It marks a dawn of their understanding, of "knowing and being known" by the Divine Other. In brief, it directs our thoughts to the already received gift of the future: "we all, with an open face [unveiled and revealed], beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord [serving as a mirror to reflect the glory of God], are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

Notes

1 The leader should note the verb "to *apprehend*" in the quoted definition, which stands in contrast with the philosopher's desire to "*comprehend*" reality. Although apprehending may be synonymous with "catching" or "grasping," that which by definition remains beyond our capacity to grasp, the suggested undertone of *apprehensive* form of knowing suggests the unsettling dimension of this gift bestowed on man. Also, as I shall further argue, the fact that revelation is given to us (*pro nobis*) in unconditional form, as a free, *sovereign* divine intention, and not achieved by human activity, has important consequences for the argument of Jean-Luc Marion, whose goal is to move beyond the constraints imposed by the intention of the inquiring *I*. The human reason is the recipient, not the origin of revealed truth, as Larry Chapp forcefully stresses in the simplest of all possible ways: "It is God who speaks in revelation and it is humanity which listens and responds." Furthermore, revelation transforms the known forms of things, by endowing then with a glory not of this world, as if a different king of light touched their contours and refashioned them according to its incomprehensible luminescence: "Even if it must be admitted that divine revelation makes use of worldly forms and words, these structures are 'taken up' into an essentially divine act and govern a new context within a divinely constructed 'form.'"

2 I deliberately allude here to the notion of *haeccitas* (which is rendered in English as "thisness"), introduced by Duns Scotus as a term designating non-qualitative property responsible for identity, and then ingeniously employed by G. M. Hopkins's in his definition of his poetic "inscapes."

3 This sentiment, reflected for instance in the vision of Christ hastening to the cross in *The Dream of the Rood*, also seems rooted in the accounts of the Passion which stress Jesus's eagerness to fulfil His Father's will without any delay. It is visible, for instance, in the Gospel of St. Mark, which shows Jesus ahead of His disciples on His final way to Jerusalem: "And they were on the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him […]" (10:32; emphasis mine). The same impatient note informs Jesus's words addressed to Judas: "That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27).

4 The reader of Donne's poem may here take advantage of Hamlet's verbal skirmish with Ophelia in 2.3, where the Danish Prince asks provocatively: "You think I meant country matters," alluding to female sexual organs. Ophelia's attempt to ignore Hamlet's foul play gives him one more reason to insult her. When she withdraws: "I meant nothing, my Lord," he repeats his rude joke: "That' a fair though to lie between maid's legs."

5 I wish to thank Prof. Jean Ward for drawing my attention to Gregory's indebtedness to St. Paul, which links all theological thought devoted to the temporalization of the eschatological future in the Pauline concept of Messianic time, and his definition of faith as the confidence/assurance/conviction or even substance/reality of what is hoped for (Heb. 11:1).

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Surprised by Death, or How Andrew Marvell's Mower Confronts Death in Arcadia

Abstract

Death's crude statement: "Et in Arcadia ego," does not spring surprise on us, as it is a recognizable pastoral convention. But for the naïve and innocent inhabitant of any type of literary Arcadia this is a moment of wonder. Surprised by Death, the coarse Mower of Andrew Marvell's pastoral poems struggles with the unfamiliar. Unaware of the world of urbane manners and unschooled in the *ars moriendi*, he translates the new, puzzling and painful experience into the familiar concepts of his everyday labours. His mind displaced, he looks for the confirmation of his identity in the mirror of his scythe, and when the latter accidentally cuts into his own ankle, the moment of ostensibly naïve *anagnorisis* of the natural man turns into the revelation of the conventional symbol. "Death, thou art a mower too," concludes the clown in a way that may sound simple-minded, but at the same time, has an obvious, though on his part unconscious, reference to a well-known cultural myth. The aim of this paper is to trace the ways Marvellian pastoral personae cope with the wonder of Death by digesting the unfamiliar into the conventional and the aesthetic.

Andrew Marvell's so called Mower Poems have usually been interpreted as the poet's adaptation and transformation of the old bucolic tradition, and three of them, "Damon the Mower," "The Mower to the Glow-worms" and "The Mower's Song," can be regarded as pastoral love complaints provoked by the unrequited love and all-consuming passion for scornful Juliana, who throws into confusion the Mower's serene existence. However, as I am going to argue, what happens in the meadow is more than just a drama of spurned affection, because the Mower's falling in love figures a different fall, one which the naïve rustic can hardly discern at first in his grassy Arcadia, and which he then desperately struggles to name and assimilate.

We can call the Mower a natural man. The world he inhabits he perceives as natural, simple and innocent, albeit he shares it begrudgingly with a character apparently more suitable for a pastoral *locus amoenus* – "the piping shepherd." Yet, notwithstanding the vexatious neighbourhood, the Mower's naïve self-complacency about the special role he plays in the meadows seems unruffled:

What, though the piping shepherd stock
The plains with an unnumbered flock,
This scythe of mine discovers wide
More ground than all his sheep do hide.
With this the golden fleece I shear
Of all these closes every year.
And though in wool more poor than they,
Yet am I richer far in hay. (Marvell 138)

A man who counts hay as his riches, may resemble the gullible horse-courser duped by Doctor Faustus and the devil into buying a horse which on the first ride turned into a bottle of worthless hay. But the naïve Mower boasts it is his hay, rather than the shepherd's wool, that may rightly be named the golden fleece. This mythological allusion seems to challenge the dominant impression of the Mower's unlearned simple-mindedness, as it subtly reminds us about a peculiar generic blend of cultural sophistication and primitive innocence characteristic of the pastoral mode. However, the implicit comparison of mowing with a heroic quest, rather than bestow signs of intellectual refinement upon the speaker, sounds a note of mild irony about his self-assumed ethos of greatness.

Indeed, the Mower flatters himself on being the hero of the meadow and the focus of particular courtesy of the natural world and its elvish dwellers:

I am the mower Damon, known
Through all the meadows I have mown.
On me the morn her dew distills
Before her darling daffodils.
And, if at noon my toil me heat,
The sun himself licks off my sweat.
While, going home, the ev'ning sweet
In cowslip water bathes my feet.
[…] The deathless fairies take me oft
To lead them in their dances soft;
And, when I tune myself to sing,
About me they contract their ring. (Marvell 137–138)

The Mower's powerful assertion of the self within the realm of the meadow courting him with its natural pleasures and pastimes is, nevertheless, consolatory rather than affirmative. As the reader learns early in the poem, this outburst of self-pride was provoked by an event which had sown thistles of doubt as to the adequacy and sufficiency of what this world can offer and to the speaker's assumed importance – that was a sudden sting of desire for haughty and heartless Juliana.

The motif of amorous complications would situate three of the Mower poems within the tradition of pastoral love complaint, especially as Marvell's

indebtedness to Theocritus *Idylls* has been recognised by critics (cf. Smith 135). Indeed, Damon the Mower resembles in many ways one of Theocritus characters Polythemus, a Cyclops inflamed with a wild passion for the sea nymph Galatea. Just like Polythemus' love gifts are (as he believes) best things that his environment can offer: milk, cheese, fawns or bear cubs, so are Damon's presents for Juliana some natural offerings of the meadows:

> To thee the harmless snake I bring,
> Disarmed of its teeth and sting;
> To thee chameleons changing hue,
> And oak leaves tipped with honey dew. (Marvell 137)

Predictably, just like Galatea, the Mower's beloved Juliana remains unmoved by the suitor's gifts and his clumsy courtship. However, the most intriguing similarity between the Mower and the Cyclops, albeit faintly implied in Marvell's poem, is the lover's repulsive appearance. In Theocritus version of the Cyclops' courtship, Polythemus demonstrates an acute and, at the same time, a matter-of-fact awareness of his monstrosity, which he frankly admits:

> I know my beautiful girl, why you run from me
> A shaggy brow spreads right across my face
> From ear to ear in one unbroken line. Below is a
> Single eye, and above my lip is set a broad flat nose. (Theocritus 34)

The fact that the lover's ugliness is so openly stated in one of the ancient versions of the story, which Marvell must have had in mind when writing his poem, sheds a peculiar light on the Mower's perfunctory remark on his appearance. "Nor am I so deformed to sight, / If in my scythe I looked right" (Marvell 138), he cheers himself up. The odd idea of using the blade of his scythe as a mirror is enough to make one's flesh creep, but it is the implied, although never fully named or pictured, deformity of the speaker that seems most uncanny. Notably, the Mower's face may simply be distorted in a mocking grimace, because, as a homophone of his name suggests, he is also a "mower" – a jester, a mocker, one who mows, who makes mouths and grimaces (Sessions 189). However, if we may at first suspect just a reproachful scowl or mocking expression upon the face of the grumpy Mower, the conclusion of the poem leaves no doubt that the reflection he saw in the scythe must have been something grotesque, impossible to describe, because truly unspeakable – an anamorphic shape of the eternal Mower, the mocker of humanity. In a grim travesty of the Narcissus story, the Mower glances at the ghastly face of death. And as Narcissus could have lived happily, if he had not seen his beauty reflected in a fount, so could have the Mower still enjoyed the illusory Arcadia, if in his sorrow "sharp as his scythe," as the poet says, he had

not caught sight of his own mortality. For the Mower, that is the moment of wonder which unsettles his thoughts, displaces his mind, and almost literally cuts him down:

> The edged steel by careless chance
> Did into his own ankle glance;
> And there among the grass fell down,
> By his own scythe, the mower mown. (Marvell 139)

The Narcissus predicament is emphasised in these lines by what David Reid calls a "self-reflexive turn," which in Marvell's poetry, according to the critic, involves an "ironic consciousness of self" (Reid 406). However, in the case of the Mower, a *glance* at himself (as the ambiguous use of the word in the stanza implies) is self-destructive rather than truly self-reflective. By drawing our attention to an apparent misuse of the verb "to glance," Marvell associates a look in the blade-mirror with the wound it inflicts; for the Latin-speaking poet, this rhetorical figure of cathacresis serves rather as an implied "silent" pun on the Latin word *acies*, which denotes both "sharp edge" and "sharpness of vision." But the latter is not really granted to the Mower; his impediment seems to be that of the Cyclops Polythemus, whose single eye not only marks his deformity, but suggests some impairment of perception. Clearly, the myth seems to have provided the poet with more than just a story of unrequited love; there is yet another distant echo of the Latin word *acies* implied in the poem – the name of Polythemus' rival, Galatea's lover Acis, whom the disappointed and jealous Cyclops brutally murders.

However, even in his passionate rage and primitive self-appraisal, Polythemus, when compared to the Mower, is much more acutely aware of his shortcomings, although he may not perceive them as disqualifying from courtship. The Mower's self-reflection seems closer to that of Narcissus, who, self-absorbed, rather than properly self-aware, does not realise that his self-love is a consequence of a curse (which to his mother seemed at first an innocuous prophecy) that has been upon him since his birth, eventually fulfilled by the inescapable Nemesis. Similarly, the Mower does not seem to realise that the deadly poison has always been running in his veins; even if we read that this is "with love of Juliana" that he was stung – the obvious biblical allusion shifts our focus to a broader context: the sting is that of death, and "the sting of death is sin" (1 Cor. 15:55–56). And the signs of sin, the signs of the Fall and death have always been present in the meadow. If only could the Mower discern them, he might have been better prepared for the blow. If he had "read" those signs, he would have realised the irrevocable truth pronounced by whole nature; the truth that is clearly seen, for example, by the speaker in George Herbert's poem "Vertue":

Sweet rose, whose hue angrie and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie,
My music shows ye have your closes,
And all must die. (Herbert 78)

But the Mower cannot yet recognise the signs of death in the fallen nature, even when they invade the language and imagery of his own rueful songs; when to refer to the time of harvest he uses the seemingly innocuous phrase "grass' fall," or when he speaks about the thistles love sowed in his mind, how deaf and blind he seems to the significance of those biblical allusions to the fallen condition of earth and decay of human flesh. Nor can he associate the "foolish fires" that lead mowers astray with the fiery Juliana, who is his *ignis fatuus* of sin, the will-o'-the-wisp or puca as the folklore styles it, or the devil himself, the one that tempts and misleads and breeds distance between the Mower and his green Eden, showing him the mocking face of death – death, whose triumphant statement "Et in Arcadia ego" the self-absorbed pastoral Narcissus could not hear before.

But what if the Mower could not have been warned against or prepared for the encounter with death by ubiquitous signs of decay exactly because he did not see them first in himself? In his penetrating observation, Walter Benjamin makes meaning inseparable from death: "There is so much meaning as there is mortality, because it is death that cuts the deepest line of demarcation between physical phenomena and meaning. But if nature has always been mortal, so it must have always been allegorical" (Benjamin 218, trans. K. Ł.). It seems thus that to be able to see the world of phenomena as endowed with meaning, the Mower has to realise his own mortal condition, to cut his own flesh with the scythe. In other words, in order to see a scull in Arcadia, the Mower has to see first the scull beneath his self-complacent reflection in the mirror.

However, when all of a sudden meanings spring upon the astounded Mower, he tries to repress them by forcing them back into the physical and literal. This is where Marvell's notorious tendency to literalise the figurative and emblematic, gains prominence (and, probably, a new interpretation). In the analysed passage from "Damon the Mower," where the steel of the scythe is said to cut down the Mower himself, Nigel Smith recognises a well-known emblem of Time as a mower cutting human life short with his scythe, but in the poem, understood literally by the speaker (139). The Marvellian Mower seems to ignore the deeper

significance of the wound the scythe has inflicted, as he desperately tries to cling to the literal and physical qualities of nature, focusing on its healing and regenerative powers:

> 'Alas!' said he, 'these hurts are slight
> To those that die by Love despite.
> With shepherd's-purse and clown's-all-heal,
> The blood I staunch, and wound I seal.' (Marvell 139)

True, if taken literally, the wound is slight, but there is a wound, which cuts into flesh like Benjamin's "line of demarcation," and which nature cannot heal:

> 'Tis Death alone that this must do:
> For Death thou art a mower too. (Marvell 139)

This naïve act of the Mower's self-identification with death is probably one of the most puzzling passages in Marvell's poetry. The mechanism and movement of figuration seems reversed in the statement. Typically, the world of phenomena is searched for metaphorical or symbolic rendering of what is abstract or impossible to name otherwise; at the same time what becomes a figure is never confused with what it figures – Benjamin's "line of demarcation" allows no trespassing. But the Mower's gesture is that of invitation of the emblematic back into the physical. The mower would not be thus an emblem of death, but this is death that becomes one of the mowers, a familiar companion. This is as if the speaker met his picture, his reflection, in the meadow, like Narcissus in the water, and took it for something corporeal, not seeing that it is just a shadow – as is death, which is the abyss, the wound itself, the division and the line of demarcation.

How shall we account for the Mower's gesture? Is this a naïve misreading of a sign or rather a denial to read it at all, to accept it as signifying rather than simply physical? Or is it that particular emblem that the Mower cannot read, because he realises that what it stands for is actually the space of no-meaning, the threshold, the in-between which belongs neither to the physical nor to the meaning it produces? But what is certain is that, however desperately the Mower tried to escape from meaning into the world of phenomena, the breach affected by the scull he saw in his Arcadia is irreversible. It breeds distance between the Mower and the world; the world of which his mind was once "the true survey [...] / And in the greenness of the grass / Did see its hopes as in a glass" (Marvell 145). Now, he has been expelled from the paradise of unity and thrown into the wilderness of meaning overgrown with the thistles of doubt. As Judith Haber notices, the Mower's sense of separation and that of doubt come to the surface in the final stanza of "The Mower to Glow-worms":

> [...] a gap has been opened between the physical nature and the realm of the mind that seems impossible to bridge. Thus, for the first time the Mower uses the word "I" distinguishing and isolating himself from the anonymous mowers in the first stanza. And, for the first time, he makes uses of logical connectives [...], transforming this world into a series of hierarchical cause and effect relationships. (Haber 100)

This is a sign of the Fall and a mark of growing sophistry in the Mower's way of thinking about himself and the world. And the shift is clearly the same that over a century later William Blake ingeniously captured in one of his pairs of poems – the innocent and affirmative "Divine Image" juxtaposed with the experienced and sophisticated "Human Abstract."

As the breach is irreversible, and the attempted escape from meaning into the literal and the physical turns out impossible, is there any consolation or hope for the Mower? Hope, that he identified with and received from the greenness of the grass, and which now, like grass, has withered. Notably, the Mower does not express the confident Christian belief in and hope for the immortality of the soul that comes as a natural conclusion to George Herbert's initial meditation on nature's decay:

> Onely a sweet and vertuous soul,
> Like season'd timber, never gives;
> But though the whole world turn to coal,
> Then chiefly lives. (Herbert 78)

What is worth pointing out in Herbert's poem, is the fact that the immortality of the soul is expressed by signs borrowed from the world of nature (the soul is like "seasoned timber") but, at the same time, nature, which is a site of decay and death, is transcended by the significance of the image it provides for. If in Herbert's poem, death also cuts into the physical producing meaning, the movement of significance there is vertical, the meaning that grows from mortality is able to transcend it. This is clearly not the case when the meaning invades the Mower's world, even if he finally seems to accept his predicament. It may be difficult to read the final stanza of "The Mower's Song" as a statement of acceptance, because what precedes it is a violent expression of the Mower's rage and revenge in turning everything to "common ruin." However, when he decides that the "meadows, which have been / Companions of [his] thoughts more green, / Shall now the heraldry become / With which [he] shall adorn [his] tomb," this seems more like a recognition of the new function that the world would now assume – that of signification. Nevertheless, in the Mower poems, this signification never transcends the world of nature that provides for it. This seems to be the Mower's truly pastoral predicament: once an innocent creature of nature, now separated from it but un-

able to step beyond its fallen state. The meaning he now discerns in nature is to him the herald of mortality (just as in the first three stanzas of Herbert's poem), but it is never able to rise from the tomb, for which it serves as an epitaph.

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Sabra the Saint: Hagiography in Richard Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom*

Abstract

This paper looks at the influence of hagiography, or the writing of the lives of saints, on Richard Johnson's wildly popular text, *The Seven Champions of Christendom* (1596). The author focuses on the character Sabra, who represents a female saint figure in opposition to her not-so-saint-like husband St George, in order to show how the tradition of hagiography is changed in the sixteenth-century as it moves away from its pious and medieval origins. A text that has been mostly overlooked by literary scholars, *The Seven Champions of Christendom* emerges as more than simply a part of the culture of popular literary fiction of the 1590s as it considers Protestant hagiography and its cultural pertinence at the time Johnson wrote.

Written in 1596, Richard Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* has been said to bear only a mild resemblance to hagiography, a body of writing that focuses on the lives of saints. Indeed, as Jennifer Fellows states, this wildly popular chivalric romance initially appears to "[belong] to a Spenserian tradition of Protestant hagiography; yet Johnson's protagonists […] are saints in name only" (xvi). Because the text purports to focus on the seven "champions of Christendom" referred to in the title of the work – these being the heroic male figures St George of England, St Denis of France, St James of Spain, St Anthony of Italy, St Andrew of Scotland, St Patrick of Ireland, and St David of Wales – it comes as no surprise that scholarly criticism written on the concept of sanctity in *The Seven Champions of Christendom* has focused on these numerous characters who bear the title of saint in their very names. However, upon closer analysis, another individual who is not referred to as a saint reveals that a veiled representation of sanctity operates within the text, suggesting that in analyzing the seven Christian knights to whom Johnson awards the title of saint, literary scholars searching for sainthood in *The Seven Champions of Christendom* have been looking in the wrong places.

Despite its apparent absence, Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* contains a saint-like figure in the character of Sabra. Throughout the narrative this female character conforms to a Catholic model of idealized female sainthood when she is described as surpassingly beautiful and is seen going through

a series of physical and emotional trials in which she must fight to defend her honour and faith. She also conforms to a more generic model of sainthood applicable to both Catholics and Protestants when she is seen accepting the fate God ordains for her and praying to her Lord, a term that is used interchangeably throughout *The Seven Champions of Christendom* to refer to both Christ and St George. The following paper explores the pivotal shift in Johnson's portrayal of Sabra as a saint that pushes past these aforementioned idealized Catholic and generic models of sainthood when she emerges at the end of the narrative as a figure who can be categorized as belonging to a more human and accessible Protestant model of sainthood. In exploring how Sabra fulfills criteria of both these Catholic and Protestant models of sainthood, I will show how Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* draws from a culturally pertinent hagiographic tradition that has been altered by Protestant writers for their use throughout the sixteenth-century.

1. Protestant Use of Hagiography

In order to show how *The Seven Champions of Christendom* draws from a hagiographic tradition, it is first necessary to briefly trace the development of hagiography, starting from the mid-sixteenth-century in England, and to show how the genre was adapted by Protestants to fit their specific needs. John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments,* popularly known as the *Book of Martyrs,* was first published in 1563 and offered a powerful narrative of the sufferings of Protestants who sought to separate from the Catholic Church. A text that functioned as a Protestant history and martyrology, it is a testament to the fact that Protestants did not completely condemn the genre of medieval hagiography, but rather, adapted it to serve what Huston Diehl refers to as "reformist ends" (44). Foxe presented England with a "polemical [narrative] of Protestant martyrdom" (Diehl 5) that, according to Helen White, came to be "second only to the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*" (qtd. in Diehl 22) in terms of its influence on the collective consciousness of England in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* bears similarity to Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* because it was "incorporated into the popular culture of early modern England, appealed to [a] broad spectrum of [people,] and helped to forge a sense of national identity" (Diehl 23) as it was met with praise by an audience who sought to unify Protestant England by differentiating themselves from their Catholic counterparts. In mid-sixteenth-century England, Foxe provided evidence for such writers as Johnson that hagiography could be used to play a formative role in shaping a Protestant national identity through recording history and religious belief, two subjects that, although inextricably linked before this period, now begin to disentangle from one another.

2. Protestant Hagiography as Source of History

Later in the sixteenth-century, Protestants such as the antiquarian Sir Robert Cotton adopted hagiography not as a record of religious belief, but as a source of history. According to Jennifer Summit, for Cotton "the Reformation project of desanctifying hagiography" (172) involved incorporating saints' lives into historical documents (172) and "recuperating the 'many illustrious saints produced by the British Isles' [which] served a national 'memory' project" (156). Thus, from the early sixteenth- to the seventeenth-century, saints' lives were "not only 'violently taken from' Catholics by the Reformation but were co-opted by Protestants" (Summit 157) like Foxe who altered them for use in his "religious history of England" (White 173). As Summit argues, Cotton and William Camden transformed the genre of medieval hagiography into "documentary evidence for British history" (164) by using "hagiographical documents as witness not to religious but to historical truth" (164). All this suggests that while Protestants used hagiography as a tool with which to construct a history and build a sense of English national identity, not all Protestants used hagiography to record religious traditions.

Bearing this in mind, Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* then appears to draw from the hagiographical genre and its development in sixteenth-century England when it presents itself as a history that inadvertently aids in building a sense of nationalism. Indeed, just as Foxe presents his *Book of Martyrs* as "so great on history of so famous doinges" (White 139), Johnson presents his *The Seven Champions of Christendom* as "THE MOST / famous History" of his seven Christian champions. As Naomi Liebler suggests, "the fact that Johnson's focus in this work is England's patron saint and national icon […] suggests that something like a sense of 'nationalism' is at the heart of the text's appeal" (119). This becomes evident in *The Seven Champions of Christendom* in places where Sabra consistently refers to her love by the name of his country of origin as she calls him "sweete *George of England*" (16) and her "deare *S.George* of *England*" (16). What appears to be a preoccupation with building as sense of nationalism for England similarly becomes evident when Johnson alters St George's legend by writing that he is born in Coventry instead of Cappadocia, as he traditionally appears in Jacobus de Voragine's hugely influential compendium of saints' lives, the *Legenda Aurea*. Because of the liminal space saints occupy as they "[inhabit] a shifting border between religious belief and historical knowledge" (Summit 155), it is hardly unexpected to see nationhood take precedence over religion in *The Seven Champions of Christendom*. This valorization of nationhood over religion is perhaps most notable in the title of *The Seven Champions of Christendom* where Johnson declares that his work will be about seven Christian champions to whom he refers to by country. He then declares that his narrative will "[show] their Honorable battailes / by Sea and Land: their Tilts, Iousts, and Tur- / naments for Ladies: their Combats with / *Giants*, *Monsters*, *and Dragons: their* / aduentures in forraine

Nations: their / *Inchauntments in the holie Land: their* / Knighthoods, Prowesse, and Chiualrie, / in Europe, Affrica, and Asia." However, it is not until the very end of this title, seventeen lines from its beginning, that Johnson declares that his story will also be about "their victories against the ene- / mies of Christ." By presenting itself as a history and by emphasizing nationalism over religion, Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* aligns itself with the works of other Protestants who similarly incorporated the hagiographic genre into their texts.

3. Hagiography and Romance in *The Seven Champions of Christendom*

Just as hagiography was adapted by Protestants such as Foxe for religious purposes and Cotton for historical purposes, the genre was also adopted by writers such as Johnson for the purpose of writing romance. Sheila Delany elucidates the close ties between the genres of romance and hagiography when she argues that hagiography is a "distinctively otherworldy enterprise; strip it of its spiritual doctrine and you would do better to read romance" (189). Pairing romance with aspects of hagiography became natural in the sixteenth-century because both genres are "a peculiar blend of fiction and history, or at least virtual history" (Delany 189). In her book *Tudor Books of Saints and Martyrs,* White outlines what she calls a "hagiographical revival" (277) and "romantic revival of the saint's legend" (288) in England during the second half of the sixteenth-century and suggests that the popular trend of appropriating religious discourse into secular texts illuminates a "passion of the time for romance" (281). For a popular writer such as Johnson who can most certainly be considered what White terms a "[purveyor] of pious literature for the masses" (281), the tail-end of the sixteenth-century was the perfect time to write what she calls "the most enduring work of the romantic revival of the saint's legend" (285).

Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* seamlessly blends religious discourse and hagiography with romance. Hagiography in the late sixteenth-century was a story composed of "romantic adventure" (White 284), and what White calls "the romanticizing of the saint's legend" (284) can be seen in *The Seven Champions of Christendom* where St George and the saint-like Sabra fall in love and the narrative focuses extensively on their relationship. In Johnson's text, their romantic adventure begins when "the beautious *Sabra*" becomes "rauished" (15) and "loue-sick" (16) by the appearance of the handsome knight St George. In sensual language Sabra is described as feeding "vpon the banquet of his loue" (15), and in pious terms their courtship is described as "long and extreame" (16). Just as in many hagiographical texts, religious conversion and marital oath are conflated as St George proposes that he will only marry Sabra if she "forsake thy *Mahomet* and bee christned in our Christian faith" (17), to which Sabra readily replies "with al my soule [will] I forsake my country Gods, & for thy

loue become a Christian" (17). Here at this point in the narrative, the religious valence of Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* is couched in romantic terms, and although it is distorted by the less-pious popular genre's influence, it remains visible.

4. Sabra as Catholic Saint

Although *The Seven Champions of Christendom* appears to be a Protestant romance, Sabra possesses beautiful physical characteristics and virtuous moral characteristics that align her with prototypical female Catholic saints. She adheres to traditional images of such saints when she is first introduced in the text as "a most fair and beautifull Damsell, attired in pure *Arabian* silke going to sacrifice" (13) and also when she is described as being "the fairest maide that euer mortall eye beheld, in whom both Arte and nature seemed to excell in curious workemanship" (21). It is worthy to note that she is also curiously described as having "white" (73) skin, an "Iuorie necke" (21), cheeks like "roses dipt in milke" (101), and hair that is "yellow burnisht brightnes" (73) and "faire golden" (120) despite being Egyptian and having darker skin. These physical characteristics that Johnson allots to Sabra are commonly emphasized in the female virgin martyr narratives from the medieval period that similarly focus on the saint's exceptional beauty in addition to her steadfastness of faith.

When Sabra is seen suffering and enduring her trials, and is even sentenced to be burned to death because of her desire to keep her chastity, her story echoes a traditional saint's life as she comes close to being martyred. In addition to being described in such a way as to suggest that she physically resembles a traditional female saint, she is seen going through a series of trials that challenge her ability to keep resolute in her faith for God. At times in the narrative St George seems to fulfill the role of a Christ-like figure in the text and Sabra seems to fulfill the role of a faithful follower or saint when St George is described several times as a "Lamb" (17), "the Innocent Lambe" (18), and a "guiltles Lamb" (98) and when Sabra pledges to, "like a [Pilgrime,] followe thee throughout the wide world" (16). In a curious instance after the episode in which Sabra's virginity protects her from being attacked by lions, St George says "I haue by this sufficiently proued thy true virginitie" (76). His language suggests that he has actively tested her in order to "prove" that she has been faithful to her sworn oath to keep truly chaste for his sake. Such a test is unnecessary, however, because Sabra defends her chastity and faith in adverse circumstances and maintains her "true chastetie and long continued constancy for hys sake" (73). She even goes so far as to deform herself in order to avoid having her true virginity taken from her, after which she cries "witnesse heauen of my loyalty vnto my Lorde, and in what extreamity I haue maintainted my chastety […] for his sake I haue indured a world of woe" (121).

Throughout *The Seven Champions of Christendom,* Sabra is seen suffering for St George's sake, and she fights to keep chaste like a career-virgin or saint would keep chaste for Christ.

Like a prototypical saint, Sabra is also seen abandoning wealth and shunning bribery in order to maintain her religious devotion. She declares to St George that she "had rather be thy English Lady, than the greatest Empresse in the world" (75) and the text's narrator states that she "for thy loue will forsake hir Parents, Countrie and Inheritance, which is the Crowne of *Egipt*" (16). This willingness to abandon wealth and refuse flattery in the name of her religion is also seen later when the Earl of Coventry tries to persuade her to warm to him and bribes her with riches, "vaine promises and flattering inticements" to which she gives a "sharpe answere" by refusing to give him "that precious Gem, the which I will not loose for *Europes* treasurie" (104). Sabra fights valiantly to keep her faith which is conflated with her virginity when she says "I [will not] falsefie my faith, or prooue disloyall to my beloued *George*" (103). Like for so many young, beautiful, and female aristocratic saints in medieval hagiography, wealth means little for Sabra in comparison to keeping her faith.

Sabra better fulfills the role of a saint in *The Seven Champions of Christendom* in comparison to her husband because, in addition to suffering more than him, she prays more than he does when she prays to her Lord and for her husband. For example, she asks for help from the "immortall powers of heauen" (108) when debating whether or not to kill the Earl of Coventry, and after having given birth to three sons she "[casts] her eyes with a chearefull looke vp to the Maiestie of heauen" (127) in thanks. Later on in the narrative, too, in another episode after which St George again leaves Sabra, she falls victim to an attack by a giant and then makes "her supplication to the Gods, that they would in mercie defend her chastetie" (121). She is seen shortly before this praying for her husband and is described as acting "like a kinde, modest, and vertuous wife [during] all the time of her husbands absence, continually [praying] to the immortal powers of heuen, for his fortunate successe and happy returne" (119). The religious valence in *The Seven Champions of Christendom* shines through when Sabra is seen praying continuously throughout the course of the narrative.

In addition to repeated prayer, Sabra's acceptance of God's will is in line with her role as a saint. Although St George is similarly seen praying to God in *The Seven Champions of Christendom,* most notably after he has defeated a dragon in battle, he also whines and complains of his bad luck, relies on fortune rather than providence, and curses the heavens. He acts far from saintly when upon being imprisoned he cries "O cruell destenies! Why is this grieuous punishment alloted to my penaunce?" (20) and then goes on to curse "his birth day, and houre of his creation" (20). In stark contrast to St George's unsaintly behaviour here is Sabra's pious behaviour in an episode in which after St George leaves Sabra and two lions appear, she "wholy [commits] her soule into the hands of God" (76). Here, as in

other instances, Sabra fulfils the role of a pious saint by accepting the fate God has ordained for her.

One of the most climactic moments in Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* is when Sabra submits her will to God as she comes close to being martyred for killing the Earl of Coventry, an act that, although hideous, was necessary in order to protect her virginity. In language that aligns her with a saint, Sabra is described by the Earl as "a heauenly Angell" and "no worldly creature, but a diuine substance" (100), and although the text's narrator gives readers hope that she will be rescued with the mentioning that she needs "a Champion to defend her cause" (110), she willingly accepts her fate and prepares to die. Sabra is "to be burned like a most wicked offender" (110), the style of death so common to Protestant martyrs in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and as in Foxe's text that features so many individuals tied to the stake who speak their eloquent, dying words, Sabra also gives a speech. Because Sabra does not know that anyone will defend her,

> shee prepared her dilicate bodie to receaue her latest breath of life: the time beeing come shee was brought to the place of execution: whether she went as willinglie, and with as much ioy, as euer shee went before time vnto her marriage, for she had made her humble submission to the world, and vnfainedly committed her soule to God. (111–112)

The religious language here is rich as Sabra is described as courageously accepting a violent death that will bring her closer to God. The narrator then describes in graphic terms how "the deaths-man stripped off her Garment, which was of blacke sarcenet, & in her snow-white smocke, bound her with an Iron chaine vnto the stake, then placed they round about her tender body, both Pitch, Turpentine and Gunpowder, with other merciles things, thereby to make her death the more easier, and her paine the shorter" (112). The horror of this scene is emphasized by the depiction of Sabra as vulnerable, white, and saint-like, and the tension peaks when, just as the fire is about to be lit, Sabra, previously silent, begins "a swanlike dying tale" (112). The expression of verbal eloquence moments before death is characteristic in hagiography and as White suggests in her study of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, "it is in the final scene at the stake that the martyrs are [often] at their best" (159). Sabra's speech would not fail to move readers familiar with martyr narratives, and for this reason I quote in full. Addressing God and accepting her fate, she cries

> Be witnes heauen, and all you bright celestiall Angells: bee witnes sun and moone and true beholders of my fact: be witnes thou cleare firmament and all the world be witnes of my innocence: the blood I shed was for the sauegard of my honor and vnspotted Chastety: Great God of heauen, if the praiers of my vnstained heart may assaile thy mighty Maiestie, or my true innocence preuaile with thy immortall power.

> Commaund that eyther my Lorde may come to be my Champion, or sad beholder of my death: But if my hands were stained with blood about some wicked enterprise: then heauen shew present vengeance vppon me by fire, or els let the earth open & deuoure my bodie vp aliue. (112)

The drama of this scene is emphasized by Sabra's physical vulnerability and the horror of her impending death, and such finds its antecedence in martyr narratives that highlight the saint's powerless against death at the hands of men while also highlighting the saint's triumph over death through verbal eloquence and a preparedness to die. Sabra's unfaltering faith in God is rewarded when, just before she is to be burned at the stake, she is rescued by the powerful and agile St George. In language that again echoes with religious connotations, Sabra is then described as realizing "that it was her Lord and husband which had redeemed her from death" (114). These numerous characteristics that Sabra possesses – her physical beauty, suffering for God, disapproval of false flattery, devotion to prayer, acceptance of God's will, and verbal eloquence – are unmistakably saint-like and would have been recognizable by both sixteenth-century Catholic and Protestant readers alike.

5. Moving Beyond: Sabra as Protestant Saint

All this is not to say that Johnson's text is a mere replication of traditional medieval forms of hagiography; indeed, although Sabra fulfills the role of a saint, and oftentimes a specifically traditional Catholic saint, she also breaks away from traditional models when her humanness within the text aligns her with a newer model of Protestant sainthood. Despite the professed lavishness of Johnson's text in instances such as when the richness of Sabra's coronation is said to "[require] a golden pen to write it" (134), characters in *The Seven Champions of Christendom* are human, fallible, and prone to danger, rather than incorruptible and ideal romantic heroes and saints. Uncharacteristically for a romance and work of traditional hagiography, both Sabra and St George are prone to exhaustion as well as human needs and desires, and are even said to be subject to "the necessity and want of victualles" (61). In contrast to older hagiographical texts in which saints and martyrs are described as being able to endure extreme pain and discomfort as they are persecuted for their religious beliefs, Sabra is described after giving birth to three sons as being so hungry that "her life were in danger" (128). Johnson writes about St George's quest to find Sabra food using language that suggests he is like a knight getting ready for heroic battle when he says "[t]his extreame desire of *Sabra* caused S. *George* to buckle on his Armour, & to vnsheath his trustie sword" (128). Thus, when St George puts on his armour and embarks on an adventure, sword in hand, to find food for his wife, he becomes less of a romantic hero than an everyday hero who fulfills the same domestic duties that an ordinary citizen may perform for their spouse. Further on

in the narrative the humanness of both St George and Sabra is illuminated again when they are compared to a child lost in a city as they become lost "amongst the vnknown passages" (124) and are "constrained to wander in the Wildernes like solitarie Pilgrims, spending the daie with wearie steps." Citing St George's wailing in despair, self-pity, and lack of heroism as defining characteristics of his lack of saintliness, Liebler states that "Johnson's St. George is in many respects no saint […]. He [is] quite ordinary" (123), and this "ordinary" quality is also seen with Sabra when she is described by Johnson as being continuously subject to her own human needs. As I will now show, the fact that saint-like figures in Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* retain their human fallible qualities aligns this text with the use of hagiography for Protestant writers.

6. Protestant Hagiography and Romance in *The Seven Champions of Christendom*

The Seven Champions of Christendom is not just an example of hagiography adapted for use in romance, but an example of hagiography adapted for use by Protestants who sought to make sainthood appear more accessible to a larger audience. As John King states, "instead of the older belief that saints are exceptional individuals who possess miraculous power to intercede on behalf of sinners […] Protestants believed that sainthood is accessible to any true believer," and these people included even "lowly peasants and artisans" (xxvii). While Foxe in his *Book of Martyrs* constructs "ordinary citizens as Protestant heroes [and] […] His book thus helps to shape a national and religious identity among a diverse people by imagining the Reformation as a dramatic struggle for the soul of England" (Diehl 25), Johnson in his *The Seven Champions of Christendom* creates St George as "Everyman's Patron Saint" (Liebler 129) and writes for "the plain citizen" (Liebler 129) as "the ideals that George embodies are those to which any ordinary citizen might aspire" (Liebler 124). The similarities between the writers Foxe and Johnson extend to their social rank as Foxe is said to be "of middle-class origin" (White 132), while "Johnson clearly perceived himself as the voice of the middling classes (apprentices, freemen, merchants, ordinary citizens)" (Liebler 120). Both the accessibility of Foxe's and Johnson's texts and the humanness of the saint-like figures within them is evident in the very language that these two writers employ. Foxe's writing style involves "idiomatic speech and simple, direct language" (Diehl 25) that has "another element of popular appeal [as his] stories abound in homely detail of everyday life" (White 194), much like Johnson's text is "unelaborate, with straightforward syntax and plain and non-Latinate diction" (Fellows xx), and is described as possessing a "homeliness" (White 286) as it depicts "homely images in a plain style" (Fellows xxi). The desire for Protestant writers to reach broad audiences involved incorporating aspects

of medieval hagiographyin such a way as to make sainthood appear accessible through truly popular works of literature that featured figures who retained their human qualities and were written in clear prose.

In addition to making their work accessible to a large audience, for Protestants who wrote texts that drew from a hagiographic tradition like Johnson, such works also had to *appeal* to an audience made up of a variety of social classes if they were to become successful. While in both Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* "there are kings [and] great ones aplenty," they are also seen at a "disadvantage" as "the infirmities of the great are in the last analysis overcome by the virtues of the humble" (White 191). We see this valorization of the lower classes and vilification of the upper-class in the narrative when "English lawlesness [is] reserved to an aristocratic" (Liebler 127) as the Earl of Coventry acts as an attacker rather than a gentleman to the humble Sabra who refuses to accept his bribery and return his affection. In this new Protestant model of sainthood that is pitched to the middle-class of England, what initially appears to be a Catholic and traditional abandonment of wealth by a saint in *The Seven Champions of Christendom* where Sabra shuns the Earl of Coventry thus becomes a testament to the fact that class does not determine worth. Such sentiments would undoubtedly have had wide-ranging appeal for Johnson's sixteenth-century audience.

7. *The Seven Champions of Christendom* and the Idea of the Middlebrow

Despite the similar preoccupations that both writers had with making their texts appeal to a large and diverse audience, a caveat is necessary, for it would be an unfair overgeneralization to say that the audience Foxe wrote for was the same audience that Johnson wrote for. While Foxe's book had an extraordinary impact "on England's uneducated and poor" (Diehl 23), literary critics have now discarded the belief that Johnson was "a writer for the illiterate" (Ernest Baker qtd. in Liebler 129) and now believe that his work was "directed to a bourgeois readership of working Englishmen" and is "both productive and indicative of the tastes of a middlebrow readership" (Liebler 115). More generally, however, that which ties Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* to Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* is the heterogeneity of both writers' readership.

Steve Mentz believes that a middlebrow writer is one who is "accessible to heterogeneous audiences" (22) and that writers of Elizabethan prose romance sought to appeal to a "broad readership" (19). The ability to do so allowed such a writer as Johnson to access a larger audience, but it was also a source of scorn for those in English society who wished to keep the "elite" status of literature. As Lori Newcomb states, "the category of popular literature was generated by the tension between a broad mixed readership and elite ambivalence about that heterogeneity"

(10). Foxe and Johnson undoubtedly would have shunned such apparent snobbery as the former desired to have his work read "by the great mass of his countrymen" (White 190) and "admitted the humblest subject who could read, or be read to, to the disputes of convocations and the debates of kings and lords" (White 190), while the latter writer's text was equally accessible for those "on the margins of elite culture" (Mentz 19). By humanizing their saints and popularizing the hagiographic genre, both Foxe – the effective popularizer (King xxvii) with a "remarkable [power] of popular appeal" (White 190) – and Johnson – the immensely popular romance writer for his middlebrow audience – opened their texts up, and their efforts were rewarded as both of their texts endured a wide and diverse readership in their own lifetimes.

Upon first glance, it is not unfair to say that Richard Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* is simply "a great romantic collection of magic tales and chivalric adventures" with "a very dim aura of endeavour for the Christian cause" (White 286). Ultimately, however, such a reading obscures the fact that the text clearly draws from a hagiographic tradition because it fails to consider the influence of the immensely popular genre of medieval hagiography and the role that hagiographical tropes play within the text. As a genre, hagiography underwent a profound change in sixteenth-century England as it was altered to serve the purposes of Protestants as religious histories, secular histories, and romances. Through a more nuanced exploration of Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, it becomes apparent that Sabra fulfills a set of criteria that would categorize her as both a Catholic saint and a figure who belongs to a more human and accessible Protestant model of sainthood. Fellows acknowledges the neglect that Johnson's popular work has been met with in literary criticism before the twentieth-century despite its phenomenal success in its own time, and suggests that exploring *The Seven Champions of Christendom* through "an informed understanding of its place in literary history" (xviii) may help to return it from obscurity. By reading Sabra as a saint, one can trace not only where *The Seven Champions of Christendom* belongs in the history of English literature, but also in the history of hagiography as it considers Protestant hagiography and its cultural pertinence at the time Johnson wrote.

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The 'inadequacy of her resistance': Reading Eighteenth-Century Rape Trials in Peter Teuthold's *The Necromancer*

Abstract

Once thought to be the fictitious creations of Jane Austen, the seven Gothic novels that comprise the 'Northanger 'Horrid' Novels' have been critically neglected since their rediscovery in the early twentieth century. This paper engages with ideas of absence and exclusion within the 'horrid' novel *The Necromancer* by Peter Teuthold, in order to consider the historical (mis)construction of women by male voices in eighteenth-century rape trials. Particular emphasis is placed on an embedded narrative within the text that subversely explores the ways in which the female voice is subsequently read and mis(constructed), so that the narrative is 'structured' and 'arranged' to construct a version of a woman at odds with femininity, one that ultimately deviates from 'the natural order.'

"Out of resentment against the female sex" – so declares the 'ghost' in Peter Teuthold's *The Necromancer*, when the landlord of the novel's haunted house demands to know the reason behind the apparition's persistent haunting (Teuthold 150). Of course, the ghost in question is not real, but rather an illusion created by the novel's eponymous character, Volkert. Part of the critically neglected collective known as the Northanger 'Horrid' Novels, *The Necromancer* frequently engages with the Gothic in order to recover narratives of those minority voices excluded by contemporary law, and thus from the narrative of male-authored history. In particular, this paper will explore how an embedded narrative within *The Necromancer* engages with the misrepresentation of testimony in eighteenth-century cases of rape, so that the source of 'terror' is located not in the traditional engagement of Gothic motifs, but rather, in the realities of eighteenth-century legal discourse. And while *The Necromancer* is largely absent of female characters, the brief instances where they do materialize suggests that further scholarship is needed, as such depictions ultimately complicate existing delineations of Male and Female Gothic.

1. Embedded Narratives

One anonymous contemporary reviewer wrote that "raising ghosts" is an "operation of frequent recurrence" in *The Necromancer*, and within the embedded narrative under analysis here, it is one that serves to signal something repressed (*The Monthly Review* 465). Throughout much of the novel, Volkert remains an elusive figure: characters in the novel continually speak about him but never to him, and are driven by their desire to locate his whereabouts and seek retribution for his crimes. Towards the conclusion of the novel, Volkert, caught, sentenced and soon to be executed for the crime of raising the dead, reveals his story in an embedded narrative to one such pursuer, the Lieutenant. Part of Volkert's ensuing narrative concerns Helen, a girl with whom Volkert becomes acquainted when he takes lodging in her father's reputedly haunted house. The haunting has persisted for six months upon Volkert's arrival, creating a "general fear" among the townspeople so that most of the rooms remain unoccupied (Teuthold 144). However, Helen eventually confesses to Volkert that the true (and indeed, very corporeal) identity of the ghost is a man named Henry, another lodger in the house and the man her father refuses to let her marry. It is also the "unhappy" Henry who, under the guise of an apparition, began visiting Helen's bedroom at night, "hurried by despaire into a resolution" that Helen claims has "destroyed" the "peace" of her mind (146). Helen professes that her:

> heart was thrilled with terror at first, and several nights elapsed in unspeakable horror, before I knew that my Henry was the spectre that visited me every night, and made my blood run chill with awful dread. At length he undeceived me, but, alas! it was then too late; my virgin honor was gone for ever. (147)

Helen's testimony suggests the novel's engagement with contemporary notions that posit rape as humorous, as evidenced by the absurdity of her declaration that she initially believed a ghost, rather than a person, had violated her.

That notions of rape as comical persisted throughout the eighteenth century can be located in the existence of *The Humours of the Old Bailey* (1772), a publication which featured a selection of trials that were considered "humorous" by the contemporary public. Out of the twenty-seven trials that were included within this volume, two dealt with felonies, two with bigamy, seven with rape and sixteen with 'privately stealing' (or theft from the person of another). The inset title reads:

> Being a collection of all the many and diverting TRIALS for above these thirty years; particularly for Rapes and private Stealing: such as have made even the Judges on the Bench forge their wonteel [sic] Gravity; and caused scenes of Mirth very unusual in Courts of Justice. (*Humours of the Old Bailey*)

No alterations were made between the text that initially appeared in the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* and the ensuing volume, with the selected trials simply representing those that inspired the most "mirth" in the courtroom. The interpretation of rape as humorous was grounded in the eighteenth-century belief that the act itself was "impossible," as, according to one contemporary medical source, a woman "always possesses sufficient power, by drawing back her limbs, and by the force of her hands, to prevent the insertion of the penis" (Farr 42). This issue was further complicated if the woman became pregnant as a result of the rape. The same medical text observed that if a pregnancy did occur after rape, it "may be necessary to enquire how far her lust was excited or if she experienced any enjoyment […] for without an excitation of lust, or the enjoyment of pleasure in the venereal act, no conception can probably take place" (42–43). This conjecture echoed contemporary notions that held female orgasm as necessary for conception, thus rendering rape impossible if a child were to result from the act. Thus, Jennie Mills argues that the public was taught – the ideology of which was reinforced by non-guilty verdicts of rape trials – that "the stories of rape and violence and forced sexual intercourse were not actually rape, but considered to be tales fabricated to convict an innocent man of consensual intercourse" (151).

2. Rape Trials and Peter Teuthold's *The Necromancer*

An initial reading of Teuthold's embedded narrative presents a farcical portrayal of Helen, one that not only coincides with notions of rape as impossible, but furthermore, following a sexual encounter between Volkert and Helen, raises "the spectre of woman as the more lustful sex, tempting man to his fate" (Hufton 264). Volkert is instantly drawn to Helen, noting that she was "adorned with charms which conquered every heart almost irresistibly" (Teuthold 144). Such "charms," Volkert explains, include a pale complexion, a sick and weakly constitution, and the ability to "infuse" his heart with "innocent virtuous love" (144). However, Volkert also notes that Helen "could not be called a beauty," for although "admirable," she was "bewitching" in nature, leading Volkert to construe her appearance as a "deformity," recasting her attractiveness as dangerous and untrustworthy (144). Despite Volkert's attempts to engage Helen in conversation, he notes that she "seemed to take the least notice of the attention" he paid her (145). In response to this silence, Volkert speaks to her in monologues," to which her replies are always in "a pantomime, composed of a silent shaking or nodding of the head, accompanied every now and then by a gentle sigh" (145).

Helen's silence leads Volkert to admit that he has grown "tired of conversing with her," and that he is willing to give up "such a lovely object" (145). This places Volkert in an interesting dichotomy, as the very reason he is attracted to Helen – that is, her pale, sickly countenance, one which restricts her to an "object" that

cannot reply – is also the reason he becomes uninterested. Whether such ruminations on the part of Volkert reflect an exploration of the subjectivity required by women who strove to embody the feminine ideal or instead the confirmation of woman's duplicitous nature, is complicated in Volkert's ensuing depiction of Helen – including a recitation of the sexual tryst that later occurs between them. Volkert thus recasts the innocent young Helen to whom the reader is first introduced as a sexually-licentious femme fatale. Indeed, throughout Volkert's testimony, there is a continued implication that Helen has tricked him into helping her, despite the fact that Volkert has himself built his life on trickery, a decision that has ultimately led to his impending execution. In addition, Volkert repeatedly observes that Helen is young, while he himself is already thirty-nine years of age, and yet his narrative persists in constructing a portrait of Helen as a seductive woman who has ensnared him. The shift in Volkert's depiction of Helen – one that ultimately problematizes his status as a reliable narrator – raises questions of narrative, truth and agency, thus exemplifying the difficulty faced by female victims in the prosecution of eighteenth-century rape trials.

Further examination into contemporary trials suggests that rape was a notoriously difficult crime to prosecute in the eighteenth century, with the uncertainty surrounding its legal definition just one of the many factors contributing to the complexity of achieving a successful conviction. While William Hawkins wrote *In a Treatise of the Pleas of the Crown* (1716) that the legal definition of rape was the "unlawful and carnal knowledge of a woman, by force and against her will," there was a question of whether "carnal knowledge" required both penetration and emission or just the former (122). Gregory Durston suggests that at the Old Bailey confirmation of penetration was often sufficient, although "evidence of ejaculation was highly desirable" for conviction (170). Regardless, the obtainment of a guilty verdict depended almost entirely upon the representation of the female victim inside the courtroom, with trials of rape ultimately placing the accuser, rather than the accused, under interrogation and creating an atmosphere that Simon Dickie describes as "a plaintiff pleading her fruitless case before a sneering crowd and an incredulous male jury" (193). This attitude is illustrated in Volkert's tale as the shift in his depiction of Helen can be located within the scene where she first describes the assault she has endured. Volkert's embedded narrative is one that requires a disruption in the linear time of the novel, as the events have occurred years prior. The process of looking back into the past allows Volkert to rewrite his narrative, and thus Helen's, so that her transformation runs parallel to the articulation of her testimony.

In order to make a successful case, women were expected to submit to the criteria outlined by William Blackstone in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765). In addition to being considered of "good fame," Blackstone writes that "if she presently discovered the offense, and made search for the offender; if the party accused fled for it; these and the like are concurring circumstances, which give greater probability to her evidence" (214). If, on the other hand,

> she be of evil fame, and stands unsupported by others; if she concealed the injury for any considerable time after she had opportunity to complain; if the place, where the act was alleged to be committed, was where it was possible she might have been heard, and she made no outcry; these and the like circumstances carry a strong, but not conclusive, presumption that her testimony is false or feigned. (Blackstone 214)

Durston writes that these factors were applied to rape trials "in an almost mechanistic fashion," so that the absence of a recent complaint or an inadequate show of resistance was almost certain to end in acquittal (24). Such confirmation demanded that the victim provide intimate details of the assault in order to dissuade the aforementioned contemporary notion that held rape to be "impossible."

Contributing to the jury's underlying mistrust of accusations of rape was Blackstone's echo of seventeenth-century jurist Matthew Hale's comments that although "rape is a most detestable crime," it "must be remembered, that it is an accusation easy to be made, hard to be proved" (215). Both Anthony Simpson and Laura Edelstein have written extensively on the topic of rape and malicious prosecution. While Simpson has concluded that charges of rape brought by female victims were part of a system in which women hoped to receive compensation, Edelstein argues that this thesis is "fundamentally mistaken" and that charges of malicious prosecution were "part of a defendant's deliberate and conscious strategy to raise questions about the motives behind the rape prosecution and shift the focus of the trial away from the defendant to the prosecution's case" (Simpson 45–46; Edelstein 353). Despite the judge's assurance that the alleged victim's testimony was both necessary and permitted within the confines of the courtroom, the stigma associated with women who engaged in conversations about sex persisted, as "the very act of repeating incontinent language in court placed women in an ambiguous position" as it "attested to the sexual irregularity of the alleged victim" (Walker and Kermode 13; Mills 145). This troubling paradox is best exemplified when the accuser, Mary Batten, testified that the prisoner "lay" with her:

> COURT. Lay with you! What, did he lay down by your side?
> BATTEN. No, he lay upon me.
> COURT. And did he do anything to you?
> BATTEN. Lord bless me! What must I say?
> COURT. You must tell the court what he did. – There's a necessity of speaking plain in such cases. –The life of a man is at stake […] You ought therefore to express yourself in such terms as may signify what you intend, and nothing else: and, though decency might not admit of it on other occasions, it is requisite on this, and cannot be dispensed with. (*Humours of Old Bailey* 27)

Batten's hesitancy to voice the details of her alleged rape illustrates the reluctance of victims to engage in sexual discourse, as the very accusation of rape worked to ensure that the woman's "reputation was destroyed […] and with it her good character and the validity of her testimony" (Mills 156). For this reason, J. M.

Beattie asserts that there was a "discouragement to prosecution," as the possibility of trial meant that women were faced with the "embarrassment and pain" of discussing the attack in a public setting (124). This is reflected in the paucity of rape trials that occurred during the course of the 1790s at the Old Bailey. Of those nineteen trials, seven received guilty verdicts and of these, six involved children. The focus here is on rape, rather than assault, for while women who fought back were able to recover their status in society, there was no such route available to women who had been raped as the "inadequacy of her resistance" translated to a ruined status (Mills 143). Additionally, rape trials under analysis here focus on women who are above the age of legal consent, which was twelve years of age during the eighteenth century, as different issues arise with the representation of children in the courtroom. For, of the seven cases that received non-guilty verdicts, four involved females under the legal consent, two involved children barely older than the age of consent, and one included no information regarding the age of the victim. Ultimately, this suggests that different standards existed for children, as the court was quick to convict the accused in cases that involved those under the legal age of consent. Further differentiation can be located in the court's printed materials, as reporters tended to censure information pertaining to children, while cases featuring women over the age of consent were less restrictive in the details they allowed to be printed. Information on the twelve cases that received non-guilty verdicts is problematic, as the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* often failed to produce extensive details and contemporary newspapers were irregular in their trial reporting. For while the majority of rape trials were relegated to what John Langbein has termed 'squib' reports, in which only the barest of facts, including the name of the accused, defendant and the ensuing verdict, are included, others, most notably those in the beginning of the eighteenth century, were presented in surprising detail, portraying stutters, pauses and other vocal tics (43).

The shift between these two contrasting styles occurred over the course of the eighteenth-century, with such extensive detailing disappearing by the latter half. While the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* provide information about all trials, their "level of detail varies," as, "after c.1790, the Court itself often responded to increasingly delicate public sensibilities by expressly forbidding the publication of all but the most basic facts about rape hearings" (Durston 167). Anna Clark locates this censure as occurring after 1796, when the "Old Bailey Court began to suppress the publication of transcripts of sexual crimes," as "presumably, judges wished to protect the public from exposure to such 'offensive' testimony" (17). Printed testimony was also subject to "much deletion and compression," as Thomas Gurney, the official Old Bailey shorthand writer from 1748–1769 testified:

> it is my method, if a question brings out an imperfect answer, and is obliged to be asked over again, and the answer comes more strong, I take that down as the proper

> evidence, and neglect the other […]. It is not to be expected I should write every unintelligible word that is said by the evidence. (Howell 488)

Indeed, Langbein argues that "*most* of what was said at an Old Bailey sessions must have been omitted," based upon the length of trials and the corresponding size of the pamphlet (271). The brevity of squib reports, coupled with a non-guilty verdict, not only trivialized the validity of such accusations, but also suggested that there was little, if any, evidence presented within the courtroom. Langbein has written extensively on the problematic nature of the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers*, including their lack of details. He concludes: "The generalization that emerges is this: If the OBSP report says something happened, it did; if the OBSP report does not say something, it still may have" (Langbein 25). However, the existence of judges' notes – or, the judges' personal written analysis of the trial that was then circulated exclusively amongst their peers – challenges the suggestion of limited evidence. Langbein argues that judges' notes, by which he means "the minutes written down in court by the presiding judge as he conducted the oral public trial," offer "narrative trial reports" that can be cross-checked with the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* to provide a more complete narrative (5). Furthermore, Francis Oldham states that both Lloyd Kenyon and Francis Buller, judges who presided over rape trials at the Old Bailey during the 1790s, were known for copious amounts of written commentary, that Kenyon himself deemed "fuller or better than what was in print" (Oldham 41). By withholding these details from the public, the judicial system ultimately contributed to the misconstruction of rape victims, for while various other official records exist that detail the charges and outcomes of those who stood before the Old Bailey Court, these documents, including "indictments, trial rosters, recognizes, depositions and so forth," do not include a narrative of the trial (Langbein 5).

3. Monstrous (Mis)constructions

Therefore, while narratives of rape do exist within contemporary publications, their problematic nature lies not in the existence or otherwise of information, but in its composition and dissemination, as narratives of female rape victims were first shaped and then later conveyed by male voices. These inconsistencies are exemplified in the three reports that exist on Ann Cadwell, as the fractured pieces of her narrative can only be read through male voices that both ventriloquize and condemn her. Appearing in court on 27 October 1790, Thomas Bolton was indicted at the Old Bailey Court for a rape on Ann Cadwell, a charge for which he was found not guilty. Following this verdict, the *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* printed the following details:

> Thomas Bolton was indicted for rape on Ann Cadwell.
> Not Guilty.
> Tried by the second Middlesex Jury before Mr. Baron Hotham.
> (*Old Bailey Proceedings*)

As the lone court record produced on the trial of Thomas Bolton, this document neglected to provide any details pertinent to the accusation and acquittal. Instead, particulars of the trial were divulged to the reading public by two London-based newspapers. While the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* addressed the details of the alleged rape, reporting Ann Cadwell's testimony that "on the 21st of June she was at work for a Mrs. Bolton, the prisoners grandmother," when the prisoner "came up to her and without any ceremony, put her hands across, threw her down, and committed the offence stated in the indictment," *Argus* omitted these details entirely (Issue 19313; Issue 513). Indeed, the focus of both articles was not Cadwell's testimony, but on the manner in which she conveyed it to the court. The *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* reported that Cadwell described "the circumstances" of the rape with "great volubility and effrontery," with the Judge observing, "he had never recollected a witness in a case of rape give her evidence in a manner more flippant and incredible" (Issue 19313). The *Argus* made similar claims, writing that Cadwell relayed the "transaction and crime" with "such a degree of fluency and boldness" that the Judge claimed to "never during the time he had sat in [his] court heard any evidence which had less weight with him" (Issue 513). Although Cadwell's actual words were never recorded, the judge's accusation of "fluency" and "boldness" in Cadwell's speech exemplifies the inherently problematic aspect of reading contemporary rape trials. For while legal codes "forced" the female victim to "abandon the normal prohibitions and protocols placed upon her speech by the codes of proper femininity," this language ultimately "violated the codes of female sexual behavior" (Mills 156). As such, the depiction of Ann Cadwell typifies the troubling dichotomy experienced by female rape victims within the courtroom: viewed through the lens of eighteenth-century patriarchy, Cadwell is seen as "bold," or "obscene," her character vilified and her testimony subsequently rendered invalid.

Similarly, Volkert's narrative presents a (mis)construction of Helen. Volkert recounts to the Lieutenant how, one night, just as he was about to retire to sleep, "a white figure" appeared in his apartment and Volkert "seized the phantom with a powerful hand" (Teuthold 146). The "apparition" responded by exclaiming: "Jesu Maria […] for God's sake be quiet" (146). Volkert immediately recognized the voice as belonging to Helen, whose verbally aggressive introduction here stands in sharp juxtaposition to the weak and sickly woman previously described. Volkert notes that Helen "groans" her words, implicitly suggesting something guttural, sexual, and unrefined – all associations that once again problematize Volkert's previous observations. In the next instant, Volkert observes how Helen switches to

a "whisper," using a "faltering accent," when she assures him that it is only Helen who has appeared at his door, thereby reinforcing the suggestion of her duplicitous nature (146). Following Helen's admission about Henry, she invokes Volkert's aid in the matter, declaring that he "shall save [her] from destruction" by winning her father's "sanction" for her love (146). Volkert, hesitant to help Helen, as it means engaging with the tricks of necromancy that he has since abandoned, is forced to reconsider when Helen pays him a second visit and reminds him "of [his] promises, and of ---" (148). A suggestion of what has previously occurred between them is recounted by Volkert's confession that:

> she pressed me to her heaving bosom, her burning kisses thrilled the very pulses of my heart with voluptuous rapture, her lily arms encircled my neck, her whole lovely form seemed melted into one with mine – but you may easily guess what was the consequence!" (147)

It is worth noting here that Helen's narrative is not recounted through her own voice, but rather through that of Volkert, a man whose advances she has dismissed and with whom she engages sexually only in order to serve her own purposes.

The motivation behind Helen's sexual relationship with Volkert is not desire, then, bur rather one of survival. Helen acknowledges that if she is unable to marry Henry, "disgrace and ruin will seize [her] with merciless fangs," with the Old English for "fang" holding meanings of "booty, plunder, spoils" as well as a "catching or seizing" (147; "fang"). Here, Helen is an "object" that Henry has "seized," for, whether or not Helen was complicit in the act, her reputation has still been taken from her by decree of patriarchal law. Consequently, Helen expresses not a desire but rather a need to marry Henry, as a result of the rape that he committed on her. Such sentiments are echoed in one of the trials that appear in the *Humours of the Old Bailey*, in which the accuser, Mary Hicks, is asked by the Judge if she would like to see the prisoner hanged, to which she responds: "No, I had rather marry him than hang him" (11). Although the reading public of the eighteenth century was amused by Mary Hicks' answer (for the statement itself does seem comically absurd), there is an undeniable practicality in her words. After publicly declaring her rape, Mary Hicks is rendered unmarriageable, her body unwillingly transformed as patriarchal authority declared that a "deflowered woman was devalued as a moral and social entity" (Hufton 303). Helen's seduction of Volkert suggests that she is similarly aware of the grim future that awaits her if she is unable to secure her marriage to Henry. That Volkert is conscious of this precarious position and still engages with her sexually, ultimately challenges the reliability of his narrative. In particular, Volkert's declaration that "the lover of the afflicted disconsolate girl did not deserve [his] assistance" presents the possibility that Volkert's testimony has been influenced and shaped by Helen's preference for Henry – epitomized in Volkert's inconsistent portrayal of Helen

(Teuthold 148). His simultaneous (and silent) attack on the character of Helen's father – as Volkert continually refers to him as a 'simpleton' or a 'simple superstitious man' – suggests that Helen's behavior is not that of a "monstrous" femme fatale, but rather a desperate woman who realizes the realities facing a woman in her situation (149). Although the house in question is reputed to be haunted "by a spirit, who disturbed the tranquility of the inhabitants, though he never had injured any body," Volkert himself notes that Helen has in fact "suffered most from the dreadful apparition," that is, she has been injured in the irreparable damage to her reputation (144).

