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EDITOR'S NOTE

Volume 7 of *Cultural Intertexts* – a Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies – includes articles by doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, presented at the fifth edition of the International Scientific Conference organized by the Doctoral Schools of “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galati (8-9 June 2017), section 6: “Cultural Spaces: Retrospective and Prospective Views”, subsection 6.1. “English Literature and Translation Studies” (official site: <http://www.cssd-udjg.ugal.ro/>).

Other contributions on the various aspects related to the area investigated by this series of publications are made by specialists from the host and partner universities, as well as by independent scholars and researchers at home and abroad.

The cultural intertext is examined here from multiple viewpoints (linguistic, aesthetic, philosophical, political, historical, sociological and psychological). The literary and filmic corpus selected by the authors covers a wide range of voices and genres, and is analysed in view of foregrounding issues associated with identity, hybridity, memory, trauma, authorship and adaptation.

As always, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to the scientific advisors for their expertise and for the dedication to the peer reviewing process.

Michaela Praisler

On Mares in Miral Al-Tahawy's *The Tent*

Shahd ALSHAMMARI*

Abstract:

*Arab Bedouin communities have long been a subject of analysis by Oriental scholars. There has been a great tendency to exoticize the Bedouin man, and particularly the Bedouin woman. A custom often overlooked and misunderstood is the significance of the ideology of "asil" or "pure blood." It was as important to keep the family's blood line "pure" as it was to maintain the horse's, or mare's, breeding. When Bedouin women occupy the same space as the mare, is this utter objectification of their bodies, or perhaps, is there a huge value placed on the woman? The mare's significance has also been present in some works of literature. *The Tent*, by Miral al-Tahawy, presents us with a protagonist, Fatima, who loses her mare to a foreign Orientalist in exchange for her education. With the mare's loss comes Fatima's loss of self, identity, and eventual descent into madness. The mare is significant to Bedouin culture, and it is this contact with the colonizer that threatens the culture and the psyche. This paper will combine both cultural ideologies, as well as attempt a literary examination of the above mentioned work. It aims to present a new approach at looking at the significance of the mare in Bedouin culture and literature, as well as the invasion of colonialism, which does not "save" Bedouin women, but rather steals the culture.*

Key words: *Bedouin, literature, mares, cultural ideology, women*

The title of this paper may appear ambiguously misleading. The focus is in fact, horses and women, but it is not the predictable relationship and kinship that Western writers have romanticized in the past, nor will it consider horse riders who happen to be women. My scholarly interest is concerned with drawing connections, finding parallelism, and similarities in a global framework. I am concerned with similarities, rather than differences between women worldwide, between humans and animals, and between cultures and across national frontiers. Minorities are significant, and one group that has been overlooked is the Bedouin. The aim of this

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paper, then, is to raise more culturally specific questions and highlight certain ideologies that remain unknown to the West, to anthropologists, and scholars of Comparative Literature. Arab Bedouin communities have long been a subject of analysis by Oriental scholars and anthropologists. There has been a great tendency to exoticize Bedouin men, and particularly Bedouin women. A custom often overlooked and misunderstood is the significance of the ideology of "*asil*" or "pure blood." Arab Bedouin tribes believed that it was as important to keep the family's bloodline "pure" as it was to maintain the mare's breeding. Inbreeding was frowned upon, controlled, and regulated, just like young women's lives were maintained. Young women were referred to as "mares" because they carried within them the capacity to give birth to new life, to either keep the bloodline "noble" or to taint it.

This paper aims to raise some questions that are yet to be answered. What is the relationship between women and mares in the Bedouin context? What are the implications and consequences of the metaphor usage? What type of metonymy can we elucidate by considering the correlation between Bedouin women and mares? In order to examine and attempt to answer these questions, I will explain Bedouin culture and ideology, position Bedouin women in their specific environment, and later discuss a Bedouin novel entitled *The Tent*, since Miral Al-Tahawy, an Egyptian Bedouin author, has managed to exemplify the inextricability of the two subjects: Bedouin women and mares.

At a first glance, there is a huge danger behind Bedouin men relating women to mares. This is not a simplistic notion, nor would it be fair to end the discussion at the idea of demeaning women's sense of subjectivity and identity. We cannot dismiss the subject as simply being yet another way that women are oppressed in the East, supposedly unlike their Western counterparts. The issue at hand is far more complex and thought-provoking. Yet, despite its allure, despite its problematic state, there has been no scholarly work devoted to the question of Bedouin women and their correlation with mares – whether linguistically, culturally, or ideologically. The most notable scholar, for me, and whose work has been indispensable throughout my vexed interest in Bedouin culture, is Lila Abu-Lughod. Abu-Lughod is a cultural anthropologist particularly interested in Egyptian Bedouin societies, which are not too different from Kuwaiti Bedouin societies and culture. The commonality shared is reflected

in the great value placed on honour, shame, nobility and purity of blood, as well as the love for horses and mares. Abu-Lughod explains the concept of *asil*: "Blood is the authenticator of origin or pedigree and as such is critical to Bedouin identity and their differentiation from Egyptians, who are said to lack roots or nobility of origin...Underlying this concern is the belief that a person's nature and worth are closely related to the worthiness of his or her stock" (45). Notice the use of such terms as: "pedigree" "nature" "worth" and "stock." Bedouin identity and *asil*, as well as vocabulary, are very closely tied to nature, the desert, and, by theory of extension, it comes as no surprise that Bedouin women are referred to as mares.

This idea of blood, then, is inerasable and remains intact ideologically and culturally. Purity and impurity, breeding and inbreeding are all concepts that have become a way of life for Bedouins, ideas that have been carried from the past to the present, and that have thrived despite modernization and globalization. To preserve identity and *asil*, the Bedouins must be wary of inbreeding. Given the association of women with nature and the symbolic link to mares, we must consider this problematic position of Bedouin women on the hierarchy and social order in the Bedouin context. This very association with nature places women in two conflicting spaces. They are valued for their ability to reproduce, and since having many children is not only a social requirement, but also a political one, women do occupy a certain terrain of agency. Political strength is measured in numbers, tribes are only powerful when there are many members who represent and defend it. As such, women carry within them the capacity to strengthen the tribe. Their role is to satisfy the community's needs and demands – they are the suppliers. I would argue to look beyond the stereotypical image of Arab women, or in this case, Bedouin women as oppressed. There are endless possibilities and a plethora of ways that Bedouin women are, in fact, resilient and significant in Bedouin society, carrying within them a certain agency.

The significance of the mare in Bedouin culture, and for Bedouin men, resonates with the significance of Bedouin women in Bedouin society and culture. This leads us to the inevitable question: what is this very intimate relationship between the Bedouin and his or her mare? Given the very harsh circumstances of desert life, the most incessantly loyal companion of the Bedouin is the mare. The foundation of the relationship is greatly built on love, friendship, and a sense of merging with the mare. The

mare and her owner form a life-long bond, a companionship built on shared histories. The mare and her human share an unspoken commitment, an unquestionable one. Neither would abandon the other. Most mares are in fact named after females, and tribal members would identify each mare by her name, followed by the owner's. For example, "Falha of Alshammari." There is a certain personalization of the mare, a reflection on her characteristics and qualities. As a result, when Bedouins write poetry, many of their poems describe the beauty of the mare and the love exchanged between the horse owner and the mare. Similarly, they are fond of love, writing about love, the romance of the desert, the connection between man and nature, and their love for women, of course.

Love in all its forms is a major theme in Bedouin oral poetry. Although the environment is a harsh one, Bedouins are tender, passionate, and very much in love with their surroundings. The stereotype usually only stresses the aggressiveness of the Bedouins, their raidings, wars, and killings, portraying them as inhumane and blood-thirsty. This image does not accurately present the Bedouins to the Western audience, or to those who have no special interest in learning and understanding Bedouin history and culture. One of the most important and non-negotiable codes of honour includes not harming women, children, the unarmed, or elders during tribal wars. Animals are neither harmed nor tortured, and there are no unnecessary killings. Even more noteworthy is that the Bedouin man, during battle, calls out the name of his sweetheart, sister, or mare. It is as though the battle is fought with their support, but also, for these significant others, those closest to the heart, and the Bedouin's loyal companions. The relationship between human and animal was not a simple one, of oppressor and oppressed, but rather an intimate one relying heavily on coexistence and companionship.

I would like to examine the depiction of this human-animal relationship in one example of Bedouin literature. In Miral Al-Tahawy's *The Tent*, the protagonist, Fatima, is the daughter of the Sheikh of the tribe and owns a beautiful mare named Khayra. Fatima and Khayra are both purebreds, they are both of noble *asil*. Fatima's life is extremely difficult and she only finds consolation in her intimate friendship with Khayra. Her mother is a madwoman confined to the tent, her grandmother is a tyrant, her father is emotionally unavailable, and her sisters are preoccupied with their own lives and the burdens of marriage. Al-Tahawy's novel deals with

Bedouin identity, especially Bedouin women's sense of self, by examining a network of relationships between women. Even Khayra is a female. As Fatima grows up, her relationship with her beloved mare grows too, becoming her only real and meaningful relationship. Her connection to Khayra is very special; as Fatima's emotional and mental state deteriorates, so does Khayra's physical health.

As mentioned earlier, bloodline is extremely important both for the nobility and purity of a Bedouin family, as well as for horses. Donna Landry's *Noble Brutes* explains Eastern ideologies concerning pure-breed horses and how these ideologies were so intrinsic to Eastern culture. The emphasis placed on Eastern horses' nobility is synonymous with Bedouin *asil*. At the same time, such nobility of heritage carried certain burdening expectations. Landry explains: "Once Eastern bloodstock became better known in Britain, these characteristics of intelligent loyalty and willingness to serve, apprehended as purity of lineage, became part of popular discourse about those superior equines, horses of 'quality'" (2009: 137). Given that Eastern horses carried such significant qualities, they were also expected to behave in a certain manner, similarly to Bedouin women. The following passage exemplifies this very specific, yet very constraining identity, expressed by Fatima's father:

And if the King of Egypt himself came to ask for your hand in marriage, I'd chase him away like a dog. Fatim comes from a long line of noble folk... She's a pure Adnanian filly... isn't that right, my little princess? I touched his face. 'I'll stay with you. I won't marry anyone else.' (Al-Tahawy 2000: 32-3)

Fatima's father expresses Bedouin ideology clearly, linking his daughter's identity to his own noble heritage. He places great value on her worth, which can be very constraining, and poses many intricate issues of use-value and exchange-value. She is rendered an object, specifically a "filly", to be either kept or sold. Just as the horse's bloodline is examined and is crucial for its value to be established, women's value is derived from their linkage to purity and noble *asil* lines. There is both power and powerlessness within the framework which restricts women to an identity closely equated to pure mares. Horses are necessary for the survival of the Bedouin, in all respects. The horse functions also as a representative of the owner, mirroring the owner's actions, identity, and moral superiority. We

can also postulate that the mare or the filly carries more of the burden, more value, being closely associated with female space and the feminine. The mare is tied to the maternal, to the ability to procreate and add more not only to the individual, but also to the collective, to the tribe's power and status in relation to other tribes. This resonates clearly with the reproductive value placed on women. Fatima's father offers her an identity, security, and she responds with an unwavering loyalty – she will not “marry” anyone else. The concept of marriage is touched upon as it is a contract which will either contaminate the tribe's *asil* or preserve it. Fatima, like my aunt, and like many other Bedouin women of pure-blood, must be very careful in keeping the bloodline pure. That is a burden they must carry.

Khayra is a “pure filly” just like Fatima, a princess, and she is a part of Fatima's identity. Khayra, whose name literally translates as “goodness”, is Fatima's stronger self, her noble self; her purity is untainted and remains strongly embedded in Khayra. Unsurprisingly, Khayra becomes an object of interest to the colonizer, the Orientalist scholar Anne, who studies Bedouin lifestyle and conducts various researches. Anne's fictional character is reminiscent of Lady Anne Blunt. As we know, Lady Anne Blunt was fascinated with the horses of Arabia. For instance, one apt example would be her reaction upon being acquainted with Prince Hamud's mares in Hail, Saudi Arabia. Lady Anne Blunt had confessed: “If I could have my choice I would take Hamud's mare. Next the brown, third the chestnut” (Winstone 159). Arabia's royal mares were not for sale and not up for negotiation. Lady Anne Blunt soon became aware of the infinite love and pride the Bedouins possessed regarding their mares and *asil*.

In *The Tent*, Fatima's relationship with Anne is extremely problematic and is one of the main factors that lead to her madness and physical disability. Upon first meeting Khayra, Anne is obsessed with the idea of buying Khayra and breeding her. Anne tries to purchase Khayra, but both Fatima and her father refuse to hand over such a noble filly. Fatima's father explains that, since Fatima is of noble origins, she has the right to keep or sell her filly. This ideology is reminiscent of my initial comparison between Fatima and Khayra – for they are one and the same.

Anne's obsession with possessing Khayra goes hand in hand with educating Fatima. Both Fatima and her double, Khayra, must undergo a process of objectification and moulding. Both are under Anne's commands

and are the object of her fascination and analysis. Through attempting to understand both Bedouin culture and breed Khayra, Anne's character symbolizes colonialism and imperialism, as well as the discourse of power and knowledge in rendering Eastern subjects invisible. I would argue that the Orient for the colonizer in *The Tent* is a plethora of symbols, subjects/objects: Bedouin culture, Fatima, and Khayra. All three are to be penetrated, objectified, and reduced to a form of knowledge. As such, Anne uses Fatima as an object, to be assimilated and moulded into the same, the very same image Anne has of herself and of what a Bedouin girl embodies. Fatima's only escape is insanity, outside the realms of reality. She is able to discern that she is equated with animals and her beloved Khayra. There is no room for her "true" self, if you will, for her own established identity. Fatima is only able to respond to the pressures and subjugation she endures inside her head. Only in her head does she speak, only in her head does she scream at Anne:

I'd had enough...I was sick of it. I am not a frog in a crystal jar for you to gaze upon. I am Fatim, ya-Anee, flesh and blood... Khayra grew weary from all the young she bore...Every year she would produce a new breed. Are you fed up, Khayra, like me? Books and writing paper, pregnancy and labor (Al-Tahawy 2000: 107-8).

Fatima's split is evident. Like her beloved Khayra, she is fed up, exhausted, taken advantage of, used, abused, and silenced. Khayra's body, like Fatima's, is weary, yet she maintains and sustains her one function as a reproductive force – she grows tired and is bred by the Western colonizer, just like most Eastern and Arabian horses were imported to the British Isles in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Miral Al-Tahawy's *The Tent*, the audience is able to develop a better understanding of the relationship between human and animal, Bedouins and horses, Bedouin women and their mares. Al-Tahawy's presentation of this very special relationship is valuable for a literary examination of Bedouin literature and of its common tropes. Bedouin literature, specifically, does not as of yet exist as a separate field of study. There is, however, much interdisciplinary work to be done and subjects that would interest feminist scholars, anthropologists, and literary critics.

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The Influence of the Mbari Club and Early Nigerian Prose Writers on the Nigerian Literary Dramatists

Babatunde BAKARE*

Abstract

The study examines the influence of the Mbari club and early Nigerian prose writers on the works of the Nigerian literary dramatists. In addition, the study analyses and documents the impact which this influence has on the works of selected Nigerian literary dramatists over decades.

Keywords: *the Mbari Club, prose, Nigerian, literary, dramatists, theatre, drama*

The emergence of the modern Nigerian writer and Fagunwa's importance as an early modern Nigerian writer

The emergence of the modern Nigerian writer should not be mistaken for the emergence of the Nigerian English literary dramatists. The reason for this is not far-fetched. The modern Nigerian writers started emerging approximately two decades before the Nigerian English literary dramatists came on board and, according to Osofisan, "not surprisingly therefore, the Modern Nigerian writer, who began to emerge from the 1940s onwards, came to the scene with this vocation of enlightened pertinence. We have the proof. For instance, one of the very first among these authors was the pioneering Chief Daniel Olorunfemi Fagunwa" (1997: 10).

Therefore, we can assume that Fagunwa was a leading exponent of the modern Nigerian writer in the Yoruba language, who, in his lifetime, wrote many novels and other works that were based on Yoruba myths, legends and magical realism. Most of his novels were written in the Yoruba language and many were later translated into English by scholars who were his contemporaries and allies. Some of his novels were used as

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materials adapted for the theatre, through adaptation. In 1968, Wole Soyinka was the first theatre maker to translate one of late Fagunwa's Yoruba popular novels, titled *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole*, into English as *The Forest of A Thousand Daemons: A Hunter Saga*. Another Nigerian playwright, Wale Ogunyemi adapted the novel into a stage play, with a different title, *Langbodo*; in addition, he directed the play for Nigeria's entry during FESTAC 1977.

On the 22nd of September, 2008, and on the 23rd of November, 2009, Femi Osofisan staged his adaptation of two of Fagunwa's novels, *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole* and *Ireke Onibudo*, first at the Department of Theatre Arts of the University of Ibadan, at Oduduwa Theatre of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria, and lastly at MUSON Centre, Lagos, for the general audience. The performances of these productions were sponsored by a Nigerian Company in an effort to preserve the rich culture and diversity of Nigeria, and in a bid to keep the works of notable writers, such as Fagunwa, alive.

Consequently, Fagunwa cannot be referred to as one of the Nigerian English literary dramatists who gained popularity between when Nigeria was about to gain independence and the moment independence became a reality. Some of his works, however, served as an inspiration and provided readily available storylines or contents for a good number of theatre makers in the country.

Bamgbose provides an illuminating background to the foregoing when he comments as follows: "Folktales are interesting not only as an aspect of Yoruba folklore, but as a popular form of oral literature. They are important in themselves as stories, but they are probably more importantly as background material which novelists such as Fagunwa and Tutuola have drawn on heavily in their writing" (2004: 547).

D.O. Fagunwa and Amos Tutuola (another notable Yoruba writer of prose) were neither theatre artists nor dramatists, but were novelists who also tapped into the Yoruba folklore and legends to tell their stories. This assertion is further supported by Whittaker: "Tutuola undoubtedly followed a form of narrative structure first employed by D.O. Fagunwa, in his stories written in Yoruba and published in the 1930's and 1940's" (2001: 6).

The Nigerian writers that emerged after G.O. Fagunwa were Amos Tutuola, Hubert Ogunde, DuroLadipo and Kola Ogunmola and others. Adedeji (1980: 23) writes about UlliBeier, a German scholar, who studied and documented Yoruba arts and culture for many decades.

Many of the plays written and staged in the Yoruba language by the aforementioned Yoruba theatre practitioners in the 1960s, and which were later translated into English by Beier, adapted some familiar story lines in some novels by Fagunwa and Tutuola. Yoruba Plays such as *Lanke Omuti* and *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole* are good examples of this assertion. Notably, one important connection between these plays is, evidently, the usage of Yoruba myth, legend, folklore, proverbs, riddles and other cultural and traditional properties of the Yoruba people.

Contribution of modern Nigerian writers to the development of theatre and drama that addresses social, political, and economic theatrical performance in Nigeria

Generally, the discussion of Nigerian literature and theatre has, over many years, attracted global attention. Such attention is noticeable in the popularity of the country's staged plays at theatres outside Nigeria, reading of play-texts authored by Nigerians outside the shores of the country, both for academic and leisure purposes and most recently, the booming film industry.

Writers in the country such as Ola Rotimi, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Femi Osofisan, J.P. Clark, Ben Okri and many others, have achieved world recognition through their various works. The relevance of their works to the socio-political and economic reality of the present day is perhaps the main reasons why theatre practitioners and scholars cannot but be associated with creating or re-inventing new works from their works. Various works by these notable writers, many of whom are masterpieces, are readily available materials for adaptation, appropriation and experimentation for theatre makers and film-makers today.

According to Yerima, the "simple answer here is 'choice'; and the reasons for it are not far-fetched." Yerima further explains that: "Choice in adaptation can be seen as the interest of 'likeness' or even 'fondness' for an older work" (2003: 120).

Stage adaptation of any work transcends "likeness or fondness." There is also the issue of relevance and whether or not the adapted work will serve the purpose of the theatre maker or dramatist who adapted such work. An excerpt published in one of the Nigerian daily newspapers few years ago supports this view:

The maverick playwright died ten years ago leaving behind a retinue of plays, all which remain relevant to the social, political and economic lives of the Nigerian people. Among these plays is *Langbodo*, the epic drama which the late Chief Wale Ogunyemi, foremost writer and actor adapted from D.O. Fagunwa's book entitled, *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole*. (An excerpt titled "Why Wale Ogunyemi still lives on Nigeria's stage-Director of *Langbodo*" from Sun News Papers, Thursday, February 16, 2012)

Another excerpt provides a short historical background on another play adaptation of a novel written by Amos Tutuola. The play is titled *Palmwine Drinkard*. The director, in his 'Directors Note' found in the production programme of the play directed by Tunde Awosanmi (2014) posits:

The *Palmwine Drinkard*: [translated as] *Lanke Omuti* was premiered on the Nigerian stage, precisely the Arts Theatre of the University of Ibadan, in April 1963. It was a product of that versatile actor and renowned practitioner of the Yoruba folk-opera, Kola Ogunmola, who adapted it from Amos Tutuola's novel *The Palmwine Drinkard*. At birth, the drama was not only expressive of a dominant theatrical style which had become a force and a definitive icon of Nigeria's post-colonial- the opera- it joined other Yoruba operatic experiments on the formal stage such as *Oba Koso* and *Obaluaye* to register the adaptive and experimental spirit of the theatre practitioners of the stage. And, of course, Kola Ogunmola's achievement was that his invention helped in pioneering the adaptation of novels to stage (An excerpt from the Director's Note: (Tunde Awosanmi), 16th of April, 2014)

Awosanmi's explanation provides useful information on how long the concept of adaptation of novel to stage has gained popularity in the Nigerian theatre and drama. Awosanmi named Kola Ogunmola, a contemporary theatre practitioner of Hubert Ogunde, who gained prominence during the era of the Yoruba Contemporary Travelling Theatre with his folk-opera performance, one of the pioneering figures who first experiment stage adaptation of Yoruba folkloric story into a staged drama. Hence, Ogunmola can be described as one of the pioneers of the adaptation of novel to the stage scene in Nigeria.

The idea behind Ogunmola's adaptation of *Lanke Omuti* [Yoruba translation of *Palmwine Drinkard*] was not that he lacked the ability to create his own piece; his reason for doing so cannot be dissociated from the fact

that Amos Tutuola's novel "*The Palmwine Drinkard*" is an artistic work that was carefully crafted, and which borrowed greatly from the Yoruba reservoir of history, legendary and folklore, which Ogunmola deemed useful to address some social vices facing his society at the time. Social vices, such as greediness, excessive drinking habit, and love for money, are a few themes in Kola Ogunmola's plays. He wrote other plays such as *Oba Ko So*, *Love for Money* and others, which also tapped into Yoruba oral tradition and folklore.

In conclusion, the contribution of modern Nigerian (prose) writers to the socio-political evolution of drama and theatre performances in Nigeria can particularly be seen in the area of adaptation, since many of their works were not originally created for the stage. Theatre practitioners and dramatists in the country, over the years, have considered many of their works useful in achieving and contributing their own quota to the growth of theatre and drama; such works have thematic pre-occupations applicable to address socio-political and economic challenges facing the country. Many of the works of these icons, especially those who are Yoruba writers, borrow or draw from the Yoruba wealth of legends, proverbs, folklore and other materials which serve as a potent means of sensitizing and educating the general populace concerning issues that threaten their socio-political and economic survival.

The emergence of the Nigerian English literary dramatists (1960 - the year of political independence and literary awakening)

The emergence of the Nigerian English literary dramatists, to some extent, coincides with the country's independence in 1960. The period was a significant one, due to the unfolding political, economic and cultural transition. The period also marked the beginning of the decisive contributions of theatre artists and dramatists through literary writings and performances, the positive growth of Nigeria as a nation. One primary concern of this group of well-trained practitioners and scholars was how to identify means of tackling various post-independence challenges that were facing the country. Their effort was to consolidate the success of Hubert Ogunde's participation in the nationalist struggle. In fact, one may even assert that the work of Ogunde and his theatre company encouraged the appearance of the new crops of theatre and drama practitioners in the country, starting from the 1960s. It can be concluded that the baton of

theatre and drama as a potent expressive channel against the tyrannies of the Nigerian rulers was passed on to those Nigerian English literary dramatists who emerged after Ogunde's time. This assertion is substantiated by Umukoro:

Since then, [after independence was achieved] Nigerian dramatists have been pre-occupied with the crisis of neo-colonialism, seeking for ways to reverse the condition so that Nigeria can become a truly independent country where power is used for the good of the common people. It is, in other words, a search for democracy: government of the people by the people for the people. (1994: 12)

During this epoch in the history of Nigerian theatre and drama, we see a kind of symbolic bridge between Ogunde's protest and political theatre and the literary dramatists who had garnered adequate trainings in theatrical and dramatic creations and performances both at home and abroad.

Credibly, the emergence of Nigerian English literary dramatists at the University of Ibadan (one of Nigeria's premier universities) during this period no doubt marked the take-off of, and opened up the academic channels and contributions towards genuine developments, both artistically and politically. The channels have since proliferated and continue to be a permanent intellectual arena or melting-point for series of positive socio-political and economic debates among many scholars across the country.

Some of these scholars specialized in theatre, drama or literature deemed it fit to discuss and analyse and attempt alerting Nigerians to post-independence problems that usually accompany nations emerging from colonialism and imperialism. Wake states that: "It is obvious, however, that the literary awakening of Africa is directly associated with the political awakening, which can probably be taken to precede it" (1969: 44). Wake's view further associates the literary awakening in Africa to the political atmosphere of the continent, as was the case of Nigeria in 1960. The dawn of the new political era immediately opened the doors, setting the stage for both literary and artistic expressions in the country. The Nigerian playwrights, poets and novelists saw opportunities and avenues to express themselves and to voice various concerns associated with the ripples,

rebounds, complications and effects of the long years of British domination of Nigeria.

Like Hubert Ogunde, the apprehension of post-colonial Nigerian English literary dramatists such as Wole Soyinka, John Pepper Clark, Ola Rotimi, Zulu Sofola, Femi Osofisan, Kole Omotoso, Wale Ogunyemi, Bode Sowande, and others was towards the conspicuous decadence, vices and ills of the Nigerian society, championed by the nation's political class handling the affairs of the country at the time. Their actions and ruling styles were perceived as an offshoot of the British legacy left behind to create disunity among the many tribes and ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The Nigerian English literary dramatists were not alone at the time in this line of thought. Writers of poems and novels such as Chinua Achebe, Christopher Okigbo and Gabriel Okara, to mention but a few, also went ahead after the emancipation of the country in 1960. They wrote on themes and subject-matters of the negative effects of the colonization of Nigeria and the incessant military take overs of mantle of the leadership in the country, warning of the consequences and aftermath of this mode of ruler-ship and likening it to a volcanic reaction by the people against the colonial masters. In relation to the foregoing, Adeoti asserts that: "in the particular case of Nigeria, the utilitarian value of literature is undeniable as it more often than not, yields a greater insight into socio-political events. To this end, Nigerian literature presents a poignant engagement with historical realities in a manner that is rewarding, not only to literary scholarship, but also to the study of politics in the postcolonial state" (2004: 12).

In addition, this set of people who quickly seized and idealized the momentum during this period of post-colonial despair and disenchantment were those Nigerians who had returned from studying abroad and those who had acquired education at the University of Ibadan, particularly those who received training in theatre and drama at the first school of drama in Nigeria, at the University of Ibadan, in 1963. Adedeji states: "The School of Drama was formally opened in October, 1963. This was a feat which coincided with the inauguration of the University of Ibadan as an independent and autonomous institution of higher learning" (1978: 10).

It will be of utmost importance here to add that the themes in the Theatre of the Nigerian English Literary Dramatists and The Contemporary Alarinjo Travelling Theatre practitioners are often similar; some themes in

their various works included need for emancipation of Nigeria from British domination and the political turmoil which took place immediately after independence. The Contemporary Alarinjo Travelling Theatre and the Theatre of the Nigerian English Literary Dramatists, therefore, inescapably marked and represented a certain epoch and developmental manifestations in the history of theatre and drama in the country.

The practitioners of these two theatrical movements partly found their craftsmanship not only from Western theories and practice, but considerably tapped into the vast Yoruba culture and tradition in the creation of themes in their performances, including themes that addressed social issues and those that merely celebrated Yoruba customs and tradition. And, in addition, the craftsmanship of the plays of The Contemporary Alarinjo Travelling Theatre practitioners such as Hubert Ogunde, DuroLadipo, Kola Ogunmola and others, alongside the Theatre of the Nigerian English Literary Dramatists such as Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, KoleOmotosho, Bode Sowande, Zulu Shofola and Wale Ogunyemi and many others cannot be dissociated from western influence.

The creation of the First School of Drama in Nigeria - The University of Ibadan - in 1963

The first school of drama at the University of Ibadan was established in 1963, just three years after the country gained its independence. Ibadan is an old city which was formerly a part of the old western region, but is known today as the capital city of Oyo State, Nigeria. The creation of this university turned out to be a major catalyst and factor in the development of theatre and drama in Nigeria. Adedeji comments:

The English language theatre had been set to struggle for its own existence on the professional level. Aided by the establishment of the first School of Drama at the University of Ibadan in 1963 for the training of professional theatre artists and educators, the foundation was supposedly laid for the boost of the theatre in English. The English language had acquired an aura of prestige and encouraged the building of an elitism which had the means and resources to support a viable theatre. (1980: 16)

Apart from the fact that the Ibadan School of Drama, which today is known as 'The Department of Theatre Arts', University of Ibadan, has trained

numerous theatre practitioners; it has also produced large numbers of notable theatre and drama critics, theatre directors, stage managers, technical directors, costumiers, designers, body make-up artists, film directors, choreographers, television producers, playwrights, script-writers, novelists and others.

The notable theatre icon, Wole Soyinka, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986, is a product of the department. The number of notable scholars and theatre practitioners produced by the Department of Theatre Arts is extensive; however, this study focuses only on those of utmost relevance to the study.

Many Nigerian writers, specifically playwrights, received international training at certain times in their careers as theatre scholars and practitioners. Consequently, their contact with the Western theatre and drama of Europe, America, and Asia and many other parts of the world must have, in one way or the other, influenced their theatrical and dramatic works, both in text and performance. Their exposure to the theatre and drama of different epochs and major developments that shaped the history of the world such as the classical theatre of the Greeks and the Romans; the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the invention of the printing press, the exploration of Africa by the Europeans, the 'Industrial Revolution' and the Modern Age among others must have enriched their knowledge about world theatre. Adesokan expands on this matter when he asserts that: "The development of this theatre, [English literary drama] like a good number of other cultural products of modern Nigeria, has been closely linked to the colonial educational system" (1996: 92).

The creation of the school of drama in Nigeria at the University of Ibadan in 1963 also marked the beginning of high level of literary, specifically in theatrical and dramatic, experimentation and exploration by the Nigerians and other foreigners who were residing in the country at the time. The residence of these foreigners in Nigeria was attributed firstly to what appeared to be self-imposed exile, since a huge number of them fled their country to escape the colonial oppression in their countries of birth. A good example of this is the involvement of Ezekiel Mphahlele, a South-African writer who was a founding member of the Mbari Club. Noticeably, the creation of first school of drama at the University of Ibadan has then paved a way to the establishment of other theatre and drama schools in the country. A considerable number of Federal, state and private universities

all over Nigeria today, have a department of theatre, drama, performing arts and creative arts. Apart from the universities that contributed to the development of theatre in Nigeria, other organizations also acted as instigators of development and experimentation. The Mbari Club was one such an organization.

The creation of the Mbari Club

The Mbari Club was a social organization which later became a strong and useful platform for artistic and academic deliberation and training. This club later put the University of Ibadan and Nigeria on the world map as a hub for literary development in Africa. The Mbari Club brought together many Nigerian and foreign playwrights, theatre directors, novelists, poets, theatre designers and others, under the same umbrella for collective reasoning and possible solutions to the various problems facing the continent. One of the major and immediate topics which were the cardinal foci of the Mbari Club at the time was the possible ways of liberating South Africa and other parts of Africa which were still in the hands of dictators and oppressive governments. The Mbari Club contributed immensely to the post-colonial build-up of all forms of arts, but more specifically to theatre and drama (both literarily and in practice), in such a way that they put to use as a viable means of discussing, exposing and informing the larger society of the country about the various ills and vices at the end of colonialism.

The importance of the creation of the Mbari Club (an Igbo word for 'creation') in Ibadan in 1961, and later on in Osogbo in South Western Nigeria with the help of Ulli Beier (a German anthropologist and a teacher at the University of Ibadan at the time) cannot be overestimated, particularly in the area of establishing a creative art forum which inevitably contributed to the artistic development of many Nigerian theatre artists and dramatists.

The Mbari Club was a catalyst in the development of modern African visual and verbal art. The German scholar, Ulli Beier, the South African writer, Ezekiel Mphahlele, and Nigerian scholars such as Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, J.P. Clark and Demas Nwoko were the founding members of the first Mbari Club.

In 1962, an additional club was formed by Ulli Beier, Mphahlele and Duro Ladipo (an Osogbo based folk-opera dramatist), to also serve as an artistic and intellectual centre to stimulate the people of Osogbo and its environs. This club was called MbariMbayo (Adepoju 2008: 665).

In an additional account, Wole Ogundele, a renowned lecturer who has taught Nigerian literary drama for many years, in a personal interview at the Department of English and Literary Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria, on 10th June, 2010, gave an enlightening explanation on the formation of the Mbari literary and artistic club; he equally provided some useful insights into what necessitated its creation:

Many young artists at the beginning of the Sixties that is, immediately after the independence of the country, were looking for a platform to exchange their views and share their various talents and so, in 1961, the Mbari Writers and Artists Club was born in Ibadan, founded by the German writer and critic, UlliBeier. He was later joined on invitation by Wole Soyinka, Georgina Beier, J. P. Clark-Bekederemo, Chinua Achebe, Christopher Okigbo, Amos Tutuola, Ezekiel Mphahlele, D. O. Fagunwa, Dennis Williams, Demas Nwoko, UcheOkeke, Frances Ademola and JanheinzJahn (the ethnologist) and many others to mention but a few.

Ogundele also posits that:

The Mbari Club was a large-scale project with various activities including visual arts exhibitions, theatres, creative workshops and a publishing house. The latter played a decisive role in the birth of modern African literature; in addition to the writings of its members and adherents, it published the South African artists and writers such as Dennis Brutus and Alex La Guma. For the visual arts, it presented the pioneers, such as the painters UcheOkeke and Yusuf Grillo, the sculptor and painter Demas Nwoko and the silk-screen artist, Bruce Onobrakpeya. All these great individuals later became well known artistes in their respective vocations in the country and abroad.

Adepoju, commenting on the remarkable achievement of the Mbari Club, states as follows:

The club provided a space for creative interaction, fueled by its library; sponsored exhibitions of artists of African descent from within Africa and

the Diaspora, as well as non-black artists, and ran the magazine *Black Orpheus*, which Beier had founded in 1957 with the pioneering German Africanist Janheinz Jahn. The club developed a publishing house that published what have become iconic works of modern African literature. It also initiated and hosted performances of seminal African theatrical and musical works. (2008: 665)

The crucial role of the Mbari Club was the creation of a true movement of contemporary African artists whose ultimate aim was to generate a new artistic culture. They reconciled the continent's cultural traditions with the technical language imported by the colonialists. It was this same Mbari Club that served as the arena where art icons met to discuss and proffer solutions to the socio-political and economic problems of the country at the time, and where they got inspiration from, as well as the drive for the struggle for emancipation from postcolonial, socio-political and economic complications that often face newly independent countries, such as Nigeria. In his interview, Ogundele notes that "the club marked the beginning of the awakening of the struggle for a better society by many Nigerian artists of various vocations in the country" (2010).

Some of the impact and influence that has been attributed to both the Mbari Club at Ibadan and the MbariMbayo Club at Osogbo included the flourishing artistic and academic environment which served as a platform for the unification of Nigerians and other nationals, in a bid to find a common resolution to the socio-political and economic challenges facing the country at the time. By inference, the creation, as well as the artistic and academic activities of the Mbari Club and the MbariMbayo Club, also contributed immensely to the beginning of arts as a potent tool capable of dissecting the social ills, economic hardship and political unrest in Nigeria in a bid to surmount them. Rea, in regards to the foregoing, explains that:

Perhaps the most important publishing exercise at this time was the journal *Black Orpheus*. While *The Hom*, a student magazine first edited by J.P. Clark, indicated what was to come, it was *Black Orpheus* that catered for the writers and poets of Ibadan as they came into their full maturity. Edited at first by Ulli Beier, a German ex-patriot, who arrived in Ibadan in the 1950s to teach in the University extramural department, the journal included poems and prose by Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark, Christopher Okigbo, the South African writer Ezekiel Mphahlele,

Abiola Irele, Ama Ata Aidoo, D.O. Fagunwa and Chinua Achebe (...).
(2006: 41)

Noticeably, during this period, the association of Wole Soyinka (who later became the co-editor of *Black Orpheus* between 1960 and 1964) and other theatre and drama scholars and practitioners with the Mbari Club and Mbari Mbayo Club was an enhancement which radically sharpened and informed their forms and contents in creating theatre and drama which was well structured to confront the socio-political and economic problems facing the country.

Characteristics of theatre and drama by the Nigerian English literary dramatists

Unlike Hubert Ogunde's political theatre, which started largely with no definite consideration for stage directions and operatic styles of actors singing their lines and progressing to the point of improvisational acting styles by the actors, scripting of dialogue and culminating into the cinemas, the Nigerian English literary dramatists such as Soyinka, Clark and many others who came later had always adopted and started creating their plays in the western styles of playwriting.