4. A "unique version of the Female Gothic"

Volkert's eventual consent to help – and the form in which such assistance materializes – complicates existing paradigms of the 'Male Gothic.' For although the ghost that Volkert "manifests" is a male who has been wronged by "the cruelty of a lady he had been in love with" during life, the ghost is invoked in order to aid a woman who has been wronged – if not by a man, than certainly by the laws of man (Teuthold 150). As such, the ghost demands the reconciliation of two lovers separated "by a cruel parent's tyranny" (recalling the conventional plotline of various female-penned Gothic novels) in order to cease his ghosting (150). Throughout *The Necromancer*, Volkert "raises" a number of female ghosts, including one who has been "assassinated" by her husband. While Jeffrey Cass notes in his *Introduction* to the recent 2007 Valancourt Edition of *The Necromancer* that "[the ghost] does not call for justice to which 'she' is entitled," but only wishes for "easeful death and obscurity," he neglects to explore the implications of the ghost's initial formidable presence upon being disturbed and her agreement to leave only when Volkert promises assistance: "unhappy spirit, betake thyself again to rest; by my power; which every spirit dreads, he shall disturb thee no more – be gone (Cass xxiv; Teuthold 41). When the ghost of the assassinated woman's husband does arrive, demanding forgiveness from his wife, Volkert exclaims: "How darest thou claim it, reprobate villain? Return to thy damned companions in hell" (Teuthold 43). Once in disguise, Volkert frequently assumes the role of defender of women, as evidenced here, performing what Cass refers to as Volkert's "unique version of the Female Gothic" (xxiv). As such, when the ghost raised by Volkert to help Helen responds that his reason for haunting is "out of resentment against women," his haunting can be read, not as a result of anger *against* women, but rather, as a result of anger *on behalf* of women (Teuthold 150). Therefore, the ghost's haunting is manifested, or made possible, as a result of the resentment incurred by law's continual exclusion of women, represented in his subsequent demand: the reunion of a couple parted by a "parent's tyranny" (Teuthold 150). That the word "tyranny" refers implicitly

to a male figure reinforces the notion that the ghost's haunting functions to illuminate and right the wrongs perpetrated by patriarchy against Helen, and thus eighteenth-century women.

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Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*: Friendship, Monstrosity and Radical Otherness

Abstract

This essay looks at the relationship between Victor Frankenstein and his Creature, examining the ethical implications of Victor's hostility towards the Creature. This problem is considered with reference to the views of various philosophers, ancient and modern, stressing one's responsibility for the Other and the importance of the Self's will to befriend another being. It is argued that Shelley indeed presents the Creature as "befriendable." Such presentation, this article indicates, is a consequence of Shelley's sympathy for the rejected and persecuted and her insistence on parental responsibility – the ideas actually emphasised in the novel, yet passed over in the 1930's Hollywood production, as a consequence, permanently affecting the popular image of the Creature.

In her *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, Mary Shelley consistently portrays the two major characters, Victor Frankenstein and his Creature as vowed enemies. While popular adaptations of Shelley's novel vilify the Creature, it is my aim to examine the character of Victor as culpable. Since Victor's failure consists in a refusal of friendship for which his Creature craves, I propose to consider the question of whether Victor's hostility was excusable in the light of ancient (mainly Aristotle's), modern (Kant's and Emerson's) and contemporary (for example, Derrida's) philosophies of *philia*.

1. Philosophers on Friendship with Radical Otherness

However, a strong argument for viewing Victor's hostility towards the Creature as inexcusable can be also found in Mary Shelley's reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's autobiography. Unwilling to establish a meaningful relationship with his mistress and her family, Rousseau is reported by Shelley to have abandoned their five children in an orphanage, where – due to the severe living conditions – few children had much chance of survival. Mary Shelley re-read the excerpts of Rousseau's *Confessions,* which convey the information on this aspect of the pedagogue's

life, when she was writing *Frankenstein* (O'Rourke 545–546). Shelley regarded Rousseau' excuses for abandoning his children as 'refutable' and his argumentation as 'futile' (Shelley, qtd. in O'Rourke 546). She stated that a man's "first duty is to render those whom we give birth, wise, virtuous, and happy, as far as in us lies" – a statement of paternal responsibility which resonates in *Frankenstein* (Shelley, qtd. in O'Rourke 547). What was, then, Rousseau's *refutable* excuse?[1] The famous pedagogue confessed that he "trembled at the thought of intrusting [his five children] to a family ill brought up, to be still worse educated [and that t] he risk of the education of the foundling hospital was much less" (Rousseau and Cohen, Book IX 2015).

Critics also note Shelley's ever-present sympathy "with marginalized and oppressed characters" of the works by various authors who influenced her writing (Sawyer 21, Ryan 154). Even the early 19th-century critics "[admitted] sympathy with the monster" and noticed that the reader's "interest in the book is [to be] entirely on the side of the [Creature]" as the "justice is indisputably on his side" (20). Both Mary Shelley and her father, William Godwin, openly condemned the racial prejudice in their contemporaries and often expressed their animosity against slave trade[2] (20–21). Godwin's tales, which mocked racism, and his general disapproval of such practises might have also inspired his daughter to depict the Creature as suffering from oppression and intolerance.

When considering the relationship of Frankenstein with his Creature, it is worthwhile to recall the philosophical discourse of friendship with a creature regarded as monstrous, or as representative of Radical Otherness. The first of the modern essays which I consider particularly helpful in the understanding of the nature of such relationships is Darren R. Walhof's *Friendship, Otherness, and Gadamer's Politics of Solidarity*. In this essay, Walhof describes our place in relation to the Other. The second essay to which I would like to refer is Mirko D. Garasic's *What Love Means to a Creature*, where Garasic elaborates his idea of an ethical attitude to otherness, stressing that the Self is to remain humane, tolerant and understanding. The third article is the *Empathy and Alterity in Cultural Psychiatry* by Laurence J. Kirmayer, which is firmly embedded in modern psychology, and which argues that whenever one interacts with radical otherness, one should also employ empathy which, according to Kirmayer, can always be developed and mastered. The fourth approach employed in this study is that of Jacques Derrida, who advocates respect and responsibility for the other, as offered and assumed beforehand so as to eradicate the forced equality. In the present essay, I shall also refer to Ralph Waldo Emerson's idea of tolerance towards that which is different, as expressed in his essay entitled "Friendship."[3]

Indeed, a respectful attitude towards the Other is stressed by both Emerson and Derrida. Emerson anticipates Derrida's claim that friendship is a relationship which involves both "likeness" and "unlikeness" (Emerson 228). This implies that two individuals can become friends if they derive joy from the other's being different,

or, as proposed by Emerson, from the fact "that the not mine is mine" (228). The increased awareness of this paradox creates a positively "dissymmetrical" relation, to which I shall refer again shortly (Derrida, qtd. in Kwok-ying 415). For the time being, it suffices to say that both Emerson and Derrida stress the importance of the Other's (not only complimentary) differences, which the Self ought to *respect* and allow for the Other to preserve.

The Other's distinctiveness can be retained by the Self's observance of the *respectful distance* between the Self and the Other. Trying to befriend another individual, Emerson claims, the Self should allow for their being not as easily approachable and *certainly* not a mere "echo" of the Self. The Self must not assume that the Other is an object devoid of will or opinion, ready to agree with us on every matter (Emerson 228). Derrida confirms this view, when he suggests that befriending the Other should involve some degree of a respectful and "minimal" distance (qtd. in Kwok-ying 422). Thanks to this very distance, the Self does not assimilate the Other, but rather preserves their "transcended alterity" and the autonomy of the potential friend (423–424). Thus, indeed, both to Emerson and to Derrida, respect in friendship stands for the "[r]everence" of other's distinctiveness, whose presence constitutes a fascinating part of friendship (Emerson 229).

Although retaining the Other's distinctiveness and privacy ought to be our priority, an "abstract, cold and distanced" tolerance implies a mere bearing with something" – an attitude that is insufficient if we wish to truly befriend the Other (Derrida, qtd. in Kwok-ying 421). Instead, our attitude towards the Other should be filled with pure solicitude and, thus, respect. What Derrida proposes in order to eliminate a cold and forced equality is a kind of "lean[ing]" towards the Other and creating a "dissymmetrical" relation (421). This all implies that when encountering the individual we wish to befriend, we ought to balance the respectful distance with a caring and affectionate approach, so as to create a slight, but positive, dissymmetry. In other words, while our distance ought to be "minimal," it should be also *friendly*.

Still in their emphasising of the respectful aspect of our encounters with the Other, Emerson and Derrida remind us not to objectify the Other. This can be achieved in two ways: by the Self having respect for the Other's name and by the Self assuming the attitude characterised by a caring interest rather than a cognitive curiosity. To begin with the first issue – or the name-learning process, to which Derrida assigns a lot of importance – it is suggested that, when befriending the Other, merely getting to know their name is insufficient; one must also respect its form as provided by the Other. Otherwise, claims Derrida, any change coming from the encountering Self would contribute to the unwelcoming and objectifying attitude (Derrida, qtd. in Kwok-ying 420). Thanks to a form-and-freedom retaining approach, we show our respect, our genuine responsibility and our care for the Other (Derrida, qtd. in Kwok-ying 420).

The objectifying attitude towards the Other, as Emerson stressed over one century before Derrida, is an effect of too much inquisitiveness and too little genuine care. Emerson says that the companionship of our friend should be to us "poetic, pure, universal" and based on the emotional rather than merely cognitive side (Emerson 229). The respect for the Other's personal space, argues Emerson, urges us to perceive the Other as the "Beautiful enemy, untamable, devoutly revered, and not a trivial convenience to be soon outgrown and cast aside" (229). Too close an observation, Emerson declares – and Derrida would confirm – objectifies the Other and "profanes" their otherness (230).

Next to the complete yet friendly respect for the Other, the encountering Self should also employ a humane and empathic attitude. This idea, in turn, has been developed by Laurence J. Kirmayer and Mirko Garasic, who regard the empathy and humanitarianism as constituting the obligatory elements of any successful trial to befriend the radical otherness. Considering the humanitarian element, Garasic observes that when trying to befriend the Other, one ought to respect their humanness: emotions, preferences and will. Even though the Other may greatly differ from the Self in their otherness, there is a possibility of a dialogue between 'us' and the Other once we acknowledge their resemblance to 'us' in our shared humanness. Reinforcing Emerson's and Derrida's warnings against the risk of the overly cognitive inquisitiveness, Garasic proposes that, in responding to otherness, we approach the Other in a humane way and make use not only of our rational abilities but also of our emotional capacities in responding to otherness. Otherwise, as claimed by Garasic, the Self cultivates a loveless "form of intellectual narcissism," and prepares to prove his/her own cleverness for the sake of it (8). Instead, one should show a true, loving interest in the Other, which involves the Self's openness to the other person's needs (10). The idea of openness is closely related to the notion of empathy, which is further elaborated by Laurence J. Kirmayer.

Kirmayer describes the existence of empathic behaviours as proving one's ability to understand another's experience by feeling or thinking something similar oneself "and possessing the willingness to meet, engage, and be moved by the Other" (458). Kirmayer warns us that the *inability* to employ empathy when approaching the Other causes us to perceive them as "alien, uncanny, and unknown" (458). However, empathy by itself is not enough. An empathic approach has to entail also the "moral commitments" since, otherwise, empathy alone may serve "sadism as well as compassion." This is so, because the avoidance of morally correct behaviours, argues Kirmayer, does not "guarantee our kindness and concern" (461). Empathy must be also buttressed by the Self's readiness to learn. It must go along with a "detailed knowledge of specific pragmatic social and cultural contexts" (461). Empathy, therefore, tolerates no prejudgements and no prejudices, yet it still employs some degree of the rational judgement.

Importantly, in Kirmayer's view, empathy can be practised and developed. Even though our personal experience constitutes a limit to our empathy with the

Other, Kirmayer says, experience is also "interpersonal and intersubjective in origin" (462). Thus, even though one is unlikely to immediately "elicit the right responses in a particular situation," if one has never experienced something beforehand, one can put oneself in the Other's place, keeping in mind the general idea of being the Other from works of literature, from mass-media, or even from the stories told by those of one's friends who once found themselves in an unfamiliar situation (462). Kirmayer does not excuse, therefore, the unwillingness on the part of the Self to even try to comprehend what the Other may be experiencing in a given situation.

An empathetic attitude which involves the Self's acceptance and acknowledgement of the Other's differences, declares Kirmayer, ought not to be devoid of the Self's openness to the *direct communication*. The Other's human-like capacity of maintaining a dialogue should be *always* made use of; thus, whenever one is able to make a conversation with the Other, there is *no* excuse for the Self's rejection of the Other. Kirmayer believes that this process of communicating should involve the Self's respectful trust in the Other beforehand – by which, he further confirms the Derridean idea of the positive "dissymmetry" in a relationship with radical otherness (Kirmayer 470–471).

Both Garasic and Kirmayer, then, caution against too much reliance on the Self's rationality. Similarly to Garasic, Kirmayer also warns us against overly trusting in our cognitive abilities, by which we would not only diminish our empathy but we could also destroy the Other's otherness. This, in turn, may lead to the "replacement [of otherness] by some generic cultural emblem or icon of feeling" (470). This occurs, for example, when the features of monstrosity are assigned merely on the basis of one's appearance. "[M]issappropriation, narcissism, collusion, and submission to the power" are all a result of the lack of empathy; therefore, our trying to be compassionate and sensitive when befriending the Other is just as necessary (and, in fact, overlaps with) respecting Otherness (470). Othwerwise, friendship becomes an impossible project when "the [inhumane] obsession to achieve personal glory" supersedes our respectfulness and empathy towards the Other (Garasic 12).

The complexity of a friendly attitude calls for yet another, essential element: a specific balance in the Self's approach towards the Other. Darren Walhof discusses several areas in which there is a necessity for such balance. Firstly, Walhof warns us against the instrumental treatment of the Other as if they were a mere object for our own understanding, since such behaviour causes the denial of Otherness (579). However, a balanced approach allows us neither to overly assimilate the Other and treat them as identical with the Self nor to leave them "completely other" and, by this, reject them without the mildest intention of offering them friendship. Secondly, the appearance of the Other always entails some degree of novelty. While we should not apply any procrustean paradigms when addressing the Other, we should also avoid confronting those who are strange to us merely

on account of their radical alterity (576). The employment of a balanced, *thus*, an open-minded and non-judgemental attitude "allows [us] to open up for the real possibility of understanding" and reaching "beyond" one's own constraints (580). By confronting the other without any 'prejudgements or prejudices," not only can we observe our limitations (having realised that our knowledge is often faulty or insufficient), but we are also able to overcome them and, having ourselves enriched and our 'self-knowledge' developed, broaden our perspectives (580–581). Thirdly, Walhof warns us against the possibility of our suppressing of the Other. He believes that allowing for some degree of the dissymmetry between the Self and the Other, we ought to remember that it cannot be the one of domination or hierarchy. He claims that whenever one of the friends, or of the friends-to-be, "so dominates the friendship that [s/he] refuses to acknowledge the distinctiveness of [his/her] friend," one eventually forms a relationship which is full of inequality and resembles rather the one between the "leader and follower, or teacher and disciple" (582). Furthermore, rejecting an overly cognitive approach, Walhof argues a friend should never believe that he can fully and completely know the Other, because, even in a profound friendship, the individuals must "remain distinct" (582). In fact, in its insistence on the respectful presentation of the element of otherness in friendship, Walhof's idea of friendship is coterminous with the philosophies of friendship developed by Emerson, Derrida, Kirmayer and Garasic.

2. The Befriendability of the Frankenstein's Creature

It should be noted that the radical otherness may pose overwhelming problems; hence, Victor Frankenstein's animosity might seem, at least to some extent, justifiable. The question, however, arises whether the Creature was *befriendable* at all. Befriendability should not be confused with 'friendliness' or 'amiability.' The main difference is that a 'befriendable' person may not always behave in a friendly manner, and occasional displays of friendliness, on the other hand, do not directly denote one's befriendablity. Instead, befriendability should be defined as a set of features, behaviours and actions which enable an individual to form and *maintain* an actual friendship, whereas friendliness denotes merely one's initial kindness and approachability.

Arguably, his tragic conundrum comes from the fact that – despite being the most loveable, benevolent and soulful out of all characters in Mary Shelley's novel – the Creature never fulfilled his dream of being anyone's true friend. His enormous potential for being a good friend could be observed on numerous occasions throughout the novel. Notably, the Creature was extremely strong, self-sufficient and exceptionally intelligent. His superior intellect, constantly stimulated by his life experiences and literary artworks (e.g. Milton's *Paradise Lost*) with which he was surrounded, was reflected, for example, during his process of learning to speak and

read. In his case, the process lasted for a considerably shorter period of time than in humans; what is more, it was far more effective. Importantly, it was his wish to become friends with the villagers that caused his willingness to learn (Shelley 92). Sensitive to art – "the delight[ful]' beauty of nature and music or "enrapturing" stories or literary artworks made the Creature weep with emotion – the Creature was also very thoughtful and judicious (90–91). He cared for the villagers, next to whom he lived, so much that, to save them the distress of a sudden intrusion, he waited and, meanwhile, mastered their language and customs. First, he intended to talk to the blind man, old De Lacey, as he wished to spare them the initial shock that his appearance could cause (102). At the same time, nonetheless, the Creature was rather self-aware of his mental capabilities and intelligence as well as of his benevolent attitude. He admitted to feeling worthy of people's "kindness and sympathy" (102). Likewise, he was not impaired by false humility when he "demanded" from Victor that he "ma[de] him happy" as, unlike other humans, he "owed" this to his Creature (78). As far as his strengths are concerned, the Creature was also, to a great degree, self-sufficient. Not only did he manage to recover from his initial helplessness and clumsiness, but soon he became so smart that he was also able to help other people. He chopped the wood for the villagers and helped them in their duties around the house, while himself maintaining physical and material independence (86).

Furthermore, the Creature's actions can be all easily justified and, thus, regarded as not monstrous. If the Creature were, indeed, a moral monster, having committed the crimes, the Creature would continue to feel no remorse. He cannot be labelled as morally monstrous also because, typically, the moral monsters are those who inflict pain on others having suffered none in the first place (Bernatchez 205–216). As cruel as some of the Creature's deeds were, they all can be to some degree excused by his motives, his pain and despair. And cruelty is not identical with moral monstrosity. This means that whatever cruelties he later performed, all of them were (at times unintentional) perversions of justice, which he saw as originally violated by his creator, cowardly and self-seeking Victor. And as cruel as the Creature was, he was still righteous; thus, he expected righteousness from Victor, whose "justice, […], clemency and affection [were] most due" to the Creature (77). Only when having no other choice but to resort to violence in order to remind Victor of his fatherly duties towards him, the Creature resolved to commit his murders, having first warned Frankenstein.

The Creature's emotionality also contributed to his befriendability. Even though initially he was rather confused by various strong emotions that would arise in him whenever he witnessed other people's affections, the fact that he noticed them and that they affected him in a positive and moving way bespeak his empathy (84). He perceived another person's "kindness and affection" as of the greatest value (86). Devoting his "attention and time" to the observation of the villagers, the Creature aimed at learning to recognise their emotional states (86). He appreciated the vil-

lager's "manners." Whenever they experienced sadness, he shared it with them, and when they were happy, he "sympathised [with them] in their joys" (87). He longed for affection which he was able to return to his potential friend and he often dreamt of having a soul mate whose "angelic countenance [would breathe] smiles of consolation" for his loneliness (101). It can be said that the Creature genuinely *loved* the villagers. His kindness, gentility, and good manners show when he enters the cottage and converses with the old De Lacey, who recognises the Creature's mildness and sincerity (103).

Aware that he was never of explicitly "sweet, cheerful, and happy temper" – the qualities attributed to a *friendly* individual by Immanuel Kant (216) – the Creature, nonetheless, decided "not to despair" but, instead, "fit himself" for his meeting with the cottagers (Shelley 100). He knew that only his goodness, mildness and kindness could win their love and affection. Thus, he tried everything not to grow bitter or wrathful (Shelley 100). Shelley's portrayal highlights also his altruism and generosity (89, 98). Generous to the hilt, even after he had been violently beaten and driven away by the villagers, he saved the little girl from drowning in a river (108). His forgiveness and patience showed not only in his attitude towards the villagers, but also in negotiations with Victor. When confronting Frankenstein about his companion-to-be, "instead of threatening [he was] content to reason with" Victor and, later, to wait for his female companion to be created (111).

The Creature was also befriendable in the Aristotelian terms. From Aristotle onwards through the 18th century, *virtue* was thought to be the basis of every genuine and meaningful friendship (Aristotle 3–5). It has been already noted that the Creature was endowed with goodness, which he possessed next to his intellectual and emotional capacities and altruism. To form friendship in the Aristotelian sense, goodness was enough, yet to maintain a profound relationship, the Creature would need to be virtuous (which he said he was [Shelley 114]) (Brewer 3,722; Annas 549). Yet his potential for developing the Aristotelian virtue was hampered in him by the emotional tortures he received from nearly all humans he encountered. Condemned to loneliness, banished from human society, the Creature lacked another in relation to whom he could develop his virtue. And virtue, as Josh Bernatchez rephrases Aristotle, requires the company of another to shine (Bernatchez 208). It is impossible, therefore, to conclusively affirm, or deny whether the Creature was virtuous in the Aristotelian sense as none of the relationships he had with other people lasted long enough for him to develop this aspect of his character. It is possible, however, to prove that the Creature, indeed, was good, kind-hearted, well-wishing, sincere and benevolent; thus, it is possible to surmise that in the Shelleyan rendering, if given loving company, he would have surely developed his virtuousness.

The Creature, admittedly, was not devoid of some imperfections of character, which could stand in the way of forming a happy friendship. Also, his

appearance was marred by physical deformities, which Aristotle would term as not "pleasurable," and which, Aristotle noted, might initially prevent the ease of contact (Aristotle 7–8). However, for someone prepared for his peculiarity, as Captain Walton was, or someone unprejudiced towards it, as was the old De Lacey, even the Creature's physique was no hindrance from forming friendship. What is more, the Creature was very well aware of his shocking appearance, and he tried to be very considerate of people's possible reactions. Thus, it may be supposed that even his physique would not have been a barrier for another to befriend him.

Malice and slander, which in the European discourse on friendship are considered to be the main causes behind one's lack of a friend, were also absent in the Creature's life[4]. Devoid of proper context, the Creature's occasional displays of cruelty and his framing of Justine into the murder which he himself committed could have been regarded as graphic examples of malice and slander. However, the justifiability of these deeds makes the prime culprit Victor Frankenstein himself. The Creature's cruelty came from despair, but he was not malicious or malevolent by nature. As regards Justine's death, it was at some point – throughout the trial until her death - exclusively in Frankenstein's power to explain everything and save her. He declined to it; thus the ultimate blame ought to be wholly ascribed to Victor Frankenstein.

The Creature's bitterness could not be considered an excuse for others' unwillingness to befriend him either. Initially, even the occasional feelings of loneliness and sadness did not suppress him. He realised his misery, but he would not give in. Instead, he tried to busy himself with physical labour that could help him to forget it. The Creature also tried to derive pleasure from art, from the beauty of nature and from observing the affectionate behaviour of the villagers towards one another. But, eventually, having experienced nothing but severe hatred, violence and abandonment, betrayed by his own creator, he succumbed to bitterness. It was his ultimate reaction to the harshness with which he was treated.

Thus, the Shelleyan portrayal of the Creature is of a being that is a very befriendable individual. His apparent vices resulted from temperamental imperfections, which grew into violence and revenge, not from an inclination to evil. Indeed, during the initial stage of his existence, when encountering the majority of his potential friends, he was not bitter. Neither was he ever malicious or prone to slander. There also existed people who could behold and endure his appearance and, recognising his goodness, maintain a non-hostile conversation with him. Intelligent, open-minded and willing to self-actualise, the Creature was sensitive of other people's feelings and – being aware of his own limitations – he tried to remain mild and caring towards them. He was exceptionally sincere, disinterested and well-wishing – a most befriendable being.

3. The Creature's Failed Attempts at Befriending Victor. Victor's Inexcusable Hostility

It was, in fact, Victor's attitude towards the Creature that should be regarded as overly monstrous and heartless. Victor's encounters with the Creature always intensified his hatred of his creation. Firstly, Frankenstein constantly disregarded and oppressed his creation. Not only did he deny the Creature's right to have a proper name (and, consequently, the sense of identity) but he also consistently threw at him insults, ranging from "fiend" to "daemon,"[5] which can be considered as a mockery of the philosophical admonition: to allow for the Other to retain their name with its form unchanged. Usurping the God's right to give and take one's life, Victor decided "to extinguish" the Creature's life as if it were worthless (71). Secondly, his rejection of, and disappointment with, the Creature indicate that Victor's approach was overly cognitive in its nature: Frankenstein looked at him through the old prisms and judged him by the standards which privileged an idealised, proportionate creation rather than a disproportionate, miserable individual requiring the overall upbringing. He regarded him as a mere animal; and he assigned to him features of *moral* monstrosity based only on his outward ugliness (46, 60, 61). He accused him of "ignorance," but at the same time he refused to guide the Creature and he considered him unworthy of his attention (63). Thirdly, the friendly openness and care – advocated by Garasic and Kirmayer – were absent in Victor's approach to the Creature. When the Creature became alive, Frankenstein immediately ran away from his laboratory; and when the then-helpless Creature hopefully followed him, Victor escaped him again (45–46). He offered the Creature no privilege of *friendly dissymmetry*. On the contrary, after a long time of not seeing his creation, Victor was possessed with a wish to instantly kill him (76–77). Devoid of empathy, morally monstrous, Victor ordered the Creature to disappear at once, before even listening to him, ignorant of his pain and needs (78). Overall, this non-acceptance and ever-present disregard towards the Creature were the major negative aspects of Victor's inhumane attitude towards his creation and they were the main reasons behind Victor's turning the Creature into his utmost enemy.

Thus, the main reason behind the failure to form a friendly relationship with the Creature was Victor's moral monstrosity: his injustice, distrust, unkindness and, most notably, his lack of virtue, which further eradicated the potential for forming a profound, virtue-based friendship. Admittedly, Victor often acknowledged that he created the being, but throughout most of the time, Frankenstein felt no responsibility for him and, therefore, no wish to provide him with food and shelter, basic education and up-bringing[6]. Justice was clearly absent from his heartless approach towards his creation. Only at one point – that is during their first encounter since the Creature's departure from Victor's laboratory – did Victor agree to actually listen to the Creature's story, so that he could judge him (76–78). Nevertheless, he primarily intended to, as if, invent an excuse for an instrumental treatment

of (rather than respect and tolerance towards) the Creature. As a result, Victor's wickedness eventually caused him to stifle the sense of justice within himself after he had broken all his promises and sworn his eternal hatred for the Creature (79, 112–113, 127, 156). Victor's hasty judgement of the Creature resulted in his distrust. On the one hand, Victor accused the Creature of adopting such an attitude, saying that he had already shown "a degree of malice." Yet the Creature's misbehaviour can be excused to a large degree (113). At no point was Frankenstein's approach devoid of prejudice. Employing an overly cognitive attitude which definitely eliminated his empathy, Victor constantly "imagined" various terrible deeds that could happen at the Creature's hands[7], despite knowing that – given no reason – the Creature was unable to commit any crime. Given the promise of receiving a companion, the Creature was even less prone to harm others, patiently awaiting the emergence of a friend with whom he could withdraw from the rest of the human society (118, 127).

Overall, Victor – perhaps a Shelleyan reminiscence of Rousseau – neglected his duty as a parental figure in the life of his Creature. However, he also failed as a person approaching the Other. His attitude is characterised by his monstrous immorality; he lacked a sense of justice, he had no kindness and openness, which resulted in his overwhelming distrust, disrespect, intolerance and oppressiveness. Only at one point did he admit to feeling "compassionate" towards the Creature, but he was still unwilling to tolerate his Otherness and accept his differences (113). He often changed his mind and tormented the Creature, which bespeak his lack of integrity – a feature criticised in the candidates for friends, primarily, by Walhof. All these attempts on the Creature's side to befriend Victor were being consistently destroyed by the latter. What is more, it becomes apparent that there were no such attempts on Victor's side at all. Even Victor's unpremeditated consent to create the companion for the Creature was not an act of friendliness. Actually, Frankenstein intended to create a surrogate companion, thus relieving himself of any duties towards the Creature.

Conclusion

The novel, while entertaining its readers with a Gothic thrill, actually constitutes an important text in the discourses of friendship and otherness understood as monstrosity. It is Mary Shelley's plea on the account of the orphaned and the marginalised. But it is also her critique of the replacing of the affective with purely cognitive patterns in human relationships. The complex relationship the novel presents – that of the Self with the Other, the Creator and Creation, fatherly and filial, and that of unrequited friendship – yields to an analysis in the context of the philosopher's statements on *philia*. Significantly, in their light, this is Victor that reveals his monstrosity. Victor's unwillingness to accept and take care of his creation – in the light

of the philosophical perspectives on friendship with the Other – can be regarded as extreme. Out of all the elements of a healthy approach towards the other – that is Emerson's *complete respect*, Derrida's *respectful responsibility and positive dissymmetry*, Kirmayer's *empathy*, Garasic's *humaneness* and Walhof's *balance* – Victor employs none when approaching his Creature. This, further, confirms one's regard of Victor's approach as monstrously abusive and unjustifiable.

Notes

1 Apart from being argued against by Shelley, Rousseau's excuse was found refutable also by E. Burke in his *Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin from 1799* and Voltaire in an open letter in 1764.
2 See, eW. Godwin's *Washing the Blackmoor White*.
3 Although Frankenstein's moral failure is also a failure of responsibility, the biblical discourse on the responsibility for one's neighbour will not be used in this present analysis was hardly a Christian. He did not follow the Christian teachings in his life, and thus, for him the Bible held little authority.
4 Among others, St. Paul in *Ephesians* 4.31–32 and Kant in his *Lecture on Friendship* 217.
5 See, e.g., M. Shelley 22, 71, 129, 130, 141, 151
6 See, e.g., M. Shelley 63, 71
7 See, e.g., M. Shelley 127

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Popular Fiction Tropes in George Eliot's *Felix Holt: the Radical*

Abstract

In line with recent critical approaches to George Eliot that increasingly question her reputation as a realist writer, the article seeks to analyse the plot and characterisation in George Eliot's *Felix Holt: The Radical* (1866) with reference to popular (and especially sensational and melodramatic) tropes often found in fiction of the period. The article discusses such plot elements as the trial scene in which the heroine gives testimony in order to help the hero, the heroine's renouncement of her fortune, and the figures of a fallen woman (treated as a cautionary example by the heroine) and of a mysterious suitor with a troubled past.

In 1864, one reviewer announced that "a book without a murder, a divorce, a seduction and a bigamy is not apparently considered worth either writing or reading" (qtd. in Hughes 4). The reign of sensation novel has begun with the publication of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859), followed by Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1861) and Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). Established novelists were quick to recognize the enormous popularity of sensation writers, whom they however often deemed amateur and upstart. Thinking about the sensation boom of the 1860s, the quintessential realist Anthony Trollope mused in his *Autobiography*: "Among English novels of the present day, and among English novelists, a great division is made. There are sensational novels and anti-sensational, sensational readers and anti-sensational. The novelists who are considered anti-sensational are generally called realistic" (Trollope 226). The effect of this often-quoted passage, in which Trollope posits the existence of an unbridgeable chasm between the sensational and anti-sensational novelists, is however significantly toned down by the remarks which directly follow it:

> I am realistic. My friend Wilkie Collins is generally supposed to be sensational. The readers who prefer the one are supposed to take delight in the elucidation of character. Those who hold by the other are charmed by the continuation and gradual development of a plot. All this is, I think, a mistake, which mistake arises from the inability of the

> imperfect artist to be at the same time realistic and sensational. A good novel should be both, and both in the highest degree. If a novel fails in either, there is a failure in art. (Trollope 226–227)

While Trollope argues that the inclusion of sensational elements in a realist novel has artistic merit, the fact that prominent realist novels of the period often contain sensational or melodramatic literary tropes can also be explained on the grounds of readers' preferences and demands of the book market. [1] Naturally, "anti-sensational" novels did not sell as well as books featuring "a murder, a divorce, a seduction and a bigamy" that flooded railway bookstalls and circulating libraries.[2] In her preface to *Hard Cash* (1864), the sensationalist Charles Reade succinctly summarized the feelings of mid-Victorian readers and book-buyers: "Without sensation, there is no interest" (3).

Just like Trollope, George Eliot herself undoubtedly belonged to the "anti-sensational" school. However, modern critical approaches to her literary output reveal the presence of sensational motifs in virtually all her works – from the mysterious *femme fatale* Countess Czerlaski in "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton," the opening novella of George Eliot's literary debut, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), to the quasi-bigamy and quasi-murder featured in her last published novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876) (see Mahawatte, Levine). In my article, I am going to offer an overview of the sensation elements in the plot of George Eliot's somewhat under-researched 1866 novel, *Felix Holt: The Radical,* and analyse it in the context of sensational and melodramatic tropes present in earlier bestselling Victorian novels, particularly Charles Reade's *Hard Cash* (1863), Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) and *Mary Barton (*1848*)* and Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852–1853).

Interestingly, Eliot's journalistic output contains proof that she was highly aware of popular literature tropes. Just weeks before starting her first work of fiction, she published in *A Westminster Review* an essay entitled "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" (1856). Wittily organized into a typology, the essay differentiates between various kinds of popular novels and contains a scathing (and wickedly funny) condemnation of escapist potboilers written by women.[3] Chief among the many literary offences committed by "lady novelists" is providing the readers' with unrealistically perfect heroines:

> The heroine is usually an heiress, probably a peeress in her own right […]. Her eyes and her wit are both dazzling; her nose and her morals are alike free from any tendency to irregularity […]. Or it may be that the heroine is not an heiress – *that rank and wealth are the only things in which she is deficient; but she infallibly gets into high society, she has the triumph of refusing many matches and securing the best* […]. Rakish men either bite their lips in impotent confusion at her repartees, or are touched to penitence by her reproofs, which, on appropriate occasions, rise to a lofty strain of

> rhetoric**,** indeed, there is a general propensity in her to make speeches and to rhapsodise at some length when she retires to her bedroom. In her recorded conversations she is amazingly eloquent, and in her unrecorded conversations, amazingly witty. She is understood to have a depth of insight that looks through the shallow theories of philosophers, and her superior instincts are a sort of dial by which men have only to set their clocks and watches and all will go well. (Eliot 1992; 296, emphasis mine)

As Lynda Mugglestone observes in her preface to *Felix Holt*, the highly idealised heroines of popular fiction can serve as a context for Eliot's heroine Esther Lyon, who is a voracious reader of the silver-fork novels: "it is on this pattern that Esther's early ideals of wish-fulfilment run as she constructs herself as a lady *manquée* […] assiduously cultivating the 'refined' sensibilities which might indicate 'superiority'" (Mugglestone xviii). In the expository chapters, Esther is presented as self-centred and obsessed with appearances. Living very frugally with her father, she is forced to work as a day-governess, and spends all her money on small items of luxury, forever hankering after elegance and refinement:

> Esther's own mind was not free from a sense of irreconcilableness between the objects of her taste and the conditions of her lot. She knew that Dissenters were looked down upon by those whom she regarded as the most refined classes; her favourite companions, both in France and at an English school where she had been a junior teacher, had thought it quite ridiculous to have a father who was a Dissenting preacher […]. She was proud that the best-born and handsomest girls at school had always said that she might be taken for a born lady. (76–77)

In the course of the novel, Esther's fortunes will undergo a scarcely credible reversal which seems directly inspired by the plot twists of popular novels. It will be revealed that she is not a daughter of the humble Dissenting preacher, but a scion of an aristocratic family, and then – in a somewhat subversive (though not fully unexpected) twist, she will renounce her inheritance in order to marry the man she loves.

Apart from Esther's characterisation, the most visible proof of Eliot's indebtedness to popular fiction is the climactic trial scene, where Esther decides to testify in order to defend her beloved Felix Holt (and bravely risks her reputation, as she will have to admit that she had met him unchaperoned). The supposition that George Eliot's trial scene is inspired by similar scenes from sensation novels receives a surprising confirmation from the abovementioned sensation novelist Charles Reade. The talented but eccentric Reade developed what Winifred Hughes terms "an envious paranoia on the subject of George Eliot" (Hughes 100). He attacked Eliot in many letters to *The Times* and, in a devious twist worthy of one of his own novels, printed in *Once a Week* an anonymous article on himself, as a part of a series on prominent English writers. In the article, Reade was effusive

in praise of himself ("Mr Reade is the greatest living writer of fiction" (250)) and did not mince words in his attack on George Eliot, whom he called "a writer of the second class […] adroit enough to disavow the sensational, yet to use it as far as her feeble powers would let her" (Reade 253). His virulent critique centred on a comparison of his own *Hard Cash* (1863) and Eliot's *Felix Holt.*

Reade's *Hard Cash*, of which he was inordinately proud, was indeed a best-selling sensation novel, whose intricate plot could be the envy of Wilkie Collins himself. It told the story of two young people who love each other, but whose families are in bitter feud, as the man's father, a banker, has apparently defrauded the girl's father of the titular "hard cash," a huge sum of money that he had brought from the colonies and that constituted his life savings. When the young protagonists overcome all obstacles and the wedding day finally comes, Alfred is lured to an asylum and promptly imprisoned on trumped-up charges of "mental instability" by his own scheming father, who dreads that his embezzlement will be exposed. After a harrowing time in the asylum, which almost breaks his sanity, Alfred stands a lunacy trial, and Julia appears in the witness-box to explain the reasons behind his father's fiendish actions. Even a brief summary reveals that the plot of *Hard Cash*, whose main concern is unlawful imprisonment in mental asylums, bears little resemblance to *Felix Holt*, which essentially tells a story of a love triangle between Esther Lyon, a working class political activist Felix Holt, and an aristocratic landowner (and Radical candidate in the upcoming parliamentary election) Harold Transome, set against the backdrop of political and social turmoil that followed the Great Reform Bill of 1832, and preceded the first general election organized after the first considerable extension of suffrage.

In spite of the obvious disparities in subject matter, Reade furiously accused Eliot of plagiarising his novel, while at the same time he maintained that his own work was by far artistically superior. In his argument, he focused on the trial scenes in both novels:

> In *Felix Holt*, the ground is admirably laid for strong situations: but in the actual treatment only two come out dramatically, and they are both borrowed. The young man coming to strike his steward, and being met by "I am your Father."[4] And the heroine going into the witness-box to give evidence for her lover. The former is borrowed from an old novel, and the latter from Charles Reade's *Hard Cash*, and it may be instructive to show how the inventor and the imitator deal with the idea […]. Now, the fertile situation in *Felix Holt* was supplied by Charles Reade. The true literary patent is in him. His is the witness with the clear, mellow voice who gives her evidence as if before God – and that witness a young lady who loves the man for whom she gives evidence. (258)

The similarities on which Reade dwells are mainly details of description – a ray of sunshine crossing the courtroom in both scenes, or the fact that the hands of

both prisoners, Alfred and Felix, tremble at some point during the trial. Needless to say, Reade's implausible claims were generally dismissed by critics and treated as proof of his mental imbalance (Hughes 114).

Though they serve more as evidence of Reade's psychological problems than of Eliot's plagiarism, the accusations bring into focus the inherent melodramatic appeal of the court scene in *Felix Holt*. The pathos of the situation in which the heroine saves the hero (either physically or metaphorically) was often exploited by nineteenth century women writers. The reversal of gender roles in comparison with the usual romantic "damsel in distress" formula was undoubtedly startling for early Victorian readers, but by the 1850s it seemed quite stale and predictable (Showalter 317). The most intrepid of these the hero-rescuing heroines is decidedly Margaret Hale from Gaskell's *North and South*. In order to save her lover from lynching by an angry mob during a strike, Margaret rushes in front of him and is hit by a stone meant for Thornton. While Esther's rescue of Felix in the court room requires less physical daring, her actions constitute an equally serious breach of propriety.

In fact, Gaskell's *North and South* provides a valid context for *Felix Holt* not only because it features a scene of the heroine sacrificing her reputation (and in the case of Gaskell's novel, also putting herself in physical danger) in order to save the hero. Another, and more fundamental, similarity between the two novels lies in the final renouncement of the heroine's fortunes, which constituted yet another popular Victorian novelistic trope. As Elaine Showalter argues, on a symbolic plane, the heroine's renouncement of her fortune constituted a symbol of feminine subjugation (Showalter 115). The formula was well-suited to the dominant Victorian beliefs about gender roles and this fact could perhaps explain its popularity (Flint 73). But in order for it to be effective, the worthiness of the hero and heroine had to be established beyond all doubt. The readers have to feel that the sacrifice of the heroine will be justly rewarded with a happy marriage.

The plot of *North and South* might serve as a blueprint for all such developments, including *Felix Holt*. In the final chapters of Gaskell's novel, the heroine serendipitously inherits great wealth and also incidentally becomes the owner of land on which the protagonist's factory is built. Margaret and Mr Thornton were initially strongly attracted to one another, but at that point, due to a series of devious misunderstandings, each believes that the other is indifferent. But when Margaret hears about Thornton's financial troubles, she offers him a generous loan, and this action brings about an instant reconciliation. On the last page of the novel, the lovers engage in what Elaine Showalter wryly calls "a self-debasement contest" (Showalter 137), fervently assuring one another that they are "not good enough" (Gaskell 521). Showalter aptly expounds the significance of this popular plot development:

> Margaret not only tames Mr Thornton but also, in a final humiliation, endows him with her legacy so that he can pay off his debts and keep his mill. To get a great deal of money and to give it to a man for his work was the feminine heroine's apotheosis, the ultimate in the power of self-sacrifice. (84)

This mutual show of humility in *North and South* serves as a final proof that both lovers have learned their lesson and abandoned false pride. Contrarily to what the characters explicitly say, the readers now believe that they have absolutely proven their worthiness.

This pattern reappears in *Felix Holt*. Here, the heroine rejects a wealthy suitor in order to marry the man she loves. What is more, in the final plot twist it is revealed that Harold's fortune should not legally be his, but (by virtue of a legal technicality too ingenious to explain here) it should belong to no other than the heroine herself. Esther thus not only refuses to marry Harold, but renounces her legal claim to his estate and willingly endows the rejected suitor with a fortune that hitherto has never legally been his. The event is presented with startling brevity: "Harold heard from Esther's lips that she loved someone else, and that she resigned all claim to the Transome estates" (471). Esther's act of renunciation is even more total than that of Margaret Hale, as she chooses a life of comparative poverty with her future husband.

Jean Kennard in *Victims of Convention* points out that apart from *North and South,* there is yet another work by Elizabeth Gaskell that may have been an inspiration for Eliot. Kennard persuasively argues that the basic plot pattern of *Felix Holt* is eerily similar that of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), which George Eliot read in April 1859 (Haight 330). Unlike Reade, Gaskell never thought to compare her own work with that of George Eliot, even though similar rumours about Eliot's supposed plagiarism had also circulated with relation to her *The Moorland Cottage* (1850) and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). In my opinion, the striking similarities between *Mary Barton* and *Felix Holt* (including the melodramatic court scenes that feature in both) testify more to the fact that both writers utilised popular fictional tropes than to conscious plagiarism on George Eliot's part. Gaskell's plot outline is a classic example of the melodramatic triangle: the titular heroine of *Mary Barton* is a beautiful working class girl, who is courted by two suitors – Jem Wilson, an engineer with a working class background, and Harry Carson, a dissolute son of a factory owner. At first, Mary encourages the advances of Harry Carson, so when Jem proposes to her, she refuses him. Soon after, she realizes that she is in love with Jem and starts to evade Harry. When Carson is murdered, Jem is accused of the crime and Mary takes it upon herself to find a witness who will provide an alibi and she also testifies in his favour during the trial.

Apart from the court scene, there are however two important points of similarity between the two novels. One is the particular variation of the two suitors convention, called by Kennard "the aristocrat versus the commoner" (Kennard 46). The

terms "aristocrat" and "commoner" are used here very loosely, indicating a marked difference in social status between the two suitors rather than their actual rank. Typically, the "aristocratic" suitor turns out to be the wrong one, and the heroine marries the poor but honest "commoner." To the best of my knowledge, *Jane Eyre* is the only major novel from the period in which the heroine marries the wealthier suitor.[5] An extreme version of "the aristocrat versus the commoner" formula also features in *Nad Niemnem* (*On the Neman River*) by Eliza Orzeszkowa, a Polish *roman à these* published in 1888, whose idealistic heroine chooses the love of a patriotic and honourable peasant over an advantageous match with a cosmopolitan aristocrat. The discrediting qualities of the aristocratic suitor in Orzeszkowa's novel are his addiction to opium and an utter disregard for local matters, including the management of his own estate. The eleventh hour revelation of compromising facts about the aristocratic suitor, which appears in Orzeszkowa's novel, is another ubiquitous element of the formula, also present in *Felix Holt*.

In mid-nineteenth century romances that employ the two suitors formula, the aristocratic suitor routinely turns out to be "an upstart […] undeserving of his superior position" (Kennard 48). The blueprint for this development is Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859), in which Walter Hartright, a poor but honest drawing master, vies for the affections of the heroine with the evil Sir Percival Glyde. Walter finds out that Glyde's devilish actions are targeted at destroying the proofs of his illegitimate birth and of the fact that he has no legal title to his fortune. Symbolically, the villain burns to death in a church fire, and the parish register in which he had forged the record of his parents' marriage burns with him.

George Eliot takes this variant of "the aristocrat versus the commoner" formula one step further, even if the *dénouement* in her novel is less dramatic than that in *The Woman in White*. Not only is Harold Transome revealed to be an illegitimate son (and as such he has no claim to the Transome estate), but also his family fortune reverts to the possession of the heroine. It is clear however that the illegitimacy of the aristocratic suitor inevitably makes the heroine's dilemma less compelling. The hitherto undoubted advantages of the aristocratic suitor, his title and wealth, turn into a mare's nest, and the sterling qualities of the commoner no longer have a valid counterpoint.

Another telling point of similarity between *Mary Barton* and *Felix Holt* is the presence of a fallen woman, whose story serves as a warning for the heroine. In Gaskell's novel this figure is Mary's aunt Esther. As a young girl, Esther was wilful and spirited and she run away from home in order to escape the life of penury and hard work. She became a "kept woman," but once her youth and good looks were gone, her position gradually downgraded to a street-walker, the lowest ranking prostitute. Aunt Esther is a cautionary figure: she comes to see Mary and explicitly warns her not to indulge in fairy-tale fantasies of "ensnaring" a wealthy man, which were the cause of her own ruin. Mary takes her words to heart and Esther's warning is thus an indirect cause of her reconciliation with Jem. Then

Esther vanishes, and after some time is found unconscious on the doorstep of Mary's home. "They rushed outside; and, fallen in what appeared simply a heap of white or light-coloured clothes, fainting or dead, lay the poor crushed Butterfly – the once innocent Esther" (Gaskell 421). The description of Esther's deathbed and funeral likewise teems with pathos. Thus, the narratorial treatment of Aunt Esther is the one traditionally accorded to fallen women in Victorian fiction: she is punished by death for her transgression.

The part of the "fallen woman" in *Felix Holt* is played by Mrs Transome. Compared with Gaskell's Esther, her portrayal is much more nuanced, and the way in which she influences the heroine's decisions much less straightforward. Several critics have pointed out that the portrayal of Mrs Transome owes much to Dickens' Lady Dedlock.[6] It is true that the mode of presentation of Mrs Transome is similar to that of *Bleak House's* anti-heroine. Both characters are first shown in "passive tableaux" (Bode 780) and the emphasis is put in equal measure on their beauty and on the as yet inexplicable feeling of suppressed anxiety they exude. They are both expiating for some mysterious sins and dreading their discovery. In both cases, perhaps predictably, the revelations that they dread can come from the family lawyer. In *Bleak House,* the menacing Mr Tulkinghorn accidentally finds proof that before her marriage, Lady Dedlock had given birth to a child out of wedlock. The sheer realization that Tulkinghorn knows of her misdeeds makes the deranged Lady Dedlock flee from home. She dies of exhaustion at the gate of the cemetery where her lover is buried.

In the case of Mrs Transome, the secret is that Harold is not in fact the son of Mr Transome, but of the family lawyer Jermyn. George Eliot is very careful about planting the necessary clues. The first one can be found already in the introductory chapter, where the coachman Sampson informs the travellers that there are some "stories" circulating in the neighbourhood about the family from Transome Court:

> If the passenger was curious for further knowledge concerning the Transome affairs, Sampson would shake his head and say there had been fine stories in his time, but he never condescended to state what the stories were. Some attributed this reticence to a wise incredulity, others to a want of memory, others to simple ignorance. But at least Sampson was right in saying that there had been fine stories – meaning, ironically, stories not altogether creditable to the parties concerned. (10)

The same mysterious rumours are then reinforced in Chapter VIII when Sir Maximus Debarry remarks to his wife about Mrs Transome: "I never swallowed the scandal about her myself" (91). More hints as to the precise cause of the scandal and of Mrs Transome's anxiety appear in a conversation between Mrs Transome and Denner, her waiting-woman and confidante. When Harold arrives, Denner remarks cryptically: "As for likeness, thirty-five and sixty are not much alike,

only to people's memories" (27). Other clues are worthy of Agatha Christie: for example, both Harold and Jermyn use similar gestures:

> [Jermyn] chose always to dress in black, and was especially addicted to black satin waistcoats, which carried out the general sleekness of his appearance; and this, together with his white, fat, but beautifully-shaped hands, which he was in the habit of rubbing gently on his entrance to the room, gave him very much the air of a lady's physician. Harold remembered with some amusement his uncle's dislike of those conspicuous hands, but as his own were soft and dimpled, and as he too was given to the innocent practice of rubbing those members, his suspicions were not yet deepened. (36)

The last sentence of this passage is especially telling. Eliot's ironic avowal that there was nothing in Jermyn's appearance to trigger Harold's suspicions brings to mind her earlier treatment of Lawyer Wakem in *The Mill on the Floss* and the narrator's insistence that "there was not more rascality [in his face] than in the shape of his stiff shirt collar" (Eliot 2003, 2006). But in contrast to Wakem, whose "villainy" was completely exonerated by Eliot in the third volume of the novel, Jermyn is a genuinely evil character. Many carefully planted allusions are intended to explain the psychology behind his actions. The essence of Jermyn's moral fallings is explained in a complex anecdote:

> A German poet was intrusted with a particularly fine sausage, which he was to convey to the donor's friend in Paris. In the course of a long journey he smelt the sausage, he got hungry, and desired to taste it; he pared a morsel off, then another, and another, in successive moments of temptation, till at last the sausage was, humanely speaking, at an end. The offence had not been premeditated. The poet had never loved meanness, but he loved sausage; the result was undeniably awkward.
>
> So it was with Matthew Jermyn. He was far from liking the ugly abstraction rascality, but he had liked other things which had suggested nibbling. He had had to do many things in law and in daily life which, in the abstract, he would have condemned; and indeed he had never been tempted by them in the abstract. Here, in fact, was the inconvenience, he had sinned for the sake of particular concrete things, and particular concrete consequences were likely to follow. (117)

Eliot scholarship failed to identify the German poet from the story, which is believed to be apocryphal (Karl 550). I believe Eliot simply wanted to add yet another ironic twist to the situation, by contrasting the poet's romantic occupation and the mundane cause of his temptation and lack of self-restraint. She further reinforces the irony in other allusions to the love affair between Mrs Transome and Jermyn: "Shall we call it degeneration or gradual development – this effect of thirty additional winters on the soft-glancing, versifying young Jermyn?" (455).

The story of the affair is only presented in glimpses and allusions, and the general mood is that of regret. As Ilona Dobosiewicz puts it, "The novel focuses not so much on the acts that [Mrs Transome] committed, but on the results of these past acts, and demonstrates that each moment of choice is influenced by previous decisions" (126). The transgressions of thirty years ago are the cause of present humiliation, but their true nature is only referred to allusively:

> For a moment [Jermyn] was fully back in those distant years when he and another bright-eyed person had seen no reason why they should not indulge their passion and their vanity, and determine for themselves how their lives should be made delightful in spite of unalterable external conditions. The reasons had been unfolding themselves gradually ever since though all the years which had converted the handsome, soft-eyed, slim young Jermyn (with a touch of sentiment) into a portly lawyer of sixty, for whom life had resolved itself into the means of keeping up his head among his professional brethren and maintaining an establishment – into a grey-haired husband and father, whose third affectionate and expensive daughter now rapped at the window and called to him, 'Papa, papa, get ready for dinner; don't you remember that the Lukyns are coming?' (220)

Eliot's psychological insight transforms a plot development that could be presented as lurid, into a pitiful situation that calls for the readers' sympathy. The treatment of Jermyn prefigures the famous exclamation: "But why always Dorothea?" from *Middlemarch* (87), whereby Eliot demanded an equal measure of compassion for the ardent heroine and her unattractive husband.

A recurring thread in the allusions to Mrs Transome's past in *Felix Holt* consists of attempts to explain how a woman could "make herself secretly dependent on a man who is beneath her in feeling" (115). Mrs Transome's infatuation with Jermyn is in fact not dissimilar from Maggie Tulliver's "great temptation," her falling in love with Stephen Guest. George Eliot explains both heroines behaviours by highlighting the lack of educational opportunities for women in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the resulting frustration of their ambitions, and the fact that they sought to fill their empty lives with some surrogate meaning by romanticizing their lot. An early chapter of the novel provides a condensed ironic account of Arabella Transome's youth:[7]

> When she was young she had been thought wonderfully clever and accomplished, and had been rather ambitious of intellectual superiority – had secretly picked out for private reading the lighter parts of dangerous French authors – and in company had been able to talk of Mr Burke's style, or of Chateaubriand's eloquence – had laughed at the *Lyrical Ballads* and admired Mr Southey's *Thalaba* […]. For Miss Lingon had had a superior governess, who held that a woman should be able to write a good letter, and to express herself with propriety on general subjects. And it is astonishing how effective this education appeared in a handsome girl, who sat supremely well

> on horseback, sang and played a little, painted small figures in water-colours, had a naughty sparkle in her eyes when she made a daring quotation, and an air of serious dignity when she recited something from her store of correct opinions. (29–30)

In spite of its opaque literary references, the passage rings the same tone as the often-quoted mocking description of the education of Rosamond Vincy in *Middlemarch*, who attended "the chief school in the county, where the teaching included all that was demanded in the accomplished female – even to extras, such as the getting in and out of a carriage" (89) and thus links to one of George Eliot's most recurring and most personal themes, that of the dearth of valid educational opportunities for young women.

The description of Mrs Transome's education and her desire to dazzle also make her a foil – or a cautionary example – for Esther. The heroine has many affinities with the young Mrs Transome, such as intelligence and the general claim to superiority, and also the desire to dazzle. But when Esther comes to "the first and last parting of her ways" (430), her decision is diametrically opposed to the choice made by Mrs Transome thirty years earlier. The point that Mrs Transome is a foil to Esther is brought home in a scene where the latter, meditating on her choice, sees a portrait of a young Mrs Transome: "the youthful brilliancy it represented saddened Esther by its inevitable association with what she daily saw had come instead of it – a joyless, embittered age" (459). In yet another interpretational twist, the love story of Mrs Transome and Jermyn takes on an almost biblical dimension, as Esther muses:

> Even the flowers […] of Paradise would have been spoiled for a young heart, if the bowered walks had been haunted by an Eve gone grey and bitter with memories of Adam who had complained, "The woman […] she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." (459)

Seeing the misery and humiliation that follows indulging in the temptation, Esther finds the strength to withstand it. The feeling of affinity with Mrs Transome is reinforced, because Esther herself had also been earlier compared by Harold to a sitter from another family portrait. To Harold's surprise, Esther rather resents the compliment, exclaiming that the lady seems "drilled into her posture" (383). This scene is one of the first clues that hint at the moral change in the heroine.

The intricate web of imagery that suggests an affinity between Esther and Mrs Transome in fact serves a simple function – Mrs Transome, as the novel's fallen woman, is meant to be a cautionary example for Esther. She plays the same role in the narrative as Gaskell's Aunt Esther, who delivered an explicit message of warning to the heroine in *Mary Barton*. Alexander Welsh in his masterly study of the motif of blackmail in George Eliot's novels stresses the realism of the ending of Mrs Transome's storyline, as opposed to the usual melodramatic deaths of

fallen women in Victorian fiction: "the narrator never deviates from a standard moral judgement upon her […]. Mrs Transome lives out her unhappy life with her senile husband; nothing can be achieved for romance or allegory by killing her off" (Welsh 198).

Just as the characterisation of Mrs Transome contains veiled allusions to earlier portrayals of fictional "fallen women," such as Braddon's Lady Audley, and, to my mind, shows a specially strong affinity to Dickens's Lady Dedlock, the characterisation of her son Harold seems subtly indebted to the Byronic hero (and possibly to later Victorian incarnations of this figure, such as Mr Rochester – another mysterious hero with a sexual past). George Eliot made the connection with Byron impossible to miss, as Harold shares a name with the eponymous hero of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Conceivably, however, Harold is meant as an ironic reaction against the Byronic tradition rather than as a straightforward tribute. George Eliot carefully prepared the ground for Harold's meeting with Esther by first describing his exciting and mysterious past:

> Meanwhile the estate was burdened […]. Harold must go and make the career for himself […]. [He] had gone with the Embassy to Constantinople, under the patronage of a high relative, his mother's cousin; he was to be a diplomatist, and work his way upward in public life. But his luck has taken another shape: he had saved the life of an Armenian banker, who in gratitude offered him a prospect which his practical mind had preferred to the problematic promises of diplomacy and high-born cousinship. Harold had become a merchant and banker at Smyrna, had let the years to pass without caring to find a possibility of visiting his early home. (24)

When Harold's dissolute elder brother Durfey dies, he inherits the family estate and announces his decision to come back to England, and only then decides to inform his mother

> that he had been married, that his Greek wife was no longer living, but that he should bring home a little boy, the finest and most desirable of heirs and grandsons. Harold, seated in his distant Smyrna home […] figured his mother as a good elderly lady, who would necessarily be delighted with the possession on any terms of a healthy grandchild, and would not mind much about the particulars of the long-concealed marriage. (25)

At first, Harold's news are only focalized through Mrs Transome, mortified by the fact that her favourite son kept his marriage a secret from her, and offended by his off-hand manner. When he arrives, Harold turns out to be a determinedly down-to-earth version of the Byronic hero. Whereas the facts of his life, such as his long residence in the exotic Smyrna, the mysterious marriage, and saving the life of a wealthy banker, have a perceptible romantic tinge, his behaviour

and appearance are in stark contrast with the romantic aura that surrounds him. Harold himself seems baffled by this disparity: "A woman would not find me a tragic hero," he tells Esther, to which she replies, "O, no! You are quite another genre […]. [A woman] must dress for genteel comedy – such as your mother once described to me – where the most thrilling event is the drawing of a handsome cheque" (420).

Esther's literary comparison further enhances the contrast between Harold and Felix, as the latter had been earlier compared to "a roughly-written page" (60). While Harold's potential as a Byronic hero is played down, there is, however, one further element of mystery surrounding him that would be recognisable to readers of sensation fiction: he brings from the Orient a "sallow-skinned domestic" (112). It is hinted in the early chapters in the book that there is more to Harold's man Dominic that meets the eye. Tantalisingly, he claims an acquaintance with the novel's would-be blackmailer Christian. But this promising story line is not pursued and in the end Dominic proves quite harmless. This method of building the readers' expectations and subsequently playing them down resembles Eliot's handling of the would-be elopement sequence in *The Mill on the Floss*.

Harold's leading characteristic, which is reiterated in many contexts throughout the novel, is his plumpness. Whereas Alicia Carroll in her seminal study of Orientalism in *Felix Holt* reads the insistent mentions of Harold's fatness as a realist indication of his indulgent lifestyle – he is "rich with Turkish fortune and literally plump with Oriental luxury" (Carroll 237), I believe that the insistence on Harold's excessive body weight may serve another function. A struggle to keep down his fat, by exercise and drinking vinegar, was a constant element of the life of Lord Byron, as testified in Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography* (1850). It is probable that George Eliot had read Hunt's book, as she had a long-standing interest in the lives of the Romantic poets and her partner G.H. Lewes used to be a close friend of Leigh Hunt's son, Thornton Leigh Hunt (Rignall 152). And, as Byron's biographer Fiona MacCarthy asserts, the story of Byron's weight-related problems and constant dieting circulated quite widely in the nineteenth century, originating not only from Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography*, but also from other memoirs and reminiscences of the poet's friends (MacCarthy 228). Taking this into account, I believe that one can safely assume that the insistent allusions to Harold's fatness are meant as an ironic reference to the Byronic legend, designed to highlight the disparity between the man and his life. Just like Byron's new acquaintances were disconcerted to discover that the Romantic icon was in fact chubby, Esther Lyon – and the novel's readers – also experience a cognitive dissonance.

Esther's final choice of the morally more worthy suitor of humble social standing over a seemingly irresistible (and a quasi-Byronic) aristocrat fulfils the requirements of the "aristocrat vs. commoner" formula and as such it is hardly surprising for the reader. In one way, Esther's decision is a clear proof of her maturity

and of final rejection of "fine-ladyism" which used to be her major weakness, but on the other hand, it also has a palpable fairy-tale quality. Like a true romantic heroine, Esther chooses the love of a good man over a loveless marriage to his wealthier rival. But the realistic setup of the story encourages different expectations: as Harold himself puts it earlier in the novel, "Esther was too clever and tasteful a woman to make a ballad heroine of herself, by bestowing her beauty and her lands on this lowly lover" (417). This, however, is precisely what she does. To complicate the picture even further, Harold himself is far from being a typical villain in the mould of Sir Percival Glyde. In the last volume of the novel he gives ample proofs of honour and generosity, informing Esther himself about her title to the Transome estates and later enlisting the help of local landowners in order to defend Felix.

All in all, a close analysis of *Felix Holt*, dubbed George Eliot's "most intensely political novel" (Rignall 169), which many readers perceive as her most realistic (and incidentally, alongside *Romola*, one of her two least accessible works) reveals Eliot's indebtedness to sensation novel tropes, which is visible not only in the climactic trial scene, but is also consistently present in characterisation of the principal characters (especially Harold and Mrs Transome) and in the outline of the plot. *Felix Holt* was published during the sensation boom of the 1860s, and a study of latent sensational and melodramatic motifs in Eliot's novel and of their affinity with similar formulas present in earlier bestselling Victorian novels by Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade helps to undermine the popular assumption that George Eliot was the quintessential realist and suggests that in fact she responded to the changing tastes of her readers and to their demand for sensation by introducing tropes inspired by popular fiction. Modern George Eliot scholarship confirms that this "the doyenne of nineteenth-century realism" (Pykett 212) often "deployed sensation effects and sensation machinery in her attempts to render the moral universe legible" (Pykett 212). For all this, she skilfully negotiated the border between the realist and the sensational conventions, never crossing the line and entering fully into the popular fiction territory.

Studying hitherto under-researched aspects of Eliot's work, such as her deployment of popular literature tropes, fits well into the new critical trends within the broader field of Victorian studies. In 2008 the distinguished Victorian scholar George Levine appealed for a new opening in the field of nineteenth-century studies, claiming that the recent tendency to pay attention to neglected minor writers necessarily results in a distorted picture of the period. Levine called forth for a renewal of critical interest in canonical texts, arguing that the great Victorian novels should be re-evaluated as "distinctly less comfortable, quaint, cute and predictable than BBC and film productions have made many people think they are" (Levine vi).

Notes

1 The complex relationships between the sensational and realist conventions are cogently studied by George Levine in *How to Read the Victorian Novel* (2008).

2 An interesting analysis of the Victorian book market in one selected year is contained in Monica Correa Fryckstedt's *On the Brink: English Novels of 1866* (1989). Incidentally, 1866 is the year of publication of *Felix Holt*, and Fryckstedt's monograph carries a wealth of interesting details on the novel's performance on the market and on Eliot's sales in comparison with other authors.