Their plays followed well-developed plots, well-built characters (minor and major), and went ahead to create conflict resolution as the plays climaxed. The costumes and lightings are adapted to support the themes of the plays, while the stage designs were often considered inside the text of the plays, thereby serving as instructions for the directors when staging the play.

The thematic preoccupation and specific subject matters in many of the plays are creatively crafted. One phenomenon about their published play-texts is their geniuses in combining well-known popular traditions of western playwriting techniques such as dramatic theatre and epic theatre as has been seen in some of their works, even though many among them have occasionally denied any deliberate attempt at conforming to any western tradition, techniques and styles of playwriting.

It must be emphasized that some of the thematic preoccupations and subject matters found in traditional Yoruba theatre and drama – such as love, reward of patience, fantasy, jealousy, clash of culture, immoralities, traditions, values, the punishment of evil and compensation of doing good

-, dramatic biographies of favourite Yoruba heroes, as well as some straight-forward didactic pieces can also be found in some dramatic works of Nigerian literary dramatists.

In relation to this, Omofolabo believes that "There is a preponderance of straight dramas in literary theatre, but there are also many great tragedies and comedies. Themes and subject matters are varied and complex. While thematic construct, dramatic structure and performances style are clearly Yoruba, there is still a lot of indebtedness to Western traditions in stylistic and technical means of production" (2004: 626).

Plays such as *Dance of the Forest*, written in 1960, and *Death and King's Horseman*, written in 1975, and many other plays by Wole Soyinka depict themes and subject-matters which are similar to that of traditional Yoruba theatre and drama. *Kunrunmi* (1971) and *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (1971) by Ola Rotimi also depict themes and subject matters which have close resemblance to the many stories told in a typical traditional Alarindo performances. Various works by Femi Osofisan, such as *Morountodun*, share themes and subject matters which are related to Yoruba oral literature and performance. The reason for this artistic influence on the various works of modern Nigerian playwrights and others is that they find the Yoruba culture and tradition useful as sources which can provide them the needed materials for creating and telling their story. The Nigerian literary dramatists adapt, tap into and use Yoruba oral literature and performances in their various dramatic works to query, question and ask pertinent questions pertaining to the post-independent socio-political and economic situation or condition which has been generally believed to be unfavourable to the Nigeria masses.

Conclusions

The emergence of early modern Nigerian writers such as D.O. Fagunwa and, later on, Amos Tutuola has influenced the works of the modern Nigerian dramatists in terms of adaptation of stories present in the prose narratives of early modern Nigerian writers into full length plays by playwrights and theatre directors such as Soyinka, Rotimi and Osofisan.

In addition, the creation of the Mbari Club marked the beginning of the academic journey of a true movement of contemporary African artists whose ultimate aim was to generate a new artistic culture towards a better

Nigeria and African continent. They reconciled the continent's cultural traditions with the technical language imported by the colonialists. It was this same Mbari Club that served as the arena where art icons met to discuss and proffer solutions to the socio-political and economic problems of the country at the time, and where they got inspiration, as well as the drive for the struggle for emancipation from postcolonial, socio-political and economic complications that often face newly independent countries.

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Diaspora Theatre and the Yoruba Sacred Tradition: Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*

Lekan BALOGUN*

Abstract

Poet and playwright, Aimé Césaire occupies a prominent place in the history of Caribbean literature generally, and postcolonial Shakespeare adaptation scholarship in particular. His adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, entitled *A Tempest*, described by Peter Dickinson as a "classic of postcolonial drama," has continually been examined by scholars in light of how the play engages, and consequently exposes, Shakespeare's text as a "foundational allegory of the experience of colonization and the expression of cultural imperialism" (Dickinson 2002: 194-5). Most commentators have however neglected to explore the play's cultural content, while those who did merely acknowledged without detailing how, and to what extent, Césaire has deployed African rituals both in characterisation and in the area of theatricality. This essays re-examines the text with particular attention on the ritual aesthetics under which the political metaphor is subsumed. The paper argues that the ritual aesthetics in question derives from the Yoruba epistemology, and then links diaspora theatre and Césaire's dramaturgy in the play to both *The Tragedy of King Christophe* (1963) and *A Season in the Congo* (1967), and to the same Yoruba ritual source.

Keywords: Césaire; òriṣà; sacred tradition; Shakespeare; Yoruba

Introduction

"When I claim Africa that means I am claiming African cultural values"
(Aimé Césaire in Jacqueline Leiner 1980: 149)

In her exploration and subsequent location of the origin of the cultural contexts of Caribbean theatre and performance in African rituals which predate colonialism and/or the horrors of the Middle Passage, Elaine

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Savory stresses the use of such paralinguistic forms including masking, music and/or dance and storytelling, possession, ritual symbolism among many others. Traces of these aesthetic forms are also to be found in neo-African and creolized cult practices such as Rastafarianism, Shango worship, vodoun, and in the liturgy of the African-centred Baptist church, as well as in Calypso and carnival music. According to Savory, while the theatrical utilisation of this folk tradition explores on the one hand “African identity in the Caribbean,” it “immediately brings together contemporary issues with a sense of African-Caribbean history and community” on the other hand (Savory 1995: 249-50). However, following Wole Soyinka who mentions the “capability of the drama (or ritual) of the gods to travel as aesthetically and passionately as the gods themselves have, across the Atlantic” (Soyinka 1976: 7), Joni L. Jones explicitly locates among the Yoruba the origins of such theatricality that Savory identifies. She contends that the Yoruba not only boast of a strong presence in the diaspora where their spirituality has been re-imagined to suit their new environments, diaspora theatre also demonstrates the recognition that spirituality is fundamental to Yoruba ritual and performance through which the people “connect the material world with cosmic forces on the spiritual plane,” and that diasporic aesthetics are grounded in “the power, sound, movement, and vibration of the *orisa* along with the twin forces of resistance and survival” (Jones 2005: 321-3). At the centre of Yoruba traditional religion and epistemology are the Òrìsà – the “*eni orí sà dá*” or preeminent beings – a pantheon of avatars and deities presided over in a transcendental manner by the One and Infinite Essence, Olodumare (God), from whom emanates, or is derived, àṣe (ashe), which represents the central organizing feature of the Yoruba worldview.¹ Yoruba belief is strong about the presence and continued influence of the Òrìsà over human actions and conducts, because the Yoruba universe is considered to be a shared relational and interactive space that is populated by human beings and their ancestry, an “integrated essentiality” due in part to the “animist interfusion of all matter and consciousness” (Soyinka 1976: 15, 145), that is represented in part by the pantheon. Either in Yoruba land of Nigeria or its diaspora, the same aforementioned religious knowledge/practices have influenced the literature that developed along with them although this body of works is mostly oral in nature. Abiola Irele has argued that

In no other area of Africa [as well as its diaspora] is the elaboration in literature of a continuous stream of the collective unconscious from the traditional to the modern so clearly evident, and as well marked out, as in Yoruba land...In Yoruba land we have the extraordinary situation where the vast folk literature, alive and vigorously contemporary, remains available to provide a constant support for new forms. (1981: 175)

In the Caribbean, Aimé Césaire was among the first set of dramatists to demonstrate how that particular Yoruba ritual aesthetics along with other meta-theatrical elements work in postcolonial Shakespeare adaptation through the introduction into *A Tempest*, of two deities from the Yoruba pantheon, Eshu and Shango. *A Tempest*, hailed by Eric Livingstone as “iconoclasm incorporated into a revisionary orthodoxy” (1995: 192), in its use of ritual symbolism and metaphors “to dramatize a theory of Black subjectivities” (Dickinson 2002: 195), shows how the Yoruba have successfully claimed for themselves a heritage that is noted throughout its diasporic history for “its quiet resilience and capacity for survival in foreign languages and cultures” and centrality in “artistic forms and theories” (Wright 1993: 6,11); and how either in Yoruba land of Nigeria or its diaspora, Yoruba ritual and its aesthetics are deployed to support new forms including Shakespeare adaptation. It is this ritual aesthetics that we term the “Sacred Tradition” in this essay.

Sacred tradition, then, means theatrical resources that are forged on the template of Yoruba religious rituals. Femi Osofisan mentions that such an artistic approach deploys dramaturgical techniques now often termed “total theatre” and is marked by the use of other paralinguistic elements of song, music, dance, as well as movement, magic and trance, together with dialogue, which shows that the sacred tradition “strives for entertainment and/or socio-political enlightenment [and] seeks for a more profound meaning in the realm of Yoruba metaphysics” (Osofisan 2007: 33). Which means that works of this nature rely on the African/Yoruba festival mode, identified by their complex invocation of “multiple artistic media orchestrated to a common purpose at once spiritual and serious, playful and entertaining. *It is in their nature to be meaningful on several levels...*” (Cole 2009: 12; emphasis added). What comes out strongly in the end from such plays, particularly in terms of being “meaningful on several levels” as Césaire’s example in *A Tempest* shows, is the “deep philosophical and

metaphysical exploration” of issues that concern the people, either in Africa or in the Caribbean.

Whereas a number of Western scholars, including Paul Sutton, have written that although the Caribbean shares a common contemporary predicament, it has largely remained a region of immense political, and perhaps cultural, diversity. Sutton contends that, although there are “common themes and shared experiences that bring the [Caribbean] countries together, much politically [also] pull them apart” (Sutton 2000: 5). He argues that the problem should be traced to colonial intrusion and the legacy that it left behind, for “two distinctive political characteristics are noticeable in the Caribbean: while the English-speaking Caribbean has emerged the most democratic although not entirely untroubled by divisive issues, the French-speaking Caribbean are dominated by authoritarian regimes which have contributed to the endemic poverty in the region” (Sutton 2000: 2). While this assertion may be true of politics in the Caribbean, there might be a need to re-examine Sutton’s assumptions in light of the cultural reality that we have already sketched above, and with what we aim to present in this essay of Césaire’s *A Tempest* and its deployment of some aspects of Yoruba ritual aesthetics. Such an assumption by Sutton also recalls the fact that the Yoruba ritual content of Césaire’s adaptation of Shakespeare has not received its deserved attention from scholars, despite the huge and vigorous attention that the play has been paid in postcolonial adaptation scholarship.

This essay aims to fill that gap by examining the Yoruba ritual imagination that we encounter in *A Tempest*, as we also re-assess Sutton’s submission about the Caribbean political and cultural landscape. First, we shall examine Césaire’s explicit expression of his connection to his African roots, the Yoruba tradition and its subsequent proliferation across the world due to the trans-Atlantic trade, including its aesthetic realisation in diaspora theatre, and, finally, Césaire’s use of the “Sacred Tradition” in *A Tempest*, including the political imperative that is subsumed therein.

Ogbè wèhìn wò: Césaire and his African ancestry

Césaire’s dramaturgy was influenced by his acute sense of awareness about his African origins, an awareness that he fully expresses through the négritude movement and in his oeuvre of works. In a comparative study of Nicolás Guillén and Aimé Césaire’s poetry, Josaphat Kubayanda points out

that “Africa is central to the Caribbean search for signification” (qtd. in Irele 2001: 154). It is a search that is anchored in the function that Africa performs for the diaspora as “a symbol of personal redemption and a source of new poetic and spiritual values” (Irele 2001: 154). Femi Ojo-Ade has also written that for Césaire “the most notable point is that both... are interwoven... Africa and her Diaspora, mother and child, twins, Siamese, with the cord cut but the same blood running through their veins”; Césaire himself acknowledges this claim and does not deny his awareness of the transformational and transcendental capability of such a vision that Ojo-Ade paints, “of and African/Caribbean mythology” by making his heroes “metamorphose into divine beings” (2010: 126,141). Césaire’s approach in his dramaturgy is at once mythopoeic and political, and founded on the tenets of négritude.

In an essay, Césaire articulates the central philosophy of négritude, that it was “founded upon an essential will to integration, to reconciliation, to harmony, that is to say, to a just insertion of man in society and in the cosmos through the operational virtue of justice, on the one hand, and of religion on the other” (1979: 185). From the perspective of the social relevance of art, Abiola Irele argues that Césaire’s négritude was born out of both a personal and collective vision of an African past, the social experience and awareness that cannot be separated from African mythology, and of the social commitment of a writer to the demoralizing conditions of her/his people (Irele 2001: 153). For Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, it is an expression of a commitment to a new “ethic of being” that is founded on “the recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place” (1989: 8). It is such a crucial function that the Yoruba mythology performs in Césaire’s body of works.

Moreover, Césaire also construes aspects of his oeuvre as a critique of postcolonial African and diaspora leadership – a concern that runs through his other two well-known plays: *The Tragedy of King Christophe*, which chronologically follows the post-revolution period in Haiti from 1806-1820 and dramatises how African/Caribbean leaders transform democracies into dictatorship; and *A Season in the Congo*, which deals with the extreme exploitation of an independent African country by colonial forces (Belgium and France in particular) with the assistance of some Black leaders. In a statement that he made in 1971, Césaire also articulates this same point:

At present, I am particularly struck by the immense difficulties that Africa has to get started, to take off, to affirm herself. I suffer for the West Indies but I also suffer for Africa. But, nonetheless, I am not losing hope. It is important for me that Africa succeed. I believe that I would be more easily consoled by a failure of the West Indies than by a failure of Africa. Because, when Africa succeeds, I believe that implicitly, partially, the rest will also be resolved. (Kesteloot and Kotchy 1973: 233)

Together with *A Tempest*, Césaire's *The Tragedy of King Christophe* and *A Season in the Congo* form a "triptych of decolonization in the African [and diaspora] world, given the combative and dialectical energies of negritude itself" (Livingstone 1995: 182), and demonstrate how Yoruba mythology can effectively contribute to global discourse through Caribbean literature and theatre, and postcolonial Shakespeare adaptation scholarship in particular. Thus, as performative devices in the diaspora, the essentially ritually-based Yoruba forms that we shall be examining in *A Tempest*, while functioning effectively to address political concerns, are also utilised both to strengthen community identity, and to ensure the people's reconnection to the ancestral roots from which they were broken by the slave trade (Savory 1995: 249). For Césaire, then, *négritude* was the deployment of that Yoruba ritual matrix through the characters of Eshu and Shango that he has drawn from the *Òrìṣà* pantheon and introduced into *A Tempest*. It is, to summarise, an aesthetic choice that suggests the "dramatic exteriorization of a mental rite of passage," and of the use of spirituality to apprehend situations that otherwise would have remained elusive (Irele 1981: 136-7), a specific spirituality of the Yoruba provenance.

Although geographically the Yoruba occupy the south-western parts of Nigeria, a territory that extends to "the swamps and lagoons of the coast" down to the "woodland savannah and distant bend of the Niger" thus covering a distance that roughly equates the size of Great Britain (Robert Smith 1988: 7), culturally, the Yoruba world consists of "a seamless continuum and, more specifically, religious circuit of passage through a world of ancestor-worship" (Derek Wright 1993: 6). Before the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the Yoruba practiced a very well-developed cultural and occupational practice in which they had the *òrìṣà* related to their professions as patron-gods. The ritual/occupational system ensured the evolvment of a thriving and sustained tradition, with elaborate

ceremonies at home in Yoruba land. These devotees and guilds of trade unions were specialists in their own right, and were among those brought as slaves to the New World (Aiyejina and Gibbons 1999: 35-6). This established system of god-human relationship through occupation assured the perpetuity of Yoruba culture and tradition in the New World in spite of the horrors of the slave trade and the harrowing experience of the Middle Passage. Not only did the transatlantic Slave Trade ultimately ensured the spread of the Yoruba to places like the Americas, Europe, Asia, Canada and the Caribbean, several religious practices also sprang up along with the establishment of a very strong diaspora in those places.

As Peter F. Cohen writes, although these rites are classified generally under the Yoruba term “Òrìṣà,” but spelt variously as Orisha in the British-Caribbean; Orixá in Brazil; and Oricha in Cuba, they include the body of pantheon in Yoruba land of Nigeria and the several traditions devotedly exclusively for their worship in the diaspora (2002: 17), including the well-known Santería (Regla de Ocha or La Regla de Lucumi) in the Caribbean areas of the Spanish Empire which emerged from the “dressing of the Orisa in Christian garb in order to circumvent the prohibition of their worship under Catholic strictures in place since colonial times”; Candomblé (Dance in honour of the gods) in Brazil and other Portuguese areas; Orixá/Orisha and Patakin in Cuba and many others such as the Umbanda and Obeah (Lima 1990: 33-42). Consequently, the Yoruba in the diaspora are known and called by the names of some of their òrìṣà or by their spoken language: Nago or Jeje in Brazil and Haiti; Şàṅgó /Shango in Trinidad and Tobago, while in Cuba and in some other New World nations, they are called “Lucumi” from “Olukumi,” or “My friend” (Mason 2015: 2). This linkage to the Yoruba roots has remained intact, and is often exploited in both the literature and theatre of the diaspora.

In Caribbean rituals and theatre for example, we have the use of mask (we also encounter same in Césaire’s *A Tempest*) which conveys a sense of a fluid identity wherein the human personality in the Caribbean is presented as “connected to a cycle of change from the metaphysical to the physical and again, after death, to the metaphysical” and suggests as well “a complex perception of the relation of individual personality to communally understood symbol, as well as the possibility of the possession of the individual by the spirits” (Savory 1995: 247). The same applies to possession which is “the entry of a god into the living body of a celebrant

[and] witnessed by many in the Caribbean religious rituals” and which traces its origin to the Yoruba practice called “gùn,” that is, “to mount” in which an òrìṣà possesses a devotee in a ritual ceremony. Karin Barber writes that both the devotee and the òrìṣà engage in a defined mutually-involved relationship, “the òrìṣà possesses the devotee; but the devotee also, in a different sense ‘possesses’ the òrìṣà... especially at the climactic moments of festival or on other highly-charged ritual occasions” (1981: 734). This god-human relationship is often realised in the Yoruba diaspora whether or not there is a ritual ceremony such as in the theatre. While Césaire does not utilise possession in anyway in *A Tempest*, mask, òrìṣà characters, symbolism and other ritual elements feature prominently in the play, and will be discussed presently.

Césaire’s *A Tempest*: Dramatizing the Sacred Tradition

Commentators on *A Tempest* have generally neglected to explore the Yoruba ritual aspect of Césaire’s aesthetics, but focused instead on the play’s postcolonial assumptions (See: Roberto Fernández Rematar 1974; Ruby Cohn 1976: 267-309; Trevor, R. Griffiths 1983: 159-80; Paul Brown 1985: 48-71; Francis Barker and Peter Hulme 1985: 191-205). In a much recent publication, *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriation on a Global Stage*, Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia claim that they bring together “global” transformations of Shakespeare that are drawn from “local traditions, values, and languages of various communities and cultures around the world”. Meanwhile the book, which includes twelve essays on diverse adaptation/appropriation drawn from different authors and cultures and which claims to have “situated Shakespeare in a range of social (and cultural) practices” (Dionne and Kapadia 2008: 6), fails to feature the Yoruba culture. In “Shakespeare and Transculturation: Aimé Césaire’s *A Tempest*”, Pier Paolo Frassineli merely acknowledges Césaire’s awareness and use of Yoruba myth, but concentrated on presenting what he calls the “multicultural” approach to the text and its claim to a theory of transculturation (2008: 173-86), without engaging how Césaire deploys the cultural and political content of Yoruba myth and ritual in the text. Few scholars who have identified Césaire with the Yoruba have merely mentioned in passing that important fact.

Whereas for the most part in *A Tempest* Césaire draws from Shakespeare’s play in the areas of characters that are similar and a plot that

follows Shakespeare's closely, he also diverges significantly by deploying Yoruba ritual tradition and its aesthetic in order to effect key changes that include storytelling, characterisation, symbolism and other theatrical elements. Along with Ariel and Caliban, Césaire adds to his cast from the Yoruba mythology and Òrìsà pantheon both Eshu and Shango. Both mythical characters also have their symbolic relevance that we explore below; whereas Ariel is now a mulatto slave and not a sprite, and Caliban is a black slave, who displays a high level of awareness and cultural consciousness. Césaire also links this particular character to another one in Yoruba mythology whose story predates that of Eshu and Shango on the pantheon. Finally, Césaire also changes the setting of the conflict that he dramatises to an island somewhere in the Caribbean. The setting also has its own symbolic relevance in Yoruba ritual thought. The rest of this essay addresses itself to these significant changes.

Césaire generally construes his play to be a story by adopting the oral narrative style (storytelling), and presents his characters as masked characters. Césaire utilises similar technique of narration in *A Season in the Congo* and *The Tragedy of King Christophe*: the Sanza Player is the storyteller in the former, while the Masters of Ceremonies are the storytellers in both *The Tragedy of King Christophe* and *A Tempest*. Christopher Balme writes that orality of this kind uses "culturally defined texts and signs" and is derived from "a mythological and oral historical base" (1996: 186). Moreover, Irele argues that such an approach that draws from oral tradition underlines the assumption that certain narrations are much "more than the adoption of [a foreign] language and narrative technique in the realities of the new environment; it also [suggests] a total appropriation [of the Yoruba tradition] in order to bring African expression into a living relationship with the tradition of literature in English" (2001: 175) in a foreign environment.

Césaire uses the mask to replace Shakespeare's characters. Although this change in "characterisation" suggests a departure from Shakespeare's dramaturgy, we should also consider how Césaire merges Western theatrical tradition with Yoruba traditional form. He writes that the masks are created, and expected to perform their role in the play, in "an atmosphere of psychodrama"; hence, through the masks his characters undergo a "process of recoding," and the "syncretism of culturally heterogeneous signs and code" with a foreign one (Balme 1996: 66).

Moreover, while these characters are now Césaire's, "Come, gentlemen, help yourselves. To each his character, to each character his mask... It takes all kinds to make a world" (Césaire 2002: 7), he uses them to articulate the essentiality of the mask to existence and continuity. And, when an understanding of the masks' significance is approached from the religious point of view, we come to realise how they are used to draw attention to and strengthen the belief by the Yoruba people in diaspora in the relationship between the visible present and a perceived past that they hold sacred.

Césaire's characterisation of Ariel and Caliban are influenced by historical contingencies. He explains that, "My text, and that is normal, was greatly influenced by the preoccupations I had at that particular time. As I was thinking very much about a play concerning the United States, inevitably, the points of reference became American... [T]here is the violent and the nonviolent attitude. There is Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and the Black Panthers" (Smith and Hudson 1992: 394). Elsewhere, Césaire explains that the dramaturgical choice is informed by the ideological standpoint that considers the Caribbean region as a part of global politics, "Yes, North America, the West Indies, both" (Kesteloot and Kotchy 1973: 242), while many commentators have continued to exploit this historical metaphors of the play.

Of the two characters however, it is Caliban that has remained crucial to understanding Césaire's political metaphor in the play, and one most scholars have paid devoted attention to. According to Alden Vaughan and Virginia Vaughan, "each age has appropriated and reshaped him to suit its needs and aspiration, for Caliban's unique image has been incredibly flexible, ranging from an aquatic beast to a noble savage, with innumerable manifestations" (1991: ix). Writing further, Vaughan and Vaughan articulate several assumptions that could have inspired the Caliban character. They explain that Caliban is the anagram for "cannibal"; that the source of his name could also be "Calibia" – a town on a nearby African coast which likely inspired Shakespeare's invention of the Algerian witch; or even "kalebon" an Arabic word for "vile dog" and "cauliban" – meaning "black", but that, of certainty, is the fact that Shakespeare's Caliban was created based on 16th and early 17th century documents relating to Europe's discovery of the Western Hemisphere, which ultimately suggests "connections between *The Tempest* and the unfolding

drama of England's overseas empire" (1991: 23-37). Besides, Dryden and Davenant's version of the Shakespeare text influenced Restoration and 18th century interpretations of Caliban's character. In their play which they also titled *The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island: A Comedy*, Sycorax is cast as Caliban's sister although both are "half-fish" and "Two monsters of the Isle" (qtd in Valdivieso 1996: 294). In David Daniell's opinion however, Dryden and Davenant "try to restore what they think of as classical balance by giving Caliban a sister called Sycorax, Miranda a sister called Dorinda, and Ariel a fiancée" (1989: 31); whereas Coleridge's assumption is that Caliban is a monster who lacks both intellectual and moral capabilities of a human being, instead, Hazlitt insists that rather than spite and bestial attributes accorded him, Caliban may actually be a victim of oppression and "the focus of pity and understanding" (Valdivieso 1996: 269-72). Nonetheless, the popular conception of Caliban as a figure of resistance and self-determination in postcolonial discourse was informed by the French social scientist, Octave Mannoni's reassessment and mobilisation of the Shakespeare text in discussing his experience of colonialism in Africa. Mannoni considers Prospero and Caliban as prototypes of the colonizer and the colonized: the Prospero/inferiority complex, and Caliban/dependency complex respectively.

In his influential essay, "Caribbean and African Appropriation of *The Tempest*," Rob Nixon observes that "Mannoni values *The Tempest* most highly for what he takes to be Shakespeare's dramatization of two cultures' mutual sense of a trust betrayed: Prospero is a fickle dissembler, Caliban an ingrate". Further, Nixon contends that Mannoni considers Caliban incapable of surviving without Prospero thereby inspiring "adversarial interpretations of the play which rehabilitated Caliban into a heroic figure, inspired by noble rage to oust the interloper Prospero from his island" (1987: 563-4). But, Césaire changes both the image and mentality of Caliban that both Shakespeare and Mannoni present to their respective audiences. Significantly, Césaire uses Caliban to show his own awareness regarding Yoruba belief in the spiritual and social significance of a name including how it influences people's actions. Caliban contests with Prospero both the spiritual and psychological imperative of his name, as well as the question of identity and personhood that he believes Prospero tramples by calling him 'Caliban', "Caliban *isn't* my name... it's the name given me by your hatred, and every time it's spoken it's an insult" (2002: 20; emphasis in the

original). When Prospero also suggests that he should be called Cannibal, or even Hannibal because, "that fits. And why not...they all seem to like historical names," Caliban insists, "Call me X. That would be best. Like a man without a name. Or, to be more precise, a man whose name has been stolen... Every time you summon me it reminds me of a basic fact, the fact that you've stolen everything, even my identity! Uhuru!" (20). Césaire also utilises the strategy of naming but in another context with regard to the title of his play, *A Tempest*, subtitled, "adaptation for a black theatre," to emphasise both the African/postcolonial imperative of the adaptation and to draw attention to the Yoruba cultural/spiritual resource that developed it; that is, *A Tempest* signifies both an allusion to and divergence from Shakespeare's original title, *The Tempest*, in cultural and political context and dramaturgy. He adopts a similar strategy in *A Season in the Congo*, in which the use of the definite article "a" suggests that the experiences of violence and social disillusionment which plague postcolonial Africa are not only unique, but also a tragically recurring experience.

Of symbols and the dramatic: meaning other than what is seen

Symbolism is central to Césaire's approach in the play both in terms of structure and characterisation. The two points are also connected through the Yoruba ritual aesthetics that they foreground, especially the highly-important *oríta-méta* (crossroads) that we discuss further below. In terms of the structure, Césaire condenses Shakespeare's original five-act into three acts. His approach here is actually deliberate since he adopts the same Three-act structure in both *The Tragedy of King Christophe* and *A Season in the Congo* which he wrote before *A Tempest*. But this approach in *A Tempest* is unique in at least three ways. First, it is unique in terms of the story that is told in Three Acts instead of the Five Acts of Shakespeare's play. According to Babatunde Lawal, the number "three" features prominently in all aspects of Yoruba ritual because it is associated with *àṣe/ashe* (the power to make things happen) controlled by *Èṣù*, a principal *òriṣà* in the aforementioned Yoruba pantheon.² It is also the sign of "*agbára*" that is, dynamic power in its physical and metaphysical dimensions; where the phrase "*Fì ééjì kún ééta*" that is, to put two and three together, is the Yoruba idiom for making up one's mind, *ééjì* (two) is a sign of balance and equilibrium which the "threeness" of *èèta/èta* foregrounds (1995: 44). In *A Tempest*, however, although three is "*méta*" in Yoruba language and the structure of the play, it

is ètèta motif in terms of its ritual aesthetic relevance. Second, the Yoruba conception of ètèta/méta as the sign of completeness connects explicitly to Césaire's division of his play into three acts: three acts which tell one story. Interestingly, it is also in Act Three, scene three, that Césaire brings in "the rebel," Eshu, who threatens the three ancient Egyptian/Greco-Roman deities: Iris, Juno and Ceres, whom he throws into confusion with his song. Third, Césaire's introduction in Act Three of Eshu (Èṣù) who oversees àṣe that is identified with ètèta/méta is also ritually and aesthetically strategic. This is coming as it were during the pastoral masque and celebration of Ferdinand and Miranda's marriage, as well as during the introduction of the three Egyptian/Greco-Roman deities.

Teresa Washington's extensive, informed analysis throws light on the connection between Yoruba ritual, and Èṣù in particular, with the three ancient Egyptian/Greco-Roman deities. Although Èṣù appears to us as Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Michael, and Santo Nino de Atocha in Christian /Catholic idioms in New World syncretic religions, the same Èṣù personality is as well mirrored in the three aforementioned ancient gods through the sexual metaphor of Ferdinand and Miranda's marriage which we describe below. Following Henry Louis Gates, Washington explains how Èṣù embraces dichotomy, frowns at division through gender ambiguity because of the possession of "both a penis and a vagina" as well as the "interconnectedness of binary oppositions" that s/he unifies (Gates 1988: 29); the phallic object in turn connects Èṣù with Ausar, the Lord of Perfect Blackness in Kemet (Ancient Egypt), who was hacked into pieces by his jealous brother Set but revived and pieced together by Aset who was able to recover thirteen pieces of her husband's body that she encased in a phallic structure to represent the only piece she was unable to find. "*Tekhen* is the Kemetic name of the structure that represents Ausar's penis," writes Washington, and it also symbolises "everlasting life, and also the rays of the sun" even as the *tekhen*s of Kemet were priceless monuments and dynastic objects that were treasured during centuries of Persian, Greek, Roman, and Arab occupation of Africa (Washington 2013: 316). What comes out strongly from Washington's analysis, and by extension Césaire's utilisation of Yoruba ritual from which the aesthetics of Èṣù is sourced, is that Èṣù is one and all of these histories combined for "the deeper history of Èṣù, foregrounded in the pre-Christian and pre-Islamic Yoruba thought...has been enhanced and put to the service of modern forms of indigenous

religion as well as the politics of identity" (Falola 2013: 16). As the symbol of the past that is used to project into the future, Èṣù bestrides both the physical and metaphysical worlds as her/his *oríkì* suggests, "Eshu can throw a stone yesterday and kill a bird today" (Cesaire 2002: 49), s/he is also a symbol that is required in order to explore the lost past and to forge a new meaning for the future.

Eṣhù's appearance at Ferdinand and Miranda's party is also culturally significant since s/he is identified with the phallic object in Yoruba mythology. As Washington reminds us, the phallic object identified with Èṣù suggests the òrìṣà's "ability to self-proliferate and regenerate" since like "all African Gods, [Èṣù] understands that the penis and vagina are the gateways to and storehouses of existence" hence it is fitting that Èṣù's "vagina is fecund, and his penis is gargantuan and always erect" (2013: 316). It is also logical, then, for Eshu to enter the scene of the wedding singing what seems to be an obscene/vulgar song. Eshu "instigates rebellion and uses sexual codes for humour and songs of protest" (Falola 2013: 21). Although the song suggests sexual union, there is also the symbolic and metaphysical sensibility that is associated with the sexual organs, "Eshu has no head for carrying burden/he's a gay one with a pointy head. When he dances/he doesn't move his shoulders/Ah, Eshu is a jolly fellow/ Eshu is a jolly fellow/with his penis, he will beat, beat, beat/with his penis" (Cesaire 2002: 70); while Èṣù can instruct with calmness and peaceful behaviour, he can as well use rebellion.

Of another significant mythological exploration is how Césaire creates an Eshu that shares a kinship with Àtúndá whose existence predates the Òrìṣà pantheon, and whose action, in fact, brought the pantheon into existence. This should be understood from the way Césaire frames the conflict between Prospero and Caliban as a reflection of Àtúndá's challenge of Òrìṣà Nlá and the subsequent creation of the Òrìṣà pantheon. In Niyi Osundare's opinion, the Àtúndá/Òrìṣà Nlá relationship "operates in a political economy in which slavery is the source of labour" (1994: 189). In that primeval story of rebellion, Àtúndá used tact and deadly stratagem to dismantle Òrìṣà Nlá, the Absolute god-head, into countless pieces. That "separation of 'essence' from 'self'," was followed by years of drought, pestilence and longing for reunion with the Whole essence by deities and their human counterparts. The bridging of that "gulf of transition" eventually results in the formation of the Òrìṣà pantheon, including Èṣù

who came into being as a result (Adeeko 1998: 15-6; Soyinka 1976: 130-60). While Àtúndá is in that sense “the first guerrilla, the first liberation fighter, the first revolutionary, the first postcolonial subject and revolutionary per-excellence from whom postcolonial subjects and freedom fighters draw their inspirations” (Aiyejina 2010: 2), Caliban reflects that primeval contest in the way he challenged the orthodoxy and imperialism of Prospero, and Césaire himself demonstrates the spark of òrìṣà in him since the òrìṣà are manifestations of the same divine energy source, “shards of the original godhead... all human beings carry a fragment of an original orisha that determines their own essence and makes them responsive to that particular god” (Wright 1993: 7). In his careful study of Césaire’s dramaturgy, his extensive riffing on the African, and especially Yoruba òrìṣà, tradition, Rodney Harris writes that “Among the Francophone black writers of his generation, Aimé Césaire is the one that seems to have best realised the difficult synthesis between the African ancestors and a solid knowledge of classical culture” (1973: 13), that he demonstrates in his body of works and especially *A Tempest*.

Èṣù shares a mutual relationship with Sango as with the individual òrìṣà on the pantheon over whom s/he “enforces the divine sanction of the Supreme Being” (Falola 2013: 10), hence Césaire’s introduction of Shango in his own play is also in order.³ Césaire draws inspiration for this character from the mythology about Sango both in Yoruba land in Nigeria and the diaspora: at home in Yoruba land, Sango is considered to be the òrìṣà that enforces social justice, a warrior who derives his power from Nature (ilè/earth), where he aligns favourably with Èṣù, the controller of the oríta-méta (crossroads). Many Yoruba diaspora writers have used the oríta-méta as an aesthetic system to articulate “the complexity of their location in a cultural twilight zone” and to resolve the crises of separation from their roots. Aiyejina identifies this sort of dramaturgy and approach to literary conception of place and self as “bacchanal aesthetics” which is at once the “artistic practice that appropriates and radicalises the underground cultural practices fashioned by ordinary New World Africans to deal with the realities of enslavement, colonisation, deracination and exploitation” and a process through “the crucible of history and culture” (2010: 16). Meaning that Èṣù is not just conceived as “devil, Satan, demon, fiend” and as “a person of outstanding quality” (*A Dictionary* 1991: 72, 77), but across the Atlantic where s/he has become part of the transatlantic history, of the

tension between relocation and history, “between the violence that led to the forced migrations of people and the long healing process of reconciliation with living in strange lands that later became new homelands,” Èṣù is also the deity who assumes “the role of a signifier that is used to talk about memory, loss, suffering, remembering, resistance, merging of ideas with time and space, and of using the memory of the past to speak to the present” (Falola 2013: 3). Across the Atlantic, a new identity has to be created against the background of displacement and Èṣù plays a significant role in the creation of that identity. Falola writes that

People use [*Esu*] to recreate new meanings, to resist power, to seek vengeance, to reinvent traditions, and to talk about the lost past and the meaning of the new future. *Esu*, the master of crossroads, enters the center in the marketplace of ideas and culture, to become the confluence between the Yoruba in Africa and the Yoruba elsewhere, and between the Yoruba of old and the Yoruba of new. *Esu* moves from what may be characterized as a local Yoruba setting to the global network of cultures...from the transatlantic slave trade, through the abolition of slavery, colonization, post-colonization, and now globalization. (16-7)

Like Èṣù, Sango is also relevant to creating that new identity in the Yoruba diaspora as reflected in rites that are devoted to òrìṣà worship. In the diaspora, rites observed in honour of Sango are done in order to draw power and self-control. Césaire’s Caliban is able to triumph over Prospero, by aligning his own energy with that of Eshu and Shango who represents nature. Césaire’s dramaturgical device here shows the example of “where society lives in a close inter-relation with Nature [and] regulates its existence by natural phenomena within the observable processes of continuity” (Soyinka 1976: 52). Caliban invites Shango because he needs Shango’s support to dislodge Prospero who he believes is anti-Nature, “I am setting forth to conquer Prospero! Prospero is Anti-Nature!” (Césaire 2002: 52). He summons Shango through a chant that reveals the affinity of the deity to nature: Caliban’s chant is accompanied by a loud roar of the sea as the stage direction states. Stephano is frightened by the noise and he asks, “Tell me, brave savage, what is that noise?” to which Caliban responds, “Come on! It’s that howling impatient thing that suddenly appears in a clap of thunder like some god and hits you in the face; that rises up out of the very depths of the abyss and smites you with its fury!” (Césaire 2002: 53), to which Stephano shudders with fright.

In fact, in *A Tempest*, Nature itself is regarded as a living entity, represented by the wind, storm and the flora and fauna of the contested island. Césaire emphasises this point through Caliban's unblemished belief in Nature and everything that is related to it, starting with his mother, Sycorax. "Mother and earth coalesce into a harmonious whole" writes Ojo-Ade, "based upon the unity and continuity of being and survival through struggle" which is also suggestive of "Nature in its quintessential linkage of human to earth" (2010: 267). Unlike Prospero who believes Sycorax is dead, Caliban insists that his mother, who assumes the role of Mother Earth and sacred Nature, is still very much alive, "You only think she's dead because you think the earth itself is dead...I respect the earth, because I know that Sycorax is alive" (Césaire 2002: 18). Thereafter, Caliban chants Sycorax's oríkì which elaborates on her relationship to Nature (the island) and every other elemental forces related to it:

Sycorax. Mother.
Serpent, rain, lightning.
And I see thee everywhere!
In the eye of the stagnant pool which stares back at me/ through the
rushes, in the gesture made by twisted root and its awaiting thrust.
In the night, the all-seeing blinded night/the nostril-less all-
smelling night! (Césaire 2002: 18)

Through Caliban's belief in Sycorax's eternal presence, Césaire also uses the island to show how the Yoruba conceive of the earth as Sacred Mother. As Lawal contends, the femaleness of the earth is stressed by its invocation "Ilè, Ògéré, a f'okó yerí... Ìyà mi, aránbalè karara", that is, Earth, Ogere, who combs her hair with a hoe; My Mother, the Extensive One (1995: 41). Besides, the ritual connotation of the earth that Césaire utilises finds further meaning in Yoruba belief about the immortality of the earth, as captured by the saying "Kàkà k'ìlè é kú, ilè á şáá" (Rather than die, the earth will endure through its transformation), which suggests that ilè/earth is not only sacred but also given to longevity. Césaire further draws from the ilè (earth) symbolism by stressing its connection to the environment: the trees, seas, and the things in nature, as opposed to Prospero who abhors them. For instance, when Ariel appreciates the trees and birds around and particularly praises the tranquillity that pervades the surrounding, "The ceiba tree—spread out beneath the proud sun. O bird, O green mansions

set in the living earth," Prospero expresses his displeasure instead, "Stuff it! I don't like talking trees" (2002: 16), however, the wind and storm which begin the play and animate the environment also end it. Césaire uses them to suggest that Nature is very much alive, as much as *ilè* (earth) remains a living and immortal being in Yoruba consciousness. Essentially, Césaire's approach in *A Tempest*, corresponds to how Caribbean writers adapt and/or appropriate existing materials, and especially Shakespeare, to "mediate the distance between [Yoruba] belief systems and western hemispheric realities (represented by Shakespeare) by employing symbolic, temporal and narrative codes reflective of [Yoruba] traditional religions and indigenous epistemes, which cohere to [their] notions of time with its accompanying concepts of causality, unity, and origins" (Kokahvah 2007: 40), even as they use the same to address growing socio-political concerns.

Conclusion

While the political and postcolonial assumptions of Césaire's re-imagination of Shakespeare's supposed last play, *The Tempest*, has gained the attention of scholars over the years, there is also the need to explore and understand the significance of the Yoruba ritual imagination that informs the play's narrative style and other aesthetic elements. Hence, we have argued thus far that Césaire not only links himself to Africa through the *négritude* movement, but he also utilises knowledge of Yoruba ritual and its aesthetics against the background of the atmosphere of *Òrìṣà* syncretic religious rites in the Caribbean in particular and the global Yoruba diaspora in general to adapt Shakespeare. We also address the relevance of Yoruba metaphysics to some of the literature that developed in the diaspora. We contend that in this play in particular, Césaire has deployed such an inherited tradition, the "Sacred Tradition" that traces its roots to Yoruba land of Nigeria in order to address his own French and other Caribbean diaspora political realities.

Notes

1. By *orisa*, we should have in mind the individual deities on the pantheon which is *Òrìṣà*.
2. *Èṣù* is the more appropriate writing of the name or "traditional" Yoruba lexical form while *Eshu* that Césaire uses should be seen in light of the deity's diaspora (Western) equivalent, hence we shall use *Èṣù* where appropriate but retain *Eshu* when quoting directly from Césaire's play.

3. Sango is the more appropriate lexical construct, but we shall retain Shango when referring to the play.

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The Trauma of Existence in *The New York Trilogy*

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Abstract

All along the New York Trilogy, Auster's detectives bear unspoken wounds of their past. Their epistemological quest for the truth is further hampered by their uncertainty to find answers about who they truly are. Chasing a perpetrator turns into chasing a shadow, an inner self, and a sense of belonging. Drawing on Trauma theory, this essay attempts to examine how The New York Trilogy is an artistic materialization of an underlying trauma leading to a confused definition of identity. This article shall primarily focus on the reading of the novel as a traumatic event. It will examine how textual indeterminacies are implemented to convey a problematized self-definition. Ultimately, it shall study how the detectives' quest for the truth is a query for personal, social and artistic belonging. This belonging is lost in the tides of a traumatic past that impedes the articulation of a clear subjectivity.

Key Words: *trauma theory, identity formation, detective, quest, belonging*

Methodology

This paper is an application of trauma theory and its relationship with the theme of identity. The latter becomes infused with doubt, dislocation and confusion. Naturally, identity dislocation is a central focus of postmodernism, where genre parody highlights this artistic dilemma of self-definition. This article attempts to analyse the determiners of trauma in these novels in terms of problematic representation, omission and impersonation conveying a heightened state of loss. Precisely, these insights will be examined from an intergenerational and cultural Trauma angle following the frameworks of Cathy Caruth, Jeffrey Alexander and Dominick Lacapra. Simultaneously, postmodern insights of parody and

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intertextuality shall be referred to in order to link the gravity of the traumatic event to the problematized literary self-definition and by extension artistic self-localization.

Introduction

Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy* has seen the light in 1986 in the form of three instalments that at a first glance may seem completely unrelated, but through a deepened analysis each is a version of another. These three instalments bear different names that magnify the state of vacuum lived by its protagonists. The First is a *City of Glass*, in which identities are easily interchangeable. Each character is a reflection of another in another dimension where the worlds of the book and reality do intertwine. In *Ghosts*, as its name may suggest, characters become meaningless copies of each other in a world where routine prevails. Reality becomes a vicious cycle of repetitiveness and confusion leading to a vain question of self-localization. The instalments end with the thrilling version of *The Locked Room*, where an obsession results in impersonating another man's life and mistaking his identity as his own. Both end up facing a door parallel inside and outside a locked room. One must die, a shot is fired and the identity of who has actually died remains a mystery. One reports being outside, walking down the street while the rest remains unknown. Three instalments that toy with the mind of the reader while problematizing the concept of identity. An identity that is presented in reflections and mosaics that shape the same piece except that at the end of the process of assemblage everything crumbles to ashes and what is left are pieces of papers. In *Trauma*, the confrontation with its initial trigger leads to an extreme state of shock ending in diversion or in violent reactions. The aftermath of the traumatic experience results in the inability to define the incident, narrate it, explain or comment on it. A linguistic block impedes the subject from voicing a latent wound that scars his being. Consequently, the inability to articulate one's trauma is sublimated in the course of writing where the subjects choose a different reality to obliterate every trace of its pre-existence. This applies to the characters of these instalments as well as to the writer himself. To assert the questionability of identity construction, traumatic, generic and artistic readings are in order.

Unspoken trauma: linguistic inexpression Introducing intergenerational trauma

In various situations, human beings may encounter tragic events manifested in the loss of someone dear, torture, kidnapping, fire, drowning, war, and displacement; to name a few. These events trigger mental reactions that will incite a repetitive reliving of the event again and again. In her book *Unclaimed Experience*, Cathy Caruth (1996) contends:

In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. The experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example, who suffers this sight in a numbed state, only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares, is a central and recurring image of trauma in our century (24).

After establishing contact with a traumatic experience, reality becomes quite frightening, dimmed with a chronic instability, an anachronism and recurrent nightmares. Traumatic disorders restrain the ability of self-expression rendering its therapeutic sublimation quasi impossible. Language, which serves as a communicatory means for social integration and spiritual release, loses its power in traumatic situations. In their renowned article the “Emotional Processing of Traumatic Events”, Richard B. Slatcher and James W. Pennebaker define the loss of language as denotative of traumatic speech impediment; they explain:

When someone talks to other people about his or her experiences, it alerts them to the person’s psychological state and ultimately allows him to remain socially tied to them. Conversely, people who have traumatic experiences and do not tell their friends are more likely to live in a detached, isolated state. Consistent with this approach, Rimé (1995) argues that disclosure in the first days or weeks after a trauma has the power to change the quality of a person’s social network by bringing people closer together (2005: 6).

Contrastively, traumatized subjects are unable to relate their experience to others, entrapping them in a perpetual state of shock where language loses

its purpose. The inability to voice the gravity of one's experience will be transmitted through different generations as a form of unresolved psychological indeterminacy. This state will be transferred as a subconscious form of malaise from fathers to sons. Slavery, holocaust, Indian genocides are all transgenerational forms of trauma. Since they were unable to transcend that traumatic experience, it was instilled through different ages as a cultural traumatic syndrome. Jeffery Alexander associates identity to an underlying social reference. For him, trauma is passed through carrier groups which function as the collective agents of trauma process who claim a form of a "Fundamental injury, an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative of some horribly destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, and symbolic reparation and restitution"(2012: 17).

The collapse of social systems entails the loss and fragmentation of societies, while culture widens the gap between the traumatic event and its representation. The carriers group's task lies in informing the public about the different determiners of trauma through revealing "the nature of the pain", "the nature of the victim"; explaining "the relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience" and finally the "attribution of responsibility" (Alexander 2012: 22). By illuminating the following questions describing the source of the trauma, its main inflictor, its devastating effects and its post-traumatic identity reconstruction, the carrier groups can uproot this state of shock. This will lead to the forging of a new discourse that glorifies survival. Lacapra states that cultural trauma transforms into a structural trauma as a form of loss and absence that may fragment wholeness. This state of absence becomes intertwined with a chronic instilment of a disintegrated identity. To overcome it, a new discourse arises on the commemoration of:

A mythical belief in a past-we-have-lost may be combined with an apocalyptic, often blind utopian quest to regain that lost wholeness or totality in a desired future, at times through violence directed against outsiders who have purportedly destroyed or contaminated that wholeness. Compressed between a past and future, one may also construe lost wholeness nostalgically and link it to a future perfect – what might have been if only those in the past had recognized what we presumably know: how to create a true community that will endure as a radiant polity (2001: 195-196).

Re-establishing a temporal framework to retrieve that lost state of identity is a mechanism that functions through the direct recognition of traumatic inflicted pain and its determiners. That is the acknowledgement of the persistent state of an identity disintegration that results from an acute state of loss. To survive a trauma, a mythical narrative of survival should take place to immortalize the communities that have endured such ordeals. Traumatic absence will be thus overcome through the adoption of a surrogate. A surrogate entails the reliance of an alternative system of belief that may bridge the gap between trauma and representation. Later generations and carrier groups will be able to voice the unvoiced leading to traumatic recovery. Ironically, absence, fragmentation and loss entrapping the lives of the protagonists of *The New York Trilogy* have no resolve but to be haunted by the ghost of a fragmented identity of an undetermined past.

Traumatic inexpression: the unescapable state of absence

Extreme traumatic situations lead to a later response of something that has occurred somewhere in the past. This delayed response may result in a post-traumatic syndrome that is characterized by various responses depending on the nature of the traumatic experience. Some subjects may lead to emotional deregulation, including extreme thoughts of anger, sadness and suicidal tendencies. Others may result in complete memory blackouts, chronic episodes of physical and mental dissociation and repetitive replay of the traumatic event. An abnormal version of the self includes helplessness, shame, guilt, stigma and a perpetual feeling of self-loathing. Another traumatic effect includes an obsession with the perpetrator and seeking vengeance of him (Herman 1997: 25). Herman's definition of the post-traumatic syndrome can be reflected in *The New York Trilogy* as its characters seem to be entrapped in the same state of loss, confusion and self-loathing. Among the determiners of trauma is a crippling state of vacuum resulting from a given absence.

In *The City of Glass*, Daniel Quinn has lost his son and his wife in a tragic accident. His life has become meaningless where he hides behind writing mystery novels under a pen name. Quinn's life has become just as faceless, dimmed by a constant state of wandering where he "drifts" and "all places were equal and it no longer mattered where he was". Exactly then, he realizes that "New York was the nowhere he had built around

himself" (Auster 1990: 4). As a traumatized subject, Quinn has become unaware of his surroundings. He has lost perceptions of time, place and purpose as if he was no one and lived nowhere. He even objectifies himself behind the pen name of Max Work who is able to actually detect the truth; this truth that he wants to forget and deny through denying his own identity as a writer. The detachment he feels is physical as his body "wandered aimlessly" placing "one foot after another". He has lost awareness of his own body and it has become a soulless entity that walks on its own. His detachment is also spiritual as he impersonates Paul Auster: the great detective. His traumatized rejection of himself as being devoid of meaning led him to adopt an alternative that may illuminate his life once more. Denying the loss of his family has paved the way for making the transition to a different realm. He has thus sublimated his spiritual and physical dislocation into a psychological reconstruction of an alternative identity. He has ironically become a detective not to look for clues and murderers but to look for what is left of his disintegrated self.

Ironically, in *Ghosts*, the prestigious Mr White gives Blue, a real detective, the task of tailing Mr Black. All Mr Black does is read and write all day in a room while Blue watches, anticipates, hopes and ends up disappointed. The cycle of waiting, reading, observing and writing has become unbreakable. Blue has become aware of his own significance as a copy. Disillusioned by this task, he decides to break the cycle finding that Mr Black was in fact Mr White and that he was made into a third copy. To be devoid of an essence, to be trapped in a cycle of vain repetitive actions indicate that an inherent trauma stifles the blooming of the self. The repetitive act of observing and tailing is in fact a euphemism for the recurrence of the traumatic event. White, who feels the worthlessness and meaninglessness of his life due to an undefined state of lack, hires Blue to watch him and write reports about him. By doing so, he tries to overcome this lack while projecting his own traumatic vacuum on Blue. The latter's projected fragmented identity and lost sense of existence decides to end both lives. He penetrates inside the realm where Black himself is White and where Blue is an intermediate shade of the same self.

Critics and readers of the book may speculate that White has committed suicide ending his derivative versions with him. Thus, due to a certain traumatic experience, probably emotional as it is suggested by the loss of his wife, White conjures up a sadder version of himself. A version

that has no actual awareness of time, place or has no another purpose than to read, sleep and write. Feeling unsatisfied with his bleaker version, he decides to break the cycle by inventing another self. The latter was the verge of his own destructiveness. As such, traumatic self-fragmentation is only healed through death. Trauma is simply a labyrinth, a rotating door that keeps on retracing the same steps to the same centre. This centre is nothing but the psychological entrapment where tragedy has struck.

Fanshawe is neither a detective, nor a copy. He is someone who has abandoned his life and chosen to give it to another. Fanshawe is successful, has written books that he simply has decided not to publish. He was married to a beautiful woman that he has abandoned while about to give birth. He has disappeared like a ghost where no body was found, the circumstances of his disappearance are unknown and the facts of his death or life have remained a mystery. Ever since the death of his father, Fanshawe has drastically changed. His life has become a burden to him where instead of choosing to abide by the predominant system of that time, he has departed on the very denial of his identity. He has simply given his life on a silver platter to his unnamed friend who fell in love with his wife, adopted his son and published his own books. Bestowing his identity on another marks a deepened sense of denial and loss. The trauma of Fanshawe's loss of his father has undergone three different stages. Judith Herman defines them as a difficulty regulating emotions and impulses, emotional numbing, anger and aggression, substance addictions, behavioural addictions (porn, anonymous sex, gambling, etc.), self-harming behaviours (cutting, burning, etc.), dissociation (spacing out, blanking out, losing time, etc.) (1990: 25). Aside from the death of his father, Fanshawe's trauma springs from a dissociative past. He had "an alcoholic mother, an overworked father, innumerable brothers and sisters. I had been to his house two or three times—a great, dark ruin of a place—and I can remember being frightened by his mother, who made me think of a fairy tale witch" (Auster 1990: 207). His anger is of an implosive kind that has only peaked twenty years later. It was followed by self-doubt and personal effacement. Fanshawe has never exteriorized his anger; instead, he has immersed himself in a writing that he has considered as a form of addiction. His wife reported that he has spent hours and hours locked in his room writing. Writing is a sublimation process but for Fanshawe, it feeds his obsession with his own tragedy. Probably, his ultimate

masochistic behaviour is leaving and suffering homesickness, self-banishment and subjugating himself to extreme labour. His traumatic disorder culminates in complete and utter dissociation, where he decides to put an end to his own existence. Death is the only cure for a miserable life he had lived without savouring the joys of love and stability. In his quest for his identity, the writer becomes immortalized as an artistic icon or becomes doomed for losing his own voice.

Traumatic silence and textual ellipsis

The New York Trilogy revolves around a problematic understanding of language. Most characters struggle to find a suitable language to express their ideas or dilemmas, where the act of naming is correlated with the state of being. A failure of expression results in an existentialist impediment of self-definition. Peter Stillman, the distinguished scholar, sought to invent a language that “signifies” because the older one fails miserably to establish an accurate signification between signifier and signified. It has become useless. For traumatic victims, any normative language is unable to convey the depth of their suffering and the magnitude of their loss. Sociologist Catherine Kohler Riessman writes:

[...] some experiences are extremely difficult to speak about. Political conditions constrain particular events from being narrated. The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from awareness. Survivors of political torture, war and sexual crimes silence themselves and are silenced because it is too difficult to tell and to listen (1993: 3).

To invent the perfect language, Stillman imprisons his son for nine years without any physical or linguistic contact. Silence was the only vehicle which Peter Stillman junior was exposed to. As a result, he was unable to master any speech. His conversation with Quinn while he was relating his ordeal is filled with unfamiliar coined gibberish:

No mother, then. Ha ha. Such is my laughter now, my belly burst of mumbo jumbo. Ha ha ha. Big father said: it makes no difference. To me. That is to say, to him. Big father of the big muscles and the boom, boom, boom. No questions now, please. “I say what they say because I know nothing. I am only poor Peter Stillman, the boy who can’t remember. Boo

hoo. Willy nilly. Nincompoop. Excuse me. They say, they say. But what does poor little Peter say? Nothing, nothing. Anymore (Auster 1990: 16).

A traumatized grown man finds it exceedingly difficult to maintain a logical conversation with a complete stranger. Speech impediment is also marked by repetitiveness. Repetitiveness embodies the cyclicity of the traumatic experience where the traumatized subject is entrapped in the circularity of the traumatic event. Repetitiveness is portrayed in the plot of *Ghosts* where Blue's actions are an imitation of Black's actions which are in turn repetitive. In *Ghosts*, Blue tails Black, reads and writes reports endlessly where any notion of time and space become inexistent. A plotless narrative incarnates the difficult state of anguish portrayed by the traumatized victim who finds it extremely painful and hard to express what they have undergone. From incoherent speech, to a repetitive cycle, *The New York Trilogy* becomes a radical traumatic event in *The Locked Room*. The text is laden with indeterminacies. *The Locked Room* is the ultimate silence that cripples the traumatized subject and renders him speechless. Fanshawe and the unnamed narrator are both versions of the same distortion where real becomes imaginary and where imaginary becomes real. A hypothetical realm is born out of the silence. This silence is the gaps that fill the text where nothing is certain. It is the self that swirls in the labyrinth of the unknown. The silence is vocalized by the absence of closure and the absence of Fanshawe as a traumatized figure. Ellipses predominate his past, his current state, his feelings, and the arbitrariness of his decision and the circumstances of his disappearance. The silence conceals the bloodiness of an internal struggle that hampered his quest for self-definition. Subsequently, "his dramas were of a different order—more internal, no doubt more brutal—but with none of the abrupt changes that seemed to punctuate everyone else's life" (Auster 1990: 206).

The anti-detective and the politics of self-definition

Trauma can only heal when the victim confronts the locus of his or trauma and manages to overcome it. Equally, Detective narratives are based on the quest of re-establishing the order or harmony in society by capturing the perpetrator (Todorov 1977: 47). Both quests undertake to restore a given type of harmony. The quest for fixing Identity occurs through regaining the

post-traumatic balance. Detective fiction is centered on reinstating the social order as it has previously existed before the occurrence of the crime as Todorov defines it in his "Typology of Detective Fiction". Patricia Merivale and Susan Sweeny prefer the term metaphysical detective to denote any text that subverts or parodies any typical detective fiction (Bennet 2013: 45). Auster frames this existentialist dilemma of a problematized self-definition through the literary genre of metaphysical detective. The metaphysical detective forsakes his quest for the truth substituting "who-dunnit" with his quest for "who-is-it". The metaphysical detective embarks on a quest for self-definition as he locates how reality is chimerical. He contends that clues are false leads that do not "necessarily work, that is possible to obscure the things they are trying to say" (Auster 1990: 148). The opacity of clue-hunting and the uncertainty of whether a crime has really occurred portray on a parallel level the difficulty of the quest and the shady nature of its determiners. The metaphysical detective becomes, accordingly, a metaphor for the real quest for existing as a traumatized subject and as a writer.

In *The City of Glass*, Quinn is lost in the vast space of the city while confiding his reality as a grieving father and a mourning husband with a detective that he has created on print. At a certain point of the quest, he has realised that the crime has never existed in the first place; that Peter Stillman was probably a figment of his imagination and that the whole case has been a sham. He confounds his narrative as a piece of fiction with reality. In *Ghosts*, Black and White are the same. Victim and perpetrator are identical, just like writer and detective are extensions of one another. In *The Locked Room*, Fanshawe and the unnamed narrator are reflections of one another. Trauma is marked with schizophrenia or dissociation of the self. Detection becomes a quest for finding identity. Ironically, in each instalment, the query for the truth ends with failure. The quest culminates with a letter, a book or a report. The self for postmodern writers is clearly correlated with the invention of a new fiction that voices the traumatic self.

Trauma and the art of writing

A writer's identity is constructed through writing. As Steven Alford contends that "if the self is a text, and if a text knowability is endlessly differed referring with within the cognitive process to other texts (be they

physical texts or other selves) then true knowledge is impossible" (2005: 21). Identity is inscribed through textual references to the self. Accordingly, the struggling of writing a good piece of fiction that is infused with inner references mirrors his inability to express his trauma in a narrative. As a result, he constructs three narratives that are symptomatic of the state of vacuum that he is living in. The spaces in themselves are indicative of his artistic psychological turbulence. *Ghosts*, *City of Glass* and *The Locked Room* are hypothetical dimensions of the self. All spaces denote claustrophobia, confusion and uncertainty. Writing becomes a challenging process where creation undergoes trial, error, failure and limited success. When faced with writer's block, Quinn affirms:

He regretted having wasted so many pages at the beginning of the red notebook and in fact felt sorry for that he had bothered to write about the Stillman case at all. For the case was far behind him now, and he no longer bothered to think about it. It had been a bridge to another place in his life, and now that he had crossed it, its meaning had been lost. (Auster 1990:130)

Defining himself as a Jewish American writer and devising a new piece of fiction is only conceivable through revolutionizing writing. Auster's quest for his identity as a writer is heavy with the holocaust trauma that he carries in his blood as a descendent of survivors. He is torn between integrating himself as a conventional detective fiction writer aligned with Edgar Allen Poe and Conan Doyle and establishing his own literary self. He has wasted so many pages trying to be someone he is not and has decided to write about his struggle during his self-affirmation as a writer. Perhaps, the train scene where Quinn was waiting for Stillman in the station reflects his literary confusion. If he had chosen the rich Stillman, it would have meant his affiliation with the predominant literary custom. Instead, he has chosen the road "less-travelled by" and he has embarked on his quest of redefining himself through a literary trend that is new and unknown. Trauma is manifested through the underlying inferences of concentration camp numbers that are tattooed on a random stranger's arm (Auster 1990: 40). Tattoos entail the engraving of the traumatic wound deep in the blood, rendering a normal man a complete stranger.

The holocaust trauma runs deep in Auster's veins reminding him of a past that he is unable to overcome. As a result, Auster constructs

anachronistic characters that exist outside of space cohabiting two simultaneous worlds. The World of the book is a mirror to the real world where all the writing happens while striving to create the perfect language. Art happens when a medium of expression is created; only then the artist can construct sentences that voice the long repressed traumatic experience. Being a descendent of a holocaust survivor allocates to carrier groups the task of constructing the myth of survival and the paste of the broken pieces of a traumatic self. This cultural wound transforms miraculously into a narrative of survival where the pains of expressing the unrepresentable and relating the unfathomable become accessible through a language of hope. This quest for the perfect language is itself an attempt to locate one's essence in a space of ambiguity that is dimmed by repetitiveness and inaccessibility. Fanshawe's refusal to publish is nothing but an assertion of the challenging nature of self-definition as a writer of a post-traumatic era.

Conclusions

The New York Trilogy is full of mystery. It may seem as the ultimate detective fiction, but it is a frame for a post-traumatic narrative where the quest of self-definition as a writer is an attempt to sublimate the crippling wounds of an intergenerational trauma. The struggles for identity formation coexist with the process of writing as a voice for traumatic inexpression. The task is not that easy owing to the fact that self-definition as a literary outlaw presupposes the experimentation with the unfamiliar territory with a language that no longer signifies. Subsequently, a new language that conveys the depth of an unfathomable traumatic despair only exists in an ontological realm that is laden with confusion, dissatisfaction and indeterminacy. Auster has conceived a narrative of dissociative identities, inexpressive languages and spatial vacuums that only serve to reflect the traumatic nature of the psychological disorder that inhabits holocaust survivors. A mission to devise a new literary genre that detects the quest for the perfect narrative that voices the most silent wounds of all: The Metaphysical detective was thus born. The doomed detective becomes a member of a carrier group that constructs a myth of traumatic survival attempting to overcome the barriers of oblivion and beguiles upcoming generations.

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“The mere habit of learning to love is the thing”:
Janeitism and/in Karen Joy Fowler’s *The Jane Austen Book
Club*

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Abstract

*To the present day, Jane Austen has remained a subject of almost religious adoration for her numerous fans, the Janeites, who keep returning to her writings, take interest in the films and the popular works derived from them, and even seek to surround themselves with objects that remind them of their ‘beloved’. Determined by the desire to engage in social practices that emulate Austenian sociability (O’Farrell 2009: 478-80), many of Jane Austen’s “everyday enthusiasts” (Wells 2011: 11) have joined reading groups/ book clubs in order to discuss her fiction and to better understand its meanings. The flourishing of book clubbing and the reflection on the symbolic values attached to Jane Austen as an icon in the contemporary popular culture are foregrounded in Karen Joy Fowler’s *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2004), a postmodernist novel which focuses on several issues in today’s American society such as gender relations, private lives, public social interactions/rituals and cultural practices or rivalry between the arts, yet all seen in relation to the reception of Austen’s novels by “everyday” American readers. The paper proposes an analysis of this novel, considered illustrative for both postmodernist writing practices and the development of “Austen cult and cultures” (Johnson 1997) at the turn of the new millennium.*

Key words: *Jane Austen, popular culture, postmodernism, intertextuality, reading practices/reader response*

Introduction

Rivalling Shakespeare in terms of popularity with contemporary audiences, Jane Austen ranks among the best known and cherished names in English

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literature. The Shakespeare myth, sustained by myriad forms of interpretation, adaptation and appropriation of the Bard's work, seems to be still essentially symbolic of a highbrow tradition of sophistication, prominence in the theatre and academic study requiring specialist expertise, despite the numerous attempts at overcoming the high/low culture divide through its integration in artistic products representative of and/or appealing to popular culture. Austen, though, as a literary and cultural icon emerging from an equally wide range of forms of reshaping her fictional worlds, is much better anchored in contemporary popular culture, being often perceived as "common cultural property rather than the domain of specialists" (Lanier qtd. in Wells 2011: 20). On the one hand "the favourite author of literary men" (unsigned review, 1870 qtd. in Fowler 2005: 263) and of academics – starting with R. W. Chapman (1923) and F. R. Leavis (1948)¹ – Jane Austen has, on the other hand, gradually made her way to mass audiences' hearts through intense commodification and commercialization to the point of becoming, to use Henry James's famous, yet derogatory, phrase, "dear, our dear, everybody's dear, Jane" (1905 qtd. in Southam 1987: 230), as both her novels and her persona "have acquired a cult status" (Simons 2009: 471).

Considering Austen's reception in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, Judy Simons remarks that:

Never best sellers in their author's lifetime, today Austen's six novels have consistently high sales and are available across the world in paperback and hard cover editions from dozens of publishing houses. Her books have proved sufficiently elastic to suit the full range of modern media. (Simons 2009: 471)

Particularly as a result of the boost given to the Austen cult by the 1995-1996 film adaptations of Austen's most famous novels (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*), the popularity of the English novelist's literary heritage has increased among "everyday enthusiasts" (Wells 2011: 11), i.e. non-academic readers who devotedly return to her writings and take interest in the films and the popular works derived from them. What some critics label as today's "Austenmania" (Pucci and Thompson 2003: 1) is often connected to the "numerous re-presentations in the forms of novels, movies, television series, and fan fictions that keep flourishing from her fictional worlds and characters" (Svensson 2013: 203), recasting and

reconfiguring Austen in “multimodal” forms of experience (Svensson 2013: 204). As Susanne R. Pucci and James Thompson explain,

The Austen phenomenon is located within the interstices of the oral, visual, and spatial delivery systems, systems that reinforce each other and in turn reinforce the interaction among these media. Increasingly, this is the way cultural experiences are disseminated and consumed: see the film, read the book, buy the soundtrack, check out the Web site, visit the ‘actual’ Austen sites in English country houses and countryside... (2003: 5)

Thus, Austen herself, as a cultural icon, has become “multi-faceted”, liable to be marketed, in her turn, as “a commodity, an industry, a corporation, and a celebrity” (Dryden 2013: 103). The ever-growing community of Janeites – mostly women nowadays – from all corners of the globe is able to experience Austen through more traditional forms related to the book-printing, film and television industries, but also through the “new and developing modes of literacy and sociability” (Mirmohamadi 2014: 3) provided by the internet, be it in the forms of online platforms for literary and fannish production, blogs and message boards, or the YouTube channel (see also O’Farrell 2009). Oscillating between “attraction to social formation and removal from it to private readership” (O’Farrell 2009: 480), the individuals constituting present-day “Austenian subcultures” engage differently, in a more or less participatory manner, with Austen’s work and biography, as well as with Austen-related cultural products, causing, hence, the “Austen phenomenon” to evolve in multiple directions.

Numerous professional writers, themselves Austen lovers, have contributed to and/or reflected on contemporary modes of reinforcing and sustaining the “Austen brand” (Foster 2008). Some have chosen to customize Austen’s life and work to the expectations of the new generations of Janeites, seeking to make connections and to close their “gaps” in new texts that rely on a wide range of techniques from parody, pastiche, burlesque, shifts in narrative perspective, recontextualization, timeline expansion, to adaptation to popular genres like crime/mystery, fantasy/horror, erotica or Christian romance². Equally capitalizing on Austen’s popularity, others have engaged in more complex intertextual games with Austen’s writings that would simultaneously allow them to pay tribute to “dear Jane” and to explore various aspects of life in the contemporary society, the “Austen phenomenon” included. Next to Helen

Fielding, the famous English author of *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996), the American novelist Karen Joy Fowler, with her *Jane Austen Book Club* (2004), is a relevant example for this latter category.

From the very title, Karen Joy Fowler's novel *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2004) announces itself as a symptom of the wide spreading of the "Jane Austen syndrome" (Garber 2003) in the turn-of-the-millennium American society and a representation of patterns of behaviour that characterise at least some of today's Janeites – who oscillate between "the fantasy of authorial possession" in the act of reading (O'Farrell 2009: 478), the desire of "becom[ing] the secret friend[s]" of Jane Austen (Mansfield 1920 qtd. in O'Farrell 2009: 478), and the urge to seek opportunities to interact with other Austen lovers and, thus, to interiorize and to put into practice the Austenian 'lesson' on "sociability as an exercise in management of time, life and world" (O'Farrell 2009: 480). This comes as natural from a writer who openly declares her love for Austen ("I've always loved Austen. I read her books over and over again." – Fowler, May 2004) and her adherence (even if temporarily) to the book clubbing 'subculture':

What I like about book clubs is how often they demonstrate the incredible controlling power the reader has, in the end, over the reading experience and the text. In the way book clubs usually operate, you've all read the same book and you've come to talk about it, but of course as you talk about it, you've not read the same book at all: you've sometimes read utterly different books. I've been in a club with a fairly steady group for about five years, and I still cannot predict who's going to like what, or why. Obviously we bring our life stories to it, but I think we also must bring our *last-week* histories to it, so you pick up a book in a good mood or a bad mood. It has an enormous impact. (Fowler, December 2004)

Such statements actually suggest the need for a more thorough consideration of *The Jane Austen Book Club*. This paper endeavours to prove that it is not just another Janeite's attempt at paying homage to her 'idol' and at producing a text that engages in a more or less sophisticated dialogue with her work. Hidden under the 'clothes' of what, at first sight, appears to be mere chick lit, there is a postmodernist novel that seriously considers current ways of engaging with and responding to literary texts (in this case, Jane Austen's) as well as the social practices they engender,

while also reflecting on issues of concern for the contemporary American society.

At the crossroads: between highbrow and lowbrow

That Karen Joy Fowler's intention is to blur, as expected from a postmodernist novel, "the boundaries between popular and high art, between mass and elite culture" (Hutcheon 2006: 116) is indicated by both elements of the novel and the paratexts that frame it. Set in Sacramento Valley, California, the plot of the novel focuses on a group of six characters, five women (Jocelyn and Sylvia, both in their early fifties; the thirty year old Allegra, Sylvia's daughter; the sixty-seven year old Bernadette and the twenty-eight year old Prudie) and a man (Grigg, in his early forties). They have different backgrounds: Jocelyn is a dog breeder; Sylvia works as a librarian; Allegra is glamorous, gay, fond of extreme sports and keeps, for a while, the company of a young would-be writer, Corinne; Bernadette had been trained for a career in the entertainment business but chose that of a wife and married several times; Prudie teaches French at a high school; and Grigg has "a temp job at the university, part of the secretarial pool" and is "based in the linguistic department" (Fowler 2005: 137). For all these characters, the participation in the book club, initially organised by Jocelyn in her attempt to help her life-time friend Sylvia get over the difficult moment of her divorce from Daniel, "her husband of thirty-two years" (2), also becomes an opportunity to bridge or simply ignore the differences between informed (e.g. Grigg's) and rather naive (e.g. Jocelyn's) ways of understanding literature, in particular Austen's novels. Interestingly and somewhat ironically, the paradoxical mixing of highbrow/lowbrow approaches to Jane Austen that pertain to the readers inside and outside the academic circles is most obvious in the construction of Prudie as the 'true Janeite' in Fowler's novel. Prudie's academic training determines her to peruse the novels she reads and to fill numerous index cards "in order to remember it all" (83), yet she refers to Jane Austen using only her first name, 'Jane', hence in a very unscholarly manner which is rather reminiscent of the popular culture reception of the English writer "as if she is a friend or even a family member" (Wells 2011: 3). Moreover, Prudie proves to lack the detachment required of a literary critic and, like the amateur Austen readers in the book club, embraces the idea that reading Austen's novels could function as a "therapeutic practice" (Wells 2011: 22),

helping her find solutions to her personal problems. Along the same lines, it is worth mentioning that Prudie is explicitly associated with the “ascribing [of] ‘divinity’ to ‘Jane’” (Lynch 2005: 113) characteristic of Austen’s representation in the popular culture³, as it can be seen from the ‘coda’ to Chapter Three, which focuses on “read[ing] *Mansfield Park* with Prudie” (Fowler 2005: 81). In Prudie’s dream, a God-like Jane Austen helps her regain peace of mind and overcome grief at her mother’s death (which turns out particularly traumatising for Prudie, though she and her mother had had a difficult relationship):

Without actually ascending a staircase, Prudie finds herself upstairs, alone, in a hall with many doors. She tries a few, but they’re all locked. Between the doors are life-sized portraits interspersed with mirrors. The mirrors are arranged so that every portrait is reflected in a mirror across the hall. Prudie can stand in front of these mirrors and position herself so that she appears to be in each portrait along with the original subject.

Jane arrives again. She is in a hurry now, hustling Prudie past many doors until they suddenly stop. “Here’s where we’ve put your mother,” she says. “I think you’ll see we’ve made some improvements.”

Prudie hesitates. “Open the door,” Jane tells her, and Prudie does. Instead of a room, there is a beach, a sailboat and an island in the distance, the ocean as far as Prudie can see. (115-116)

Also, the exchange of opinions on Jane Austen and her novels (*Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Persuasion*, in the order in which they are referred to in the six ‘corresponding’ chapters of Fowler’s text) among the members of the book club both hints at the “validation of the amateur reading association” as social practice and raises “critical issues which concern Austen scholars: ownership, status, reception, genre, and the postmodern” (Simons 2009: 473).

Equally relevant of Fowler’s endeavour to efface the distinction between high and popular culture, as well as academic and amateur readers of Austen, are some of the paratexts added to her novel. Her so-called ‘Reader’s Guide’ is actually a quotation from Martin Amis’s article “Jane’s World”, published in *The New Yorker* in January 1996:

Jane Austen is weirdly capable of keeping everybody busy. The moralists, the Eros-and-Agape people, the Marxists, the Freudians, the Jungians, the

semioticians, the deconstructors—all find an adventure playground in six samey novels about middle-class provincials. And for every generation of critics, and readers, her fiction effortlessly renews itself. (Amis qtd. in Fowler 2005: 251)

Thus, Fowler uses a voice of authority in the present-day world of highbrow novel and academic studies to reinforce the ultimate message of her novel, namely that Jane Austen is above high art/ popular culture divisions as her novels ‘speak’ to the readers, irrespective of the age and the (sub)culture they belong to.