3 A detailed study of the specific novels which Eliot analyses in her essay is contained in Susan Rowland Tush's *George Eliot and the Conventions of Popular Women's Fiction* (1993).

4 Reade alludes here to the scene in which Jermyn reveals to Harold that he is his father (*Felix Holt*, 456). Regrettably, I was not able to identify "the old novel" to which he refers. The relevant passage from George Eliot's novel is analyzed in a classic article that traces the links of Eliot's novel to classic Greek tragedy and especially to the notion of *anagnorisis* (see Thompson 47–58).

5 The subversion of the formula in the case of Mr Rochester and St. John Rivers makes the closure of Jane Eyre quite unexpected and testifies to the uniqueness of Charlotte Brontë's creative imagination. Given the Victorian value framework, the fact that the heroine rejects a proposal from a clergyman (and a prospective missionary) and marries a reformed villain is a brave departure from the reigning convention. The novel was a tremendous success in terms of sales, but several early reviews condemned the "immorality" of its ending (Barker 536–577).

6 See Dobosiewicz (124) and Karl (390–395). On a similar note, Winifred Hughes comments on the resemblance between Mrs Transome and Braddon's Lady Audley (171–172). The similarities between the two "fallen women" in *Felix Holt* and *Lady Audley* were in fact first noticed by at least one contemporary reviewer. In her chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction* Lyn Pykett observes: "*The Contemporary Review* was not alone in noting the indebtedness of *Felix Holt* (1866) to the sensation novel when it described Eliot's Mrs Transome […] and Lady Audley as 'twin sisters'" (212).

7 Mrs Transome's Christian name is in itself significant as it carries palpable romantic associations. Disraeli was one novelist who used the name often for his heroines, e.g. in "The Loves of the Lady Arabella" (1834). One of the main characters of Disraeli's Chartist novel *Sybil* (1845) is also called Arabella.

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Literature, Politics and the CIA: Polish-English Literary Translation at the Time of the Cold War

Abstract

The paper examines the interdependence of literature and world politics, focusing on contemporary Polish prose, mainly in English translation, promoted in the West between 1945 and 1989 for its anti-communist message, not rarely with the financial backing from the CIA, denied to apolitical Polish writing. Among others, it addresses the question of the instrumental treatment of writers on both sides of the Iron Curtain and the ideological censorship of the original as well as of the translated literary texts. Taken into account are works of fiction by Czesław Miłosz, Marek Hłasko, Witold Gombrowicz, Jerzy Andrzejewski and Ryszard Kapuściński.

The idea for the present paper originated in reaction to the striking gap discernible between the high reputation and continuing popularity of many Polish narratives dating to the 1945–1989 period and their absence in English translation.[1] Naturally, one-to-one correspondence between any long-established literatures is impossible, especially if power relations between them are asymmetrical. As Benjamin Paloff noticed: "beyond the academic world, [in the West] the phrase 'Polish literature' is not equivalent to [the Polish understanding of] *literatura polska*" (87; trans. S. Sz.). Even if we accept this unflattering truth, unflattering since it denotes the lack of popular interest in Polish culture in the West, the study of what has or has not been translated into English and what forms the Anglo-American concept of Polish literature remains valid. The question becomes especially interesting when extra-literary factors come into play, be it international politics of the Cold War period (1945–1989) or publishing policies prevailing nowadays, according to which publishers are unwilling to invest in unknown writers and books from the old literary repertoire.

The lack of pre-1990 English versions of prose works by Kornel Filipowicz (1913–1990), Zofia Posmysz (b. 1923), Jan Himilsbach (1931–1988), Wiesław Myśliwski (b. 1932), Edward Stachura (1937–1979) or Edward Redliński (b. 1940) proves that indeed the main factor behind the discrepancy between the image of contemporary Polish literature in Poland and that which emerges abroad from its English-language renditions was Cold War politics. Even if appreciated at their

source, novels and short stories by the above-mentioned authors stayed outside the scope of interest of Anglo-American translation commissioners, focused on the anti-communist aspect of literary works.[2]

Literature, also that in translation from and into English, had an important role to play in the Cold War propaganda struggle. The strategy was simple enough: import translations of any works which testify to the corruption of the ideas professed by your opponent, export anything which will change the mindset of the people in the enemy's camp in order to attract them to your (ostensive) values and make them support your cause. In her fascinating book, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (2013),[3] Frances Stonor Saunders gives a comprehensive account of the postwar situation in the cultural contest between the East and the West, which initially was dominated by the Soviet Union:

> Experts in the use of culture as a tool of political persuasion, the Soviets did much in these early years of the Cold War to establish their central paradigm as a cultural one. Lacking the economic power of the United States and, above all, still without a nuclear capability, Stalin's regime concentrated on winning "the battle for men's minds." America, despite the massive marshaling of the arts in the New Deal period, was a virgin in the practice of international Kulturkampf. (15)

The Americans, however, soon learnt how to respond to the Soviet cultural offensive, subsequently surpassing their enemy. "Mindful of Disraeli's injunction that 'a book may be as great a thing as a battle,' […] [s]uitable texts were 'whatever critiques of Soviet foreign policy and of Communism as a form of government [they found] to be objective, convincingly written, and timely'" (qtd. in Stonor Saunders 19). The same principle applied to Polish authors published in the West. As a result, instead of being assessed for its purely literary or existential values, contemporary Polish literature was selected for translation into English primarily on the political basis. In her Introduction to *Polish Literature in Transformation* (2013), a volume of papers on Polish literary production since the fundamental political and economic changes in 1989, Ursula Phillips remarks:

> The continued prolific activity, success and recognition of such writers [as Wiesław Myśliwski (b. 1932) or Marian Pilot (b. 1936)] begs questions about the relationship (if there is one) between literary production (in terms of universal human or artistic values) and political dissidence: were certain opposition writers, but not those honoured here, artificially promoted pre-1989 by émigré milieus or by scholars sympathetic to the opposition for the content rather than the literary value of their work? (9)

The answer to the question posed by Phillips is affirmative, but the question itself does not take into account one more powerful agent active in the promotion of

anti-communist literature: the CIA. The Agency's involvement in dissident book publishing, whether in émigré, academic or commercial presses, at home and abroad, as well as in book distribution, is a historical fact. Although some of the crucial documents are still classified, the *Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities*, conveniently referred to as the *Final Report of the Church Committee*, gives testimony to the US-sponsored promotion of opposition writers in the US and abroad (192–201). Apart from being the stimulus for the secret funding of certain publications, translations included, world politics also influenced reading fashions. In 2009 Jarosław Anders recalled:

> [O]wing to dramatic events in Eastern Europe, including the Solidarity uprising and martial law in Poland and growing political dissent throughout the region, the literature of Eastern Europe was very much *en vogue* in literary New York and beyond. Miłosz on his frequent visits from Berkeley and Joseph Brodsky in his Greenwich Village basement apartment were the new arbiters of literary "seriousness." In Paris, Milan Kundera and Danilo Kiš were grudgingly assuming a similar role. American publishers, normally scared of contemporary translations, were bringing out a whole slew of East European authors of different caliber, though with impeccable dissident credentials. (xiv–xv)

Marek Nowakowski's (1935–2014) *Raport o stanie wojennym* is a perfect illustration of Anders's words. Notwithstanding the fact that *Raport* was a literary failure (Jarosiński 146–147), only this book was chosen for translation into English out of the writer's whole *oeuvre*. Originally brought out in 1982 by Instytut Literacki in Paris and by the Warsaw-based underground publisher NOWa, the collection appeared in English as *The Canary and Other Tales of Martial Law* (1983 and 1984). It was also rendered into Swedish (1982) French (1983), German (1983, in Munich and Vienna), Norwegian (1983), Spanish (1984, in Argentina), Serbian (1984, by an independent publisher) and Dutch (1986), an example of "coordinated publishing," typical of literature which served as a warning against communism. Although the situation described by Anders, as well as Nowakowski's example, refers to the first half of the 1980s, when martial law was imposed in Poland, such a publishing tendency, guided by the political agenda, was already in operation in the 1950s (*Final Report…* 181; Nowak-Jeziorański and Giedroyc 219, 236, 244–245, 247, 297–299, 326, 419; Stonor Saunders 100–101, 112–113). Of course Nowakowski's case does not mean that all such books were artistic disasters; some of them led to genuine interest in such writers as Czesław Miłosz or Ryszard Kapuściński. Nevertheless, the state of "the cultural Cold War" meant that English-language publishers were unwilling to bring out contemporary literature from the Eastern Bloc which was meaningless from the political point of view and extremely risky from the financial one, especially if not supported by external sources. As mentioned above, it was

the CIA which played the role of a generous sponsor of anti-communist literature. University presses as well as privately owned publishing houses were often infiltrated and subsidised by the Agency, "regardless of commercial viability"[4] (*Final Report of...* 193; Matthews; Reisch). Published in 1976, the *Final Report of the Church Committee* stated:

> Well over a thousand books were produced, subsidized or sponsored by the CIA before the end of 1967. Approximately 25 percent of them were written in English. Many of them were published by cultural organizations which the CIA backed, and more often than not the author was unaware of CIA subsidization. (193)

After the CIA's funding of a number of organisations and publications in America and abroad was disclosed to the general public in 1967, consequently causing much outrage and many accusations, George Kennan of the Free Europe Committee, pointedly replied: "This country [the USA] has no Ministry of Culture, and CIA was obliged to do what it could to try to fill the gap. It should be praised for having done so, and not criticized" (qtd. in Stonor Saunders 344). Desmond FitzGerald, the Deputy Director for Plans of the Central Intelligence Agency was of a similar opinion. As a result, the publishing and mailing programmes continued, with some modifications, until the fall of the Soviet Union (FitzGerald; Matthews; Reisch; Stonor Saunders 341).

In the context of Polish literature, the implementation of the book publishing programme directed against communism was possible largely due to the following groups of authors:

- The diaspora of Polish émigré writers who did not return to Poland after the Second World War, among them Stanisław Vincenz (1888–1971), Herminia Naglerowa (1890–1957), Aleksander Hertz (1895–1983), Józef Czapski (1896–1993), Józef Mackiewicz (1902–1985), Witold Gombrowicz (1904–1969), Wacław Zagórski (1909–1983), Andrzej Bobkowski (1913–1961) and Gustaw Herling-Grudziński (1919–2000).[5]
- Asylum seekers who defected to the West from postwar Poland, for example Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004; asked for asylum in 1951 in Paris), Marek Hłasko (1934–1969; asked for asylum in 1958 in West Berlin), Leopold Tyrmand (1920–1985; asked for asylum in 1966 in the USA) and Sławomir Mrożek (1930–2013; asked for asylum in 1968 in Paris).
- Writers living in Poland but disenchanted with communism, among them Jerzy Andrzejewski (1909–1983), Kazimierz Brandys (1916–2000)[6] and Tadeusz Konwicki (1926–2015).
- Opposition writers of the younger generation who never championed communism in Poland, among others Marek Nowakowski (1935–2014), Janusz Głowacki (b. 1938) and Janusz Anderman (b. 1949).
- Authors of anti-totalitarian works, whose message was limited in the West

to the unambiguous anti-communist interpretation, such as Stanisław Lem (1921–2006) and Ryszard Kapuściński (1932–2007).

The most acute blow at the early stage of the East-West literary Cold War came with the publishing of two dissident books by Czesław Miłosz, in their Polish, English and many other language versions. Stonor Saunders writes: "In May [1951], the Congress [for Cultural Freedom][7] 'presented' a prize intellectual defector at a press conference in Paris. He was the young cultural attaché at the Polish Embassy, a poet and translator of *The Waste Land*, Czesław Miłosz" (84).

In 1953, Miłosz's anti-totalitarian study, *Zniewolony umysł*, was published in Jane Zielonko's translation as *The Captive Mind* in two English-language editions: by Secker & Warburg in London and by Alfred A. Knopf in New York. What is crucial here is that at that time, both publishing houses were involved in bringing out publications opposing communist ideology. According to Stonor Saunders, Frederic Warburg wittingly cooperated with American intelligence agencies (332), publishing *Encounter* (146–147; 275) and distributing *Partisan Review* in England (284). Alfred Knopf, in turn, refused to bring out Howard Fast's novel *Spartacus*, sending "the manuscript back unopened, saying he wouldn't even look at a work of a [communist] traitor" (qtd. in Stonor Saunders 44). Until 1956, the year of the Polish October Thaw and the bloody Hungarian Revolution, after which the American propaganda operations in Europe subsided and were redirected for some time to Asia, *Zniewolony umysł* appeared in Polish (1953 in Paris), English (1953), French (1953), German (1953), Italian (1955) and Swedish (1956). The French, German and Swedish editions were additionally accompanied with a foreword by Karl Jaspers.[8]

Another book by Miłosz, *Zdobycie władzy* (1955), known in the United States as *The Seizure of Power* (1955) and in the United Kingdom as *The Usurpers* (1955), was a political novel whose writing was stimulated, in all good intention, by the philosopher Jeanne Hersch, a student of Jaspers,' whom Miłosz met through Józef Czapski (Franaszek 221). All the circumstances of the novel's creation point to it being one of the books whose writing and publication were carefully staged by the American secret services according to the specifications contained in the *Final Report of the Church Committee* (192–193). The fact that *Zdobycie władzy* was written on commission in only two summer months of 1952 in order to be presented (in a manuscript form) by October of the same year for the 1953 *Prix Littéraire Européen* confirms this supposition, since Miłosz's winning the prize provided, via numerous translations, a perfect opportunity for the proliferation of the anti-communist message contained in the book in all the sensitive areas of the world where socialist ideals were gaining strong ground. Among others, in the 1950s and 1980s the book was published in English, French (France and Switzerland), German (Germany, Switzerland and Austria), Gujarati, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean (two different translations), Malayalam, Marathi, Norwegian, Portuguese (Brazil

and Portugal), Serbian, Spanish (Colombia and Spain) and Swedish. In contrast, *Kimmerische Fahrt* (1953) by Werner Warsinsky, a narrative about the Second World War which won the *Prix Littéraire Européen* together with *Zdobycie władzy*, appeared only in Japanese translation in 1955.

Significantly, the organization which gave the idea for the *Prix Littéraire Européen*, the European Centre of Culture in Geneva, was created by Denis de Rougemont, the President of the Paris-based anti-communist Congress for Cultural Freedom, aware of it being the CIA's operation from the very beginning (Stonor Saunders, qtd. in Lucas 29). However, even years after the CIA's role in many "spontaneouos and independent" initiatives targeted at fighting communism became public knowledge, Miłosz remained blissfully unaware of the circumstances of the award's creation. In 1999 he wrote:

> In 1952, Les Guildes du Livre in Switzerland […] announced a competition for a novel submitted in one of the Western European languages. The prize, *Prix Littéraire Européen*, guaranteed to the winner a considerable sum of money and the novel's publication by the book guilds. I decided to take part, although I had never written a novel before. […] The book was created in two months. I used to write a chapter in the morning and in the afternoon it was delivered to my French translator, Jeanne Hersch. […] Following the terms of the competition, the first selection of the manuscripts was the responsibility of national juries, depending on the language. I submitted my novel as *La prise du pouvoir*. […] The *Prix Littéraire Européen* was awarded in 1953. Warsinsky, the candidate of the German jury, was my rival. Both of us received the Prize. It was timely. I was completely broke. (7–8; trans. S. Sz.)

Financial hardships evoked by Miłosz return like a mantra in the reminiscences by many émigré and dissident writers and although the ideological or ethical concerns were the prevailing factor in their anti-communist stance, money was a tool with which they could have been potentially manipulated.

On the other hand, it sometimes happened that American periodicals published translations of Polish literary pieces without the author's knowledge or consent and without any remuneration. Such was the case of two stories by Marek Hłasko, printed in English translation in the American magazine *East Europe*,[9] while the writer was still based in Poland (Nowak-Jeziorański and Giedroyc 236). Initially pampered by the communist authorities, Hłasko soon learnt that he could not count on unfettered artistic expression. In fact, the closing of the intellectual weekly *Po prostu* in 1957[10] and the withdrawal of Hłasko's *Cmentarze* (*The Graveyard*) from publication spelt the end of the Polish Thaw (Szymańska 195). Although Juliusz Żuławski from the Polish Writers' Union managed to assure the Ford Foundation stipend for Hłasko (Żuławski 42), the governmental approval was later withdrawn. Instead of going to the United States, the writer decided to go to Paris, where he had his *Cmentarze*, as well as *Następny do raju* (*Next Stop – Paradise*),

brought out in Jerzy Giedroyc's *Kultura*.[11] In a letter to Giedroyc, Jan Nowak-Jeziorański wrote:

> Congratulations on the great success with Hłasko. Publishing his book [*Cmentarze*; *Następny do raju*, 1958; *The Graveyard*, 1959; *Next Stop – Paradise*, 1960] was a splendid move, all the more important that he didn't sever his ties with Poland. This is an important precedence, which might open yet another way to the West for writers in Poland. To my mind, if Hłasko "had chosen freedom" the publication of his book would have had much less meaning. (Nowak-Jeziorański and Giedroyc 240; trans. S. Sz.)

Although soon after the appearance of *Cmentarze* and *Następny do raju* their author asked for asylum, the propaganda value of the two books, subsequently translated into English, did not diminish. Brought out in Polish in one volume, the publication received the *Kultura* Award in the *ad-hoc* one-off "home literature" category for the year 1957. In 1958, for his *Cmentarze*, Hłasko was chosen the first winner of the London *Wiadomości* Prize, the émigré literary award founded for the first five years by Auberon Herbert.[12] Even though the financial remuneration (100 guineas) which came with the winning of the *Wiadomości* Prize was a great help for Hłasko, he found it extremely difficult to make a living from writing in the West. In his autobiographical book, *Piękni dwudziestoletni* (1966; *Beautiful Twenty-somethings*; 2013), he bitterly commented:

> But what to do when you want to keep on writing? You'll be fine, so long as you were once a communist, a member of the Central Committee, a high functionary in the Department of Security, a spy, or a diplomat. A man who was a spy for the Kremlin behind the Iron Curtain, who tore out his compatriots' fingernails or put a bullet in the back of their heads, will always find a good career. He'll be used as a propaganda trump card and a pawn in the battle against communism. An honest man who has never been a communist or a spy just becomes an unnecessary burden for the people of the West. As everybody knows, the people of Eastern Europe hate the commies, and it's impossible to exploit them for propaganda purposes, since to say that evening is dark and morning is bright isn't a revelation in the West. (1673–1677)[13]

With Western publishers disinterested in him as a writer, Hłasko analysed, with typical irony, four further ways of survival in the new circumstances he found himself. These included: feigning insanity in order to be admitted to a mental asylum; finding a "quiet harbor," in other words going to prison; pimping, which, however, is a difficult and dangerous job; or undertaking "honest work," i.e. a career in espionage, for which, unfortunately, he has no talent (1693–2167).[14]

At the same time, Witold Gombrowicz, who did not achieve wider recognition in the West until the 1960s, was struggling to make a living in Argentina. In 1954,

reflecting on his *Ferdydurke* (1937–1938; *Ferdydurke*, 1961; retranslated 2000) being initially rejected by the French publisher Julliard, Gombrowicz remarked: "How outrageous! The only contemporary Polish novel which could become a success abroad. […] It seems that in order to be translated, a Pole has to write about Bolsheviks. Hopeless!" (Giedroyc and Gombrowicz 172, trans. S. Sz.). Even a year earlier, confident of his intellectual and artistic potential, the writer stated: "[N]ever have we been more torn between East and West. These two worlds, destroying each other right before our eyes, create an emptiness in us which we will be able to fill only with our own contents" (Gombrowicz 2012, 283–284). And indeed, throughout his writing Gombrowicz abstained from direct political engagement, filling it instead with interhuman (and interspecies) existential experience. However, it would be erroneous to believe that Gombrowicz's fame and freedom from financial worries, late as they came, were purely an outcome of his creative talent. Rather, it must be acknowledged that his eventual popularity in the 1960s was largely due to protection from the circles connected with the Paris *Kultura* and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, among others Jerzy Giedroyc, Konstanty Jeleński or the chief editor of the CIA-sponsored periodical *Preuves*, François Bondy (Giedroyc and Gombrowicz; Gombrowicz 1998). This proves that even at an extra-textual level, politics played a vital role in the process of accepting or rejecting contemporary Polish writing into the literatures and languages of the countries lying west of the Berlin Wall.[15] Luckily for Gombrowicz, François Bondy, one of the most influential "cold warriors" in the West, showed a genuine interest in his literary creativity. Aware of Bondy's political significance, the Polish writer characterised him in the following way:

> This important editor, whom it is difficult to imagine without four phones and three secretaries, is very much the poet. He is a poet so much that sometimes we, poets, harbor the suspicion that his indolence, his expression of a lost child, greedy eyes, the strange capacity for just appearing (instead of walking in normally), are to lure us and use us coldly to his own purposes. But I cheer myself that politicians are inclined to do the reverse, to nurture the fear that Bondy's cold organizational talents are to dupe them and to catch them in nets of poetry. (Gombrowicz 2012, 496–497)

In his dedication in Bondy's copy of the French-language edition of *Bakakaj* (1933–1953; *Bakakaï*, 1967), Gombrowicz wrote: "My Dear François, it was you who discovered, promoted, supported, defended, imposed and crowned me and I am writhing at your feet with my 20,000 [dollars – Prix Formentor] in absolutely incredible convulsions" (R. Gombrowicz 87; trans. S. Sz.). That Gombrowicz successfully conquered the Western literary mind, may be proved by the presence of *Ferdydurke* (1937–1938; *Ferdydurke*, 1961; retranslated. 2000) among Emma Beare's *501 Must-Read Books* (2006 and later editions), next to Stanisław Lem's *Solaris* (1961; *Solaris*, 1970; retranslated 2011).[16]

While Gombrowicz might be said to be the only contemporary Polish writer of apolitical works who was widely translated into Western languages before 1989, all the other authors from Poland who became well-known in the West, whether émigré or home-based ones, entered the translated English-language literature thanks to the anti-totalitarian message contained in their books.[17] Such, for instance, was the case of Jerzy Andrzejewski's post-Stalinist *Ciemności kryją ziemię* (1957; *The Inquisitors*, 1960) and *Bramy raju* (1960; *The Gates of Paradise*, 1962). However, it is the unauthorised censorship of Andrzejewski's *Popiół i diament* (1948; *Ashes and Diamonds*, 1962) that most reveals the anti-communist slant of Western publishers.

The book was brought out in English translation fourteen years after the novel's publication in the original Polish.[18] It depicted the general instability in postwar Poland: in-fights between groups representing different political options, hopes for a better future and its uncertainty, as well as moral dilemmas which accompanied people and affected their choices and lives. What may have seemed too unsavoury in the novel for official reviewers in Poland, for example the depiction of the lack of widespread popular support for the new communist government in Polish society, as well as the pessimistic ending, automatically became an asset for capitalist propaganda. The book, however, did not draw the attention of English-language publishers at the time it first appeared in Poland. This may have been caused by Andrzejewski's reticence about the Soviet involvement in the takeover of power by communists in Poland (Synoradzka-Demadre xvii–xix). Moreover, in 1950, Andrzejewski renounced all his pre-communist writings in the self-critical confession "Notatki: Wyznania i rozmyślania pisarza" (4). As such, the writer and the books he published before his departure from communism would not have been welcome in the West. The fact that Andrzejewski was the prototype of Alpha, one of the captive minds portrayed by Czesław Miłosz did not help, either.

It is no coincidence then that Andrzejewski's novels, *Popiół i diament* included, were translated into English only after he became a communist dissident. Andrzej Wajda's film of the same title (1958) must have been an additional factor, if not the spur for the book's publication in the West. Wajda's work owed its huge popularity not only to its cinematic values, but also to the shift of accents in the original plot. In his film, the Polish director moved the tragic figure of Maciek Chełmicki, the anti-communist Home Army soldier, decidedly to the fore. The English translation of the novel also differed from its Polish basis, not only because Maciek became Michael in David John Welsh's rendition. More importantly, *Ashes and Diamonds* was severely mutilated by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, the London publisher of Andrzejewski's books. The translator of *Ashes and Diamonds*, thus commented on the shape of his rendition in the published form:

> Probably the best known Polish novel in my translation is Andrzejewski's *Popiół i diament* (*Ashes and Diamonds*) (largely due to the film). The translation was published in London and is now available in paper-back there. But *we have not been able to find a publisher in the US*, so the novel is not available here. In connection with *Popiół i diament*, I might add that *my translation was subjected by the publisher to ruthless cutting, entirely without my knowledge or approval*. Only when the page proofs reached me, did I see what they had done. By that time it was too late to protest. *The cuts completely ruined the novel and made nonsense of the title*. (88; emphasis mine)

What was lacking from the English-language version of the book were two long passages: one devoted to Maciek Chełmicki's hesitation before the completion of his mission to assassinate Stefan Szczuka, an idealistic communist functionary; the other, Szczuka's moving funeral speech at the graves of two workers whom Chełmicki had mistakenly killed instead of Szczuka himself. The key words: "ashes" and "a star-like diamond," crucial for the understanding of the book's title come from the first of the excluded passages, which contained two quatrains from the Prologue to Cyprian Kamil Norwid's drama *Za kulisami* (1865–1866; Behind the Scenes), inscribed on one of the gravestones at the cemetery where Chełmicki is lying in wait for Szczuka.

The way in which Welsh's rendition of *Popiół i diament* was treated by the translation commissioners is a perfect illustration of publishing policies at the service of big politics. Both, George Weidenfeld and Nigel Nicolson, who co-founded their publishing house in 1948, held conservative views, with Weidenfeld being one of Nicolas Nabokov's, Secretary General of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, closest contacts (Stonor Saunders 185). No wonder then that Weidenfeld & Nicolson commissioned, or agreed to commission, the translation of Andrzejewski's anti-totalitarian books and felt at ease to selectively "edit" the pre-dissenting novel that *Ashes and Diamonds* represented. In the United States in turn, the novel was not published until 1980, when it appeared in the Writers from the Other Europe series, also in a censored form. In 1991 both missing fragments were restored in the Errata part of the Northwestern University Press edition of the novel.[19]

Ryszard Kapuściński's *Szachinszach* (1982; *Shah of Shahs*, 1985) fell prey to similar "selective editing," this time in "the land of the free," to use Francis Scott Key's words from the US national anthem. Translated by William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand, *Shah of Shahs*, lacks about 15 pages which contained references to the CIA's involvement in the 1953 overthrow of Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister, Mohammad Mosaddegh (Domosławski 285–287). Even though Artur Domosławski, reporter and Kapuściński's biographer, speculates that the Polish writer censored his own book for the American market (386–387), Kapuściński himself claimed that he did it on the request of the American publisher, as indeed he wanted the book to appear in English translation (Domosławski 286).

Martin Pollack, a well-known translator of Ryszard Kapuściński's works into German, recalls that in the spring of 1983 the German publisher Kiepenheuer & Witsch, known for its previous affiliations with the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the CIA (Boge 386–402), approached him about a translation of *Cesarz* (1978; *The Emperor: Downfall of an Autocrat*, 1983), after another translator had refused to accept a commission to render the book from English (Pollack 34).[20] As a result, Kapuściński's *Cesarz* (1978) became the first book Pollack translated from Polish and the German *König der Könige* was published in 1984 by Kiepenheuer & Witsch, to be reissued in a pocket edition by Fischer Verlag in 1986. Interestingly, the latter publisher is to be found on the list of "Sponsors in Europe," typed on 1st March 1968 in connection with the partly declassified book distribution and publishing programme masterminded by the CIA (Matthews 422). An identical publishing pattern applied to *Szachinszach*. The German editions, translated from Polish, but mysteriously missing the troublesome pages on the overthrow of Mosaddegh's democratically elected government, appeared as *Schah-in-schah* in Pollack's translation in 1986 by Kiepenheuer & Witsch[21] and in 1988 by Fischer Verlag. The fact that neither the German translator, nor Drenka Willen of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, the editor of the English-language edition of *Shah of Shahs*, knew that the book would be censored (Domosławski 287) points to somebody taking such a decision behind their backs.[22] In a paper on the reception of Kapuściński's books in Germany, "Ryszarda Kapuścińskiego przypadki…," Pollack tried to understand the publishing market mechanics which prompted Kiepenheuer & Witsch to invest in *Schah-in-schah* (1986), although Kapuściński's previous book *König der Könige* (1984) proved to be unprofitable, in order to suddenly break a translation contract on the third book: *Jeszcze dzień życia* (34–35). The most likely answer to this question is that the political changes which started gathering momentum in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s must have withdrawn both the attention and financial support of the American-financed book publishing programme in the West and brought this kind of sponsorship there to an end, leaving the risk of publishing Kapuściński's *Jeszcze dzień życia* (1976; *Another Day of Life*; 1987) to the sole discretion of the publisher.[23]

The above study of interrelations between contemporary Polish literature and Cold War politics in the context of Polish-English translation helps to draw a twofold conclusion. First, it reveals that, initially, strictly artistic values present in the writings by Czesław Miłosz, Marek Hłasko, Witold Gombrowicz, Jerzy Andrzejewski and Ryszard Kapuściński were not decisive in the acceptance of their works into the English-speaking world, then lying at the opposite end of the political spectrum than Poland. Moreover, in some cases, their works fell prey to political censorship in the countries where, officially, it did not exist.

Secondly, the political criteria applied to books selected for translation from Polish at that time set up "an arbitrary and factitious system of values" (Epstein 20), in which many outstanding Polish writers remained outside the scope of

interest of Anglo-American translation commissioners who were focused on the anti-communist aspect of literary works. Although certainly not exhaustive in all cases, this fact should be borne in mind whenever searching for an explanation why so many notable works of Polish literature dating to the 1945–1989 period have never made their way into the English-language; especially since, all too often, this argument is usually overlooked in the corpus of literary criticism.

Notes

1 A detailed analysis of this issue is the subject of my PhD dissertation, written at the Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw under the supervision of Professor Aniela Korzeniowska. Fragments of the dissertation are presented in the following article. The theoretical framework adopted here remains in accordance with the polysystemic approach, theorised by Itamar Even-Zohar (1990a and 1990b). Drawing on the ideas of the Russian formalists, Even-Zohar suggested that in analysing the status and image of translated literature in a given target culture, extra-literary factors should be taken into account as well. Questions about how a text is selected for translation, what role translation agents (the commissioner, the publisher, the translator, the editor) play in it, or how a text will be received in the target system are at the heart of the polysystemic approach to studying translation.

2 In reference to these and other noteworthy authors whose writings were not concerned with exposing the cruelties or absurdities of the communist system, it is even possible to talk about "a lost generation of Polish writers," lost to the English-language readership, since they were born too early to be considered for rendition during the times of the Cold War and too late to be promoted after the political changes took place in Poland. The fact that the old patron of literary translation, the Author's Agency, ceased to play any significant role after the introduction of martial law in 1981 and that the creation of a new patronage body, the Polish Book Institute, did not occur until 1998 decided about their long-time oblivion when it comes to promotional activities connected with literary translation. After 1989, only Wiesław Myśliwski's narratives were successfully translated into English by Ursula Phillips and Bill Johnston.

3 First published as *Who Paid the Piper?*, London: Granta Books, 1999.

4 A notable exception to this rule were books published by Marian and Hanna Kister, the owners of Roy Publishers, the American embodiment of the pre-war Warsaw-based Rój. Just as before the war in Poland, the Kisters remained objective in promoting Polish writing on an apolitical basis throughout their presence on the Anglophone publishing market.

5 Some of these authors received financial support from the National Committee for a Free Europe (later known as the Free Europe Committee), thanks to the

intercession of Jerzy Giedroyc, who at that time was unaware of the Committee's links to the CIA. The stipends were awarded until the end of 1957 (Yarrow), after the London-based Union of Polish Writers in Exile abolished the infamous prohibition on publishing in Poland.

6 Although Brandys remained abroad from 1981, his anti-communist stories and novels started appearing in English while he was still based in Poland.

7 Founded in 1950 in West Berlin, the Congress for Cultural Freedom was "one of the CIA's more daring and effective Cold War covert operations" (Warner 89). The central office of the Congress was opened in Paris in 1952. It had its affiliates in the United States (the American Committee for Cultural Freedom), the United Kingdom (the British Society for Cultural Freedom) and Australia (the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom).

8 Outside Europe, *Zniewolony umysł* appeared in the 1950s in Puerto Rico and Mexico (1954), as well as Indonesia (1959). During the 1980s' deterioration in relations between the East and the West, the book was (re)published in Finland (1980), France (1980), Germany (1980), Sweden (1980), Italy (1981), Norway (1981), Spain (1981), Greece (1983), the Netherlands (1984), Austria (1985 in Ukrainian), Yugoslavia (1985 in Serbian; 1988 in Macedonian) and Argentina (1988).

9 "'A Point, Mister?' Or: Everything Has Changed" (an anonymous translation of "Kancik czyli wszystko się zmieniło"), *East Europe*, 9, 1957, 10–14 and "We Take Off for Heaven" (an anonymous translation of "Odlatujemy w niebo"), *East Europe*, 10, 1957, 31–35. Between 1950 and 1956 the monthly appeared as *News from behind the Iron Curtain*, changing its title in 1957 to the more conciliatory *East Europe*. The magazine had also German and French editions (Reisch 8) and was published by the CIA-sponsored National Committee for a Free Europe / Free Europe Committee.

10 Stefan Bratkowski, Włodzimierz Godek, Marek Hłasko, Jan Olszewski, Agnieszka Osiecka, Ryszard Turski and Jerzy Urban were among the *Po prostu* contributors.

11 Not having enough money for the trip, the writer had to borrow from an American correspondent in Warsaw (Grabowska 7).

12 During the Second World War Auberon Herbert (1922–1974) joined the Polish forces in Britain. He learnt to speak Polish fluently and became an expert in Polish affairs. After the war, he financially supported anti-communist groups from Eastern Europe. The prize was awarded on a yearly basis from 1958 to 1990, when Zbigniew Herbert became its last recipient. More in: Stefania Kossowska (ed.), *Od Herberta do Herberta: nagroda* Wiadomości *1958–1990*, Londyn: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1993.

13 An allusion to *Darkness at Noon* (1940) by Arthur Koestler (1905–1983). Celebrated in the West as a leading anti-communist propagandist, for many years Koestler overused his powerful position with impunity. "In 1998, Koestler

was literally taken off his pedestal when his bronze bust was removed from public display at Edinburgh University following revelations by biographer David Cesarani that he had been a violent rapist" (Stonor Saunders 356).

14 In his autobiography, Jerzy Giedroyc gives evidence of how Americans "took care" of young people escaping from Poland to the West, in order to recruit, train and send them back home to serve US intelligence purposes (152).

15 On the other hand, works by Gombrowicz were banned in Poland until the 1980s, with the exception of the 1957–1958 period when his *Ferdydurke* (1937–38; *Ferdydurke*, 1961; retrans. 2000), *Bakakaj* (1933; *Bacacay*, 2004), *Trans-Atlantyk* (1953; 1994; retrans. 2014), *Ślub* (1953; *The Marriage*, 1969) and *Iwona, księżniczka Burgunda* (1938–1958; *Princess Ivona*, 1969 – British title; *Ivona, Princess of Burgundia*, 1970 – American title) (re)appeared, the result of the short-lived Polish Thaw.

16 In contrast to the author of *Pornografia* (1960; *Pornografia* 1966; retranslated 2009) and *Kosmos* (1965; *Cosmos*, 1967; retranslated 2005), who skilfully used Bondy for self-promotion, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński and his political involvement were used by other "cold warriors." Herling's name appears in the CIA's financial report concerning the coverage of travel expenses to the 1965 International PEN Club Congress in Bled. The event was crucial in promoting American interests in international politics, through seeking support among writers and intellectuals, unaware of the Agency's machinations behind the scenes (Minow; Stonor Saunders 306–308).

17 Even Stanisław Lem's example follows this pattern, since his renown among the Polish and American publishers and readers was stimulated by the Cold War tension, space and arms races included. Nevertheless, his sci-fi narratives proved to be authentically popular among mass readerships in many countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

18 Earlier, parts of the novel, in a slightly different form, appeared in instalments in the 1947 issues of the weekly *Odrodzenie* under the much-telling title *Zaraz po wojnie* (Right After the War) (Synoradzka-Demadre xviii).

19 I have not managed to establish the authorship of the English version of the restored fragments. The Errata section of the Northwestern University Press edition of the book gives the following introduction: "In the D. J. Welsh translation of *Ashes and Diamonds* several of the Polish names have been translated incorrectly into English and two lengthy passages have been omitted from the text. The corrections and missing texts are here provided" (Errata xv). There is, however, no information on who "omitted" the fragments nor who rendered the ones in the Errata. The editor of the book, Barbara Niemczyk, left my enquiries unanswered. It can be presumed that the restored pieces come from David John Welsh's manuscript.

20 This and other fragments of Pollack's account (34) prove that the German translation of *Cesarz* was commissioned by the Americans, for whom the

question of translation ethics was unimportant. It was only by chance that the book's rendition into German was entrusted to a translator sensitive to the issue of indirect literary transfer. In turn, the first French edition of Kapuściński's book (*Le Négus*, 1984) appeared as an indirect rendition from English. In 2010, *Cesarz* appeared again, this time translated from the Polish by Véronique Patte.

21 Domosławski writes that although the German translation (*Schah-in-schah*, 1986) was done from the Polish, the American edition (*Shah of Shahs*, 1985) was taken as its basis (Domosławski 286). Literally, the copyright note to the 1986 German version states that the book appeared "With the approval from the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers" (Kapuściński 6; trans. S. Sz.). The French edition (*Le Shah ou la démesure du pouvoir*, 1986), published by Flammarion, was translated from the English and lacked the same portion of the original book as the American and German texts. In 2010, *Szachinszach* appeared in a complete direct translation into French (*Le Shah*), done by Véronique Patte. No complete renditions into German or English have appeared to date.

22 Paradoxically, thanks to institutional censorship in Poland, it is much easier to trace the purging process in translations from English into Polish than from Polish into English. For example, while working on his *Censorship, Translation and English Language Fiction in People's Poland* (2015), Robert Looby was able to use archival evidence from the files of Poland's Censorship Office. No such material is readily available for Polish researchers into British or American publishing policies.

23 Eventually, *Jeszcze dzień życia* appeared in Pollack's translation into German as *Wieder ein Tag Leben: Innenansichten eines Bürgerkriegs* (1994), published by Eichborn Verlag.

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The Petty Theft of Fiction – V. S. Pritchett and the Moderate Short Story

Abstract

The article presents the most important formal and thematic characteristics of V. S. Pritchett's short stories, and attempts to provide an analytical paradigm for what seems to be an original form of social realist short fiction. By analysing themes (crime, above all others), characterisation, eventfulness, and rhetorical closures of selected stories, the author of this article draws attention to the importance of *stasis* and recalcitrance in the texts, and aims to address the problem of the relative neglect V. S. Pritchett's short fiction has suffered from in the critical debates of the last few decades.

The status of V. S. Pritchett's short stories in the history of British short fiction is indicative of an ambivalent aftermath of the historical process of canon formation: the fossilization and generalization of commentary on a writer who seems apparently crucial to the understanding of certain portions of literary history. Pritchett's short fiction is undoubtedly central to the history of the short story form in Britain in the twentieth century. His stories have been published both in Britain and America,[1] praised by fellow writers (Eudora Welty [39], Frank Kermode [online] and William Trevor [30–31]), and discussed in the context of the short story works of other writers, such as William Trevor (Bloom) and T. F. Powys (Wojtyna). Pritchett is commonly listed among the masters of British short story writing (Gąsiorek 423, Hanson 113), is quoted as a veritable authority in theoretical debates of the specific form of the short story (Allen 268), and has been commemorated by the organizers of a short fiction contest (V. S. Pritchett Memorial Prize). At least five book-length studies have been devoted to his life and works (Baldwin 1987; Bloom; Stinson; Treglown; Wojtyna). Despite a fairly extensive range of critical commentary, there seems to be a striking disproportion concerning the subject matter the critics have been concerned with. What David Malcolm calls "one of the scandals of the canon of British literature" (158), the critical neglect of Pritchett's work does not consist in the ignoring of Pritchett's mastery, but in the lack of detailed scrutiny of the actual form that the mastery takes in narrative. While authors of monographs on Pritchett have focused on the intersections of work and biography (Treglown, Baldwin,

B. L. Reid, Bloom), on his novelistic and travel writing (Baldwin, Treglown), as well as on Pritchett's own critical work (Baldwin, Bloom), very little attention (perhaps with the exception of Stinson's excellent monograph and Wojtyna's formalist study) has been devoted to the actual structures and formal devices that his short fiction makes use of.[2] When short fiction has been discussed, it was immediately reduced to social-psychological concerns (e.g. Henderson 155, Ian Reid 24), and claimed to be stylistically rich (Stinson 188). While such statements are generally true, they offer very little detail about formal means. Such a general tone of critical commentary is especially striking when it comes to the short story form – itself a literary phenomenon that has been claimed to be preoccupied with structural specificity and formal precision (Poe 569–577; Hanson 1–9, Current-García and Walton; Ferguson 457–471).

I would like to propose that such polarization results from a crime his work commits on itself. An excellent exercise in moderation, his short stories do not strike the reader with formal or thematic extravagance. "Pritchett is not thought to be anywhere near the cutting edge of experimentation," John Stinson claims (3–4),[3] and this perhaps, together with a very strong interest in apparently commonplace situations and unglamorous protagonists, accompanied by a set of quite unobvious narrative strategies, dooms Pritchett to be fossilized in the canon of British twentieth-century literature as a predominantly conventional exponent of psychological realism. While generalizations of this sort tend to enhance typological demarcation, in this case they are severely reductive of the actual appeal of Pritchett's short fiction. The relative lack of precision of critical commentary[4] – apparently resulting from the author's aesthetic and thematic sobriety that generates texts in the form of the "free story" (Hanson 113) based on the "haze effect" (with its "vagaries of plot, character, or structure" – Stinson 4) – seems undeserved. What appears to be predominantly realist social-psychological short story, under closer scrutiny reveals a richness of generic conventions (tale, fable, parable, short story of exotic adventure, crime story), a linguistic diversity (demotic, conversational, formal, poetic registers are used equally often), and a mastery of narrative patterns. What the critical categorization misses by ignoring the very formal detail of the Pritchett's narrative texture is the whole range of cases in which the author manages to be a profoundly modern writer (dealing with stasis, the ordinary, the social pressures of the twentieth century), despite his unwillingness to engage with techniques characteristic of the modernist or post-modernist repertoire.

The moderateness of Pritchett's short fiction is especially evident in the few texts that, unlike the majority of his short stories concerned primarily with the ordinary, present transgressive themes and hideous human interactions. Pritchett's crime stories – due to their moderate character – all the more strikingly point to the importance of (thematic, structural) violations that organize most narrative texts by building textual tensions on the level of plot, characterisation and readerly judgement. Pritchett's crime stories conduct these violations in an altogether

unstraightforward manner – the crimes presented are either negligible and given a serious presentation, or serious but shown in a manner that moves focus to other problems. In what follows I discuss different kinds of literary misdemeanours of the Pritchett short story: internal violations of thematic and formal patterns; presentation of crime that is at odds with generic conventions; and the self-incriminating recalcitrant simplicity that may not be without effect on the canonical fossilization of Pritchett's stories.

Suicide, fraud, robbery, assault or attempted poisoning play a central role in perhaps only 10 of the 83 short stories included in the 1990 volume of *Complete Collected Stories*. Although a more extensive group of Pritchett's short stories reveals a detective aspect of a fairly particular kind (numerous character sketches aim at penetrating the mystery of a person, at analysing characterological lacunae and completing information), in most of the stories affiliations with crime fiction are scarce and not very obvious. An understanding of the general character of Pritchett's short fiction, however, is necessary before a closer look is taken at the petty theft Pritchett commits.

Many texts we find in the 1990 volume are Chekhovian slice-of-life stories, with their attention to the ordinary, to man-woman relationship, to family strife, personality intricacies and mundane situations.[5] Many of Pritchett's stories present repetitive experiences. "One of those everlasting situations," we read in "The Sniff," where a mother's habit becomes a dominant of a family's life (391). Careful characterisation in "The Ladder," a story of family mischief, points to obstinacy of habit by presenting a character of Janey, who "had no behaviour" other than repetition (355). The stories are mostly set in unglamorous locations: the streets of London, shops, pubs, restaurants, offices, roads in the country. The presentation of characters highlights is highly mimetic – detailed information is given about their conduct, profession and social status.[6] There is almost no heroism. Events are often unsurprising and rarely change the narrative situation. These elements build one part of the visible facade of Pritchett's stories.

The other, equally overt part of the same facade are violations of the patterns established by usual settings, characters, events and the balanced, restrained diction. Presentation of seemingly unsurprising protagonists is essentially concerned with characterological obsession, inconsistency or mistake. What is typical in characters, reveals a shady aspect, escalates into momentary madness or leads to a dramatic change. In "The Lion's Den," which takes place during the war, and presents most of its material through a conventional dialogue of mother and son, the son learns about his father's obsessive day-by-day stealing. In "Sense of Humour" a background of endless repetitions about the meetings of man and woman (highlighted by the repetitive use of phrases such as: "Every time I went to that town"), leads to suicide and a peculiarly dramatic funeral. The simple regular activities in "The Collection" include one that is shown in completely different light – a collection the main protagonists conducts at Sunday mass is

his central obsession, and receives a striking, grotesquely excessive presentation: "Treading like a cat, floating silkily down, watching the amazing stripes of his trousers, with the gravity of a mourner, a little distracted, like a bridegroom by the flash of his spats which might make him misjudge the steps if he were not careful, he arrives downstairs" (402), we read about the way the man walks off to the church.

This sort of linguistic excess works to counter the impression that the thematic focus of Pritchett's short stories is on the balanced construction of the commonplace. Language, with its extensive use of dialogue, varies from simple colloquial diction, with elements of local dialect, to elevated phrasing of a strongly literary style: "His dullness was a sort of earthly deposit left by a being whose diluted mind was far away in the effervescence of metaphysical matters" (197), we read in "The Saint."

In a number of stories settings of the usual kind receive an exotic, repulsive or uncanny aspect. This is the case with an empty bed in "The Story of Don Juan," where the bedroom becomes a locus of torture, haunting and vision, or in "The Main Road," where country paths seem to aggravate the personal conflict of two walkers.

As these examples indicate, Pritchett's short narratives insistently rework their thematic dominant. The reworking is frequently concerned with variable degrees of eventfulness that can be observed in different sections of texts. Very often the beginning of a story sketches the usual plain of reference and afterwards a significant event is introduced. "One Monday, when I had been four or five months in the firm, a woman came to the counter" (271), we read in a story about an office with no women. "And then came the most extraordinary fortnight of Roger's life," we read in "Pocock Passes." Sometimes, breakthrough events are shown in hierarchy: "The death of a Rogers is something. But the death of a stranger like Pocock, who had been in the place only a few months, was like a motor smash" (224), tells us the narrator of the same text. Usually the event which seems to be climactic, leads to a further complication; event sequences, if such appear, manifest rather evident causality arrangements. All in all, event presentation seems to offer a reassuring sense of coherence to the texts, and to comply with the general conventions of plot-oriented fictions. There are nevertheless several aspects of Pritchett's short stories that render such an impression untenable.

Many of the stories do not use what Peter Hühn calls type II events, or they use just one, while much of what happens are clearly type I events. Hühn describes the difference in the following way:

> The difference between event I and event II lies in the degree of specificity of change to which they refer. Event I involves all kinds of change of state, whereas event II concerns a special kind of change that meets certain additional conditions in the sense, for example, of being a decisive, unpredictable turn in the narrated

> happenings, a deviation from the normal, expected course of things, as is implied by event in everyday language. Whether these additional conditions are met is a matter of interpretation; event II is therefore a hermeneutic category, unlike event I, which can largely be described objectively. (5)

This is the case in "The Collection," where no dramatic change occurs through an event of the second type, but obsession results from a reiteration of a type I event, and in "The Main Road," where just one type II event appears. If more than two type II events appear, the relation between them is hardly ever that of reinforcement; usually the events either create another focus for the story or confront the meanings created by what precedes them.

Thematic reversal is yet another aspect of the short stories that violates the patterns constructed. This is the case in "The Saint," where the central protagonist reveals his gloomy nature and turns out to be far less saintly than he seemed. A similar effect is achieved through the use of ironic, telling titles, like "The Sailor," "Sense of Humour," "Lion's Den," all of which are at odds with what is presented in the texts.

Narrational repertoire is as rich as the range of characters, locations and linguistic registers. The stories employ a variety of etic and emic openings, involve a great deal of analepsis and use a range of narrative voices (Genette's heterodiegetic, homodiegetic and autodiegetic are more or less equally frequent). The formal mastery of techniques and rhetorical devices highlight the artistic organization of Pritchett's narratives, and even further deautomatize the image of the commonplace that they frequently so consistently construct.

As shown above, the majority of Pritchett's short stories are based on an interplay between regularity and violation. A set of formal and thematic elements that construct both the stable, unchangeable, repetitive structures of the narratives themselves and the images of protagonists and events they present, stand against a rich selection of, again, formal and thematic explosions. Relative stasis on the level of plot, enhanced by extensive use of long descriptive characterisation passages and of markers of commonplace unchangeability indeed support the general mood of the stories that seem not to "have any news." Still, this is subject to numerous revisions. Here, then, one faces crime number one of Pritchett's work – patterns are violated.

Crime number two – crimes are presented. More than that: they are revealing of the nature of the Pritchett short story, in which moderation and subtlety dominate. Interestingly, where Pritchett presents crime, the nature of the violation mechanism is all the more visible. In "The Main Road" two men of unknown origin are walking in the country. The setting is unglamourous and simple – they follow side lanes, muddy, dirty and sodden. They are hungry, mute, furious and desperate. The aim of their walk is obscure, they seem to have forgotten it themselves. "Anarchy of hunger," as the narrator announces, starts to take control of their emotions. A large

part of the story is devoted to the presentation of their discomfort and hatred of each other. Typically for Pritchett, the study of character plays an important role, and establishes a clear focus on the antagonism of the two figures. Analepsis enhances the effect of circling around a growing obsession. Suspense, in Todorov's understanding of the word[7], is centred around this very unfriendliness. Suddenly, an element is introduced that is strangely at odds with the development of the plot – the two men attack and beat a young boy in order to get food and money. The assault scene is shown in detail, as if extinguishing the anger accumulated all the way:

> Now there was no doubt about it. It was as if silently under all their talk and in all their silences they had been rehearsing this all day, working out every detail to perfection. They said nothing but sprang to it. The big fellow went down gay and hard on the gasping youth and sat on him. The younger one snatched up the bag and rummaged in the youth's pocket for a handkerchief. Money chinked. The youth feebly kicked. Without a word, the older man stuffed a bit of the handkerchief between the youth's teeth and ties it round his neck. A look of extraordinary pale, breathless gaiety rose in the older man's exhausted face; a look of keenness and shrewd skill sprang up in the eyes of the other. Their breath came in helpless gasps. […] They pitched the youth at the top of their strength through the hedge and into the ditch and run for the bus. (29)

The fact that brutality is directed towards somebody else and not against each other would of course seem to totally comply with the general rule of violation that works clearly for many Pritchett stories. Still, the problematic aspect is in the recalcitrant ending that does not provide any precise interpretive clues that might guarantee the reader a cognitive closure. "Food! He looked at the old man with contempt. What he wanted, his tortured hating soul cried out within him, was not food" (30).

In "A Spring Morning" the subject matter is apparently typical and definitely very distant from any general definition of crime. Still, however, the text uses some conventional mechanisms of crime fiction. In this story of teenage assault and sexual stalking positive and negative characters are clearly distinguishable. "A thin girl, ill-nourished," who is standing in the door of a shop she is minds in a quiet village, where "one side of the […] street was in the sun and the other in shadow" becomes here the victim of a "fat, pale youth with his thick unbrushed hair and his pimpled skin" (18). The physical opposition of the two, highlighted by the difference of the two sides of the street, clearly points to the roles the protagonists play in the text. The "great quietness" of the place in which routine dominates (18) is violated by an encroachment the youth makes: "Slowly, smiling, threatening, he came back towards her. He came nearer and nearer and when he was so close that she could smell the breakfast tea in his warm breath on her cheeks, he took one hot fat freckled hand out of his pocket, and leaned it on the doorpost above her head. Then he looked over her shoulder impertinently into the shop. She was

alarmed because he was nearly touching her" (19). This very subtly tense fragment is followed by a taunting exchange of words, and a fight: "Now he got hold of both wrists. His mouth was open. She was angry and helpless, her fingers crooked, trying to scratch at his face. He laughed at her with what breath he had. […] He did not know what he wanted to do and she did not know what she did not want him to do. They just stood fighting" (20). The fight is followed by physical contact of yet different character: "Then he made a leap at her. He had his arm round her waist and his fingers on the hollow of her spine at once. She was dragged and rubbed in confusion against him. He kissed her roughly on the lips and would not release her, though she pushed with her knees and her hands against him" (21). Soon after, the girl is presented as victim: "Her heart was striking against her chest, and her aching lips were bruised with kissing" (21).

Thus, up to this point, the text presents an intense account of an assault. Its problematic character is connected with three issues. Firstly, "the crime" is negligible – although painful, the assault would perhaps be seen as very typical among youths. Secondly, the girl at some point is drawn to the aggressor: "She was driven straight out of the shop towards him and he stood up waiting for her to come and be near to him" (22). Thirdly, she takes revenge in the end of the story by emptying a pail of water on the boy. With the gradual presentation of the assault, with the clear division into good and bad protagonists, with the final revenge, the story reveals clear affinities with crime fiction. However, the seemingly petty character of the offence, and the otherwise moderate circumstances, the ambiguous attitude the girl has to the event, together with the very balanced opening and closure of the story, are compatible with a larger strategy Pritchett uses in other texts. The typical is broken by a violation, but the violation does not restore a clear order. The text does not offer clear information about the aggressor-victim roles, the brutality of actual happenings and the relationship of the teenagers.

Ambiguity is used in a similar way in relation to petty crime in "The Clerk's Tale," a story of assault a young boy commits on an older fellow passenger on a train. The story presents a routine action (commuting to school), and introduces a violation of the routine in the fight scene. There is again a male-female tension that underlies the teenage crime – the boy explodes in the fight because his attempts to see a girl in the train corridor are interrupted by the old man. The narrator describes his attitude to the ugly girl in a way that resembles an obsessive criminal's devising of a heist:

> I used to follow in the evenings. My technique was like this. […] The idea of knowing exactly where D.O.M. lived was repugnant. At first there was excitement in this pursuit; then dead but obliged boredom and finally the humiliation of secrecy. […] This went into the summer. It was a bondage. I believed that [the girl] did not know I followed her. […] I felt deep shame and anger. But this soon gave place to a decisive bombast and brutality. (293–294)

Again, motives are not completely straightforward, and the crime itself is both brutal and treated lightly ("It wasn't a fight," the narrator says, initially downgrading the importance of the incident [296]). The moral aspect of the situation – highlighted in the story by reference to the victim's difficult past (291, 296) clearly marks the youth as guilty ("evil") and the old man as innocent. Unlike in the previous example, the first-person narrator attempts to explain the situation. Also, as in "The Spring Morning" aggressive action is connected to teenage initiation into life: "Then I felt horror at myself; and at the whole human race. I had struck a man whose son had been killed. I suddenly knew what the war was. I went home and was sick" (296). Still, the last paragraph not only concludes the story, but again introduces elements of mystery:

> After this, I did not use the East station any more. I got up earlier and used the Junction. For two years I dared not go near the East station […]. I found a new girl on the new line and went out arm-in-arm with her. That had an unhappy ending, too – unhappy for the girl. None of this would have happened if Isabel Hertz had not known what God is. (296)

Thus, the misdemeanour which violates a routine, does not have a clear explanation and is supposedly followed by another case of misconduct.

Minor theft is presented in "The Aristocrat." The story takes place in a pub. Circumstances are typical. "The usual people" are present (74) – guests who are "always present there on Saturday afternoon" (75) – and busy with drink and chat. Suddenly, a stranger comes in. From this point onwards, the story focuses on the presentation of the old, elegant gentleman. Regulars of the pub become the collective focalizer of the scene. Eyes are on the stranger and one Mr Murgatroyd who gets involved in conversation with him ("They watched him" [75], "Everybody noted this" [76], "Everybody was watching" [78], "They gazed with command" [79]; "They all looked" [84]). This insistent gaze the people of the pub offer underlines the interest of the story in character. As it normally is in Pritchett stories, people are described in detail. Still, the gaze is also crucial in the story for another reason – the spectators watch the stranger perform tricks. These are of different sorts (a handkerchief and a coin, a ring and a stick, fingers and a tumbler) but all catch the attention of the guests. The whole pub watches in awe. Still, something escapes their attention and leads to the final confusion of the story: to the surprise of all, it turns out, when the stranger has left, that he stole Mr Murgatroyd's watch.

In "The Scapegoat" the crime is involuntary and the criminal becomes (posthumously) a hero. Again, the story initially refers to a background of habits in the life of a ("good") community of Terrence Street conflicted with the neighbouring ("evil") Earl Street. A special occasion occurs in the normal rivalry of the two: a money collection to celebrate the Jubilee (106). A person is needed to collect the funds. Art Edwards, a widower who "was made serious by death," seems a perfect

choice because he remains very stable in his behaviour ("Every Sunday he used to go alone with a bunch of flowers for his wife's grave"; "He never changed"; "He never seemed to get richer or poorer. He just went on the same" [108]). The very last person to be suspected of mischief, and watched very carefully by the community, Art Edwards does commit the crime of fraud. With good intentions, though: he loses the money in dog races, because he wants to double the sum. Violation of habit is introduced, but the crime is revealed only in the very end of the text. Much of what is offered before is focuses on character presentation. Thus, "The Scapegoat" deals with the fraud in characterological terms. Since the crime involves a change in personality – an act at odds with Art's normal conduct – it is considered by the narrator and protagonists to be a personal mistake. Immediately after the crime is revealed, the failed protagonist is despised by the crowd and accused: "The bloody twister"; "That bloody widower"; "The rotten thief" (117). Eventually, however, he receives a fair deal of respect: "Art Edwards was suddenly our hero. […] He was ourselves, our hero, our god. He had borne our sins" (118–119). A major instability in the plot (the fraud) results here from an instability of character, but an ambiguity of the ultimate change in social opinion again points to some unresolved, problematic nature of crime in this text. The personality-changing offence, and the attention to character detail, together with a surprising ending that glorifies the criminal, are the distinctive marks of "The Scapegoat."

In all the crime stories discussed above, the criminal subject matter is presented in an ambiguous way. Here, then, we deal with the third crime of Pritchett's short fiction. The violation of internal patterns of the texts does not provide ultimate informative solutions about the motives, the consequences, or reliable narratorial judgement of the criminal act. The crimes are not the ones normally associated with the most gripping plots of crime fiction, and the themes accompanying them are hardly controversial. Pritchett's relative insistence on (repetitive) type I events, and his limited use of type II events (that introduce genuine change into plot), is also rather untypical for crime fiction. Moreover, this mechanism of moderation decides that Pritchett's stories, with their interest in the commonplace, are not in agreement with some of the normally accepted markers of crime fiction, especially with the genre's insistence on the presentation of shocking themes. On the other hand, Pritchett's criminal subject matter, and his frequent use of different violations of the usual, together with a clear division into good and bad protagonists, and detailed observation of the criminal procedures (which strengthens suspense in the texts), indicate some affinities with the genre. Therefore one can assume that despite their apparent ambiguities, Pritchett's crime stories offer interesting insight into the complexity of generic divisions.

The breaking of patterns – which occurs in a majority of Pritchett's short stories, and can create a larger sequence of mutual violations, means for some of the texts – and for his criminal stories especially – an introduction of what James Phelan in

Narrative as Rhetoric calls "the stubborn," that is, as opposed to "the difficult," recalcitrance that does not "yield to explanatory efforts" (Phelan 178). In his practical-theoretical work that can offer interesting comment on the rhetorical reader-response to crime fiction, Phelan proposes a view of narrative as rhetoric and bases his study on phenomenology of reading. He seeks "to link the experience of reading with the activity of interpretation" (173). In this vein Phelan writes that "some textual recalcitrance cannot be fully explained, even though it functions very productively in our reading" (173).

The productivity of recalcitrant, stubborn material can be shown very well in "The Main Road," which offers examples of irresolvable difficulties in connection with crime. First of all, since the aim of the walk of the two men is imprecise, the story progresses in a vacuum of motive and reason. "On this third day the object of their journey had been driven from their minds altogether." The motivation for the walk seems the more obscure when a juxtaposition of adventure and anger is offered: "They had eaten poorly on the first two days when the adventure was young, but on this day the singing had stopped and the whistling. The only sounds all day had been the dazed singing in their heads, the gritting of their teeth" (24). One may ask numerous questions: Are they looking for work? Why is that an adventure? Why are the two together? Is December good time for a walking escapade? What does the anger lead to? Answers there are none. Moreover, the conflict between protagonists is also not completely clear. One clue seems not completely plausible: "In his hunger he had begun to hate the man who was always in front" (25). Most importantly, the brutal act the protagonists commit, cannot be clearly explained either. The ending paragraph of the text again disrupts certainty (30), rejecting the possible motivation of crime with the hunger the two felt. With its open ending and a relative lack of motivation for the assault, the story points to the nonsensical character of crime and highlights the Pritchett's general insistence on moderate, non-finite, recalcitrant textual closures.

A similar issue in relation to form in the short story is described by Austin Wright as formal "resistance" or "recalcitrance." Wright links the concept to Edgar Allan Poe's formal unity, and adds that the tradition of the short story "has always stressed the vital functioning of parts in a whole" (115). He attempts to indicate that a special cognitive effect of recalcitrance is "essential to the strength and attractiveness of the short story" (119). One argument seems particularly useful when dealing with the petty theft Pritchett's crime fiction commits – the abovementioned problem of recalcitrant closure. Wright quotes Susan Lohafer, who writes about the reader's experience of the resistant material: "[The reader] undergoes a sequential process which is yearning toward a static result: he is experiencing an impetus toward closure, blocked by various kinds of interference which are in one way and another removed, surmounted, absorbed" (Lohafer 42, qtd. in Wright 119). True as this seems for numerous Pritchett short stories, in the texts discussed above the resistance is enhanced because the stubborn culminates mostly in the closures of

respective stories. Frequently, then, the closure of a story functions as anticlosure. "It means, quite literally, that the text has provided for a reading that the text itself will not bring to an end," Terry Heller clarifies the issue in relation to Poe's "Ligeia" (Heller). To put Wright's more precise categorisation of final recalcitrance into practice, one may try to apply his conclusions to the Pritchett texts discussed above. "Unresolved contradiction at the level of character or action" or "mimetic resistance" (Wright 124) appears in "The Main Road" with the protagonists who "themselves do not understand what motivates them" (Wright 124). Unexplaining explanation works in the closure of "The Clerk's Tale," where the boy's fight "appears to be, abstractly, an explanation of what has gone before […] yet which fails, at the level of explicitness, actually to explain" (Wright 125). A recalcitrant ending with suppressed explanation can be observed in "The Aristocrat," where no comment is offered about the crime and the criminal. Symbolic recalcitrance can be seen in "The Scapegoat," where the presentation of Edwards is organised – paradoxically for a criminal figure – around some typical markers of the figure of Christ.

Still another kind of textual resistance is at work in Pritchett's short stories. It is strongly related to the petty theft this article refers to in its title. The resistant moderation of Pritchett's stories or their "recalcitrant simplicity" – a phrase used by Alexander Hollenberg (301) – turns out to be particularly interesting for the treatment of a criminal subject matter. Reticence of language, interest in the mundane, focus on character rather than event, presentation of petty offences – these lead to a series of puzzling questions about the genre that Pritchett subtly refers to. Can crime fiction be moderate? Is simplicity a useful tool for a fictional genre centred around complexity? How does simplicity reveal mysteries in a crime story? Is a petty theft serious enough as a subject of a crime story? Does readerly cognitive and interpretive effort follow from what is not said? These questions, naturally, remain unanswered.

The problematic simplicity of Pritchett's short stories essentially depends on the interplay of the difficult and the stubborn (Phelan), on the mixture of the commonplace and the unexpected, but most essentially on the unsaid, absent elements that give the opposition numerous additional, most stubborn dimensions.[8] These resistant, unresolved elements, clearly highlight the productive effect the texts' simplicity has in the reader's cognitive and interpretive processes.

"We, academic interpreters naturally gravitate toward recalcitrant material, but we typically assume that all recalcitrance can yield to understanding, even if all that is finally revealed is the inevitability of recalcitrance" (178), Phelan writes, when introducing the concept of the stubborn. One could adopt this comment to claim that we, fiction readers, gravitate towards complicated stories with a desire to fully understand the mechanisms of human actions and of the textual presentations of these – despite the rather convincing conclusion that even an apparently simple, moderate text might remain resistant to interpretive efforts.

A conclusion with Pritchett is difficult, but the most important petty theft of his fiction is clearly connected with the notorious proffering of complicated material with a content and in a form that seem simple, but repeatedly violate their own internal patterns. A Pritchett text is by all means surprising – because of its moderate character one hardly expects to confront the enormous amount of irresolvable issues. This, in turn, proves to be a very meaningful aspect of the stories. Untypical combination of themes, but also different kinds of formal recalcitrance in narration provide the detective instincts of readers with a very interesting case – quite contrary to the position Pritchett occupies in the British literary history. The richness of Pritchett's formal and thematic repertoire – his competent use of dialogue, outstanding skill with linguistic registers, inimitable grasp of textual instabilities and tensions that generate incomplete closures, insistent refusal to present ground-breaking events (even in his genre-bending crime fictions), as well as the resulting focus on the ordinary aspects of the fictional worlds – is ample evidence of how inappropriate it might be to "come to terms" (to quote the title of Lohafer's seminal study) with Pritchett's short fiction. In order to duly approach the large oeuvre of the short fiction writer – and, to "spark further critical inquiry into Pritchett's art" (Baldwin 1993, 431), we ought to honour the variety of its forms rather than reduce it to the psychological-realistic paradigm or to ignore it on grounds of relative conventionality. Moderation and convention, as Pritchett's short stories prove, are very engaging indeed.

Notes

1 The year 2011 saw the publication of *The Camberwell Beauty and Other Stories* by the London Folio Society with an introduction by William Trevor.

2 It is perhaps another reason for the dwindling enthusiasm Pritchett felt for the short story in the 1960s. "The short-story writer V. S. Pritchett (1900–1997) was not unpopular. Indeed, he was much respected. He had had his first short story, 'Rain in the Sierra,' published in the *New Statesman* in 1926 and was [in the 1960s – M. W.] still going strong. But forty years later things had changed, and his faith in the short story as a form which 'concentrates an impulse that is essentially poetic' was being severely tested. In a long diatribe, Pritchett wrote that 'the periodicals on which the writer can rely have almost all vanished, driven out by expensive printing, by television and the hundred and one diversions of an extrovert and leisured society'" (Pritchett 1966, 6, qtd. in Liggins, Maunder and Robbins 211–212)

3 A similar claim is expressed by Robert Kiely: "Even as a young writer, he seemed to have the confidence not to strain for effect." Kiely adds that Pritchett's is "the course of quiet originality."

4 In 2001 Karen Tracey diagnosed the state of Pritchett studies in the following

way: "Pritchett has not yet become the subject of extended critical dialogue, yet he is among the most highly respected of twentieth-century short-story writers. [...] In 1981 Walter Allen anointed Pritchett the 'outstanding English short-story writer' after the death of D. H. Lawrence, but discussed his work for only seven pages. This combination of lavish praise and stinting discussion typifies Pritchett's fate in academic circles. […] Were it not for Twayne [the publisher of two monographs on Pritchett – Baldwin 1987, Stinson 1992], he would still be noticed primarily with exclamations about his undeserved neglect" (348). Though Tracey's claim has lost some of its validity with the appearance of book-length studies (Bloom 2007, Wojtyna 2015) the unhurried historical development seems to support the overriding claim of this article: general praise for Pritchett's fiction has not always translated into detailed study.

5 Andrzej Gąsiorek writes that "[Pritchett's] greatest contribution […] surely lies in his even-handed representation of ordinary people in all their glorious multiplicity" (429). Sarah Lyall supports such a claim: "Mr. Pritchett made the commonplace fascinating, capturing subtleties of mood, language, behavior and motivation with precision and sensitivity."

6 "Characters and settings are unglamorous, without even the literary attraction of being poor" (Malcolm 159).

7 "Two entirely different forms of interest exist. The first can be called *curiosity*; it proceeds from effect to cause […]. The second form is *suspense*, and here the movement is from cause to effect" (Todorov 124).

8 David Malcolm comments on "You Make Your Own Life" in the following way "The story's excellence lies in its reticence. True? Partly true? The reader can only speculate" (160).

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"The Things We Are": Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* and the Science of Man

Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine the influence of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy on Alasdair Gray's novel *Poor Things* (1992) with a particular focus on its references to the natural and life sciences. The essay argues that the novel allegorizes two central themes of the eighteenth-century Science of Man: it stresses the social nature of human beings, and it aims for a comprehensive portrayal of human nature whose different aspects are depicted in explicit connection with one another. The article shows that Gray employs the emancipatory framework of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy in order to communicate an idealistic belief in the possibility of gradual improvement of society.

Since its publication in 1992, contemporary Scottish writer Alasdair Gray's novel *Poor Things* has been discussed by scholars as an example of historiographic metafiction that self-referentially examines Neo-Victorian (re)constructions of history. A semi-fantastic narrative set in the European *fin de siècle* period with references to historical figures from literature, politics, and science, the novel has been approached as a "postmodern narrative that explores the notion of selfhood [...] by literalizing the mind / body split" (Kaczvinsky 775); as a literary rendition of a "post-humanist cosmopolitanism" that overcomes the Kantian division of man into autonomous intelligence and automatic animal nature (Vardoulakis 137); and as an "authentic history" that confronts the ideological foundation and moral legacy of the British Empire (Baker 58). Last but not least, *Poor Things* has been understood as a postmodern rewriting of the Frankenstein myth, including characters modelled on the historical members of the Wollstonecraft-Godwin-Shelley circle (see Tiitinen). These analyses have shed light on the text's literary, political, historical, and philosophical dimensions, emphasizing Gray's interest in debating different forms of knowledge in the pursuit of understanding human nature. The references to the history of science in his novel, however, have received little attention in literary scholarship so far, while their significance for the text's manifestation of values of the Scottish Enlightenment has not been considered at all. This paper attends to these lacunae by discussing the inclusion of sciences such as

medicine, physics, and biology in *Poor Things* as a manifestation of a philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment, the so-called Science of Man, which will also be identified in the novel's story and discursive features. Inspired by this intellectual tradition, *Poor Things* will be shown to draw on aesthetic, political, social, and scientific knowledge in its exploration of the achievements and drawbacks of what was considered 'progress' in Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

Before discussing how its representation of science complements the novel's comprehensive approach to historical notions of progress, it is important to outline briefly the eighteenth-century philosophy of the Science of Man. The Scottish Enlightenment included such formidable thinkers as Adam Ferguson, David Hume, and Adam Smith, who conceived of humans as naturally social beings, and believed in the possibility of improving society through the application of common sense and inductive reasoning. Proceeding from their empirical observation of human nature, these philosophers sought to uncover the principles that determined history, economy, social interactions and society, and political organization. Committed to "the study of human life" in all of its forms and aspects, the philosophers engaged in developing a Science of Man and "stimulated a range of new disciplinary frameworks built on an evolutionary model, from developmental psychology to literary history and comparative literature" (Manning 10). They were concerned with encouraging civil engagement, the promotion of a moral philosophy based on other-regarding sympathy as a guiding force in human conduct and interactions, and they debated the idea of progress itself. The natural and life sciences were understood as an integral part of their intellectual exploration, and as conducive to the improvement of society; the involvement of scholars and researchers from medicine, geology, chemistry, and mathematics in the Science of Man demonstrates the philosophy's all-encompassing character and objective. The guiding principle of all their research was its presumed usefulness, and while the applicability of the so-called abstract and speculative sciences (which, in the eighteenth century, included physics and mathematics) was sometimes in question, there was no doubt that theoretical enquiries at least served to "improve the mind" (Hume 54). In their attempt to develop a shared methodology for all branches of science and intellectual enquiry, philosophers of the Science of Man sought to overcome the Cartesian separation of mind and body by approaching these as engaged in dialogue, rather than as opposed to one another (see Stewart 225). Likewise, sentiment and emotion were not perceived as conflicting with reason, but as inspiring a form of sympathy that was guided by reasonable judgement, and believed to further moral conduct, social progress, and the common good (see Keymer 578).

The aim of this article is to examine the influence of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy on Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* with a particular focus on its references to the natural and life sciences. Indeed, the novel allegorizes two central themes of the eighteenth-century Science of Man: it stresses the social nature of man, and it aims for a comprehensive portrayal of human nature whose different aspects

are depicted as inherently connected with one another. These philosophical ideas are realized in the novel both implicitly and explicitly with regard to the history of science. Moreover, *Poor Things* reflects the conceptual approach of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy when it correlates scientific knowledge and its history with moral considerations, the discussion of political ideologies, and an emphasis on humans' emotional and social needs in addition to their material and physical wants. As the article will show, Gray positions what Burton described as his "plea for a kinder, gentler century" (n.p.) in the emancipatory and optimistic framework of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy in order to communicate an idealistic belief in the possibility of gradual improvement of human society.

1. A Postmodern Anatomy of Fiction

To begin with an overview of the novel's main themes, plot, and discursive structure, *Poor Things* struggles with definitions of human nature and with cognitive processes of understanding, debating scientific research and the production of knowledge, the exclusion of emotional needs from medical care, and issues of sexual health and the body. These concerns are discussed in connection with politico-economic ideologies, from Fabian socialism to imperialism, and their potential to facilitate a good life in a just society. A paradigm of Alasdair Gray's idiosyncratic anatomy of literature, the novel is an entertaining combination of gothic plot elements, historical and intertextual references, and social realism. Set in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, it tells the story of the fictitious Lady Blessington who, after committing suicide, is revived when a surgeon named Godwin Baxter replaces her brain with that of her unborn child. He subsequently 'raises' her as Bella Baxter, and trains her to experience the world unaffected by the conventions and sexual mores of Victorian socialization. After journeys geographical, sexual, and emotional, Bella marries Godwin's friend Archibald McCandless, and becomes a successful obstetrician, suffragist, and Fabian reformer. This story is told by Archibald, but it is not the only version of events, which are depicted in two embedded narratives. His memoir is complemented by a letter from his wife, in which she calls herself Victoria and offers a different account of her life (the discussion below will refer to their narratives as 'memoir' and 'letter,' respectively). Victoria denounces her husband's memoir as an "infernal parody of my life-story" for which Archibald had "plagiarized [...] G.B. Shaw's *Pygmalion* and the scientific romances of Herbert George Wells" as well as "stirring into it episodes and phrases to be found in Hogg's Suicide's Grave with additional ghouleries from the works of Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe" (273, 272). She counters his version by describing in detail her destitute and emotionally deprived childhood and unhappy first marriage, from which Godwin Baxter saved her by giving her houseroom, political education, and professional training. Victoria's letter rejects the fantastic and romanticized ele-

ments of Archibald's memoir and offers a more realistic account of how she came to embark on a new and useful existence. Both accounts, however, emphasize her close relationship with Godwin, his influence on her pursuing a medical profession, her second marriage to Archibald, her successful career, and her public engagement for women's rights and social reform.

In spite of Alasdair Gray's "intense dislike of the label 'postmodern' when applied to his work" (Böhnke 53), the plethora of topics with which *Poor Things* deals inhabits a decidedly postmodern narrative edifice that features several overt and unreliable narrators, the embedded narratives of Archibald and Victoria, elements of historiographic metafiction, epistolary passages in different fonts and sizes, and an apparatus of paratexts, titled 'Notes Critical and Historical' (277–318). The 'Notes' are part of the frame narrative, which discursively mirrors the competing stories of memoir and letter by debating how to interpret them: the self-proclaimed "editor" Alasdair Gray – who is introduced as the narrator of the frame story – struggles with a "local historian" about whether the memoir and the letter they claim to have found and published constitute history or fiction (ix). Their controversy, which is fought with the help of paratextual notes and annotations that contain both factual and made-up information, represents a metafictional struggle for historical truth, in which it is the historian who denies the factual quality of Archibald's account, whereas the fiction writer claims to have found a primary historical source (see also Böhnke 191–192). To complicate matters further, the memoir and the frame narrative also include illustrations that seem to verify Archibald and the editor's claims to representing historical truth. While some images are drawn by the author Alasdair Gray, others are reprints from a nineteenth-century edition of the historical science textbook *Gray's Anatomy*, which was illustrated by the anatomical artist Henry Vandyke Carter. The editor Gray admits to having complemented "the chapter notes with some nineteenth-century engravings, but it was [the intradiegetic narrator Archibald] McCandless who filled spaces in his book with illustrations from the first edition of *Gray's Anatomy*: probably because he and his friend Baxter learned the kindly art of healing from it" (xvi). In contrast to her husband's memoir, Victoria's letter does not feature any images. Instead, it is entirely printed in italics, which gives her story a very personal and autobiographical quality. In typical postmodern fashion, it also renders her embedded narrative more ambiguous: while the style of print appears to confirm the letter's authenticity, it simultaneously undermines its factual claim and characterizes Victoria's story as subjective. The discursive strategy of the novel, which introduces competing versions of the characters' stories, has been criticized as "an account of possibility frustrated" (Bernstein 132) because it fails to suggest solutions to the problems it raises, instead leaving "the text unresolved" (March 338). Such criticism overlooks that social realism has never been a key concern of historiographic metafiction; *Poor Things* is more interested in exploring human knowledge production than in providing political instruction.

2. Cognitive Sensations and the Development of Knowledge

As suggested above, the novel's agenda must be understood as philosophical rather than factual-historical, for *Poor Things* epitomizes one of the most significant dictums of the Scottish Enlightenment: the belief in the social nature of man. In rejection of Hobbes' view of human nature, according to which individuals' fear of one another and their thirst for power are the dominating forces of social interaction, adherents of the Science of Man emphasized that human beings need company, and thrive in relations defined by sympathy and mutual regard. In the words of Adam Smith, "[s]ociety and conversation [...] are the most powerful remedies for restoring the mind to its tranquillity, [...] as well as the best preservatives of that equal and happy temper, which is so necessary to self-satisfaction and enjoyment" (Smith 28). Adam Ferguson concurred by pointing out that "[t]o act in the view of his fellow-creatures, to produce his mind in public, to give it all the exercise of sentiment and thought, which pertain to man as a member of society, [...] seems to be the principal calling and occupation of his nature" (Ferguson 33). *Poor Things* manifests these philosophers' reasoning in a number of story elements and character attributes, while two of the novel's repeated themes, 'nursing' and 'cuddling,' assign scientific and political relevance to the human need for kindness and intimate relations.

The character who is the strongest embodiment of the social nature of man is Bella/Victoria Baxter, whose story begins with her unfulfilled longing for intimacy and companionship, and ends with her practicing a form of obstetrics that takes into account both the physical and social needs of her patients. In both embedded narratives, she suffers from loneliness and depression because of her first husband's emotional and physical neglect. Trapped in a marriage that typifies bourgeois Victorian gender conventions, which expect her to subordinate her physical desires as well as intellectual ambitions to the pleasing of her husband, Lady Blessington's yearning for closeness to another human being is pathologized in the memoir: she is diagnosed with erotomania, excessive sexual desire, and it is recommended she undergo a clitoridectomy that is supposed to cure her (217, 218).[1] The advice illustrates a misogynistic and anti-sensualist tenet of nineteenth-century medical science, which claimed that "decent women seldom desired sexual gratification for themselves, [and were] submitting to their husbands' demands only in order to achieve motherhood and for conjugal harmony" (Porter and Hall 142). The text has character Godwin Baxter attribute the popularity of this belief to the "increase in the size and number of boys' boarding-schools [that] has bred up a professional class who are strangers to female reality" (218), linking the production of scientific knowledge to Britain's educational and class systems. His opinion stands in contrast to the views of the majority of Victorian gynaecologists, who argued that women and men both experienced sexual desires as natural, and recommended marriage as "a locus for sexual fulfilment, [for there was] no doubt that marriage was commonly

looked to by both parties as an opportunity for very rewarding sexual pleasures" (Mason 219, 218). In its presentation of the Blessingtons' marital problems, the novel relates to a minority opinion in nineteenth-century British medical science that corresponds with the literary commonplace of the domestic middle-class woman, who evolves above desires of the flesh and dedicates her existence to her husband and children.[2]

The reason for the textual reference to Victorian anxieties about sexuality is that they inversely serve to emphasize Lady Blessington's emotional suffering (the exposure of General Blessington's sexual preferences – he prefers to be spanked by prostitutes – later in the story recast him as the partner who himself failed to live up to the Victorian ideal of a husband). The story of her neglect explains that longing for human contact and physical interaction must neither be pathologized nor understood exclusively as an erotic desire. Gray goes to considerable lengths to give what he calls our "careful kindly social part" (68) a broader significance, connecting it with cognitive development, the healing powers of kindness, and social progress. And he explores the quest for understanding man's social nature by employing Archibald and Bella as representatives of Scottish Enlightenment philosophers' differing attitudes towards human affections. Archibald functions as an epitome of Adam Smith's suspicion towards passionate feelings, which Smith accepted only in moderation, whereas Bella illustrates David Hume's embrace of "wild sympathy – spontaneous, passionate, embodied," which Ian Duncan identified as "the disciplinary target of [Smith's] *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*" (Duncan 269). In the memoir, Bella's gradually developing mind persistently demands what Lady Blessington had died wanting: affection and sensually fulfilling relations with others. Interestingly, Bella's unrestrained expression of her desires encourages a like response in the sober Archibald, who describes himself ironically as a "thoroughly rational Scot" (220). During their first encounter, Bella flings "both arms out straight toward me and kept them there," to which he responded by "taking Bella's fingers in mine and kissing them" (29). Not yet aware of her condition, Archibald instinctively mirrors her approach and gives in to his own impulses for physical sensation. Afterwards, he seeks to gloss over the momentary failure of his self-possession by affecting to have analysed Bella's excitement as a mental problem: "A bad case of brain damage [...] Only idiots and infants [...] are capable of such radiant happiness, such frank glee and friendship on meeting someone new" (30). Godwin confirms that Bella's infant brain is indeed still developing, but argues that her "response [to Archibald's kissing her fingers] showed that her body was recalling carnal sensations from its earlier life, and the sensations excited her brain into new thoughts and word forms" (36). The novel alludes here to an important influence on David Hume, which is the belief of Anglo-Irish philosopher George Berkeley that all knowledge is derived from our sensation of things. Berkeley further developed John Locke's empiricism and emphasized the power of the human mind to produce ideas: "By sight I have the ideas of light and colours with their

several degrees and variations. By touch I perceive, for example, hard and soft, heat and cold, motion and resistance, and of all these more and less either as to quantity or degree. Smelling furnishes me with odours; the palate with tastes, and hearing conveys sounds to the mind in all their variety of tone and composition" (Berkeley 24; see also Berman 118). The novel allegorizes Berkeley's ideas in defining Bella's sensations as cognitive: sensual stimulation derived from social contact enables her to develop ideas and language, which subsequently inform her knowledge of her own self, and her understanding of others.

In addition to describing social interactions as necessary for the development of intellectual and emotional cognition, the novel defines them as essential for efficient medical care. This proposition is demonstrated with reference to the nineteenth-century introduction of nursing care, which was born out of a growing historical recognition of the need to align humans' physical and emotional wants. Godwin Baxter describes nurses as "the true practitioners of the healing art. If every Scottish, Welsh and English doctor and surgeon dropped suddenly dead, eighty per cent of those admitted to our hospitals would [still] recover if the nursing continued" (17–18). His ironic assessment of doctors' skills echoes a statement of Adam Smith, who was convinced that "[t]he medicines of the physician are often the greatest torment of the incurable patient" (175). The 'Notes' put Godwin's comment in the historical context of Florence Nightingale's attempts to reform patient treatment (280), while Archibald's memoir connects Godwin's esteem for nursing with the latter's socio-political philosophy: "[t]he loving kindness of people is what creates and supports us, keeps our society running and lets us move freely in it" (101). This statement is replete with the Scottish Enlightenment's appreciation of the civilizing impact of social virtues, and the sympathy with others the latter are supposed to generate.

3. Connecting Humane Knowledge and Scientific Thinking: the Scottish Tradition of the Science of Man

To continue with the second topic of the Science of Man that is allegorized in *Poor Things*, the novel emphasizes the importance of humane knowledge for scientific progress in medicine, biology, and physics. The historical setting of the novel is significant here, for it testifies to the legacy of the eighteenth-century Science of Man: the Scottish Enlightenment and its project of civilizing progress had laid the philosophical and educational foundation for Scotland's leading role in nineteenth-century technical innovations and the natural sciences (see Saunders 309).[3] In the Victorian era, Scottish scientists like James Clerk Maxwell, Sir William Thomson (later Lord Kelvin), and James Young Simpson further developed their disciplines not least because they remained open to humanistic contributions to the pursuit of knowledge. George Elder Davie has shown that

> in consequence of their original grounding in the philosophy of common sense, the Scottish scientists, although devoted to observation and experiment, nevertheless were much more philosophically sophisticated about their subject than their English colleagues, and were in particular very suspicious of the easy-going empiricism which passed muster south of the border. [...] Scottish scientists] continued to look on the academical philosophers not as obscurantists but as allies. (20–21)

Set in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Gray's novel includes repeated references to scientific innovations of the time and establishes fictitious connections between its characters and historical scientists. The text also problematizes the increasing scientific specialization in these decades, which would eventually result in the establishment of separate disciplines. It questions this development as potentially preventing a form of progress that involves distinct humane benefits as well as scientific insights: "If medical practitioners wanted to save lives, [...] instead of making money out of them, they would *unite* to prevent diseases, not work *separately* to cure them" (23; emphasis mine). In addition, the novel highlights examples of a comprehensive approach to knowledge by referring to historical scientists like the physicists Maxwell and Kelvin, the physicians Simpson, Ignaz Semmelweis and Joseph Lister, and the biologist and town planner Sir Patrick Geddes, all of whom have contributed not only to the knowledge in their respective disciplines, but have changed notions of human nature. The following passages discuss one representative of each discipline – Geddes, Semmelweis, and Maxwell – chosen because they are incorporated into the novel's story, and because they all represent the Science of Man tradition that combines humane as well as scientific thinking.

In effect, the ideas of Sir Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) tie the previous discussion of the nursing motif with innovations in biology, architecture and sociology, for both his designs in urban construction and his scholarly work as a biologist call attention to the vital significance of social relations for the achievement of civilizing progress. Introduced in the novel as collaborator and correspondent of Victoria McCandless (305, 312), Geddes became known as "the sociological town planner" because he believed that the "well-being of society depended on a harmonious interaction of people with their environment" (Meller paragraph 11). His ideas owe much to Adam Ferguson's concept of an engaged citizenship, with which the philosopher hoped to reconcile the interests of individual and modern society, because "the most happy men [are those whose] hearts are engaged to a community, in which they find every object of generosity and zeal, and a scope to the exercise of every talent, and of every virtuous disposition" (Ferguson 59). Geddes developed a "theory of civics," which sought to teach young people about their communities' traditions in order to enable them to understand, and become engaged in, their environment (see Geddes 83–84). He was also known for his rejection of abstract ideologies from capitalism to socialism, which he found both

short-sighted and impractical (see Meller paragraph 11). In the novel, Victoria expresses a similar critique of the reductionist take of political ideologies on modern society when she accuses orthodox communism of having "one simple answer to every question and believ[ing] (like the fascists) that they can forcibly simplify what they do not understand" (312). Furthermore, Godwin Baxter's philosophy of a medical science that includes kindness and care shows the philosophical influence of the biologist, whose influential journal *The Evergreen* decried "the pitiful creed of individualism" that promoted a reductionist scientific knowledge instead of emphasizing "how primordial, how organically imperative the social virtues are; how love, not egoism, is the motive which the final history of every species justifies; how fostering, not ravening, is the pioneer process in the ascent of life" (MacDonald and Thomson 11). Gray's novel has imbibed and propagates Geddes' teachings on civic values and social responsibility, which can be traced in several story elements, such as Archibald's support of his wife's political engagement, Godwin's philosophical statements, Bella's moral principles that have her question discrimination and social injustice, and the *Loving Economy* manifesto of Victoria, which promotes physical tenderness as an antidote to the psychological repercussions of war. With Sir Patrick Geddes, the novel includes a historical figure who managed to combine humane knowledge with political concerns and scientific insights, and whose 'theory of civics' realized the enlightened ambition to understand and improve society with regard to its material and immaterial aspects.

Another scientific reference points to the influence of class, gender, and ethnic conceptions on knowledge production: Godwin Baxter describes his father's admiration of Ignaz Semmelweis (1818–1865), a Hungarian obstetrician who was one of the first modern doctors to stress the importance of hygiene and disinfection in medical practice. While working in an obstetric clinic in Vienna in the 1840s, Semmelweis had noticed that women who were attended by doctors were three times more likely to die of childbed fever than women delivered by midwives (see Zoltan paragraph 3). His investigations suggested that the rampaging infections with puerperal fever, "the scourge of maternity hospitals" (Zoltan paragraph 2) in the nineteenth century, were caused by doctors who examined the women after having dissected corpses but without having washed their hands first. Semmelweis introduced the use of a solution of chlorinated lime before each examination, and the death rate in his hospital division dropped from eighteen to one per cent (see Zoltan paragraphs 3–4). However, his observations were met with hostility from colleagues who refused to accept that they themselves had been responsible for the spread of septicaemia. The physician and poet Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. (1809–1894), who made similar discoveries in the United States at that time, actually found himself confronted with the belief that "[d]octors were gentlemen, and gentlemen's hands were clean" (Kaufman 55).

Poor Things adapts the history of Semmelweis's discovery for its critique of the medical profession's pursuit of financial profit, mixing fact and interpreta-

tion in a convincing story of bravery and tragic defeat. Both in the narrative and in the paratextual 'Notes,' the emphasis of the Semmelweis reference lies on the ignorance of the medical practitioners, who refuse to question their methods, and on the tragic fate of the obstetrician. Godwin Baxter claims that his own father, an able physician, followed Semmelweis's example, but kept it to himself because "[n]o surgeons in the public eye dared admit that their filthy scalpels and blood-caked frock-coats had killed scores of patients a year" (17). He also maintains that Semmelweis had been driven "mad" by his colleagues' rejection and had "committed suicide through trying to broadcast the truth" (17). This allegation is supported by the information provided in the 'Notes,' which claim that Semmelweis "deliberately" infected himself with septicaemia and "died in a mental hospital of the disease he had spent his life combating" (279). While it is correct that Semmelweis ended his life in a lunatic asylum, and that he died of a sepsis, there are contradictory accounts of how he contracted it (see Nuland 167–168). The paratextual romanticization of Semmelweis's struggle against the medical establishment works in conjunction with Godwin Baxter's denunciation of the latter in the narrative, where he accuses doctors of ignorance towards humane concerns.

However, the historical background of the Semmelweis reference also deserves critical attention with regard to the novel's general emphasis on the correlation of science and its context, because it shows scientific, political, and personal circumstances intertwining in the rejection of the obstetrician's research. As a Hungarian citizen working in Vienna, Semmelweis was in a difficult position after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1848. And while he could present empirical data that confirmed the efficiency of the chlorinated lime solution, his hypothesis that decaying organic matter caused childbed fever lacked an acceptable scientific explanation, which would be provided by germ theory only years after his death. Moreover, Semmelweis's rudeness towards those who were willing to support him, and his open aggression towards those who would not (he called a colleague who rejected his theory a "murderer"), positively impeded the acceptance of his conclusions (Nuland 124, 161). To put it in the managerial idiom of a popular twenty-first century health journal, the dedicated physician "lacked change agent skills" (Best and Neuhauser 234) insofar as his behaviour actively discouraged colleagues from supporting him. Last but not least, his story illustrates the class distinctions in nineteenth-century Europe, for the majority of the women who gave birth in hospitals were poor. In contrast, most medical practitioners had a high socio-economic rank; they tended to consider their profession to be "divinely blessed," and, consequently, their individual repute and actions as beyond any doubt (Best and Neuhauser 234). It is this attitude of self-importance, which resists rather than welcomes innovative thinking because it potentially threatens the privileged position of those who have mastered the established knowledge, that is described today with the term "Semmelweis-Reflex" (see Zankl 138).

The textual presentation of Semmelweis as a heroic figure supports the novel's argument that humane knowledge and scientific insight are conducive to progress only when pursued in tandem. The more complex historical background of the obstetrician's struggle against the medical establishment confirms this contention by demonstrating that human concerns must not be ignored because they are inevitably part of the production of scientific knowledge. Moreover, it represents an ideological critique of scientific practices that Dietmar Böhnke has discussed with regard to Alasdair Gray's science fiction writing. At the heart of Gray's philosophical concern, he argues, is a "criticism of science – similar to his related social criticism – [that] is in fact a criticism of ideology (i.e. 'the destructive nature of monolithic explanation'), of political and social structures and their underlying (or missing) morality and ethics" (134). In like manner, *Poor Things* condemns a science that is developed purely for financial reasons, and in disregard of humane values: "Our vast new scientific skills are first used by the damnably greedy selfish impatient parts of our nature and nation, [while] the careful kindly social part always comes second" (68). The reference to Semmelweis allegorizes the impact of human nature on science both in its romanticized textual version, which gives credit to Semmelweis's personal struggle, and by implication to the historical sequence of events, in which his colleagues' unwillingness to consider their own fallibility, and to overlook the social flaws of Semmelweis, had thwarted medical progress.

The discussion so far has demonstrated the ways in which the novel connects social, moral, and political considerations with the history of science in its enlightened portrayal of human nature. The final paragraphs will show how extensively the text allegorizes the philosophy of the Science of Man by associating several realms of knowledge. This is manifest in the textual involvement of the Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1879), whose mathematical equations were a groundbreaking development in nineteenth-century physics. His science explained the behaviour of electric and magnetic fields and "demonstrated that electricity and magnetism are not merely related, [...] they are one and the same. Maxwell showed that an oscillating electric charge produces an electromagnetic field" (McPhee 77). In its discussion of Maxwell, the novel relates medical with physical knowledge and the latter with the imaginary, and it conceives of the science of life in artistic terms. In the memoir, the beginning of Godwin and Archibald's friendship is linked with their attendance of a lecture by Maxwell in Glasgow, where Godwin Baxter celebrates the physicist's electromagnetic theory of light as just such a comprehensive approach to understanding nature that he would desire for medical science:

> [W]e had been the only members of the medical faculty to attend a lecture by Clerk Maxwell, and both thought it odd that students who must one day diagnose diseases of the eye cared nothing for the physical nature of light. Godwin said, "Medicine is as much an art as a science, but our science should be as broadly based as possible.

> Clerk Maxwell and Sir William Thomson are discovering the living quick of what illuminates our brains and thrills along our nerves. The medical faculty overestimate morbid anatomy." (16)

The alleged obsession of Victorian medicine with "morbid anatomy," i.e. the exclusive focus on the material reality of the body, is contrasted unfavourably here with Maxwell's then revolutionary theory of the nature of energy mediation. Maxwell's equations of the electromagnetic field changed "our conception of the nature of Physical Reality" from considering the processes of nature "as consisting in material particles" to them being "thought of as represented by continuous fields, and not capable of any mechanical interpretation" (Einstein 71). Godwin and Archibald find that their medical colleagues' lack of interest in the abstract, mathematical description of electromagnetic waves, which introduced a new perspective on nature's processes, renders them lesser doctors, for it has led them to neglect a significant observation about the constitution of life. In contrast to the previous examples discussed in this essay, which correlated social knowledge with scientific forms of knowledge production, the reference to James Clerk Maxwell highlights the vital importance of intellectual collaboration *between* the natural and life sciences.

Furthermore, the text builds on this referential combination when it introduces a comparison with the fine arts in order to explain why the art of healing – "the living art!" (23) – must be based on inclusive principles:

> Morbid anatomy is essential to training and research, but leads many doctors into thinking that life is an agitation in something essentially dead. They treat patients' bodies as if the minds, the *lives* were of no account. [...] But a portrait painter does not learn his art by scraping layers of varnish from a Rembrandt, then slicing off the impasto, dissolving the ground and finally separating the fibres of the canvas. (17)

Complementing the reference to Maxwell's electromagnetic field theory, the artistic analogy demands a medical science whose exploration of human nature takes into account both abstract and imaginative dimensions of life rather than dissecting only the body. And in addition to providing a referential interface for different realms of knowledge, the textual mention of James Clerk Maxwell invites a further consideration of his work. The historical background of the Semmelweis story had illustrated the conventions that affect the production of medical knowledge. The reference to Maxwell points to the intellectual impact of imaginative thinking in molecular physics, which adds yet another aspect to the comprehensive portrayal of human nature explicitly introduced, and discursively implied, in *Poor Things*. I am referring, of course, to Maxwell's famous 'demon paradox,' so named by William Thomson after the imaginary being that Maxwell had conceived (Harman paragraph 23). This thought experiment proved that the second law of thermodynamics,

which claims that bodies of different temperatures will achieve equilibrium when brought into contact in an isolated system, has relevance only when the separate molecules of a body cannot be manipulated. In a theoretical scenario, Maxwell's 'demon' has the ability to effect such a manipulation, for he can "follow every molecule in its course, [including their] velocities [that are] by no means uniform," by opening and closing the valve of a door separating two gas chambers "so as to allow only the swifter molecules to pass from A to B, and only the slower ones from B to A. He will thus, without expenditure or work, raise the temperature of B and lower that of A, in contradiction of the second law of thermodynamics" (Maxwell 328–329). This 'demon' has gained popularity not only for being an imaginative intellectual challenge to one of the fundamental laws of physics. As a metaphor, the thought experiment also entered twentieth-century creative writing. A "perpetual motion machine" produced by a Maxwellian demon's manipulation features in US-American writer Thomas Pynchon's novel *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) under the name Nefastis Machine (Schweighauser 153), while Polish science fiction author Stanisław Lem refers to a "thermodynamic demon" (156) modelled on Maxwell's being in *The Cyberiad* (1967).

In Maxwell's own day, his intellectual endeavours inspired Scottish writers of the later Victorian decades, like Robert Louis Stevenson and George MacDonald, who were fascinated by scientific ideas about the physical world as "consisting only of energy," and "set out to question [... that] the only reality was a social world defined by material circumstance and evolutionary conflict" (Craig 17, 24). Cairns Craig linked Scottish writers' interest in fantasy, myth, and psychic energy with their attempt to create a new form of realism, which would be different from "classic nineteenth-century fiction" because it would take into account that "material reality is an illusion concealing rather than revealing truth" (17). Alasdair Gray's novel commemorates these modernist endeavours that have refashioned literary realism. In the spirit of the historical period which it depicts, *Poor Things* insists on correlating the imaginary with the abstract and the social as a reminder "that only through the imaginary can one begin to grasp this new universe" (Craig 20).

To conclude, Alasdair Gray allegorizes the philosophy of the Science of Man by portraying humans as a natural union of material reality, social needs, cognitive enquiry, and imaginary exploration. *Poor Things* proceeds from this holistic understanding of man in its examination of knowledge production, arguing that the reduction of human beings to their physical existence fails to offer meaningful ways towards civilizing progress. The postmodern metahistorical novel includes historical examples of social and scientific advancement in the Victorian and Edwardian periods both to insist that civilizing progress must involve humane values, and to demonstrate that scientific knowledge is related to the circumstances of its production. The novel follows Scottish Enlightenment thinking in promoting individuals' engagement in their community, because "no single mind can know more than a fraction of past, present and future existence" (101). It champions an optimistic

belief in the ability of humans to develop their understanding of themselves, and their society, for "nothing we do not know [...] is more holy, sacred and wonderful than the things we know – the things we are!" (101). As has been shown, the references to the history of science complement the aesthetic, political and philosophical arguments of the novel, bridging the disciplinary gaps to highlight their shared epistemological and civilizing purpose.

Notes

1 A clitoridectomy was an advised medical procedure in the nineteenth and early twentieth century that was aimed at preventing female masturbation (see Mason 197).

2 The domestic ideal, a commonplace in Victorian literature, is most famously (and notoriously) identified with writer Coventry Patmore's (1823–1896) domestic epic *The Angel in the House* (1854–1962), which depicts a female "middle-class ideal" that is characterised by "purity and selflessness, strong moral and religious principles, coupled with a willingness to submit to the will of men"; it celebrated middle-class women as providers of "sanctuary" comfort for their men and "cherished" them for their "maternal role" (Thomas 64).

3 "The critical approach was indeed marked in the Scottish intellectual inheritance from the 18th-century enlightenment, and the philosophical tradition was now spreading out into exposition and research in the physical and natural sciences" (Saunders 309).

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Alan Hollinghurst's *The Folding Star*: A Tale of Psychopathology in a Neo-Romantic Setting

Abstract

Alan Hollinghurst's 1994 novel *The Folding Star* tells the story of a gay man who develops an obsessive fascination with his seventeen-year-old student. The first-person narrative focuses on the protagonist's emotional suffering: he gradually succumbs to masochistic and sadistic impulses and nurtures a melancholic condition which eventually leads to his failure and the permanent loss of his object of desire. The aim of this article is to read Hollinghurst's novel as a study of an emotional disorder, using the conceptual tools provided by psychoanalysis, a method born at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. *The Folding Star* recreates a *Fin de siècle* aura, and exploits the then established links between homosexuality, psychopathology, oversensitivity and aestheticism. With this novel, Hollinghurst investigates and mocks conventions and stereotypes related both to modernism and to homosexuality.

Over the last twenty-five years Alan Hollinghurst has established himself as the most prominent contemporary British gay novelist. His fourth novel, *The Line of Beauty* won him the Man Booker Prize in 2004, and following the release of *The Stranger's Child* in 2011 he received the Bill Whitehead Award for Lifetime Achievement. Throughout his career Hollinghurst has been carrying out a consistent literary project: to give an account of the gay presence in Britain in the 20th and the 21st century. Through their setting and themes, Hollinghurst's novels have a distinctly English character, but at the same time they are peopled mainly with homosexual characters of various ages, whose stories, lifestyles, mores, and appearance add up to create a multifaceted gay universe which thrives in the background, as if underneath official British history. Often on the verge of stereotype, the author's portrayals of members of the gay community reveal regularities which suggest the existence of a collective identity. The characters represent different ways of living the homosexual experience, nevertheless they fall into distinguishable types, and often share similar fascinations, disappointments, or traumas.

While Hollinghurst's debut *The Swimming-Pool Library* revolved around sex, carnality and promiscuity, the second novel, *The Folding Star* focuses on psychology and emotions. It tells the story of Edward Manners, a disaffected thirty-

three-year-old gay man who leaves England to earn his living as a language tutor in a Flemish city. The first-person narrative concentrates on Edward's emotional suffering and his tormented inner life, while contrasting it with his relative lack of action and satisfaction in his actual life. Almost immediately after his arrival in Flanders, Edward falls in love, or rather, develops an obsessive fascination with his seventeen-years-old student, Luc Altidore. As the narrative progresses, Edward succumbs to masochistic and sadistic impulses and nurtures a melancholic condition which eventually leads to his failure and the permanent loss of his object of desire.

This paper focuses on Edward's emotional disorder as the organizing axis of the plot. The protagonist's errant behaviour can be best interpreted within the framework of psychoanalysis, as a neurosis which takes on various forms that range from violence to withdrawal, accompanied by instances of masochism, sadism, and melancholia. Hollinghurst creates a neurotic protagonist in order to explore a set of aesthetic, ideological and behavioural patterns traditionally associated on the one hand with homosexuality and on the other, with a *Fin de siècle* hypersensitivity. It is crucial to remember that "homosexuality" is a term created at the end of the 19th century to denote a sexual disorder which was supposed to be treated by psychiatrists. Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, and later Sigmund Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* are the two founding works that link homosexuality to pathology. Hollinghurst makes clear references both to psychoanalysis, and to symbolist art and literature, in order to recreate an aura in which Edward functions as a melodramatic figure, a caricature of the Neo-Romantic, pathologized homosexual. In this way, the author tackles a repository of traditions and cliches which have built up around the figure of "the homosexual," both psychological and aesthetic.

1. The Neurotic

German psychoanalyst Karen Horney, who devoted her life to the study of neurosis, defines it as "a psychic disturbance brought about by fears and defences against these fears, and by attempts to find compromise solutions for conflicting tendencies" (26). It manifests itself through disturbed patterns of behaviours which fall into categories: "first, attitudes concerning giving and getting affections; second, attitudes concerning evaluation of the self; third, attitudes concerning self-assertion; forth, aggression; fifth, sexuality" (31). Hollinghurst's character displays symptoms related to all of these attitudes.

In a recent interview, Hollinghurst admitted that the opening page of his novels is always crucial to the whole structure of the book: "I've always had the feeling that the first page should somehow contain the whole book in nuce, that it should symbolize important things about the book" (Hollinghurst 2011). Indeed,

the first scene of *The Folding Star* foreshadows the driving theme of the novel, namely – the protagonist's neurosis – as it accumulates pathological patterns that recur throughout the narrative. In the scene Edward has just arrived to the Belgian town where he is going to teach and he is waiting for a tram. He notices another man at the tram-stop and asks him about the routes. The man smiles and answers politely, and this is enough for Edward to lose touch with reality and set off on a fantasy ride of desire and disappointment. Edward is overwhelmed by the man's smile and his dark-blond hair, and he decides to secretly follow him. On the tram, the man sits behind Edward, and the protagonist concentrates on the sensation of feeling the man's breath stirring the hair on the back of his neck. Edward fantasises about this moment as a beginning of a series of romantic or erotic adventures, but when he finally turns to the man to ask him a further question that he had been nurturing, the tram stops and the man jumps off to meet a woman waiting for him on the tram stop. They go away and the doors of the tram "fold with a sigh" (Hollinghurst 1998, 3).

It is striking how the mundane exchange with a stranger on the tram-stop becomes a dramatic narrative of an instantaneous infatuation, a secret following, courtship at the ticket validator, future plans, ecstatic sensations connected with his breathing, and finally – an abrupt disappointment. Moreover, the fellow passenger is totally unaware of being the object of such extreme emotional agitation. The whole plot follows a similar pattern of Edward's romantic turmoil, accompanied by feeble or non-existent events to back those states in real life, and a relative lack of awareness of the object of desire that he is the trigger for Edward's suffering. However, Edward's rich emotionality turns out not to be the effect of a spontaneous romantic disposition but a product of self-fashioning, an effort of imagination.

When a few days later Edward develops his passion for his young student Luc, it is worth noticing that this is not 'love at first sight' but at 'the second sight.' At his first visit at the Altidores, Edward catches a glimpse of Luc with a towel around his neck skidding through the kitchen behind his mother's back. During the class, Edward scrutinises his physical appearance and asks him a series of personal questions including "what kind of trunks did he wear to swim during the holidays and whether he could keep them on since they were borrowed from a friend and too big" (Hollinghurst 1998, 30). It is only later, when Edward alone in his little rented room plunges into endless fantasies about Luc, that the emotional work is done and the ground is made ready for a real romantic pitfall. Edward then sees Luc with a group of friends in the street and describes it:

> It was a turning-point in my life, this second sighting of Luc. I knew at once how the shape of him lingered in me: there was a kind of miserable excitement, a lurch of the heart. At the moment I recognized him, and laid a hopeless claim to him, […] I had the clearest sense of his indifference, as he stood there with his back to me. (43)

Edward starts secretly observing the group, and only when he eventually loses their sight, he realises: "my sudden burst of feeling had wrongfooted me. I had lost the chance of an easy greeting, a display of the amiable equality of our dealings. I could have put my arm around that broad suede back and claimed the beginning of a friendship" (44).

This is one of Edward's many outbursts of feelings which hinder his possibility of entering into a meaningful relationship with other people. This condition can be described in terms of an emotional disorder which Horney calls "the neurotic need for affection." Horney points to the fact that "The first characteristic that strikes us in the neurotic need for affection is its compulsiveness [...] a loss of spontaneity and flexibility. […] [T]o a neurotic the gaining of affection is not primarily a source of additional strength or pleasure, or a luxury, but a vital necessity" (99). Indeed, Edward seeks affection everywhere. Despite his emotional devotion to Luc, he fantasises about any attractive boy or man that he encounters, and considers every one of them to be a potential partner. In fact, Edward has a lot of sex, within a few months of his stay in Belgium he knows everyone in the local gay club, and has had several lovers. Nevertheless, he is unhappy because his sexual exploits are actually a means of compensating for the lack of affection. Horney mentions, that there are some neurotics "whose contacts with others assume immediately, almost compulsively, a sexual colouring" (130). The most striking characteristics of this disposition are "a definite lack of discrimination in the choice of partners" and "the discrepancy between their readiness to have sexual relations, factual or imaginary, and the profound disturbance in their emotional relations to others" (131).

Although Edward claims that he "falls in love," the reader can clearly see that this is not "love." Horney explains that "the difference between love and the neurotic need for affection lies in the fact that in love the feeling of affection is primary, whereas in the case of a neurotic, the primary feeling is the need for reassurance, and the illusion of loving is only secondary" (94). The need for reassurance is triggered by the fact that the underpinning element of neurosis is anxiety. This applies to Edward who, despite his multiple sexual adventures, remains chronically anxious about his alleged unattractiveness. Neurosis is connected with an unstable self-esteem and this is also the reason why the neurotic craving for affection is by definition insatiable. In fact, a neurotic is unable to genuinely accept affection. Deep down it either meets with his disbelief or stirs up distrust and fear. He does not believe in it, because he is firmly convinced that no one can possibly love him.

The illusion of love is also a device to conceal a more unpleasant aspect of a neurotic's personality:

> a neurotic person does not recognize how much his sensitivities, his latent hostilities, his demands interfere with his own relationships; nor is he able to judge the

> impression he makes on others or their reaction to him. Consequently he is at a loss to understand why his friendships, marriages, love affairs […] are so often dissatisfactory. He tends to conclude that the others are at fault or that for some inexplicable reason he lacks the gift of being popular. Thus he keeps chasing the phantom of love. (Horney 91–92)

Neurotic anxiety is generated by repressed hostility and it generates more hostility in a recurrent feedback loop. Edward is hostile to virtually every stranger whom he sees as a potential rival. Two most striking examples include a couple of Spanish girls renting a room next to his, and an Englishman Rodney Young, who happens to be doing research in the same town.

Edward is constantly upset about the noise that the Spanish girls make or the hot water that they use up. However, it turns out later that the girls are scared of Edward because he is the one to come back late and drunk every evening, making all kinds of disturbing and awkward sounds. As for the noises that Edward gets so frustrated with, it is about the sound of the girls laughing and playing the guitar which exacerbates Edward's feeling of solitude (although the first-person narrative conceals this fact), but also bursts his bubble of the fantasy world in which he likes to remain. Another issue is that the girls receive an extremely handsome Spanish visitor, and Edward bitterly fantasises about the pleasures that they might be having (he even eavesdrops on what is happening in their room, and hears a rhythmic, thumping sound, only to realise that it is the sound of his own blood pumping). Edward's paranoid visions are compromised when it turns out that the boy is the Spanish girls' brother, and one evening drunk Edward makes a pass on the man which is an embarrassing and terrifying experience for the victim.

As for Rodney Young, the first time Edward meets him is when Young, standing with a city map in the middle of the street is asking Luc (who just happened to be passing by) about the way to a chapel. Edward's possessiveness and neurotic jealousy makes it unacceptable for him to see Luc being the attention of another man. Edward immediately develops a very negative disposition towards the Englishman, especially because certain parallels between them (nationality, age, academic interest in arts) strengthen the protagonist's impression of Rodney being a rival. Edward spitefully never refers to the man using his real name (he claims to never remember it) and instead calls him names like Rex Stout, Rodney Strong (which emphasise the man's physical threat and fearful sexuality). Edward's malice is revealing, as it touches on the kernel of his neurosis, avoiding Rodney's actual name – Young – hints directly at Edward's most inner painful secret: the inability to deal with his passing youth, a topic which will be discussed later in this paper.

2. Narcissism

Edward's unstable self-esteem is characteristic of another neurotic disposition, namely – the narcissistic personality disorder. According to Sam Vaknin's definition:

> Pathological narcissism is a life-long pattern of traits and behaviours which signify infatuation and obsession with one's self to the exclusion of all others and the egotistic and ruthless pursuit of one's gratification, dominance and ambition. As distinct from healthy narcissism which we all possess, pathological narcissism is maladaptive, rigid, persisting, and causes significant distress, and functional impairment. (7)

Hollingurst makes deliberate allusions to narcissism throughout the novel. It is evoked at the very beginning of the book by the name of the school, St Narcissus, which Luc used to attend before getting expelled, and which Edward can see every day from the window of his rented room. Narcissism is sometimes wrongly interpreted as pure self-love when, in fact, narcissistic self-absorption can be more accurately described as excessive self-consciousness. In a number of scenes Edward contemplates his face in mirrors and this provokes a torrent of conflicting thoughts, he also mediates the vision of himself through fantasies of how others may see him, since he is unable to develop a stable, positive self-image on his own. For instance, upon Edward's first visit to a local gay bar he establishes eye-contact with a sexy teenager and follows him to the lavatory but the boy ignores Edward and locks himself in a cabin. Edward, discouraged, has to retreat and this immediately makes him self-conscious: "I hung back and looked in the mirror at Edward Manners, the pudging, bespectacled English teacher twice his age" (22). In another scene towards the beginning of the novel, Edward admires his reflection in a tiny mirror:

> my cropped face looked good in it – like the features of any biker in the classic frame of his helmet. I swept my thick black hair around – my best feature, which people sometimes thought was dyed […] I imagined Luc might quite admire it, and see the claim it made for my being romantic and young. *He ought to see it in this mirror, which left out all the rest of me.* I thought of […] my steady disappointment at how I'd turned out and was likely to stay – never having looked fabulous in a swimsuit, caught in other people's photographs with a certain undeniable burliness. While my hair was still wet I combed it back, and it lay appealingly where I left it. It appealed to me, that is to say, though perhaps to other people it was the tell-tale feature of my self-delusion. (40; emphasis mine)

The passage shows how any self-appreciation is immediately countered with self-dissatisfaction. In fact, narcissists seek attention, admiration, and support from their

environment because it is essential to their unstable self-esteem. Their hunger for constant approval from others results from a deflated, inadequate self-perception. According to Dave Kelly:

> [a narcissist] strives for recognition and prestige to compensate for the lack of a feeling of self-worth […], is prone to feel shamed and humiliated and especially hyper-anxious and vulnerable to the judgements of others […], is self-conscious, due to a dependence on approval from others. ("Compensatory Narcissistic Personality Disorder")

Narcissists suffer as they are excessively preoccupied with themselves and with their personal adequacy, and unable to concentrate on another human being. Thus, their own self becomes the object not only of their libido (which accounts for undivided attention and interest, self-love, the desire to remain in constant contact with one's self), but also the destrudo (in Freudian psychoanalysis, it is the energy of the death instinct, or the destructive impulse, which accounts for aggressiveness, or sadism). This is why a narcissist will experience strong mood swings – from love and self-admiration, to self-abasement, suicidal thoughts, inferiority complex, and narcissistic depression.

Since the narcissist is pathologically focused on him or herself, he or she loses touch with reality, and may experience the world as if it were behind a thick pane of glass. Narcissists may feel as if they were deprived of agency in the outside world, and the objects from the outside world – including people as their objects of desire – are perceived as not fully real. For Edward, the thick pane of glass that separates him from the real world is art and literature. Edward presents himself from the beginning of the novel as a man equipped with an excessive erudition of the pastoral idealist (and later we actually learn that he is an unaccomplished poet and novelist). He carries with himself a time-worn edition of a collection called *The Poets of Our Time*, from which he quotes compulsively, and he clings to the illusion of mastering his life through literature which does not turn out to be translatable into real-life experience. In an analysis of *The Folding Star*, critic Christian Lassen claims that "this reveals Edward's tendency – throughout the novel – to misread the world around him, his tendency to confuse the literal and the literary, reality and fiction, and, consequently, his tendency to narcissistically and myopically interblend art and life" (153). Hollinghurst cunningly emphasises this feature of the protagonist: as a matter of fact Edward is myopic and his having a blurred vision of the surrounding world is mentioned several times throughout the novel. The metaphoric emotional myopia is thus doubled by a literal physical condition.

Edward's connection to literature is also expressed in the fact the he perceives himself as a kind of literary character, and he models his life according to literary traditions. For example, because he is homosexual, he sees himself as an aesthete and a decadent. The link between decadence, aestheticism and homo-

sexuality has been analysed by Kaye Mitchell: "At the end of the 19th century, the emergent figure of the male homosexual is closely identified with Aestheticism and with a certain philosophy and practice of decadence which was a fin-de-siècle euphemism for homosexuality" (43). Alan Sinfield further explains how the Aesthetician

> fits the model of the queer man – dandified, effeminate, leisured, flamboyant – personified by Oscar Wilde. Aestheticism fits the model because high culture is regarded, implicitly and perhaps residually, as a leisured preserve, and as feminine in comparison with the (supposedly) real world of business and public affairs. (150)

Edward's life is heavily influenced by the Neo-Romantic atmosphere that he attributes to the Flemish city where he is staying, and – as I have already mentioned – Edward fancies seeing himself and experiencing his life as if he were the protagonist of a Neo-Romantic story. Indeed, the novel abounds with references to Modernism and Symbolism, and Hollinghurst playfully exploits these conventions to simultaneously justify and mock Edward's illusions with a series of intertextual references.[1] One prominent intertext is *Death in Venice*: in chapter 8 Luc and his friends go to the sea-side for the week-end, and Edward, together with a friend, Matt, secretly follows them. They break into an abandoned house (which is Matt's initiative) and from there Edward spies on Luc lying on the beach, just like Gustav Aschenbach spied on Tadzio. There are several other parallels, including both Luc and Tadzio described as stunningly beautiful youths, the fact that both Edward and Gustav are drawn deep into devastating, inward passion and develop an obsession, the secret followings, the compulsive need to whisper the words "I love you!" secretly, and references to Narcissus: one evening, when Tadzio directs a charming smile at him, Gustav compares this to Narcissus smiling at his own reflection. Hollinghurst's character compulsively reliving a Modernist story may be interpreted as another manifestation of Edward's narcissistic tendency to entertain fantasies of being unique and special, to build up an image of high self-worth.

3. Masochism and Sadism

The link between sadism and masochism was first made by Sigmund Freud in his 1905 *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. According to Freud, "masochism is nothing more than an extension of sadism" because "[e]very active perversion is [...] accompanied by its passive counterpart" (26, 34).[2] Hollinghurst's inspiration to include sadomasochism in his novel is also rooted in a Modernist intertext: *The Folding Star* is in part a transposition of the Flemish Symbolist short novel *Bruges-la-Morte* by Georges Rodenbach, and the story of the main character of the

Flemish novel is very similar to the story of the painter Edgar Orst who becomes a background character in *The Folding Star*. Paul Echevin, who is the father of Edward's second pupil, Marcel, and also the curator of the local art museum, introduces Edward to the twilight world of Edgar Orst when he asks Edward to help him write a monograph on Orst. Edward slowly discovers the secret biography of the reclusive artist whose life was overshadowed by the loss of his wife and muse, actress Jane Byron. She has gone missing during a swim in the sea off the coast of Ostend and Orst's life becomes fixated on the effort to get over that loss. Eventually Orst meets a laundry girl called Martha who strikingly resembles Jane, and he starts a morbid relationship with her. The relationship largely revolves around Orst's attempts to immortalise his lover by means of photography, taking pictures of Martha which are on the verge of pornography and sadomasochism. Edward gradually starts identifying with Edgar Orst, and "his longings and his melancholic disposition finally results in a death-driven fixation with Luc" (Lassen 148). This death drive that becomes Edward's driving force results in masochistic and sadistic impulses.

In an analysis comparing Freud's and Deleuze's approach to masochism, Thanem and Wallenberg point to the fact that the script structuring the masochistic performance is first shaped by fantasy. Hence, the masochist "slave" is the hero of the masochist "drama." The drama is narrativized and structured by the masochist before the actual performance can take place, thus ascribing agency and power to the masochist victim. The masochist is an agent who, via the masochistic contract, actively chooses to locate himself in a passive and inferior position. The masochistic world is coloured by dramatic suspense and intimacy wherein the masochist hero is a supersensual hero, as masochism involves exaggerated love for the other. In masochism, pain remains within the realm of possibility, it is the fear of pain and retribution and humiliation which drives the masochist. "Hence, the masochist slave's infatuation, worship, and submission before his master is more important than physical pain or actual sex" (Thanem and Wallenberg 7).

There are several scenes in the book demonstrating that Edward's suffering is self-inflicted, and that Luc is only an element in the protagonist's self-drama. Indeed, Edward's propensity for self-torturing longings goes back to his early teenage years, which will be discussed in the following part of this paper. However, Edward's death-drive also finds expression in sadism. He is sadistic towards the less attractive pupil Marcel, and clearly enjoys making him suffer and fear his teacher. But the most obvious and shocking evidence of sadism is when, after an unexpected encounter in a gay bar, Edward takes Luc home and finally has sex with him. It turns out that Luc is gay; it has actually become quite obvious much earlier in the novel, but again – Edward is too myopic and too much absorbed in his fears and delusions to read it. The sex scene is brutal, narrated by Edward in the following way:

> I fucked him across the armchair […] I had to see his face and read what I was doing in his winces and gasps, his violent blush as I forced my cock in […] I saw tears slide from the corners of his eyes, his upper lip curled back in a gesture like anguish or goaded aggression. […] I was […] only half-aware […] of a deaf desire to hurt him, to watch a punishment inflicted and pay him back for what he had done to me, the expense and humiliations of so many weeks. I saw the pleasure start up inside for him […] but I made him flinch with steeper little thrusts. (337; emphasis mine)

Again, in this scene Edward is fixated on himself, and the pleasure he takes is obviously not from the longed-for encounter with his beloved, but from taking revenge for his narcissistic injury. The lover is distant and, as if, absent. Edward craves Luc's gaze, however, the boy's eyes were, as Edward puts it, "oddly veiled, fluttering and colourless like some Orst temptress's" (337). Even in this intimate and landmark moment Edward stays within his mind-frame, mediated through Orst's morbid and decadent art.

Although Edward's darker, violent side becomes evident in the sex scene with Luc, it is foreshadowed much earlier in the novel by the appearance of another character, Matt. Hollinghurst introduces the character of Matt as an apparent opposition to Edward: an unemotional sexual predator who easily succeeds in seducing those who Edward only dreams about. However, Matt's promiscuity represents what Edward himself represses and secretly admires, what he denies in his obsession with Luc, that it is purely sexual. Edward also secretly admires Matt's falsity, superficiality and his double-faced, criminal nature (for example his shabby, dingy apartment from which he emerges elegant and spotless). The two men start a bizarre relationship and Edward becomes Matt's regular lover, despite his emotional engagement with Luc and a more or less stable relationship he has formed in the meantime with yet another man, Cherif, a local inhabitant of Moroccan descent who had fallen in love with Edward. Hollinghurst oddly suggests a mysterious mind-bondage between Edward and Matt: when the former is away in England, he has a nightmarish dream of Matt having sex with Luc several times in a row. This dream is very meaningful – Edward relives his fantasies (to have vehement and multiple sexual intercourses with Luc); however, he cannot picture himself in this scene, but the more attractive counterpart, Matt. The scene is a simultaneous realisation of what Edward dreams of (to have sex with Luc), aspires to (to become like Matt, who is his better, more successful alter-ego), and dreads (his prey being snatched up from him by a rival). At the end of the novel it turns out that Matt indeed had sessions of repetitive sex with Luc while Edward was away, and Edward's dream thus appears as premonitory, adding to the mysterious, Neo-Gothic atmosphere of the novel, but also hinting at Freud's interpretation of dreams as forms of wish fulfilment – the satisfaction of a desire through an involuntary thought process.

Similarly to Orst, Matt is Edward's exteriorized alter-ego. By introducing these characters Hollinghurst reveals multiple layers of Edward's irreconcilable

inner conflicts: his antithetical and schizoid visions of the self and his contradictory aspirations. A bolder interpretation of the eerie similitude between Edward's fantasises and Matt's actions may be that Matt is nothing more than the creation of Edward's schizophrenic mind, and that in fact Edward himself committed all the deeds he admires or loathes Matt for (a narrative device which can be found in contemporary psychedelic horror fiction such as Jonathan Carroll's or Chuck Palahniuk's).

4. Melancholia

The binding element to understand Edward's disturbed psyche is melancholia. Sigmund Freud makes the following link between melancholia, narcissism and sadism:

> In melancholia, the occasions which give rise to the illness […] include all those situations of being slighted, neglected or disappointed, which can import opposed feelings of love and hate into the relationship. […] If the love for the object – a love which cannot be given up though the object itself is given up – takes refuge in narcissistic identification, then the hate comes into operation on this substitutive object, abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering. The self-tormenting in melancholia, which is without doubt enjoyable, signifies, just like the corresponding phenomenon in obsessional neurosis, a satisfaction of trends of sadism and hate which relate to an object, and which have been turned round upon the subject's own self. (1985, 56)[3]

The Folding Star is a triptych, the first and the third part of the novel are set in Belgium, while the middle part, "Underwoods" describes Edward's sudden trip to England for the funeral of his first lover, Dawn. Under the pretext of Edward's nostalgic and tragic comeback to where he spent his childhood and teenage years, "Underwoods" retells the story of Edward's youth, which was shaped by a difficult relation with his parents, and multiple disappointments. The account is filled with recollections that explain Edward's longings and his melancholic disposition. The reader also discovers that Edward's first sexual experience, a night that he spent with Dawn in a tent on a common, was traumatic partly because of the intrusion of an older man. The "ghoulish" face of the 33-year-old stranger, his too tight jeans and swept-back black hair are "an obviously sinister portent of Edward's own future" (Alderson 39). Although the protagonist distances himself from the man as well as from other figures moving among the trees, the scene haunts him ever since. The middle part of the novel provides the most prominent argument in favour of the psychoanalytical analysis of the novel, and sheds new light on the overall meaning of Edward's suffering. In psychoanalysis, the melancholic condition describes grief for a loss which a person is unable to fully comprehend or identify,

and is the opposite of a healthy mourning. Lassen points to the fact that Edward gradually descends into a state of melancholia because for him "loss takes on an additive dimension that interblends previous moments of traumatic damage with present ones" (Lassen 149). Indeed, Edward excessively ponders on his unrealized passions and romantic failures. However, a more audacious interpretation would be to conclude that Edward develops melancholia because he is actually mourning over his lost youth. This by definition cannot be recovered, and as a result his condition becomes chronic and tragic. In Edward's own words, since his teenage infatuation, even though it had no future ahead, "nothing [has been] quite the same. Everything in some way melancholy, frantic or foredoomed" (Hollinghurst 1998, 200). Edward thus stays forever suspended in his dissatisfaction, unable to form a positive attitude towards his present self or his multiple lovers.

Conclusion

The Folding Star is a sombre, dream-like work about an annihilating desire. It shows the dangers of self-delusion and narcissism. Hollinghurst's protagonist is neurotic, tainted with chronic anxiety and hostility, constantly seeking reassurance that he is still attractive. His rich emotionality is actually a set of emotional disorders which hinder his possibility to develop any kind of meaningful relationship with Luc or anyone else. Those emotions are too strong, misplaced, self-directed and have a morbid resonance, as Edward exhibits fetishist, voyeuristic and sadist tendencies. Through the character of Edward, Hollinghurst explores a certain historical stereotype of the homosexual: alienated, immersed in art and literature, sentimental and melodramatic, but at the same time criminal, promiscuous and on a never-ending quest to find the perfect lover. Hollinghurst complicates the stereotypical image as the protagonist exhibits features which remain in sharp contrast: aestheticism and fascination with beauty, with the propensity to fantasize about the ideal of romantic love on the one hand, and the everyday sexual adventures and hedonistic or even nihilistic lifestyle on the other. Hollinghurst uses literary conventions and rewrites the classics to his own ends – queering both psychoanalytical theory and modernist prose. The first person narrative is like the discourse of a patient undergoing a psychoanalytical therapy: a deeply subjective and distorted rendition of actual events mixed with memories, desires, dreams and fantasises. These reveal the character's phobias, anxieties, hostilities and compulsions which become obvious to the reader but not to the protagonist. The excessive, almost pathetic passion experienced by Edward allowed Lassen to classify *The Folding Star* as a "camp pastoral elegy" (148). This complex mosaic of features constitutes a literary complement to psychological and sociological descriptions of the homosexual identity, historically and socially conditioned. Just like in *The Swimming Pool Library* Hollinghurst creates certain character "types," his gay protagonists

have distinguishable traits and are contrasted with one another, they are distinct and expressive, to some extent stereotypical, however escaping easy classification or sweeping judgements.