The following paratexts – ‘The Novels’ (252-257) and ‘The Response’ (258-283) – seek to meet the expectations of both uninformed and scholarly readerships. The former provides the ordinary reader with accessible plot synopses of the six novels by Jane Austen with which Fowler’s own work establishes intricate intertextual relations. The latter addresses the connoisseur in literary criticism and invites her/him to embark on a long, yet fascinating ‘journey’ along the ‘convoluted paths’ of Austen’s reception, recording comments by Austen’s family members and friends providing her with feedback on her novels (e.g. *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*), as well as by “critics, writers, and literary figures” considering “Austen, her novels, her admirers, and her detractors through two centuries” (260) (from 1812 to 2003).

Pastiche and departing from Austenian models

It is important to notice that the fragmented discourse of Fowler’s novel, marked by repeated movements back and forth in time, and the breaking up of the text by the use of spaces, titles in different font, small drawings of chairs, the introduction of ‘codas’ to every chapter, several emails (exchanged between Grigg and his sisters) and even an advertising poster for an invented mystery novel (*A Murder of Crows* by Mo Bellington) (200), is largely held together by a cleverly-woven web of intertextual connections. Fowler introduces in her novel excerpts of various length from Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* and Ann Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho*, from negative comments on Austen’s novels by the American writers Mark Twain and Ralph Waldo Emerson or from the ‘treatises’ of an eighteenth-century dancing master, Kellom Tomlison, in order to subtly hint at the deep meanings attached to the experiences that shape her characters’ identities. More complex, though, are the links that establish between

Austen's and Fowler's fiction, beyond mere quotation. Fowler's exercise in "artistic recycling" of Austen's work (Rabinowitz 1980 qtd. in Hutcheon 1985: 15) may be labelled as pastiche: it "operates more by similarity and correspondence" (Hutcheon 1985: 38) with Austenian plots, characters and even writing style, and "remains within the same genre as its model[s]" (Hutcheon 1985: 38). Fowler – the Janeite entwines in her narrative discourse realism with romance, the keen observation of interactions within both the domestic and the public spaces with the representation of the inner world of the characters. As Judy Simons rightfully remarks,

[Fowler's novel] reinforces both Austen's provincial appeal – the six who form the club are small-town inhabitants, and as two members are a mother and daughter, a replica of Austen's "three or four families in a country village" – and her transatlantic portability. The setting, in an American suburb with a distinctively twenty-first century outlook and culturally specific environment, indicates Austen's ability to transcend geographical distance and national boundaries. (2009: 473)

Even if writing for and about another age and cultural environment, Fowler largely follows the Austenian 'recipe': she constructs her novel around the making, breaking and re-making of couples, ultimately opting for a happy ending as the resolution of all narrative equations (see Tauchert 2005: 15). Nonetheless, she avoids falling into the trap of slavish and unproblematic imitation of her Austenian models.

Thus, Jocelyn, who is single at the beginning of the novel, resembles Austen's Emma, as she is always in search for the right match for her friends.

While they were still in high school, she'd introduced Sylvia to the boy who would become her husband, and she'd been maid of honour at the wedding three years after they graduated. This early success had given her a taste for blood; she'd never recovered. (Fowler 2005: 3)

That accounts for her endeavouring to find "suitable young men" for Sylvia's daughter Allegra, "switch[ing] to suitable young women" when she found out that Allegra was gay, and, maybe (as Sylvia suspects), even for her inviting Grigg – whom she had accidentally met at a hotel in Stockton where she participated in "the annual meeting of the Inland

Empire Hound Club" and he attended "a science fiction convention" (126) – to join the book club⁴. Her very profession, running a kennel and breeding Rhodesian Ridgebacks, allows Jocelyn to give ample time to this 'hobby' of hers, i.e. match-making, and Fowler uses it as a source of metaphoric, somewhat ironic, hints at the profile of the ideal husband as envisaged by women in the postfeminist age, which is not very far from the one drawn in Austen's *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*: "The dog show emphasizes bloodline, appearance, and comportment, but money and breeding are never far from anyone's mind" (39). However, Jocelyn's interactions with Grigg throughout the six months (from April to August) covered by the novel's storyline indicate that she is equally conceived as a contemporary Elizabeth Bennet who must get over deceiving "first impressions", give up her pride and finally accept that the man with "nice eyelashes and a funny name" who, she initially thought, "didn't interest her in the slightest" (157), is actually her Mr Darcy.

In the aftermath of the crisis that leads to her separation from Daniel, favoured by miscommunication between the spouses and Daniel's feeling that, for him at least, marriage has stopped being a source of fulfilment and happiness, Sylvia is revealed as having much in common with Anne Eliot from Austen's novel *Persuasion*. She continues to love her ex-husband, though she is trying to come to terms with his being involved with another woman (Pam), and enjoys the thought that Daniel might believe her attached to another man (when, while at home, preparing a few things to take to the hospital, after Allegra's accident, Daniel overhears a message Grigg left Sylvia on the phone, inviting her to have lunch with him). Daniel too slips into the shoes of Captain Wentworth when he chooses, as a means of reconciliation with Sylvia, a letter in which he confesses that he still loves her and asks to be given a second chance. The two are ultimately reunited, so their story ends happily, just like that of their Austenian counterparts. But, as in the case of Jocelyn, there is much more to say about Sylvia's Austenian dimensions. Her relationship with Allegra, her daughter, who comes back home to support her after the divorce, discloses her similarity to another Austenian character, Elinor Dashwood. Sylvia is, hence, the embodiment of "sense", showing restraint, when it comes to expressing her feelings for her ex-husband Daniel, and being deeply devoted to Allegra (even more plausibly so, since, with

Fowler, Sylvia is a mother, not a sister figure) when the latter gets injured at a local climbing gym and is hospitalised.

That Allegra stands for “sensibility” among Fowler’s characters is repeatedly implied in the novel. This gay Marianne Dashwood turns out to be, like her Austenian model, “everything but prudent”, “sensible and clever, but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation” (Austen 2012: 5). That accounts for Allegra’s enthusiasm with extreme sports like skydiving and climbing, ignoring the inherent risks, her loss of self-control when betrayed by her lover Corinne, her Willoughby (who takes advantage of Allegra’s bedtime confessions to make up for lack of inspiration and to make a name as a short-story writer), as well as for her attempt at regaining her equilibrium at home, in Sylvia’s company, until she can find love and happiness again (with Dr. Yep). Only in the Epilogue does Fowler depart from the Austenian formula and proposes a less ‘happy’ ending to Allegra’s quest for the right match: she moves “back to San Francisco and back with Corinne” (Fowler 2005: 249), much to the dissatisfaction of her family and friends who find it “hard to have a good feeling about the relationship” (250).

Trapped between an authoritarian mother, who seems, above all, interested in preparing her daughter to become a star in Hollywood, and an indulgent father, a dentist who is “pushed and prodded and coaxed and sulked” by his wife until he gets his daughter “introduced to someone somewhere in that chain of someones” (166), Bernadette unavoidably reminds the reader of one of the Bennet girls in *Pride and Prejudice*. Her first marriage may strike one as quite similar to the Lydia Bennet – Wickham subplot line in Austen’s novel⁵. Bernadette and John, her Wickham, ran off to Vegas to get married, without her parents’ blessing, but John, a politician who “made the best first impression” (182), proved, in fact, to be a “climber” who cared only about his image in the eyes of the voting public, and lacked integrity and loyalty. The end of Bernadette’s relationship with John seems to complicate even more the connection between Fowler’s and Austen’s characters: John ultimately ran off with Bernadette’s little sister, without having divorced, and Bernadette’s father “had to go looking all over the state for them to bring [her] sister home” (191). There may be more than one way of reading this final twist in the story of Fowler’s characters. On the one hand, it may provide evidence of Fowler’s intention of ‘playing’ with details from *Pride and Prejudice* shuffling them in pastiching Austen:

Bernadette is temporarily 'dressed' in Elizabeth Bennet's 'clothes', betrayed by Wickham, who chose to elope with her younger sister Lydia, while Bernadette's father is shown as Mr Bennet-like, desperate to find his silly daughter. On the other hand, though, taking into account a popular practice among Janeites, namely that of turning into writers producing new texts "to fill in the gaps – in both Austen's novels and her biography – according to their own desires" (Foster 2008), this may be indicative of Fowler's attempt at imagining a possible continuation of Lydia and Wickham's story, of course updated and transposed into another cultural frame, which would show the former allegedly learning a lesson and the latter unable to change his despicable character. The important thing is that Bernadette, this modern American Lydia, never loses faith in the power of love and, despite failures in her subsequent marriages, she still believes in happy endings (Fowler 2005: 243). She finds the inner resources necessary to start all over again with a new husband, Señor Obando, who finally seems to be closer to the Mr Darcy ideal (as mentioned in the Epilogue). Edward Neill interprets Bernadette's marriage with Señor Obando as "a kind of parody of Austen's repeated, yet differenced, marriage-plot outcomes in her six completed novels", but he seems to draw a somewhat similar conclusion in relation to Bernadette's choice of marrying again as "entailing a 'triumph of hope over experience'" (2004: 252).

As for Prudie, the youngest member of the Jane Austen book club, her image connects back to that of Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*. Her personality is, like Fanny's, profoundly influenced by the difficult relationship with her mother and by social marginalization, here rendered in the form of high school experiences that Prudie did not "remember with satisfaction" (Fowler 2005: 87). Moreover, this Fanny Price 'reloaded' is equally caught in a love triangle: she goes through the 'test' of resisting the 'charms' of the dangerously flirtatious and amoral Trey Norton, one of her students, whom she observes in 'action' first with Sallie Wong (another student of hers) and then at the rehearsal of a school production of *Brigadoon*, where he dares approach her, before accepting that, after all, the steady, "dependable" Dean, her husband, is her Edmund and the best companion for her⁶.

Last but not least, Grigg, the only male member of the book club, is not deprived of certain intertextual complexity. His past, especially a "poignant episode" (Simons 2009: 473) of his youth, when a camping trip

with his father ends up as “a 1970s Gothic nightmare set in a mansion, which has been taken over by drug-taking hippies” (Simons 2009: 473), points to his being partly envisaged as a male version of Catherine Morland. Nonetheless, his present, which reveals him eager to get Jocelyn’s attention, after their first meeting in the elevator of a Stockton hotel, and to integrate into the Jane Austen book club, brings about his metamorphosis into a Mr Darcy in pursuit of the woman he loves. Even Grigg’s profile seems broadly reminiscent of that of Austen’s ‘most wanted’ bachelor: he is portrayed as attractive, physically and, though not financially, definitely intellectually⁷. He is not just a “science-fiction addict” (Simons 2009: 473), but an avid and open-minded reader whose list of readings includes a wide range of texts from the early gothic to postmodernism, and, after his joining the book club, Jane Austen. That is an opportunity for Fowler to further expand the dialogue with other texts in her novel by means of references to Ann Radcliffe and Ursula Le Guin, in particular, but also to Arthur C. Clarke, Theodore Sturgeon, Philip K. Dick, Andre Norton (aka Andrew North), Connie Willis, Nancy Kress or Patrick O’Brian.

All these characters that Fowler creates drawing on Austenian hypotexts have their share of troubles but also of happiness and the end of Fowler’s novel is unmistakably tributary, like that of Austen’s novels, to “the magical framework of romance” (Tauchert 2005: 7): Sylvia and Daniel get back together, Grigg and Jocelyn become a couple, Bernadette gets married again, Allegra is temporarily involved with Dr. Yep⁸ but then returns to Corinne, and Prudie and Dean’s relationship is probably improved.

Nevertheless, as already mentioned, in Fowler’s novel, pastiche does not work simply by imitation of Austenian plot patterns but also by the more or less extended imitation of Austen’s writing style. As with Austen, important building blocks for character construction at the discursive level are what Mieke Bal calls the “piling up of data” regarding the ‘reality’ that makes up the so-called “frame of reference”, as well as the relations to other characters and to itself (2002: 119, 125). Thus, *The Jane Austen Book Club* ‘piles up’ details which prove the American writer’s interest (akin to Austen’s) in the recording of various aspects of life in the contemporary society. That gender differences, gender relations and the renegotiation of the individual’s identity at the intersection of multiple perspectives on femininity and masculinity are very much of the heart of

the novel is demonstrated by the life stories of the six protagonists. Jocelyn must work through the trauma of being raped when she was still a teenager. After having been married for thirty-two years, Sylvia must cope with the painful experience of the divorce, which is all the more traumatizing for her as she was born in a Catholic family. The gay Allegra openly expresses her sexual orientation and is constantly in search for someone to love and be loved by. Bernadette likes “the getting married” but not “being married” and is still looking for the man who would make her feel she could “fit [her] whole self into a marriage” (Fowler 2005: 193). Concerned about gender stereotypes and how they influence the expectations of partners in a relationship, Prudie must discover what would make her content: sexual gratification in a potential affair with an available student or marriage with a responsible and loyal man like Dean. Largely influenced by his very close relationship with his three sisters (Amelia, Bianca and Cat), Grigg comes to be perceived even by his own parents as effeminate (“more of a girl than any of the girls” – 143), so his father has to “teach him to be a man” (143) and lamentably fails to do so. The picture of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century American society, as painted in Fowler’s novel, is then completed by further details. Some regard parent – child relationships, seen as close (in Sylvia and Allegra’s case), difficult (in Bernadette’s and Grigg’s cases) or conflict-ridden (in Prudie’s case). Religious differences are focused on in the references to Sylvia’s Catholic family and the detailed representation of sect life as witnessed by Bernadette while living in Colorado in Reverend Watson’s commune. Politics and the race for power are alluded to in the story of John, Bernadette’s first husband. Multiculturalism is hinted at in the presentation of Sylvia Sanchez’s family and childhood amidst a Spanish-speaking community in Chicago (most likely, a Mexican-American one, as suggested by the reference to Sylvia’s father writing for the newspaper *La Raza* – 209).

Many ‘bits’ of these ‘slices of life’ in the contemporary American society are, though, incorporated in the large flashback sections of the novel that look almost like six “dramatic monologues” (Hinnant 2004: 20), which disorder the coherence of the main narrative. It is true that there are plenty of instances in Jane Austen’s novels which confirm the appeal of introspection to the English writer (that finds its best expression at the discursive level in the use of free indirect discourse) and that there is a

sense of nostalgia in Austenian narratives. But, for Austen's characters, the past should be thought of as long as "its remembrance gives [one] pleasure", as Elizabeth Bennet puts it in *Pride and Prejudice* (2012: 389), so their nostalgia is "a form of forgetting – a winnowing of the specific, emotional disturbance, and unpredictability of reminiscence into a diluted, vague, comfortable retrospect" (Dames qtd. in Hinnant 2004: 20). At this point, Fowler departs from the Austenian model and, as if trying to provide new evidence of the fact that there are continuities with modernism in postmodernist writing (Hutcheon 2006: 118), her characters are haunted by their past. Hence, past events, as narrated through Fowler's six "centres of consciousness" (to use Henry James's terms), steal the attention of the reader and even tend to dominate the narrative discourse to the detriment of the storyline set in the present. That explains why some of the reviewers of *The Jane Austen Book Club* (e.g. Mullan 2004; Hinnant 2004) tend to downgrade the merits of Fowler's novel and reproach to it the fact that the book club, which is supposed to provide the main narrative thread of the novel, "remains a convenience for gathering the novel's capsule stories" (Mullan 2004).

Yet, such criticism seems utterly unfair and ignorant of the main function(s) of the series of discussions occasioned by the Jane Austen book club meetings in Fowler's novel: they show her interest in manifestations of the "Austen phenomenon" in contemporary America and give substance to the metafictional dimension of the novel.

Metafiction in practice

Fiction writing and the relationship between 'reality' and the literary text that is supposed to represent it entwine with gender issues and are in focus not only in the account of Allegra's bitter experience with Corinne, who 'copies' her partner's life stories in short stories that she sends for publication in hopes of gaining visibility as a writer, but also in the 'coda' to Chapter Five which encloses "promotional materials for a new Terrence Hopkins Mystery by Mo Bellington", *A Murder of Crows* (Fowler 2005: 200). Ironically, this mystery novel, which is advertised as maybe "Bellington's best ever" (200) draws, judging by its brief description, precisely on Bernadette's 'adventures' in Reverend Watson's commune, as recounted by Bernadette, at a gathering of the club members at "the annual fund-raiser

for the Sacramento Public Library" (158), in an attempt to counter the male writer's prejudiced opinion of "women's stuff" (182) (Jane Austen's novels included) as lacking "good plot" (182). The debate on the 'ingredients' of good fiction that involves Mo Bellington and Bernadette raises ontological questions "about what sort of world is being created at each moment in the text, and who or what in a text [the reader] can believe or rely on" (Malpas 2005: 24). If Bellington proclaims himself "kind of a stickler for accuracy" (Fowler 2005: 193) who values the "discovery phase" (193) as it gives him access to stories he might recycle in his own fiction, Bernadette "shade[s] a few things" in the construction of her plot, "add[ing] some bits. Sports. Lingerie. Sexy little sisters. Guy stuff." (193), to the point that it is difficult to tell (as Prudie realizes) "which parts were true and which weren't" (193). Reminiscent of the postmodernist mindset is also the idea, expressed in the same chapter, this time in a discussion between Sylvia and Allegra, that fictional characters could escape authorial control and have a "secret life" of their own:

"Are you saying Austen meant [Charlotte Lucas] to be gay?" Sylvia asked. "Or that she's gay and Austen doesn't know it?"

Sylvia preferred the latter. There was something appealing in thinking of a character with a secret life that her author knew nothing about. Slipping off while the author's back was turned, to find love in her own way. Showing up just in time to deliver the next bit of dialogue with an innocent face. If Sylvia were a character in a book, that's the kind of character she'd want to be. (171)

More often than not, though, the reflections on the text production – text reception continuum tend to veer onto the subject of Austen's readings and re-presentations in the postmodern American culture. As Mary Ann O'Farrell points out,

Exploring their discreet Austens together, the participants in her Jane Austen book club, Fowler seems to suggest, make a society out of personal and private obsessions and demonstrate that society itself is so constituted. And thinking about the function of author-based communities for an Austenian readership that is attached to a sense of victorious and possessive oneness with Austen means recognizing a readership that, in the course of developing subcultures, embodies the tension and enacts the play between private obsession and public relations. (2009: 478-479)

The very structuring of the group of book club participants is meant to draw attention to and simultaneously undermine stereotypical perceptions of the contemporary Janeite. The predominance of women among the members of the book club in Fowler's novel signals her acknowledging the gender-marked profile of the target audience for Austen's novels and for the various forms (which include film adaptation) of expanding her universe as part of the "huge phenomenon" referred to as "Austenmania". Most present-day Austen fans are women whose "appreciation of [Austen's] novels stems in part from her depiction of women's life" (Wells 2011: 16), and more specifically from her representation of love relationships from the perspective of a feminine consciousness as always (though sometimes rather implausibly) ending happily with "ideal marriages that *somehow* resolve all real (social) contradictions for her heroines and their communities" (Tauchert 2005: 19). And when they seek to "explore, dissect, and reconfigure her life and fiction" in their own writings, women writers inspired by Austen (Fowler included) "do not 'talk back' to her so much as converse with her" (Wells 2011: 16); hence Fowler's use of pastiche rather than parody in her novel. That may also account, as some reviewers of the novel suggest, for Fowler's choice of a rather uncanny narrating voice that tells the story of the book club meetings. Dismissed by some as "bizarre" (Mullan 2004), Fowler's narratorial 'we' might help convey a certain sense of solidarity and sociability by metaleptically connecting the female writer (Fowler) and the female readers, the real-life Janeites, to the female characters of the novel, the fictional ones. Patricia O'Conner comments on this peculiarity of Fowler's style in the following terms:

Most intriguing of all is the occasional narrator who steps in to describe the group's meetings in an unexpectedly cozy first-person plural: "We were quiet for a minute, listening to the fly buzz, thinking our private thoughts." But the speaker isn't any one of the six book club members. Then who is it? Some ghostly collective presence? Jane herself? Reader, is it ... us? (2004)

Interestingly, though, Fowler's book club also includes a man, Grigg, who has never read Austen's novels but is willing to do so in order to integrate in the group. It is not clear whether Grigg evolves into an 'Austen devotee', but he definitely has the profile of what the early twentieth-century society

would have called a Janeite: a “cultured” and “sensitive” man (Johnson 1997: 213), with certain knowledge of literary criticism, whose admiration for Austen’s novels is motivated by the questions they raise and her writing style rather than by romance. It is equally true that Grigg is conceived as a male character that escapes the patriarchal stereotypes of masculinity and remains more ‘in touch’ with his feminine side. Even so, by creating this character, Fowler appears to have made a step forward towards reminding her readers that Jane Austen is “everybody’s dear” (no irony or pejorative meaning intended)⁹, irrespective of gender, age or education differences. Furthermore, for all Fowler’s characters, as for all Austen’s ‘lovers’ – “especially, but not exclusively, women” – reading Austen “[has] to do with growing up”, finding answers not only to academic questions (like Grigg’s or, sometimes, Prudie’s) but mostly to personal ones; hence, it becomes a means “to find meaning and to understand themselves” (Wells 2011: 21).

But, as a novel about how Austen’s novels are read nowadays, Fowler’s *The Jane Austen Book Club* is, above all, meant to investigate reading practices in their multiplicity. In line with Barthes’s theory according to which the “birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author”, since “the reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost” (2001: 1469-1470), Fowler believes that “[e]ach of us has a private Austen” (2005: 1)/“[e]veryone has a private Austen” (288). So she sets out to illustrate in her novel various perceptions of Jane Austen, as the members of her fictional book club “view Austen through the lenses of their own experiences, creating a kaleidoscope through the sum of their little bits of Austen” (Foster 2008).

Having chosen as a motto a quotation from Jane Austen’s *Emma* that, *avant* postmodernism, implies that there is no single, absolute truth (“Seldom, very seldom does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken.” – 2012: 874), Fowler lays out, from the very Prologue, different images of a commodified Austen in the contemporary popular culture.

Jocelyn’s Austen wrote wonderful novels about love and courtship, but never married. (Fowler 2005: 1)

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Bernadette's Austen was a comic genius. Her characters, her dialogue remained genuinely funny, not like Shakespeare's jokes, which amused you only because they were Shakespeare's and you owed him that. (1-2)

Sylvia's Austen was a daughter, a sister, an aunt. Sylvia's Austen wrote her books in a busy sitting room, read them aloud to her family, yet remained an acute and non-partisan observer of people. Sylvia's Austen could love and be loved, but it didn't cloud her vision, blunt her judgment. (2)

Allegra's Austen wrote about the impact of financial need on the intimate lives of women. If she'd worked in a bookstore, Allegra would have shelved Austen in the horror section. (4)

Prudie's was the Austen whose books changed every time you read them, so that one year they were all romances and the next you suddenly noticed Austen's cool, ironic prose. Prudie's was the Austen who died, possibly of Hodgkin's disease, when she was only forty-one years old. (4)

Only Grigg's image of Austen remains initially unknown ("None of us knew who Grigg's Austen was." – 5), a welcome instance of mystery to arouse the reader's curiosity and an open door to the integration of a different approach to Austen, more akin to the academic's/literary critic's, in the broader 'picture' of Austen's reception at the turn of the millennium. For Grigg, at least, Austen's *Northanger Abbey* is particularly appealing because "it's all about reading novels. Who's the heroine, what's an adventure? Austen poses these questions very directly"; that is why, in Grigg's opinion, "there's something very pomo going on there" (138). Moreover, Grigg takes interest in the intertextual links that connect Austen's novel to Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* and their impact on the very construction of Austen's narrative discourse: "Austen's imitated the structure, made all her choices in opposition to that original text. Assumes everyone has read it" (139). That definitely distinguishes Grigg from his interlocutors and fellow readers in the book club to whom "it hadn't occurred (...) to read [*Udolpho*]" ("Some of us hadn't even realized it was a real book.") (139). Fowler further lays stress on the tension in reading practices between the cultivated (open-minded) and the naïve (yet prejudiced) reader in Grigg's dialogue with Jocelyn about characters in fiction:

"I like books about real people," Jocelyn said.

"I don't understand the distinction." Grigg's eyes had returned to the road.

"Elizabeth Bennet is a real person, but the people in science fiction books aren't?"

"Science fiction books have people in them, but they're not about the people. Real people are really complicated." (173)

The relativity of interpretation in the process of reading, another issue of interest for the academy, is pondered over by Prudie (whose paradoxical espousing of academic reading habits and popular reader enthusiasm has been previously discussed). Interestingly, in her reflections on Austen's reception in the contemporary society, Prudie also brings forth the academic concern about fidelity in film adaptation¹⁰ and her *parti pris* definitely reminds one of the old-fashioned, yet still enduring, belief in the superiority of literature to film:

The great thing about books was the solidity of the written word. You might change and your reading might change as a result, but the book remained whatever it had always been. A good book was surprising the first time through, less so the second.

The movies, as everyone knew, had no respect for this. (82)

The multiplicity, yet arbitrariness, of reader responses is intertextually sustained in the 'coda' to Chapter Two by quotations from letters of publishers who rejected the now highly appreciated *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey* when first submitted for publication, as well as from American writers (Mark Twain and Ralph Waldo Emerson) who dismissed Austen's novels as second-rate literature, in utter contrast to subsequent generations of writers and critics who have looked up to them as literary models.

Equally noteworthy is the fact that, in this novel which carries on, in its own terms, the already 'old' tradition of actively and creatively interacting with the Austenian text, the metafictional dimension naturally incorporates illustrative examples in this respect. Bernadette, who "always like[s] to know how a story ends" (199), seems to be satisfied with the details provided by J. E. Austen-Leigh in his *Memoir of Jane Austen* (1869) regarding the way in which Austen herself chose to round off, to the amusement of her family members, the "career of some of her people"

(2002: 119), like Mary and Kitty Bennet. But Allegra proves to be the most ingenious and creates, using famous quotations from Austen's novels, a modified version of the "black Magic 8-Balls" (Fowler 2005: 233), which she names *Ask Austen*, that could give each of the club members the possibility of receiving 'advice' from their "dear", "divine", "matchless" Jane (Johnson 1997: 214). Allegra's initiative is, in fact, the crowning expression of the present-day Janeite's tendency to use Austen "for a goal of self-improvement" (Wells 2011: 22), being thus somewhat akin to those special forms of interactive engagement with Austen's world(s) that are the Austen-inspired advice books (e.g. Lauren Henderson's 2005 *Jane Austen Guide to Dating* and *Jane Austen's Guide to Romance: the Regency Rules*, etc. – see Wells 2011).

Finally, with 'Questions for Discussion' (Fowler 2005: 284-286) (which is one of the paratexts), Fowler takes further her postmodern melange of realism, romance, intertextuality and metafiction, setting the basis for a potential metaleptic dialogue between her characters and her readers on: the themes, characters and style of Austen's novels; Austen's biography; the relationship between reality and fiction; the relationship between the literary text and its film adaptation(s), as well as their impact on the readership/audience; cultural hierarchies; gender relationships; private lives and public interactions; rituals and cultural practices in the contemporary society.

Concluding remarks

An international bestseller at the time of its publication, featuring in "the *New York Times* 100 Notable Books of the Year and *The Australian's* Book of the Year list" (Simons 2009: 473), available to the readers in printed and audio book form, Karen Joy Fowler's *The Jane Austen Book Club* soon followed what has already become a trend in the "Austen phenomenon", being adapted for the screen in 2007 by Robin Swicord. Unavoidably, the filmic hypertext departed, in many ways, from Fowler's novel. That is not actually something to deplore, as, after all, fidelity in adaptation is unlikely, even undesirable. Most importantly, though, apart from the semiotic differences between novel and film, it was Swicord's reading of *The Jane Austen Book Club* that caused many of the deep meanings of Fowler's postmodernist novel to get 'lost' in adaptation. In Swicord's film, there is little concern about "making *distinctions* but not making *choices* (...) between

the popular and the elite” (Hutcheon 2006: 116). The pastiching of Austenian models, so prominent, yet not slavish, with Fowler is significantly altered and, in some cases, somewhat simplified in the film, which, while still drawing on *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*, definitely privileges *Pride and Prejudice* as ‘everybody’s favourite’. The constant movement back and forth in time that was largely responsible for the fragmentation of the novelistic discourse and the introspective plunging into the characters’ past are done away with, the film filling occasionally the ‘gaps’ related to the nature and the past of the characters by mere hints in the protagonists’ dialogues. Only the metafictional dimension, strongly anchored in the present of Fowler’s participants in the Jane Austen book club, makes it more explicitly to the screen and, even so, is altered, the filmic metatext being clearly focused on the exploration of American amateur readers’ response to Austen’s novels and the proliferation of the ‘cult of Austen’ in the contemporary American society. Altogether, with its interest in romance and its emphasis on Austen as “an antidote to our fractured, busy lives” (Swicord qtd. in Fowler 2007: 171), Swicord’s film (which unmistakably fits into the category of romantic comedies) provides a better picture of today’s Janeitism in the American society than Fowler’s novel does. With Fowler, Austen’s reception in the contemporary American culture is but one of the many aspects explored with the ‘tools’ of postmodernism. Fowler’s ‘lessons’ about text production and, especially, text reception, about cultural dynamics and the role of Austen as a catalyst for private emotions and public interactions, are integrated in a cleverly crafted novel that, from behind the ‘mask’ of chick lit, raises questions about ‘reality’ and its literary representations, social practices, cultural phenomena and literary hierarchies.

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Notes

¹ In 1923, R. W. Chapman published at Clarendon Press, in five volumes, *The Novels of Jane Austen*, “the first scholarly edition of any English novelist – male or female – to appear”, “ever since acknowledged to be the authoritative edition of

[Austen's] works" (Johnson 1997: 218). A few decades later, Professor F. R. Leavis, in his study *The Great Tradition* (1948), "dignifies Austen as well as the great tradition of English fiction she originated by insisting on her moral seriousness" (Johnson 1997: 219). Thus, they have paved the way for "the rise of Austen as an academic field" (Johnson 1997: 221) in development since mid-twentieth century.

² Among the numerous texts that have appropriated Austen's work and biography "to accommodate niche markets" (Foster 2008), the following could be mentioned: Arielle Eckstut, *Pride and Promiscuity: The Lost Sex Scenes of Jane Austen*, 2001; Debra White Smith, *Austen Series*, 2004-2006; Linda Berdoll, *Mr Darcy Takes a Wife: Pride and Prejudice Continues*, 2004; Sarah Arthur, *Dating Mr. Darcy: A Smart Girl's Guide to Sensible Romance*, 2005; Seth Graham-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, 2009; P. D. James, *Death Comes to Pemberley*, 2011, etc. For a detailed analysis of 'hybrid' writings produced in the American cultural space, which mingle Austenian patterns with elements of erotica, horror and Christian romance, see Wells 2011: 177-205.

³ In the filmic adaptation of Fowler's novel (2007, dir. Robin Swicord), Prudie remains an embodiment of the Janeite as "special", "set (...) apart from the contemporary world" (Cobb 2012: 209) because of the "mystical nature" of her relationship with her 'idol', Jane Austen. However, Prudie's Austen-dominated dream vision in the novel is replaced by a "surreal moment" in the film that switches the stress from uneasy mother – daughter relationships, as represented in *Mansfield Park*, to difficult love relationships, as portrayed in *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. In Swicord's film, as Prudie is about to cross the street to meet one of her students, Trey Norton, for a sexual tryst, the signal flashing the words WHAT – WOULD – JANE – DO, and then repeatedly, in red, the words DON'T WALK, determines her to give up the idea of having an affair and to return to her husband Dean, with whom she is reconciled after they read together *Persuasion*. The scene, Shelley Cobb remarks, signifies "otherworldliness about being a reader of Austen", "a distinction reinforced by the postmodern, ironic play on the once ubiquitous Christian bracelet imprinted with the letters WWJD (What Would Jesus Do)" (2012: 208-209).

⁴ Fowler chooses to keep her readers in the dark about the reason why Jocelyn invites Grigg to join the book club and merely has Sylvia speculate about it: "Sylvia had always suspected Grigg was intended for her. Of course, she didn't want him, but when had that ever stopped Jocelyn?" (Fowler 2005: 225). The 2007 filmic adaptation of Fowler's novel explicitly points to Grigg's being intended as potential replacement for Sylvia's husband Daniel, thus emphasising the similarity between Jocelyn and Austen's Emma as match-maker figures.

⁵ In the 2007 filmic version, Bernadette's role in the plot and her representation as a modern counterpart of one of Austen's characters in *Pride and Prejudice* are significantly reconsidered. As Fowler admits herself, Bernadette is given "a larger

role" in the film, "put[ting] the book club together" and "serv[ing] as a universal confidante and a somewhat bawdy reader of Austen", unlike her "dishevelled, repetitive Bernadette" (Fowler 2007: 170). In addition, Swicord's Bernadette places herself differently in relation to the Austenian world of characters and, in a conversation at the annual fund-raiser for the Sacramento Public Library, claims that she had experienced all the types of marriages presented in *Pride and Prejudice* and identifies herself as the Charlotte Lucas type, as she married at 17 with the first man who proposed to her.

⁶ On screen, the love triangle that includes Prudie, her husband Dean and Trey Norton, the student, is amply developed and Prudie is more explicitly shown as thinking herself in love with Trey, indulging in clandestine meetings with the boy she is sexually attracted to, going along with his flirtatious 'games' when she accepts to help him rehearse for the *Brigadoon* performance and almost ready to make the 'final step' of consummating their relationship, from which she is prevented by the 'divine Jane', as shown in Note 1. As far as the evolution of Prudie and Dean's marriage is concerned, it is given new intertextual connotations as it becomes another story about 'second chances' like Austen's *Persuasion*, which the two characters read together and which helps them overcome misunderstandings so that they could be reunited as a couple.

⁷ Though she generally praises Swicord's adaptation of her novel for the screen, Fowler feels, nonetheless, sorry to find that, in the film, "Grigg had become a wealthy man". She explains: "Readers still insist on seeing him as an Austen hero when I meant him to be an Austen heroine. I still like him best when he has no money, no connections, nothing that can tempt someone to marry him, beyond his own good heart and impeccable taste in books" (2007: 171).

⁸ Commenting on the end of the film adaptation of Fowler's novel, Shelley Cobb remarks that, even though Allegra is shown, at a certain point, enjoying the company of Dr. Yep, the final sequence of the reunion of the Jane Austen book club members at a charity event reveals Allegra without a partner. It is true that "[t]he film does not self-consciously highlight her status. However, as the camera pulls away from the table, it is impossible not to notice all the couples next to each other and Allegra on her own. (...) The specialness of being an Austen reader-fan and the happy endings it offers to the heterosexual white women (...) is not available to (...) the lesbian woman" (2012: 223-224).

⁹ Henry James's now famous phrase was originally integrated in a sarcastic comment on the emergence and rapid proliferation of the "cult of Jane Austen" (Lynch 2005: 111) among mass readerships, owing to "the body of publishers, editors, illustrators, producers of the pleasant twaddle of magazines; who have found their 'dear', our dear, everybody's dear, Jane so infinitely to their material purpose, so amenable to pretty reproduction in every variety of what is called tasteful, and in what seemingly proves to be saleable, form" (in Southam 1987:

230). Here, the statement in which James's phrase is enclosed carries no ironic undertones, but literally refers to Fowler's belief that Jane Austen as a literary and cultural icon may transcend highbrow/lowbrow boundaries, as well as challenge and appeal to academic and non-academic readers, women and men, alike.

¹⁰ Surprisingly for a representative of the popular culture, Jocelyn – whom Prudie met “at a Sunday matinee of *Mansfield Park*” (Fowler 2005: 81) – seems to share Prudie's opinions about film adaptations as disappointingly distorting Austen's fictional worlds. As a matter of fact, both Prudie and Jocelyn seem to voice Fowler's own expectations regarding film adaptations of Austen's work, as expressed by the American writer in the article ‘What Would Jane Cut?': “All I want in an Austen movie is perfect fidelity. Jane Bennet is supposed to be prettier than Elizabeth. Is she? Is Mr. Knightley much, much older than Emma, as written? Has Edward Ferrars been made sexier and more charming than he should be? I don't want a more romantic version. I don't want a happier ending. What I want is no monkeying about.” (Fowler 2007: 169)

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The Jamesian Material Self: Show Me Your House and I Will Tell You Who You Are!

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Abstract

The major purpose of this study is to analyse the aspects and the role of the Material Self present in the novel The Portrait of a Lady by Henry James. The Material Self is a constituent of the Empirical Self which William James (Henry James's brother) defines in his theoretical work The Principles of Psychology. Therefore, the representation of the Material Self in Henry James's works is much more interesting when compared with the representation of the Self in William James's theory. According to William James, one of the core elements of the Material Self is the 'house'. The 'house' is carefully selected by Henry James as a tool for creating the images of his characters from The Portrait of a Lady; the analogical relation between setting and character helps Henry James build indirect characterisation. The houses he drafts represent in detail the appearance and character of their masters. Moreover, the hierarchy of the constituent parts of the Material Self suggested by William James in his theory is somehow reshaped by the major character in The Portrait of a Lady by Henry James.