Notes

1 Critics emphasise that *The Folding Star* is actually a parody of Symbolist fiction (Stead 361), or that it "knowingly flirts with the ridicule" (Lassen 148).
2 Torkild Thanem and Louise Wallenberg further explain Freud's viewpoint: "Indeed, it is all within the masochist. At any time the masochist can turn into a sadist. But not only are all sadists ex-masochists. Both masochists and sadists are sadomasochists as both desires are embodied within one and the same individual" (5).
3 In conclusion, Freud asks the question "whether a loss in the ego irrespectively of the object – a purely narcissistic blow to the ego – may not suffice to produce the picture of melancholia" (1985, 58) thus suggesting that the lost object of desire may be secondary and incidental, a pretext to develop melancholia (see also Clewell 47).

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The Clones' Apprenticeship: Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* as a *Bildungsroman*

Abstract

This article considers as a *Bildungsroman* the 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro, which depicts the education of young clones in a boarding school in a 1990s uchronic England. It studies the main theoretical works about this type of writing in order to isolate some of its defining characteristics and then evaluate the possibility of an analogy between the fictional developments of humans and clones. It concludes that, even though the *Bildunsgroman* has strong ties with the changing nineteenth-century society, it has been adapted to other – even non-existing – environments.

The success of young adult science-fiction narratives such as Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*, Veronica Roth's *Divergent*, or James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* is evidence that a non-realist[1] genre such as science fiction can be compatible with the traditionally realist *Bildungsroman*. Many scholars actually see the *Bildungsroman* as a mode that can adapt to any genre. The science-fiction scholar Irène Langlet indeed alludes twice to the *Bildungsroman* (72–74; 199–200) in dealing with science fiction as a literary genre. Kazuo Ishiguro's 2005 *Never Let Me Go* depicts a dystopian 1990s England where scientists have managed to clone humans for the sole purpose of harvesting their organs for transplants. The narrator, Kathy H., is one of these clones; she remembers her childhood at Hailsham, a boarding school once managed by a group of people who campaigned against the clone breeding system by trying to prove that clones had the same characteristics as humans. Regardless of its typical science-fiction plot, this novel focuses less on the scientific improvement that allows clones to exist than on their everyday lives (chores, lessons and entertainment), their social interactions (with friends, lovers and guardians) and their inner worlds (their thoughts, hopes and fears). This article seeks to isolate the defining characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* through the study of the main theoretical works devoted to this concept. It then considers *Never Let Me Go* in the light of these theories and evaluates the possibility of an analogy between the fictional developments of humans and clones.

Navigating through the criticism about this concept, one realises there might be as many definitions of the *Bildungsroman* as there are *Bildungsromane*. This is illustrated by the many variations in dictionary definitions. According to shorter definitions, such as those in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* or *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, the *Bildungsroman* describes the development of a young hero from childhood, or adolescence according to *Oxford* (35), into adulthood through various obstacles (*Oxford* 35; *Penguin* 82). *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* does not specify the hero's age but rather alludes to his (or, less usually, to her) "maturation" and *civilisation* (100): the hero "becomes aware of himself as he relates to the objective world outside his subjective consciousness" (100–101). Longer definitions, like the one in *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms,* showcase some typical features of the *Bildungsroman* but also tell of its history and evolution through various countries (Germany, Britain, France and Russia) and cultural fashions (Modernism and Postmodernism).

Thomas L. Jeffers, in *Apprenticeships: The Bildungsroman from Goethe to Santayana*, explains that the lack of clear and satisfying theory about the *Bildunsgroman* (even though many critics tend towards this ideal) is the main difficulty in dealing with it (5). Summerfield and Downward note that the *Bildungsroman* seems to be an untameable literary concept whose characteristics and implications are impossible to grasp all at once and whose definition is therefore still a matter for discussion among scholars (3). The way in which this theme is dealt with differs not only in dictionaries but also according to the scholars involved; while François Jost provides many keys towards an actual definition, Thomas L. Jeffers instead focuses on writings about the *Bildungsroman* through the years whilst still trying to gather defining elements. Franco Moretti gives a thematic, "over-regardful of theory, mostly Marxist" (Jeffers 5) analysis of various classic *Bildungsromane*, as he often focuses on the way they feature class conflict. Finally, Giovanna Summerfield and Lisa Downward try to evade the discussions about definition, focusing instead on two neglected aspects: spirituality and the female *Bildungsroman* (3).

The aim of this article is not to re-theorise the *Bildungsroman* but rather establish a theoretical basis upon which I can rely for the analysis of a novel whose genre would not typically be associated with this literary concept. Indeed, on the one hand, Moretti's focus on class conflicts (aristocrats, *bourgeois*, workers and peasants) shows that the *Bildungsroman* is deeply rooted in nineteenth-century culture, while Ishiguro's plot occurs at the end of the twentieth century, the beginning of the twenty-first, or even much later. On the other hand, the *Bildungsroman* is usually realist because it educates the reader, through the character's edification, about a world they both share (Langlet 72). Despite Ishiguro's novel representing a world that does not correspond to the reader's reality, this world still shares many similarities with ours, and the novel therefore still contains a high dose of realism. Moreover, Langlet wrote that the use of the *Bildungsroman* pattern was possible in a

completely unrealistic science-fiction novel because they rely on the same process: the carefully selected details given by the text must be combined with the reader's encyclopaedic knowledge. If the world of the text differs from the one which the reader knows, then this renders their encyclopaedic knowledge less accurate but not completely useless, for the text follows a minimum distance principle[2] which allows the reader to associate elements of the imaginary world with some of the real world. This explains why science-fiction novels are often interpreted as commentaries (and sometimes criticisms) of our own society (Langlet 200).

Never Let Me Go can already be associated with the *Bildungsroman* since it "can be placed within a tradition of boarding school narratives" (Carroll 62). Novels, like this one, happening in schools or focusing on school life, are called 'school stories.' According to *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, this tradition has origins in the seventeenth century and grew during the eighteenth, but the most famous example is Thomas Hughes' 1857 *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (470). School stories are often *Bildungsromane* since they describe the *maturation* of children through adolescence and onwards to adulthood.

1. Between the *Erziehungsroman* and the *Entwicklungsroman*

The *Bildungsroman* is considered to be somewhere between the *Erziehungsroman*, which means "novel of education," and the *Entwicklungsroman*, which means "novel of development" (Jost 100, Moretti 16–17, Jeffers 49). The *Erziehungsroman* is often mistakenly taken as a synonym for *Bildungsroman* (Cuddon 81, Barnet *et al.* 100). Again, defining such categories is as complicated and subjective as defining the *Bildungsroman* itself, each scholar bringing a different approach to the definition. The focus of the *Erziehungsroman* is pedagogic (Jost 101, Jeffers 49); Moretti adds that it reflects the point of view of the educator (17). The standpoint given in *Never Let Me Go* is clearly the student's, impeding its categorisation, according to Moretti's argument, as *Erziehungsroman*. Jost also explains that, in such a story, the hero follows an educational programme and is subject to an external pressure or influence which helps shape him, for example a teacher (101). Moreover, he explains that the emergence of the *Bildungsroman* is linked to the early-nineteenth-century German preoccupation about education in which the pedagogical objective was, instead of educating children, to let children educate themselves (113).[3] This could explain why, even in school stories such as Ishiguro's, the emphasis is on what students learn outside, not inside, the classroom. However, in *Never Let Me Go*, guardians and their lessons do play a role in the clones' development and education is an important focus of the novel because it is Hailsham's tool for proving that the clones do not deserve to be treated as animals. However, Kathy's personal relationships with other students (mostly Ruth and Tommy) are what shapes her for the most part.

According to Jost, the *Erziehungsroman* is more restrictive than the *Bildungsroman* (101), which is why *Never Let Me Go* cannot fully correspond to this type. For the *Entwicklungsroman*, the opposite is true: less restrictive, this genre could even encompass the *Bildungsroman*, along with a lot of other kinds of narrative, because a novel that does not follow its hero's development is a rare commodity (101). However, development or *change* of the protagonist during its progression is, according to M. M. Bakhtin, what distinguishes the *Bildungsroman* from its predecessors (the novel of ordeal, the biographical novel and the family novel). He adds that this change in character reflects the changes in eventful, late-eighteenth-century society (qtd. in Jeffers 2). In his chapter, "The *Bildungsroman* as Symbolic Form" (3–13), Moretti argues likewise: the emergence of the *Bildungsroman* corresponds with the changing youth of changing, late-eighteenth-century European society which, as will be explained below, becomes mobile and takes a sudden interest in internal feelings (4). Regarding change in protagonists, *Never Let Me Go* is no exception. Kathy obviously develops along with the plot since the reader witnesses her maturation from childhood to adulthood. Her growth is inexorably influenced by the gradual awareness of whom (or what) she is and what she will have to do when the time comes. One of the most interesting aspects regarding this study is that in regular *Bildungsromane* the protagonist learns to insert himself correctly into society, while in Ishiguro's novel, when Kathy and her friends leave school and should therefore enter general society, they instead gradually *de-socialise* themselves from the rest of the world. They leave a community where they were never set aside to lead lives of outcasts in a society that needs them as much as it fears them. The proactiveness they show in the beginning of the novel in finding out the reason of the guardians' occasionally strange behaviours eventually disappears when they obtain all of the answers they are looking for. This gives way to fatalism, acceptance, and therefore passivity. Some regard this deficit of survival instinct as proof of their non-humanity (Braun 81).

Moretti found another distinctive feature between the two "genres": a novel of education is objective (17) whereas a novel of development is subjective (16). Given that Kathy is a homodiegetic narrator, her considerations about herself and the world are very likely to be subjective, making it obvious again that this novel could be a novel of development. The *Bildungsroman* is situated between the *Erziehungsroman* and the *Entwicklungsroman* because it features some, but not all, of their characteristics. Jost, Moretti and Jeffers agree about this and enjoy this opportunity to give some elements of definition. For example, Jeffers states that the difference between the *Bildungsroman* and the *Entwicklungsroman* is that the former "is about the early childhood-to-young-adulthood stages of life" (49), while the latter concerns transition between any stages. However, regarding the *Bildungsroman* Jost disagrees, believing that the focus is on adolescence and young adulthood (103).

In this respect, if pushed to define *Never Let Me Go* one could say that it is only partly, but not entirely, a *Bildungsroman*. Indeed, Kathy H.'s memories range from the time she was a child to her thirties. Where, therefore, does the *Bildung* end? Is it when Kathy leaves her school, Hailsham? It is when she leaves the Cottages, a house where she lives with other clones until she is ready to work as a carer? Is it when she quits being a carer to become a donor? The answer is debatable and depends on personal interpretation, and on how much one wishes to stick to established theories. Possible answers to these questions will be considered in the section "The Limits of Formation."

According to Jost, who also uses the *Erziehungsroman* to define the *Bildungsroman*, the former necessarily features a conscious formative authority whereas the latter emphasises the hero/student's own will to achieve a goal.[4] Classical *Bildungsromane* like *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* by Goethe or *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen (Moretti's *Bildungsroman* archetypes) corresponds to this description: in these, Wilhelm wants to be an actor (Moretti 182) and Elizabeth wants to marry for happiness instead of money. However, in other *Bildungsromane* the *Bildungsheld*'s behaviour is much less proactive: in *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens, the obstacles which the protagonist must endure do not appear because he has set himself a goal, nor are they orchestrated by someone else who wants to educate him. The boy lives a miserable and unlucky life in which his only goal is to survive (Jeffers 56).

The awareness of the hero in achieving his goal lies implicitly in the Jost's suggestion that he fights for a goal that he might even have set himself (101), which seems rather proactive. Such proactiveness is not to be found in Kathy H, who is very passive at both a personal and a general level. In her personal life she is nice, gullible and submissive to Ruth. At a more general level she is like the majority of the clones: she does not rebel against the system of organ donation, she does not fight to live (Lochner 231). She is even more passive than her friends Ruth, Tommy, Chrissie and Rodney who, at least, believe in a deferral system by which a couple can postpone organ donation by proving that they are really in love. However, when finding that such a deferral system does not exist, they will simply resign themselves to accepting their fate. The clones' passiveness is one of the most intriguing elements of the novel (Braun 66). Such acceptance of her fate explains Kathy's lack of goal setting; it is hard to project oneself into the future when one has no future, and people do not usually try to change what they already accept.

2. Experience Shaping Extraordinary Characters

The shaping of the protagonist through the experience of numerous obstacles one encounters whilst trying to become an adult is, according to Jost, the principal defining feature of the *Bildungsroman* (99). Moretti alludes to the same topic through

what he calls "episodes," events that are not inherently meaningful or exceptional but to which meaning may be given afterwards by the hero (45). Moretti's emphasis on the hero's role (42) – a kind of "anthropocentrism" (43) – is supported by Jost's comment that, in the *Bildungsroman*, common events happen to uncommon characters (107). This is true of Wilhelm Meister in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, who both differentiate themselves from their peers in wanting something different from their lives, he an acting career and she a happy marriage. However, according to *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms,* only in British *Bildungsromane* do the heroes feature "a certain sense of social dislocation" (19). Such an argument is corroborated by Moretti stating that the German tradition of "[t]his genre does not bother with extraordinary men" (32). The case of Kathy in *Never Let Me Go* is a bit ambiguous. The school environment in which she lives features a lot of conformism (students wear the same clothes, eat the same food, go to the same class, read the same books, etc.), which prevents her from being as non-conformist as her literary predecessors. Moreover, there is not much room left for fancy since she is drilled to serve one precise goal: to donate organs. However, while Kathy does not particularly stand out compared to her fellow students, her school stands out very much compared to other schools. Hailsham is one of the few schools where clones are educated and treated like human beings. Being part of these schools definitely influences Kathy's identity, which becomes even more apparent after she comes into contact with people from other kinds of schools – when she becomes a carer: "I don't know how it was where you were, but at Hailsham we had to have some form of medical almost every week" (Ishiguro 13). In this quotation Kathy is talking to an imaginary narratee, also a clone, who attended a different school from Hailsham.

Susanne Howe's 1930 "foundational study" (Jeffers 49) also mentions experience as a central theme in the *Bildungsroman*:

> The adolescent hero of the typical "apprentice" novel sets out on his way through the world, meets reverses usually due to his temperament, falls in with various guides and counsellors, makes many false starts in choosing his friends, his wife, and his life work, and finally adjusts himself in some way to the demands of his time and environment by finding a sphere of action in which he may work effectively. […] Needless to say, the variations of it are endless. (Howe, qtd. in Jeffers 49)

Never Let Me Go broadly meets such criteria: Kathy recalls episodes of her teenage years, events that caused her to suffer but also to grow; her various guardians serve as guides to her and have different points of view (for example, Miss Emily *vs.* Miss Lucy on the clones' education); due to her dominant position among the girls of the class, Ruth can also be seen as a sort of guide to Kathy; Kathy does not make any "false start," as Howe puts it, regarding her life's work due to the scarcity of options available, but her friendships are intermittent: her relationships with

Ruth and Tommy prove fragile; in the end, she definitely "adjusts" herself "to the demands of [her] time" by giving up her job as a carer and becoming the organ donor society wants her to become. Surprisingly, she considers herself ready, accepts her future with relative peace and thinks of it as a duty. Indeed, she says:

> [...] by the end of the year, I won't be driving around like this any more. So the chances are I won't ever come across [Hailsham] now, and on reflection, I'm glad that's the way it'll be. It's like my memories of Tommy and of Ruth. Once I'm able to have a quieter life, in whichever centre they send me to, I'll have Hailsham with me, safely in my head, and that'll be something no one can take away. [...] The fantasy [of imagining Tommy alive] never got beyond that – I didn't let it – and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control. I just waited a bit, then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be. (Ishiguro 281–282)

Throughout the novel, Kathy is nostalgic of her Hailsham years and this nostalgia is exacerbated by Tommy's death. Although she is very much afflicted, her sense of duty prevails. Even the loss of her lover does not cause her to question the organ donation system. It is interesting to consider that Kathy is not critical of the treatment of the human body as a commodity – Kathy is not critical of anything at all. As one will see, the only thing she ends up questioning is, ironically, Hailsham.

3. Inner versus Outer Lives

Moretti explains that the classical *Bildungsroman* necessarily ends with marriage, "a pact between the individual and the world" (22), and presents happiness as "the end of becoming [...], the end of all tension between the individual and his world" (23) and "the subjective symptom of an objectively complete socialization" (24). However, times have changed and marriage no longer holds as much social importance as it used to (Moretti 7). In *Never Let Me Go*, the conclusion of adolescence no longer coincides with marrying but rather becoming a carer and, later, an organ donor. Marriage is understandably not one of Kathy's concerns. Nonetheless, the ending of this novel does convey the ideas of the erasure of tension and complete socialisation achieved not through marriage but through the death of a loved one.

Jeffers sees socialisation in a light that could not be more accurate with regards to Ishiguro novel: "social relationships matter less for themselves than for the *Weltanschauung* – the "lay religion or general philosophy of life," as W.H. Bruford says – they help articulate" (50). Kathy's social life is indeed central to the plot and has undeniable shaping power on the characters: most of Kathy's anecdotes allude to her problematic, love-hate relationship with Ruth. After suffering Ruth's constant undermining throughout her childhood and adolescence, it becomes apparent that Ruth's negative behaviours have transferred to Kathy,

whilst Ruth herself has become a better person (Stamirowska 64): on their trip to the boat Kathy openly ridicules Ruth for the first time, while shortly afterwards Ruth admits to having tried to separate Kathy and Tommy more than once, asks for forgiveness and pushes the couple to ask for a deferral. Kathy's relationship with Tommy is also important to her personal development, because it is with him that she discusses the mystery that lies, spatially and temporally, beyond Hailsham, and finally understands who – or what – she and her fellow Hailsham students really are. It is also with Tommy that she discovers the supposedly-typical human feeling of love, of striking relevance in a novel that ultimately questions and discusses the human condition.

Whilst this section has dwelled on the importance of social life in the *Bildungsroman*, most authors agree that this kind of novel focuses above all on the hero's internal development, his inner life. Jost writes that this inner life matters much more than events, turning the *Bildungsroman* into a spiritual voyage.[5] Jeffers confirms: "An intensely Jamesian center of consciousness [the *Bildungsheld*] need not be, but a focus on the development of his inner life is nevertheless essential" (50). Thanks to this prevailing introspection, the *Bildungsheld* is rather a dreamer and an artist than a man of action (Jeffers 50). According to Moretti, the focus on inner life is typical of modern youth: in the 18th century, the emergence of the *bourgeoisie* undermines the class system; besides, there is a city exodus that splits generations – sons are no longer bound to do the same job as their fathers –, which permits spatial and social mobility that "give rise to unexpected hopes, thereby generating an *interiority* not only fuller than before, but also – as Hegel clearly saw, even though he deplored it – perennially dissatisfied and restless" (Moretti 4).

Some might consider inner and outer lives to be two sides of the same coin that is the *Bildungsheld*. However, these two sides coexist in a far from harmonious state: as *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* recalls "Goethe's attention to the gradual growth to self-awareness of his protagonist depends on a harmonious negotiation of interior and exterior selfhoods, a reconciliation that involves the balancing of social role with individual fulfilment" (18). Summerfield and Downward allude to Wilhelm Dilthey's similar conception of the *Bildungsroman*, popularised by the latter, which "traces the progress of a young person towards self-understanding as well as a sense of social responsibility" (1). Starting from Moretti's theory, Jeffers explains that the *Bildungsroman* is about "modern youth, representative of the coming democracy, [and] a self-expressive ego confronted with the community's demands for self-repression" 51). According to Moretti, the only way to cope with these demands is to internalise them: "not to 'solve' the contradiction, but rather to learn to live with it, and even transform it into a tool for survival" (10).[6] All of these references end up mentioning a tension between the hero's interior being (his feelings, his need for freedom) and external environment (society, which imposes its limitations).

The environment of *Never Let Me Go*, a boarding school where the entire life of students is regulated, is quite repressive. Beyond the already limiting school lies a future that does not leave many choices open to the characters. The leeway given by these realities is rather small, but after a short, lacking-of-enthusiasm attempt to escape it, Kathy accepts her situation. Like the traditional *Bildungsroman* hero, she manages to stay true to herself even when confronted with society's demands however unpleasant these may be.

Nevertheless, Kathy has a counterpart who does not display such acceptance. Although Tommy cannot conform to society's demands and tries to bypass them, he ends up broken by them. The hysterical child he used to be relapses when he learns that there is absolutely no way of escaping his fate, in a heart-breaking scene in which he screams in a field at night. After witnessing this, Kathy tells him: "I was thinking maybe the reason you used to get like that [hysterical] was because at some level you always *knew*" (270), to which he answers:

> "Don't think so, Kath. No, it was always just me. Me being an idiot. That's all it ever was." Then after a moment, he did a small laugh and said: "But that's a funny idea. Maybe I did know, somewhere deep down. Something the rest of you didn't." (270)

Tommy simultaneously dismisses and acknowledges his childhood intuition, just like the *Bildungsheld* expresses his unique self but at the same time wants to conform. Even if the screaming episode is a turning point after which Tommy begins to accept his fate, he does so, however, by force rather than as willingly as Kathy; reality has managed to break him and he cannot resist any longer. In the chapter that follows this extract, it becomes apparent that Tommy is resigned – he is more distant from Kathy and closer to the other donors. Besides, he displays a light and positive mood around his fellow donors, as if nothing had ever happened, and even more so when he learns that he will soon have to make his fourth donation, which is bound to kill him. This difference in acceptance has to do with the way these characters discovered the truth about themselves. If Kathy's theory is right, Tommy did learn the truth sooner than his fellow Hailsham students and by himself, instead of gradually thanks to the guardians' truncated explanations. His acceptance of the facts was thus not innate; he experienced reality sooner and more suddenly than the others and, therefore could not internalise it – he could not 'live with it' – in the way that the others could.

4. Art and Culture

Some consider culture, and subsequently art, essential to the *Bildungsroman* as it has influence on both the hero's inner and outer lives. According to Jost, intellectual and moral progress implies a quest towards an ideal in which knowledge

is essential[7] (114). In this respect, both Moretti and Jeffers refer back to Friedrich von Schiller, one of the pioneers of *Bildungsroman* theory, and his *Aesthetic Education* (Moretti 29–32; Jeffers 40–42). Schiller considered men of his time too specialised – being either a scientist, an intellectual, a craftsman, an artist or an athlete, etc. – and that they should instead draw inspiration from the Ancient Greek model of totality, in which a man is all these things at once. Culture is the tool to rediscover this lost totality, and men must, therefore, engage in an acculturation path, which can be high – becoming "artists and connoisseurs" (Jeffers 41) – or low, for those who cannot indulge in such full-time activities; in other, cruder words, the poor who must work. Men's "intellectual character awaken[ing]" and freedom of choice is the final destination of this low path (Jeffers 41). Since Hailsham students are privileged and still at school, they have a lot of time "to 'play' at thinking, forming, or writing.," i.e. the high path and the only activity that can lead them to being human (Jeffers 41).

'Art' may have more than one meaning. On the one hand there is the dictionary definition, following the most general and common understanding of the term: "something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings" (*Merriam-Webster*). On the other hand there is the German conception of 'art' described by Wilhelm Humboldt:

> Everything towards which man directs his attention, whether it is limited to the direct or indirect satisfaction of merely physical wants, or to the accomplishment of external objects in general, presents itself in a closely interwoven relation with his internal sensations. [...] In view of this consideration, it seems as if all peasants and craftsmen might be elevated into artists; that is, into men who love their labour for its own sake, improve it by their own plastic genius and inventive skill, and thereby cultivate their intellect, ennoble their character, and exalt and refine their enjoyments. (qtd. in Moretti 30)

Like Schiller with his acculturation paths, Humboldt seems to insist that the *bourgeoisie* and aristocracy should not be the only ones who can afford to access art and culture.

Set in imaginary, dystopian/uchronic world, *Never Let Me Go* contains, surprisingly, some art and culture references that belong to the reader's world. Kathy recurrently alludes to the Victorian literary period regarding her final essay (Ishiguro 105). Hailsham guardians insist very much on student creativity and, every once in a while, the best pieces of art are collected by Madame. To the students whose art is taken away, it is always a great honour; they receive compensation and the other students' admiration. Kathy enlarges on her friends' art and her own, because at Hailsham, the best students are actually those with greatest artistic skills. If one cannot produce any work of art, like Tommy, they are scolded by the guardians and ridiculed by their fellow students. However, Tommy secretly begins to draw

fantasy animals when he arrives at the Cottages. Kathy feels confused about these drawings:

> I didn't come up with wholehearted praise. Maybe it was partly my worry that any artwork was liable to get him into trouble all over again. But also, what I was looking at was so different from anything the guardians had taught us to do at Hailsham, I didn't know how to judge it. (Ishiguro 185)

Her reaction shows that nonconformist types of artistic expressions are not easily considered artistic among people to whom art has always been a way of establishing someone's quality. Coming back to the two definitions of 'art,' Hailsham's understanding is more traditional whereas Tommy, who produces something unexpected and unprecedented, rather corresponds to Humboldt's German idea of an artist: he puts his attention, effort, personal feelings and love into his fantasy animals, which in their turn lead him to improve his skills, his intellect and his character.

Clones being educated and sensitive to fine art is actually the reason behind Hailsham's existence. When Kathy and Tommy meet Miss Emily again years after Hailsham, Kathy asks:

> Why did we do all of that work in the first place? Why train us, encourage us, make us produce all of that [art]? If we're just going to give donations anyway, then die, why all those lessons? Why all those books and discussions? (Ishiguro 255)

To this Miss Emily answers: "We took your art because we thought it would reveal your souls. Or to put it more finely, we did it to *prove you had souls at all*" (Ishiguro 255). Their plan was to change public opinion about clones so that they would not be killed for their organs anymore. Some would say they did manage to prove the clones' humanity; others would argue that the clones' resignation before death is so unnatural they might not be human after all (Braun 81).

Explaining Schiller's praise of Greek totality, Moretti writes that the *Bildungsheld* is eventually "[f]ree from that disharmonious specialization that [...] constitutes the specific curse of the 'bourgeois'" (31). The aim of the classical *Bildungsroman* is, therefore, "to create 'full and happy men' – full and happy because 'tempered,' not 'partial' or 'unilateral'" (Moretti 31). Jeffers, who also alludes to Schiller, reminds us that Goethe himself believed that such "all-roundedness" was not yet possible and that "the achievement of modern civilization depended on specialization" (Jeffers 3).

Never Let Me Go features this ambivalence towards specialisation: on the one hand Kathy's school is preparing her for a certain purpose (organ donation), and on the other hand it teaches her many other things as well. Even though the guardians know what lies ahead of the children, they insist on them having various

competences to show the world that a clone reared in a humane way is not different to an actual human.

5. The Limits of Formation

According to Jost the *Bildungsroman* is like a "préroman": it prepares the hero for his future life. This presupposes a favourable outcome for the protagonist (99). However, to establish if the *Bildung* ends 'happily', one must first know when the *Bildung* ends. It is indeed difficult to decide where to place the limit between the *Bildungsroman*, Jost's "prérroman" (99), and the rest of the novel, Jost's "roman" (99).

The most logical delimitation in *Never Let Me Go* would appear to be when Kathy enters adulthood as she leaves the Cottages to become a carer (at the end of "Part Two"): she leaves the acquaintances and the environment of her childhood and teenage years and experiences the reality of organ donation. At this point, there is no more room left for doubt, hope or change.

Some might also argue that life experiences keep on shaping Kathy *after* leaving the Cottages: she meets old friends struggling with being a carer (Laura) or a donor (Ruth), Ruth finally admits that she had been manipulating Kathy all along and then dies, Kathy starts a romantic relationship with Tommy, this couple ends up hoping to be granted a deferral that does not even exist, and then Tommy dies. After the latter event, Kathy decides it is time she fulfilled her obligation as a donor, the role for which she was, after all, created. The novel implies that the death of a loved one being a difficult and important experience, its consequences and its character-forming power are likewise important.

As explained previously, the *Bildung* might be complete if one considers that the *Bildungsroman* ends when the hero finds and accepts his role in society. However, wherever one decides to place the limit of the *Bildung*, Kathy does not reach a happy ending anyway. She leaves the Cottages out of spite for Ruth and Tommy and nothing of what follows is likely to bring her happiness. Moreover, she is bound to die and has no way of escaping her fate.

Contradicting Jost's assertion that *Bildungsromane* must have 'happy endings,' Suleiman states that they can have a positive or a negative ending, the only difference being *the message they send*. Suleiman indeed sees many *Bildungsromane* as ideological novels that show the reader the path to follow – or not to follow in cases where the outcome is unfavourable to the protagonist (67).

6. Update on the *Bildungsroman*

Never Let Me Go features many characteristics of the *Bildungsroman*, though not all. The reason for this is likely to be its uncommon mix of realistic and unrealistic

elements. Ishiguro's dystopian setting is normalised through the use of a high number of familiar elements such as the boarding school (Carroll 62) or the characters' childlike and adolescent behaviours.

However, the true objective of this study is not to decide whether to label this novel as '*Bildungsroman'* but rather to explore the updating of a concept that was, at first, closely related to the context it was born in. *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* already describes how this genre has been adapted through the years and in various places: in Britain, the heroes were outcasts; in France and Russia they were sexually transgressive; Modernists exacerbated the focus on the inner life and Postmodernists took an interest in marginalised groups, i.e. women and non-white people (19). It is now the turn of science fiction to reinvent the *Bildungsroman*. In *Never Let Me Go,* the late-eighteenth-century considerations about marriage, industrial revolution or the rise of the *bourgeoisie* were replaced by considerations about the "scientific-technical revolution" initiated by this WWII (Šmihula 51). This novel brings to mind recent preoccupations about biotechnologies initiated in 1996 by the birth of Dolly the sheep, the first mammal to be cloned successfully. The nineteenth-century *Bildungsheld* looking for a place in a changing society has now turned into a posthuman looking for his own humanity in a dehumanised world.

Notes

1 The term "non-realist" is to be understood according to its narrower meaning as a genre that does not represent the world of its author. A convenient synonym could therefore be "fantastic" (Hellekson 3).

2 "principe d'écart minimal"

3 "au lieu d'*éduquer* l'enfant, il faut lui permettre de *s'éduquer* lui-même."

4 "Au lieu que dans le Bildungsroman, le héros, tout en demeurant dans son milieu naturel – social et professionnel – combat pour un but qu'il entrevoit ou qu'il s'est lui-même donné et, ce faisant, se forme; dans l'Erziehungsroman, ce héros suit un programme d'étude, un plan d'exercices" (101).

5 "Ce principe d'unité est plutôt à chercher dans le héros lui-même, ses attitudes devant la vie, ses victoires et ses défaites [que dans les événements]. Ainsi, le *Bildungsroman* demeure une sorte de récit de voyage spirituel: la distance intérieure parcourue donne la mesure du progrès accompli" (Jost 104).

6 Years before, Jost praised Wilhelm Meister's acceptance: " En fait, c'est dans un labyrinthe dont personne n'a pu consulter le plan que tout apprenti-homme se trouve engagé, et c'est par un dédale de superstitions et de mensonges qu'il s'achemine vers la lumière ou vers l'acceptation d'une certaine irrationalité du monde. Mieux que le monde lui-même, Wilhelm reconnait sa place dans

le monde, il commence à distinguer, à pouvoir définir cet homme qu'est lui-même" (105).

7 "l'idée de progrès intellectuels et moraux implique celle d'une montée vers un idéal [...]. C'est ici la quintessence même du *Bildungsroman*. [...] [R]ien ne purifie comme la connaissance" (Jost 114).

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The Ubiquitous Absence of Jack: *Ripper Street* and the (Neo-)Victorian Obsession

Abstract

Despite the title reference, the BBC's *Ripper Street* (2012–2014) was not intended as another Jack the Ripper story; the infamous killer's absence is acutely felt in its first three seasons, though. The paper examines the way his acts are being recalled for the characters and viewers, but also reconstructed in a performance and copycat murders, and how, even though the Ripper is long gone, people may become his victims. The absence as echoed in the series plot and setting is a commentary on both the Victorian and modern fascination with the unsolved case.

It is a plain fact that "no title on Jack the Ripper ever gathers much dust" (*Publisher's Weekly*, qtd. in Schmid 198) and it is hard to imagine late-Victorian Whitechapel without him. Félix J. Palma, author of a Spanish steampunk novel *The Map of Time* (2008) about Wells' time machine and nineteenth-century time travelling, presents an alternative history in which the 1888 killer is caught; one of the characters provides a somewhat unexpected comment:

> This may surprise you, gentlemen, but nobody should ever have captured Jack the Ripper. [...] for the purposes of history, Jack the Ripper would have disappeared off the face of the earth. He would have left behind him the unsolved mystery of his identity, over which as much ink would be spilled as the blood that had flowed under his knife, and which throughout the ensuing century would become the favourite pastime of researchers, detectives, and amateurs. They would all root around in Scotland Yard's archives, desperate to be the first to put a face to the shadow that time had converted into a gruesome legend. (448)

The amount of ink used to retell the events of the autumn of terror, as it is usually called, and present yet another "real identity" of Jack the Ripper is understated. There has been "a steady trickle of Whitechapel literature" (Moore and Campbell 6) ever since the "fated combination" of a "series of murders and a nascent popular press" (Altick, qtd. in Schmid 200). The legend stands behind numerous

'true-crime' books – the oldest being *The Curse Upon Mitre Square* (1888) and *The History of the Whitechapel Murders* (1888) – works of fiction, films, comic books, walking tours, conference papers, articles, etc. For many, "the countless resurrections of the Ripper murders" (Curtis, qtd. in Warwick and Willis 3) have become a source of income. Each retells the well-known story but offers a "repetition with variation" and "without replication" (Hutcheon 4, 7), and yet, in spite of all the adaptations and appropriations, explanations and (re)examinations, the killer keeps succeeding in eluding us? Our unquenchable thirst for anything of interest regarding the 1888 mystery is probably best depicted in Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's "Dance of the gull catchers": "Truth is, this has never been about the murders, not the killer nor his victims. It's about us. About our minds and how they dance. Jack mirrors our hysterias. Faceless, he is the receptacle for each new social panic" (22). The first three seasons of Richard Warlow's BBC series *Ripper Street* (2012–2014) provide an equally interesting commentary on the Victorian and neo-Victorian ways of dealing with the unsolved case and the absence of the culprit.

The series' approach to the late nineteenth-century Whitechapel corresponds with Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn's definition of neo-Victorian texts as "*self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians* (4; original emphasis). It also relates to Louisa Hadley's statement that "when neo-Victorian fictions incorporate historical figures, they remain committed to the historical specificity of that figure; they do not simplistically establish Victorian 'types' but rather question the very processes by which an historical individual becomes an exemplar of an age" (18). By not offering yet another 'definite' suspect, and thus not providing a solution to the case, it refocuses the viewers' attention to the different ways in which the killer and his deeds have been construed.

The ubiquitous absence and ambiguous or contradictory character of the killer was stressed already at the time when he was given his moniker. On the one hand, "Jack" is "a common name that represents ubiquity: the nomenclature of the ordinary" (Bloom 91); on the other, "Jack the Ripper is not a name but a *label* connecting a set of related acts; he has no proper name, no address, no biographical details" (Smith, qtd. in Cunningham 166; original emphasis). From the very beginning, he has been given so many faces and motives that nowadays it is hardly possible to distinguish fact from fiction, and it seems that the sheer number of theories and narratives in circulation is closing the circle, thus turning Jack the Ripper again into a jack. What is interesting, his name is hardly used in *Ripper Street*: the killer is mostly referred to by a pronoun or common nouns with negative connotations: "Is it him?," "Has he come?," "maniac," "lunatic" ("I Need Light"). The people who do use the name are the ones that profit from (re)telling his story: a tour guide and a journalist; the police – Reid and Abberline – usually use "Jack" and "Ripper" to describe the

authors of copycat slayings, not the original killer ("I Need Light," "What Use Our Work?").

Even though back in 1888 the West of London could "only dimly imagine what the terror must have been in those acres of narrow streets where the inhabitants knew the murderer to be lurking" (Ackroyd 273) and the serial killer has not been caught, in *Ripper Street* it is business as usual in 1889 Whitechapel: urchins misbehave, madams make money, abortionists flourish, opium dens and freak shows attract clients, slums make way for the railway, and slummers feed on the East End atmosphere. The policemen of the Leman Street station have to deal with anarchists, Irish bombers, anti-Semites, etc., and the journalists are following new sensations. And yet, although Jack the Ripper is absent from the series, his presence is acutely felt there. A slumming tour, a music hall show, a copycat murder, or a traumatised passive victim – all of these are present to show the Victorian fascination with the unsolved case so widely reported by the press of the day. However, as is the usual case with other neo-Victorian texts, they also serve as a comment on our absorption in the Ripper myth and demonstrate that Chief Inspector Abberline is not the only one whose engagement with it is bordering on obsession.

1. "Follow me for the haunts of Jack the Ripper"

The opening scene of the first episode depicts a sight well-known to modern inhabitants of Whitechapel: a group of people alien to the area is walking around with their faces expressing varying mixtures of curiosity and disgust, masked with vague smiles. A few years ago I saw similar mixtures of curiosity and genuine shock on the faces of the participants of one of the many Ripper tours organised in London's East End. Unlike contemporary tours, however, the people shown in *Ripper Street* stand out also due to their appearance: they are groomed and smartly dressed. The guide welcomes both the group and the viewers: "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Whitechapel. [...] Follow me for the haunts of Jack the Ripper" ("I Need Light"). The depiction of the East End is fairly conventional – it is different and dangerous, threatening and thrilling at the same time. The guide's speech reflects both the feeling of superiority and the level of hypocrisy on the part of the slummers: "All of this parish know little else but thuggery. How best to raise them up from such iniquity? Well, that's a matter for you good people, of course" ("I Need Light"). His words seem to echo one of the earliest accounts of the murders whose anonymous author rhetorically asks: "What else can you expect in Whitechapel with its floating population of criminals and fallen women?" (*The History of the Whitechapel Murders* 107). The series "perpetuates the myths surrounding the east and tends to offer up middle-class 'heroes' as its saviors" (Gray). Unfortunately, the "good people" touring the area are not interested in

helping the unfortunates. Many of the historic middle- and upper-class ladies and gentlemen were joining lower classes either from a distance, by eagerly discussing each instalment of the narrative serialized in the newspapers, or on the spot: they "made up parties to go and view the scenes" ("*Baroness Orczy*..."). Scavenging crime scenes in search of blood stains and admiring waxworks depicting the murders was common.

In February 1889, one Thomas Barry was found guilty of causing a nuisance by his show at Whitechapel Road. He exhibited

> the Whitechapel murders of 'Jack the Ripper,' various fat people and dwarves, and all kinds of monstrosities. There was a waxwork inside, and boxing and other performances went on. The price of admission was a penny. [...] [and] as many as 200 people had assembled outside the show premises at one time. The pictures that attracted most attention were those relating to the Whitechapel murders [...]. One picture showed six women lying down injured and covered in blood, and with their clothes disturbed. ("A Penny Show")

As reported by the press, the reason for including the Ripper killings was very plain: Barry's "ordinary attractions had failed to arouse public interest [so] he took advantage of the excitement which had been caused by the murders in Whitechapel to exhibit ghastly and disgusting representations of the victims" ("Whitechapel Nuisances"). Simple, effective, and victim/gore oriented. Another Victorian example of using those murders for profit is the case of a man who, a year after the autumn of terror, was selling newspapers shouting: "Another horrible murder and mutilation; Jack the Ripper at work again," even though the paper reported nothing of the kind. For obtaining money by false pretences he was sentenced to twenty-one-day imprisonment and hard labour ("James Kendrick"). Whereas both men had to face consequences of their actions, contemporary tourists may safely engage in the (sometimes) guilty pleasure of visiting Madame Tussauds or the London Dungeon in search of the thrill similar to the one felt by late-Victorian slummers. No form of Jack the Ripper is there, "his presence is implied by moving shadows and the sound of retreating footsteps" (Cunningham 162). Moreover, sightseers taking part in the East End walking tours, preoccupied with "the ghosts of the past crimes, [are] unlikely to notice the conditions of such crimes in the present" (Cunningham 161).

2. "The man and his works abide"

The first major crime the Leman Street police have to deal with in the series is a murder. A female body is found in a back street, "carved," her left carotid is cut in a way suggesting a left to right stroke, characteristic of the Ripper victims;

her eyelids are star-shaped slit, like Catherine Eddowes' and Mary Kelly's; there is a message on the wall next to her, reminiscent of the one found next to Eddowes' apron, but this one reads "Down on whores," which is a quotation from the "Dear Boss" letter received at the Central News Agency on September 27, 1888. The writing turns out to be a journalist's doing, to highlight what he considers "plain" – that "our friend is back" ("I Need Light"). If everyone believes it, two people would profit most: *The Star* journalist, due to the increase in circulation of the paper, and the real killer. Inspector Reid, however, stands in their way. Even though Chief Inspector Abberline is overexcited at the possibility of finally catching the Ripper, Reid believes the victim was "dressed as Jack for [their] eyes;" the woman was not an East End prostitute, the cause of her death was different, and the cuts are "a postscript, an afterthought" ("I Need Light") merely leading the investigators to the wrong track.

The other copycat murder is staged for different reasons. A body of a prostitute is found in a back alley, and her injuries make the surgeon conducting the autopsy and Abberline believe "she is Ripper": "Throat-cut commencing left, terminating right. Abrasions on the spine. Access to the pelvic organs secured with one incision, ribcage to pubis. As before, parts of the bladder taken. And the womb also. That organ recovered at Captain Jackson's lodgings on Tenter Street" ("What Use Our Work"). "That organ" is a kidney found wrapped together with a bloody knife ("A Man of My Company"), which is a reference to the "From Hell" letter to Mr Lusk, head of the Vigilance Committee, received on October 16, 1888. It read: "I send you half the Kidne I took from one woman and prasarved it for you tother piece I fried and ate it was very nise. I may send you the bloody knif that took it out if you only wate a whil longer" ("Ripper letters"). It appears the Ripper has kept his word, especially since the body bears so many of his victims' signature traits. Here, again, the ambiguous role of the press is highlighted, since the cuts were made on the basis of the pictures of the real victims: the killer used newspaper cuttings as models to copy. Later, he planted the kidney and the knife on the man he wanted to take revenge on. Such false accusations were not uncommon back in the nineteenth century: a certain man lost his job after being "mistaken for Jack the Ripper," followed by a crowd and detained a few hours at the police station – "simply out of malice" ("You are Jack the Ripper").

Some years ago, another TV series introduced the concept of the Ripper copycat. The first season of *Whitechapel* (2009) also makes extensive use of replicas of the 1888 letters, newspaper cuttings, autopsy photographs, medical reports, etc., to solve crimes committed in modern London by another serial killer. He is not merely labelled the Ripper, like "The Yorkshire Ripper," Peter Sutcliffe was – he painstakingly recreates Jack's work. And we, the modern audience, once again engage in resurrecting the murders and revisiting the Ripper's h(a)unting ground.

3. "Jack's idea of fun, fun, fun, fun, fun"

The killer's given name is common, and his appearance is unknown – not only due to the fact that he was not caught, but also because the descriptions provided by the witnesses were contradictory (tall/medium, dark/light etc.). Some fictional accounts are interestingly tainted with Hyde-like qualities – as the *Ripper Street* witness explains: "It is what I have tried to tell you. Yes, that night, I saw him. But I saw nothing in him. Where his face should be, only darkness. This Ripper, he is dybbuk" ("What Use Our Work"). Temporary possession by an evil spirit may account for different bodies being described but does not seem to be a particularly attractive theory. In one of the episodes, Jack is given a face and a costume that is reminiscent of a Victorian gentleman, or, a far-fetched analogy to early-cinematic depictions of another Victorian villain, Count Dracula: white shirt, black suit, and a black cloak with red lining. He appears on the music-hall stage and performs mock killings accompanied by a counting-out song.

The lyrics begin with "Eight little whores / With no hope of heaven," and do more than retell the killings. In the first stanza there is a reference to William Ewart Gladstone's attempts at rescuing and rehabilitating London prostitutes ("Gladstone may save one / Then there'll be seven") ("Become Man"); in the second Heneage Court is mentioned, which must be a reference to the story of an arrest of a respected doctor made there ("Frederick Richard Chapman"). Jack appears in the third, and already in the fourth he is boasting about "set[ting] the town alight;" the majority of the listeners are definitely alight with the performance and the character. When the counting out stops at two,

> Jack's knife flashes
> Then there is but one
> And the last one is the ripest
> For Jack's idea of fun, fun, fun, fun, fun. ("Become Man")

This last stanza is of particular importance. Not only Jack is having fun: the audience, looking even smarter than the first episode tour participants, enjoy the performance and laugh with gusto at the long knife and hands covered in red paint. The question arises: whose idea of fun is more disturbing: Jack's or the audience's?

According to Clive Bloom, the very letters attributed to the Ripper convey not only "a black humour and a certain 'bravado,'" but also "a music-hall atmosphere and a self-important theatricality through which [they] create an imaginary persona for the perpetrator. […] Jack goes into his music-hall act for the bewildered audience – appalled, amazed (and applauding) the virtuoso performance" (94). By the time the letters became widely known, the killer had become "a multiplicity of performing personas for the popular imagination. The possibility of

copycat crimes (although finally dismissed from at least two other 'torso' cases) lent to Jack the amorphous ability to inhabit more than one physical body" (95), which may be read as validating the dybbuk comparison.

The actual readers of the serialised sensational story consisting of the letters and articles, as well as the music-hall audience of *Ripper Street*, share with the viewers of the series the interest and the will to engage in the process of reinventing Jack to their tastes. There are others who, for different reasons, need to go a step further and recreate his crimes.

4. "Where the Ripper did his work, my daughter now follows"

Back in 1888 and 1889, "sightseers were flocking Berner Street and George Yard and Flower and Dean Street" (Ackroyd 273). These places, together with Brick Lane, The Frying Pan, Osborn Street, Spitalfields Market, Brushfield Street, Little Paternoster Row, and Hanbury Street, ring a bell not only to ripperologists. *Ripper Street* recalls them not to follow and find the killer, thus terminating Abberline's obsession, but to save Jack's *in absentia* passive victim and bring an end to Inspector Reid's private problems.

The key to finding Mathilda, Reid's lost daughter, turns out to be the map of Whitechapel with the locations of the first two canonical Ripper's victims and their few possessions, "the fine details of the Ripper case […] not even those hounds at *The Star*" knew, such as "the shard of glass that Polly Nichols had in her purse, [and] the red and white neckerchief that Annie Chapman had tied around her neck" ("Your Father, My Friend"). Mathilda gets similar objects and tries to locate the places the women visited on their last night; it is the report of her saying "See what a jolly bonnet I've got now" ("Your Father, My Friend") – quoting Polly Nichols – that gives her father a clue. The map Reid prepared while working on the case became a step towards losing his daughter: the post-mortem pictures of the victims that marked the crime scenes scarred the little girl, as evidenced by her drawings of dead women made a few years later. Fanciful as the idea of her looking through the case files may be (cf. Gray), and even though she herself was not hurt by the Ripper, Mathilda is presented as another victim of his work. What is interesting, though, is that she did not become one passively – she did some marking on the map of her own, putting pins to locate the place where she thought the victims would be safe: her family home, with "her daddy" there to protect them ("Your Father, My Friend"). Preoccupied with the case, Reid was unable to protect his own daughter, and even when he does get Mathilda back, the "dead of Whitechapel" are said to have priority over her ("Live Free, Live True").

The dead of Whitechapel, especially those five canonical victims, keep coming back; Jack, however, does not (at least not yet), despite continuous efforts on the part of historians and ripperologists. The theories amount and while some of

them are seen as fairly reasonable, others are discredited very quickly. What is interesting, those that turn out to be fairly short-lived are the ones that use modern technology with its accompanying claims to be definitive and conclusive. Patricia Cornwell's *Portrait of a Killer: Jack the Ripper – Case Closed* (2002) and Russell Edwards' *Naming Jack the Ripper* (2014) are dismissed on the same basis: the problems with using mitochondrial DNA evidence (Ryder). Even if such books sell well, the media frenzy is short-lived and the writers themselves become a kind of passive victims of the Ripper myth.

5. "A little joy in his continuous absence"

The meticulous approach to recreating late-Victorian reality combined with placing the plot six months after the last canonical Ripper murder and still calling it *Ripper Street* may have resulted in the reception of the title as a mere catchphrase attracting the viewers to "an investigative procedural about dedicated policemen" ("Ripper Street"). What it also meant was that the killer's absence had to become a necessary part of the setting. Towards the end of the first episode, Reid suggests Abberline "to undertake this: that we find a little joy in his continued absence, […]. All that we can hope for now is that he is gone and stays gone" ("I Need Light"). And that is what makes the series interesting: it does not create yet another Ripper-figure on the basis of vague theories. Jack's shadow resurfaces as a form of commentary on the ways of dealing with failure on the part of the police – not solving the case, hence not bringing order and resolution – and the success on the part of the press – creating a best-selling sensational story, which is still being re-imagined for modern audiences. But more importantly, the series presents both the Victorians and us, the modern audiences, as obsessed with his legend, the narrative in which "fiction and history meet and mutate" (Bloom 96). We are "watching our social and psychological concerns performed in costume" (Whelehan 278).

Our obsession is used by some marketing departments, as evident in the subtitle added to the Polish version of the series: *Ripper Street: The Mystery of Jack the Ripper* [*Ripper Street: Tajemnica Kuby Rozpruwacza*], which signals that the series might be yet another attempt at discovering who the killer was (or that the people in the local marketing department have no clue regarding what the series is about). Another example is the cover of the Blu-ray edition of the second season, which relies on the stereotypical signifiers of the Ripper: a pool of blood on a cobbled street, a long knife dripping with blood, and a long coat; even though only the lower part of the man is visible, he is standing back to the viewer, walking away, leaving the crime scene and leaving us – the viewers.

Whereas the historic people of Whitechapel were relieved the Ripper was gone and the TV Leman Street police officers were looking for some joy in his

absence, modern audiences seem to find joy in reimagining the autumn of terror from a safe distance, reading (and watching) all about it. Almost a century ago, in the 1920s, Edmund Pearson stated that while writing about true crime, we are "constructing the criminal as a comfortably distant monster" (Schmid 203). Coming to terms with the fact that the killer was not caught and we may never learn his true identity, *Ripper Street* goes a step further building the character around his conspicuous and ubiquitous absence.

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Trading Rationality for Tomatoes: The Consolidation of Anglo-American National Identities in Popular Literary Representations of Italian Culture

Abstract

In *The Rhetoric of Empire* (1993), David Spurr analyzes journalistic discourse on the Third World and isolates a nucleus of rhetorical figures around which representations of the colonial and post-colonial other are articulated. In this paper, I will borrow, in particular, three of these rhetorical figures (naturalization, idealization, appropriation) and I will adapt them to the context of contemporary Anglo-American representations of Italian culture in popular literature. I will argue that a substantial number of contemporary works on Italy retains the basic assumption of a world ordered around a dichotomy between modern cultures and pre-modern ones, and makes of this taxonomy the basic spatiotemporal context for its narratives.

In *The Rhetoric of Empire* (1993), David Spurr analyzes journalistic discourse on the Third World and isolates a nucleus of rhetorical figures around which representations of the colonial and post-colonial other are articulated. In this paper, I will borrow, in particular, three of these rhetorical figures (naturalization, idealization, appropriation) and I will adapt them to the context of contemporary Anglo-American representations of Italian culture in popular literature. I will argue that a substantial number of contemporary works on Italy retains the basic assumption of a world ordered around a dichotomy between modern cultures and pre-modern ones, and makes of this taxonomy the basic spatiotemporal context for its narratives. A large number of contemporary popular novels, memoirs, and relocation narratives, in spite of their clear vocation for a light and graceful sort of entertainment, classify Italy as the other of modern Europe through the *naturalization* of certain characteristics that from the territory extend to the people and get inscribed in the genetic code of Italians, the *idealization* of Italy in its relation to the past – its history is ready to be accessed and read as from an open book – and the *appropriation* of this imagined world of alleged continuity

with tradition from a distant modernity that has lost authenticity and romanticism along the way.

The contemporary works I will analyse in the present study appropriate and uncritically maintain a particularly crude definition of modernity, thoroughly saturated with colonial discourse, which perpetuates the cultural dichotomies between an allegedly rational and technologically advanced Northern Europe (and America) and a less rational (therefore more sensual and "earthy") Southern one. Since "modernity" is, in many of these works, commonly equated with "rationality," the latter too becomes the exclusive privilege of a part of the world perceived to be at the vanguard of human history and development.

This translates itself, at the level of Anglo-American popular representations of Italian culture, into novels and memoirs which romanticize Italy as the locale of a backwardness and/or timelessness comprising both positive and negative connotations. This highly romanticized factor is often the reason why Italy is sought after as an ideal place of contemplation, regeneration, tranquility, and authenticity. However, through the depiction of Italy as a pre-modern other, Anglo-American authors manage to consolidate their national identities as thoroughly modern, rational, dynamic, and forward-looking.[1]

This study sets itself the goal of making certain similarities in the approach to the observation and description of Southern European cultures, and Italy in particular, recognizable across the work of contemporary Anglo-American authors who belong to different literary genres. I do not wish to argue that such authors are comparable in every respect, but I do wish, at the risk of incurring a certain degree of abstraction, to make the point that colonial discourse has survived the end of colonial rule, and expresses itself today, in the post-colonial world, in popular narratives (among other media) which exemplify, beyond their apparent vocation to light entertainment based on personal experience, an hegemonic attitude. They reference a world based on a taxonomy of concepts and values that can be observed and discussed. The deconstruction of this world of ideas, a world that is at the same time powerful and elusive, has, as its broad objective, not to identify ideologies as the expression of a conscious effort to somehow support and promote a specific hegemonic view of the world, but to see discourse as a basic expression of social practice, and to expose its many layers by "stirring up and dispersing the sedimented meanings dormant in texts" (Parry 17).

The conceptual starting point of the present study is that contemporary popular literature on Italy retains the basic dichotomy of modern/pre-modern and makes of it the basic spatiotemporal context for its narratives. It appropriates and uncritically maintains a particularly crude definition of modernity as:

> A distinctive and superior period in the history of humanity […]. As European power expanded, this sense of the superiority of the present over the past became translated

> into a sense of superiority over those pre-modern societies and cultures that were 'locked' in the past– primitive and uncivilized people whose subjugation and 'introduction' into modernity became the right and obligation of European powers. (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 130–131)

Spurr argues that the apparently straight-forward divide between more and less "modern" cultures serves to justify and reiterate a series of value judgements and ideologically charged assumptions, as well as "a rhetorical procedure by which Western writing generates an ideologically charged meaning from its perception of non-Western cultures" (62). If modernity is "the process which transforms a traditional, 'pretechnological' society into one marked by the technology and economy of the machine, rational and secular concepts of authority, and a high degree of differentiation within the social structure" (69), every form of social organization that features a different cluster of dominant characteristics is automatically the target of more or less authoritative remarks on its pre-modern, archaic, or undeveloped state. Consequently, as Spurr argues, "nations are classified as more or less developed forms of a single species that reaches its highest degree of refinement in the Western post-industrial state" (69–70).

In the present study, I move the focus of inquiry back from a journalistic to a literary context, and to the circumscribed domain of popular novels, memoirs, relocation narratives, and travel accounts written in the English language. If I do so, is because I am persuaded that this literary genre makes particularly visible the manufacturing of a temporal difference, a prolific producer of cultural difference and a powerful device for its constant reiteration. I employ Johannes Fabian's seminal critique of anthropology *Time and the Other* (1983) and his notion of "denial of coevalness," to argue that the authority of anthropology is employed (in a much diluted and popularized form) in numerous narratives to legitimize pseudo-scientific analyses of the other based on personal observation "in the field," a process made possible by a series of assumptions on the intelligibility of certain practices seen as signifying and witnessing a previous stage of historical development.

1. Rationality and Tomatoes

Since "modernity" is commonly equated with "rationality," the latter too becomes the exclusive privilege of a part of the world perceived to be at the vanguard of the modern. In *Italian Pleasures* (1996), a work co-authored with David Leavitt, Mark Mitchell writes: "Things taste like themselves here [in Italy] in a way that they do less and less in America, where rational thinking gives us the seedless (and bland) tomato, or a patented garlic that does not scent the breath" (97). I find this passage extremely interesting, because it explicitly contrasts rationality to the world of

nature, as they were two mutually exclusive domains. Being somewhere between a pre-modern and a fully modern condition, Italy is somehow closer to nature than the United States. This results in better tomatoes but also in a loss of rationality.

This mode of thinking thoughtlessly assigns rational thinking to a very limited Western geographical area. In this case the United States, that represent themselves as the most modern nation, the new centre of the global empire, have appropriated rationality and now own it almost exclusively. Italy still has the authenticity of nature and the sensorial pleasures which derive from it. Therefore, Italy is praised for its ability to produce fresh and tasty tomatoes over rational thinking.

Nobody doubts the sincerity with which the author appreciates and pays a compliment to what Italy has to offer. At the same time, I do not think it is particularly controversial to argue that modern societies generally assign a higher value on rational thinking than on tomatoes. Therefore, the negative and condescending value of the judgement comes from a pre-ordered arrangement of cultural values (taxonomy) which endows the most modern countries with a higher capacity to judge the things of nature, because supposedly, things natural, being the signs of a pre-modern condition, have been overcome and left behind. Or, better said, having rationality, the American traveller can understand the value of tomatoes objectively, whereas Italians are locked in their own sensuousness, lacking consciousness of their position in the global cultural scenario.

In *Journey to the South: A Calabrian Homecoming* (2005), Annie Hawes teases an Italian friend for being possibly interested in Kabbalah. Hawes first equates Kabbalah to witchcraft and superstition in general; she then opposes such practices to "civilization," that she describes as a fragile layer of veneer covering the pre-modern essence of her Italian friend. Such essence is bound to reveal itself in Calabria, a southern place within Italian borders that both women (the writer/narrator and her Italian friend), perceive as backward: "Learn what? Witchcraft? I point out to Marisa that she's hardly been here [in Calabria] an hour and already the superstitious paganism in her wild Calabrian blood is beginning to show: the veneer of civilization is breaking down" (2005, 88).

In both instances, there is the suggestion of Italian life and culture being ruled by an order of values different from the rational modern. In the first instance there is nature; in the second, the anti-rational element is inscribed in the "wild Calabrian blood," responsible for the Italian propensity towards pre-modern religious forms (kabbalah, witchcraft, superstition), associated by Hawes with one another and competing against civilization, of which Hawes is clearly a representative.

2. Naturalization: The Romantic Pursuit of Primitivism

Furthermore, I believe is possible to detect, in Mitchell's statement, an echo of those climatologic ideas that have been largely employed during the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries, in Europe, to rationalize, theorize, and ultimately consolidate the East/West divide and, within European borders, the North/South divide: the north has rationality, the South a natural propensity for pleasures. *In Europe (in Theory* (2007), Roberto M. Dainotto surveys such theorizations and individuates, in the works of Charles de Montesquieu and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, two opposite yet complementary views of the south of Europe that reappear in contemporary descriptions of Italy. One is the just mentioned alleged lack of rationality. According to this view, Italy is not the place for it, but the place for a sensual/pagan enjoyment of existence that is seen and construed as the very opposite of rationality and made to be the effect of a warm climate. The second outlook, derived from Rousseau, posits this sensual sphere as positive, and sometimes as even superior, but, in actual fact, it maintains the dichotomies between the rational and the sensual, the modern and the pre-modern, perfectly intact.[2]

In her recent doctoral dissertation, Lynn Ann Mastellotto analyzes "relocation narratives" and stories, that is to say recent accounts of Italy written by financially privileged, highly educated cosmopolitan Anglo-American expatriates.[3] Such narratives, she argues, typically depict individuals "fleeing from the frenzy of modern life to places that hold out the promise of a better quality of life, often places in the sun and/or the countryside, and of finding personal fulfilment by living along simpler lines, closer to nature and in convivial communities" (17). Mastellotto points out that:

> This pastoral flight from the complications and corruptions of ordinary life into a green world that offers refuge and reconciliation is a literary trope with a long tradition of antecedents […]. Contemporary relocation writing re-enacts the Romantic rejection of the modern and pursuit of primitivism and organicism through a flight from the city to the countryside in search of the good life, defined as a "simple" life, and a nostalgic revaluing of the past and of traditional practices. (17)

The romantic pursuit of primitivism and organicism on Italian soil makes several authors extend their observations on a country that they perceive as simpler and closer to nature, to its inhabitants. I have found numerous instances of such a pattern: Italians are assimilated to the territory, and made the object of remarks on their closeness to a natural and simpler rural world.[4]

In a greatly successful relocation novel, Frances Mayes' *Under the Tuscan Sun* (1996), an American divorcee decides to settle in Italy. In the passage below, taken from the novel, I see Italians portrayed in their familiarity to humble and essential (pre-modern) values that cause them to behave "naturally," free from the (too) many social conditionings and superstructures of the properly modern world. The polar opposite of the Italian lifestyle is the American one, and the protagonist is, once again, caught up between the two:

> A friend says Italy is getting to be just like everywhere else – homogenized and Americanized, she says disparagingly. I want to drag her here and stand her in this doorway. The men have the look of their lives – perhaps we all do. Hard work, their faces and bodies affirm. All are lean, not a pound of extra fat anywhere. They look cured by the sun, so deeply tan they probably never go pale in winter. Their country clothes are serviceable, rough – they don't "dress," they just get dressed. They wear as well a natural dignity. Surely some are cunny, crusty, cruel, but they totally look present, unhidden, and alive. Some are missing teeth but they smile widely, without embarrassment. I look in one's man eyes; the left one is white with milky blue veins like those in an exploded marble. The other is black at the center of a sunflower. A retarded boy wanders among them, neither catered to, nor ignored. He is just there, living his life like the rest of us. (1996, 111)

In the passage above, Italians are praised for the modesty of their lifestyle, and for their capacity to live in harmony with nature. A "natural" dignity belongs to them, which seems to be a consequence of the closeness to the land and of a daily routine of work under the sun. Mayes' observation, for instance, on Italians "getting dressed," as opposed to "dressing," is meant, I believe, to convey a sign of a natural approach to life, differentiated from a more "cultural" one: "getting dressed" obeys a practical need, whereas "dressing" involves discernment and familiarity with modern social rules and codes.

Perceiving her own culture as at the same time more corrupted by modernity and more advanced than rural Italy, the author can contemplate, from a distance, a picturesque tableau of humanity depicting a previous stage of human advancement. This nostalgic and indulgent contemplation of a lifestyle which is foreign, not only because it belongs to a foreign place, but to a previous stage of human history (therefore to a different time), is a constant trait in numerous narratives set in Italy.