Key words: *Consciousness of Self, Material Self, choice of words, indirect characterization*

*Then straight I 'gin my heart to chide,
And did thy wealth on earth abide?
Didst fix thy hope on mould'ring dust?
The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?*
(A. Bradstreet, *Upon the Burning of Our House*)

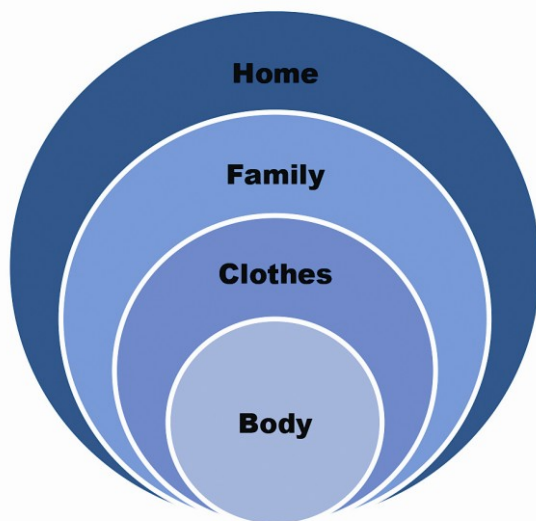
William James's volumes *The Principles of Psychology* were published in 1890, roughly ten years after Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1880-1881), the novel in which he discusses and reflects on the concept of the Consciousness of Self. Henry James focused his attention on the nature of

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selfhood and successfully portrayed the extraordinary complexity of the Self of his characters. The novel introduces the life and experience of a young American woman, Isabel Archer, after her travelling in Europe. The setting of the novel is vast, involving various parts of England and Italy, places where she draws her experience from. The novel generously presents the aspects of the Material Self (very well portrayed by means of mimesis).

This paper argues that the representation and the importance of the Material Self in the novel *The Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James is very similar to the theoretical description of the same concept in *The Principles of Psychology* by William James; besides, the representation of the Material Self was successfully used by Henry James to build the indirect characterisation of the heroes through the analogical relation between setting and character.

The Puritan belief that one should not care for material possessions, but for spiritual ones only, is not the belief advocated in *The Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James. In the age of consumerism, it comes as no surprise that the two brothers gave special attention to material possessions. In order to have a clearer picture of the Material Self, the graph that attempts to show William James's representation of the Material Self would be of great help:



This graph explains that “the body is the innermost” and most personal piece of the Material Self. Our garments and possessions are also part of who we are, along with the members of our family, who are likewise important, as they are “flesh of our flesh” (2006: 291). Last, but not least, comes housing, as a sort of shell for the body, possessions and family. It represents our castle, our shelter, our home; it takes care of us, and we, in turn, take care of it.

The Material Self plays an important role in James’s novel *The Portrait of a Lady*. The issue of property and belongings is constantly discussed by Henry James through his characters; Isabel Archer and Madame Merle, for instance. The former insists on the idea that clothes and things which surround us do not define our nature, while the latter is convinced that they do. Madame Merle has life experience and considerable intelligence; she understands that people are not separated cells but are each “made up of some cluster of appurtenance” and that “every human being has his shell and that [one] must take the shell into account” (1995: 222-223). William James’s interpretation of the Material Self is strikingly similar to that of Madame Merle:

The body is the innermost part of the Material Self in each of us [...] The clothes come next. [...] We so appropriate our clothes and identify ourselves with them [...] Next, our immediate family is a part of ourselves. Our father and mother, our wife and babes, are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. [...] Our home comes next. Its scenes are part of our life; [...] We all have a blind impulse to watch over our body, to deck it with clothing of an ornamental sort, to cherish parents, wife and babes, and to find for ourselves a home of our own which we may live in and improve (2006: 292).

It appears, according to William James, that almost all of us care for our body, clothes and dwellings because they are the real expression of ourselves. The psychologist argues that one’s Material Self characterises his/her state of mind, which means that it defines his/her actions, reactions, emotions, attitude and choices. The character of Madame Merle seems to have almost the same understanding of the Material Self:

It overflows into everything that belongs to us—and then it flows back again. I know a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I’ve a

great respect for things! One's self – for other people – is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps – these things are all expressive (1995: 223).

There is nothing wrong with this declaration of an experienced, worldly woman, and it evidently does not make Madame Merle a materialist person; it merely represents her Material Self. Isabel, on the other hand, still young and unworldly, believes that she has a different opinion on this issue. She vehemently protests, believing that her clothes and environment do not express her personality: "My clothes may express the dressmaker, but they don't express me. To begin with it's not my own choice that I wear them; they're imposed upon me by society" (1995: 223). Still, when it comes to attire, she is critical of Mr. Goodwood, one of her gallants, exactly because of his dressing habits:

[S]he viewed with reserve a habit he had of dressing always in the same manner; it was not apparently that he wore the same clothes continually, for, on the contrary, his garments had a way of looking rather too new. But they all seemed of the same piece; the figure, the stuff, was so drearily usual (1995: 137).

Her protest to Madame Merle, in this case, indicates a particular characteristic of her personality: self-adulation. It is obvious that the author makes fun of Isabel, for when she made the most important choice of her life she was certainly attracted to her partner by these very aspects: his appearance ("His dense, delicate hair, his overdrawn, retouched features, his clear complexion, ripe without being coarse, the very evenness of the growth of his beard) and possessions (his pictures and cabinets all looked like treasures [...] His pictures, his medallions and tapestries were interesting" (1995: 284- 285)). Perhaps they did not indicate too great a wealth, but they certainly spoke of his character. Besides, when receiving a great fortune from her uncle, she was not squeamish about keeping the money. Afterwards, being unhappy in her marriage, she did not leave her husband. This unwillingness to leave her husband may imply that she did care for money because in case of a divorce she would gain nothing according to the 1870 Married Women's Property Act. Finally, the title of the novel is not *The Portrait of a Woman*, or *The Portrait of a Young Girl*, not

even *The Portrait of Isabel*. The title refers to the portrait of a 'lady', a woman from high society.

A further point to be considered as an element of the Material Self is the 'house'. The house is carefully selected by Henry James as a tool to outline the images of the characters in *The Portrait of a Lady*. The houses he drafts represent in detail the appearance and character of their masters. Recent studies show that the relation between the setting and the character was of great significance for the Victorian novelists. For instance, Michael Toolan mentions the analogical relation of setting and character in such novels as: *Mansfield Park* by J. Austen, *Great Expectations* and *Bleak House* by C. Dickens, and *Jane Eyre* by C. Bronte (2001: 91-94). For the modernist and post-modernist writers, on the contrary, this relation, in his opinion, seems to be rarely important.

A novelist at the threshold of centuries, Henry James, seems to pay assiduous attention to the setting-character analogical relation. The first residence to be introduced in detail to the reader is the old English country-house of, accordingly, an old gentleman, who had come to England thirty years before from America – Mr Touchett. The old gentleman is evidently satisfied with his achievements and his life, just as he is very content and pleased with his house. The fact that he is described from the very beginning "with his face turned to the house" and peacefully "rest[ing] his eyes upon the rich red front of his dwelling," (1995: 20) shows the reader just how fond he is of his property. The image of the house is gracious and respectful, as is the image of its owner.

The Image of the House	Mr Touchett's Image	Qualities
It stood upon a low hill, <u>above the river</u> – the river being the Thames at some forty miles from London (1995: 20).	He had been <u>successful in life</u> , yet it seemed to tell also that his success had not been exclusive and invidious, but had had much of the inoffensiveness of failure (1995: 21).	Authenticity Maturity Success
A long gabled front of red brick, with the complexion of	He had a narrow, clean-shaven face, with features evenly	Experience

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which time and the weather had played all sorts of pictorial tricks, only, however, to improve and refine it, presented to the lawn its patches of ivy, its clustered chimneys, its windows smothered in creepers (1995: 20).	distributed and an expression of placid acuteness. It was evidently a face in which the range of representation was not large, so that the air of contented shrewdness was all the more of a merit (1995: 21).	Wisdom Tradition Composure Adaptability
The house had a name and a history. [...] it had passed into the careful keeping of a shrewd American banker (1995: 20).	He had brought with him, at the top of his baggage, his American physiognomy; and he had not only brought it with him, but he had kept it in the best order (1995: 21).	Majesty Nobility Greatness Heritage
Privacy here reigned supreme, and the wide carpet of turf that covered the level hill-top seemed but the extension of a luxurious interior (1995: 20).	At present, obviously, nevertheless, he was not likely to displace himself; his journeys were over and he was taking the rest that precedes the great rest (1995: 21).	Knowledge Prosperity Privacy
The great still <u>oaks</u> and beeches flung down a shade as dense as that of velvet curtains (1995: 21).	He had certainly had a great <u>experience</u> of men, but there was an almost rustic simplicity in the faint smile that played upon his lean, spacious cheek and lighted up his humorous eye (1995: 21).	Naturalness Wisdom Experience Dignity Authority
[...] and the place was	He was neatly dressed, in well-	Education

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furnished, like a room, with cushioned seats, with rich-coloured rugs, with the books and papers that lay upon the grass (1995: 21).	brushed black; but a shawl was folded upon his knees, and his feet were encased in thick, embroidered slippers (1995: 21).	Sense Frailty
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What stands out in the table is that the portrait of Mr Touchett, cautiously portrayed by Henry James, is one of a very experienced, wise, respectful gentleman. The concomitant description of the house helps to make the picture of the “old gentleman” more vivid and clear. The careful choice of words like, “oak” and “ivy”, for instance, directs the readers’ thoughts to such concepts as strength, authority, dignity, steadiness and adaptability. These are the traits which the reader can associate with Mr Touchett’s image and the description of the house he possesses.

The character of Gilbert Osmond is also presented in parallel with the description of his house. The representation of the house is rounded up in the Jamesian manner, described from top to bottom, in carefully chosen words.

The Image of the House	Mr Osmond	Qualities
The villa was a long, rather <u>blank</u> -looking structure, with the far-projecting roof which Tuscany loves and which, on the hills that encircle Florence, when considered from a distance, makes so harmonious a <u>rectangle</u> with the straight, dark, definite <u>cypresses</u> that usually rise in groups of three or four beside it (1995: 249).	He was a man of forty, with a high but well-shaped head, on which the hair, still dense, but prematurely grizzled, had been cropped close. He had a fine, narrow, extremely modelled and composed face, of which the only fault was just this effect of its running a trifle too much to points (1995: 251).	Emptiness Sadness Simplicity

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[...] this antique, solid, weather-worn, yet <u>imposing</u> front had a somewhat incommunicative character (1995: 249).	[...] narrow, extremely modelled and composed face [...] beard, cut in the manner of the portraits of the sixteenth century and surmounted by a fair moustache, of which the ends had a romantic upward flourish, gave its wearer a foreign, traditionary look and suggested that he was a <u>gentleman who studied style</u> (1995: 251).	Coolness Calmness Affectation
[the] imposing front had a somewhat incommunicative character. It was the <u>mask</u> , not the face of the house. It had heavy lids, but no eyes; the house in reality looked another way – looked off behind, into splendid openness and the range of the afternoon light (1995: 249).	His conscious, curious eyes, however, eyes at once vague and penetrating, <u>intelligent</u> and <u>hard</u> , expressive of the <u>observer</u> as well as of the <u>dreamer</u> , would have assured you that he studied it only within well-chosen limits, and that in so far as he sought it he found it. You would have been much at a loss to determine his original clime and country (1995: 251).	Inscrutability Deceitfulness Unsociability Mysteriousness

It is apparent from this table that Gilbert Osmond's character is difficult to interpret from the beginning of James's descriptions; his image is enigmatic and ambiguous. Yet, after several readings, words like "composed", "fault", "vague", "penetrating", and "hard" might indicate the contradictory nature of the man. Taking into consideration that the exterior description of the house is slightly different from the interior one, described in terms of "angular specimens of pictorial art in frames as pedantically primitive, those perverse-looking relics of medieval brass and pottery, of

which Italy has long been the not quite exhausted storehouse" (1995: 250), it may be concluded that these details pinpoint the cheapness of his soul. Later on, the description of his house in chapter 22 seems to have more meaning, finally disclosing its owner's real nature to Isabel in chapter 42:

The windows of the ground-floor, as you saw them from the piazza, were, in their noble proportions, extremely architectural; but their function seemed less to offer communication with the world than to defy the world to look in. They were massively cross-barred, and placed at such a height that curiosity, even on tiptoe, expired before it reached them (1995: 249-250).

Osmond's beautiful mind gave it neither light nor air; Osmond's beautiful mind indeed seemed to peep down from a small high window and mock at her (1995: 461).

Henry James, a real aesthete, uses art to underline the difference between the moral and ethical features of the two characters; for instance, among the paintings mentioned as hanging in Mr Touchett's residence are artworks of renown European painters, while in Gilbert Osmond's house, the paintings are "small, odd, elaborate pictures, chiefly in water-colour" (1995: 250). The choice of the tree by Gilbert Osmond's house also seems to be purposeful – a cypress – a conifer which is commonly associated with mourning.

These two characters are not the only ones to be described side by side with their dwellings. Lord Warburton's house is also carefully outlined, as well as Mrs Touchett's exceptional residence in the city of Florence. The "high, cool rooms where the cavern rafters and pompous frescoes of the sixteenth century looked down on the familiar commodities of the age of advertisement", along with the "monumental court of the great house" (1995: 270) announce the respectability and nobleness of its mistress.

Lord Warburton's house, on the other hand, announces the interesting nature of its master, being introduced as "a very curious old place" (James 1995: 87) at the beginning of Chapter 8. The house is described in a delicate manner while Lord Warburton is showing it to Isabel Archer. James is trying to create a "noble picture" of the mansion, as noble as a real English lord should be. The image of the house had a great impact on the heroine of the novel; she saw it as if it were "a castle in a legend". Then again, to increase the reader's interest in the character of

Lord Warburton, James repeats the word 'curious' once again: "the house, which had a very curious history" (1995: 97). His efforts, however, are not enough, as Isabel is not attracted to the young Englishman. He is too perfect, so not interesting for her. The fact that he has "a hundred thousand a year, [...] owns fifty thousand acres of the soil of this little island, [...] has half a dozen houses, [...] a seat in Parliament [...] elegant tastes" does not help him in influencing her opinion, as she believes that to be so impeccable is "a very poor position" (1995: 93). It can be assumed that in this case Isabel is rejecting his candidate because he is too perfect and there is no challenge for her in marrying him. A totally different situation is foregrounded when it comes to Gilbert Osmond: "he has no money; he has no name; he has no importance". This very situation is what catches Isabel's attention: "I care very much for money, and that's why I wish Gilbert Osmond to have a little" (1995: 361). The reader, on the contrary, rises to the bait and seems to like the character of Lord Warburton. Eventually, this 'little' flaw, consisting of pride and vain glory, intended to show the whole world that she does not care for material possessions, leads to her failure.

Finally, Isabel's house in Rome, where she resides as Gilbert Osmond's wife, offers a totally different view from what was once the house of Gilbert Osmond in Florence, before his marriage to Isabel. The interesting oil paintings are now replaced by "frescoes by Caravaggio" (an Italian painter, who activated during the 16th century, known for his exceeding violence), yet the gallery is full of "mutilated statues and dusty urns" (James 1995: 393). The image of the house is presented from Mr Rosier's perspective, the gentleman who was in love with Gilbert Osmond's daughter. There is one aspect, however, which strikes one's attention: it is Isabel's radically changed portrait. Nothing of the previous Isabel has remained, and the house is the evidence of her new image: "dark and massive structure", "a palace", "a dungeon", "a domestic fortress", "a pile which smelt of historic deeds, of crime and craft and violence", "visited on a vague survey, disappointed and depressed" (1995: 392-393). Despite its sad and disheartened appearance, the residence is located in the centre of the city of Rome and has an impressive aura. The interior is sumptuously furnished, the second floor reception-rooms richly decorated, "walls covered with old red damask" and almost everywhere the "odour of

flowers" is poignant (1995: 393-395). The hostess makes her appearance after the detailed description of her house:

She was dressed in black velvet; she looked high and splendid, [...] and yet oh so radiantly gentle! [...] The years had touched her only to enrich her; the flower of her youth had not faded, it only hung more quietly on its stem. She had lost something of that quick eagerness to which her husband had privately taken exception – she had more the air of being able to wait. Now, at all events, framed in the gilded doorway, she struck our young man as the picture of a gracious lady (1995: 396).

Thus, the young lady who considered money, possessions and wealth to be of no importance, and to express nothing of one's personality, is now decorating her house and her life with rich and luxurious things. Besides, she is allowing her husband to make a museum of their house simply for his own pleasure. These facts speak against Isabel's statements; it is obvious that she cares for possessions and goods, and that all she surrounds herself with definitely expresses her nature.

It appears that the major character, Isabel Archer, does not 'share' the assumption promoted by W. James in his theory – according to which a person is represented by its Material Self. On the contrary, she claims that the Material Self is not expressive at all. The character that is constructed to support W. James's opinion is the antagonist of the novel, Madame Merle. Furthermore, the selected instances from the novel *The Portrait of a Lady* show the skilful use of the analogical relation between setting and characters. Taken together, these results indicate Henry James's philosophy of life and art, as well as the inner workings of his literary portraiture via emphasis on the Material Self.

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The Re-Emergence of Medieval Authorship Models in Contemporary Genres

Gabriela DEBITA*

Abstract

*Medieval, pre-print authorship differs significantly from modern authorship in that it is often anonymous, derivative, collaborative or 'conspiratorial.' While the invention of the printing press completely revolutionized book production and led to an unprecedented diversification, availability, and affordability of printed material, it also profoundly changed authorship models and introduced new material and legal constraints. With publishers acting as gatekeepers, and with copyright laws limiting imitative and derivative authorship, informal authorship became difficult and derivative authorship dangerous from a legal point of view. However, the introduction of digital mediums eliminated some of these constraints, allowing medieval authorship models to re-emerge in a number of genres which were initially considered 'fringe,' but which have been gradually joining the mainstream over the course of the last decade: fantasy fiction, videogames, and fanfiction. This paper analyzes two cases (the continuation of Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* fantasy series by author Brian Sanderson, and the expansion of the *World of Warcraft* universe from the initial MMORPG to a complex network of canonical and non-canonical works, including fiction, visual art, animation, and cinema), and argues that medieval authorship practices are present in both. Our conclusion is that due to the popularity and profitability of fantasy franchises and to the flexibility of digital mediums, such authorship practices are gradually spreading upwards and inwards into mainstream publishing and are likely to become increasingly common in decades to come.*

Keywords: *medieval, authorship, fantasy, video games, fanfiction*

While the invention of printing liberated the book from the constraints of scarcity and laborious production, and allowed unprecedented diversification and dissemination, it also brought about material and legal concerns, such as the necessity of a fixed form, authors' rights and

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royalties, and copyright laws. The impact of these concerns on the act of writing and on the formulation of authorship models cannot be overstated. With publishers acting as gatekeepers, informal authorship became difficult, the dissemination of material produced by non-professional authors almost impossible, and derivative authorship dangerous from a legal point of view.

It is not surprising, therefore, that once some of these constraints were removed by new digital mediums, older and almost forgotten authorship models (anonymous, imitative, interpretative, corrective, collaborative, 'conspiratorial') started to re-emerge. This happened despite the fact that many of their most enthusiastic users and supporters have little knowledge of the medieval and early Renaissance roots of such models, or little awareness of the part mediums have to play in the shaping of authorship. The goal of this paper, therefore, is to explore the similarities between pre-print and post-print authorship models, and to demonstrate the fact that, due to the freedom afforded by digital mediums, some medieval practices are re-emerging in fantasy writing, video game production and the derivative genre of fanfiction, and from there spreading upwards and inwards into mainstream publishing¹.

Although authors like J.R.R. Tolkien have brought both attention and respectability to fantasy writing, and fantasy books, along with their associated film productions, have earned their publishers millions of dollars, the genre is still situated at the outer limits of 'serious writing' compared to more canonical literature; insofar as fanfiction is concerned, many, including its adherents, place it on the fringes of the literary world, and a good many authors have spoken against its legitimacy (*Authors and FanFiction: 'Precious Sparkly Unicorns'* 2010, *Thus Spake the Creator – Fans and the FAQ*, n.d.). Interestingly, the distance from spheres of authority, such as literary criticism or official publishers, along with relegation to the realm of online publishing, are contributing factors to the nurturing of new authorship models, since they involve relatively little interference or limitations, and allow free and widespread dissemination.

Due to the limited scope of this paper, two cases were selected for further analysis, although it is undeniable that both fantasy and fanfiction universes are present in large numbers and in every medium. The first case is that of *The Wheel of Time* series, envisioned and written to a large extent by Robert Jordan, and finished by Brandon Sanderson, despite Jordan's

clear directives against any continuations after his death and his antagonistic position towards fanfiction. The second case is that of the *Warcraft* universe, including lore development in game, official novels, the *Warcraft* film, and the activities of the fanfiction community. Both cases present unorthodox authorship models, some of them originating in the unofficial communities surrounding these franchises, along with the co-existence of several authorship models in the case of *Warcraft*. While it is not realistic to expect mainstream literary and authorship practices to change overnight, especially considering that the digital age is still in its infancy, the commercial success of the practices emerging from fantasy and fanfiction writing may lead to a reshaping of mainstream authorship practices in the course of the upcoming decades.

The pre-print era – anonymous, collaborative, and ‘conspiratorial’ models of authorship

Authorship is, according to Sebastian Coxon, “the most fundamental and provocative literary issue of all” (2001: 1). As modern readers and cultural products of the print era, we take it for granted that every published text has a known author, both ready to stand behind his or her written work and to defend it from unauthorized plagiarism and copyright infringements. Therefore, Coxon’s assertion may seem hyperbolic: ‘fundamental,’ certainly, given our interest in canonicity, biographies, literary influences, and schools of thought, but ‘provocative’ may seem far-reaching considering the efforts of publishers and lawmakers to define the boundaries of legitimate authorship and to dispose of uncertainties. However, as Hobbins succinctly puts it, “authorship before print is different from modern authorship” (2009: xii), and “all the things we thought we knew about authorship, books, and publishing, are not timeless but historically conditioned and contingent on the printed book” (2009: xi). Thus, in order to understand the uncertainty, flexibility, even ‘lawlessness’ of medieval authorship, we must step outside the norms and definitions we have developed in relationship to the printed book.

Before we begin to understand the ways in which pre-print authorship differs from modern authorship, we must consider the implications of the words *auctor* and *auctoritas*, which cannot be directly translated into modern English without careful contextual delineations.

Auctoritas can be translated as both 'authority' and 'authorship',² of which the former precedes and supersedes the latter in a medieval context. As Coxon explains, the notion of 'authority' had 'juridical connotations of responsibility' (2001: 5) due to the fact that the word *auctor* referred to "guarantor' in ancient and medieval common law' (2001: 5). In a scholastic and literary sense, 'authority' expands beyond its juridical origins to encompass truth, intellectual value, and adherence to divine revelations and precepts. Hence, the Church Fathers, or scholars like Duns Scotus and Ockam "may have been authors in the sense that they possessed authority and were recognized" (Hobbins 2009: 2), and their works were valued, copied, cited, and memorized. Similarly, the notion of authority applied to writers of the classical and late antiquity whose works encompassed "the sum of learning" (Coxon 2001: 5), as revealed by the title of Conrad of Hirsau's book, *Dialogus super auctores*. In essence, the attribution of a text to a recognized and revered *auctor* was an act of institutionalization and legitimization, of investing the text with divinely sanctioned authority. Nevertheless, the accuracy of such attributions is far from precise, as we will see in the examples of Alexander of Hales and Thomas Aquinas.

"*Auctor est aequivocum*", however, according to Honorius of Autun, quoted by Coxon: "*Est autem auctor civitatis, id est fundator ur Romulus Romae; est et auctor sceleris, id est princeps vel signifer, ut Judas Christi mortus; est quoque auctor libri, id est compositor, ut David Psalterii, Plato Thymaei*" (Honorius cited in Coxon 2001: 5, my emphasis). If we choose to translate *auctor* as the 'originator' or 'composer' of a book, someone able to claim the "individual creation and ownership of texts" (Hobbins 2009: 2), then 'authorship' is perhaps an imprecise way of describing the 'authority' of some medieval scholars and writers, as Hobbins points out. Hobbins mentions the example of Alexander of Hales, a 12th century theologian, who was unable to finish his *Summa* before his death in 1245. Not wishing to leave his work unfinished, the Franciscan order commissioned a group of writers in order to see it to completion (Hobbins 2009: 2). A similar situation involves the continuation of Thomas Aquinas' work by the Dominican order, using 'fragments of odd treatises and even memories of his teachings' (2009: 2). As Boureau explains, "[t]he true author [of Thomas Aquinas's works] [...] is not the person who died in 1274 but 'the mind of Thomas' that inspired these works and their continuations" (Boureau cited in Hobbins 2009: 2).

These two cases clearly show the impossibility of choosing just one facet, one meaning of the word *auctor* – Alexander of Hales and Thomas Aquinas were *auctores* in the sense that they possessed authority, just as they were *auctores* in the sense that they were ‘originators’ of their works. Yet, despite modern editions displaying their names on the cover, neither can claim sole ownership of his works or individual creation, starting with the formulation of their ideas and ending with the composition of their sentences. In fact, neither had any semblance of control over the shape and content of their works after their deaths, or any say in whether they considered the continuation of their works an acceptable solution. The accuracy of their disciples’ memories is also profoundly questionable, and allows the seamless insertion of foreign interpretations and formulations into the oeuvre itself. In a way, we will always be one degree removed from the ‘true’ work of Thomas and we must understand his ‘authorship’ in the loosest sense, as osmosis between his authentic writings and his disciples’ contributions. Hence, the authorship model that emerges is collaborative and partially anonymous, more interested in investing the final work with its proper authority than with preserving authenticity or recording individual contributions with accuracy.

According to Minnis, a shift in the construction of authorship took place by the 13th century, when “the aspect of divinely sanctioned authority no longer presented an obstacle to attempts to grasp the individual literary and moral activity of human authors” (cited in Coxon 2001: 6). Coxon explains that this shift was the result of a rising interest in ‘the literal sense of the Bible’ and to a ‘new critical idiom’ (2001: 6) based on Aristotle’s four causes, which allowed the differentiation between the primary effective cause – God (the unmoved mover) and the secondary effective cause – the human writer, drawing his inspiration from God. As a consequence, various contributions to the production of a literary work could be classified in a more precise manner, from *scriptor* (scribe), to *compiler*, *commentator*, and *auctor*, as outlined in Bonaventure’s scale, for example³.

As Coxon explains, Bonaventure’s scale is based on the degrees to which a writer fuses borrowed and original material, which allows us to see a perhaps greater acknowledgement of the role of personal contribution (as well as the tension between ‘authority’ and ‘authorship’ at work). For example, scribes, whose role was mostly that of copyists, ‘also functioned as interpreters, editing and consequently altering the meaning of texts’

(Johnson 1991: 820). And, even though, according to Bale, 'in many medieval vernacular texts the author is represented as a craftsman and translator rather than a visionary or virtuoso' (Bale 2008: 920), this is probably a convenient means of seamlessly (and, occasionally, subversively) inserting and concealing original contributions while making recourse to the authority of classical and patristic texts. Interestingly, this is the polar opposite of modern authorship formulations, which seek to distinguish the author from others who may have undertaken similar pursuits and to emphasize the originality of the work, even if the latter is located in approach or interpretation rather than in subject.

In the late medieval period, a greater preoccupation with the role and status of the author emerged, "signalling a growing trend of attaching an authorial identity to a text worth reading", as Bale points out (2008: 920). While the writer of *The Wanderer*, or the *Pearl* poet, or even writers whose identity is known, such as Chrétien de Troyes, are faint, undefined, presences in their works, the same cannot be said of Christine de Pizan or Geoffrey Chaucer. Pizan obsessively repeats the phrase "Je, Christine" throughout her works, as a permanent reminder of her status as an individual and as a professional writer, and Chaucer is the first English writer "to use the word *author* in its secular meaning [...] the word *tale* in its literary sense [...] the words *audience* and *auditor* without their legal implications" (Sanders 1991: 111). After Chaucer, particularly through the works of John Lydgate and the prologues of William Caxton in the early print era, we can see the emergence of the English 'laureate poet' and the attempt to solidify the notion of personal authorship in a form which is similar to its modern incarnation (that is, investing individual authorship with authority derived from its own merits, rather than from a divine source).

At the same time, considering that the authorship of Chaucer, or, later on, that of Shakespeare, is based on the same claims to individuality and originality as modern authorship would be a gross oversimplification. Chaucer owes a great debt to classical mythology and Greek tragedy, to Ovid, the Bible, Boethius, Boccaccio, and to oral medieval tales in circulation during his time. Although his contributions to the development of English vernacular literature are undeniable, and his treatment of popular themes, plots, and genres shows a great degree of innovation, Chaucer is, in a manner of speaking, one of the most refined fanfiction

writers in English literature, for his works unfold in borrowed or conventional 'universes,' and make ample use of characters not of his invention (from the stock characters of his *Canterbury Tales*, like the popular Johan and Alysoun, or the figures of his pilgrims, to Troilus and Criseyde). This is by no means a sin from a medieval perspective, and certainly not what would be considered an act of plagiarism today; on the contrary, it is an exercise in the art of *conspiratio*, which has the connotation of multiple voices 'breathing' together as they intermingle, if we are to use Macrobius' metaphor: "Not only do different authors proffer different versions of a single story, but each individual author must negotiate among the many voices heard in order to arrive at a new version" (Kelly 1999: xi), as Kelly elaborates. Rather than simply imitating, Chaucer engages in a literary 'conspiracy' of intertextual allusions, rewriting, correcting, or adding to earlier voices instead of relying solely on personal inspiration. From here, a complicated model of authorship emerges, one in which individual contributions are finely interwoven with borrowed material, to the point where untangling the separate threads is no longer possible.

A very similar model applies to Shakespeare as well, whose plots appear to be almost entirely borrowed, although with added complications: none of Shakespeare's original manuscripts survive today – only the printed folios –, which makes it exceedingly difficult to document where Shakespeare himself ends and the additions and corrections of his collaborators and contemporaries begin. In addition, a number of Shakespeare's plays are the result of literary collaborations, and it is possible that works attributed to other playwrights, such as John Fletcher's *A Woman's Prize or The Tamer Tamed* may have benefitted from Shakespeare's indirect contributions (aside from the fact that the play is a response to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*).

Besides the theological, philosophical, and aesthetical influences presented above, there is one more factor which contributed to the fluidity of medieval authorship: the medium itself – the manuscript book. Although great care went into the production of presentation and display copies, the manual reproduction and production of books allowed the relatively effortless incorporation of editorial corrections and annotations, the collation of multiple versions, and the revision of earlier ones. Individual authorship, even in times when the individuality of creation started emerging as a concept, is difficult or impossible to separate from

subsequent, signed or anonymous, contributions. The picture emerging from the pre-print era and the ensuing transitional period, therefore, is that of multiple and complicated authorship models, involving heavy reliance on: divine authority and on the authority of preceding scholars; anonymous contributions; anonymous modifications, editing, and continuations of existing works; collaborative writing; intricate allusions to and rewritings of previous works (in other words, involving the clothing of old books in new flesh).

With the introduction of the printing press, however, new concerns and practices emerge, which, over the course of over 500 years, solidify a more concrete model of authorship: one which is more familiar and coherent for the modern reader. While the exploration of authorship in the print era is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to summarize the factors which led to the fixity of texts and the crystallization of modern authorship.

As Hellinga notes, the material investment in paper and equipment, and the complicated processes of typesetting and printing “encouraged careful control over texts before they were committed to print and during production” (2009: 211). The implication is that gradual and collaborative contributions were no longer feasible from a material point of view. The commercial nature of book production also invited authors to claim ownership of their texts, beyond the scarce rights they were entitled to in the 16th century, when “they owned their copyright so long as they held the only copy of their book” (Shaw 2009: 229). In this respect, one of the most important developments came in the 18th century in Britain, with the creation of literary property under copyright legislation, which “allowed authors legal rights to be recognized as originators and therefore owners of a specific commodity (in this case text)” (Finkelstein and McCleery 2006: 275). This development settled the ambiguity and polysemantic nature of *auctor* and *auctoritas*, by recognizing the precedence of ‘originator’ over that of vessel of divine inspiration and authority. The 19th century witnessed the emergence of one of the most important copyright acts, which extended copyright to “42 years or seven years after the author’s death, whichever was the longest” (Eliot 2009: 293). While references and allusions to prominent texts continued in established literary practices, copyright laws created the necessity for much more drastic delineations between individual works and between the contributions of individual authors. As

the medium itself, the printed book, required formal fixity in order to permit inexpensive mass dissemination, anonymous, collaborative, and 'conspiratorial' models of authorship fell out of grace, and public, individual, original authorship became the norm.

The post-print era - the rediscovery of Mediaeval models of authorship in fantasy writing and fanfiction

The introduction of digital production and reproduction technologies, along with the exciting opportunities provided by online publishing and distribution are perhaps the most significant influences on the re-emergence of fluid authorship models in the new digital mediums. That is not to minimize the contributions of Barthes and Foucault to the critical debate surrounding authorship, which served to emphasize the pre-eminence of language and the role of the reader (Barthes) or the historical variability of the *fonction auteur* (Foucault), and which encouraged scholars to review and rethink their considerations on authorship from antiquity to the modern era. However, the formulation of authorship should not be regarded solely as an academic preoccupation, ultimately removed from within the reach of writers themselves and of their audiences. On the contrary, the accessibility of digital mediums and the almost complete permeation of the internet have enabled those who were previously voiceless to become actively engaged in the formulation of new authorship models. Ironically, these apparently new models bear striking resemblances to the medieval models reviewed in the previous section, and certainly not due to an overall acquaintance with medieval history, philosophy, and writing practices. While literacy has reached unprecedented levels, the return to these models cannot be ascribed to it, but to some inherent similarities between pre-print and post-print mediums.

The image of the medieval scribe or *auctor* as it comes to us from miniatures, carefully inking letters on a sheet of vellum, is not at all congruent with that of the contemporary writer (professional or amateur), typing his or her piece on a computer and e-mailing it or posting it on an online forum. The production of a manuscript was a laborious process, which could stretch over months or years, and the ability to reproduce a work was painfully limited, by our contemporary standards. And yet, the pre-print book could 'soak' generations of corrections and annotations, the

contributions of its readers sometimes absorbed into recopied versions, and could certainly morph into a very different version of itself if new sections were added or removed. In a similar vein, a piece of fanfiction posted on an online forum can change considerably based on feedback from its readers, and could even become incorporated in further versions of the canonical work (assuming the work is not considered finished), therefore impacting the latter's shape and direction. Although the manuscript book and digital productions are vastly different in themselves, what they share is a certain flexibility lacking in the printed book, an ability to accommodate authorship models which are not always public, individual, and original (as a reference to 'origin,' rather than to creativity per se).

The genre of fantasy writing is not a product of the digital age, but has benefitted greatly from the convergence of various mediums, including the audiovisual and the digital, and has arguably created a nurturing environment for online fan communities and has stimulated the development of fanfiction as a genre. In terms of authorship models, an important distinction which needs to be made is that fantasy itself has not necessarily embraced the diversification of authorship, except in some cases, but has certainly encouraged its development in derivative genres. Therefore, it is important to preface a discussion of fanfiction-related models of authorship with an analysis of the potential inherent in fantasy writing.

Considering the seminal role played by fantasy in the development of fanfiction, it is surprising (and, to an extent, amusing) that its most hallowed paragons have shown a definite distaste for unorthodox models of authorship, and, in particular, for derivative/imitative authorship. The reasons behind this staunch opposition to fanfiction, which involves the creation of original stories taking place in borrowed universes and, occasionally, but not always, involves established characters, converge into two main considerations: lack of literary value (perceived in the milder cases as a form of artistic immaturity⁴, and in others as a form of intellectual violation⁵) and copyright infringement, with its negative material consequences for the original author. Charlie Stross, author of *Down on the Farm* and *Trunk and Disorderly*, has summarized these positions in fittingly 'medieval' metaphors: "I am not a precious sparkly unicorn who is obsessed with the purity of his characters — rather, I am a glittery and avaricious dragon who is jealous of his steaming pile of gold. If you do not

steal the dragon's gold, the dragon will leave you alone" (*Authors and FanFiction: 'Glittery and Avaricious Dragons'* 2010). Robert Jordan, author of the celebrated *The Wheel of Time* series, was ostensibly of the latter persuasion: tolerant of music and art illustrating his works, but adamantly against copyright transgressions and the dissemination of fan creations based on his work for material gain.⁶ That is not to say that all writers have shown a similar level of intolerance towards fanfiction,⁷ but the sheer existence of such objections underlines the conflicted nature of a genre caught in the transition between print and digital cultures – a genre based on traditional print authorship models, yet serving as a source for alternative, non-print models.

The case of Robert Jordan and of *The Wheel of Time* series is perhaps the most interesting in its ironic turn. Despite his reticent position towards fanfiction and somewhat uncomfortable relationship with digital mediums, evidenced by the fact that he kept track of online fan activities by having webpages printed for him (*Thus Spake the Creator – Fans and the FAQ*, n.d.), Jordan attempted to connect with some of his fan communities, like *Dragonmount*, founded in 1998, and which has since become a major online hub for Jordan fans (*About Dragonmount* n.d.). Such fan communities, which engage in a direct dialogue with writers and their representatives, may have played a part in a major decision taken by Jordan's widow, Harriet Rigney, following the author's death in 2007.