In another work by Mayes, the memoir "In Tuscany" (2000), observations and memories are collected over a long period of time spent in the Italian region. Anthropologically connoted remarks on the nature and character of Tuscans figure prominently in the work:

> Tuscans are ribald and sharp in their humor, fatalistic, private, and fazed by nothing. Symbiosis with the land runs deep. Meet even the slickest fashion designer or magazine reporter or video cameraman and the talk soon reveals a passion for the way food and wine are made: a homing instinct toward the land. I always find a fierce territorial attachment in Italians. In the country, the connection is vital. The constant gift-giving is an exchange of bounty from the garden. Italy is a world leader in the number of ecological, organic farmers. This springs not from a recent Greenpeace promotion, but from a natural feeling for the right way to grow things, the way Virgil and Cato and Varro knew. (2000, 33)

In the passage above, there are references to the Tuscan proximity to nature (symbiosis with the land), and a posited opposition between modernity (epitomised by the urban world and the media) and the pre-modernity of a culture that values the products of the land. Both aspects (the modern and the pre-modern) are present in Italian culture, but the passage seems to suggest that underneath a superficial coat of modern attitudes, Italians are still strongly determined by the environment and the territory. In conclusion to the passage, there is a fantasy of continuity with the ancient Roman world and the thread that links the two distant worlds (modern Italy and ancient Rome) is a "natural feeling of the right way to grow things," an instinct inherited from past generations that grounds present-day Italians to an ancient sameness in discontinuity with modernity and confers on them a timeless wisdom.

There is at work, I believe, an imagined relation between the land and its people that is frequently used by Mayes to reiterate a dichotomy between the modern world (California) and the pre-modern one (Italy): "When I'm back in California, my life is radically different from that of these anciently landed people" (2000, 33). This fantasy of unbroken origins leads Mayes to imagine continuity when its presence is at the very least highly improbable. During a trip to Volterra, for instance, Mayes assumes the present-day alabaster craftsmen working in the city to be the "distant descendants of the Etruscan alabaster craftsmen, whose designs, on display at the museum, still inspire the local art" (2000, 75).

I find that the thoughts and observations that are expressed in this work connect the main theme of the current segment of this article to that of the next. Italians are determined by their territory at the same time as they are determined by their history and traditions. The passages that I have chosen to report highlight a link between historical determinism and closeness to nature. Italians, being determined by both, have not transcended this doubly-connoted pre-modern condition that sets them apart from modernity (they *still* have history; they *still* have nature) and enables them to live in a world fundamentally "other" with respect to modernity, and yet a world which is in unbroken continuity with its own past.

Describing Etruscan art, for instance, Mayes explains: "The art frequently depicts olive trees, meadows, fish, birds, horses, even wild boars, revealing how closely they lived in connection with nature, another legacy that still lives" (2000, 75). A statement such as this one makes the connection between art and nature appear as a characteristic peculiar to Italic cultures. It also implies unbroken continuity by assuming an out-of-the-ordinary relationship, still continuing into the present, with the natural world. More importantly, by presenting the connection between art and the natural world as a trait specific to Italic cultures, Mayes implies the possibility of a complete emancipation (allegedly realized in modernity) of art and culture from the natural world.

The alleged proximity of Italians to nature is sometimes at the centre of entertaining scenes staged for the amusement of the modern visitor. David Leavitt, for instance, witnesses an argument at the post office between a man and a woman

in contemporary Italy. A minor, every-day event is made to appear as an instance of "primitive" national character: "Something primal, historical, was being fought out here. Perhaps he was Guelf, she Ghibelline; he black, she white. It occurred to me that argument could be a form of intimacy, a ritual as elaborate as the mating dances performed by exotic birds" (18). Two people arguing in present-day Italy are made to appear as somehow continuing a dispute started in The Middle Ages. The quarrel is "historical," with its ties in medieval times (the historical reference is to the opposite factions of Guelfs and Ghibellines in XII-XIV Century Florence). Italians are assimilated to birds, and, as animals, arguing comes natural to them. Aggressive feelings and impulses are unmediated and straight-forwardly expressed by bodily gestures. This performance, this "exotic dance," is available as a spectacle for the observer, who is not able to understand the language but can nevertheless recognize it as an expression of a previous stage of human life.

Spurr argues that twentieth century representations of the other, and of the primitive savage in particular, were indications of uneasiness with the current utilitarian ways of conceiving the world. Numerous authors voiced their concerns in regard to the values which society promoted at the time, and towards the social changes that modernity was bringing about. As Southern Europe was experiencing these changes at a slower pace, it offered the opportunity for *idealization* as a piece of past history surviving into the present. Southern Europe was also figuratively *appropriated*, by making of it an opportunity for a reconnection of modern man with his roots and identity. These particular aspects of idealization and appropriation in relation to history and tradition can also be detected, I find, in contemporary popular literature, and will be further discussed in the following section.

3. Idealization and Appropriation: History as a Timeless Dimension

As seen in the instance above, history is the force cementing the identities of "less modern" societies, freezing them in a timeless dimension. In this perspective, history is equated with tradition and made to belong to the past. Fully modern societies, and their inhabitants, having overcome history, live in the present, not conceived of as an historical phase, but as the culmination of history, the highest possible peak of human progress and development. Traditional, pre-modern societies still hold history as a powerful referent moulding their identity and ways of life. This confers on them, alternatively, a superior wisdom, but also a stuck-in-time mentality which does not let them fully function in the present. One of the most important consequences of dividing individuals into those who still rely on tradition and those who have supposedly emancipated themselves from it, is that the second category of human beings has a capacity for self-determination that is allegedly (at least) partially unknown to the first. This is a fundamental point, as it sets the theoretical validation for more or less ambitious, anthropologically-oriented, idealized, and

romanticized descriptions of Italian people, the "Italian character," the "Southern mentality," and so on, as objects of study, removed in space and time.

The texts that will be discussed in the following section will further clarify such dichotomy. Let me reiterate, one last time, that I employ Spurr's rhetorical category of "idealization" to illustrate the romanticized depiction of Italy's relation with its past, and the category of "appropriation" to designate the possibility that several authors associate with Italy, of a reconnection between the modern fragmented self and an existence grounded in timeless traditional values.

4. Internal Determinism

The genetics of being Italian, albeit not explicitly and very probably not even consciously, is often weighed against the British and American ways of being and living, which, being more "modern," are much less defined by genetic factors, and much more by common sense and reason. There are a number of instances that illustrate this view.

Italian Neighbours (1992) is an autobiographical novel described by its British author Tim Parks as an "arrival book," meaning by this an account of the process of finding a home (Italy) away from home (England). This novel is therefore the story of Parks' gradual adjustment to Italy and Italians. Every-day events in the life of Parks and his family are accompanied by thoughtful reflections on Italian culture. At one point in the hook, Parks reflects on the fact that Italians carry within them centuries of peasant culture, an historical fact at the basis of their alleged uneasiness with gardening:

> The truth is that the modern Italian has problems with his garden. He is not at ease yet as the Englishman is. Behind him he has centuries of a peasant culture, which ended, if it has ended, not a hundred years ago, but yesterday. For him the ground means crops, the vines, the towering corn plants, tobacco, fruit trees, tomatoes. Quite simply, he has this in his blood. (55)

However, when Parks' Italian neighbours expect the author to be knowledgeable in lawns up-keeping on the assumption that all English people must know a great deal about gardening, Parks comments amusingly and ironically: "As if such knowledge were carried in the genes" (60). A double standard is thus established by Parks: the attitude towards gardening of Italians is determined by their genetics, while that of the British is a matter of free choice.

In short, Italians are predetermined whereas English people are self-determined and free to be who they choose to be. As a consequence of being self-determined, the modern individual is also unrestricted, as he can freely move past national cultural constraints and stereotypes that do not concern him as an individual; the

individual who is not yet completely modern, on the other hand, has to deal with a higher amount of restrictions and pre-determined cultural forces. Simply put, Italians are a product of their environment and history; the British are self-grounded and self-defined.

A similar dichotomizing discourse between the alleged autonomy of modern individuals and the pre-determination of pre-modern ones is made in the novel *An Italian Affair* (2001), by Laura Fraser, the story of a young woman who leaves for Italy on an impulse, after a painful divorce. On the Italian island of Ischia, she meets an older man, a professor. The professor's peculiar charm comes from being half Arab and half Italian, and therefore, as the author puts it, from being "an Oriental":

> He [the Professor] explains that it's understood in his household that, once a year, he needs his solitude. He has to get away from Paris and just sit on an island and *far niente*, do nothing, so that he can be his Mediterranean self for a while. He needs to be able to relax completely, which is impossible to do in Paris. He is in part Italian and part Arab, and he has to spend some time being an Oriental man, living where the days are warmer and slower. It's in his blood. (37)

In this case, his "Italian half" seems to contribute and add to his Oriental character. "Arab-ness" and "Italian-ness" are here casually associated (just a more recent literary instance of the assimilation of Southern Europe to the "Orient") on the basis not only of their perceived similarity as instances of a "Mediterranean nature," but, more importantly, on the basis of their perceived distance from the modern world. All this is, once again, naturalized, that is to say inborn and carried in the Professor's blood.

In the following passage, taken from de Blasi's *The Lady in the Palazzo* (2007), a relocation narrative set in Umbria, an Italian woman selling fruits and vegetables at the market hesitates to give a loud and brash American tourist her family recipe for cooking artichokes. She justifies her choice as follows:

> "We don't have recipes. We cook from memories. We watched and listed to our mothers and our mothers' mothers, just as all the other women in a family had watched and listened before them. Rather than learn how to cook, we *inherit* the way we cook and bake, our methods being birthrights, like the color of a father's eyes, the jut of a mother's chin. Like the past itself, which nourishes us at least as much as the food. And the rest is instinct. There is not much left of life that is inviolable, but I'd say that how we cook still is. Stuck in history like a sword in a rock. Grazie a Dio. But how could I tell a man like that about *instinct*?" (165, original emphasis)

In the excerpt, knowledge is thoroughly naturalized and made genetic. Italians passively receive it as one of the few things in life that remain sacred. Tradition

is not only inherited through the emulation of one's elders, but becomes internalized in the Italian blood. One inherits one's mother's recipe just as one inherits a facial feature. The analogy of the chin suggests that in Italy, tradition (in this case the culinary tradition) simply cannot be rejected, since it is an integral part of the self. Instead of recipes, the Italian has instincts enabling him or her to manifest a tradition that is genetically encoded from within.

There is no autonomy, rationality, or self-determination involved. Moreover, this kind of insider's knowledge cannot be simply shared with anyone, but only with those outsiders who are open-minded enough to appreciate the value of tradition as a genetic legacy. Therefore, the author does not only distance Italians from the present-day way of living by placing them in a discontinuous realm ruled by timeless traditions, a realm in which knowledge is not commodified, but she also distances herself from those modern individuals who are not capable of understanding what Italy has to offer to them.

Finally, in the passage, history is an unmoving repository for all things that have happened (stuck in history like a sword in a rock), a fixed source of information on the past. Since the past plays such an important role in present-day Italy, Italians seem to have a privileged relation with history.

5. External Determinism

In the already cited *Italian Neighbours*, Parks insists on the ritualistic character of Italian society and many of its customs. By emphasizing the ritualistic aspect of Italian culture, Parks makes the point that Italians are confined to a highly codified and traditional way of doing things, which is, ultimately, opposed to the modern one, while British individuals are unconstrained by this irrational form of behaviour. There are numerous references, in Parks' novel, to the love of Italians for the ritualistic. "Italians are more ritualistic about death than romantic," (143) he argues, for instance, in reference to Italian practices of burial and disposal. In the following passage, Parks summarizes the rituals, that mainly pertain to the worlds of food and religious life, punctuating the average Italian life:

> Life is so carefully controlled here in Veneto, so attractively wrapped up: *cappuccino* till ten, then *espresso*; *aperitivo* after twelve; your pasta, your meat, your *dolce* in bright packaging; light white wine, strong red wine, *prosecco*; baptism, first communion, marriage, funeral; *loculo, lumino,* exhumation. (149, original emphasis)

The ritualistic, in the common ways of understanding and sensing the world today, is likely to evoke a world of unbroken traditions and a number of quintessentially pre-modern values, such as religion, superstition, and a reliance on past and outdated ways of life. As one of the symptoms of a pre-modern mentality and way

of life, a negative connotation has been ascribed to the term "over a series of long days and long nights" (Fanon 201) in the context of the divide between a secular modernity and a ritualistic and superstitious pre-modernity. The adjective "ritualistic" is layered with judgement on the role of religion and superstition in organized societies. Therefore, every time ritualism is brought forward, it is inevitably linked to a series of other terms and to a world of reference that sees the ritualistic, the superstitious, and the traditional, as opposed to the modern, the rational, and the functional.

In the passage, the use of the words "controlled" and "wrapped up" suggests a lack of freedom, a life set in its own well-established ways. There is also, I believe, a relation between the daily rituals and the rituals that punctuate a lifetime, suggesting that Italian life is not only determined in its superficial minute details, but also in its whole trajectory (from birth to death).

Not seeing ritualism as a feature pertaining to all cultures, including his own (how is consuming a beer on Friday night at the local pub different than drinking espresso at the local bar?), Parks assigns it to Italy as an odd element, a strange remnant of an archaic past. In other words, Parks seems to conceive of rituals as specifically pertaining to the Italian lifestyle, without considering that a large number of social practices anywhere in the world (including England) could be reasonably described as ritualistic.

Parks is certainly not alone in detecting a strong present of the ritualistic element in Italian culture. Annie Hawes' memoir *Extra Virgin: Among the Olive Groves of Liguria* (2001), set in the small rural town of San Pietro, derives much of its dramatic and comic content from the confrontation between Hawes' cosmopolitan ways and mind-set and the old farmers' habits and customs. Hawes has obviously built, over many years in Italy, personal and long-lasting ties with the people of the community; this world has obviously become part of her own life, and her intentions of treating the people she describes with sympathy and respect are apparent throughout. On the other hand, her intentions, I find, are undercut by a fundamental misinterpretation: the denial of coevalness that is always premised in her writing and makes the locals (and the old farmers especially) appear as museum exhibits, hetero-determined "good old people" who do not belong to the present-day world.

There is a point, in Hawes' memoir, in which she seems to realize that the old farmers she has befriended in Italy, during the course of her stay, are more complex than they appear to be. Their war tales make Hawes understand that their lives have not been changeless, and that the familiar places of the Ligurian countryside have once been the scenario of tragedy and struggles for survival. I find this passage particularly telling, because, maybe for the first time in the memoir, Hawes sees the people who surround her as having lived and still living a life of their own, not just as being there to entertain her, amuse her, or remind her of the world as it used to be:

> As usually happens when I get told these war stories, I've gone all sniffy. These cheerful matter-of-fact folk living with another, parallel vision of these safe and familiar streets and hillsides, one filled with death and danger, hunger and fear. Cautious old peasant folk who seem as solid and unchanging as their stony landscape, rooted in centuries old tradition, but who've lived through more upheavals and earthshaking changes than I can begin to imagine, and whose stories send everything into double exposure. (2001, 208)

Unfortunately, this realization does not last long; one really wishes that Hawes would take more time to observe reality in this double exposure, but Hawes must give us a pseudo-ethnographic interpretation of the character of these old farmers to fit into recognisable categories. Instead of "staying with the recognition" that it is simply not true that change has not occurred, Hawes decides to "tame" this revelation into the worn-out categories of ritual and tradition:

> No wonder the old folk around here are all so fussily in love with the security of their daily routines, their carefully ordered meals at carefully ordered times, the endless pernickety rules and regulations about their food and drink, health and safety, the web of customs and habits, all the amulets and charms designed to ensure survival and continuity, to magically stave off any new outbreak of chaos and incomprehensibility. (2001, 208)

I wonder if old people in the very small towns of England usually live their lives improvising and experimenting the new at all times; I wonder if they might not eat something different and exotic every day, taking their meals every day at different times. Are old English people not usually fastidious about their tea-habits? Or do they take a different quality of tea at different hours of the day? Maybe, creating a "web of customs and habits" is more of a human activity than one that depends on national belonging. Of course, believing herself to come from a time that has transcended tradition, Hawes, as Parks in the previous example, is incapable of perceiving the traditions, customs, and routines of her own culture.

Lastly, I wonder why it should not suffice to say that these small-town farmers are often very much set in their ways and routines without recurring to words such as "amulets," "charms," "magically"; the type of vocabulary to which we refer to in order to indicate a discontinuity with modernity and the fundamental adherence of a place to an ancient and obsolete order of things. In the already mentioned Umbrian memoir, de Blasi describes a rural celebration for the festivity of Sant'Antonio. Some people light a fire to keep warm while eating outdoor:

> Trenchers of oak, split and drenched in benzine, piled one atop another; it is a totem, primitive and dreadful, that they set alight. Sixty feet high it is, but higher still it seems the flames licking now, gasping in a rampage up and over the oily black skin of the wood. The crowd sways in a primal thrall and, save a sacrificial lamb or a pale-skinned virgin, the ritual flames are barely removed from those of the ancients. In a single brazen voice, they are a pagan tribe saying psalms in the red smoke of Saint Anthony's fire. (11)

De Blasi, who, at the very least, is reading too much into the event, imagines what she sees as a present-day instantiation of old ritual practices. By making use of words such as: "totem," "primitive," "primal," "sacrificial," "ritual," "ancients," "pagan," she invests a twenty-first century festivity with an aura of timeless pre-modernity. There is such a gap between the unpretentiousness of the event and how de Blasi reads it: a country celebration is invested with an excess of projections on the primal and ritualistic character of Italian social events. Probably this is exclusively due to the fact that the event takes place in the countryside *and* in Italy, the combination being enough to ignite an overabundance of primitivistic images.

Conclusion

Arguably, those writers who have access to a large readership could help questioning, deconstructing, and re-inventing the established descriptive patterns rather than perpetuating the age-old tradition of thought which sees the world as neatly split between rational/modern places and pre-modern ones. As David Spurr points out in reference to the world of the media and journalism: "Although writers can hardly break free from the basic cultural presuppositions that give their work meaning, there are nonetheless ways of writing that resist the imposition of value inherent in any colonizing discourse" (189). Avoiding this reiteration of imperialist categories is simply not a concern of the authors; the majority of them simply restate them at every turn, in complete obliviousness of their history.

The core argument of the present essay has been the long-lasting endurance of certain kinds of fantasies about Italy, and their prominence in popular narrative and imagination. I have tried to demonstrate how a segment of an interiorized and ideologically charged hierarchy of cultural values is still at work in Anglo-American representations of southern Europe. I have used and adapted David Spurr's categories of naturalization, idealization, and appropriation, to analyze contemporary popular novels which place at the center of their conception of Italy an element of backwardness and/or timelessness which serves to accommodate observations of a more or less nostalgic, condescending, or celebratory nature. The preferred mode of description, in these novels, seems to be a personal chronicle punctuated by observations which aspire to a sort of "friendly" anthropology, so to speak.

Such observations strive not to come across as overly severe, but largely rely on a repertoire of images, rhetorical figures, and taken-for-granted dichotomies which end up reiterating an age-old classification of cultural values deeply rooted in a colonial and imperialistic conception of the world.

According to a monolithic and one-dimensional definition of it, modernity resides in, and emanates from, one part of the world before expanding to the rest. This part of the world can adopt a more or less open, "democratic," and honest attitude, trying to avoid the pitfalls of past models of appreciation of foreign cultures that were too hostile, condescending, or politically involved, but in any case, this remains the part of the world that names, assigns, and categorizes from the vantage point of "modernity." It is this "anthropological" attitude – in the sense that the observer is said to be positioned within and yet above the observed – that undergoes a make-over of irony and wit in contemporary Anglophone accounts of Italy, but its basic assumptions are never truly questioned. As I have tried to argue in this article, it appears that instead of seizing the opportunity, in their writings, to emancipate intellectual and artistic discourses from the utopic idea of a detached and objective point of observation, many contemporary authors, longing for the authoritative role of position-less interpreters and translators of the other, posit Italy in the past by manufacturing and constantly reiterating a cultural difference that is, first and foremost, the corollary of an imagined temporal one.

Notes

1 The processes through which we are constructed as subjects are, for the most part, gradual constructions, fabricated realities, made-up in political, cultural, and everyday discourses and practices. A recent work that has certainly made this perspective clear is Annemarie McAllister's *John Bull's Italian Snakes and Ladders: English Attitudes to Italy in the mid-nineteenth Century* (2007). The study demonstrates how a certain imagined notion of "Italian-ness" has contributed to the formation of British modern identities. By exploring British representation of Italian culture at the end of the nineteenth century, and showing how a certain notion of "Italian-ness" has entered British cultural and literary traditions taking the form of a reservoir for all that was deemed discordant to the making of the British individual, collective, and national identities, McAllister illustrates how self-representations and narratives of national consolidation took place not only in opposition to the Orient, but to others within Europe as well.

2 In other words, Rousseau's perspective, apparently in disagreement with most intellectuals of his time, gave positive connotations to, but fundamentally maintained, that dichotomy according to which France was objectively more advanced than the south of Europe on the path towards modernity: "In

Rousseau as in Montesquieu, the south remained a distant fantasy of primitivism against which modern and northern Europe, with nostalgia or with pride, could still theorize itself. It remained the antithesis- nature; the past- posited by the spirit of a modern north eager not only to define itself but also to overcome its own discontents in some superior synthesis, or in a return to a hypothetical origin" (Dainotto 101).

3 Relocation narratives are a sub-genre of travel memoirs initiated by the books, set in Provence, by Peter Mayle.

4 Mastellotto argues that Italy, and other places that serve a similar literary and existential purpose, "may objectively conform to [the authors'] corresponding typologies or may not; what is important is that they are perceived to and are, consequently, constructed as idyllic places which satisfy the personal preferences of those searching for a better quality of life" (31). I regret not having the possibility to present and discuss, in the present article, a larger array of instances of this idyllic construction of Italy, its territory and culture.

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The Transformative Power of Words: Subverting Traumatic Experiences in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and Lee Maracle's "Goodbye Snauq"

Abstract

In the past few decades Native Canadian literature has gained a large and wide audience and has been described as a new and exciting field by critics. While Native-authored texts cannot be reduced to protest writing any longer, the collective trauma, caused by oppression, cultural alienation, deterritorialization as well as persisting inequalities and racism, remains an important theme. Tomson Highway's debut novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and Lee Maracle's short story "Goodbye Snauq" both effectively communicate and subvert traumatic experiences. By using a plethora of strategies, these two narratives demonstrate that literature can function as a suitable space for the symbolic transformation and healing of pain and suffering.

> "To speak is to create more than words, more than sounds retelling the world; it is to realise the potential for transformation of the world" (Armstrong 1998, 183).

In the wake of the current Canadian prime minister's promise to radically renew the government's relationship with Indigenous peoples and his aspiration to achieve national reconciliation, the question of how healing and transformation of trauma can be achieved has gained renewed interest. This new era in Canada's politics was initiated by Justin Trudeau's plan to increase financial support for the infrastructure in Native communities and for the investigation into the tragedy of thousands of missing and murdered women and girls and his pledge to generally pursue a new kind of cooperation with Indigenous peoples characterized by "partnership and friendship" (Trudeau, "Statement on the Release of the Final Report of the TRC").

In light of this political shift it is all the more important to discuss new developments in the field of Indigenous literature and acknowledge its potential to create a space for the healing and transformation of trauma. In the past, published

narratives by Canadian Indigenous writers used to be largely political as political events, such as the proposal of the so called *White Paper* in the late 1960s and the Oka crisis in the 1990s, ignited a downright upsurge of Native writing and interest in Native issues. In the last few decades, however, Native-authored texts can no longer be reduced to protest writing alone (Eigenbrod), as writers from different cultural backgrounds are creating a new aesthetics by challenging Western standards and by incorporating culture-specific imagery and values into their texts. Indeed, Aboriginal writing has been gaining widespread attention in Canada and internationally in the past few decades and is now described as an innovative and exciting new field by critics. Part of this fascination stems from the fact that Native literature, while being relatively new, is deeply rooted in traditions. Contemporary Indigenous literature reflects the many different realities of First Nations, Métis and Inuit today and recognizes the dualistic nature of their living conditions between the Euro-Canadian culture and their distinct traditional cultures. Critic Eva Gruber argues that gradually "Aboriginal writing has reached mainstream publishing" (426) and E. F. Dyke writes that "aboriginal literature is now established in Canada" (63).

While contemporary Aboriginal writing is highly diverse and can in no way be reduced to mere protest writing alone, the issues of persisting inequalities and the healing from historical trauma remain important topics in Native-authored texts. Native writers, such as Thomson Highway and Lee Maracle, thematize traumata which have affected generations of Native people from different cultural backgrounds and which have been responsible for many challenging social, psychological and physical conditions today. While a substantial body of critical literature on Native-authored narratives has emerged in the past few decades, this article offers new insights as it juxtaposes two trauma narratives which feature two different forms of trauma and closely examines innovative and creative discursive strategies and patterns which mediate, subvert and even symbolically transform painful experiences**.** I argue that the textual strategies discussed in this article employ subversive mimicry to counter personal and collective traumata but also transcend this concept in order to offer a more profound response to traumatic experience.

1. The Transformative Power of Words

Discussing psychological issues in Native-authored narratives, however, poses many challenges as approaching this issue as a cultural outsider is highly problematic and might even be emblematic of the persisting political and academic power hierarchy. Approaching psychological aspects is especially controversial as this issue echoes the historical depiction of Native people – first as savage because of their supposedly 'primitive' belief systems, and later as sick due to the numerous problems the residential school system caused in Native communities (McKegney 2007, 147). Furthermore, while Western psychologists and counsellors are now aware of

the importance of Native healing techniques, Western theories still dominate and counselling programs lack Native psychologists.

Likewise, the application of a postcolonial approach to Indigenous literature is problematic. While Native American literature "performs ideological work that parallels that of postcolonial fiction elsewhere" (Krupart 74), the term 'postcolonial' suggests that colonial activities are located in the historical past and hence it is inadequate as long as Aboriginal peoples do not hold equal status. As Diana Brydon points out, Canada is still "a settler state that has not addressed the full implications of its invader status." Even if the ongoing effects of colonialism are taken into consideration, postcolonial studies still rely on "larger disciplinary paradigms that have constructed norms of excellence and aesthetic value based on ethnocentric understandings of the universal, the true and the good" (62). The influential American-Canadian Native writer Thomas King also strongly opposes the term 'postcolonial literature' as it suggests a linear and progressive development from precolonial to postcolonial literature, in which colonization per definition occupies a central position. Furthermore, this term insinuates that "Native writing is largely a construct of oppression" (12), while in fact Native traditions have survived colonization and play an important role in so-called postcolonial narratives.

Without neglecting the concerns raised above, the focus of this article is on healing and transformation that does not come from outside sources but is inherent in the discussed narratives. This article examines different strategies Tomson Highway and Lee Maracle use in two selected texts to define and communicate traumatic experiences and to promote paradigms for healing. It is based on the assumption that storytelling can function as a tool to symbolically re-enact trauma and to shape its representation, thereby enabling a constructive re-visitation and re-invention of the past. Native writers from different cultural backgrounds have emphasised the healing power of storytelling and stressed its potential power to transform historical trauma. This potential firstly stems from a storyteller's power to influence, challenge and subvert the dominant discourse and secondly from their decision to provide useful insights into historical trauma and its consequences. The revitalization of Native beliefs and traditions has also proven to be a powerful tool to counteract the consequences of collective trauma and interrupt its transmission to future generations. In this respect, Native literature plays a vital role as it provides a space for writers to express Native values and traditions and use culture-specific imagery to subvert Western literary conventions. Jeannette Armstrong stresses the importance of refusing to accept the victimization of Native peoples and emphasises the urgency to redefine the strength and power of Aboriginal communities (2006). The Métis professor Jo-Ann Episkenew states that storytelling is a medicine that can cure the trauma of colonialism by countering the master narrative (2). The reinvention of the master narrative initiates the healing process as Native writers generate discourse which constructs their own identities and puts them in a position which allows them to control how they are being represented. Episkenew also

highlights that writing in English is empowering because it allows her to foster pan-Indian solidarity (12–13).

The transforming power of Native literature also results from its educational function as it may disperse knowledge of the long-lasting effects of colonialism on Native communities and give people concepts to talk about traumatic experiences as well as allowing them to discuss taboo subjects in a safe way (15–17). Yuen et al. also emphasises that the imagination plays a vital role when it comes to claiming agency and self-determination. The decolonisation of the mind presupposes the ability to imagine a different world characterised by healthy and strong communities. Being able to envision such a world is the first step to creating it (271–272). Jeannette Armstrong argues that Native languages are deeply connected with the land and that stories have a very profound effect on the people who listen to them. She describes the power of words as follows: "To speak is to create more than words, more than sounds retelling the world; it is to realize the potential for transformation of the world" (1998, 183).

Numerous concepts have been suggested to pinpoint this transformative power of words. Arnold Krupart, for instance, has introduced the term "anti-imperial translation" (74), which emphasises the significance of imperial translations in the history of America. Krupart states that "people indigenous to the Americas entered the European consciousness only by means of a variety of complex acts of translation" (74). The renaming of places and people that already had names by European conquerors marked the beginning of a long history of mistranslations. When Columbus conquered the New World, different worldviews met and contact zones became places were "European assumptions, desires, projections and mismappings" (Siemerling 59) constructed Indian-ness. These "acts of translation" usually involved the process of translating from 'primitive languages' to English, from spoken words to written texts, from the subjected to the dominant culture. Interpreters translated oral stories depending on their affiliation to an academic field. While the social sciences favoured texts in which the verbal expression was transmitted as authentically as possible to demonstrate the difference between the literate Western culture and the "primitive" Native culture, translations in the humanities produced texts that were supposed to be interesting by Western standards. This form of misrepresentation still occurs today. The successful Okanagan writer Jeannette Armstrong states that "mostly sanitized versions" of Aboriginal stories are published in English and that these stories would shock people if told accurately (2006).

Imperial translations are nowadays being challenged by so called "anti-imperial translations." In contrast to imperial translations, anti-imperial translations permit cultural influence to go both ways, thereby preventing it from being a one-way street where the less powerful group is forced to adapt to the culture of the more powerful group (Krupart 79). By creating works of English literature, Native writers appropriate Western art forms while at the same time they also transform Western

genres by means of incorporating Native words and expressions, perspectives and oral narrative devices into written English texts. In this way they create a new and exciting literary aesthetics. Consequently, anti-imperial translations destabilize dominant Eurocentric standards by creating a polyvocal narrative.

The Canadian professor and author Dee Horne promotes a similar concept termed 'subversive mimicry,' which subsumes a plethora of options to subvert the master narrative. It is based on the observation that the process of colonization often involves strategies aimed at imposing the dominant culture on the colonized peoples to assert its supremacy. The colonized are then encouraged to imitate cultural conventions and rules to accelerate their assimilation into the dominant culture. When adhering to Western literary conventions Native writers are either accused of lacking authenticity or they are praised for their ability to compete within the dominant discourse (Horne 2).

Horne clearly bases her concept of subversive mimicry on Homi Bhabha, who states that "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (126) [original emphasis]. As used to be the case in residential schools, similarity to the dominant culture is often encouraged but denied at the same time. While residential schools educated Native children according to Western standards and conventions, they still treated them as inferior to white Canadians and taught them mainly practical skills which allowed them to just work in menial jobs. Thus similarity to and difference from the dominant discourse is often constructed at the same time. Indigenous people can never become white, they can only imitate the white culture in order to participate in the dominant discourse.

Writing in the "enemy's language" (Armstrong 1998, 175) therefore may be problematic but it also allows authors to shape the dominant discourse. Bhabha clearly recognizes the subversive power of mimicry by stating that the "menace" (127) of mimicry lies in the return of the gaze of the Other, when "the observer becomes the observed" (129), which "alienates it [identity] from essence" (129). Distinguishing between two different forms of mimicry, colonial and subversive mimicry, Horne makes it clear that mimicry as a literary strategy can pursue different agendas. While colonial mimicry adopts literary conventions of the dominant group in order to express consensus and affiliation with it, subversive mimicry does the opposite. The power of subversive mimicry lies in the fact that an author's strategies are not immediately apparent. Basing her argumentation on Bhabha's concept of mimicry, Horne states that similar to anti-imperialistic translations, subversive mimicry expresses criticism by holding up a mirror to the dominant group (14). It challenges existing power relations by depicting the dominant group as the Other, (20) while asserting the colonized group's subject position (23). Furthermore, subversive mimicry recognizes that cultural differences exist and that these differences should be articulated. In this way subversive mimicry offers "paradigms for decolonization" (24) and may even perform acts of decolonization. It is often

not immediately palpable and hence readers of texts using this strategy have to analyse it more closely in order to discern the underlying humour and irony.

One important advantage of this strategy of making a text less tangible for white readers lies in the difficult of textual appropriation. In this context I would argue that the trickster figure, for example, enjoys so much popularity among contemporary Aboriginal writers partly because it is such an elusive concept, which Western critics struggle to pin down. Not limited by human boundaries, tricksters move through time and space and also challenge cultural categories by identifying neither as female nor male and by blurring other well-established dichotomies (127–129). By transgressing social boundaries and resisting classification the trickster fulfils an important function in Native narratives: Not fully understood by non-Native critics and therefore not deemed as dangerous, the trickster undermines the dominant discourse and deconstructs it (Horne 131). Contemporary trickster studies foreground the constructedness of the pan-Indian trickster archetype as this concept was (and often still is) based on the assumption that there is one identifiable figure occurring in Indigenous folklore around the globe that can be observed and studied (Basso 5).

The trickster gained considerable importance after the success of Highway's play *The Rez Sisters*, in which the trickster figure Nanabush plays a central role. Together with Daniel David Moses and Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, Highway has taught workshops on the trickster and eventually created the Committee to Re-establish the Trickster, which should help re-appropriate the trickster as a cross-cultural and mainly urban archetype (Fee 62). In Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998), for instance, one of the trickster's many incarnations is a two-spirit person who symbolically baptizes Gabriel in a gay bar. The trickster in this scene serves the purpose of expressing criticism against heterosexual norms (13). Consequently, the trickster figure has arguably been re-appropriated by some Native writers to serve specific functions and needs and in particular to use its force and ambiguity to express subversive mimicry.

Subversive mimicry is achieved by numerous strategies varying in degrees of subtlety. One prominent characteristic of Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, for instance, is the fact that the novel is interspersed with Cree words and phrases. Most remarkably, some names and proper nouns are not glossed in the back of the book but left untranslated. This "troubles the sense of familiarity" and "creates a linguistic boundary between Cree people and the rest of the world" (Van Essen 106). Highway, for instance, uses the precolonial name for "The Pas" ("Oopaskooyak"), thereby "reversing colonial appropriation and possession and reasserting Cree cultural memory by recalling the names that have been erased by the colonizing language(s)" (106). Some of the proper names are also highly humorous but as they are not glossed non-Cree speakers or speakers of another dialect are excluded from the jokes. The Wuchusk Oochisk River (*Kiss* 60), for instance, translates as "muskrat anus" (107) humorously evoking the story of

Weesageechak and the Weetigo (*Kiss* 118). Even if most words are translated, the Cree words and expressions disrupt the flow of reading and make non-Aboriginal readers aware of their limited knowledge of the Cree culture and language. In this way, Highway, despite writing mostly in English, inspires resistance to the dominant culture. Through the incorporation of Native words and phrases this form of subversive mimicry is apparent to Native and non-Native readers alike, but the subtle nuances of it are only visible to a group of cultural or intellectual insiders and put everyone else in the position of outsiders.

As mentioned above, subversive mimicry encompasses the incorporation of Native-specific language, art forms and concepts and the reversal of the representation of the colonized as "the Other." In the following analysis I would like to expand on the notion of subversive mimicry by identifying strategies that undermine the master narrative. I argue that *Kiss of the Fur Queen* as well as "Goodbye Snauq" (2010) deploy subversive mimicry but also transcend this concept by offering a more profound understanding of the complexity of personal and collective trauma and by shedding light on potential moments of healing and transformation.

2. Manifestations of Trauma in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

Tomson Highway's debut novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, published in 1998, is a trauma narrative as much as it is a celebration of life and the victory over traumatic experiences. It embraces Western art forms while infusing them with Cree spirituality and humour. *Kiss of the Fur Queen* relates the story of two Cree brothers who are torn away from their family and their Native community Eemanipiteepitat in Manitoba to attend a Roman Catholic residential school. In this institution the brothers Champion and Ooneemeetoo Okimasis are renamed Jeremiah and Gabriel, forbidden to speak their mother tongue and raised in a strictly Catholic way. They are physically and sexually abused at the hands of the school's principal Father Lafleur. This traumatic experience haunts them throughout their early adult years, characterized by a conflicting struggle to find and express their own distinct identities. Alienated from their own Native community but not successfully assimilated into Western culture, the brothers have to navigate between their Native roots and Western culture, which allows them to fulfil their potentials.

The novel centres on the ramifications of the collective trauma caused by the residential school system, which affected approximately 150.000 Aboriginal children from the 1890s to the last decades of the 20th century. The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, which was commissioned to conduct a six-year long investigation into the school's horrendous conditions came up in December 2015 with a final report and 94 recommendations for improving the lives of Inuit, Métis and First Nations in Canada, which were approved by Justin Trudeau soon after being sworn in as prime minister of Canada. The commission has called the residential school policy

a cultural genocide as the school system disrupted the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next, thereby severely weakening Native communities.

The trauma caused by the residential schools encompasses cultural and social alienation, forced replacement and psychological, physical and sexual abuse. Residential schools have had a long lasting impact on Native communities producing generations of parents unable to acquire supportive and responsible parenting skills (Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins and Altschul. 2011, 287). In this respect, the trauma caused by the residential schools is collective in the sense that it has had a profound impact on the social relations of the affected communities. The American sociologist Kai Erikson defines collective trauma as "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of community" (154). Jeffrey C. Alexander criticises this approach by accentuating that trauma is a "socially mediated" (8) phenomenon and "not the result of a group experiencing pain" (10). He thus emphasizes the constructedness of cultural trauma, which is integrated into a group's sense of identity for a specific purpose.

In this regard, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* touches upon cultural trauma as defined by Alexander only at the end of the novel when it refers to the representation and dissemination of shared traumata within and outside of Native communities. Otherwise, the novel clearly centres on the two brothers' personal identity struggles as a result of their traumatizing years at Birch Lake School.

With regard to the function of the residential school system, land appropriation was found to be an important motive underlying government policies. Residential schools were surrounded by farmland and Aboriginal children were indoctrinated to lead a sedentary life corresponding to colonial notions of private property. Sam McKegney (2013) elucidates the correlation between deterritorialization and residential schools by identifying three "amputations" which all serve the purpose of facilitating the marginalisation of Indigenous peoples. These amputations encompass "the severing of mind and body," "the severing of male from female" and "the severing of the individual from the communal and territorial roles and responsibilities" (8). All of these three "amputations" can be observed in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, in which they account for the brothers' severe identity struggles and their relapses into self-destructive behaviour.

To begin with, the separation of body and mind is exemplified in the relationship between Gabriel and Jeremiah, who are associated with the body and mind respectively. In many ways the two brothers embody the dichotomy of the shameful body and the imperfect mind that residential schools tried to inculcate in their Native pupils. Whereas Jeremiah's life after residential school is marked by asceticism and self-discipline, Gabriel leads a promiscuous lifestyle freely pursuing his sexual passions. Witnessing his brother's affair with another man, Jeremiah is so shocked that he becomes "intellect-pure, undiluted, precise" (*Kiss* 205). This separation of body and mind is also mirrored in the urban setting of the novel, in which the

sites of high culture are clearly separated from the sites of crime and prostitution, the latter being solely reserved for Indigenous people echoing Father Lafleur's depiction of hell and paradise (59). Furthermore, the harsh corporal punishment in residential schools also establishes a connection between body and shame. In view of the reduction of Aboriginal peoples to their bodies it is not surprising that Jeremiah, after graduating, aspires to become a classical pianist and rejects his Native roots. Like Gabriel he also seems to re-enact his traumatic childhood as he re-creates a sensation of corporal punishment by playing the piano until his fingers start bleeding (*Kiss* 107).

Secondly, the "severing of male from female" and the systematic derogation of femaleness pervade the whole novel. The residential school functions as a site where the Western concept of gender differences is constructed and reproduced on a daily basis. Right after their arrival at the Birch Lake school, the two brothers' sisters Josephine and Chugweesees "march […] away to their own world" (64) and practically disappear from the narrative. Most importantly, the girls are kept in different buildings to keep them "away from the view of lusty lads who might savour their company" (63). This illustrates that women's bodies are sexualized from an early age while boys are reduced to their bodily desires. The link between femininity and sexuality is further complicated by the connection between sexuality and shame, which the teachers at Birch Lake residential school install in the children. Gendered crimes become an actual reality for both brothers when they move to the city as they witness numerous rapes and murders of women in the dark alleyways of Winnipeg. In a most disturbing scene, Gabriel walks past a gang rape without intervening or reporting it to the police (132), demonstrating the extent to which he has become insensitive to violence against women. Other instances in which historical, fictional or actual violence against women are tolerated and occasionally even glorified are numerous, illustrating how residential schools manufactured hatred towards women. Gendered violence also presents an opportunity for disempowered men to purge their anger and frustration, or as Jeremiah puts it, "[s]omehow, misogynistic violence – watching it, thinking it – was a relief" (260).

The third "amputation" caused by the residential school system, "the severing of the individual from the communal," is a consequence of the geographical, cultural and emotional dislocation of thousands of young children from numerous different cultural backgrounds. Much has already been said about the linguistic alienation the two brothers face as they have to realize that their parents lack the concepts to understand and talk about their experiences at the margin of Western society (see for instance Löschnigg in "How do you say AIDS in Cree?"). Little attention, however, has been paid to the emotional alienation between the two brothers caused by the numerous educational methods aimed at traumatising children and disrupting communal bonds. The Birch Lake residential school introduces and encourages educational games which disrupt bonds between siblings and friends. The prohibition to speak their Native tongues, promoted by a "game" in

which the boys are allowed to take away objects from other boys whenever they overhear them speak their native tongues (*Kiss* 63), further separates the children and forces them to remain silent when their words would have expressed compassion, reassurance or resistance. When Gabriel joins his brother at Birch Lake residential school he is frightened by a nun who disapprovingly touches his long hair, and his brother tries to reassure him but they are immediately reprimanded for speaking their mother tongue. In view of residential schools' aim to disrupt communal bonds, it is hardly surprising that the disturbingly brutal re-enactments of the Passion of the Christ are strongly encouraged by the priests. In the case of the two brothers, this "game" severely weakens the fraternal bond. As Gabriel is left almost naked attached to the cross while Jeremiah and the other children are going to have lunch he swears to take revenge. It is clear that this role play, which is "admired, even praised" (84) by the teachers, is a re-enactment of the trauma inflicted on the children, which allows them to revisit traumatic experiences while exerting a certain degree of power and control. It is also the result of educational methods aimed at desensitising the children and shutting off empathy by means of the public display of violence. One of the most traumatizing realisations for Jeremiah is the fact that he is not able to protect his brother, which he still regrets as an adult (*Kiss* 301). As he is witnessing the rape of his brother by Father Lafleur, "some chamber deep inside his mind slam[s] permanently shut." He is unwilling to integrate the abuse into his consciousness as he tries to convince himself that the rape "had happened to nobody" and that "[h]e had not seen what he was seeing" (80). It is obvious that in the novel the residential school experience produces two disconnected individuals alienated from their community and culture but not successfully integrated into the Western culture. In fact, Gabriel and Jeremiah live at the margin of Western culture, and it is only due to their reconnection with their Native roots that they manage to confront their traumatic pasts.

3. Resisting Traumatic Experiences

The process of healing in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* is complex and encompasses numerous moments of resistance. The concept of subversive mimicry plays a vital role with regard to the communication of resistance on the extratextual as well as intratextual level of communication. By writing a novel Highway appropriates an intrinsically Western genre, but he uses it on his own terms and for his own purposes. The prominence of the ambivalent trickster figure, for instance, marks his narrative as distinctly Native, a strategy that does not only win him praise from several Native communities. Humour and irony are also essential in the novel despite its tragic content. The highly disturbing scene in which Gabriel is raped by father Lafleur, for instance, is accompanied by the soft tones of the song "Love me Tender," illustrating the importance of humour in exceptional circumstances.

Indeed, humour is an essential part of Cree culture because it allows people to talk about taboo subjects and utter criticism in a non-confrontational manner as the line between what is said and what is meant by a humorous utterance is often blurred (Fagan 4).

Another form of subversive mimicry is the much discussed depiction of Catholicism as the "exotic Other" (219). The link between non-normative sexuality, violence, eroticism and Catholicism runs like a golden thread through the narrative. Highway clearly reverses the power dynamics by depicting Catholicism as misogynous, primitive and hypocritical. The object of such biased views is no longer the colonised group but are the colonisers, who are now presented as the highly sexualized exotic Other. A clear link is also established between Catholicism and the cannibalistic Weetigo, one of the most fearful creatures in Cree and Ojibway (Wendigo) cultures that may infect its victim with the same appetite for human flesh (Atwood 67). In contrast to his brother, Gabriel manages to distance himself from Western belief systems and encourages his brother to embrace his Native roots. In a heated argument with his brother, Gabriel vigorously rejects the Holy Communion as it involves the incorporation of the "essence of maleness" (*Kiss* 125), the body of Christ, in the form of the host, which arguably constitutes a form of symbolic cannibalism. This link between the cannibalistic creature and Catholicism also becomes evident when Gabriel receives a host in church and he is described as "spewing blood, his bloated gut regurgitant, his esophagus engorged with entrails" (181). Most remarkably, the Holy Communion is depicted as a violent sexual orgy in which the church goers are "screaming with hunger" and impatiently waiting to receive a host and their "tongues dart […] as a priest, with a confidential murmur, place[s] a wafer on them" (180). In this crucial scene in which Highway makes highly effective use of subversive mimicry, the topos of the wild savage is re-projected onto dignitaries of the Catholic Church and thus the power structure is reversed. Clearly, subversive mimicry is at work here but the novel illustrates the ramifications of traumatic experience on an even deeper level.

In fact, two main realizations propel the process of healing. Firstly, the awareness that destructive trauma re-enactment can be transformed into a constructive form of repetition on a symbolic level and, secondly, the conceptualization of the cycle of abuse in terms of Native myths, which provide a more profound understanding of it. The phenomenon of trauma re-enactment, widely discussed in psychology, dates back to Sigmund Freud, who observed that survivors of abuse often "repeat the repressed material." Since re-enactment negatively correlates with a person's conscious memory of the traumatic event, Freud defines trauma re-enactment as the "compulsion to repeat […] the unconscious repressed" (20). Trauma re-enactment fulfils the function of re-experiencing disturbing events in a safer context that allows the former victim to exert a more powerful role (17). This insinuates that two aspects are essential in the healing process: the integration of the event into the conscious mind and the act of gaining control of it. These two aspects

are realised in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* on both diegetic levels. As the two brothers grow older, they manage to symbolically re-enact the abuse they have experienced in residential school in thrilling theatrical performances in which Jeremiah uses the classical piano as a "pow wow drum" and as a "magical weapon […]" (*Kiss* 267) in an attempt to create a better world.

The same form of constructive re-enactment takes place on the extradiegetic level as Highway relates his own memories of being a pupil in a residential school in this semi-autobiographical novel, which clearly resists assimilation and victimhood. Most importantly, the creative act of storytelling functions as a powerful tool to gain control of the traumatising past and to revitalize cultural aspects in a text interspersed with Cree words and vibrant with Cree mythological figures. It is a re-enactment that reverses power structures and reveals the hypocrisy and backwardness of Western society.

The ending of the book, in which the Weetigo approaches the dying Gabriel as Father Lafleur and he manages to drive the cannibalistic monster away by shouting "awus," emblematises the "exorcism of the Weetigo" and all that it stands for (Buzny 15). However, at this point the novel also transcends subversive mimicry as it offers more than the resistance to trauma. *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, which so accurately accounts for the multiple manifestations of trauma described above, also provides a model of trauma theory steeped in Native legends and myths. By means of multiple agents well known to Cree readers, such as the Weetigo, the Son of Ayash, and the ambivalent Fur Queen, who transcends notions of good and evil, Highway approaches the topic of trauma re-enactment in terms of Native mythology by means of a multifaceted and polyvocal narrative.

The Weetigo is a very dreaded figure not primarily because it kills people but because of its ability to transform a normal human being into a cannibal. In *Kiss of the Fur Queen* the Weetigo embodies the fear and danger of destructive trauma re-enactment. The two brothers are consistently confronted with the decision either to identify with the Weetigo and continue to re-enact the abuse or to identify with the Son of Ayash, who is associated with stepping out of the cycle of abuse and creating a meaningful life by using one's creativity in a constructive way.

The Son of Ayash stands for the transcendence of evil and the proactive creation of a better reality, while the Weetigo represents the danger of repeating abusive or self-harming behaviour. This becomes evident when Jeremiah, while teaching at the *Muskoosis Club of Ontario*, is approached by a child who indirectly tells him that he has been abused and Jeremiah immediately becomes sexually aroused. As the child leaves the room he imagines himself to be forced into some sort of violent sex orgy (*Kiss* 272). However, the short fight against the Weetigo is quickly won and he reports the incident to the headmaster. After introducing his pupils to the story of ayash oogoosisa, the son of Ayash, who is abandoned on an island and has to endure hardship and master difficult challenges before he manages to return home where he burns the world to make it a new and better place (Brightman 94–95), the small

boy asks Jeremiah what a Weetigo is and he describes it as "a monster who eats little boys" (271). The boy's immediate response, "A Weetigo ate me," illustrates that the mythological story of the son of Ayash provides concepts to communicate traumatic experiences and offers safe ways to address taboo subjects. In this way, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* translates traumatic experiences and the phenomenon of destructive trauma re-enactment into mythological tales which intersperse the narrative. Besides providing lucid concepts to address taboo subjects and offering an intrinsically Native perspective on trauma, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* hints at possible ways to regain the power and control to "make a new world" (*Kiss* 272). Tomson Highway's and the two brothers' "magical weapons" encompass their creativity and imagination and they use those skills for a constructive re-enactment which fosters the healing and transformation of their traumatic pasts.

4. Resisting Historical Trauma in "Goodbye Snauq"

The short story "Goodbye Snauq," which appeared in Lee Maracle's 2010 short story collection *First Wives Club: Coast Salish Style*, addresses the long-term effects of traumatic experiences and the power of words to influence cultural memory. The story revolves around a young teaching assistant of Squamish heritage who receives a letter from the Squamish First Nation government presumably telling her that the Squamish Nation lost its claim on False Creek, previously called Snauq. Looking at a picture of the well-known Squamish chief Khahtsahlano the teaching assistant contemplates the history of Snauq and engages in a fictitious conversation with the chief, who lived in this area until he and his family were expelled from it. She laments the loss of the former Native land, now misidentified as False Creek, and the ecological deterioration of this once abundant place. In one of her courses the teaching assistant questions the impact she is able to make in a "Western institution" ("GS" 22) and deplores the changes the Squamish Nation was forced to undergo. Overwhelmed by her strong emotions, she faints in front of her students and as she regains her consciousness she decides to visit False Creek to conduct a ceremony for the loss of the village with her students. At the end of the story she states that First Nations are not equal members of Canadian society yet, but that she is hopeful that the situation will approve in the future: "I am not through with Canada. I am not a partner in its construction, but neither am I its enemy. Canada has opened the door. […] But we are a long way from being participants" (27).

In "Goodbye Snauq" Lee Maracle accounts for the difficulty of communicating traumatic experience due to the incomprehensibility of the traumatic event, which is so overwhelming that it cannot be accurately grasped when it occurs. The story's protagonist vividly imagines how the Squamish chief Khahtsahlano and his wife Swanamia experience the dispossession of their land. While envisioning this event, she emphasises that the expulsion is truly "incomprehensible," impossible"

and that there is "no way to understand" (17) it as they lack a "reference post" (17) for the loss of a village. The fact that the teaching assistant so intensively recreates the tragic fate of her ancestors illustrates that the text alludes to historical trauma. Historical trauma as a psychological concept, which has been first observed in descendants of Holocaust victims, suggests that descendants of traumatized people may suffer from manifestations of trauma responses even if they have never experienced a traumatic event in their whole lives. The Native American scholar Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, who is an expert on historical trauma, defines it as "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences" (Brave Heart 2003, 7). In an interview with Craig Lambert, the American scholar Sousan Abadian, an expert on collective trauma, argues that the social problems that Native people suffer from today are rooted in the historical trauma that Aboriginal peoples experienced. She argues that the current social challenges are "the symptoms of trauma" and that if just the symptoms but never the underlying causes are tackled other problems will surface (Abadian, online). Historical trauma often manifests itself in the complete identification with ancestors and in transposition, which means that "one lives simultaneously in the past and the present with the ancestral suffering as the main organising principal in one's life" (Brave Heart 2000, 247).

The reflector figure in "Goodbye Snauq" clearly draws on memory located outside the realm of her own experience. She "remember[s]" ("GS" 20) False Creek as a paradisiacal place densely populated with "cams, sturgeon, oolichan, sockeye, and spring salmon" (21), even though the ecological abundance of Snauq radically abated after the arrival of Europeans. By asking herself the question whether she should "remember Snauq as a Squamish, Musqueam, Tsleil Waututh supermarket" (25) and stating that her people "will remember" (26) Snauq as an unpolluted precolonial place she evokes collective memories of the Squamish Nation. In this narrative the evocation of collective memory effectively communicates the pain and suffering of the protagonist and accounts for her motifs to enact a commemoration ceremony. The pain of the historical trauma is so intense that it affects her emotionally as well physically. While ruminating on the loss of the Native village the teaching assistant's "office closes in on [her]. The walls crawl towards [her], slow and easy, crowd [her]" (19). "The white fluorescent bulbs" in her office make it seem "eerie" (13) and "the dry perfect room temperature insults, and the very space mocks" (22). Her "eyes bulge, [her] muscles pulse, [her] saliva trickles out the side of her mouth" (22).

The pain of the colonization of Snauq is also conveyed by conjuring up an idyllic vision of pre-contact False Creek, which evokes images of the Garden of Eden and the expulsions from paradise. I agree with Eva Daria-Beautell, who notes that what "Goodbye Snauq" centres on is "the absence of place, both material (Snauq, the place does no longer exist) and symbolic (the name, Snauq is no longer)" (147),

and I would like to add that Lee Maracle uses this re-appropriation of a "non-place" as a strategy to communicate the pain and suffering of the protagonist in a more persuasive way. Considering that the communication of pain always requires an act of persuasion (Hron 48), Lee Maracle makes the loss of the city tangible to the reader by conjuring up a paradisiac place while at the same time negating its existence. Snauq is described as a place abundant with "the biggest trees in the world," "clams, sturgeons, oolichan, sockeye, and spring salmon," "grouse, deer, and elk" and "stanchions of fir, spruce, cedar and the gardens of Snauq" ("GS" 26). It is a place where "[m]en from Squamish, Musqueam, and T'sleil Waututh join the men at Snauq to hunt and trap ducks, geese, grouse, deer and elk […]." Most curiously, by providing such a detailed description of the pre-colonial Snauq in the present tense and by naming numerous aspects of the place, the story itself functions as a ceremony commemorating the Native village.

Given that memory and in particular cultural memory is socially constructed and thus dependent on social, cultural and political factors, which means that it is often retrospectively evaluated and manipulated to meet current interests (Nünning et al. 11–12), the power of publishing a counter memory becomes evident. Considering that not only the content of memory is constructed but also when and how events are remembered (Zerubavel 4–5), both Lee Maracle (on the extradiegetic level) and the young teaching assistant (on the intratextual level of communication) make an attempt at anchoring Snauq, which belongs to the forgotten history of Vancouver, in the cultural memory of her readers/students. Even if the protagonist does not seem to be fully convinced that she can accept the transformation of this place, she clearly discovers how to follow Khahtsahlano's advice to "[f]ind freedom in the context you inherit" ("GS" 11). This freedom encompasses the power to influence how her students remember Snauq. On the extradiegetic level the text functions as a ceremony that tries to anchor a collective Native memory of Snauq in the Canadian consciousness.

Conclusion: Transformative Narratives

What emerges from this analysis is that *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and "Goodbye Snauq" deploy an array of strategies to subvert collective and intergenerational traumata. It could be illustrated that the two narratives communicate and counter traumatic experiences in different ways. While *Kiss of the Fur Queen* demonstrates how the protagonists' separation from their Native traditions and community, the loss of their bodily integrity and the forced assimilation into a patriarchal society shapes their lives, "Goodbye Snauq" addresses the long-lasting effects of historical trauma. In addition to numerous acts of subversive mimicry, the two narratives develop a deeper understanding of the complexity of traumatic experience, thereby offering models for transcending it.

Kiss of the Fur Queen stresses the importance of transforming destructive trauma re-enactment into a form of constructive repetition and elucidates the cycle of abuse in terms of Cree mythological figures. It provides a profound insight into how personal traumata seep into communities and rupture interpersonal relationships and communal bonds. The linguistic and cultural alienation which the two protagonists experience as a result of the residential school experience is ironically rendered in a narrative profoundly infused with Native spirituality and imagery resisting trauma and its consequences. The elusive character of the scandalous trickster figure, the untranslated proper nouns hinting at Native myths and the shockingly humorous way of depicting pain and suffering make *Kiss of the Fur Queen* a deeply destabilizing narrative holding up a mirror to the dominant culture but defying full understanding for cultural out-groups. The narrative provides intrinsically Native concepts to talk about and conceptualize painful experiences and their effects on individual lives and explains via the extensive use of metaphors how the transformation of traumatic experiences can be achieved.

"Goodbye Snauq," a more recent narrative published more than ten years after *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, explores the impact of collective trauma on future generations, drawing attention to the uncomfortable truth that manifestations of trauma symptoms can occur in descendants of trauma victims. The protagonist manages to ease historical trauma by performing a mnemonic act to demonstrate the significance of her counter-memories in order to shed light on a forgotten part of Vancouver's history. On the extratextual level, this narrative resists trauma and its silencing by conjuring up a vivid image of a forgotten place and its forgotten history. As literature has the power to shape collective memory, this short story challenges the master narrative by providing a detailed and vivid description of a valid counter-memory.

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Breaking Silence in Marlene Nourbese Philip's *She Tries Her Tongue*

Abstract

Born on the island of Tobago, Marlene Nourbese Philip, an Afro-Caribbean Canadian poet, was shaped by her experience as a colonized subject whose African ancestors had been transported to the Caribbean and whose lives as slaves were largely unrecorded. This loss of history and the marginalization some Afro-Caribbean people feel, weighed heavily on her poetry. The paper examines Philip's collection *She Tries Her Tongue* (1988) to reveal how she attempts to break silence and survive hardship and adversity. The paper explores her use of myth to highlight her quest for a voice as a strategy of resistance to coercion and investigates her attitude towards the "father tongue," i.e. the English language of the colonizer. For a theoretical frame work, the paper draws on various postcolonial texts with special emphasis on the 'Calibanic discourse' and strategies of language and resistance.

Diaspora, as the sociologist Robin Cohen points out, is a Greek word that means the sowing or dispersion of seed (*speiro*, is "to sow," *dia*, is "over") and it was used by the ancient Greeks to refer to migrations of colonizing Greeks who formed settlements throughout the Mediterranean world, extending the economic, political and cultural power of those who remained at home (ix). According to Susan Friedman, diaspora is migration plus loss, desire, and widely scattered communities held together by memory and a sense of history over a long period of time. This history "has involved oppression against a whole people and thus an attachment to community based on a sense of shared suffering" (268). The African Diaspora, the massive forced migration of Africans with the start of the Atlantic slave trade, resulted in the dispersion of Africans all over the world. The Caribbean was historically the earliest and main destination of the European slave ships that carried them from Africa to the Americas. The slave ships, Sanyu Ruth Mulira states, "acted as the womb that housed the initial transformation of its inhabitants" (116). She adds "the ocean was a liminal space in which the enslaved Africans were faced with the reality that their lives would never be the same. Slavery, oppression, and cultural domination were in front of them" (116). Once docked in the New World, the enslaved Africans, who came from different

ethnic backgrounds, found ways to weave the fragmented pieces of their past into a cultural fabric that could support their lives in a foreign land, in what Edouard Glissant calls "the abyss, the unknown" (1997, 8). Together, they created a multicultural unit. After "incubation" upon the ship, the many African roots were planted together in the soil of a new land. There, they wove themselves together, and finally they became one. Glissant uses the concept of a "rhizome" to explain how Caribbean culture grew out of the experience of slavery. He describes it as an "enmeshed root system, whose plant product appears self-contained and singular above ground. However, underneath the soil it is comprised of a network of roots so intertwined that one could never be freed from the other" (1997, 11).

Enslaved Africans were not only abducted from their country, but also from their language. They were prohibited from speaking in African languages and even had their tongues removed in punishment. The English language was imposed on them by the colonizers "as a conscious strategy of cultural hegemony" (Ashcroft 2009, 3) and it became "not only a codified site of colonial and imperial authority, through which racist discourses [were] mobilized, but also a historical, metaphorical, and literal site perpetuating systematic violence and cultural repression and erasure" (Verhagen 85). Meredith Gadsby asserts that "trapped within the prison that is English; African Caribbean shook its walls with an English Language that to the colonizer was unintelligible." They constructed a new language, the Caribbean demotic, "which provided a tangible psychic and linguistic link to their histories while creating a new social/linguistic/symbolic order that would provide subsequent generations with the psychic power to resist the master" (125).

In the process of decolonization as expressed in postcolonial literatures, Bill Ashcroft documents three types of language situations. He locates resistance discourses within monoglossic, diaglossic, and polyglossic locations. He identifies the Caribbean linguistic situation as polyglossic, and thus it presents the most complex case of the struggle within a colonial language. The complexity comes out of this history of slavery in which the enslaved Africans, brought over to the Caribbean, were forced to abandon their mother tongues and to adopt the enslaving colonial English language. Over a period of time, these Africans submerged their original mother tongues in the colonial language. These submerged mother tongues strongly influenced the way Afro-Caribbean use English: with heavy African inflexions. The result is the development of Creole/Nation language/Caribbean Demotic (Ashcroft 2002, 39). Each developed as a "subversive language" whose purpose from the start was not simply to communicate but also to conceal the meanings, thereby turning the master's language against him. In this sense, they are typical forms of Edouard Glissant's "opacity," For Glissant, "opacity" is "an active, positive form of resistance" (qtd. in Britton 19).

1. "Sister of Caliban": The Search for a "New World Song"

Afro-Caribbean women writers in Canada, including Marlene Nourbese Philip, Claire Harris, Lorna Goodison, and Cynthia James are often described as "sisters of Caliban" a term used by M J. Fenwick in his anthology of Caribbean women writers in Canada. For Ashcroft in *Caliban's Voice*, Caliban is celebrated as a symbol of resistance; "a symbol for representations of the subaltern exploitation and resistance" (17). Resistance discourse within Afro-Caribbean culture is a Calibanic discourse that has its origin and tradition in language. It is the perceived history and story of the enslaved Africans in Western culture. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is a symbolic and iconic text in postcolonial literature. Two figures have become the models of colonizer and colonized: Prospero, a usurped duke who is cast away and takes over an island, and Caliban, his enslaved native who is depicted as savage and deformed. Ashcroft asserts that "Caliban is the prototype of the colonized subject whose baseness as constructed by the colonizer is the justifying perquisite of colonization" (2009*,* 19). Prospero takes Caliban's island and makes Caliban a slave for him and his daughter Miranda who in turn tries to teach Caliban language, the language of Prospero that he utilizes as a means by which he can effectively control Caliban. Caliban learns language from his oppressors and in turn uses it to curse them and break his silence. *The Tempest* is "a complex staging of the struggle between 'the cannibal' and 'the oppressor,' close anagrams of Caliban and Prospero respectively" (Singh 191). James Coleman defines the "Calibanic discourse" term as follows:

> Calibanic discourse is the perceived history and story of the black male in Western culture that has its genesis and tradition in language and non-linguistic signs. It denotes slavery, proscribed freedom, proscribed sexuality, inferior character, and inferior voice. In summary, the black male is the slave or servant who is the antithesis of the reason, civilized development, entitlement, freedom, and power of white men, and he never learns the civilized use of language. His voice is unreliable; his words fail to signify his humanity. (3)

In Afro-Caribbean women poetry, Calibanic discourse and a responsive story of resistance and liberation are largely inseparable. Like Caliban, Afro-Caribbean women writers try to break their silence, attain an empowered status in a racist world and recover their voice and identity within Afro-Caribbean history and language. Their writing is preoccupied with a struggle with language that "connects [them] to [their] people and [their] histories of resistance to physical, emotional, psychic and linguistic conquest." They "suck coarse salt" and "speak out against the hardships suffered in a hostile landscape, using mother tongue to give tongue to their rage and lash out against repression" (Gadsby 124). Meredith M. Gadsby adopts the terminology and imagery of "sucking salt" in examining their literature.