When asked in an undated interview about the future of the series after his death, Jordan adamantly insisted that it would remain unfinished and that he had taken precautions to ensure a continuation would be difficult to accomplish (*What If He Dies?* n.d.). At the same time, Jordan kept extremely detailed notes for the final book of the series, which he never had the chance to finish himself. Despite the writer's alleged refusal to see his work brought to completion by another writer, in 2007 Harriet Rigney commissioned young Brandon Sanderson with the monumental task of writing the last book in the series (*Brandon Sanderson: The Official Site* n.d.). While it is impossible to know exactly what motivated Rigney to go against Jordan's wishes (and difficult to find out whether Jordan changed his position before his death), financial gain from the sales of an additional book (which ended up being developed into three separate novels) was likely not the sole reason. After all, Jordan had been compared positively with the titan of fantasy writing, J.R.R. Tolkien, and the success of his series

had been tremendous up to that point. Sanderson faced the difficult task of living up to a reputation of epic proportions, and it is a fair assumption that literary critics and audiences alike awaited the release of *The Gathering Storm* with a mix of fervent anticipation and anxiety. A disappointing performance on Sanderson's part, especially if met with scathing criticism, may have painted the act of appointing a successor as morally corrupt and surrounded the franchise with negative publicity. An educated guess regarding the causes of this decision is that Rigney understood the anxiety of long-term fan communities when faced with the perspective of never finding out how the series was slated to end, especially when these communities found a voice through the online medium.

The appointment of Sanderson as Jordan's successor, in the light of the preceding section, is resonant of the Franciscans' and Dominicans' decision to continue the works of Alexander of Hales and Thomas Aquinas, using the deceased authors' notes and teachings as a basis for a post-mortem literary collaboration. While contemporary mediums allow a much more detailed documentation of which parts were produced by the original author and by the successor, the seamless construction of the three Sanderson novels, *The Gathering Storm*, *Towers of Midnight*, and *A Memory of Light* does not make their readership privy to such details. From a reader's point of view, the latest books exemplify a model of authorship which is quasi-medieval in its construction. Without scholarly training and extensive research, we have no way of telling where Jordan ends and Sanderson begins, especially since these recent works have not been subjected to the sort of critical attention afforded to Aquinas' works (and, in all fairness, never will).

In light of Jordan's attitude towards imitative writing, Sanderson's authorship is twice tinged with uncomfortable irony: Sanderson began his creative career as a fanfiction writer, and his work with *The Wheel of Time* series is, in effect, glorified fanfiction (of admittedly superior quality compared to what is normally posted on online forums like *Dragonmount* and *Fanfiction.net*). From a literary perspective, however, Sanderson's authorship is revolutionary: once relegated to imitative writing, he was offered the chance to engage in 'conspiratorial' writing, using his predecessor's notes and plans as a basis for original writing set in a borrowed universe. Given Rigney's training as a literary editor, perhaps

this transgression was an act of auctorial innovation – allowing the possibility of a controversial authorship model for the sake of the *oeuvre*.

While this model is certainly not a natural result of the far more orthodox models embraced by the fantasy genre, it could be argued that it appeared at the fortunate intersection between fantasy, the possibilities offered by online mediums and communities, and the existence of derivative genres, which emerged from fantasy and science fiction writing. Sanderson's predicament could be qualified as the ultimate experience of fandom – not only actively engaging with a beloved universe, but having access to the author's private notes, and developing a form of authorship which is inextricably linked with that of the original author – which is collaborative, 'conspiratorial,' imitative to an extent, yet raised to an official, canonical position. To date, Sanderson's books have been released to critical acclaim and excellent sales, which prove that an authorship model inspired by medieval practices can have significant commercial value, in the spirit of print-era material concerns.

However, not every fantasy universe was conceived within the boundaries of traditional print practices, and some juxtapose unorthodox authorial practices in their very canon with a very active fanfiction community. The case of the *Warcraft* universe is particularly interesting, since it came into being as a product of the digital age, and its *auctores*, its originators, have recognized the collaborative circumstances of its conception and allowed the practice to continue by commissioning several writers for the canonical novels, stories, comics and manga, working with director Duncan Jones to produce a collaborative script for the *Warcraft* film, and encouraging the development of a fanfiction community.

Although Christopher Metzen was the creative director of the *Warcraft* franchise from its inception until 2016, and likely responsible for major lore decisions, the proper authorship of *Warcraft* cannot be pinned on any single developer or writer – the original lore was developed by a team, not anonymous per se, but whose separate, individual contributions are impossible to untangle after almost a decade of creative development. This patchwork authorship is further complicated by the addition of several novelists and short-story writers – Richard A. Knaak, Christie Golden, Charles L. Grant, Jeff Grub, Grace Randolph, Troy Lewter, Brian Kindregan, Aaron Rosenberg, among others, whose works are considered canonical along with Metzen's own novel, and by the occasional

collaboration between some of the authors (Golden and Rosenberg, for example). While Grant and Rosenberg are not considered particularly influential, Knaak and Golden stand out as major contributors to the development of official lore – Knaak as the creator of the Dragonflights and of the infamous character Rhonin, and Golden as a fictional biographer of major lore figures (Thrall and Arthas Menethil, in particular). Given the organic intermingling of elements originating in different novels, or the free, bidirectional exchange between lore aspects and details found in game and in the novels, the authorship of *Warcraft* becomes very much like that of the *Arthurian* cycle – a tangled weave of uncertain origins and a collective product of mixed authorship.

As a brain-child of the digital medium, *Warcraft* exemplifies perhaps one of the most fluid models of authorship in existence today, considerably more complicated and more flexible than what classical fantasy has been able to produce. The locus of this authorial experimentation and rediscovery (it is tempting to qualify it as ‘innovation,’ but its similarities to medieval models require caution) is likely its remoteness from what is considered canonical in the literary world. Literary scholarship may have embraced Tolkien, yet Tolkien came to it not only as a fantasy writer, but also as a medieval scholar, one who imbued his works with enough allusion and ‘conspiracy’ to satisfy the most sophisticated tastes. The writers behind *Warcraft* come to it as much more humble figures from a cultural point of view – their work, in terms of content, is by no means revolutionary or erudite; quite the opposite, despite its commercial success, it is little more than fodder for the masses. And yet, this removal from the critical eye of literary scholarship, from the responsibility which comes with ‘real literature,’ has likely enabled the continuation of a chaotic authorship model, in which individual contributions were enmeshed with each other, and the story itself became more important than its writers. By separating single, consolidated authorship from the lore of *Warcraft*, its developers allowed it to remain open and limitless as text.

In terms of this openness and limitlessness, the nurturing of a fanfiction community on the official *World of Warcraft* boards seems like as a natural choice. While many fantasy authors distanced themselves from fanfiction or considered it an inferior genre with limited possibilities, it is likely that the game developers have understood that a born-digital

product cannot alienate its online audience without consequences. If online communities have become a marketing trick used by authors in order to concentrate their fan base and maintain the illusion of a bottom-up type of convergence, born-digital products with frequently-altered structure and content are dependent on the feedback of their audiences and have a vested interest in allowing the latter to submit creative suggestions. Despite the fact that lore decisions have elicited considerably less debate than changes impacting game mechanics, the existence of a Roleplay Forum (currently known as The World's End Tavern: Roleplay and Fan Fiction) and the addition of the Story Forum indicate that developers are not ignoring the massive untapped potential of millions of users, many of them capable of suggesting interesting developments. While users normally create their own stories and discussions, occasional 'blue' (i.e. created by the moderators) threads direct the stories in certain directions associated with in-game events – *The Northrend Journals* and *Tales of the Tournament* are such examples. More recently, the Roleplay and Fan Fiction forum has included 'stickied' topics, which offer advice regarding character and story development.

The response to the inclusion of fanfiction on the official website has been overwhelmingly positive, with many threads and new posts being added every hour. However, despite their enthusiastic participation in fanfiction-related activities, contributors do not generally feel that their personal work is prominent enough to impact the official universe in any significant way. This feeling of irrelevance or insignificance is to be expected in the context of anonymous, unofficial, un-authoritative authorship. At the same time, the tension between insignificant personal contribution and strong collective contribution is a revealing and constructive one: despite the fact that we continue to operate under the assumptions of the print era (in which individual authorship is rewarded with authority via official, in-print publication), we are starting to acknowledge the importance of collective authorship and of genres capitalizing on collective potential. While one author, especially an unrecognized, anonymous one, may not leave his or her imprint on the canon, the fanfiction community as a whole is making a positive impact on the official environment and can be viewed as an intellectual and creative training ground for more significant initiatives involving non-traditional authorship.

This tension between individual and collective authorship can also be noticed in *Warcraft*'s network of professional writers. Knaak's work is certainly controversial among *Warcraft* lore fans, many of whom consider his writing vapid, self-centered, and tainted by 'Mary Sue' character development. Having read some of Knaak's *Warcraft* books, I found myself in agreement with these discontents; at the same time, from a theoretical perspective, his commercial success is perfectly understandable. Fans do not purchase Knaak books per se, but *Warcraft* books (or, alternatively, they purchase *Warcraft* books *despite* their being written by Knaak), which serves as another reminder that the work has outgrown its creators and that Knaak as an author is secondary to the importance of the work and to the contributions of the professional network as a whole.

Until this point in time, the *World of Warcraft* universe has successfully sustained several separate networks of authors and an interesting variety of unorthodox authorship models. While much work remains to be done regarding the further integration and convergence of these networks, it will be interesting to see whether these quasi-medieval models of authorship will be able to permeate mainstream publishing circles in the years to come. The work of the fanfiction community is not yet at a stage where it can make a fundamental impression on the canon, but the willingness of the creators to foster and encourage this community certainly reflects an understanding of changing authority and authorship concepts (along with a much more pragmatic understanding that actively-involved, fully-immersed audiences are far more likely to maintain their loyalty, and thus to contribute to the steady flow of income in the company's coffers). As it happens, Amazon has already launched Amazon Worlds, a platform which allows the publishing of authorized fanfiction based on a selection of universes, which, if successful, will likely greatly expand in the future.

Conclusions

As Jordan would say, "The Wheel of Time turns, and Ages come and pass, leaving memories that become legend. Legend fades to myth, and even myth is long forgotten when the Age that gave it birth comes again" (1990: 1). While the Middle Ages have not returned, the old bones of the manuscript book and its corresponding authorship practices have been

clothed in the new flesh of the digital medium. Collaborative, anonymous, imitative, allusive, or 'conspiratorial' models of authorship, discarded as inconvenient or financially inefficient during the print era, are slowly re-emerging as viable alternatives to the model we have held on to for the past few centuries. The continuation of *The Wheel of Time* series by a different writer, an act of collaborative, imitative, and 'conspiratorial' authorship, has provided readers with a long-awaited conclusion based on the original author's notes. It is certainly debatable whether this act was ethical in light of Jordan's own statements, although perhaps this question will be settled in the future, once more documents regarding the decision process become available. From a medieval point of view, however, the completed series fully reflects Jordan's 'authority' despite the intervention of a secondary author. In its turn, the *Warcraft* universe's highly complex network of interconnected genres, works, and authors represents just one example of a growing number of multifaceted fantasy and science-fiction universes which have fully embraced a collaborative model. The most high-profile recent example is that of George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* fantasy series, which has already spawned a highly successful (and divergent) TV series and a number of smaller projects, such as the Telltale Games PC game, which explores a non-canonical episode carefully inserted into a corner of the main universe so as to avoid any changes to the major storylines. If Martin is unable to produce an official conclusion to his book series, a debate similar to that surrounding *The Wheel of Time* is likely to erupt, although its terms will inevitably be influenced by the prior existence of a multi-genre, collaborative network of related works. Although still relatively removed from the literary mainstream, this re-emergence of pre-print authorship models in the post-print era represents a significant phenomenon and will undoubtedly lead to the development of new models as both legislation and technology evolve.

Notes

1. In accordance with the theories of vertical convergence (Jenkins 2004) and horizontal convergence (Castells 2004).
2. The complexities of this term and of its separate meanings are explored by Alastair Minnis with reference to medieval scholastic commentaries of scriptural texts (2009).
3. In addition, starting in the 12th century, monastic scriptoria were no longer the only book production centers, with commercial production centers appearing

in major cities and employing professional scribes as part of a separation of roles in book production (Clanchy 2009: 195), which arguably allowed for a finer differentiation in authorship degrees.

4. For instance, Jasper Fforde, author of *First Among Sequels* and *Shades of Grey*, has expressed this position: 'My thoughts on Fan Fiction are pretty much this: That it seems strange to want to copy or 'augment' someone else's work when you could expend just as much energy and have a lot more fun making up your own. I feel, and I think with good reason, very proprietorial about Thursday and all her escapades; clearly I can't stop you writing and playing what you want in private, and am very flattered that you wish to do so. But anything published in any form whatsoever – and that specifically includes the internet – I cannot encourage, nor approve of' (*Authors and FanFiction: 'Precious Sparkly Unicorns'* 2010). Others include Anne Rice, who encouraged her readers to 'write [their] own original stories with [their] own characters,' George R.R. Martin (*Authors and FanFiction: 'Precious Sparkly Unicorns'* 2010), and Robert Jordan.
5. Anne Rice and Diana Gabaldon have been particularly vocal. Rice has commented that "it upsets [her] terribly to even think about fan fiction with [her] characters," and Gabaldon has been unequivocally dismissive of fan creations: "I think it's immoral, I _know_ it's illegal, and it makes me want to barf whenever I've inadvertently encountered some of it involving my characters." She goes on to compare fan creations to theft or violation (*Authors and FanFiction: 'Precious Sparkly Unicorns'* 2010).
6. Jordan is quoted as saying: "To protect my copyright, I have to keep on top of anyone who violates it. So, no fan fiction using my characters or my world. Sorry. Using the ornaments out of the books is a different matter. That is a violation of copyrights, trademarks. When I say I like seeing art about the *Wheel of Time*, I mean art that the fans created themselves. And remember guys, you can't try to make money out of this stuff" (*Thus Spake the Creator – Fans and the FAQ*, n.d.).
7. Naomi Novik, author of the *Temeraire* series, and herself a former fanfiction writer, considers fanfiction a part of literary history (*Naomi Novik Says Fanfic Is Part of Literary History - and Reveals What's Next for Temeraire*, n.d.) and others, like W.A. Hoffman, Catherynne M. Valente, Cecilia Tan, and J.K. Rowling have taken tolerant, if not particularly enthusiastic positions (*Authors and FanFiction: Complex Positions* 2010).

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Fat Fetishism and Feederism on Film

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Abstract

The development of queer theory has motivated a growing number of cinematic offerings to move beyond conservative, outdated representational strategies of the past by expanding the range of sexual orientations, sexual practices, and preferred ways of being that historically have remained largely concealed from viewers. Although various forms of 'kinky' sexual practices have increasingly been incorporated into films in recent years, the topic of fat fetishism has only incredibly rarely been explicitly represented and remains one of ignorance to many audience members. Accordingly, this article provides a representational analysis of intriguing twenty-first-century portrayals of fat fetishism in relation to the phenomenon of feederism as contained in the films Feed (Leonard, 2005) and City Island (De Felitta, 2009). In doing so, it incorporates a queer theoretical perspective in order to provide insight into real-world sexual phenomena that lie dramatically outside the mainstream status quo.

Key words: cinema, fat fetishism, feederism, kink, representation

An intertitle in white lettering on a black background states "Although the events depicted in this film are fictional, they are based on actual behaviours that are happening between consenting adults right now". As the screen fades entirely to black, the song 'Cherish', in its version made famous by The Association in the mid-1960s, begins to play, immediately establishing a romantic, sentimental tone. Seconds later, a man is seen driving in his car at night, his face visible only in the vehicle's rear-view mirror. A quick close-up of his wedding band indicates his marital status.

The scene transforms to daylight; the song abruptly stops. Nearly a dozen hamburgers can be seen and heard sizzling on the grill of a fast-food restaurant; two baskets of French fries can be seen and heard frying nearby. As the man pulls up to the window of the establishment's drive-thru, he

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receives four large bags filled with these food items and drives off, his euphoria evident as he begins to sing along with 'Cherish', which has resurfaced on the film's soundtrack. Upon arrival at his ultimate destination, a seemingly deserted suburban home, he walks down a hallway and enters a bright red bedroom. A scantily clad, six-hundred-pound woman named Deidre (played by Gabby Millgate), lying on a bed in the middle of the room, awakens, refers to the man as 'baby' and 'sweetie', and moments later identifies him as Michael (played by Alex O'Loughlin).

When Michael heads into the adjacent kitchen, Deidre struggles to prop herself up on the bed and repositions her rolls of flesh. "Don't you come in here with your hot, greasy bags and tease me", she admonishes, adding that she loves him. Out of her view, Michael piles burgers and fries on a plate, strips naked, removes his wedding ring, and re-enters the bedroom, carrying Deidre's morning meal. "Say it", he commands, approaching her with her greasy treat. "Feed me", she replies longingly. He begins to masturbate momentarily. "Say it again", he orders. "Feed me", she begs, as he begins to cram the first burger into her mouth aggressively, masturbating occasionally as she eats.

Thus begins the 2005 film *Feed* (directed by Brett Leonard), one of the few cinematic offerings to date that explicitly explores the phenomena of fat fetishism and feederism. The film is particularly noteworthy because it boldly dares to represent unconventional sexual practices and ways of being that, until its creation, have historically been concealed from media audiences. As such, its representational approaches can be expected to be highly influential in shaping the images and perceptions of these phenomena among viewers who are exposed to them. For as communication scholar Larry Gross notes:

The contributions of the mass media are likely to be especially powerful in cultivating images of groups and phenomena about which there is little first-hand opportunity for learning, particularly when such images are not contradicted by other established beliefs and ideologies. By definition, portrayals of minority groups and 'deviants' will be relatively distant from the real lives of a majority of viewers (Gross 1994: 144).

Under such circumstances, films and other media offerings play a substantial role in moulding the images and perceptions held by society of these sorts of lesser known (or presumably 'deviant') phenomena (Gross

1994: 144; Hart, 2000: 7, 50). Given this film's ground-breaking status, therefore, the goals of this article are twofold: (1) to conduct a representational analysis of the overall contents of *Feed* in order to identify the messages it communicates about these real-world sexual phenomena that lie dramatically outside the mainstream status quo, and (2) to compare and contrasts *Feed*'s representational approaches with those of the same phenomena as contained in another ground-breaking media offering, the 2009 film *City Island* (directed by Raymond De Felitta).

Exploring fat fetishism, feederism, and *Feed*

Because fat fetishism and feederism have historically been excluded from both polite conversation and mainstream media offerings, brief definitions of both phenomena will be offered here before returning to the discussion of *Feed*.

Fat fetishism, sometimes referred to alternately as fat admiration, refers to individuals who find themselves overwhelmingly (and frequently exclusively) sexually attracted to clinically overweight individuals (typically) of the opposite sex (Griffiths 2013). This fetish may primarily involve erotically charged appreciation of bloated bellies and other body parts, or it can be linked to the process of assisting other individuals in packing on additional pounds, with the corresponding journey to obesity generating tremendous sexual pleasure (Weisman 2014).

Feederism, therefore, refers to the acquisition of sexual arousal and gratification through the process of one individual (referred to as the 'feeder' or 'encourager') encouraging the gaining of body fat in another individual (referred to as the 'gainer' or 'feedee') through direct participation involving excessive food eating (Griffiths 2013; Weisman 2014). The vast majority of feedees tend to be female (and are frequently referred to as 'big beautiful women') and most feeders tend to be male, although naturally there are exceptions to such patterns. Nevertheless, in these regards, sexual gratification is typically

facilitated and/or enhanced [by] the eating behaviour itself, and/or from the feedee becoming fatter – known as 'gaining.' This may not only involve eating more food but also engaging in sedentary activities that leave the feedee immobile. Some fat admirers may also derive pleasure from very specific parts of the body becoming fatter. Feedees are

individuals who become sexually aroused by eating, being fed [or forced to eat], and the idea or act of gaining weight (Griffiths 2013).

A bit more succinctly, feederism has been defined in a *Scientific American* blog post, subtitled 'Getting Off by Getting Fat', as a "bustling fetish subculture in which one's most intense sexual pleasure involves eating, gaining weight, or being fed. [Its] not-so-subtle power dynamic suggests that feederism is a variant of more "traditional" sadomasochism" (Bering 2013). Some gainers particularly enjoy being referred to as gluttonous, or being called 'fatty' or 'piggy' and commanded to oink (Bering 2013; Weisman 2014). Furthermore, there exists within this subculture a distinct subgroup of participants known as 'submissive gainers', which are feedees who allow a dominant feeder to exclusively determine which and how much food they will ingest, how much weight they will ultimately gain, and sometimes even whether they will ultimately become immobile and largely or entirely dependent on their encourager (Weisman 2014).

Clearly, both of these erotically charged phenomena serve as the primary subject matter of *Feed*. However, the relationship between Michael and Deidre in the film is not as innocent and sincere as he has led her to believe, and the film represents their various interactions in a highly exploitative manner. Early on, during a scene in which Michael sponge-bathes the immobilized Deidre while feeding her chocolates and commenting that her skin is soft and silky like crushed velvet, it appears that they are involved in a truly loving relationship. This impression is further strengthened when Michael refers to her body as being 'delicious' and adds, "I could lose myself in your body and never be found"; Deidre responds, smiling broadly, "You make me so happy". However, the video camera positioned at the foot of the bed, which is actively capturing their entire interaction, provides the first hint that something more nefarious may be going on. This initial perception is confirmed minutes later in the film, as Phillip Jackson (played by Patrick Thompson), a cyber-crime investigator in Australia who specializes in online perversion, stumbles upon FeederX.com, a members-only feederism website that he eventually determines is operated by Michael in Toledo, Ohio. It is at this site that Phillip first views video footage of Deidre — who is identified online as the 'latest attraction' — as well as some of Michael's previous gainers.

As the film continues, Michael's encounters with Deidre become increasingly dominant and abusive. In one scene, he covers her face and body with gooey food, whipped cream, and chocolate sauce before standing over her and masturbating, commanding her to "shut the fuck up" when Deidre says that she loves him. In another, after he has moved Deidre to a more isolated location and instructs her to eat her special treat of piggy-shaped cookies (which she refuses), he becomes emotionally manipulative, threatening to abandon Deidre for another woman who will appreciate having the whole world dropped at her feet and thereby coercing her to eat. To keep Deidre's weight increasing, despite her expressed resistance and fear, Michael proceeds over time to begin force-feeding her liquefied food by inserting a tube down her throat, remaining unconcerned as she gags and slaps at his hand in protest.

Continuing his investigation in the United States, Phillip discovers that Michael monitors and posts heart rate, blood pressure, cholesterol, and related data about his various gainers online. Glimpsing a 'latest odds' link on FeederX.com, he further discovers that Michael's true motive is to feed his gainers to death, and that his site is actually a gambling website at which members place bets about precisely when each of his latest attractions will perish. "He's leading them willingly to their slaughter", Phillip expresses to one of his crime-fighting colleagues. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that all of Michael's gainers prior to Deidre have mysteriously gone missing (and are presumed to be dead), strongly suggesting that this man is a unique type of serial killer. What is far more surprising, however, is Philip's discovery that the liquefied food Michael is force-feeding Deidre contains the remains of his previous victims.

The film's climax features the final showdown between Philip and Michael on the outskirts of Toledo, in the home where he served as the feeder to his deceased obese mother (whom he intentionally killed) when he was a young boy. As Michael performs a silly dance on Deidre's bed, his ebullience reveals that this is the day he plans to force-feed Deidre to death. Playfully pouncing on Deidre's exposed flesh, he kisses down the length of her left breast before callously biting her stomach. Her positive spirits now soured, Deidre scolds him, adding that she does not understand what has gotten into him lately. Holding a large plastic funnel and feeding tube in front of her, Michael instructs her to beg for it. She complies by telling him what he wants to hear: that she is hungry and wants to grow to be a

thousand pounds. Seconds later, she starts to scream as he harshly forces the tube down her throat. He then begins to pour her corpse-laced, liquefied meal into the tube, jamming it in further when Deidre tries to resist. Michael remains unfazed as Deidre expresses that she is feeling unwell, having trouble breathing, and experiencing heart palpitations.

Brandishing a pistol, Phillip enters the bedroom suddenly and unexpectedly, startling Deidre as he commands Michael to move away from her. Deidre immediately defends Michael verbally, telling Phillip to leave her 'baby' alone and not to hurt him. She refuses to believe the investigator when he says that Michael is trying to kill her, even after Michael burns Phillip with the boiling liquefied remains of his most recent victim, beats the man repeatedly, and drags him into the bed beside her. Although Phillip reveals the fact that Michael currently has a thin, beautiful wife and the horrific details about what Michael has been feeding her, Deidre still clings to the belief that her feeder is an innocent man. She attempts to comfort Michael, telling him that everything is okay – that is, until Michael confirms that he intentionally killed his own mother before carving all the fat off her body in order to make her thin and beautiful. Michael begins to experience a psychotic episode; he points Phillip's gun at Deidre's head and pretends to pull the trigger, terrifying her. "This is power", Michael turns and says proudly to Phillip, as he begins to smother Deidre with a pillow. In a surprising turn of events, Phillip emerges the victor in a struggle with Michael to reclaim his pistol. However, rather than shooting Michael after he insults the investigator's manhood, Phillip instead turns away abruptly and shoots Deidre in the head after she calls him a 'pervert' and a 'pig' and proceeds to spit at him, killing her instantly. After Phillip aims the pistol once again at Michael, two additional shots are heard being fired after the screen fades to black.

With the possible exception of a few moments early on, everything about the representation of fat fetishism and feederism in *Feed* communicates a clear message that both of these subcultural sexual phenomena are to be regarded as being extremely deviant in nature. Although that is already quite evident from the various scenes described above, this message is further reinforced by juxtapositions of several of these same scenes with noteworthy others as the narrative unfolds. Early in the film, for example, viewers watch as Phillip travels to Hamburg, Germany, to investigate a horrifying cannibalism case and discovers one

man, whom Phillip explicitly refers to as a 'freak', feeding the severed body parts of another man (which include his severed penis) back to that same man. To film buffs, this scene is readily reminiscent of the brain-feeding scene featured in *Hannibal* (Scott, 2001) – during which Hannibal Lecter (played by Anthony Hopkins) serves fried pieces of the brain of Paul Krendler (played by Ray Liotta) to Krendler himself – and it implies that Phillip only works cases involving the most extreme sexual deviants. In addition, the aforementioned scenes of Michael engaging in acts of feederism with Deidre are regularly juxtaposed, and frequently intercut, with scenes of Phillip engaging in increasingly rough, borderline abusive sexual acts with his girlfriend Abbey (played by Rose Ashton) as the film progresses – which suggests that the deviant sexual activities he is being exposed to regularly in his work life are changing him in unexpected and undesirable ways in his personal life – to the point that she writes the word 'pig' in large letters on his chest and leaves him in the middle of the night. In this regard, *Feed's* representational strategies pertaining to 'deviant' individuals who engage in fat fetishism and feederism in the early 2000s are akin to director William Friedkin's representational strategies pertaining to 'deviant' gay men in the early 1980s in his controversial film *Cruising*, a similarly sordid, exploitation-filled crime thriller which readily suggests that those who are exposed to so-called deviant subcultures and sexual activities will be unable to resist the lure of those same phenomena and will one day soon begin engaging in them themselves. (It should be noted here that, during *Feed's* denouement, it is revealed that Phillip actually allowed Michael to live and is now holding him hostage in the home where he once imprisoned Deidre, and that he derives extreme pleasure from making the man beg for food in order to survive.)

In the event that *Feed's* negative attitudes toward fat fetishism and feederism somehow still remain a bit unclear to audience members, the film makes them entirely explicit through three particularly insightful exchanges of dialogue. First, Phillip explains to a colleague:

They [feeders] want to control them [gainers]. Get 'em as fat as they can so they can't even leave the house. Can't even take a shit without the feeder. It's the ultimate in sub/dom relationships. It's not your run-of-the-mill lick my boots, drink my piss kind of relationship.

A bit later, as he attempts to dissuade Phillip from pursuing Michael's case, Phillip's supervisor states, "If these women are as fat as you say they are, they're going to die of a stroke or a heart attack or downright fuckin' ugliness anyway". Then, the representational icing on the cake comes in the form of the revelation that the priest who adopted Michael following his mother's death is no longer willing to even speak of Michael because he is so evil. It is perhaps little surprise, therefore, that *Feed* has been characterized by critics as an 'intentionally nauseating' (Weinberg 2006) creation centring on a 'preening nutcase [who] pampers overweight girls by shoving fattening foods down their cakeholes while taking Internet bets on how long they'll live' (Newman n. d.) which is filled with disturbing themes pertaining to "co-dependence, consumerism, the ripple effects of bad parenting, [and] even the difficulty of trusting someone" (Cline 2005) and devolves into "gross, sadistic exploitation" (Time Out 2006).

Toward more positive representation: fat fetishism, feederism, and *City Island*

Arguably, the only positive aspect of the representation of fat fetishism and feederism in *Feed*, besides the reality that the film opts to represent these phenomena at all, occurs when Michael explains to Phillip that his actions may have some positive benefits for his gainers. He notes that his behaviours liberate his gainers by fostering true beauty in them, rather than forcing them to adhere to fashion, culture, and Madison Avenue's anorexic version of contemporary femininity: skinny, androgynous women with small breasts, bony backsides, and no hips or curves who resemble boys and would crack their pelvises if they ever attempted to give birth. He adds:

The truth is that men like their women big and soft, not constipated and waifish with halitosis from malnourishment. Nourishing a woman, honouring her, caring for her, accepting her the way she is – that is what it means to love a woman. It's about respecting my queen, and putting her needs before anything else.

According to real-life individuals who participate in these sorts of relationships, this is the kind of positive state of affairs that they typically enjoy.

The *Moral Feederism Handbook* contains an article about the leading myths and stereotypes pertaining to feeders and feederism. It explains that widespread negative perceptions of such individuals and activities stem from occasional news stories and other media offerings (such as *Feed*) that only feature feederistic relationships having gone horribly awry, coupled with the reality that

happy, successful, safe, and loving feederistic couples (which form the vast majority of all pairings) are fairly successful at minding their own business and being quirky but not outright newsworthy. So we wind up being judged by our worst and most despicable examples. Can you imagine if the same standard applied to something as harmless as foot fetishism? If anyone who thought feet were pretty were assumed to want to chop them off at the ankles? (Moralfeeder 2011)

The article further emphasizes that, although there may indeed be a small percentage of feeders who are emotionally manipulative and/or abusive to their gainers, most feederist participants are actually just regular people who are involved in “normal, equal relationships, with the slight twist that one of us is gaining weight and the other is helping” . To drive these points home, it states:

Feeders aren’t usually calculating, ruthless [beings determined] to take advantage of others. There are certainly a few, but as I keep saying, they’re the exception and not the rule. Feeders are human beings with feelings. They fall in love. Most of us are people first — husbands, wives, boyfriends, girlfriends — and feeders or feedees second. That’s the proper prioritization of life versus fetish. The majority of feeders and feedees are responsible, sober adults exercising their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in whatever way that they deem inoffensive and sane (Moralfeeder 2011).

Certainly, the pictures of fat fetishism and feederism that are painted in *The Moral Feederism Handbook* differ substantially from those that are painted in *Feed*, despite the fact that the handbook does explicitly acknowledge that abusive feeder-feedee relationships occasionally do actually exist. It is fortuitous, therefore, that 2009’s *City Island* offers very different representations of these same phenomena in a mainstream-appealing film

that can more realistically introduce audience members to their existence and typical realities.

City Island is a film about family secrets that ultimately get revealed. For starters, Andy Garcia plays the patriarch Vince Rizzo, a working-class prison guard who has been concealing two big secrets from his loved ones: he is secretly taking acting classes in order to pursue his dream of becoming an actor, and the handsome parolee that he brings home to live in a shed in the family's backyard in the Bronx fishing village of City Island, New York, is actually his grown son from a previous relationship. His wife of twenty years, Joyce (played by Julianna Margulies), is remaining silent about her attempted seduction of the parolee in an attempt to get back at her husband, whom she incorrectly believes is having an affair with another woman (Vince tells her that he is out playing poker whenever he heads to his acting classes and she is suspicious of his secretive whereabouts). Their college-aged daughter Vivian (played by Dominik Garcia-Lorido) hides the fact that she is now working as a stripper in order to generate much-needed funds after losing her scholarship. Their high school-aged son Vince Jr. (played by Ezra Miller), or Vinnie, is keeping mum about his burgeoning sexual attraction to large women and his desire to feed them in order to derive mutual pleasure, "which results in him spending a lot of time in his room trolling the Internet and gazing wistfully out the window at the plus-sized neighbour" (Kendrick 2010). All four of these family members are also secret smokers, actively concealing their smoking behaviour from the others at every turn. As such, the film stems from "a fundamental chicken-and-egg scenario: Do we lie to our loved ones because we fear their responses, or are their responses a result of our lies?" (Kendrick 2010)

The fat fetishism and feederism storyline in *City Island* begins during the film's opening sequence, as Vinnie admires his big beautiful neighbour Denise (played by Carrie Baker Reynolds) entering her vehicle before he departs for school. Once on campus, he runs into Cheryl (played by Hope Glendon-Ross), an overweight girl his own age that he is interested in, and offers to skip class with her so that he can feed her donuts. Visibly offended, Cheryl storms off, wrongly convinced that he was making a fat joke at her expense. As he begins to come to terms with his newly discovered sexual proclivities, Vinnie stumbles upon a website called 'Feeding Denise', operated by a "proud BBW" who is 5'8" tall and

weighs 350 pounds, which makes money by providing subscribers with round-the-clock access to images of the woman in her kitchen, where she spends the majority of her free time. It doesn't take him long to realize that this woman is his next-door neighbour. Unsatisfied by simply watching the woman seductively baking food items in her kitchen on his computer screen, Vinnie climbs atop some trash cans and peers directly into her kitchen window, running away just moments before his presence is discovered. Shortly thereafter, the boy's knowledge of Denise's secret password lets her know that he is one of her fans, and she invites him to go shopping with her. While doing so, they run into Cheryl at the supermarket, who seems jealous when she glimpses Vinnie with another woman. Once inside Denise's kitchen with the groceries, Vinnie expresses aloud for the first time what he has recently been discovering about himself: "It's my thing — I need to feed a girl, like a lot of food". He seems relieved when Denise responds in a positive, non-judgemental way to this declaration by stating that he is a classic feeder who obtains pleasure by giving pleasure, and also happy when the woman says that he should invite Cheryl over to spend time with them.

Through the inclusion of such scenes, *City Island* acknowledges the reality that "gaining is something that many feedees [such as Denise] do on their own in the beginning, perhaps with some encouragement from people in the online feeder community" (Eaton 2015). Subsequent scenes show the trio sharing a huge meal together — Vinnie is encouraged when Cheryl reveals that she doesn't mind him touching her food with his bare hands — and enjoying snack foods together on Denise's living room sofa while they watch food-related television programming. In addition, the film concludes with everyone's secrets having finally been revealed, followed by an outdoor family meal that warmly embraces Vince's newfound son (played by Steven Strait) and the newfound trio of friends composed of Vinnie, Cheryl, and Denise.

Concluding observations

Until media representations of fat fetishism and feederism become more numerous and common, the ones contained in the films *Feed* and *City Island* can be highly influential in moulding audience member perceptions. Although both communicate some truths about these sexually charged

real-world phenomena, the latter does a far more effective job of normalizing them with regard to the ways they appear to be most commonly experienced. In contrast, extreme and sensationalistic representations such as those featured in *Feed* serve primarily to give these relatively unknown ways of being a bad name.

To date, little empirical research has yet been conducted on fat fetishists and individuals who engage in feederist relations (Griffiths 2013). Some researchers believe this is due to the misperception that it is inconceivable for individuals to be attracted to obese others, and that anti-fat prejudice renders sexual subcultures such as these to remain in the closet (Clark-Flory 2010; Griffiths 2013). The same sorts of logic likely explain the dearth of representations of fat fetishism and feederism in films and other forms of popular culture. However, representing these phenomena more frequently will provide greater insight into the true variety of sexual proclivities that exist. It will also enable currently closeted fat fetishists, feeders, and gainers to more readily identify role models, accept themselves and others like them, and reduce the secrecy they frequently feel with regard to their preferred sexual activities and personal lives (Moralfeeder 2015).

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Nanny, Signifying Empowerment: The Evolution of the Dispirited Black Female in Zora Neale Hurstons *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

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Abstract

The essay contains a stylistic analysis of the dispirited black female. Hurston uses Their Eyes Were Watching God to deconstruct the negative image of the dispirited black female, a woman who is dogged by a tragic past. True to her commitment to not fall under the constraints of feeling "tragically colored," Hurston uses Nanny and an empowered sermon to create a warrior woman who struggles to hold on to the remnants of a spirit that had been beaten down by the effects and after effects of slavery.

While there are a plethora of articles on Nanny, there are no articles (at least none that were found after quite an exhaustive search) that focus on a stylistic study of Nanny's sermon. In an effort to add to the scholarship for Nanny, this paper analyses Nanny's sermon – the independent and dependent clauses, the signifiers, and the cohesive ties – all of which help Nanny shed the burdens of her past, whereby freeing her from the burdens of the dispirited black woman.

Key words: Hurston, stylistics, linguistics, signifying, Nanny

*Got on da train didn't have no fare
But I rode some
Yes I rode some. (Dust Tracks...133)*

Writers of the Harlem Renaissance—Jessie Fauset, Nella Larsen, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, etc.—used art to create images of black characters who were more vivid, more real, and more in tune with

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Alain Locke's "make it new" mantra. Alain Locke, in his 1925 text entitled "The New Negro" states that black writers had to commit themselves to creating reconstructed views of blacks. After being viewed for generations as more of a formula than a human being—as something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be "kept down" or "in his place," or "helped up," to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social burden—Locke believed that the Negro community was primed and ready to enter a dynamic new phase through the expression of the young Negro in his poetry, his art, his literature, and his education. Locke's words created a mantra; words that proclaimed that the new Negro wished to be known for what he was, even in his faults and shortcomings, rather than what he was not.

In 1937, Zora Neale Hurston upholds Locke's 'make it new' mantra by re-visioning the negative image of the dispirited black woman; a woman who is dogged by a tragic past. In her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (TEWWG), Hurston, true to her commitment to not fall under the constraints of feeling "tragically colored" uses Nanny, and an empowered sermon, to create a warrior woman. Mary Jane Lupton contends, TEWWG "is a novel about life, power, and survival" (46). Thus, through the transcending power of her literary skill in redefining the feminine spaces, Hurston constructs Nanny, a survivor, who struggles to hold on to the remnants of a spirit that had been beaten down by the effects and after effects of slavery.

TEWWG is a novel that begins with Hurston's declaration that this story will be a "woman's story" (9). Hurston writes..."so the beginning of this was a woman" (9). Thus, the narration of Nanny about the life lived as a dispirited black woman, and the creation of truth that comes about as a result of this narration, is about and for the sake of empowering women. Even though at a first glance Nanny may not be read as a symbol for empowerment, this title is uniquely hers because she is insistent on renaming her past as progress rather than pain. This is not to say Hurston creates a character who overlooks all of the pain of her past. On the contrary, Hurston is insistent on recreating or 'making new' the life of the dispirited black woman. In fact, her decision to construct Nanny, a character who is resolute about renaming her pain, her hurt, and the evilness of her past is at the very heart of what it means to be empowered. Clenora Hudson-Weems proposes that black women become empowered

when they create their own name, and define themselves and their critical perspectives and agenda in ways that reflect their particular experiences and African culture (qtd. in Johnson 2008: 117). And this is what Hurston does; she characterizes Nanny in such a way that her voice, her past, and her sermon become empowering symbols of liberation, wholeness, authenticity, and spirituality; characteristics that Hudson-Weems argues that black women need in order to reclaim ourselves (18).

In the novel, Nanny is classified as a dispirited woman because her spirit has been broken just enough to force her world to be “diffused into one comprehension” (TEWWG 12). Nanny was continually raped by her owner, Master Roberts, and consequently, she gives birth to a mulatto daughter, Leafy. Nanny tells Janie that Mistress Roberts does not take well to Leafy’s “gray eyes and yaller hair?” (15) In a heart-wrenching narrative, Nanny tells Janie that not only does her mistress threaten to whip her until “de blood run down to [her] heels” (15) but she tells her that as soon as Leafy is a month old she will be sold off of the plantation.

In a strong show of courage, Nanny refuses to be separated from Leafy, so she fights for her life and the life of her daughter. Thus, what characterizes Nanny as an empowered woman in this text is not only her decision to save a text for her Janie, but her decision to “throw up a highway through the wilderness” (16), and steal her daughter away into the night to save her from certain death. In her sermon, Nanny admits that she knows that she did not know what she would be faced with in the wilderness, but she was “more skeered uh whut was behind [her]” (18) than what was hidden in the darkness. Nanny is successful in keeping Leafy safe from harm for a while, but she is unable to protect her when she is raped by her white school teacher. And because Leafy cannot endure the mental scars left by the rape, after her daughter Janie is born, “she took to drinkin’ likker and stayin’ out nights” (19). Finally, Leafy runs away and Nanny provides for Janie the best way she knows how.

Nanny’s decisions are intimately tied to the pain she and Leafy experience. So much so that she bases her decisions about Janie’s life on *her experienced* truth: “de nigga woman is de mule uh de world” (14). And it is because she does not want Janie to suffer the way she and Leafy had, she has a very narrow-minded vision for Janie; a vision that some scholars dismiss as irrelevant to Janie’s journey to wholeness. Nanny is seen as a woman who limits Janie’s progression by “shackling her to a middle-aged

farmer—all in the name of safety and protection” (Howard 1982: 404). However, she does this because she has lived a hard life and she does not want Janie to have to experience the pain she had. Though the reader gets to know very little about Nanny because she dies early on in the novel, the reader does get to see her move beyond the burdens of the dispiritedness that plagued her most of her life. Through a simple sermon given by Nanny, feelings of alienation and loss are replaced with feelings of freedom and empowerment for the dispirited black woman.

In early literature written by both black and white authors, the dispirited black woman plays a part. This character derived her name during the initial stages of an indoctrination process that was supposed to transform the African ‘free’ human being into a slave. Slave masters, in an effort to try and transform the African personality so that a more marketable, docile slave could be brought to the American colonies, brutalized the independent spirit of the slaves. Once broken, the slaves would willingly conform to proper slave demeanour. The methods of destroying the spirit of slaves often forced them to repress their awareness of themselves as free people and to adopt the imposed slave identity. Yet, even though slaves did fall prey to this dispiriting process, many struggled to maintain a sense of self; a feat that was not easy for most female slaves.

Jacqueline Royster in her text, *Traces of a Stream* (2000), believes this fight to move beyond dispiritedness was embedded in Africans before the European invasion, and it was the internal residue of this spirit that black women had to hold onto because they were expected to be “beasts of burden”. Beasts of burden (women viewed as non-human objects) who were expected to not only carry the weight of their slave identity, the pain of being raped, and the back-breaking labour they experienced in the fields, but they also had to make sure they were the primary caregivers in their families. Royster goes on to say that, in spite of the heaviness of the loads they had to bear, the dispirited black woman had to carve out a space of credibility and respect as women and human beings (2000: 109). However, the mechanism that would help them maintain a sense of spirit was literacy. The literacy tools that were available to slave women were: the trickster tales, the oral retelling of ancestral histories, and sermons and testimonies.

For Nanny, her literary tool of choice was the sermon. In *TEWWG*, Hurston portrays Nanny as a strong woman who, through the use of the

sermon, tries to circumvent the demarcations set by her dispiritedness. However, some scholars do not see much strength in Nanny. Houston A. Baker believes that Nanny's history under slavery is a determining factor in how she manoeuvres through life. Nanny's past and her feelings about being seen as only property force critics such as Klaus Benesch to read Nanny as one of the earliest efforts in the text to exclude and isolate Janie" (1988: 628). In fact, Klaus Benesch, in his article "Oral Narrative and Literary Text", characterizes Nanny as "deprived of self-determination and free will" (629); thus, he feels this forces her to turn a blind eye to Janie's needs. But it is important to note that because Nanny lived under the old system of slavery, her conception of freedom was of wealth and idleness, rather than a re-visioned voice.

Adding to Benesch's claims is Glenda Weathers (2005), who in "Biblical Trees, Biblical Deliverance" argues that, because of Nanny's misconstrued idea of how each person achieved their own level of freedom, Nanny imposes a death sentence on Janie when she forces her to marry Logan Killicks. In the same vein, Todd McGowan (1999) believes that Janie is denied her own autonomous voice because of Nanny. Furthermore, Sandra Pouchet-Paquet believes Nanny is so deprived of self-determination she has abandoned her ancestral roots in the African American community (1990: 503). But are these valid assessments of Nanny? Lillie Howard argues that they are not. According to Howard, Nanny:

...is hurriedly dismissed as one of those desecrators of the pear tree who spit on Janie's idea of 'marriage lak when you sit under a pear tree and think' by cluttering up her life with materialism, security, and other stifling trappings supposedly necessary to a happy marriage. While Nanny is guilty of limiting her granddaughter by shackling her to a middle-aged farmer-all in the name of safety and protection—her intentions are wholly good, her actions understandable, and her advice well-meant (1982: 404).

Nanny has not had many opportunities to take a stand on high ground, but because she does hold on to her ancestral roots, and she remains true to what she believes is good because of her faith in God, Nanny takes a stand for herself and for the survival of Janie.

Nanny is not only a former slave and a victim of rape, but she is fighter. She fights for the survival of Janie. Thus, Nanny's story is about the strength that comes in spite of *and because of* the struggle. Once Nanny is

able to see beyond the pain of her past, she uses her sermon to try and help Janie become a whole woman. Hence, I argue that Nanny does not lose touch with her ancestral roots. On the contrary, these roots, along with the sermon, permit Nanny to use her dispiritedness as a tool to move forward. Furthermore, through Nanny's voice, Hurston not only reclaims power for the dispirited black woman, but through this re-characterization, which leads Janie's first steps toward her journey to wholeness.

How does Hurston help the dispirited black woman rename her past as a tool to unlock her empowering spirit? Hurston through several "linguistic moments" as biographer, Robert Hemenway (1971) calls them, is able to revision the ending for the dispirited black woman. Thus, studying the grammatical functionality of these linguistic moments is what allows readers to see how Hurston is able to breathe new life into the dispirited black woman.

Looking at the functionality of Nanny's language helps trace the journey to renaming her past. Hence, studying functional grammar will shed light on this renaming process. Functional grammar, according to Halliday, is concerned with the way in which grammar is organized to make meaning" (1994: 6). In this study, functional grammar, as it pertains to stylistics, is used to show how Nanny is a warrior rather than a handicap. This stylistic study presents data that will show how Hurston, using parataxis embedded with cultural signifiers inside the black sermon, help Nanny reclaim the voice of the dispirited black woman.

In order to dismantle the fragmented psyche, or to understand the path to self-consciousness, Nanny's signifying must be understood. Signifying includes history, life experience and word association that assign new meanings to a particular culture. Henry Louis Gates (1989) argues that black literature must be evaluated by the aesthetic measures of its context of culture and context of utterance. Gates brought this strain of thought into his ground-breaking text, *The Signifying Monkey*, whereby he discusses the concept of signifying to analyse African American literature. In this text, Gates explains the Yoruba trickster god Esu-Elegbara, whose African American descendant, the signifying monkey, continually outwits his foes with skilful stories and verbal barrage. The signifying monkey is "distinctly African-American" and depicts Esu-Elegbara with a monkey at his side. There are numerous stories about the signifying monkey and his interactions with the Lion and the Elephant. In general, stories about the

signifying monkey see him insulting the Lion, but maintaining that he is only repeating the Elephant's words. The Lion then confronts the Elephant, who retaliates against the Lion. The Lion soon realizes that the monkey has been signifying or used double-talk and trickery to deceive him. The signifying monkey's power and identity lie in his mastery of verbal techniques that act as manoeuvring skills (Gates 1989: 46). Thus, slaves, who were able to hear about the signifying monkey's dual voiced technique used to outfox an enemy, were able to learn a useful strategy that would allow them to find freedom in spite of their imprisonment. Nanny's signifiers help create a meta-language, a sermonized rhetoric that could be used to testify to Janie about the stories of not only rape and bondage, but also hope and freedom.

There was no pulpit for Nanny, but her sermon, along with signification, is the powerful rhetorical tool she uses to empower herself and her granddaughter. The dynamics of the black sermon help Nanny create a new voice for the dispirited female. The basic components of the black sermon include: 1) an understanding of what blacks believe about power and the sovereign God and how that belief has traditionally informed their sacred story; 2) awareness of and sensitivity to the history and culture of black life in America; 3) an insightful competence in describing and addressing the many and varied life situations that blacks experience daily in America; and 4) an ability to wed the scriptures to those experiences (testimonies) in a practical and relevant manner (Proctor and Watley 1984: 10). Granted, Nanny's talk with Janie does not follow the basic guidelines of the black sermon—which, at the time, was normally given by black men—but it captures some of the basic tenets of the sermon, a belief in the power of God, and an insightful competence in describing and addressing life situations.

Typically, with the black sermon, "there is a creative tension between the black sermon's delivery of heavenly truths and its steadfast linking to the here and now. And despite the relative rigidity of the sermon's foundational structures, it is jazz-like in its insistence that the "performer"—in this case Nanny—finds his or her own "voice" and imprint upon each performance his or her own particular style" (O'Meally 1988: 198). Even though Nanny's suggestions about Janie's future are not considered life changing, it is important to note that Nanny's past cannot allow her to see a completely clear future for Janie, but it does allow her to

let Janie know that there is a possible way out of the chaos that she (Nanny) and Leafy had to endure. Nanny's sermon is meant to inform Janie about "colored women sittin' on high" (*TEWWG* 15), yet at the same time it is meant to help Janie find security. Nanny believes that marriage, family and belief in God are the best ways to find security, and she preaches about this in her sermon. However, Janie sees beyond the closed world that Nanny has lived in for so long. Nanny and Leafy were enslaved by life and life's circumstances, but Janie does not want to be imprisoned. Thus, Nanny's sermon and her signifiers do not handicap Janie's growth. Quite the contrary, her sermon and the signifiers become rhetorical tools that help Janie see her past, her present, and in time, a new future.

In her sermon, Nanny not only finds her voice, but she is able to link her faith in God with her faith in Janie's here and now. Throughout Nanny's sermon, several paratactic clauses are used to extend the sermon so as to include invigorating words for Nanny. Parataxis, according to Halliday (1994), consists of two independent clauses joined by a linking word—oftentimes a conjunction—that can stand alone. Because the independent clauses are linked, the first clause is considered the initiating clause, and the connected clause is considered the continuing clause. Qualitative data (shown in the appendix and throughout this essay) will prove that the majority of cultural signifiers found in Nanny's speech are in the initiating clauses. Thus, Nanny can be read as the initiator or the beginning of Janie's journey toward wholeness. Also, data from Nanny's sermon will not only produce new ways of thinking about literary-linguistic data, including what can be learned about the literary text, but also what can be learned about how Hurston uses Nanny to revision the dispirited black woman.

When Nanny gives her sermon to Janie, she assigns a variety of signifiers to inspire Janie to action. The sermon is supposed to invigorate the soul. It is a form of oral narration or storytelling where listeners of the Word hear a communal voice which is normally raised to help people, blacks post-slavery for example, attempt to break free from psychological immobility. If the purpose of storytelling is not to impart information, "but rather to engage in a free play of signifiers that invoke a range of meanings and truths having multiple sources and origins" (Rishoi 2003: 115), then Nanny's choice of signifiers enable her to preach an important and meaningful sermon to Janie.

The signifiers in Nanny's sermon are cohesively tied together. Cohesion is the process by which sentences are infused to create and build texture within a text (81). Cohesion occurs "where the interpretation of some element in the text is dependent on that of another" (184). The first cohesive tie used in this study is collocation. Collocation happens when "sets of words turn up together in texts because they relate to the same idea" (81). For example, mule, work-ox, and brood sow, flightless bird relate to the same image: burdened animals. Black female slaves were burdened with the pain of being imprisoned by silent voices. The second cohesive tie used in this study is referencing. Referencing is used when a writer wants to introduce an idea or image that will be referred to in a succeeding clause or later in the text. There are three types of referencing, anaphoric, cataphoric and exophoric. In this study, anaphoric referencing will be used to present another level of cohesion that is found in Nanny's sermon. Anaphoric referencing points back to previously mentioned information in a text. Consider the following example:

Carrying and maintaining the load of the slaver was difficult. It was heavy and difficult to manage. It sometimes burdened the overworked slaves.

In this example, the use of anaphoric referencing between *the load* and *it* adds cohesion to the two sentences, so the reader interprets them together rather than separately. Building meaning through signifiers, collocations and a specific context of culture helps Nanny discover her most important role—being a voice that will help Janie begin to re-interpret her future.

The frequency of the cultural signifiers in Nanny's sermon is important because Nanny's sermon is only four pages long. Hence, in four pages, twenty six signifiers (see Appendix) are presented to signify women as burdened animals, mammies/caregivers, and women warriors. The excerpt pulled from Nanny's sermon that will be used in this study contains sixty-four clauses (see Appendix). Of the sixty five clauses, only three are written using narrative voice. Thus, sixty-two of the clauses are written in dialogue, and forty-eight of these clauses are independent. Using collocation, the twenty-seven signifiers are linked inside of seventeen clauses in Nanny's sermon. Interesting, these clauses are independent. Independent clauses are able to stand alone; thus, Nanny's sermon becomes a fight to take a stand on her own. This is worth noting because

stealing her daughter away from certain death, saving a text for Janie, preaching a sermon—something only men did—are all independent, empowering moves for the dispirited black woman.

Unfortunately, we get to know little about Nanny because she dies early on in the novel. The little we do learn, however, is highly revealing and offers insight into Nanny's thought and actions (Howard 1982: 405). Even though Nanny had been born during slavery [...], slavery could not kill her will (405). This is why, in the beginning of Nanny's sermon, she bares her soul about the heavy burdens she has had to carry all of her life. Thus, she starts her sermon not by preaching about the supreme ruler, she begins putting some perspective on the life she has been forced to live. The signified load—which will connect later to the signified mule and work-ox—presents the life situation for the dispirited black woman.

[So] De white man throw down **de load**
[and] tell de nigger man tuh pick it up.
He pick it up
*because he have to,
but he don't tote it.
He hand it to his womenfolks.

*Dependent Clauses

In these six clauses, only one signifier is mentioned in the first independent clause. However, a pattern is revealed in four of the clauses in the middle of the passage. Every word, phrase and signifier is cohesively tied together in Nanny's sermon. The reason for these links is to continually tie Nanny's words together. In a sermon, the preacher will use links throughout his sermon to pull together the lesson. For example, if he is presenting a sermon on enduring faith, he will use images that connect to faith, such as the immovable rock, the mustard seed, or the rain of manna provided to the Jews who felt God had forgotten them while they wandered through the desert. In Nanny's sermon, anaphoric referencing is used to signify about 'de load' that slaves had to carry. 'De load' for the dispirited black female is the role of slave, mother, seamstress, cook, maid, sexual object. In the first clause, Nanny signifies about the load, and then, in four succeeding clauses, there are references to the load with the use of the pronoun 'it.' The constant use of 'it' allows this reference to become

anaphoric in that the constant use of 'it' points the reader back to the signified 'load.' Hurston uses anaphoric references when an idea needs to be extended or amplified. The burden of the load the dispirited black woman had to carry is heavy, and it is enduring. Later, in Nanny's sermon and in the passages for Janie, the image of 'de load' will resurface to show how both Nanny and Janie persevere through being seen as beast of burdens.

In the middle of Nanny's sermon, there is a heavy use of collocation, and in turn, this conjures up burdened animal images and mother/caregiver images. The signified burdened animal images are the most telling part of Nanny's sermon because with these signifiers, Hurston is able to construct the life of the dispirited black woman, while at the same deconstructing this trope.

De nigger woman is de mule uh de world

*so fur as Ah can see.

Ah been prayin' fuh it to be different wid you.

Lawd! Lawd! Lawd!

You can't beat nobody down so low

*till you can rob 'em of they will.

Ah didn't want to be used for a **work-ox** and a **brood-sow**

[And]. Ah didn't want mah daughter used dat way neither.

Ah don't want yo' **feathers always crumpled** by folks throwin' up things in yo' face.

* Dependent Clause

In this part of the sermon, there are eight clauses, and five of these clauses are independent. Nanny's ability to stand on her pulpit and preach a great sermon to Janie is important for her and for her granddaughter. Hurston empowers Nanny with the sermon in an effort to present the dispirited woman with a voice, an independent voice that rejects the beast of burden image. Nanny was forced to bear the weight of the labour inflicted by her slave owner. She says, "De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see" (14). The signified mule, because this animal is of mixed heritage, connects to the idea of the double consciousness many black women fought every day. Mules, which are a mix between a donkey and a horse, are relevant signifiers because they represent the female whose identity is broken into two parts. On the one hand, black women saw

themselves as a product of their own culture, but they also recognized that the racist world they lived in distinguished them as sexual beings, hard labourers, and non-human.

Mules are docile, compliant animals, thus, this image helps Nanny relay the idea that sometimes the dispirited woman had to lead a silent, passive life. On the other hand, the mule has a stubborn spirit. This obstinate spirit represents potential resistance to an oppressive system. Nanny's signifying about 'mules' shows that many black women, even though they carried broken spirits, desperately tried to hold on to the value and beliefs of their culture.

Just as the mule helps characterize the dispirited female, other animals in this section of Nanny's sermon provide further insight into the burdened animal signifier. "You can't beat nobody down so low till you can rob'em of they will," Nanny says. "Ah didn't want to be used for a work-ox and a brood-sow and Ah didn't want mah daughter used dat way neither" (16). When Nanny admits that she did not want to be a work ox, she signifies about women as hard labourers. The ox, normally a castrated male, has the job to pull, carry, and labour all day. The dispirited female often felt castrated by her slavers, like something that was essential to her physical psychological well-being had been taken or stripped away. The dispirited black woman was often emotionally closed off and silenced, but like the ox, she was still expected to pull and carry 'de load' all day. Just as the work ox and the mule are considered beasts of burden, so is the brood sow. The brood sow is a pig whose primary job is to breed. "African American women were positioned in the social order as workers and breeders and were thereby central to the slave economy—a degraded status" (Royster 2000: 111). Hence, when Nanny uses the "brood sow" signifier, she is pleading with Janie to not feel as though the only thing she is good for is breeding. The life of a breeder had been forced on Nanny and her daughter, but she uses this sermon to release herself from this history.

After the harsh reality of slavery, black women often felt as though their ability to fly like soaring birds was lost to them. When Nanny signifies about crumpled feathers, an image of the dispirited black female can be visualized. Nanny says, "Ah don't want yo' feathers always crumpled by white folks throwin' up things in yo face" (16). Using the phrase "crumpled feathers", instead of just signifying a flightless bird, constructs a picture of the broken spirit of black women who were forced to walk around with

“crumpled feathers”. Nanny’s feathers were beaten down, and she was unable to soar above life’s troubling circumstances, but she knew that no one could be beaten down “so low till you can rob ‘em of they will” (16). Crumpled feathers embody the psychological fragmentation often presented in the dispirited black woman.

The animal signifiers connect back to the signified dispirited black female, but the mother/caregiver signifiers reinforce the idea that these women were not only expected to live as hard labourers and sexual objects, but they also had to do whatever they could to maintain their homes.

You ain’t got nobody but me.
And mah head is ole and **tilted towards the grave**.
Neither can you stand alone by yo’self.
De thought uh you **bein’ kicked around from pillar to post** is uh hurtin’
thing.
Every tear you drop squeezes a **cup uh blood outa** mah heart.
Ah got tuh try and do for you befo’ mah head is cold.
Freedom found me with a baby daughter in mah arms,
[so] Ah said Ah’d take a **broom** and a **cook-pot**
[and] throw up a **highway** through **de wilderness** for her.
She would expound what Ah felt.
But somehow she got lost offa *de highway*
[and] next think Ah knowed here you was in de world.
*Whilst Ah was tendin’ yuh of nights
[so] Ah said Ah’d save a **text** fuh yuh.
[And] Ah can’t die easy thinkin’ maybe de men folks white or black is
makin’ a **spit cup** oughta yuh.
Have some sympathy fuh me.
Put me down easy, Janie.
Ah’m a **cracked plate**.

*Dependent Clause

These eighteen clauses that appear in the middle of Nanny’s sermon create an image of the mother/caregiver. Of the eighteen clauses, eight contain collocated signifiers that connect to the mother/caregiver image. The signified ‘head titled to the grave,’ ‘broom,’ ‘cook-pot,’ the ‘highway through the wilderness,’ ‘the text’ and ‘the cracked plate’ are embedded inside independent clauses. This is significant because the sermon for Nanny is the tool she uses to teach Janie how to stand on her own. Part of

the black sermon requires that the person giving the sermon uses insightful competence in discussing situations that blacks experience every day. When Nanny begins to use signifiers that explain her role as a mother and a caregiver, the independent clauses are longer and more complex. In the first example listed below, Hurston embeds four images that signify the strength and perseverance of the dispirited black female. The second independent clause only has one signifier, but it is housed inside a detailed independent clause.

Ah said Ah'd take a broom and a cook-pot and throw up a
1 2
highway through the wilderness for her
3 4

Ah can't die easy thinkin' maybe de men folks white or black is makin' a
spit cup outa yuh.
5

The broom and the cook-pot signify the heart of the slave woman. "Emancipation liberated [Nanny] from slavery, but not from the burdens of domesticity [...] her broom and cook pot are domestic staples allowing Nanny to provide for herself and her daughter, Leafy" (Kelley 1999). The broom and the cook-pot are signifiers that had become intricately tied to the dispirited black woman. Yet, even though the dispirited female is associated with these tools, Nanny admits to herself and Janie that the broom and the cook-pot could be used to help her create a way out for her and her daughter.

Because these signifiers appear in one independent clause, Hurston is able to introduce Nanny's situation—she had to escape with Leafy to save her from being murdered by her Master's wife—and then explain the only option she had to run and protect her daughter. Nanny, with only her broom and her cook-pot, was willing to risk death in order to make a better life for herself. Also, in the clause Nanny uses the 'a highway' signifier. The highway signifies a way out of an oppressive situation. Thus, the signifier in this clause becomes dual voiced. It not only signifies a way to escape, but it also signifies the horizon that is oftentimes hidden from the mulatto. During a sermon, the preacher and the people are engaged in a dynamic exchange. The preacher, through his sermon, is able to impart his message

so that his congregation is provided the tools they need to purge their pain and replace it with a new understanding. In many instances, the preacher or the one relaying the sermon experiences a sense of kenosis or a purging or emptying of old wounds. When Nanny introduces the signified highway, Janie is given the necessary information she needs to remember she will have to fight with whatever she has, whether it is with a broom or a cook pot, to reach that highway or that horizon.

Next, in the same passage, Nanny introduces the 'spit cup.' For the dispirited black woman, the cultural significance of *spit cup* held an enormous amount of pain. The spit cup is a cup that is used by many to catch what is spit out. Hence, the cup becomes symbolic of that which has been rejected, tossed aside, or simply forgotten. After having their bodies abused (sexually, physically, and psychologically) in every way, the dispirited black woman often felt as if she were the excess garbage that was used and discarded when no longer needed. Yet, even with the feelings of insignificance tied to this particular cup, Nanny still felt it was important to remain vocal about her history. Thus, the signified *spit cup* becomes vital in Nanny's decision to release her horrific history because she wants to purge feelings of insignificance.

Royster states that black women maintained a sense of place in the world, even with its incumbent expectations, obligations, and harsh responsibilities; they struggled to pass along to future generations a new literacy (2000: 103). More important than Nanny using the sermon to try and set Janie on the road to finding her voice, is that she speaks of her history through very telling signifiers, and in the process she reaches for the residual spirit that the slavers were not able to completely beat down. The greatest gift Nanny provides for Janie is a narrative sermon that considers the possibilities of a higher road for her granddaughter.

Towards the end of Nanny's sermon, she pleads with Janie to put her down easy because she is a cracked plate (20). This signified image of the woman who is finally able to lay down easy her past, so her present and future is realized in one short independent clause.

57 Ah'm a cracked plate.

Once a plate is cracked, some pieces may remain in tack, but it is no longer able to hold what it once could. Nanny is strong, strong enough to know that she is no longer able to hold on to the burdens of her past that

have imprisoned her and family for a long time. However, this realization is not Nanny giving in to the pain; this simple sentence shows that Nanny is strong enough to recognize that parts of her may always be broken, but her spirit is whole and intact. Thus, Nanny finally releases herself from the pain connected to her past. Thus, she signifies about this cracked plate in this short and uncomplicated independent clause to help Janie see that it is time for her to make sure that her spirit is never cracked or broken by the weight of her past.

Furthermore, Nanny, through her powerful sermon and her telling signifiers such as the *spit cup* and *brood sow*, is able to prove that Nanny is not voiceless; that she, in fact, has one of the strongest voices in the text. Interestingly, Weiss, in her text, *Tangible Voice Throwing*, states that African women are not as voiceless as is commonly claimed. On the contrary, African women's voices are articulated in a variety of spaces, some women centred and others not (2004: 229). Nanny's voice is centred on the struggle to extrapolate herself and Janie from the constricting bonds of the past. Weiss believes that this is a difficult feat because African women's voices are often "veiled," or muffled by traumatic pasts (229). But she goes on to say that rather than be subdued by this "veil," African women fight back by deploying the strategy of "voice throwing," in essence empowering themselves in their societies by speaking up and speaking out, "airing their opinions, agonies, desires, passions, et cetera" (229). Thus, this is what Nanny does with her sermon. She moves beyond the veil of pain, hurt, anger to find a way for Janie to live a life wrapped in hope and freedom.

The way Hurston makes sure Nanny's voice is heard beyond the veil is to add three levels of signifiers to Nanny's sermon: the signified beast of burden, the signified mother/caregiver, and the signified warrior woman that is made apparent with the heavy use of pastoral imagery in Nanny's sermon.

1 Ah wanted yuh to school out
[and] pick from a **higher bush** and a **sweeter berry**.
Tain't Logan Killicks Ah wants you to have, baby
It's [it is] protection, now,
de **angel wid de sword** is going tuh stop by here.
Mah daily prayer now is tuh let dese golden moments rolls on a few days
longer
You know, honey, us **colored folks is branches without roots**.

*[and] that makes things come round in queer ways.
Ah wanted to preach a **great sermon**
* about **colored women sittin' on high**
Ah been waitin' a long time, Janie,
but nothin' Ah been through ain't too much
* if yuh just take a stand on **high ground** lak Ah dreamed.

*Dependent Clause

Although not all thirteen clauses in this excerpt are independent, eight of the clauses are, and of the eight, six contain signifiers. Each image signifies the dispirited black woman as a warrior; a woman who is willing to fight for a new ending. The signified 'high ground,' 'colored women sittin' on high,' 'the great sermon' and the 'colored folks as branches without roots' help present the dispirited black woman as she sheds the skin of oppression and subjugation. Nanny's rhetorical prowess is shown in her sermon when she admits that "colored folks is branches without roots and that makes things come in queer ways" (16). In this independent clause, the signified *rootless* tree is important because it helps solidify the primary purpose of Nanny's sermon. The signified *rootless* tree is one that allows Nanny to explain the history she has lived. Thus, the image of the *rootless* tree signifies the pain many dispirited females felt, as they were stripped of not only their families but of their dignity. When Nanny uses the signified *rootless* tree in her sermon, she is trying to revision her history in an effort to create new roots for her family.

In one section of Nanny's sermon, she alludes to the power of the sovereign God. Nanny states,

It is protection, now
de **angel wid de sword** is going tuh stop by here
Mah *daily prayer* now is tuh let dese golden moments rolls on a few days longer.

A strong reliance on God gives Nanny the strength to tell Janie it is imperative that she "pick from a higher bush and a sweeter berry" (13). In keeping with the pattern presented in Nanny's speech, the images of a higher power, the signified "higher bush" and "sweeter berry" are embedded in three independent clauses. As the sermon progresses, so do the clauses. The last clause in the previous short excerpt is longer, and it

focuses more on Nanny's faith that God will see her through the rest of her golden moments. Interestingly, the higher bush provides an image of the woman who is intent on creating a new voice after becoming "privy to ancestral connections and ancestral voices" (Royster 2000: 100). Rarely were the dispirited black woman characters offered such opportunities; thus, Nanny's image of the sweeter berry constructs a visual image of hope for Nanny. Hope and faith are closely tied to nature in this novel. Certain signifiers, such as the sweeter berry, support the idea that many black women felt tied to their history. The rootless tree, the higher bush, and the sweet berries are collocated images that signify the growth of a broken spirit.

Sometimes the dispirited black woman would "deliberately choose to throw her voice" (14) because oftentimes the pain was too great to bear. However, Hurston does not construct Nanny as a voiceless woman. Taking action, giving her sermon, signifying about the past, and enlarging the vision of the dispirited black woman is what seems to be Hurston's goal. Nanny renames her past which helps her to not only "surpass the boundaries of agony and repression," but to also restore her emotionally mutilated mind and author a new beginning for herself and Janie.

As elucidated by Gates (1989), *TEWVG* is a speakerly text. Through carefully embedded signifiers, basic tenets of the black sermon, Hurston allows Nanny's signifiers to construct a new and empowered voice for the dispirited black woman. When Nanny declares, "Fact is ah done been on mah knees to mah Maker many's de time askin' please—for Him not to make de burden too heavy for me to bear" (13), the reader knows this is not the language of a woman with no hope; this is the language of a woman who is using her spoken soul to help the future generation realize the importance of searching for wholeness. Nanny's sermon and signifiers provide Janie with a chance to go out and find her own voice, and in the process, the chains that tied down the dispirited black woman and the voiceless mulatto are loosened.

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Appendix

Nanny's Sermon

All excerpts are from the 1990 First Perennial Library Edition of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Key:

Clauses/Total	Independent	Dependent	Incomplete Clauses
67	49	16	1 (not included in clause total)
Signifiers	Collocated	Substitution	Anaphoric Referencing
22	12	10	4

[Free Indirect Speech]: 4 clauses

Direct Speech: 61 clauses

- 1 Ah wanted yuh to school out
- 2 and pick from a higher bush and a sweeter berry.
- 3 Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything
- 4 as fur as Ah been able tuh find out.
- 5 Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean
- 6 where de black man is in power,
- 7 but we don't know nothin'
- 8 but what we see.
- 9 So de white man throw down de load
- 10 and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up.
- 11 He pick it up
- 12 because he have to,
- 13 but de don't tote it.
- 14 He hand it to his womenfolks.
- 15 De nigger woman is
- 16 so fur as Ah can see.
- 17 Ah been prayin' fuh it tuh be different wid you.
- 18 Tain't Logan Killicks Ah wants you to have, baby,
- Lawd, Lawd, Lawd
- 19 it's protection, now,
- 20 de angel wid de sword is going tuh stop by here.
- 21 Mah daily prayer now is tuh let dese golden moments rolls on a few days longer

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- 22 till Ah see you safe in life.
23 You ain't got nobody but me.
24 And mah head is ole and titled towards the grave.
25 Neither can you stand alone by yo'self.
26 De thought uh you bein' kicked around from pillar to post is uh hurtin' thing.
27 Every tear you drop squeezes a cup uh blood outa mah heart.

The Coral Island vs. Lord of the Flies

Variations in Emotional Intelligence Skills

Raluca-Ştefania PELIN*

Abstract

The present paper aims at a close analysis of two novels that bring to light the issue of human behaviour and survival in unfamiliar conditions: The Coral Island, by Robert Michael Ballantyne and Lord of the Flies, by William Golding. Although the former novel has served as a source of inspiration for the latter, its utopian atmosphere and the power relations in it are cruelly overshadowed by the dystopian perspective Golding offers. Strikingly enough, the characters in both novels are cast on islands of almost equal beauty and resources and are let free to choose in fairly similar extreme contexts. However, the reader is faced with two unexpected unveilings of human manifestations that reveal the inner structure of the acting people in both cases. By means of a transfer of concepts from the psychological field of Emotional Intelligence, the profiles of the characters gain new dimensions, and the reader gets a deeper insight into the intricate inner workings of the human mind and human relations, and not in the least, into the power of the context to turn these relations into beneficial or destructive outcomes. The boys themselves - with their emotional and ethical heritage - determine the courses of action and in the end they either rejoice in the emotional and the moral choices they have made or deplore the flaws of their character.

Key words: *Emotional Intelligence, emotional competences, character, context, leadership*

Literature is the best realm where readers can meet themselves in new, unexpected contexts and can face their *hopes, joys, fears, and anxieties*. By means of the characters writers construct, literature opens itself up to new interpretations and it is precisely here that psychology, through the present focus on Emotional Intelligence, can cast a new light on the inner workings

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of people's mind and character and on the impact various contexts can have on their development and manifestation.

Characters in literature have different ways of revealing their *inner self with emotions and values* and the readers can reach a better understanding of them when they are mindful not only of the words that express their thoughts but also of the working mechanism behind the thoughts:

If an author chooses to have access to the thoughts in a character's head, the reader can be aware not only of what he or she is thinking, but can be acquainted with the manner of thought – how the character's mind is made up, and how they approach problems and challenges (Gill 1995: 137).

The thoughts of people are most of the time the result of the emotional states they go through. In his book, *Emotional Intelligence. Why it can matter more than IQ*, Daniel Goleman identifies the following emotions, each of which can assume various shades of manifestation: *anger, sadness, fear, enjoyment, love, surprise, disgust, shame*. The author is inspired in his exploration of Emotional Intelligence by Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*:

In *The Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle's philosophical enquiry into virtue, character, and the good life, his challenge is to manage our emotional life with intelligence. Our passions, when well exercised, have wisdom; they guide our thinking, our values, our survival. [...] The question is how can we bring intelligence to our emotions – and civility to our streets and caring to our communal life? (1995: xv)

The author proposes in his book, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, an Emotional Competence Framework that highlights the areas of Personal Competence and Social Competence and details the aspects that make a person emotionally intelligent:

Personal Competence – these competencies determine how we manage ourselves:

1. Self – Awareness

Knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions

- *Emotional awareness*: Recognizing one's emotions and their effects
- *Accurate self-assessment*: Knowing one's strengths and limits
- *Self-confidence*: A strong sense of one's self-worth and capabilities

2. Self-Regulation

Managing one's internal states, impulses, and resources

- **Self-Control:** Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check
- **Trustworthiness:** Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity
- **Conscientiousness:** Taking responsibility for personal performance
- **Adaptability:** Flexibility in handling change
- **Innovation:** Being comfortable with novel ideas, approaches, and new information

3. Motivation

Emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals

- **Achievement drive:** Striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence
- **Commitment:** Aligning with the goals of the group or organization
- **Initiative:** Readiness to act on opportunities
- **Optimism:** Persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks

Social Competence – these competencies determine how we handle relationships:

1. Empathy

Awareness of others' feelings, needs and concerns

- **Understanding others:** Sensing others' feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns
- **Developing others:** Sensing others' development needs and bolstering their abilities
- **Service orientation:** Anticipating, recognizing, and meeting customers' needs
- **Leveraging diversity:** Cultivating opportunities through different kinds of people
- **Political awareness:** Reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships

2. Social skills

Adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others

- **Influence:** Wielding effective tactics for persuasion
- **Communication:** Listening openly and sending convincing messages
- **Conflict management:** Negotiating and resolving disagreements
- **Leadership:** Inspiring and guiding individuals and groups
- **Change catalyst:** Initiating and guiding individuals and groups

- ***Building bonds:*** Nurturing instrumental relationships
- ***Collaboration and cooperation:*** Working with others towards shared goals
- ***Team capabilities:*** Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals (1998: 32-34).