According to Richard and Jeannette Allsopp's *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*, "sucking salt," which has Caribbean origins, means "to suffer much hardship and to have a rough time of it" (485). The term connotes desperation and hopelessness but carries with it the will to overcome hardship, take stock of the situation and rebuild it. "Sucking the salt," then," is a survival skill passed on from generation to generation of Caribbean women" who turned the notion into a "battle cry" (Gadsby 3).

A major Afro-Caribbean writer in Canada, Marlene Nourbese Philip or "sister of Caliban" sucks coarse salt and in her writings attempts to break the different forms of silencing imposed by the New World. Philip was born in Tobago in the West Indies in 1947. She took her first degree in economics at the University of the West Indies, and then she moved to Canada to continue her studies. She is a lawyer by profession, practicing law from 1975 to 1982. In 1983 she became a full time writer, and in 1988 she won the Casa de las Americas Prize for her collection, *She Tries Her Tongue* (1988). In addition to her poetry, she has published two novels and two books of essays that investigate racism, colonialism, and the position of the woman of colour in Canadian cultural life. Philip describes herself as an "Afrosporic" writer; a short form for African and Diaspora, as in her original coinage for black Caribbean authors in North America.[1] She makes the experience of the African Diaspora central to her writing and focuses on the issue of language and the way in which colonially inherited European languages have exiled the Caribbean speaker/writer, reducing them to "linguistic squatters" (Sage, Greer & Showalter 472–473).

A reading of Philip's collection *She Tries Her Tongue* with special emphasis on her masterpiece "A Discourse on the Logic of Language" reveals that she is searching for a voice that adequately expresses the specific experience of black people in Diaspora. For Philip, breaking silence is one of the means for recovering a voice in order to resist the politics of erasure apparent in her multiple locations as a poet "triply displaced through race, gender and language" (1997, 59). In a reading held at Florida International University on January 1999, Philip spoke out of trying to create a language in which to efficiently communicate the experience of the Middle Passage, its results, and its legacies for Black peoples. Philip tries to create in her poetry what Gayle Jones, an African American writer, in her novel *Corregidora* (1975), refers to as "a new world song," the creation of a language capable of expressing the experience of diasporic Africans in the west; a language that connects them to their "histories of resistance to physical, emotional, psychic and linguistic conquest" (Gadsby 3).

In an interview, Philip says that she considers herself to be a writer in exile. However, it is not merely exile from a particular place, but it is "an exile from a number of things on many layers – your original language, your mother tongue, your culture, your spirituality," She adds "even if I were to go back to Tobago, I would still be in exile, and so it's almost a permanent exile" (Mahlis 690).

What she means is that she has eternally lost most of her African culture and, very importantly, her original mother tongue. These losses have been caused by the actions of the colonizer. Some of the questions she asks herself in her poetry are summarized in the following quotation from her essay "Ignoring Poetry":

> How does one write from the perspective of one who has mastered a foreign language, yet has never had a mother tongue; one whose father tongue is an English fashioned to exclude, deride and deny the essence of one's being? How does the poet confront and resolve the profound loss and absence of language - a language which can truly be the house of one's being? How does the poet work a language engorge on her many silences? How does *she break that silence* that is one yet many? Should she? Can she fashion a language that uses silence as a first principle? (1997, 120)

2. A Creolized Version of the Myths of Persephone, Io and Philomela

Nourbese Philip employs Greek mythology in her collection to highlight the loss of language and mother tongue and to stress her struggle to break silence. She is interested in the myths of Persephone, Io and Philomela. In Greek mythology, Persephone is the daughter of Zeus and Demeter. Hades, god of the underworld, abducted Persephone from a field in Sicily where she was gathering flowers and took her with him down to the underworld. Luke and Monica Roman in *Encyclopedia of Greek and Roman Mythology* state that "her distraught mother searched in vain for her and, in her grief, caused a famine. Zeus finally persuaded Hades to free Persephone, but since she had eaten a seed […] of a pomegranate in the underworld, she was obliged to spend a part of each year there" (391). Philip employs the myth of Persephone's abduction and her return to her mother to explore her own experience of exile and separation from Tobago and the wider history of African transplantation. For Philip, language is one of the most important sites of struggle between the Old World and the New World, and Persephone represents the "linguistic rape and subsequent forced marriage between African and English tongues" (1988, 23).

The opening quotation in Philip's collection is from Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* It is a reference to the myth of Persephone as told by Ovid. The title of the collection is a quotation from Dryden's translation of book 1 of *Metamorphoses*, where the story of Io, princess and nymph of Argos, is told. Raped by Zeus, the king of the gods, Io was then transmuted into a white cow to avoid his wife's anger and therefore deprived of the ability of speech. Io's story ends with the retransformation of the cow into a woman: "She tries her tongue, her silence softly breaks, / and fears her former Lowings when she speaks" (281). In another poem, Philip mentions Philomela, who was raped and hurt by her brother-in-law, and later transformed into a nightingale. Philip writes:

When silence is
of word tongue and lip
Ashes of once in what was
Silence
Song word speech
Might I.like Philomela.sing
Continue
Over
into
pure utterance (1988, 65)

The story of Philomela is a well known mythological narrative of abuse, suffering and poetic song. In Greek mythology, Philomela, daughter of King Pandion of Attica, was raped by her brother-in-law who then cut out her tongue to silence her. Philomela embroidered her calamity into cloth, which she sent to her sister. She thus manages to overcome – albeit symbolically – the silence that was enforced upon her. Her brother-in-law tried to kill her and her sister, but the gods changed them into birds. Philomela became a swallow and her sister a nightingale. Philomela transforms her tonguelessness into her victory.

In the vein of Philomela, Philip has had her tongue 'cut out 'by colonialism. Yet, just like Philomela, Philip was able to tell her version of history. In the same way that Philomela's embroidery enabled her to write her story through art, by weaving the name of her rapist, Philip conveys her story through poetry. The association between Philip and the image of the nightingale has come to indicate creative experience arising from loss, darkness and seclusion. Io and Philomela share a similar destiny as they are both raped and they both have to struggle to reacquire a language, a way of communicating with the rest of the world. Philip has been interested in the myths of Io, Philomela and Persephone because they reverberate "the predicament of the many female slaves raped by their white masters" and because they echo "the experiences of the African slaves in the New World who, deprived of their mother tongues, had to find a new language to express themselves" (Fumagalli 74). Philip's poem "Questions' Questions" is another poem of loss and suffering and an excellent example of a mother's desire for a reunion with her lost daughter. The mother is searching for her daughter everywhere. Philip writes:

Where she, where she, where she
Be, where she gone?
Where high and low meet I search,
Find cant, way down the islands' way
I gone – South. (1988, 26)

In "Adoption Bureau," it is the daughter who searches for the mother and wants to reunite with her. For "Afrosporic" people, the search for their mother is not only a search for the lost mother, or even the lost mother tongue, but it is also a search for origin, for the lost land. "Questions' Questions" is written in the Caribbean demotic while "Adoption Bureau" is in Standard English in order to point out Philip's loss. Philip mentions another Greek character, Cyane, a nymph who tried to prevent Hades from abducting Persephone, her playmate. Upon failure she dissolved away in tears and melted into her pool. Philip writes: "As for Cyane, she lamented the rape of the goddess. […] / Nursing silently in her heart a wound that none could / Heal" (1988, 27).

3. English is a "Foreign Anguish"

Moreover, the quest for reunion with the mother and the recovery of the mother tongue are dealt with greatest intensity in Philip's masterpiece "Discourse on the Logic of Language." The poem is constructed out of four texts written next to each other on two opposing pages. Some of the means used by the colonizer to eradicate the language and destroy the identity of the African are effectively shown in the poem. Philip imitates the voice of the colonizer by using two edicts which represent the way in which the law forced the colonized to dismiss their own language. She writes:

> Every owner of slaves
> Shall, wherever possible
> Ensure that his slaves
> Belong to as many ethno -
> Linguistic groups as
> Possible. If they can-
> Not speak to each other
> They cannot then foment
> Rebellion and revolution (1988, 55)

Enslaved Africans were prohibited from speaking in African languages and even had their tongues removed in punishment. The lack of language was experienced as a lack of being, in Britton words, "not having a language that adequately, immediately, and fully expresses what one wishes to say about the world and, perhaps particularly, about oneself, becomes equated with not having a fully realized self." Because enslaved Africans were not allowed to use their native language, "their ability to express their "i-mage" was efficaciously destroyed" (Guttman 58). In her essay "The Absence of Writing," Philip introduces her concept of the "i-mage," She points out that the image is fundamental to any art form, whether it be the

physical image as created by the dancer, the musical image of the composer, the visual image of the plastic artist or the verbal image of the writer and poet. She asserts that the "i-mage" is the heart of all creative writing and uses the word "i-mage" to convey what can only be described as the irreducible essence, the "i-mage" of creative writing. It can be likened to the DNA molecules at the heart of all life.[2] She asserts that the tangible representation of the "i-mage" in creative writing is the word and "the success of the execution of this "i-mage" depends to a large degree on the essential tension between the "i-mage" and word or words giving voice to the "i-mage" (1988, 12–14).

According to Philip, the colonizer destroyed the "equation between i-mage and word" for the black Caribbean. The colonizer did not cause the enslaved African to lose his ability to think and i-mage, but "in stripping [him] of [his] language, in denying the voice power to make and, simultaneously, to express the i-mage – in denying the voice expressing, in fact–the ability and power to use the voice was effectively stymied," In short, "the bridge that language creates, the crossover from 'i-mage' to expression was destroyed, if only temporarily," the African in the Caribbean was never able to overcome the experience of slavery because the experience had "never been reclaimed and integrated metaphorically through the language and so within the psyche" (1988, 14–15). Certain images that contained an African consciousness were considered to be "primitive, naive, and ugly" (1988, 13) and were repudiated not only by the West, but also by the Africans living outside Africa. This gives evidence of how far Africans themselves were "removed from their power to create, control and even understand their own i-mages" (1988, 14). Philip is trying to create a new world song and a new language in order to reflect the "i-mage" of the African people in the Caribbean. Philip writes in *Edict II*:

> Every slave caught speaking
> His native language
> Shall be severely
> punished. Where necessary
> Removal of the tongue is
> recommended. The of-
> fending organ, when re-
> moved, should be hung
> On high in a central place,
> So that all may see and tremble (1988, 57)

Colonial language has always presented itself as dominant, the proper, correct, civilized, way to behave. The colonizer looks at the languages of the colonized as bad, childish and impure. But this very dominance means that its appropriation by the colonized can be empowering. The impure languages of the colonized are

typically seen as the opposite of the pure Standard English language as spoken by the colonizer. Philip writes in standard English but nevertheless allows African and Creole influences to penetrate into this English in order to fully reflect the **"**i-mage**"** of her people. In this way she shows the importance of the culture of the Afro-Caribbean colonized without asserting the division between colonizers and colonized. The impurities that African and Creole influences cast upon the Standard English language of the colonizer are not only a means of restoring the tension between word and "i-mage," but also a strategy of resistance to the coercion of the West.

This resistance to submersion by colonial powers throughout the Caribbean signals what Louise Bennett refers to as "colonization in reverse" (215). Gadsby asserts that "nation language, thus located within the culture of the enslaved, in fact recolonizes the plantation and island space at the level of culture. Language becomes the battle ground for the colonial struggle between colonizer and the colonized" (14). For Glissant, language operates as "a mode of cultural resistance." The colonized consciousness is opaque in that it cannot be "read" by the colonizer. The colonizer is unable to understand the colonized. There is a dynamic relationship between the lack of language, as "a passively determined condition," and opacity as "an active strategy of resistance," a strategy that transforms lack into a positive force. In this sense "opacity" as described by Britton becomes a militant position (19-20). Glissant states, "We must fight against transparency everywhere" and he claims that opacity is a right: "We demand for all the right to opacity" (1997, 209). He equates opacity simply with freedom: "their [opacity] which is nothing, after all, but their freedom" (1999, 256). This "subversive language" becomes a strategy of resistance. Hence, colonial languages have been not only instruments of oppression but also instruments of radical resistance and transformation.

In another text, Philip shows the way in which the colonizer tries to prove his superiority to the colonized in a scientific way. The text discusses the work of the famous Dr. Broca who tried to prove that the brains of black people, women and coloured people were smaller and that because of that, they were less intelligent than white males. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said wrote about this polarized difference between the West and the 'Other' that "the sense of Western power" over the subject colonial population "is taken for granted as having the status of scientific truth" (46). Philip writes:

> Those parts of the brain chiefly responsible for speech are named after two learned nineteenth century doctors, the eponymous Doctors Wernicke and Broca respectively. Dr. Broca believed the size of the brain determined intelligence; he devoted much of his time to proving that white males of the Caucasian race had larger brains than, and were therefore superior to women, Blacks and other peoples of colour. (1988, 56)

Philip attempts to create a mother tongue that will save her from the "foreign anguish" of her 'father tongue' English. Gadsby asserts that "fatherhood symbolizes a patriarchal dominance, enslavement, and linguistic violence perpetrated by the slave master and the slave narrative: therefore 'English is a foreign anguish'" (1988, 57). Philip refuses to regard the English language as her mother tongue, instead naming it her "dumb tongue" and her "father tongue." In the beginning of the second text, Philip writes:

> English
> Is my mother tongue
> A mother tongue is not
> Not a foreign lan lan Lang
> Language
> L/anguish
> Anguish
> A foreign anguish (1988, 57)

Naomi Guttman points out that "Philip connects between language and displacement by playing with the word "language." She repeats the word 'lan' a few times so that the reader is not sure whether the next word will be 'land' or 'language'" (64). Accordingly, English becomes a position from which black people are forced to speak. Philip repeats the words 'my mother tongue' in different dialects of the Caribbean demotic to emphasize her quest for a mother tongue. Philip emphasizes the "foreign anguish" (1988, 55) caused by living half-submerged in the mother-tongue while burdened with the colonial violence of the father-tongue. Philip highlights the complex relationship between the mother tongue and the father tongue. From the father tongue's rape of the mother tongue, a "dumb-tongued / dub-tongued" child was born (1988, 55). The struggle by the dominated "to adopt a language which has been forced upon them at the expense of remembering their mother tongue is a struggle characterized by conflict and anxiety" (Guttman 56). She writes:

> What is my mother
> Tongue
> My mammy tongue
> My mummy tongue
> My momsy tongue
> My modder tongue
> My ma tongue? (1988, 30)

Yet, Philip does not find her original African language, as it has been destroyed by the colonizer. She concludes by saying "I must therefore be tongue / dumb"

(1988, 30). The first text on the page is vertically written in the margin of the poem. The place of the text at the margin is very important as it asserts the marginalization of African people within Caribbean history and culture.

Marginalization is perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression. A whole category of people is "expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination." Marginalization deprives one "of cultural, practical, and institutionalized conditions for exercising capacities in a context of recognition and interaction" (Young 53–55). Philip is marginalized both by her colour and her gender as a female black writer. The whole text is written in capital letters to emphasize the quest for a mother tongue:

> THE MOTHER THEN PUT HER FINGERS INTO HER CHILD'S MOUTH – GENTLY FORCING IT OPEN; SHE TOUCHES HER TONGUE TO THE CHILD'S TONGUE, AND HOLDING THE TINY MOUTH OPEN, SHE BLOWS INTO IT – HARD. SHE WAS BLOWING WORDS – HER WORDS, HER MOTHER'S WORDS, THOSE OF HER MOTHER'S MOTHER, AND ALL THEIR MOTHERS BEFORE – INTO HER DAUGHTER'S MOUTH. (1988, 55)

The image of a mother licking her newborn child is a powerful image. With her tongue, the mother cleans the "creamy white substance" off of the baby's body (Philip 1988, 53). The mother not only cleans the baby of the birth-fluid, but also cleans the baby of what she has been born into a long history of colonial violence, oppression and adversity. The mother blows "her words, her mother's words, those of her mother's mother, and all the mothers before" into her child's mouth (Philip 1988, 55), an act that is challenging, resistant and defiant. The mother feeds her child with the words of her female ancestors. She gives her daughter voice through breath, "communicating vast land of memory, history, culture, and tradition without uttering a word." Even though the mother's gift to her daughter is language itself, "language is re-envisioned as a space outside of the ideological weight of the father tongue, a space in which the daughter can remember what has been forgotten and move towards a better future" (Deloughrey 134).

The speaker's voice tries to find her mother tongue, but does not know where to look. When she asks, "What is my mother tongue" (1988, 55), she expresses a desire to find a language that can voice the "concerns of a displaced people" (Guttman 64). Yet the language of the people has already been penetrated by the "principal organ of oppression and exploitation" (1988, 58), the colonial discourse of the father tongue. The speaker cannot find her mother tongue because it has been cut off from its cultural and linguistic origins. Just as the "slave caught speaking his native language" (1988, 57) is punished and silenced by the removal of his tongue, so too has the mother tongue been cut out off the mouth of the people. Philip is trying to break the silence of black people by using language as a strategy of resistance to coercion. For Philip, the struggle with language is

the struggle to create powerful images for oneself. Philip discusses how colonial language has oppressed colonized African people. She uses experimental form to resist English as a colonial language. The poem breaks away from conventional and poetic techniques in order to highlight the oppressive strategies of the English language that is presented in the poem as an accomplice of the colonizer in the abduction of Africans. The "mother tongue," is referred to in the poem as "a space in which to counter, mediate and resist the homogenizing forces" and "disruptive linguistic oppression that standard English has affected and continues to affect" (Verhagen 85).

Conclusion

In *She Tries her Tongue*, Marlene Nourbese Philip tries to overcome the colonial imposition of Standard English which she regards as a language of oppression that silences the natives. She subverts it as a neutral construction and engages in discourses of decolonization that encourages remembrance of the silenced voices of oppressed people. She moves from silence to voice; from the 'dumb' silence that the linguistic 'rape' forces upon the Africans in the New World, to the resistant voice that records their struggles for liberation. Like Shakespeare's Caliban, Philip is trying to speak in an empowering voice, to achieve freedom from slavery and racism, to define the self, and to fashion a humane character and a secure, empowered status in the New World. Her poetry is a political statement of the rebellion of African Caribbean women against their colonizers, of the continuity of African history through language and of the uncut umbilical cord with the continent from which Africans were forcibly removed.

Notes

1 The term 'Afrosporic' is introduced by Marlene Nourbese Philip. See Kristen Mahlis, "A Poet of Place: An Interview with M. Nourbese Philip. *Callaloo* 27. 3 (2004): 682–697.
2 She uses the word "I-mage" in reference to the Rastafarian habit of giving special favour to the 'I' in many words.

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British Colonial Education and the Rise of Nationalism in Malaya: Tracing the Route of the *Merdeka*[1] Generation in Adibah Amin's *This End of the Rainbow*

Abstract

Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) asserted the importance of colonial education for the emergence of "native intellectuals" who will be able to represent the masses and participate in the national agenda against colonisation. Likewise Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) draws attention to a secondary school in West Africa during French colonialism that offered colonial education to the local boys who eventually became nationalist leaders. Both Fanon and Anderson opined that colonial education was vital for the emergence of an elite indigenous group who possessed the key to mobilise the masses, contributing to the rise in nationalism. With the emergence of the Subaltern Studies in South Asia, the significance of the elite group and the ways non-elite members of a nation have been represented in nationalist discourses have been highly debated. This paper examines the relationship between British colonial education and the rise of nationalism in *This End of the Rainbow* (2006), a Malaysian life-writing in English by Adibah Amin, a female writer of Malay ethnic origin. Also, this paper looks at how as a nationalist writing, the narrative has deployed colonial education to distinguish the elites as decolonising agents from the masses, placing the latter at the margin as the subalterns.

To understand a nation through its narrative discourse is pertinent for a postcolonial nation like Malaysia due to the text's engagement with emergent issues like nation, nationalism, and identity construction. Political scientist Benedict Anderson describes nation as an "imagined community" because, regardless of how small a country may be, its citizens may never know of one another, yet, in their imagination they exist as a whole community due to the sovereign geographical boundaries they share. It is also due to this that they have a "deep, horizontal comradeship" that brings them together under the collective identity of a nation (16). Homi Bhabha, a post-colonial theorist whose conceptualisation of a nation is based on post-structuralist thoughts, explains that nation is given meaning by its occupants through narrative discourses that construct or contest against a unified identity. In

the introduction to his edited collection of essays, *Nation and Narration*, he adds that a nation has no meaning until it is narrativised in the form of written text through "textual strategies, metaphoric displacements, subtexts, and figurative stratagems" by the people who do not just occupy the centre, but more importantly, by those who are in the fringes of the nation as a result of socio-political divisions like migration, ethnicity, religion, and so on (1990a, 2). A nation is an empty space until meaning is given to it through textualisation.

One of the key components in the narrativisation of a nation, particularly those emerging out of colonial occupation, is nationalism. As a matter of fact nationalist thoughts may be thematically or structurally manifested in a variety of ways in a text well after a nation has achieved its formal independence. Anderson draws on the newspaper and realist novel as forms through which nationalist thoughts may exist as they provide a shared culture, interests, and vocabularies for the people of the nation. The question then is, how does a text that is narrativised in the colonial language (English) able to address the construction of collective identity as it highlights the influence of British colonial education in the rise of nationalism in Malaya during the years preceding independence. It is along this line of thought that this paper examines the depiction of nationalism in *This End of the Rainbow*, published in 2006, a fictional biography by Adibah Amin, a Malaysian writer of Malay ethnic origin.[2] This paper will also examine how as a nationalist writing the narrative deploys colonial education to distinguish the elites as decolonising agents from the masses thus placing the latter at the margin as the subalterns – a term taken up shortly – in the construction of a collective identity for the soon-to-be independent nation.

1. Malaysian History and Socio-Political Structure

Peninsula Malaysia's eleven states and two federal territories used to be individual Malay kingdoms where early contestations for power and territory between local chieftains and sultans saw the Portuguese (1511) and Dutch (1641) using the disputes to their advantage and establishing their rule in Melaka, an important port for trade within the Malay Archipelago. Disputes among chieftains in the local kingdoms also gave plausible causes for the British to arrive in Penang (1786) and later Singapore (1819). The Anglo-Dutch Treaty signed in 1824 divided the territorial interests of the Dutch and British, leaving Melaka, Singapore, and Penang to the British. British influence was soon extended to the other states of the peninsula which saw the formation of the Federated and Non-Federated Malay States bringing together individual Malay kingdoms under a British administrative system.

During British rule – in mid-19th and 20th centuries – indentured labourers from mainland China and India were brought to fill labour shortage in the tin mines and plantation estates. This seemingly new period of arrival has become a

major point of contention in present-day Malaysia as a person's origin is reiterated through terms like 'pendatang' (new arrival/immigrant) as opposed to 'bumiputera' (sons/daughters of the soil). The Chinese and Indians are collectively known as non-Malays, and due to their migrant ancestry, they are considered outsiders. The Malays are Muslims and accepted as insiders accorded by their *bumiputera* status.[3] The justification that the period when the Chinese and Indians settled in Malaya accords them the status of immigrants or new arrivals is disputable. Historic records indicate that Chinese and Indian traders had long settled in Melaka even before the arrival of the colonial powers (Andaya and Andaya, 2001; Sandhu and Mani, 1993). Even if the period of arrival is taken into consideration as it reflects the massive wave of migration, the question of belonging for those migrants who stayed back and their descendants who eventually made Malaya, later Malaysia, their only home, remains unanswered in contemporary Malaysia's socio-political makeup (*BBC News Asia*, 2013; *The Malaysian Insider*, 2013).

The reason for the divisiveness between Malays and non-Malays is traceable to the forming of the Federation of Malaya in 1948 when the British heeded the pressure from the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), a Malay nationalist political party that successfully campaigned against Malayan Union, an immediate post-war plan by the British that proposed equal citizenship for Malays and non-Malays. Historians conclude that, had Malayan Union materialised, all citizens, regardless of their origin, would have had equal rights in the country (Cheah, 2002; Hooker, 2003). By withdrawing Malayan Union, the British had restored Malay sovereignty and Malay ownership where Malay political primacy among different ethnic groups became guaranteed. This is why the formation of UMNO and the period when UMNO, MCA (Malayan Chinese Association), and MIC (Malayan Indian Congress)[4] came together to form the Alliance preceding independence is considered as the peak of nationalism in Malaysia.[5] Nationalism as explained by Malays is that non-Malays would gain citizenship rights *in return* for a guarantee of Malay special positon, termed the 'social contract' and is used time and again to legitimise the Malays' hegemonic position in the country.[6] Such notion of nationalism is contrary to the non-Malays' imagination of a pluralist multicultural nation and the on-going disputes in contemporary Malaysia is evidence of such disparaging view. As a person's national identity is shaped along the lines of a country's official markers and policies, Malaysia's markers are founded on the Malays' history, language, culture, economy, and religion, justifying the approach taken in this paper that situates a life-writing by a Malay writer as a nationalist text.

2. Malaysian Literature in English, MLE[7]

It is important to trace the development of literature writings in English, commonly known as MLE, and examine how such materials have provided crucial cultural,

linguistic, and literary evidence to the construction of nation-ness in narrative discourses alike. The seeds of literary writings in English were sown in the late 1940s when the undergraduates of the University of Malaya in Singapore were involved in the print publication of the literary journal *The New Cauldron* as they hoped for a shared linguistic identity.

In spite of efforts to cross ethnic boundaries through a common language, the use of English kept the pioneers of MLE away from the anti-colonial agenda of both Malaya and Singapore. This was because Malay was the most important linguistic instrument to mobilise the rural and urban folks under the collective efforts of nationalism. Moreover, the university that served as the colonial educational centre of British Malaya was distinguishable among the various ethnic groups occupying the land along class lines since English education was considered a privilege availing those in the urban areas. The location of the university in Singapore, a British Crown Colony and separated from the Federation of Malaya, further divided the noble intentions of the pioneer writers.

It also has to be noted that language has always been a point of contention in Malaysia and was one of the catalysts in the 1969 racial riots following which a pro-Malay nation was founded. This is because up to that point, then Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, had used a multi-cultural model to steer the newly independent nation towards unity much to the disdain of numerous pro-Malay extremists (Cheah, 2002; Brown, 2007). Following the riot, one after another policies were introduced and implemented to safeguard the Malay language and the economic as well as cultural empowerment of the Malays.

Linguistic distinction became pronounced after the implementation of the New Economic Policy and the 1971 Amendment Act (to reinforce the 1967 Language Act) that witnessed a peak in the 1970s and 1980s as the nationalisation of Malay language was fervently undertaken. It went to the extent of denouncing writings in English, Mandarin, and Tamil as Sectional Literatures as opposed to those written in Malay as National Literatures. Such trying period for English was also noticeable in schools when teaching hours were significantly reduced. In the local literary circle, some bilingual local writers chose to continue writing only in Malay as a mark of resistance against the English colonisers and their language. Some others who felt English was their only language of literary expression left the country; those who stayed back chose a long period of silence without any serious literary outputs in that duration.

Years of having de-emphasised English had caused more problems than expected as young Malaysians are not competent users of the language. There is a marked problem at the tertiary level where materials are still in English.[8] Youngsters' employability is at stake as private and foreign companies require fluent speakers. To overcome this problem, in recent years the state's efforts to reinstate English and to improve the standard of the language among Malaysian school-goers in order for them to be employable at the international market has seen the implementa-

tion of numerous educational policies – the latest of its kind – making English a must-pass subject at the SPM level starting from 2016.[9] It can also be said that the hostility that English suffered from during the immediate years following the New Economic Policy has been overcome since it does not pose a threat to the status that Malay has as the national language of the country. The state's move to offer fully sponsored studentships in English-speaking countries has also allowed Malaysians to return as fluent users of the language to the point where some have joined the country's literati preferring to use English as their literary medium.

Another reason to why writings in English may be used to study issues pertaining to the nation is because of the way in which the language was introduced in British Malaya. Unlike the tradition that was practised in the other colonies of the Empire, say India, English education in Malaya was not aimed at Anglicising its users; instead it was to produce competent speakers to join the administrative machinery of the colonisers (Hirschman, 1972). This was seen as one of the cost-effective measures of the colonial government. Mohammad A. Quayum points out that it is due to such difference that English writings in India flourished way before the retreat of the British Raj whereas in Malaya such writings came into prominence only a few years before formal independence was granted (2007, 17). The introduction of English education in Malaya therefore did not involve the erasure of local culture; rather it was a process through which colonial administration was made easy. This meant that the cultural identity of the colonised masses remained intact. Additionally, the formation of MLE in the 1940s that coincided with heightened nationalistic sentiments is proof that the use of English as a creative medium for the select group of writers was not a psychological conflict that involved a de-colonising of the mind. Such mind-set nonetheless could not infiltrate the majority since it was mainly popular among the idealistic undergraduates in Singapore. The homogeneity that MLE provided could not surpass the demographical and class-oriented differences that existed in Malaya then.

To dismiss these materials on linguistic distinctiveness may be far-fetched and the continuous development of MLE proves the accessibility of the writings to a wider group of people in present-day Malaysia. It is also evident through the contemporary group of writers who have chosen to express in English that, despite having attended national (Malay) schools, the colonial language in some way provides writerly freedom to address controversial themes which may not be readily accepted in Malay. In fact, the dissemination of some materials in Malay has been controlled by the government yet the English version of the same materials is permitted in the market, giving writings in English a steady readership.[10]

Life-writings – that later became MLE's offshoot – first appeared in the forms of memoirs, sketches, and semi-documentary biographies as they were written by colonial administrators and expatriate writers residing in British Malaya.[11] The real impetus for life-writings came during post-war years with works like Sybil Kathigasu's *No Dram of Mercy* (1954) and Janet Lim's *Sold for Silver* (1958). Although

sporadic attempts were made thereafter, it can be said that the genre has remained relatively unexplored until recent years. One possible explanation for this neglect is that life-writings became increasingly synonymous with political biographies and national autobiographies.[12]

Although Malaysian life-writings of public figures and founding fathers deserve an examination of their own, the aim of this paper is to analyse the common, largely obscured life-writer's work so that the way nation is imagined can be understood through a representative text of a particular ethnic group. Moreover, life-writings, not exclusively about public figures, have made a comeback in Malaysia in the recent years calling for an in-depth examination of such materials in relation to Malaysia's evolving status as a nation (Quayum, 2007; Abdul Manaf and Quayum, 2001). It is precisely for this reason that this paper does not deal with issues concerning life-writings where distinctions are drawn between terminologies or the critical development of the genre;[13] rather, the focus of this paper is to read Amin's narrative as a critical practice as it centres on the country's most nationalistic period through the perspective of a hegemonic Malay-Muslim protagonist.

The perception that colonial values continue to live on through the use of English persist in Malaysia which is not uncommon for a postcolonial nation. With this reason in mind, this paper discusses the appropriation of nationalism in Amin's narrative as it traces British colonial education and examines how it contributes to the rise in anti-colonial nationalist sentiments. It also goes a step further to address the conceptualisation pertaining to nationalism and examines if the term itself is a European/Western adoption so that the dynamics of Malaysian nationalism in literary texts may be addressed. This paper in doing so analyses the de-limiting tendencies of nationalist texts where in the pursuit to homogenise a country's people, such texts unwittingly normalise exclusions. In Amin's text these exclusions are observable through the representations given to the non-elites as they are cast, in Gramscian terms, as subalterns, and will be taken up accordingly.

3. *This End of the Rainbow*

The setting of Amin's text covers a pre-independent Malaya based on the author's experiences as an undergraduate during the late 1940s at the University of Malaya in Singapore. The story is narrativised in third person with a focus on the protagonist, Ayu, thus bringing to light the fictional element of the biographical piece.[14] Ayu is a young Malay girl who shares close friendships with her multi-ethnic friends in Johor and at the university in Singapore. The narrative is set against the backdrop of British rule after the surrender of the Japanese army. Ayu is contemplating to switch course from medicine to journalism as talks for self-government proceeds in the land. As the spirit of nationalism heightens, Ayu and her friends are caught in uncertainties, with Ayu constantly assuring the rest that the power transition will

benefit everyone regardless of class and ethnic differences. Her biggest challenge comes in the form of a university friend, Han, a Chinese, who persuades her to join a multi-ethnic youth movement that strives for equality among the different ethnic groups. Ayu eventually changes her course and decides not to join Han's movement. She feels that the aftermath of the world war and communist attacks have made people disillusioned but believes that these will be overcome when independence is granted.

In many ways the narrative is about reading the past in the present. It is also about reading the present in the past. Such juxtaposition in narrative temporality draws attention to the text's postcolonial complexity.[15] More importantly, the deployment of a third person narrator to relate ethnic relations of pre-independent Malaya calls into question the text's engagement with the genre of life-writing and the theme of nationalism as a whole. The disconnectedness between the narrator and protagonist may be viewed as a move to locate the 'voices' of those occupying the centre *and* fringes of the nation. Such presumed impartiality and omniscience nonetheless becomes ambiguous as the story focuses on Ayu, highlighting an individualised agency. As a nationalist text, the distancing of the narrator depicts the need for neutrality; it also demonstrates the archetypical portrayal of a nationalist through the Malay-Muslim protagonist. To unravel the complexity in the authorial identity as the text is a life-writing, this paper forwards a relational reading between the narrator, fictive protagonist, and the supplementary characters.[16]

It is my contention that by giving voiced representation to some characters – mostly non-colonial educated non-elites – the narrativisation casts them to a position of class oriented exclusion. In some other instances when the non-elite characters are completely silenced, a double-fold marginality based on class and ethnic differences emerges in the text.[17] The former mainly involves the Malays while the latter group that is silenced altogether involves the Chinese and Indians. It is also my argument that colonial education which is used as the empowering tool fragments the Malays' collective identity. In the case of voiceless representation given to the non-colonial educated non-Malays, the divisiveness is deeper. Such a claim is an anti-thesis to Anderson's conceptualisation of a nation that is horizontally and vertically unified, i.e. "deep, horizontal comradeship" (16). By analysing the elements that make a nationalist in Amin's text, I argue that, a nationalist is a *colonial* educated elite Malay and is portrayed apart from the masses.

4. Nationalism: A Western Tradition?

Although post-structuralist theorists opine that nationalism is losing its vigour in "a transnational, migratory and diasporic world culture" (Rivkin and Ryan 853), in a country like Malaysia, it is not only alive but also constantly re-visited by the state to proliferate a sense of unified identity among its people. The top-down national-

ist narrativisation may be understood through Ernest Gellner's conceptualisation where the need for progress drives what he calls an "agrarian society" towards a homogeneous nationalist cultural ideology and the state's apparatus pushes this process towards success. Nationalism is therefore "a political principle" when "the political and the national unit [are] congruent" (1). Similarly Benedict Anderson associates the birth of a nation to the demise of feudalism and the rise of capitalism. He further adds that the convergence of capitalism and print technology may allow the emergence of a *new* imagined community (49). Gellner and Anderson's ideas may be used to understand Malaysian nationalism as a cause that is determined by the need for development and modernity. The question then is, what problematises the attempt to homogenise a diverse group of people in a once-colonised nation like Malaysia?

To address this question, it is useful to return to the roots of nation formation. Nation-states may be categorised as 'old' and 'new', the latter emerging after World War I and II and the slow demise of European colonial empires.[18] Anderson explains that old nations were mostly modelled on a religious homogeneity, while some others, through the use of vernacular languages and bounded geography. In some non-European countries, rather than language, anti-imperialist sentiments cut across class distinctions and resulted in nationalism which brought upon the birth of a nation.[19] In Europe, language played a more fundamental role in developing a national consciousness through the middle-class and intelligentsia who used the rhetoric of democracy which was eventually appropriated by the colonial powers to expand their influence in their dominions; nationalism became the primary tool of imperialism. In the case of new nations as they emerged out of conflicts and war, it may be said that they were based on the European/Western model through the ideas of liberation, progress, and human dignity and therefore are relatable to Western history and intellectuality (Anderson 107–110).

In colonised nations, such identification proved to be problematic and ambivalent. Partha Chatterjee claims rather sarcastically that nationalism will always remain a borrowed idea without the possibility of difference if the colonised subjects' anti-colonialism is also related to Western imperialist notions of liberty, freedom, and dignity (Chatterjee 5). Bhabha critiques nationalist discourses by highlighting that they are bound to fail due to a conceptual failure. Naming the flaw as "double narrative movement," he describes the performative and pedagogic narrative movement of a nationalist text as consisting of differing temporality; while one homogenises in a forward motion towards progress, the other moves backwards to draw from past experiences and unwittingly reveals people's inherent differences (1994, 145). Even Frantz Fanon, the Martinique born Algerian philosopher, who spent most of his life advocating nationalism, dedicated an entire chapter of his book to the "pitfalls of national consciousness." Fanon warns the administrators who fill the leadership vacuum left behind by the colonial administrators not to assume the colonial values by asserting any form of dominance (119; 120–122).

In returning to Malaysia as a case study, one may also turn to Anthony Smith's chapter on the modernist histories of nationalism that traces three main waves, covering various continents of the world from the 18th century to as recently as the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and draws attention to the beginning of modern nationalist sentiments as a European/Western product (2010, 95–97). This shows that chronologically Malaysia belongs to the category of a modern nation; yet could it have inherited nationalist sentiments from an older tradition that is rooted in pre-colonial days? David Henley's chapter, "The Origins of Southeast Asian Nations: A Question of Timing," concludes that the absence of strong exclusive nationalism in pre-colonial Malaya meant that the nation as we know it emerged from a new tradition thus attributing Malaysia with the European/Western model of nation formation (285). Such lack may be used to argue the on-going claim made by Malays in which Malay hegemony translates as the founding principle of Malaysian nationalism and national identity. It also shows that present-day Malaysia is a result of colonial remapping.

It should not however be construed that nationalism in pre-independent Malaya and its process towards nation formation were purely based on the imperial model; rather, it has to be viewed as an appropriated form where local nationalist movements were powerful enough to mobilise the masses through the distinction they possessed. This is why some theorists like Andreas Eckert calls for the re-situatedness of the concepts through "transnational history of ideas" rather than tracing the roots as western or non-western (70). In Amin's work, the borrowing of the Western ideals *as well as* the difference possessed by the local nationalist thought is traceable through such an appropriated sense of nationalism.

That said, the role of, in Anderson's term, "the native intelligentsia," or "the native intellectuals" as Fanon refers to them, is crucial in the forging of nationalist consciousness as such people have been empowered through the colonial education system. Anderson describes a secondary school in Dakar, West Africa during French colonialism for offering colonial education to the local boys who became nationalist leaders (112–113). Likewise Fanon asserts the importance of colonial education for the creation of "national consciousness" as the intellectuals will be able to represent the local masses and participate in the national agenda to fight against the colonial power. His main idea regarding the colonial educated intellectuals involves three stages of cultural empowerment. The latter two are the most important as the native intellectuals join with the masses to fight against the colonial power (179–182).

Both Anderson and Fanon's thesis corresponds with the idea that colonial education contributed directly to the rise in nationalist sentiments in the colonial dominions. Malaysia's case is not an exception and the examination of Amin's narrative in the succeeding section provides textual support to prove this claim. The fact that the pioneers of UMNO were also colonial educated – as depicted in the text – further affirms this statement. The nationalist agency

given to colonial educated elites in the text may also be used to elucidate the aforementioned deployment of third person narrator as he/she *represents the masses* by supposedly producing verbatim the multi-ethnic characters conversations with Ayu.

A major setback to nationalist representation is that, in the pursuit for homogeneity, it tends to overlook specificities. This becomes even more pronounced in a case like Malaysia where anti-colonial nationalism included members from different ethnic groups and classes, who at the time when the narrative was set, were distinguishable as immigrants and locals, and did not share a long common historical past with one another. Further complicating this situation were the differences that existed between the colonial educated elites and the non-colonial educated non-elite masses. This was the key concern of the Subaltern Studies scholars in the context of Indian nationalism, who having been influenced by the works of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and Michel Foucault, analysed the representations of nationalism. These scholars found that such representations were selective because they credited the contributions of certain elite quarters, where, the efforts of the masses were either neglected or insufficiently represented as the consciousness of the less privileged group, whom they called 'subalterns' (a term borrowed from Gramsci), was largely obscured.

One of the main proponents, Ranajit Guha, defines the term subalterns in his essay as those who were not part of the colonial elite such as "the lesser rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich peasants and upper-middle-class peasants" (44). Guha's essay concentrates on how Indian anti-colonial nationalism honoured the elites' consciousness and not the subalterns,' consequently tracing and attributing nationalism in Indian history with the colonial educated native intellectuals. His definition of subalternity which not only uses colonial education but also the Indian community's social strata (gentry, landlords and peasants) as a class category can be used to examine Amin's text because the ethnic diversity present amongst the people of Malaya can act as a divisive criterion in addition to the colonial education. In short, the textualisation given to the colonial educated de-colonising agents as opposed to the silencing of the non-colonial educated masses is observable through the representation given by both the narrator and Ayu. It also has to be mentioned that there are occurrences in the text when a voiced representation is given only to further cast the character to a position of marginality.

5. Collectivity versus Subalternity in *This End of the Rainbow*

In the narrative nationalism is both borrowed and different as it mainly depicts how through the empowerment provided by the colonial education, the founding figures of the nation were able to negotiate the terms for independence with the colonial government. The defining attributes of such founding figures are

mainly incorporated through the protagonist. In the following dialogue the main characteristic of a nationalist is made apparent:

> Ayu asked her parents to teach her "white people's language" so that she could tell the "white people" to stop taking other people's lands. "How come you never speak that language to me?"
> "We want you to be very good at our own language first," her mother said. "After that, you'll learn white people's language and know it very well." […] "Then you'll be strong. They'll listen when you tell them to give us back our land." (Amin 88)

The contextualisation of nationalism against the "white people" depicts the importance of being proficient in English and draws attention to colonial education. In other words, as the young Ayu naively constructs her otherness against the British colonisers, her parents assert that her identity will take its full form only when she assumes the strength that comes with colonial education. To gain her agency as the nationalist Ayu has to cross the borders of *both* English and Malay which is a crucial position of empowerment in the text. This is also the point when the appropriation of nationalism is narrativised as the values of the two linguistic identities are highlighted. Since the third person narrator is the one that is giving voiced representation to Ayu and her parents, it may be said that a point of convergence between these characters and the narrator emerges where the principal definition of the nationalist as a colonial educated Malay elite surfaces in the text. Such convergence between the personas of Ayu and the narrator occur throughout the story.

Nationalism can also be seen through the colonial educated Malay elites in the depiction of UMNO which from the helm of its founder, Dato Onn Jaafar, was passed to Tunku Abdul Rahman, a member of the Kedah royal family. Other than being an issue of class by birth (Onn Jaafar was a commoner as opposed to Tunku who was of royal blood), the role of UMNO towards anti-colonial movements, the readers are told, is one that is most inspiring. Amongst all of its efforts, to Ayu, the resistance UMNO showed against the formation of Malayan Union – introduced by the British government upon its return – was most noteworthy. She in fact describes these men as possessing "gentlemanly qualities" (Amin 94) attributing their civilised nature to the English education they had acquired. Yet as they have taken up the stride to negotiate the terms for self-government, these men still possessed the cultures and values of the colonised land. The representation given to UMNO and its members from Ayu's perspective displays another form of appropriation where a group solidarity based on nationalism is ascertained among the Malay elites.

Crucially, the fragmentation of the collective Malay nationalist identity occurs when the non-colonial educated non-elites are silenced in the narrative, calling into question how far did nationalist representation represent the masses? It is from this point onwards that exclusions are normalised in the text. The two ways in which the non-elites grace the pages of the narrative is through Husna's freedom fight

and Han's multiracial youth gathering in Johor Bahru. Husna's village folks are not given 'voice' in the text, however, the Malay men who gathered with suspicion towards Han are given emphasis as these lines show:

> A Malay man of about thirty said, "I remember him as a little boy. Same face. *Naughty*, just like my little brothers." Another young Malay man said, "The way he speaks, he has to be from here." A third added, "Sure it's him, *no need to look for birthmarks*." (Amin 126; emphasis mine)

The 'voices' of the nameless men who were trying to evaluate Han through his appearance can be interpreted as lacking in decorum as they expressed their feelings outwardly towards a stranger in a crowd consisting of unknown men and women. This may be described as an occurrence of subalternity as the nationalist representation by the narrator highlights the aggressiveness of the non-elites, and bring to mind the importance of Western culture and education as measures of civilising the uncivilised. To a large extent, such positioning of marginality demonstrates that class identity is far more crucial than the shared ethnic identity. Although these men are given voiced representations, they still lack individualisation as the narrator does not name them. Such representation displays narratorial divergence from the personas of the supplementary characters as the occurrence of fragmentation in the unified Malay identity is made visible.

Other than these men, another non-elite member that the narrator introduces is Ayu's uncle, Norhadi, who is Malay educated. The only conversation between him and Ayu takes place in the subsequent lines:

> "Are you happy to be going to university?" [Norhadi] asked Ayu.
> "Mixed feelings, uncle," Ayu confessed. "Sometimes I wonder, do I need to go to university to get an education?" […]
> "That's interesting," her uncle said. "Why do you ask yourself that question?"
> "The people I admire most didn't go to university. My parents, Nimmi's parents, Surmeet's parents. Writers like Kris Mas and Tongkat Warrant. Thinkers like you."
> "I would hardly call myself a thinker, Ayu," he said, smiling. "Often I feel the lack of thinking tools. Maybe that's one reason for going to university."
> "Uncle, I don't think you lack anything, except maybe self-confidence."
> "See? That's what a university degree can give," her uncle said, laughing. (Amin 108)

There are two paradoxical points to be noted here. First, though Ayu confesses that she admires her uncle who is not a university graduate, she does not outwardly express her admiration for the competency he had in the Malay language. The readers are informed in passing that Norhadi was involved with Amri, Ayu's father, in writing the English-Malay dictionary which completely stalled upon Amri's death. Second, contrary to the statement that she admired the people in her life who never

received a university education, she acknowledges the confidence it gives one echoing segregation based on colonial education and language. In doing so, Ayu excludes herself from the non-elite members such as her parents and uncle hence casting the latter three to the position of subalternity. By giving a voiced representation to Norhadi, the personas of Ayu and the narrator diverge. This point in the text shows that Ayu is the archetype of a nationalist and she has to be portrayed apart in order to demonstrate her individualised agency.

In looking at the non-colonial educated non-elite Chinese and Indians, Mr Lim (Ayu's childhood friend, Lin's father), as well as her friend, Nimmi's mother, Amma emerge for discussion. The question is, how does Ayu who is also a member of the colonial educated elite, represent these characters? Does Ayu's representation cast them to subalternity and more importantly, where does she place herself in relation to representing the two characters? Does the place from where Ayu represents them give her the legitimation of authority as the elite anti-colonial nationalist?

Mr Lim, we are told through Ayu's recollection, was a teacher at a Chinese school and the communication between Ayu's family and the Lims was limited due to the language barrier (the Lims mainly spoke in Chinese whereas Ayu's family spoke Malay). Nonetheless they managed to maintain a friendship until the Lims fled when the Japanese army arrived, resulting in the families losing contact altogether. Although the bonding between the two families is described through respective cultural celebrations like *Aidilfitri* and Chinese New Year, the silencing of Mr Lim's character makes one wonder if he was as important to Ayu's childhood as described by the narrator: "In the afternoon, Lin's father was home and spent the time with her" (Amin 36). During a crucial moment in the narrative, when the Japanese army had arrived in Malaya, Mr Lim's concern is presented through a reported (indirect) speech: "He thanked them [Ayu's parents for warning the Lims regarding the Japanese] but explained that his family's presence would only endanger them further" (Amin 39). The continuous silencing of Mr Lim and the representation of his 'voice' through the reported speech by Ayu shows that as a Chinese educated non-elite, Mr Lim has been placed as the subaltern. In addition, the place from which Ayu and the narrator represented Mr Lim, gave the two personas the authority as the legitimate members of the anti-colonial nationalist movement, a position that the Lims did not qualify for, as these lines describe:

> Lin and her parents never returned to their house. Like all the other houses, it had been cleaned out by looters, and the doors were wide open. The Chinese school on the hill, and the other schools too, had met with the same fate. […] The empty Chinese school building was taken over by the Japanese army. Even after the war, none of the students or teachers was seen anywhere. (Amin 40)

By portraying the Lims as those who *left* their home and the school, Ayu and the narrator take the position of those who *stayed*, thus making them the representa-

tives who had the legitimate power to cast the Lims as subalterns due to the latter's act of *leaving*. Mr Lim fled with his family and never returned to participate in the national struggle against colonialism. Furthermore, in a metaphoric sense, the emptiness of the Lims' house and the Chinese schools can be regarded as the Chinese-educated people's self-imposed exclusion from the bigger picture of nationalism as Ayu's remark asserts: "*Even after the war*, none of the students or teachers was seen anywhere" (emphasis mine). The Chinese educated people in the narrative presented through Mr Lim and his family, showed no traces of resistance, thus making them subalterns not only based on their Chinese language education, but also through their self-interested act of moving away from the national picture of Malaya against colonialism.

In the case of Malayalam and Tamil educated Amma, the narrator's observation through Ayu's lens can be analysed from the perspectives of class, language, race, and gender, all of which cast Amma to the position of a subaltern:

> [Nimmi's father] had a no-nonsense, impatient look about him. When he engaged Ayu in conversation about school and career, she was tongue-tied first, but after a while she felt the kindness in him and relaxed. […] In his home he was a king who felt fortunate in his queen; for besides being a wonderful wife and mother, she was a Malayalam scholar and had taught herself Tamil so well that he consulted her on points of language […]. Amma [who] had been reading Kalidas, her favourite in Malayalam literature, […] with Ayu's coming […] switched instantly to "earth mother." (Amin 26–27)

Firstly, in the context of class, the Malayalam and Tamil language educated woman can be seen as someone lacking the emancipatory values of progress and civilisation that come as a result of colonial education. These values are essential for the participation in the national resistance against the colonisers. Secondly, with reference to language, Amma's proficiency in Malayalam and Tamil kept her at a domestic level where the exercise of reading was kept at home, disallowing her from gaining agency as a nationalist. Amma moreover practised her migrant roots by learning Tamil and keeping in contact with her nativity through Indian literature; in doing so, she distances herself from the new land because it resonates with the motherland language and culture. Also, a gendered representation surfaces when Amma's character is made audible only in retrospect to Ayu's recollection of her husband. Such multiple levels of subalternity permanently silence Amma, the non-colonial educated non-elite.

The last character analysed in this paper is Ayu's mother, Husna. Unlike the others examined thus far Husna is not silenced or cast to subalternity; instead it is through her that Ayu's agency as nationalist reaches its full circle. This is because through Husna one may understand how the double personas (narrator and protagonist) trace a Malay woman's nationalist agency in discourses

like *This End of the Rainbow* through aspects such as appearance and articulation. Readers are told from the very beginning that Husna who worked as the supervisor of the Malay girls' school did not get her contract extended by the colonial government due to her involvement in the freedom movement. Husna's resistance makes her a powerful character especially when she continues to strive after her husband's death. In the description of Husna one can observe how she has been epitomised as representing the Malay identity in pre-independent Malaya:

> [L]ooking smart in her batik sarong with white *baju*, head-scarf and shoes and carrying a batik hold-all […]. A slim girl in blue *kurung* suit with matching scarf and shoes jumped out of the driver's seat, hugged Husna and opened the front passenger door for her. At the back of the car sat a big woman with a low bun, a plump one with short permed hair and a third, slightly thinner, who had the Johorean 'twelve o' clock bun' perched at the top of her head. They were going on a tour of villages all over the state to talk to the women there about independence: and, in Husna's case to sing. […] [Husna] had been the first woman to be seen driving a car in Johor Bahru. People in the streets had stared and pointed, shouting, "Betina gohed!"("A female driving!"). (Amin 122)

Husna maintained her Malay culture through the batik sarong and white *baju* attire when she left the house, choosing culture over comfort as she set off to travel around the state of Johor to sing about independence. Additionally she had her head-scarf on symbolising her Muslim identity. The young girl in blue who wore the *kurung* suit with a scarf can be seen as Husna's protégé; she opened the front passenger door and followed in Husna's footstep in retaining the Malay-Muslim identity when visiting people in the state.

Conversely, in the representation of the three women who were already seated in the car, a contrast in appearance can be observed: "At the back of the car sat a big woman with *a low bun*, a plump one with *short permed hair* and a third, slightly thinner, […] had the *Johorean 'twelve o' clock bun"*"(emphasis mine). These three women who shared a similar cause with Husna in trying to instil a nationalistic spirit among the peoples of Malaya failed to identify themselves with the Malay-Muslim identity as their fashionable hairdo, to an extent, represented western influence, or to say the least, singled them out from women like Husna and the girl in blue. Through Husna it can be said that racial and religious identities are important for the female agent who has taken it upon her to fight for the nationalistic cause. By describing Husna and her social appearance in detail the narrator forwards the notion that the female nationalist follow in the footsteps of pioneer women like Husna by wearing identifiable Malay attire and covering their hair. More importantly, in maintaining cultural and religious identities through appearance, Husna openly shows her position as a Malay nationalist thus symbolising to the younger generation like her daughter that it is better to display one's identity in one's

appearance than to hide it in order to fit in with the rest of the crowd. Similarly at the university in Singapore, where multi-ethnic students received education from the colonial education centre, Ayu insists on wearing her Malay attire, the *kurung* suit. So it can be said that the Malay-Muslim identity in the form of the female's attire is crucial in order to give her agency as the nationalist.

In addition to this, Husna's resistance can also be seen through her action in choosing to drive at a time when the womenfolk in Malaya were expected to stay home. Her choice to drive did not earn her popularity among the locals as can be seen in the phrase, "*Betina* gohed!," as the word "betina" implies a derogatory Malay term equivalent to the English word "bitch." Such remarks did not stop Husna from exercising her freedom to the fullest by driving around for her nationalistic cause until later in the narrative we are told that she stopped driving altogether due to an accident. A similar trend of independence can be seen in Ayu, albeit on a small scale, as she visits her friends in Johor using her own transport, the bicycle. This form of independence and emancipation that Husna embodied can be perceived as the Malay female's self-defined trait in order to fit into the mould of nationalism.

Conclusion

By forwarding a relational reading through the narrator, protagonist, and supplementary characters, this paper traces the de-limiting tendencies of a nationalist text that attempts to give a neutral representation of the masses. In *This End of the Rainbow* the nationalist is a colonial educated Malay elite who abides by the Islamic religious identity, highlighting the occurrence of ethno-nationalism. It also has to be noted that Malaysia's top-down pro-Malay identity as nationalist identity is supported through the narrativisation of a similar bottom-up hegemonic Malay agency in Amin's text. This proves the claim that Malays occupy the centre of the nation – insiders/*bumiputeras* – which accords them a sense of ownership and sovereignty. Malay group solidarity is not without problem as intra-ethnic divisions may exist to further complicate the norms of the national imagination.

It can also be said through the examination of the text that nationalism is an ambivalent and complex subject matter. This is why post-colonial theorists like Bhabha have based their arguments on the conceptual failure of nationalist discourses. The strength of such discourses nevertheless depends on the dynamics they possess when portraying nationalism as both borrowed and distinctive so that the influence of colonial education in the rise of nationalism is not superficially understood. The normalisation of exclusions in nationalist discourses may also be construed as a call for more inclusive writing strategy that addresses themes of de-territorialisation to befit the current wave of globalisation.

Notes

1 *Merdeka* is the Malay language equivalent for freedom. "*Merdeka* generation" refers to the group of people during the 1940s and 1950s in pre-independent Malaya involved in the nationalist movement against the British colonisers and are coincidentally the main characters of Amin's work. Malaya gained its independence in 1957. In 1963, Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore joined Malaya to become Malaysia; nevertheless, in 1965, Singapore left the federation and became a sovereign nation. Present-day Malaysia consists of West (Peninsula) Malaysia and East (Sabah and Sarawak in Borneo) Malaysia. Identity contestation is more widespread in West Malaysia as the early settlement of Chinese and Indian immigrants was concentrated within this region, hence creating an ethnically segregated society in comparison to the two eastern states in Borneo.

2 Amin is well known among the local literary circles in Malaysia as she was one of the pioneer writers who was bilingual but chose to write mainly in Malay to mark her anti-colonialist fervour. Amin however returned to writing in English in the 1970s through her newspaper columns and *This End Of The Rainbow* is her only fictional biography in English. For details, see Ganesan, "Constructions of national identity in contemporary Malaysian state narratives and life-writings in English," unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2014.

3 The term "Melayu" (Malay) has undergone various conceptual changes. For more information on the term and Malays as a group of people see Andaya and Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 2001; Kessler, "Archaism and modernity: Contemporary Malay political culture" *Fragmented vision: Culture and politics in contemporary Malaysia*, 1992, 133–157. Also, in Malaysia all Malays are Muslims as the Federal Constitution, Article 160, defines a Malay as a person who habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to the Malay customs, and professes Islam as his/her religion, see *Malaysian Federal Constitution*, 2010.

4 MCA and MIC were formed to safeguard the political, economic, and social interests of the Chinese and Indians in the country.

5 UMNO is still the major political party in the ruling coalition now known as *Barisan Nasional*.

6 The term has been used by pro-Malay nationalists with reference to theorists like Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. See Das, "An Interview with Datuk Abdullah" *Malay Dominance*, 1986, 63.

7 MLE is a small body of writings in Malaysia as there is a far greater corpus in the Malay language. MLE has suffered from slow growth as depicted by limited critical work done in the area. See *Malaysian Literature in English: A Critical Reader*, 2001.

8 For details, see "Exploring English Language Learning and Teaching in Malaysia" *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 2012, 35–51.

9 Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia, SPM, which was used to be known as Malaysian Certificate of Education, MCE, is equivalent to O-Levels.

10 The Home Ministry's official website lists a total of 1,532 "prohibited publications" ranging from Charles Darwin's translated Malay version of *The Origin of Species* to Karen Armstrong's Malay edition of *Islam: A Short History*. The English editions of both books are available in the bookstores. See the Home Ministry's website at http://www.kdn.gov.my/index.php/en/2012-08-08-00-54-58/penerbitan-larangan.

11 Some of the colonial writers were Hugh Clifford, Richard Winstedt, and Frank Swettenham. For a good account of writings in colonial Malaya that includes works by expatriates, see Yap, *A Brief Critical Survey of Prose Writings*, 1971.

12 In his article, "A Man and an Island: Gender and Nation in Lee Kuan Yew's the Singapore Story," Holden explains the terms "political biography" and "national autobiographies" and situates the two with the making of the nation by drawing reference to Prime Minister Lee's biography. See *Biography*, Vol. 24. 2 (2001): 401–424.

13 See *Reading Autobiography* (2001) that includes varying terminologies to examine the dynamics of life-writing and also provides a good explanation on the development of the genre.

14 Amin's interview following the book's publication evidences that the story is based on her life. See Yaakub, "Dunia Kreatif Khalidah Adibah Amin" (16 November 2006) *Berita Harian*.

15 Postcolonial complexity refers to the temporal and spatial mix and blend in literary texts that is different from the clear, linear structure of life-writing that has western roots. See Moore-Gilbert "A Concern Peculiar to Western Man? Postcolonial Reconsiderations of Autobiography as Genre" *Postcolonial Poetics* (2011): 91–108.

16 Moore-Gilbert's monograph, *Postcolonial Life-Writing* (2009), forwards three ways in which a female writer's work can be read: relational, embodied, and de-centred. A relational reading may unlock the complexity of the postcolonial female writer such as Amin and her authorial intention as it examines the existence of numerous personas in the text.

17 Voiced representation here refers to the presence of speech/dialogue. Voiceless representation or silencing is absence of speech. At times voiced representation is given to silence the characters altogether.

18 Although this paper mainly discusses the roots of nation-state through a brief summary of Anderson's work, many works have been done to trace the models on which nations are based, see for example Seton-Watson's *Nations and States: An Inquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*

(1977); Breuilly's "Introduction: Concepts, Approaches, Theories" *The Oxford Handbook of The History of Nationalism* (2013): 1–14.

19 Anderson makes this claim with reference to Spanish-speaking South and Central American creole communities.

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Islamophobia in Early and Contemporary America: Reproducing Myths in *Slaves in Algiers* (1794) and *Argo* (2012)

Abstract

This paper examines the representational practices in Susanna Haswell Rowson's melodramatic comedy *Slaves of Algiers, or, A struggle for Freedom* (1794) and Ben Affleck's thriller movie *Argo* (2012) claiming that both works, although historically distant, employ a similar repertoire of representations which repeat myths and stereotypes about the Islamic culture and people. Deploying Stuart Hall's theory of representation and drawing on the historical and cultural contexts of the two works, the paper puts forward the argument that Islamophobia is a media-made myth which comes to the foreground in times of western-Islamic conflicts and which is regenerated through western xenophobic language and images that reiterate established cultural presuppositions.

In his classical treatise *De Anima* [*On the Soul*], Aristotle argues that people depend on their imagination to make sense of the world because "the soul never thinks (*noein*) without an image" (Gendlin 6–7). This understanding of the image and its role in shaping humans' thoughts is very timely in the modern age, as the world is increasingly represented through a discourse of aural-visual forms that constitute sign systems and saturate peoples' relationships . It is through images that meaning is constructed and representation is maintained. This paper investigates the representational practices and reproduction of Islamophobia in early and contemporary America as reflected in Susanna Haswell Rowson's melodrama *Slaves in Algiers, or, A struggle for Freedom* (1794) and Ben Affleck's thriller movie *Argo* (2012). I put forward the claim that Islamophobia, although a recently coined term, was a phenomenon encountered in early America. The phenomenon is recurrently circulated through a representational regime that is more mythical than real. The two works selected for analysis share many elements despite their historical distance. Both take place in transatlantic Muslim lands and follow the experiences of American citizens seized by Muslim captors. The representations in both cases are given from the American slaves' points of view. The two works project similar images of

Muslims that help construct and sustain American cultural and political imperialism in the Islamic world. Furthermore, the genres of writing to which both works belong (*Slaves in Algiers* is melodramatic comedy and *Argo* is a political thriller) provide a room for exaggerating, stereotyping, and inciting sensational emotions. My analysis will depend primarily on Stuart Hall's theory of representation and the cultural and historical contexts of the two works.

1. Islamophobia: Recycling a Myth

Islamophobia is defined as a "dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force" ("Islamophobia"). Robin Richardson states that the first appearance of the term was in French in a 1910 article titled *La Politique Musulmane dans L'Afrique Occidentale Française* by Alain Quellien, and the second-recorded usage of the word goes to an article published in the American journal *Insight* on February 4, 1991, that referred to the hostility of the Soviet Union to its Muslim citizens. The coinage of the term, however, remains a vexed question. Claire Berlinski, echoing the views of a considerable number of western scholars, claims that the term is a neologism that was deliberately coined by a Muslim Brotherhood organization called the International Institute for Islam in order to "dismiss your concerns about what are obviously very real pathologies in the Islamic world." Berlinski's interpretation of the neologistic nature of Islamophobia is in itself Islamophobic. She ascribes atrocities and abomination to the Islamic world and ignores all possibilities of western anti-Islamism. Countering Berlinski's definition, Said Gull states that Islamophobia is "unnecessary and groundless culture and fear against Muslims and Islam." Gull traces this anti-Islamic anxiety back to the crusades and Andalusia collapse times when most of the infighting between Muslim and Christian inhabitants were based on fear and mutual distrust. Apart from this intellectual controversy over the origin of the term, it is obvious that Islamophobia is a reality today. In practice, Islam is often represented in western media as a source of terrorism and chaos and a threat to western civilization. In an article entitled "Islamophobia," Dalal Alshammari lists a number of "unquestioned perceptions" (177) about Islam that are predominantly popular in western culture and media. She writes:

- The Islam Religion portrays a monolithic culture and it is relentless to accept emerging realities in the society.
- Islamic religion has completely different values in comparison with other faiths and cultures.
- Islam is considered inferior as perceived by the west. It is deemed to have barbarism traits, archaic, and relatively irrational.
- Islam religion supports various acts of terrorism and general violence in the society.
- Islamic religion is a violent ideology in the political arena. (177)

The reproduction and absorption of these incontrovertible perceptions of Islam raised by Alshammari falls within what Stuart Hall terms as "conceptual maps" (1997d, 10). To paraphrase Hall, conceptual maps are presuppositions inculcated in a particular culture and make people think, behave, feel, and interpret the world in similar ways. Conceptual maps construct chains of equivalences between things (people, objects, thoughts, other cultures, etc.) and meanings, which are encoded into sets of signs that are expressed and interpreted through language. The word language for Hall is not restricted only to the language we write and speak, it is expanded to include various cultural objects. Hall elaborates:

> By language […] I mean a very wide range of things – I mean the language that we speak and the language that we write, I mean electronic languages, digital languages, languages communicated by musical instrument, languages communicated by facial gesture, languages communicated by facial expression, the use of the body to communicate meaning, the use of clothes to express meaning – anything in the sense in which I'm talking about can be a language. (1997d, 11)

Hall's reading of signs depends on two approaches: the traditional semiotic approach of Saussure and Barthes, who viewed signs as "vehicles of meaning in culture" and Foucault's discursive approach which puts emphasis on "the *effects* and *consequences* of representation – its 'politics'" (1997a, 6). Meaning, for Hall, is not fixed. It is contextual, changeable, and "connected in more intimate ways with social practices and questions of power" (1997c, 42). The only way to fix meaning is to have power over representation and to manipulate the production of language in the cultural sense of the word. Power, Hall insists, is intended to "close language, close meaning, to stop the flow" (1997c, 19).

The construction and reproduction of Islamophobia is an exercise of social power and a practice of meaning sustenance. In the United States, the practice is as old as the early beginnings of the nation. America inherited the old western anti-Islamism and presented it in sets of images and through representational practices that often arise in times of political and ideological conflict with the Islamic world. One of the earliest encounters between America and the Islamic world was between 1801 and 1805 when America had its first overseas war with Tripoli, historically known as the Tripolitan War. By the turn of the eighteenth century, what was called "the Barbary States" of Algiers, Tunis, Morocco, and Tripoli had the tradition of receiving annual tributes from the neighbouring European countries in order to allow them to safely pass the Mediterranean waters. After the American Revolution, America also had to pay the tribute to guarantee American sailors a peaceful voyage across the Mediterranean Sea. In order to enforce the newly formed country to follow the tradition of the Europeans, the Barbary States' corsairs regularly kidnapped American sailors for ransom and annual tributes. This practice caused outrage against the transatlantic Muslims and aroused a sense of zealous nationalism

in sympathy for the imprisoned countrymen. Early American literary and artistic arenas reflected this public concern with the hostage crisis. Michel Paul Baepler explains:

> The Barbary conflict became part of the American public spectacle: wax museums exhibited Barbary scenes, circuses held benefit performances for ransomed captives, the 'machinery in transparency' – an early form of American film – projected Barbary displays. In addition to the published historical accounts of slavery in North Africa, the Barbary captivity topos appeared in at least four early American novels, nine early plays, ten dime novels, and almost a dozen Hollywood movies. (220–221)

Theatre was an ideal arena for staging anti-Islamic sentiments and raising patriotic consciousness for the war cause because of its dependence on performance and images. *Slaves in Algiers* was first performed in 1794 on the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia shortly before the Tripolitan war and with the background of the hostage crises of the 1790s when more than 100 American sailors were captured by the Barbary States. It was one of the earliest works that reproduced Islamophobia in early America through xenophobic language encoded into sets of signs and images. The play was Rowson's "first successful effort as a dramatist" (Richards 143) after her American first best-selling novel *Charlotte, A Tale of Truth* (1791).

When we first encounter Muslims in *Slaves in Algiers*, we see them stereotypically turbaned or head-covered, whiskered, and robed. They are also presented as ruthless and anti-democratic. Muley Moloc, the dey of Algiers, is a cruel and lascivious ruler who imprisons honest American men and harasses virtuous American women. He is an embodiment of the autocratic Muslim ruler with lecherous desires and vengeful spirit. Moloc appears in few scenes in the play, but he makes a strong presence through the indirect speeches and descriptions of him given by his victims. His repulsive personality is established from the very beginning of the play by one of his harem, Fetnah, who feels agony and distress at being his favourite woman: "He is old and ugly; then he wears such tremendous whiskers; and when he makes love, he looks so grave and stately, that I declare, if it was not for fear of his huge seymetar, I shou'd burst out a laughing in his face" (Rowson 14). Moloc is ridiculed and reduced to a stupid ruler who often draws his sword against his concubines when they refuse his love and sensual moves. Fredrick, an American slave in the play, calls him "Mr. Whisker" (43) and Henry, another American slave, refers to him as the "impotent vain boaster" (64). The dey's right-hand man, Mustapha, looks no less ugly and cruel than the dey. Mustapha is described as an "ugly thing" who, when bowing, "his long, hooked nose" almost touches the toe of his slipper (14). Ben Hassan, one of the dey's men, is a renegade who betrays his captives and the dey himself and always speaks in a comic accent.

The derogating stereotypes of Muslims portrayed by Rowson and performed in front of ardent American audiences in 1794 were not invented by the playwright

herself. Rowson drew on a long history of representation and a rich repository of stereotypes that have been "familiar and formulaic" (Richards 144) to her audiences. It was not difficult for Rowson to arouse antipathy against the Muslim captors in North Africa. All she had to do was to recall historical concepts and images of vicious Muslims and to present them through an anti-Islamic rhetoric. Tracing the literary and theatrical resources of *Slaves in Algiers*, Richards notes that the play borrows more from earlier plays with stock Islamic characters than from events during the eighteenth century. He refers to British playwright Aaron Hill's *Zara*, among others, to be one of the strongest influences on the depiction of the Muslim stereotypes in Rowson's play. *Zara*, a translation of French playwright Voltaire's *Zaire,* was written almost six decades before *Slaves in Algiers* and deals with a similar theme of western captivity in the exotic Islamic world (144–145). This interrelation between British, French, and American texts generated a complex network of intertextual meanings and conceptual maps that mystified Islamic culture and people.

Argo is part of another cycle in the history of Islamophobia. The movie recaptures Islamophobia in a contemporary social and political context. It is based on the true life story (though there are many historical inaccuracies in the movie) of the hostage crisis of the 1979 when about 52 Americans were held captives at the American embassy in Tehran for 444 days after Iranian students took over the embassy during the Iranian Revolution. The movie follows the story of six American diplomats, who managed to escape the embassy and hide in the Canadian ambassador's house for three months before a CIA officer devised a plan of directing a fake movie entitled *Argo* in order to release the hidden diplomats under the cover of a Canadian film crew. *Argo* was produced in 2012 in the context of political tensions between the U.S. and Iran. By 2012, American-Iranian conflict over the Iranian nuclear program reached its peak as America continued its cyberwar through developing viruses that attacked computers in Iranian nuclear labs. David Sanger reported the following in his 2012 article for the *New York Times*: "From his first months in office, President Obama secretly ordered increasingly sophisticated attacks on the computer systems that run Iran's main nuclear enrichment facilities, significantly expanding America's first sustained use of cyberweapons, according to participants in the program." The U.S. also imposed economic and military sanctions against Iran, and threats of waging war against the Muslim country frequently appeared in the news. Within such a complicated political context, a long history of Islamophobia was recalled and reproduced in *Argo* in order to mark Iran as an enemy. The images of Iranians presented in the movie are decoded by viewers with "conceptual maps" in mind and through old representational practices similar to those employed in *Slaves in Algiers*.

According to the meanings foregrounded in *Argo* and communicated through anti-Islamic language, Iran is a country of religious fanatics, vicious militants, and ruthless politicians. The rioting Iranians in front of the American embassy

displayed at the very beginning of the movie look similar to the dey and Mustapha in Rowson's play. The rioters are either men with long whiskers carrying guns, knives, and photos of turbaned long-bearded Ayatollah Khomeini, or women veiled in black. In the movie the American television repeatedly broadcasts shocking scenes of American hostages sleeping in dungeon-like rooms in Iran, while armoured revolutionary guards pose their guns at their heads. Radio channels speak the news that Iranian rioters at the embassy "will kill them [the hostages] all and blow up the embassy" (*Argo*). American CIA officers express their fear that the six American employees who escape the embassy could be subject to 74 leashes by the revolutionary guards if they are caught. One officer mentions that the American diplomats are "standing room only for beheading in the square" (*Argo*).When CIA agent Mendez arrives in Iran to rescue the six escapees, he is shocked by the inhumanity of Iranian Muslims at Mehrabad airport, where guards and turbaned bearded men drag people around for investigation. In Tehran streets, malicious Iranian mobs are everywhere, women draped in black clothes tour the city in Jeep cars holding gun machines, and bodies of traitors are hung on construction cranes in public as if it is a daily ritual. Iranians in the movie are reduced and simplified to look homogeneously mindless, vile, and fanatical. Their Farsi chanting is purposefully given without subtitles to stress their distance from western culture and conformity to a despotic Islamic ideology. In his review of the movie, Fouad Pervez points out that *Argo* "falls into the common Hollywood trap of making Muslims into a monolithic Green Menace" when it ignores the liberal and secular elements that were parts of the Iranian revolutionary coalition against the Shah regime.

The representation of the Islamic world in *Argo* and *Slaves in Algiers* is a product of powerful racist rhetoric. Islamic cultural objects are given a political significance that goes beyond their literal meaning. This anti-Islamic representation could be read within the context of Roland Barthes' semiotics, which emphasizes the idea of secondary significance. Departing from Saussure's signification process system that interprets signs linguistically, Barthes links signs to myths stressing that the relationship between the signifier and the signified conceals reality and creates myths-based ideology. Barthes reads the sign as signifying the feelings, concepts, and thoughts of a certain group. He explains:

> Our press, our films, our theatre, our pulp literature, our rituals, our justice, our diplomacy, our conversations, our remarks about the weather, a murder trial, a touching wedding, the cooking we dream of, the garments we wear, everything, in everyday life, is dependent on the representation which the bourgeoisie *has and makes us have* of the relations between man and the world. (139)

Based on Barthes' semiotics theory, Islamic cultural objects are sometimes given mythic attributes beyond their actual signification. When relationships and mean-

ings are drawn through narratives of dominance and cultural extremism, a cultural object like a headscarf transforms its signification from piety, when donned by a nun for example, into phobia when worn by a Muslim. The same object acquires two different meanings that blur the boundaries between reality and myth.

2. Islamophobia and the Representation of Difference

The vilification of Islam in *Slaves in Algiers* and *Argo* encapsulates a verification of American culture and politics. Rowson and Affleck similarly accentuate difference between intolerant Muslims and liberal Americans in their works in order to entice public support for America's political ventures in the Islamic world. In his article "The Spectacle of the Other," Hall stresses that the representation of difference is a very complicated business since it "engages feelings, attitudes and emotions and it mobilizes fears and anxieties in the viewer, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple, common sense way" (226). Hall refers to Jacque Derrida's argument that "there is always a relation of power between the poles of a binary opposition" (235). The ideological polarization of the Islamic system and American democracy could be evidently seen in the genres to which *Slaves in Algiers* and *Argo* belong. *Slaves in Algiers* is a melodramatic comedy that aroused the Americans' hostility against North African Muslim corsairs in the late eighteenth century, and *Argo* is a political thriller that patriotically served the Americans' anger against Iran in 2012. I would agree with film scholar Linda Williams who argues that melodrama "has been the norm, rather than the exception, of American cinema" (qtd. in Kelleter 8). Williams' argument is more accurate when applied to political thrillers, which borrow from the classical American melodrama the tendency to depict struggles between good and evil and to give dominance to the American ideology over the depicted other, especially in times of conflict. Hollywood is known for its various productions that berated Russians during the Cold War era and vilified Muslims in moments of political crises or cultural clashes (Jack Shahin's *Reel Bad Arabs* is an engaging book on this topic). Such melodramas and political thrillers inevitably end with the good American overcoming the vile 'Other.'

In his book *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism*, Timothy Marr argues that Islam was politically used in colonial and early America as an antithesis to the emerging political system in the country. Islamic religion and government were both put in contrast to American Christianity and Republican government in order to establish the superiority of American values. Marr adds:

> The Islamic orient was conceived by many Americans as a vicious realm of human bondage, unstable tyranny, illicit sensuality, and selfish luxury that symbolized the dangerous forces that threatened their fledgling political rights and freedoms. The

> orientalist construction of Islam as a cultural enemy maligned as both antidemocratic and antichristian, served as an important oppositional icon in terms of which Americans of diverse dimensional, ethnic, and partisan persuasions united in defining Republican identities from the nation's founding through the Jacksonian era. (21)

This religious and political opposition serves two main goals in early America: the exclusion of Muslims in the formation of American national and political identity, and the justification of America's rising imperialist ambitions in the Islamic world. Muslims, along with Jews and Catholics, were not welcome in the emerging United States of America which insisted on maintaining a WASP identity. Claims for embracing other religions and races in the cultural and political fabric of the country were often met with rejection. When President Thomas Jefferson, for instance, called for the inclusion of Muslims and Jews in the American national identity, he was publicly accused of secretly being Muslim (Milani). Ironically, the Republicans' attempt to establish a liberal country was not liberal. To form a white Christian national identity and still claim democracy, the Republicans diverted the peoples' attention to North Africa where the different and threatening Muslim lived. Locating oppressive Muslims in North Africa defined a non-American transatlantic Muslim identity and justified the Republicans' politics of exclusion.

The American slaves in Rowson's play define their democratic values in opposition to the selfishness and absolutism of their Moorish captors. Muley Moloc's sensual desires towards Olivia are set against the virtuousness of the American captive. When Olivia refuses to be one of his concubines and tries to help the captives escape his bondage, he becomes very intolerant and orders to "devise each means of torture; let them linger – months, years, ages, in their misery" (64). In contrast to this revengeful spirit, the American captives show forgiveness and mercy when they finally take the dey into custody. They refuse to enslave or torture him because they are "free men" (73). Ben Hassan, a Jew who converted to Islam, is subject to two forms of racial and religious intolerance: Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. He was a Jew cheating the British in London's streets by selling rosin instead of wax. When stalked by the British, he converted to Islam to captivate and sell white slaves. Hassan's deceitfulness originating from his religious backgrounds evinces lack of virtue and morality and distances him from the American Christian virtues. Though doubly paid by Rebecca's relatives and friends to grant her freedom, he keeps Rebecca in slavery claiming he still awaits her ransom money. Ben Hassan approaches Rebecca for marriage because "our law gives us great many wives. […] our law gives us liberty in love; you are an American and you must love liberty" (21). Ben Hassan's subversion of the word "liberty" establishes an anti-American figure and legitimizes the repudiation of non-Christians, whether Muslims or Jews, from American national and political structure. For Rebecca, Ben Hassan's anti-Republican polygamous rhetoric denigrates the very meaning of the word liberty as an American concept: "Hold, Hassan; prostitute not the sacred word by applying

it to licentiousness; the sons and daughters of liberty, take justice, truth, and mercy, for their leaders, when they list under her glorious banners" (21). Discovering that Ben Hassan lies about the ransom, Rebecca offers forgiveness rather than seeks revenge because of her American liberal ideals: "Hassan, you have dealt unjustly by me, but I forgive you – for while my own heart o'erflows with gratitude for this unexpected blessing, I will wish every human being as happy as I am this moment" (59). The failure of Moloc-Oliva and Ben Hassan-Rebecca's marriages confirms the incompatibility of Muslims, Jews, and American democratic ideals. Together, Moloc and Ben Hassan serve both as male figures against whom white women claim the right for inclusion in American political identity, and racial figures whose difference establishes "the fixed whiteness of American identity" (Dillon 417). Rowson tries to reframe the 'male white free' identity of the nation to include females and to concurrently exclude non-Christians.

America's emerging imperialist ambitions in the Islamic world are central references in *Slaves in Algiers*. The dominance of Christian values and the melodramatic reinstatement of order by the end of the play can be explained with reference to what Marr terms as "imperialism of virtue" (35). The play ends with the reunion of the western characters and the overthrow of Muslims. The Muslim masters turn into captives and the American slaves turn into masters. Like in a typical melodrama, the good characters reunite after overcoming evil. Olivia finds her imprisoned father, her lover Henry, and her son Augustus. Rebecca and her imprisoned husband Constant are finally together after discovering that Rebecca is their daughter. The dey and Ben Hassan end up captives in the hands of the Americans. More significantly, the American republican ideals defeat the Islamic ideology. The dey, desirous to redeem himself, pleads them to teach him how to do right: "I fear from following the steps of my ancestors, I have greatly erred: teach me then, you who so well know how to practice what is right, how to amend my faults" (74). The last speech given by Olivia echoes the play's premise that American values will spread all over the world: "Long, long, may that prosperity continue – may Freedom spread her benign influence thro' every nation, till the bright Eagle, united with the dove and olive-branch, waves high, the acknowledged standard of the world" (75). Henry shares the same prospect that "the warlike Eagle extends his glittering pinions in the sunshine of prosperity" (74). The defeat of the Islamic despotic system and the colonization of the Islamic world are presented to be crucial to the vitalization of American democracy.

In *Argo*, a similar representation of difference is deployed to reproduce the dichotomy of tyrant Muslims and democratic Americans. The images of Muslims, indistinguishable from each other, rioting in front of the American embassy in Tehran are contrasted with decent-looking Americans inside the embassy. While the outraged rioters are trying to capture the American diplomats in the embassy, a Marine sergeant at the visa section asks everybody to evacuate but he stresses that Iranian applicants must leave first to save their lives. A Marine captain reminds

his soldiers not to shoot at the protesters and to use tear gas as their last resort. Insisting on saving the lives of the Americans and calming down the protesters, the captain decides to go out and talk to the angry Iranians who get him harshly blindfolded. The chaos in Iran reflected in the sound of gunshots and the incomprehensible Farsi chanting is put in contrast to the beautiful scenes of Washington DC. In the first scenes of the movie, the camera displays narrow Iranian streets packed with angry fanatics. When the action moves to the U.S., a bird's-eye view of Washington DC shows its beautiful streets coloured with yellow ribbons made by American citizens wishing for the safe return of the captives in Iran. This contrast creates feelings of fear over the loss of American liberty, beauty, and humanity at the hands of barbaric Muslims in the Middle East. These Islamophobic sentiments incite Lester, the famous American producer in the movie, to accept the mission of producing a CIA fake movie. It is very ironic that the CIA agent had the idea of a fake science fiction movie that takes place in a bizarre exotic setting after he had watched the 1981 *Planet of the Apes* movie. By analogy, Iran is such a bizarre place which could serve as an ape city inhabited by savage Muslims.

The predominance of American values over Islamic ideologies is also melodramatically stressed by the end of *Argo*. The sophistication and efficiency of the American agent and the escapees overcome the primitive violence of the Iranian revolutionary guards. At Tehran Mehrabad airport, the American diplomats are stopped by the Iranian militant guards for more investigation. The diplomats manage to deceive the Iranians and walk safely to the plane while the guards are ironically shown reading the sketch of the fake movie left behind by the Americans. The desperate defeat of the guards is highlighted near the end of the film when they realize their fault and try in vain to reach the plane before its taking off. This final chase is entirely fictional. Writing the original story for *Wired* magazine, Joshuah Bearman confirms that the flight was in the early morning and there was little military presence at Mehrabad airport. The American diplomats and the CIA agent found their way out of Tehran very smoothly. Adding a fictional chase scene to the movie helps to rejuvenate the film's main premise of the Americans' inevitable victory over vicious Muslims, and to restore the order of American masters and Muslim losers. Like Olivia, the American sacrificial heroine in *Slaves in Algiers* who unites with her family by the end of the play, Tony Mendez returns to his wife and son after successfully accomplishing his mission in Iran. In a very emotional scene, his wife forgives him and meets him with tears and a hug of reunion while the waving American flag makes the background of the scene. The American family unity is finally restored after the anti-American danger is overwhelmed. American values eventually prevail. *Argo*, as Larry Durkay concludes, is more than an entertaining story. When awarded Oscars for Best Motion Picture of the Year, Best Writing, Adapted Screenplay, and Best Achievement in Film Editing, the prize was actually given to "Islamophobia" (Durkay).

3. Islamophobic Muslims: One of Their Own Bore Witness

Islamophobia is given more validity in *Slaves in Algiers* and *Argo* through the portrayal of Islamophobic Muslims who are introduced to be intimidated by their own faith. Islamophobic Muslims show bias against Islamic ideologies and preference for American values and, thereby, they sanction the western representation of Islam. In the aftermath of 9/11, President George W. Bush divided the Islamic world into two categories: The good Muslims who supported the American war on terror, and the bad Muslims who defied America and criticized its transnational wars against terrorism. In his provocative book *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim,* Mahmoud Mamdani delves deep into the history of this categorization and argues that "judgments of 'good' and 'bad' refer to Islamic political identities, not to cultural or religious ones" (15). While both Bush and Mamdani give a political nature to Muslims' profiling, a close scrutiny of the depiction of Muslim characters in *Slaves in Algiers* and *Argo* reveals that the cultural, the religious, and the political are all merged when the Muslim identity is concerned. It also reveals that the categorization is as old as the beginning of America. It is striking, for example, to observe that there are no anti-American good Muslims or pro-American bad Muslims in *Slaves in Algiers* and *Argo*. To be good is to adopt American values and support American causes. To be bad is to do otherwise. This categorization of good and bad Muslims falls within the binary nature of the stereotype which is elaborated by Hall, who writes:

> People who are in any way significantly different from the majority – 'them' rather that 'us' – are frequently exposed to this *binary* form of representation. They seem to be represented through sharply opposed, polarized, binary extremes – good/bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling-because-different/compelling-because-strange-and-exotic. And they are often required to be *both things at the same time!* (1997b, 229)

In *Slaves in Algiers,* the pro-American good Muslims are given human faces and made overly appealing because they embrace Christian values. The good Muslims are in political alliance with the Christian captives and express antipathy to/towards their fellow Muslims. Zoriana, the dey's daughter, detests her father and tries to help the captives escape their bondage because she is "a Christian in […] heart" (28). Fetnah, Ben Hassan's daughter, is another Islamophobic good Muslim, who has an aversion to the manners of the "Moorish religion" (16), which encourages having "a great many wives at a time" (16). Unlike her father who speaks in heavily accented English, Fetnah is presented to be speaking in sound American English, which makes her look more human than her evil Muslim father. Fetnah was taught by an American captive woman who "came from that land, where virtue in either sex is the only mark of superiority. – She was an American" (17). She wishes to leave the Muslims' "land of captivity" to "the regions of peace and liberty" (47)

because she is fed up with her life at the dey's palace which is inhabited by abhorrent Muslim creatures. The only hope left for Fetnah is to escape to America after marrying a Christian lover. While wandering in the dey's palace garden, she muses:

> If I am forced to remain here much longer, I shall fret myself as old and as ugly as Mustapha. That's no matter, there's nobody here to look at one, but great, black, goggle-ey'd creatures, that are posted here and there to watch us. And when one speaks to them, they shake their frightful heads, and make such a horrid noise – lord, I wish I could run away, but that's impossible; there is no getting over these nasty high walls. I do wish some dear, sweet, Christian man, would fall in love with me, break open the garden gates, and carry me off. […] And take me to that charming place, where there are no bolts and bars; no mutes and guards; no bowstrings and seymetars. (38)

In *Argo*, there is a similar example of the good Muslim stereotype represented in Sahar, the Canadian ambassador's housemaid. Unlike other Muslims in the movie, Sahar is given a name, a character, and a western look. She wears western clothes without a headscarf inside the Canadian ambassador's house and colourful clothes in public (all other Iranian women are presented cloaked in black). Also, her Persian language is subtitled and made comprehensible to western audiences. In one scene, Sahar hides frightened behind her windows in order to escape the sight of revolutionary guards in an alley shooting an Iranian civilian who seems to be anti-Khomeini. When Sahar is approached by the revolutionary guards at the gate of the Canadian house and asked about the ambassadors' guests, she deceives the guards claiming the guests arrived only two days ago and that "everyone in this house is a friend of Iran" (*Argo*). Before the CIA agent Mendez and the American diplomats leave for the airport to escape from Iran, he looks very worried about Sahar and feels relieved only when he knows that she is now on a bus and will be safe. By the end of the movie, Sahar appears at the airport safely leaving Iran to go to another safer place; ironically the neighbouring Republic of Iraq which was an American ally at that time. Evelyn Alsultany terms the depiction of good Muslims in anti-Islamist movies as "simplified complex representations." She argues:

> For example, if a television show or movie is focused on terrorism perpetrated by Arabs or Muslims, then to defuse the stereotype, the production team typically includes some kind of positive representation of an Arab or Muslim, usually a patriotic U.S. citizen or innocent victim of hate crimes. I argue that while this is certainly an improvement over past representations of one-dimensional villains, it is far from ideal since such representations often seem gratuitous, thrown in to appease Arab and Muslim watchdog groups such as CAIR and MPAC as well as those of us who are sick and tired of the same old stereotypes.

Alsultany's argument seems erroneous as the representation of the good Muslim is not meant to defuse the stereotype and to avoid Muslims' criticism. Conversely, the good Muslims are presented as witnesses from within, who prove that Islamophobia is a reality since they bore witness to it. The good Muslims often unite with western powers to eradicate an Islamic danger. In *Slaves in Algiers*, Zoriana and Fetnah unite with Sebastian, a Spanish captive, to rescue the American prisoners. In *Argo*, the American escapees are assisted by Sahar and the Canadian ambassador who helps issue them Canadian passports so that they can escape from Iran. The good Muslim in both *Slaves in Algiers* and *Argo* is integral to the making of the stereotype and the reproduction of Islamophobia. Interestingly, a good Muslim housemaid in *Argo* is historically inaccurate. Comparing the movie to the original story published in *Wired, New Yorker* reviewer Nicholas Thompson notes that "there wasn't a housekeeper tempted to turn the refugees in, though the guests did worry about a gardener." Thompson calls these alterations "historical embroidery," but they are segments of the stereotype which keep it alive, unchanged, simplified, and fixed.

Conclusion

Slaves in Algiers and *Argo* reflect parallel images of Muslims, which could be read within the context of intertextuality. Although *Argo* was produced almost 200 years after *Slaves in Algiers*, the signs, language, and representational practices employed in both works are very similar and serve to stir a sense of fear and denigration of the spatially different Muslim. These Islamophobic attitudes are constructed through anti-Islamic rhetoric that exaggerates Muslims' violence, especially in times of conflict in the Middle East. Islamophobia is a type of racism that divides the world into civilized people and savages, and provides moral and ethical veneers for cultural, political, and military interference in the Islamic world. Based on Aristotle's argument that people think in images, and Hall's theory that the media is responsible for encoding meanings within signs, western viewers are left with fewer other options than consuming Islamophobia as a reality. People like Muley Moloc and the revolutionary guards become sole representatives of Muslims, while tolerant moderate Muslims who constitute the majority of the Islamic world are often neglected by the western media . These representations have many repercussions in the contemporary world, as the media frames Muslims in images of Al Qaeda and ISIS terrorists and reproduces a stock of tyrannous Muslim stereotypes. Ironically enough, ISIS terrorists themselves make use of the Hollywoodish stereotypical images of Muslims to spread fear around the world. Wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Libya are rationalized as parts of the white man's burden to colonize the savages in order to civilize them. Islamophobia has always been a tool for imperialist expansion and will continue to exist as long as the world is defined and represented through power, authority, dominance, and cultural extremism.

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‘Living in a house without mirrors’: Poetry’s Cachet and Student Engagement

Abstract

This article examines the contentious proposition that poetry has for the past few decades been experiencing a crisis, especially when it comes to student engagement. By means of the results of a study conducted in an English as a second language context, it explores teachers’ and students’ beliefs, attitudes and practices in relation to poetry. This article shows that the very discourse used to talk about poetry is a direct reflection of how much cachet it is ascribed in the classroom. It questions whether this inflation of cachet is responsible for the fact that poetry is not perceived as a genre that teachers and students opt to read for personal pleasure.

Students’ engagement with a literary text seems to be one of the most desirable objectives of literature teaching. In fact, it is claimed that “The key to active, involved reading of literature is engagement with a text” (Beach, Appleman, Hynds, and Wilhelm 170). However, a number of writers on literary education have deemed young people’s engagement with literature in general and poetry in particular to be in trouble. Despite the fact that this situation has been a cause for concern for a number of decades, it currently seems to be even more pronounced and is considered to be symptomatic of the downtrend that is being experienced by the humanities in education as well as in contemporary society as a whole. This is especially pertinent for the small Mediterranean island of Malta, where the present study is set. It is also relevant to other contexts where teachers’ pedagogy might not make use of active approaches to poems nor expose students to engaging forms of poetry like spoken word poetry and multimodal poetry (Xerri, “Poetry Teaching”).

By reviewing the literature in relation to crisis discourse and the concomitant value of poetry in education, the groundwork is laid for an investigation of what teachers and students think about poetry’s status in the educational system. These views were gathered by means of research whose main purpose was that of shedding light on teachers’ and students’ beliefs, attitudes and practices in relation to poetry and the study of poetry at Advanced Level in a post-16 college in Malta. On the basis of the findings that emerged from this study, this article questions whether

the very discourse used to discuss poetry's status is helping to undermine students' engagement with poems as texts that may also be read outside the classroom.

1. Crisis Discourse

The death of literature was announced in the 1960s and it was associated with a number of factors, including the influence of television and the rise of new schools of criticism such as post-structuralism and deconstruction. Kernan explains that "What has passed, or is passing" is the literature "that flourished in capitalistic society in the high age of print, between the mid-eighteenth century and the mid-twentieth" (5–6). The rise of digital and audiovisual media in particular has been proclaimed as hastening the death of the printed book. This seems to be leading to a situation in which "the very continuation of literary culture is, in effect, put in play by a scholarly and educational turn away from a literary corpus strongly identified with the printed book" (Paulson ix). Even though books for the time being are not in risk of utter extinction "their prestige and status, their role as models of learning and knowledge transmission, and even their centrality to literary culture are not what they used to be" (Paulson 9). These views might sound sensational and anachronistic but they are indicative of nostalgia for a literary golden age in which books were synonymous with a form of permanence that is well nigh impossible to achieve in the digital era.

This perceived crisis has reverberations in the classroom environment as well, in which "Reading and writing have to share space and time […] with ever more new activities" and the reading of books is "less and less reinforced or supported – whether in school or out of it – by the communications environments in which students actually live their lives" (Paulson 9). Once again those teachers and students who share this view are probably expressing a yearning for a time in which technology did not play an increasingly fundamental role in defining the way people engage with literary texts both inside and outside the classroom.

The literary crisis seems to be compounded by the fact that some form of dilution is threatening the kind of critical engagement that is required by literature. Seyhan, speaking about the aftermath of 9/11, says that even though "Verse can be a powerful shield against adversity […] the search for meaning and consolation in literature at a time of crisis can only be temporary in a society where people have practically forgotten how to read" (510–511). For Bloom in the contemporary world of distractions "Reading falls apart, and much of the self scatters with it" and "All this is past lamenting, and will not be remedied by any vows or programs" (23). In Manguel's opinion the crisis is exacerbated by the fact that "instead of promoting books of breadth and depth, for the most part the publishing industry of our time creates one-dimensional objects, books that are surface only and that don't allow readers the possibility of exploration" (130). Such ideas imply that readers are los-

ing the ability to engage in the kind of literary reading associated with a past era in which there were fewer distractions and in which literature had pride of place in culture.

Those who declaim the existence of a crisis feel that literature is being denigrated by contemporary society and for this reason "People die miserably every day for lack of what is found in despised poems" (Edmundson 1). Some teachers manifest "an extreme timidity" and "find it embarrassing to talk about poetry as something that can redeem a life, or make it worth living," while there are those who admire literary works as aesthetic artefacts completely removed from "common experience" (Edmundson 2). Somewhat in relation to this, Showalter says that "Even talking about our profession with any hint of idealism can bring down the sneers of the sophisticated, while it's often hard to know exactly what kind and degree of cynicism to adopt" (4). What might be being implied by these ideas is that those teachers who feel reluctant to adopt a crisis discourse and its attendant championing of literature's redeeming value might be implicitly responsible for the literary crisis.

In fact, teachers (and students) are seen as being partly to blame for the crisis because some of them "denounce literature's privileged role in education as an irrelevant or elitist relic" best replaced with "more popular, democratically shared forms of cultural production" (Paulson 2). This leads to a situation in which the humanities are viewed as being impractical. Seyhan in fact affirms that "in an age marked by profound scepticism about the value of the humanities and by the rapid corporatization of universities […] our efforts to promote literature as a legitimate field of inquiry ring inevitably apologetic" (511). The apparent need to justify the utility of the humanities is seen as indicative of how malignant the crisis has actually become.

Despite the doom-laden discourse of those who diagnose the literary crisis, there are those who are much more cautious when it comes to discussing literature's status in contemporary culture. When talking about the future of the humanities, Culler warns against the tendency to engage in "crisis narratives" that all seem to despair at the decline of "a canon of great cultural monuments […] and [the] ignorance and moral imbecility of students" (42). He feels that rather than trying to reverse the clock to an illusionary moment in time in which there was not yet a crisis, teachers should embrace the idea that "the humanities ought to teach […] diversity" (Culler 48). Moreover teachers should not feel that "the principal justification for work in the humanities must be the contribution they make to the formation of what we used to call the 'well-rounded' student" (Culler 53). Those accusing the humanities of being recondite for not being utilitarian can best be answered by means of the argument that "Thought can flourish under utilitarian pressures, but it also needs discursive spaces where it can pursue questions as far as possible without knowing what general use or relevance the answers might prove to have" (Culler 54). Even though "The death of literature looks like the twilight

of the gods to conservatives or the fall of the Bastille of high culture to radicals," Kernan argues that "we are watching the complex transformations of a social institution in a time of radical political, technological, and social change" (10). It is the embrace of such an institutional metamorphosis that is most often missing from the discourse of those who sensationalise the crisis in literary studies.

2. The Poetry Crisis

The crisis in literary studies is considered to be especially acute when one considers poetry in particular. Just like the crisis in literary studies in general, the crisis in poetry has been developing for a number of decades. Reeves, for example, believes that poetry is meant to provide the reader with pleasure and he affirms that "No nation which claims to give its citizens a full cultural education can neglect its poetry" (93). He bemoans the fact that "by the time children have left school, ninety-nine per cent of them have no use for it" and for this he blames the notion that "poetry is not felt to be a vital part of the adult life of a modern community" (Reeves 88). In agreement with this, Muir affirms that the general public "is quite unworried, does not know what it has lost, and goes its way" (2). This is partly to do with "our contemporary notion of poetry as a rarefied and special and often difficult thing" (Muir 94). Rather pessimistically, Holbrook proclaims that "poetry has lost confidence in itself, and that this is part of a widespread failure of human creativity" (11). Given students' "severe difficulties in reading poetry […] of being able to believe in poetry, to love poetry, to be stirred by it" (243), Holbrook's injunction is that this belief needs to be regained at all costs. In full agreement with this, Thompson asserts that notwithstanding the fact that for much of history poetry was a crucial aspect of human communities, its role in contemporary society has gradually become less important and its utility has diminished. He laments the fact that "Hostility to poetry and the arts generally still persists" and believes that the audience for poetry has become "a small minority of the population" and that this "can never be a satisfactory aim or recipe" (Thompson 191–193). The issue of poetry's significance "is an urgent question at a difficult time for anyone concerned with creativity in education" (Sedgwick 95) and is closely bound to the importance of language for humanity. In the times before the crisis, poetry was valued for "its capacity not only to open other worlds, but also to explain and illuminate this one" (Spiro 5). However, currently a more practical view of language predominates and thus "the business-driven world of corporate meanings and conventional formulae is more valued than the life of the imagination" (Spiro 5). Parini is aware that "Poetry doesn't matter to most people" and this is because "There is little time for concentration, or a space wherein the still, small voice of poetry can be heard" (ix). These views pinpoint the root of the problem as lying within society's utilitarian preoccupations, which cause poetry to be sidelined as being somewhat recherché.

Poetry is seen as occupying "a marginal place" both "in the world which the children we teach will live in as adults" as well as in "the actual cultural lives" of teachers of English (Parry 112). Kermode refers to Valery's idea that among those for whom poetry is an intrinsic part of their job and hence whose responsibility it is "to cultivate a taste for it in others, there are many who lack any appetite for it, or any understanding of the need for it" (26–27). This implies that some teachers are not interested in reading poetry and cannot help affecting students' own enjoyment of poetry. In fact, teachers are seen as being responsible for aggravating the crisis. McIrvin, for example, goes so far as to claim that "Poetry has become irrelevant" partly because "Those who do teach poetry mostly offer up canned responses to the staid standbys from literature survey textbooks" (89). It is argued that in order to effectively motivate students to read for pleasure teachers need to be "themselves readers, teaching *by example* the attitudes and behaviors of a reader" (Day and Bamford 140). In class, teachers need to position themselves as readers (Commeyras, Bisplinghoff, and Olson) and to "model the behaviours of an enthusiastic reader" (Hedgcock and Ferris 227). It is clear that teachers are seen as being instrumental in determining the level of students' engagement with poetry.

However, not everyone agrees that poetry is in trouble. Hall, for example, feels that those who proclaim the death of poetry tend to exaggerate and to ignore the fact that "there are many poets, many readings –and there is an audience" (26). He states that the audience for poetry has actually grown and that the concept that poetry is a dying genre is a lie that by means of constant repetition is adduced to be a fact by those "who enjoy viewing our culture with alarm" (Hall 20). The former po et laureate Andrew Motion is not alarmed at poetry's status in contemporary culture and feels that "The audience for poetry is much larger than it's usually held to be." Even though he admits that poetry might not be for everyone and that "many schoolchildren, especially boys, find poetry difficult," Motion still thinks that "with some imaginative thinking, about how to shape the national curriculum for instance, a far larger number of people will be able to take poetry into their lives." Once again teachers and the educational system in which they operate are seen to play a crucial role in influencing young people's attitude to poetry.

3. Poetry's Cachet

A number of distinguished poets and literary critics conceive of poetry (and literature) as having a transformative and illuminating potential. The kind of discourse employed to talk about poetry invariably ends up amplifying poetry's cachet. By vesting poetry with some kind of transcendental significance that elevates it above all other genres there is a risk that young people might not consider it relevant to their everyday lives, viewing it solely as the preserve of academic study. For Mallarmé poetry's task is to "endow / with a sense more pure the words of the tribe" (89).

Stevens argues that poetry seems "to have something to do with our self-preservation" and it "helps us to live our lives" (36). Thompson concurs with this and says that poetry "provides the reader with a means of discovering truths about himself and about human experience" (198). Heaney views "poetry as divination, poetry as revelation of the self to the self, as restoration of the culture to itself; poems as elements of continuity" (41). According to him "Poetry of any power is always deeper than its declared meaning. The secret between the words, the binding element, is often a psychic force that is elusive, archaic and only half-apprehended by maker and audience" (Heaney 186). In an essay on Keats's conception of poetry, Hughes shows that he shares the same ideas: "true poetry […] is a healing substance – the vital energy of it is a healing energy, as if it were produced, in a natural and spontaneous way, by the psychological component of the auto-immune system, the body's self-repair system" (249). Such claims for poetry's potential imbue it with a substantial amount of cachet and help to elevate it onto a pedestal that is seemingly removed from young people's ordinary everyday experiences.

Literature and poetry in particular are considered capable of not only transforming the individual reader but also of reforming society. Eco claims that literature possesses a "true educational function" (13) that influences the kind of person one turns out to be. He states that most of the "wretches" who sometimes commit heinous crimes end up this way because "they are excluded from the universe of literature and from those places where, through education and discussion, they might be reached by a glimmer from the world of values that stems from and sends us back again to books" (Eco 4). In tune with William Carlos Williams's ideas, Edmundson affirms that reading literature can change a person's life: "there may be no medium that can help us learn to live our lives as well as poetry, and literature overall, can" (1). He argues that "Poetry – literature in general – is the major cultural source of vital options for those who find that their lives fall short of their highest hopes"; it acts as "our best goad toward new beginnings, our best chance for what we might call secular rebirth" (Edmundson 2–3). He is convinced of "the fact…that in literature there abide major hopes for human renovation" (Edmundson 3). As teachers of literature "what we need is for people to be open to changing into their own highest mode of being" (Edmundson 86). In a similar vein Manguel posits the question of whether "is it possible for stories to change us and the world we live in?" (3). He feels that literature can sometimes "heal us, illuminate us, and show us the way" (Manguel 9). In his opinion "The language of poetry and stories…groups us under a common and fluid humanity while granting us, at the same time, self-revelatory identities" (Manguel 26). For Parini "Poetry matters because it serves up the substance of our lives, and becomes more than a mere articulation of experience" (181). These ideas betray the seemingly common belief that poetry has a transformative function that serves both the reader and society.

However, not everyone agrees that reading poetry can have such a transformative effect on the individual and society. Kermode, for example, rejects the idea that

teachers of literature can make people good. He feels that "reading, as we ought to teach it, can make not a good person, but a subtle, questioning one, always with the possibility of corruption yet richer and more enriching" (Kermode 57). Whilst agreeing that literature may allow us "to strengthen the self, and to learn its authentic interests," Bloom disagrees with the idea that literature possesses a broader transformative potential. In his opinion we read "not because we can "improve anyone else's life by reading better or more deeply" (Bloom 22). He considers "The pleasures of reading" to be "selfish rather than social" and "remain[s] sceptical of the traditional social hope that care for others may be stimulated by the growth of the individual imagination" (Bloom 22). He is clearly "wary of any arguments whatsoever that connect the pleasures of solitary reading to the public good" (Bloom 22). This scepticism does not detract from poetry's ability to provide the reader with cognitive and emotive pleasure. It merely acknowledges that to overburden poetry with the kind of expectations traditionally associated with religious arcana is potentially alienating for some readers.

4. Poetry and Personal Growth

One of the chief reasons for poetry's cachet seems to be the notion that poetry possesses some kind of transformative power that allows the individual to achieve personal growth. The personal growth model of literature teaching was the one most often alluded to by the teachers and students forming part of this study and some of its principles seem to influence their attitude towards poetry.

The personal growth model is constructed on the premise that the reading of literature can serve as an avenue for personal enrichment. In Hourd's opinion, for example, the primary aim of a literature lesson is "to provide a means towards a fuller development of personality – a means, again, of growth" (13). A 1968 bulletin published by the Scottish Education Department echoes this idea and states that "the value of literature for mental growth cannot be ignored" (7–8). In a report on the 1966 Dartmouth Seminar, Dixon shows how teachers and students adopting the personal growth model can "work together to keep language alive and in so doing […] enrich and diversify personal growth" (13). By using what they encounter in literature students use language to accommodate the world as they experience it and thus achieve personal growth. During a literature lesson students find themselves "taking on new roles, facing new situations – coming to terms in different ways with new elements of oneself and new levels of human experience" (Dixon 31). It is for some of these reasons that this pedagogical model is considered to be highly student-centred.

Those teachers who justify the teaching of literature by means of the individual development it generates feel that their adoption of the personal growth model "involve[s] students as active learners" and helps them "achieve a sense of self-

identity" as well as "clarify their values" (Rodrigues and Badaczewski 3). Brumfit considers it a "tragedy" that "literature remains inaccessible to so many people" and this is because "there is no more easily available source for personal growth than serious literature" (124). He argues that the "only honest justification for any kind of [literature] teaching" is that as teachers we wish to communicate our own personal need to partake of the experience of reading an "imaginative literature for the light it sheds on [us] and [our] position as human beings" (Brumfit 122). Cutajar and Briffa take these ideas further and state that literature as a subject "illuminates different areas of human life so that the learner might deepen his/her views on the quality of living. It contributes to the business of living and may alter a person's outlook of the world" (20). By studying literature "The learner is educated in modes of thought that equip him/her with a cognitive disposition that may be transferred to other areas of human behaviour and may eventually transform his/her view of life in general" (Cutajar and Briffa 20). These arguments emphasise the singular significance of literature as a valuable source of personal enrichment for students. However, the rhetoric used by those describing this kind of literature-based enrichment might also run the risk of distancing students from literary texts due to the perceived profundity attached to something so overwhelmingly laden with cachet.

Supposedly, the main advantages of the personal growth model are that it "demystifies literature" and that students are involved holistically; hence the whole process is "potentially highly motivating" (Lazar 25). Nonetheless, the downside to it is that if the transformative and illuminating potential of literature is heavily underscored the cachet of literary texts is overinflated and this might lead students to feel alienated from something that is perhaps a bit too abstruse for it to form part of their everyday lives. In fact, Gribble maintains that literary studies should not set "the *general* emotional development and psychic health of the individual [as] […] a primary objective" but they should be "concerned to develop the adequacy and appropriateness of students' emotional responses to literary works [and] […] this necessarily entails the development of the adequacy and appropriateness of their perceptions of literary works" (108). By overly accentuating the transformative potential of literature teachers might unwittingly lead students to view literature with too much awe and this might cause any plans for literature-based personal growth to rebound adversely.

5. The Study

The study took place at the largest post-16 college in Malta, a country that due to its colonial heritage recognises English as one of two official languages. The majority of the population is bilingual, learning Maltese and English from an early age but speaking the latter as a second language. The institution where the study was conducted acts as a preparatory school for students wishing to sit for

Matriculation examinations with the intention of enrolling at university. Students who choose to study Advanced Level English follow a two-year course leading to a nine-hour examination consisting of a number of language, linguistics and literature components. Two of these components focus on poetry: a question on a set text (e.g. Wilfred Owen's war poems) and an unseen poem. Preparation for the first component is provided by means of lectures while training for the unseen poem component is held during literary criticism seminars.

The study employed a mixed methods approach involving the following instruments: a survey completed by 376 students aged 16 to 18; semi-structured interviews with 15 students; and semi-structured interviews with eight poetry teachers. Every interview was conducted in a one-to-one manner and the two interview guides were designed in such a way that there was a high level of consistency in the kind of questions asked to both sets of interviewees. These questions probed their beliefs, attitudes and practices in relation to poetry and poetry pedagogy. The teachers all held Masters degrees or PhDs in English and only one of them had less than five years' teaching experience. All the students had at least one year of post-16 schooling.

6. Reasons for Studying Poetry

The teachers and students interviewed for the purposes of this study conceived of poetry as a form of enrichment that allowed the reader to achieve personal growth. They seemed to consider it to be a highly significant genre that needed to continue being studied otherwise students would be short-changed by the educational system.

All the teachers claimed that poetry played an important part in the Advanced Level English course and most of them expressed the opinion that "it's enriching" (Teacher A, henceforth TA) in some way or other. Despite the fact that it could be termed "not essential" (TB) or "useless" (TC), poetry was still a necessary part of the syllabus because "it develops a certain refinement in our appreciation of life" (TB). According to one teacher poetry "does make you wonder at being alive and I think our students need a kind of reconnection to the sheer unpredictability of being alive" (TC). Moreover, poetry seemed to develop one's understanding in terms of "allow[ing] the individual to see the world differently, to see the world from the point of view of others, to explore aspects of imagination which otherwise wouldn't be explored" (TD). Poetry allowed people to "connect with certain parts in ourselves which might not come to the fore otherwise" (TG). These teachers seemed to share the belief that poetry was of benefit to students because it possessed a transformative and illuminating potential.

The majority of interviewed students concurred with their teachers' views in relation to poetry's enriching potential. For most of them studying poetry was

a means of developing one's understanding of life and human emotions, with four of them indicating that "by studying poetry we are also studying life in a way" (Student B, henceforth SB). Poetry gave students an "insight on their own lives, it helps them understand certain things" (SJ) and this happened because "poetry is something which is really insightful and really deep" (SE). The fact that these students held these beliefs in common with their teachers leads one to contemplate whether they were bequeathed to students during their poetry lessons.

All the teachers seemed to concur that students should continue studying poetry in this day and age because "it's a form of enrichment" (TH). If the educational system had to prevent them from studying poetry "it would be robbing our students of a very important experience whether or not they follow it up in the future" (TE). All the teachers agreed with the idea that students got a lot out of studying poetry, "both in terms of language and also in terms of discovering new things about themselves and the world around them" (TD). Poetry "aids in critical thinking and analysing what people write, what people say" (TB). For one teacher "in an age of prose, with all that involves, keeping poetry alive or allowing poetry to keep us alive is a necessity" (TC). A colleague of his agreed with this and said that "if you don't have poetry it's like living in a house without mirrors […] poetry is essentially aimed at knowing yourself" (TA). For this teacher poetry was "a civilising process […] and if we stop teaching poetry we are saying that we have stopped civilisation" (TA). The figurative idea of "living in a house without mirrors" captured how significant poetry was held to be as a means of "civilising" the student, but what this teacher probably failed to notice was that this cachet was firmly bound to poetry's role as a school subject.

Almost 85% of surveyed students declared that poetry was important. For more than half of the interviewed students poetry needed to be studied because by means of it "a lot of people can understand emotions […] it makes you think about such things" (SC). Poetry allowed students to "analyse things more, see things that other people can't see" (SD). According to one student "you'd be surprised by how much poetry can help someone" (SJ). These views seemed to corroborate the idea that students colluded with their teachers in thinking that poetry was a crucial part of the curriculum because of the presumed personal growth it led to. The similarity between the rhetoric employed by teachers and students seemed to indicate that they shared a set of entrenched beliefs about poetry's transformative value. Elsewhere (Xerri, "Colluding"), I show how these shared beliefs lead teachers and students to adopt the same approach to poetry, seeing it as something to be critically analysed rather than read for pleasure. In fact, paradoxically enough, despite highlighting how much cachet it possessed for them, very few teachers and students mentioned that poetry was something they enjoyed reading.

7. Reading Poetry

Notwithstanding the fact that both teachers and students seemed to consider poetry to be a highly significant genre in terms of its potential for personal growth, when asked about their poetry reading habits it transpired that only a small number of them actually read poetry for personal pleasure. This seemed to be at variance with the prestige that they accorded to poetry and was probably a result of the notion that poetry was considered to be an academic genre rather than something teachers and students read for pleasure.

7.1 Teachers' Reading of Poetry

Only three teachers mentioned that they enjoyed reading "some poetry just for pleasure" (TB), the others indicating that they normally opted for prose. The teachers mentioned a total of 21 favourite poets, however, the list was unduly lengthened by the nine poets mentioned by one particular teacher (TE), who was himself a published poet. If the list of mostly contemporary poets mentioned by TE were not to be taken into account then it would be clear that the majority of teachers preferred strictly canonical poets. Philip Larkin was mentioned by half the teachers and this was probably due to the fact that up to a few years ago *The Whitsun Weddings* was on the A Level English syllabus. The only other two poets who were mentioned more than once were Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney. These findings are in line with those of a major UK study (Cremin, Bearne, Mottram, and Goodwin), which found that teachers' knowledge of poets and their reading of poetry for pleasure are highly restricted. It is this dismal state of affairs that children's poet John Rice (qtd. in Xerri, "Poetry on the Subway") encounters whenever he visits schools, leading him to claim that "it's a very restricted canon of work that teachers have read" (114). Teachers' lack of reading of contemporary poetry makes it difficult for them to model the behavior of enthusiastic readers of poetry written by 21st century poets.

Ironically, the same teacher who used the simile of "living in a house without mirrors" to describe the absence of poetry in people's lives also claimed that he did not read a lot of poetry for pleasure "because things here can get so intense that you don't want to sort of imprison yourself in this academic world" (TA). A colleague of his seemed to concur with this idea and said that he preferred prose "probably because poetry requires a more intense and a more engaged reading" (TD). In fact, five of the teachers indicated that if they had to choose between reading and listening to poetry they would prefer the former because when they read it they could do so at their "own pace" (TB) and "concentrate more" (TC). According to one teacher, "poetry does demand repeated raids on the inarticulate and I think reading for that is necessary" (TC). This shows that for most of these

teachers poetry was associated with academic study and required a critical kind of engagement which they did not usually opt for when reading purely for pleasure. Most probably this kind of attitude towards poetry was driven in part by their belief that poetry was the repository of a form of transformative wisdom that could only be tapped by an analytical approach.

According to those teachers who mostly read poetry for work purposes, teaching gave them the opportunity to read a lot of poetry. As one teacher put it, "professionally I can't avoid it" (TA). The latter also mentioned that he enjoyed "reading it aloud especially to an audience […] we're very fortunate here that we have been granted a captive audience […] these poor devils can't do anything about it" (TA). Despite the fact that these teachers mostly read poetry because of their job they still enjoyed it. However, two of them did confess that their awareness of examination realities did sometimes mar the experience. They ended up "look[ing] at the poem in more pedagogical terms" (TE) and "when you become over technical about something and you have to reduce it to a certain level […] it's like you lose the joy of it" (TG). This kind of analytical approach to poetry seemed to undermine some teachers' motivation to read it for pleasure: "the problem is that since I've been teaching and doing poetry mostly for crit I've become too analytical I find and whenever I read a poem I don't just read it for pleasure" (TF). The word "analyse" was used by almost all the teachers and this seemed to indicate that poetry for them entailed an analytical kind of approach that hindered them from seeing it as a genre that they could read solely for pleasure. The very cachet they ascribed to poetry made it seem abstruse and probably led them to see it as incapable of any other kind of approach.

7.2 Students' Reading of Poetry

As shown by Figure 1 more than 80% of the 376 surveyed students admitted that they either did not read any poetry for pleasure or did so only on rare occasions. Just like their teachers, the 15 interviewed students seemed to share a preference for prose, with only four of them mentioning that they read any poetry for pleasure. One student pointed out that she "prefer[red] prose because poems it's more fun to discuss than to read" (SA). To explain why they did not read any poetry the students claimed that "it just isn't in me" (SG), that they "don't know […] where to look for good poetry" (SH), and that they "find it boring […] I just don't enjoy reading it […] it frustrates me" (SM). These sentiments seemed to be instigated by the shared perception that poetry was "difficult" and that it required them to "analyse" it in a particularly methodical manner. Just like their teachers, students attributed a lot of cachet to poetry by seeing it as capable of transformation but in the process this served to make poetry seem difficult and thus only accessible via the analytical approach practised in the classroom.

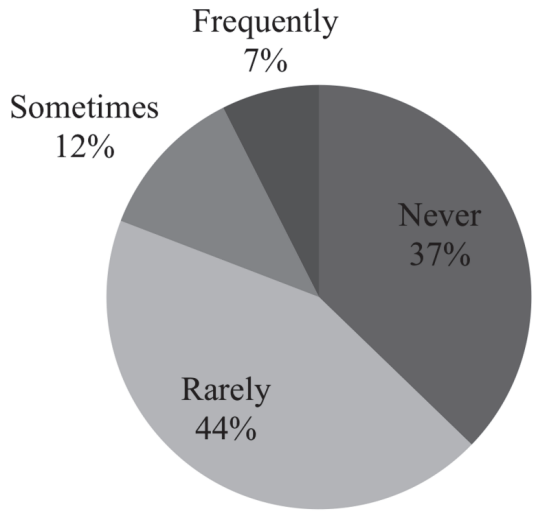


Figure 1. How often do you read poetry for pleasure?

In common with their teachers, the interviewed students' taste in poetry was restricted to a few canonical poets. They mentioned a total of nine favourite poets and all of these poets were ones the students had read during literary criticism seminars or else ones they had encountered in secondary school. Shakespeare was mentioned six times while Ted Hughes and Wilfred Owen were mentioned three times. The fact that the range of mentioned poets was so narrow seemed to indicate that poetry was a genre they encountered solely within the confines of the classroom and under the guidance of their teachers, who ended up adopting the role of gatekeepers to a poem's meaning (Xerri, "Colluding").

Some of the students who only read poetry for study purposes claimed that "I have to study poetry but I don't enjoy reading it" (SM), one of them admitting that "if it wasn't for school I wouldn't read too much poetry […] because I think I've always thought of it as being academic, sort of it's work" (SF). However, this student did confess that "maybe if I look at published poetry from another perspective and not as something that has to do with school maybe I would read more" (SF). Another student took a somewhat opposite perspective when she said that "I'm also finding poems that I really like through studying so then I look them up and look up [the poet's] works" (SC). This link between studying and enjoying poetry was also made by a student who admitted not to reading a lot of poetry but finding it "interesting" because one got "to analyse the thoughts of [the] poet" (SB). As in the case of the interviewed teachers, the students seemed to associate poetry with academic study and rarely perceived it as a genre that could also be read for personal pleasure. Most probably this was partly due to the fact that teachers and

students vested poetry with a transformative power that required an analytical approach for it to be unleashed.

The majority of students taking part in this study seemed to consider their poetry lessons as the sole opportunity for them of reading poetry. Only 35% of surveyed students agreed that if poetry were not part of the syllabus they would still read it and less than half the interviewed students declared that their poetry lessons had encouraged them to read more poetry for pleasure. One student stated that "if I hadn't attended these lessons I wouldn't have looked up poetry for personal pleasure" (SB) and this seemed symptomatic of the fact that unfortunately for most students poetry was only engaged with at school.

Nearly 61% of surveyed students claimed that they would not continue reading poetry once they finished their studies. Apart from two students whose poetry reading habits were not affected because "I've always done it so it hasn't really had an impact on me" (SJ), most of the interviewed students asserted that their lessons had not encouraged them to read poetry for pleasure. One student claimed that this had not happened "because I'm not interested in it" while another student said, "I think I only read the poems I need to study. I don't like reading poetry for pleasure. I don't really understand poetry" (SN). For other students it was either because they preferred reading prose or else "because most of us just feel fed up with the number of poems we have to study" (SH). The constant link that students seemed to make between poetry and study was probably what stopped most of them from conceiving of it as something that they might enjoy reading in a non-academic context. As shown by Cremin, this negative attitude towards poetry can partly be changed if teachers position themselves as "readers who teach and teachers who read poetry" (224). If teachers are seen to value poetry as a genre that they enjoy reading for pleasure rather than as something cryptic and which necessarily demands an analytical approach for its transformative and illuminating potential to be harnessed, then students are much more likely to mirror that attitude.

Conclusion

Crisis discourse most often pinpoints a variety of reasons for which poetry is seemingly in decline, some of them found within the educational system while others outside it. Nonetheless, the idea that the lofty status of this genre could in a way be responsible for undermining students' engagement with poetry in post-16 education has not been given sufficient consideration. The stress laid on its transformative potential inflates its cachet and helps cultivate the belief that poetry is a "difficult" genre that requires an analytical approach in order for it to be properly understood. By subscribing to this view, teachers ironically fail to position themselves as readers of poetry for pleasure. This probably plays a part

in dampening students' enthusiasm for the reading of poetry beyond the confines of the classroom. Teachers' and students' complicity in amplifying poetry's cachet helps to place it on top of a pedestal that is just too high for it to be accessible in a non-academic context.

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Review

MARJORIE GEHRHARDT, *The Men with Broken Faces:* Gueules Cassées *of the First World War*. Peter Lang (*Cultural History and Literary Imagination Series 25*). Bern 2015. ISBN 978-3-0343-1869-3. 304 pages. (Anna Branach-Kallas)

The Men with Broken Faces: Gueules Cassées *of the First World War* is a fascinating study in the cultural history of facially disfigured veterans of the First World War. According to Joanna Bourke the trench war generated a "corporeal crisis": men's bodies were brutally mutilated on the battlefields and the soldier's face was particularly vulnerable. Although medical progress increased the chances of survival of men with injuries of the face, plastic surgery was a new, experimental discipline during the First World War. While the lives of plastic surgeons, pioneers in facial reconstruction, seem to have been well documented in a narrative of scientific progress, the reintegration of facially wounded veterans has been relatively little researched and Marjorie Gerhardt's book aims to fill this gap.

The Men with Broken Faces: Gueules Cassées *of the First World War* places the history of facial disfigurement in a transnational perspective, comparing historical data from Great Britain, Germany and France (perhaps with a predominance of French sources). This distinguishes Gehrhardt's study from earlier accounts, in medical history in particular, such as, for example, Sophie Delaporte's pioneering *Les Gueules Cassées: Les blessés de la face de la Grande Guerre*, limited to the French context. Apart from historical documentation, Gehrhardt, who worked as a researcher on the EU-funded project 1914FACES2014, also explores visual and literary representations of facially wounded soldiers produced in-between the wars. The transnational perspective allows Gehrhardt to question the definition of facial disfigurement. According to British sources, 60,500 soldiers in the British Army suffered from wounds to the head or the eyes, the Germans give the figure of 300,000, while the French estimate that injuries of the face were sustained by over 500,000 servicemen. In her study, Gehrhardt focuses on the destinies of soldiers who were treated in specialized maxillofacial units and whose appearance, radically changed by their injuries, was perceived as a "visual affront" (Feo) and generated a "culture of aversion" (Biernoff) among onlookers, both civilians and the medical staff.

Chapter One analyses the "transitional space" of the hospitals and numerous medical and artistic practices that helped to rebuild the maimed faces of the veterans. Gehrhardt claims that the hospitals also created a family sphere, situating the medical personnel in various roles, significant in the psychological healing process of the ex-servicemen: nurses as mothers or lovers, the male staff as fraternal figures, and the surgeons as father and/or heroes.

Chapter Two addresses the problem of social reintegration, showing the numerous challenges faced by the veterans with injuries of the face upon their return to civilian life. While in Germany the state assumed responsibility for the employment of disabled veterans, in Great Britain they received insufficient support and were abandoned to the care of philanthropic networks. However, by drawing on personal testimonies, Gehrhardt shows that many facially wounded combatants enjoyed successful careers in spite of their unsightly scars. Nevertheless, those who failed to do so withdrew from society and were often seen as its victims. The experience of transition from "wounded serviceman in convalescence" to "civilian with disfigured face" was more universal in the private sphere; familial reunions forced *gueules cassées* to restructure their intimate lives, undermining traditional definitions of masculinity. Gehrhardt approaches wounds of the face as evidence of transgression, between the visible and the invisible, the human and inhuman, peacetime and wartime, life and death, illustrating the tension between the maimed men's desire to remain unnoticed and the public pressure to treat them as "walking reminders of the war." She also analyses the images of facial wounds in the press, dominated by a discourse of monstrosity, which contributed to the public perception of men with broken faces as either inhuman gargoyles or superhuman embodiments of patriotism.

The third chapter is entirely devoted to the unique experience of the French facially disfigured veterans who, due to their self-help organisation, the *Union des Blessés de la Face* (UBF), managed to construct a powerful social network based on a special form of kinship. This chapter documents the creation of the association at the Val-de-Grâce hospital and the charismatic role of its leader, Colonel Yves Picot. Using the bulletins of the union as source material, Gehrhardt traces the evolution of the UBF from an organization eager to provide practical help (employment, loans, specialized treatment) and moral support, through a micro-community, bound by comradeship and a family-like atmosphere, to a political body determined to improve the destinies of the facially wounded veterans. In contrast to Germany and Great Britain, the UBF managed to publicize a positive image of *gueules cassées* in the French media, providing a model of resilience and esprit de corps for the whole society to follow.

In Chapter Four, Gehrhardt interprets numerous photographs, portraits and paintings of facially disfigured veterans, arguing that German artists usually highlighted the isolation and degradation of war veterans, while the visual representations in France and Great Britain were more discreet and more positive, insisting

upon physical and social reconstruction. The literary analyses in the last chapter also point to national divergences, with French writers providing the greatest number of publications about facially wounded veterans as central protagonists. According to Gehrhardt, literary representations either heroicize wounded combatants or present them as ordinary people, thus providing a trivialization of the facial wound. Exploring the psychological and social impact of war disfigurement, Gehrhardt also points to the complex processes of remembrance in culture and art.

Written in a clear and absorbing style, *The Men with Broken Faces:* Gueules Cassées *of the First World War* shows the author's passionate involvement in the difficult subject she analyses. As she emphasises in the Preface, the idea of facial disfigurement "confronts the researcher or reader with their own fears of 'losing face,' both literally and metaphorically." The interdisciplinary and transnational scope of her research deserves special attention. If not an easy reading, it is a fascinating one, interesting for historians as well as cultural and literary scholars. While it opens a new perspective on a neglected aspect of the First World War, approaching the facially disfigured combatant as a controversial human "site of memory," Marjorie Gehrhardt's study also stimulates reflection about the integration of individuals with facial differences today.

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