The two novels taken into discussion reveal characters that seem to possess many of the competences listed in Goleman's framework. Nevertheless, some fail at manifesting them or manifest some of them at the expense of others, which hinders a complete acceptance of their person as good models and leaders. In the given setting – context in which the authors place the stranded boys, some competences are essential: *self-confidence* with the perspective that one can use all the resources – inner and outer – that one has at hand in order to survive, *self-control* – according to which one would never surrender to the inner menaces and fears and to the threats and discouragements of others, *adaptability* to the new environment and conditions, and *innovation* with the aim of turning the context into a favourable one. Moreover, *motivation* is the trait that keeps one move on and dare overcome all obstacles. On the other hand, placed in a context with people having various personalities, it is also essential to manifest social competences: *empathy* is the core characteristic that will make a tremendous difference in the way the boys in the two novels behave towards the others. In addition to this, good *communication* is the essence of the harmonious coexistence on the islands, as it can lead to avoiding or wisely managing conflicts and to building healthy bonds among the boys and to developing fruitful cooperation.

In an attempt to link emotions to thoughts and behaviour, Seymour Epstein affirms in his book, *Constructive Thinking, The Key to Emotional Intelligence*, that:

Emotions ... are almost always produced by the interpretation of events, which means that emotions are almost always produced by thoughts. If you want to change the way you emotionally react, you have to change your thinking. This, of course, has enormous implications for improving emotional intelligence (1998: 7).

Therefore, what the reader gets in the two novels are two different perspectives on how boys cast on similar islands perceive and interpret the reality. They go through a dynamic process of interpretation of the contexts they are placed in, and one of adapting their feelings and attitudes as a

consequence of this interpretation. The characters' actions give an insight into the workings of the mind of the authors themselves, which are a result of the impact of the historical, cultural, and social context. Consequently, the two books reveal a totally different perspective on life mediated by the external factors. Robert M. Ballantyne writes in a time when there was still hope in the world, whereas for Golding there seems to be no hope in sight due to an absurd war going on in the world. The two novels, *The Coral Island* and *Lord of the Flies*, contrast profoundly in the perspective they offer, although the action is set in fairly similar places. *The Coral Island* places the characters on an idyllic background, but not devoid of threats. However, the whole atmosphere is imbued with the presence of the Divinity. *Lord of the Flies* places the characters on a very good island with spots of breathtaking beauty, but also with places of decay and menace. The atmosphere is devoid of the presence of God and imbued with the oppressive presence of Beelzebub, who seems to demand constant submission through fear. William Golding uses the central motif from *The Coral Island* in order to contrast "two radically different pictures of human nature and society" (Baker, cf. R. H. Reiff 2010: 92).

There are many similarities in terms of setting, characters, and challenges that the characters face. The boys in *Lord of the Flies* discover that they have been marooned on a very good island which resembles Eden. The three friends in *The Coral Island* discover the same thing, and the impression will remain with them for the rest of their stay, whereas in Golding's book the edenic place will turn into hell.

Ralph in *The Coral Island* has many moments in which he contemplates the beauty of the island: "My heart was filled with more delight than I can express at sight of so many glorious objects, and my thoughts turned suddenly to the contemplation of the Creator of them all." (Ballantyne 1884: 18) According to Aristotle, *contemplation* is the quality of a *happy* person (2004: 17) and this kind of person will be able to maintain this state of happiness despite all obstacles. Slightly resembling the contemplative Ralph from *The Coral Island*, Ralph in *Lord of the Flies* has a moment of joy and contemplation, mediated by the description of the narrator:

Every point of the mountain held up trees – flowers and trees. Now the forest stirred, roared, flailed. The nearer acres of rock flowers fluttered and for half a minute the breeze blew cool on their faces.

Ralph spread his arms.

'All ours.' (Golding 1954: 30)

The character adds with a tone of satisfaction and a feeling of possession: "This is our island. It's a good island. Until the grown-ups come to fetch us we'll have fun" (35)

Ralph's companions on the Coral Island are described by Ralph himself who elicits the best qualities in those with whom he will spend a lot of his time. There is a kind of *optimism* and positiveness in the presentation of his future friends which reveal much of his *awareness of others* and his inclination of focusing on the positive aspects in someone's personality:

There were a number of boys in the ship, but two of them were my special favourites. Jack Martin was a tall, strapping, broad-shouldered youth of eighteen, with a handsome, good-humoured, firm face. He had a good education, was clever and hearty and lion-like in his actions, but mild and quiet in disposition. Jack was a general favourite and had a peculiar fondness for me. My other companion was Peterkin Gay. He was little, quick, funny, decidedly mischievous, and about fourteen years old. But Peterkin's mischief was almost always harmless, else he could not have been so much beloved as he was (Ballantyne 1884: 6).

In *The Coral Island*, all the three companions seem to be possessed by *positive dispositions*, such as: *mildness*, a kind of *shyness*, *confidence*, *courage*, *joyfulness*, *thankfulness*, *understanding*, *appreciation*, *altruism*, *empathy*, and *self-sacrifice*. Jack – the leading figure – obtains his position naturally, *friendship* is the core concept of the novel, *love* unites the characters, *kindness* and *good will* are shared by all main characters, *empathy* leads to understanding and acts of courage, *savagery* is only a menace from the outside and is tamed, *death* shocks, *hope* is a dominating feeling, *happiness* is pursued and profoundly felt when contemplating the wonders of nature.

Ralph's opponent in *Lord of the Flies* is Jack, whose hidden side comes to life in the very context of this idyllic place. He is no longer the Jack offered as a model in Ballantyne's book, but one that has been distorted:

He knelt holding the shell of water. A rounded patch of sunlight fell on his face and a brightness appeared in the depths of water. He looked in astonishment, no longer at himself but at an awesome stranger. He spilt the water and leapt to his feet, laughing excitedly. Beside the pool his sinewy body held up a mask that drew their eyes and appalled them. He

began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling (Golding 1954: 63 - 64).

The boys in *Lord of the Flies*: Ralph, Jack, Piggy, Simon – possess a kind of emotional and moral inheritance. The leading figures – Ralph and Jack – attempt to impose their leadership. *Friendship* tends to be a rather marginal concept, *fear* divides the characters, *kindness* and *good will* are the virtues of the outcasts, *empathy* is only manifested by Piggy, the mocked character, who – because he has been bullied, has managed to develop a compassionate understanding of others and a wise interpretation of events, *savagery* takes shape from within – either as an uncontrolled manifestation of freedom or as an outburst of fear, *death* is regrettably pursued, *hope* which should have kept the boys united is a lost feeling, *happiness* turns into despair and there is little joy in contemplating nature.

The outlines of the leading figures become more and more visible on the background of the unfolding events. The reader is faced with two types of leadership: the *emotionally intelligent* and the *emotionally unintelligent* type. In *The Coral Island* there are only three characters, who, however different, manage to overcome differences by appreciating them as endowments that complement the lacks of the others. Therefore, even if the image of Jack emerges as the leading one, the boys form a team and each of them has a vital contribution to the well-being of all.

In *Lord of the Flies* the boys cast on the island form a community made up of big ones and 'littluns' as the small boys are called. It is precisely due to this difference that the idea of leadership emerges powerfully in Golding's novel, whereas it is slightly vague in Ballantyne's book, as each of the three boys represents a kind of leader. *Leadership* is the state or the position that facilitates a good observance of emotions, virtues, and vices in action. Ralph emerges as the leader, being supported for this position by his attractive looks, charismatic personality, and intelligence. The strengths of his character that qualify him as a good, *emotionally intelligent leader* are: *good rapport*, *initiative*, *optimism*, *discipline* (he sees the good side of having rules in order to avoid anarchy and keep fear at bay), he has got that *achievement drive* that can move people towards a set goal, he remains truthful and honest despite his mistakes. His flaws however – *dominance*, *lack of empathy*, *lack of involvement* in the building of shelters – overshadow the positive side of his character. Ralph feels and acts like a leader. He rules through *reason* – the fire should be kept burning – and *order* (the conch shell

is the symbol). He speaks about the island as belonging to them: "This belongs to us!" (Golding 1954: 29) He reminds the boys of the rules and the common-sensical things they have to attend to. In his speech, he likes to have things straight and clear and as a very good orator he summarises the rules the boys have to obey in order to offer themselves a safe stay on the island and a sure rescue. *Emotionally intelligent* and still holding moral virtues in his heart, Ralph manages to understand and master his feelings and contain his impulsive emotions. He will also be capable of admitting to his guilt of participating in the act that led to Simon's death, thus proving that he is *truthful* and *conscientious*. He makes all the efforts to keep the others within the boundaries of *rationality* and *order*. He is the one who takes the *rational decisions* regarding the shelters, the meeting place and the rescuing fire. He pursues the *good* of others out of *reason* and because these are the right things to do. He *encourages* the boys to keep *hoping* but, at the same time, to keep attending to the things that may ensure their survival and salvation. Ralph, closely attended and advised by Piggy, manages with the heart and the mind. A good leader is capable of identifying oneself with those one leads, of observing their abilities so as to put them to good use, and of noticing their needs so as to meet them and thus enhance the progress they have to make in the tasks assigned: "Leadership is not domination, but the art of persuading people to work toward a common goal" (Goleman 1995: 171).

In spite of his efforts of becoming more and more *aware of himself* and *others*, Ralph sees decay creeping not only on their material possessions, but more frighteningly on their spirits, and the idea of rescue will turn into a long forgotten hope. The *emotionally unintelligent* Ralph manifests almost *no empathy* and he laughs when hearing about the *fear* of the others. Ralph stubbornly refuses to believe there is a beast and is incapable of understanding *fear*, up to the point in which the fear instilled in all the boys reduces him to silence, robbing him of all rational arguments. He has the *achievement drive* but fails to understand the others and their emotional needs, a failure that disqualifies him from the position of a compassionate leader able to *build bonds by understanding the others and leveraging diversity*. Consequently, when the alternative of an *emotionally caring leader* looms out of sight, the boys will seek the protection of a leader that can keep them away from danger, even if this protection is assured through violent means. Ralph himself will finally be overcome by fear, a

fear of the untamed 'beast' in every boy who surrenders to irrational anxiety and to evil tendencies: "I'm frightened. Of us" (Golding 1954: 157).

Unlike the *fear* the boys experience in *Lord of the Flies*, in *The Coral Island* the fear Ralph feels in the midst of events gains a totally different magnitude and the attitude towards it is mediated by his upbringing and perspective on life:

When I looked at the white waves that lashed the reef and boiled against the rocks as if in fury, I felt that there was a step between us and death. My heart sank within me; but at that moment my thoughts turned to my beloved mother, and I remembered those words, which were among the last that she said to me – 'Ralph, my dearest child, always remember in the hour of danger to look to your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He alone is both able and willing to save your body and your soul.' So I felt much comforted when I thought thereon (Ballantyne 1884: 9).

Fear is the perfect tool used by the alternative leading figure in *Lord of the Flies* – Jack. Jack is chosen leader by the choir boys. Jack's indulgence in hunting and ritualistic games seems like more fun and the boys will be more prone to seeking *pleasure* instead of attending to serious stuff. The *strengths* of his personality that qualify him for the leading position are his *free-spirit, courage, practical reason, and a sense of shame* (for having forgotten the importance of the fire). His flaws, however, outweigh the virtues – he is *authoritarian, savage, proud, impulsive, and contemptuous*. He humiliates others, especially Piggy. He subdues the others by means of instilling *fear* as it is the best tool of manipulating them. He wants to be the leader only to satisfy his ego. His thirst for *immediate gratification* will contaminate the others. He assumes a new identity, free from all rules and constraints. He instigates to murder and has no remorse.

In blatant contrast to Jack from *Lord of the Flies*, Jack from *The Coral Island* is the one who embodies all the good qualities a leader should possess. He is not the one to catch the hogs – like Jack in *Lord of the Flies*, but the encouraging leader-companion of Peterkin: "'Well done, my boy!' exclaimed Jack, slapping him on the shoulder when he came up, 'you're the best shot amongst us' " (Ballantyne 1884: 70). From Ralph's perspective, Jack in *The Coral Island* "would have induced people much older than himself to choose him for their leader, especially if they required to be led on a bold enterprise" (20) When they are about to drown due to an

enraging storm, Jack proposes a course of action, and Ralph together with Peterking “gladly agreed to follow Jack, for he inspired us with confidence” (9) His motto is the forever valid one: *Where there’s a will, there’s a way*. When inflamed to the point of menacing, he is given some emotionally intelligent advice by the missionary teacher, which he will strive to embrace: to “overcome evil with good” (237), not to “give way to anger” (240), and to be patient. When his *rashness* and *loss of self-control* will bring about the condemnation of the three of them, Jack confesses to Ralph: “...I regret deeply the hastiness of my violent temper...” (250). As an *emotionally intelligent leader*, Jack possesses skills such as: a good understanding of the self and others, a good ability of being aware of one’s emotions the emotions of others and of the consequences emotional outbursts have, the ability to build and keep relationships, and the ability to motivate others towards seeking the good of everyone.

The two novels, *The Coral Island* and *Lord of the Flies*, bring before the readers’ eyes telling examples of the way people react emotionally in unexpected situations, of the way they interact with others based on the emotions that trigger their thoughts and shape their behaviour, and of the way people cooperate towards reaching a common goal or fail to do so. While in the first novel all the three characters possess personal and social competences in the area of emotional intelligence that qualify them as leaders, leadership in *Lord of the Flies* would have required the presence of such qualities in both leaders – Ralph and Jack, but the flaws of their character keep them from attaining this goal. Ralph from *The Coral Island* discovered the key to their harmonious life on the island:

From all these things I came at length to understand that things very opposite and dissimilar in themselves, when united, do make an agreeable whole; as, for example, we three on this our island, although most unlike in many things, when united, made a trio so harmonious that I question if there ever met before such an agreeable triumvirate. There was, indeed, no note of discord whatever in the symphony we played together on that sweet Coral Island; and I am now persuaded that this was owing to our having been all tuned to the same key, namely that of love! Yes, we loved one another with much fervency while we lived on that island; and, for the matter of that, we love each other still (Ballantyne 1884: 96).

In contrast to the harmonious friendship of the boys in *The Coral Island*, the boys from *Lord of the Flies* do not manage to build such a relationship.

Although at first Jack and Ralph seem to manifest a kind of inclination to befriending each other: “[...] once more, amid the breeze, the shouting, the slanting sunlight on the high mountain, was shed that glamour, that strange invisible light of friendship, adventure, and content.” (Golding 1954: 39), as the plot unfolds, things take a sad turn – “They walked along, two continents of experience and feeling, unable to communicate” (54).

The Coral Island and *Lord of the Flies* challenge the readers to become aware of the experiences the boys go through, the contrasting outcomes their actions bring about, and the emotional profile of each and every character involved in the plots. The books act as mirrors to the readers who may become aware of their own emotional resources and of the personal and social competences they have as part of their emotionally intelligent profile. In this respect, literature acts as a revealer of human nature and as a counsellor towards adopting the best emotionally intelligent strategy in one’s own behaviour and for the good of all people coming into one’s life.

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Representations of the Upper-Class Victorian Father in Ellen Pickering's *The Fright*

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Abstract

The Fright by Ellen Pickering deals with parental roles within a wide range of foster families of early Victorian upper classes and with parent-child relationships these roles imply. A special attention is drawn to the paternal figure as it is depicted in the characters of Mr Bradley and Mr Rolleston, and to the relationships they develop with Grace, whom they foster one after another. Mr Bradley is a kind and loving foster parent to Grace, but his physical and psychological absence and lack of domestic authority allow his wife and children to mistreat her. In contrast, Mr Rolleston is described as a sovereign father who is always present, being actively and directly involved with his foster daughter, but whose parental involvement derives from self-oriented reasons, making his fatherhood swing from stern coldness to affection. The contention is that the portrayals of Mr Bradley's and Mr Rolleston's fatherhood depart from the socio-historical prototype of early Victorian wealthy fathers, who were often absent from their households, but nonetheless ruled them with undisputed power. By comparing the literary representations of the upper-class English father to the typical historical construct, this article aims at proving, through the deviation existing between these two, that the realism of the Victorian novel does not consist in rendering characters and their actions in consistency with socio-historical templates.

Key words: father, foster child, early Victorian upper classes, parental absence, authority

Ellen Pickering's *The Fright* (1839) heavily focuses on upper-class fatherhood and on father-daughter relationships. The only ideal family of the novel is disintegrated because its parents are compelled to depart for India and entrust their two daughters to the care of their relatives. The girls are separated, being sent to different families. Grace, the younger child and the novel's protagonist, is fostered by four parents. First, she is brought up

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in Mr Bradley's family, where she is mistreated by his wife and children, leading a miserable life of abuse and neglect. Although Mr Bradley is kind and affectionate to Grace, he is frequently absent and lacks domestic authority, thus failing to protect her from the discrimination she suffers. But this terrible period of Grace's life ends when Mr Rolleston, her great-uncle, having a vindictive plan in mind, takes her under his care and provides her with everything she needs. Neither of these two characters that the novel depicts in their role as fathers is the embodiment of the ideal father. Similarly, neither of them is a typical upper-class father of the early Victorian period. Instead, the traits ascribed to the ideal father and the common features describing the parental behaviour of upper-class men of the first half of the nineteenth century are interestingly mixed in their paternal portrayals, making them original, but also antagonistic in many aspects. While Mr Bradley is a man without domestic authority, an absent, but kind-hearted foster father, Mr Rolleston, a cold and stern man who enjoys undoubted sovereignty, becomes a benevolent, present, and even fond father to Grace as long as she completely obeys him.

Mr Bradley's fatherhood is defined by three main characteristics: kindness, lack of authority and absenteeism. The external narrator introduces this character with the words: "Mr Bradley, a second cousin of Mr Rolleston's, a kind-hearted squire, so well pleased with country sports, and country occupations, particularly farming his own estates [...]" (TF 112, vol. 1). It is an opening description that clarifies what are Mr Bradley's family connections with the male protagonist of the novel, Mr Rolleston. Immediately after that, his social status is indicated through the word 'squire', which is preceded by an adjective designating a moral trait. The use of the adjective 'kind-hearted' in the narrative introduction of the character points to the fact that kindness is his predominant personal quality. This particularity is supported throughout the novel by other explicit qualifications made by the external narrator-focalizer, such as "He certainly had one of the kindest hearts that ever beat within a human bosom" (TF 174, vol. 1); "his heart was all kindness" (TF 314, vol. 1); "her kind-hearted cousin" (TF 163, vol. 3) and "the warm-hearted Bradley" (TF 110, vol. 2). Moreover, it is also stated by other characters: "your too great kindness of heart" (TF 148, vol. 1); "Mr Bradley is a kind man" (TF 222, vol. 1), and shown by Mr Bradley's speech and actions, both means of characterization proving the narrator reliable. It is because of his kind and

sympathetic nature that Mr Bradley decides to foster his little cousin until her parents return from India. And it is towards Grace that his kindness and affection are first and foremost displayed.

Although Mr Bradley has his own four children, he becomes much more attached to the fostered child. What makes Mr Bradley develop a more caring relationship with Grace than with his own sons and daughters is not only his compassion for her pitiful state (which is seriously compounded by his wife's and his children's discriminatory behaviour towards her), but also his preference for warm affection over cool decorousness. He is attracted to Grace's simplicity, honesty and her overtly expressed gratitude for his generosity, things which he cannot expect from his children. The cordial relationship between Mr Bradley and his children is, to a certain degree, prevented by the fact that the free expression of his daughters' feelings is restrained by the cultural code of the upper-class decorum, in keeping with which they are insistently taught to act by their mother, and by his sons' bad manners, insolence and dishonesty.

Consequently, Mr Bradley's attitude towards Grace, whom he treats with an unconventional easy familiarity for an upper-class man, differs from that towards his own children. He is tender and loving with his cousin, displaying the characteristics of a middle-class fond father, who expresses his affection with an easiness that is free from the formality of the Victorian elite. Because emphasis is put to a greater extent on the emotional relationship between them, Mr Bradley's fatherhood towards Grace departs from the Victorian upper-class conception of paternal fondness that was mainly expressed through the multitude of various presents and entertainments fathers offered their children (Newman 1997: 118, Roberts 1978: 65-66). However, this does not mean that Mr Bradley is not a generous parent, but benevolence¹, which is considered by David Roberts one of the most common characteristics of early Victorian fathers (1978: 59), is not one of the features that are foregrounded in his paternal portrayal. Instead, emphasis is laid on his kindness of heart, which he shows to the foster daughter more than to his own children. To the latter, Mr Bradley is not so close and affectionate. While the external narrator points out his habit to kiss Grace and to call her by the endearing name "Gracey", there is no indication that he does the same with regard to his own children, whom he occasionally reprimands for the above-mentioned shortcomings and for their coldness and cruelty to Grace. Presented like this, his parental

position is antithetical to that of his wife, who dotes on her own children but mistreats the fostered one. The reason for such a contrast resides in the characters' different ideologies that guide their actions, Mr Bradley's being in consonance with the dominant ideology of the novel.

Supporting the moral principles of humanity, sympathy, justice and equality, Mr Bradley acts as the fostered child's protector, but because of his frequent absence from home, he fails to spare the girl from the abuse inflicted by the other members of his family. Mr Bradley cannot condone his wife's mistreatment of Grace, and therefore he orders the girl to be treated similarly to their own children. He shows deep interest in Grace's welfare, intervening to keep her safe from domestic tyranny, spending time with her and caring for her needs. But such instances of paternal involvement are not many and mainly occur right after he takes her into their house. Although Mr Bradley always treats Grace like his favourite daughter, he is more and more depicted as being absent, his image as a fond father being absorbed by the increasingly emphasised figure of the absent father. Mr Bradley's remoteness is explicitly indicated through narratorial statements such as "Mr Bradley [...] unluckily, happened to be absent when she suffered most!" (TF 195, vol. 1) and "he was frequently absent" (314), but also inferred from the passages revealing Grace's loneliness: "[e]very hour did she feel herself more lonely and desolate" (37, vol. 2) and "none cared if she improved – none lured her on to learning by the words of praise [...], none heeded if she wept or laughed" (198, vol. 1). The negative pronoun "none", insistently repeated in the last example, primarily refers to Mrs Bradley, as the one who has the duty to supervise the children's education, to the governess that instructs them and also to the children, who, living in the same house, could be Grace's best friends instead of adding to her suffering by mocking her. However, because this pronoun means "not one of a group of people" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2017), it refers to all the members of Mr Bradley's family, including Mr Bradley. Moreover, the character's remoteness is confirmed and reinforced by Grace's harsh mistreatment from Mrs Bradley, her children and Miss Heywood, because only his presence can save her from overt cruelty.

Mr Bradley's fatherhood is described not only in terms of physical remoteness, but also in terms of psychological remoteness demonstrated by his carelessness about family matters and relationships. While he does not

agree with his wife in many aspects regarding their children's education, he nevertheless allows her to have it her own way in everything, except for the treatment of the fostered child. However, despite his initial concerns about Grace's well-being, he is not persistent in defending her from harsh injustice and neglect:

Mr. Bradley's conduct with regard to Grace [...] had been kind and judicious; and the continuance of such conduct would have ensured, to a certain extent, the comfort, if not the absolute happiness, of his little *protégée*; but it was just exactly this perseverance in judicious kindness which was not to be expected from the owner of Elmwood Lodge. He was not an undecided, but, except in his favorite pursuit of agriculture, he was an indolent man; and to this indolence was his wife chiefly indebted for maintaining her rule (*TF* 181, vol. 1, original emphasis).

This excerpt calls attention to two positions held by Mr Bradley: that of Grace's protector, implied through the use of the French word "*protégée*", preceded by the possessive adjective "his", with regard to the fostered girl, and that of "the owner of Elmwood Lodge". It is by no means accidental that here the external narrator makes reference to the character as the master of Elmwood Lodge estate. Mr Bradley is implicitly evaluated according to his position as an upper-class ruler and the allusion is made to the fact that, notwithstanding his social status, he does not possess the typical characteristics of the early Victorian gentleman. According to the research carried out by David Roberts, the male members of the upper classes of the first half of the nineteenth century were generally confident and resolute men who freely maintained their prerogatives, governing their households with uncontested authority (1978: 71). Although Mr Bradley is a man with independent judgement and clear opinions, he lacks the strong determination of the upper-class landowners to insist on having his word obeyed and to run his house according to his principles, a detail rendered through the use of the litotes "[he] was not an undecided [...] man" instead of a direct remark that he is a determined man. For this reason, Mr Bradley is unsuccessful in performing his function as the protector of the fostered girl, in making his home a friendly environment to her. Despite his firm order that Grace should be regarded as their own child and few moments of parental caring and open affection between him and his little cousin, Mr Bradley does not persist in standing for her rights. Instead, he negligently

leaves her under his wife's supervision, never investigating whether his decisions are fully carried out and never taking serious action against the destructive influence of Mrs Bradley.

Although paternal absence, both physical and psychological, is a common characteristic of the early-Victorian upper-class father (McKee and O'Brien 1982: 18, Thaden 1997: 113, Roberts 1978: 59-62), Mr Bradley's fatherhood differs from the parenting style of most of his real counterparts, in particular on account of his deficiency of authority within the family. Despite their absence, many wealthy men were still "present" in their families through the complete control with which they ruled their homes. They were not very much concerned about bringing up their children because they were convinced that their wives and servants, to whom they delegated their parental duties, and the upper-class child-rearing system would ensure an appropriate education for them (Mitchell 2009: 150, Roberts 1978: 62-64, 78, Thompson 1988: 125-126). In contrast, Mr Bradley knows that his children are not properly instructed under his wife's supervision and that Grace is unfairly treated, but instead of interfering to counteract her negative influence, he only shows his disagreement at times. Such behaviour is determined not only by his thoughtfulness but also by his lack of domestic authority: "Mr Bradley ruled in the kennel, the stable and the farm; but, unhappily, he did not rule in his own house [...], there Mrs Bradley held the sway" (*TF* 133, vol. 1). The country occupations listed in this citation are first collectively mentioned in the character's introduction previously quoted, which indicates that Mr Bradley's involvement in them is an important aspect in the description of his personality. The same thing is emphasized, and also clarified here by means of the contrast between Mr Bradley's authority outside and that inside the home, marked by the presence of the adversative conjunction "but" and by the employment of the positive and negative forms of the verb "to rule" within the same sentence and reinforced by the enumeration of each of the outdoor activities Mr Bradley supervises. While his sovereignty in the public sphere is indisputable, his power in the private sphere is severely undermined by his determined wife's complete control over the house.

Furthermore, Mr Bradley's powerlessness is clearly demonstrated through the way in which his orders with regard to Grace's treatment are executed. As Mrs Bradley artfully runs the house according to her personal

preference, which differs from that of her husband, she does not obey or only partly obeys his commands. Because she wants to be considered a dutiful wife not only by the people from outside but also by those living in their house, including her husband, she is constrained to submit to her spouse's will in his presence, in order to give at least the impression of submissiveness. Taking this into consideration, Mr Bradley can make his orders be obeyed by firmly and repeatedly insisting on them being carried out and by constantly verifying their execution. However, he does not do that, on the one hand, due to his great kindness, and on the other, on account of the aforementioned carelessness, which, along with his physical absence and lack of authority, contributes to the construction of a paternal figure that reinforces the stereotype of the Victorian absent father.

Being thus portrayed, Mr Bradley is a perfect foil to *The Fright's* male protagonist, Mr Rolleston. These two characters are primarily depicted as antithetical personalities. If kindness is Mr Bradley's predominant personal quality, then sternness is the trait that best describes Mr Rolleston. This can be deduced from the external narrator's repeated use throughout the novel of the term "sternness" and of other words from the same word family: "stern demeanour" (TF 34, vol.1); "the stern formality" (83); "stern gaze" (87); "questioned Mr Rolleston sternly" (99); "that stern, proud man" (124, vol. 2); "he replied with greater sternness" (209, vol. 3) etc. Moreover, this characteristic is reinforced by the employment of a variety of synonyms for the word "sternness" and its derivatives: "his stern and generally immoveable features" (20, vol. 1); "cold, commanding tone" (24); "stern unpitying gaze" (95); "unsoftened look" (104); "inexorable host" (105); "harsh and inflexible uncle" (216), "the cold, keen, gaze of Mr Rolleston" (220); "his cold, unsympathising look and tone" (108, vol. 2); "grim master" (119); "habitual coldness of demeanour" (135); "unrelenting hatred" (166, vol. 3); and "his cold and stern eye without one touch of feeling or emotion" (199), to cite but a few examples. Many of these noun phrases contain two adjectives, making the character's description more vivid, while conveying and emphasising the same idea that Mr Rolleston is the embodiment of sternness.

Although sternness is Mr Rolleston's prevailing trait, it is just one of the many other characteristics that, complementing each other, form his image of a diabolic despot. As the above-mentioned examples demonstrate, Mr Rolleston's personality is rendered through both his verbal and,

especially, his non-verbal behaviour. His tone is not only stern but also sarcastic, as revealed by clauses framing the character's direct speech, such as: "exclaimed Mr. Rolleston in a sarcastic tone" (118, vol. 3); "asked Mr. Rolleston sarcastically" (92, vol. 1); and "observed her uncle ironically" (207, vol. 3); "demanded Mr Rolleston with bitter irony" (101, vol. 1). Sarcasm is also conveyed by his smile, depicted in such phrases as: "satirical curling of the lip" (10, vol. 3); "cold, sardonic smile" (12, vol. 1); hateful, cynical smile" (24, vol. 3); sneering smile (241, vol. 2); "mocking smile" (276, vol. 2); and "Mephistopheles smile" (120, vol. 1). Striking is the multitude of synonymous adjectives modifying the noun "smile" and employed throughout the novel to highlight Mr Rolleston's ironic manner. Nonetheless, more striking and powerful is the use of the proper noun "Mephistopheles" to modify the word "smile", since it points out the novel's intertextual reference to German folklore, namely to the Faust legend. Via this phrase, Mr Rolleston is explicitly compared with Mephistopheles, a devil from the German legend, by one of the minor characters, Captain Rawdon, whose thoughts about Mr Rolleston are directly reported by the external narrator. The external narrator also shows the protagonist's similarity to a diabolic figure through descriptions of his look: "looking into her face with an almost fiendish glare that made her shudder" (95, vol. 1) and "replied Mr Rolleston with the triumphant look of a demon, contemplating the misery wrought by his power" (166, vol. 3), disclosing his cruel superiority over his relatives and other people, and his malicious joy at their misfortunes.

Besides Mr Rolleston's sternness and sarcasm, other features contribute to his depiction as a despotic tyrant. Among them is his deep insight into human motives, a characteristic foregrounded even from the opening pages of the novel. *The Fright* starts with two gentlemen sitting at the table in a country mansion: Thomas Rolleston and his nephew, Henry Trevyllian. But the introduction of their names is purposely delayed until a detailed portrayal of Mr Rolleston's personality is provided, emphasising that it is his personal qualities what determine his behaviour and his relationships with all the other characters, and not his social status, family connections, or something else. This portrayal is presented by the external narrator who renders Captain Rawdon's opinion about Mr Rolleston, whom Rawdon again compares with one of the characters of the Faustian legend. However, this time he is not analogized with Mephistopheles, but

with the legend's hero. Similarly to Faust, who sold his soul to gain unlimited knowledge, Mr Rolleston has intellectual discovery at the expense of his happiness. The protagonist's keenness of insight into the minds of people, as described by Captain Rawdon, is "universal" (3, vol. 1); he reads the reasons behind their actions with complete easiness. The external narrator-focalizer mentions that such a description is exaggerated and demonstrates this through instances when Mr Rolleston's insight is not absolute. Examples are found in phrases like: "even his penetration could not determine which" (252, vol. 2); "some parts of his niece's conduct [...] puzzled his penetration" (70, vol. 3) and "so that even his almost superhuman penetration had been baffled" (219-220, vol. 3). So, although the novel abounds in explicit references to the character's keenness, confirming that it is indeed one of his most distinctive qualities, the narratorial qualifications of it seem to be more objective. A relative objectiveness is provided in the last cited example by the employment of the adverb "almost", which diminishes the power of the surrounding statement, deeming it more neutral. In fact, the external narrator tends to maintain neutrality with regard to Mr Rolleston, generally not criticising him, nor sympathising with him, but rather pointing out the way other characters consider him to be.

Furthermore, the tyrannical figure of the novel's male protagonist is reinforced by the dreadful wrath he expresses against those who act in opposition to his will. This feature is clearly illustrated by his comparison with a lion: "The lion is not as fierce as he is painted; but he has nothing sentimental about him, and is awful when crossed" (124, vol. 2). These are Mr Rolleston's words about himself and they fully reveal his character, which is likewise displayed by the way he refuses to consider his nephew and his great-niece Grace as his relatives and refuses to leave his fortune to them when they decide to disregard his choices for their marriage partners. In fact, anger is, as disclosed by a "subjective anachrony" (Bal 2009: 85-86) and an external analepsis, the main reason Mr Rolleston behaves like a tyrant. The "undying anger" (TF 227, vol. 3) produced by the fact that Grace's grandmother rejected his marriage proposal when he was young kills every trace of humanity in him and makes him thirsty for revenge. The revelation of this fact is purposely delayed and the suspense it generates is heightened by the use of anticipatory hints, such as "one dark and gloomy passion ruled his soul, rolling its noisome flood over all things fair and

lovely, whelming beneath its turbid waves, love, gentleness and pity" (86, vol. 1), and "his niece [was] convinced that there was much in his character which she did not understand; whilst the fancy crossed her mind, that he had not been in his youth as he was in his age" (137, vol. 2). Although the first example strongly indicates that the motive behind Mr Rolleston's antisocial and unsympathetic behaviour is a horrible grudge he harbours, it is only when light is shed on his past that the suspense is broken. The second example, however, more subtly suggests that Mr Rolleston is not stern and cruel by nature and that there is something that makes him so, something concealed from all the other characters and from the reader as well.

Strange as it may seem, Mr Rolleston's vindictive anger, which determines his despotic behaviour, is the dominant element that makes him engage in a parent-child relationship with Grace and become like a father to her. Although Grace's graciousness and her affectionate nature play a significant part in the changes that take place in their initially cold relationship, it is Mr Rolleston's desire to make her totally dependent on him that is the decisive factor. The reason Mr Rolleston fosters Grace is a selfish one. He plans revenge against her parents and grandmother, who dared to refuse him, by manipulating his niece into complete submission to his will. To accomplish his plan, he tries to establish a strong relationship with Grace by spending time with her, by taking care of her every need and by lavishing her in luxury, so that she could not imagine her life without the things he provides her with and would obey him unquestioningly from fear of losing them. The novel, however, is silent about Mr Rolleston's scheme, which only becomes clear the moment Grace refuses to marry whom her great-uncle asks her to. Because she makes this choice, Mr Rolleston no longer considers Grace his relative or foster child. Up to that critical point of their parent-child relationship, the novel details only the positive way Mr Rolleston and his niece become close to each other, how her fear gives way to love and how his sternness is softened by the girl's tenderness and gratitude, transforming him into a caring and fond father, while his intentions and motives concerning Grace remain unrevealed. This concealment creates a sense of suspense, which is increased by the following anticipatory clue:

There were times too when she [Grace] fancied that Mr. Rolleston surrounded her with luxury either as a mere matter of psychological

curiosity, [...]; or else, by accustoming her to this splendour, make it absolutely needful to her happiness, and thus bend her to his will, from the fear of losing it (159, vol. 2).

Despite the apparent clarity and straightforwardness of this anticipation, it is still a hint, because its “germinating force” (Bal 2009: 95) is seen only when Mr Rolleston divulges the secret of his sternness and inhumanity and the reason behind Grace’s fostering and his caring attitude towards her. Before that disclosure, the information this hint provides cannot be relied upon, since it is, in this context, just a hypothetical thought that comes to Grace’s mind, unsupported by any explicit and precise statements about Mr Rolleston’s plan. But the delayed clarification explored here is not employed only as a means of producing suspense; it also helps to separate Mr Rolleston’s image as a foster father from his egotism and desire for revenge, as otherwise his paternal figure would be significantly spoiled by the knowledge of his hidden motives.

Being thus presented, Mr Rolleston’s fatherhood is characterised by three main features: sovereignty, benevolence and presence, departing to a certain degree from the socio-historical paradigm of early Victorian upper-class fathers on the basis of its characteristic. According to David Roberts’s research, sovereignty is one the three most common characteristics describing upper-class men of the first half of the nineteenth century (1978: 59, 78). Mr Rolleston’s undoubted authority derives from his distinctive personality traits and that together form his portrait as a despot in whose presence almost everyone feels uneasy. Although in his relationship with Grace he is not as cruel as others deem him to be, he requires and expects her to acknowledge his absolute sovereignty over her and to act according to his rules. Despite her uncomplaining submissiveness, Grace chooses not to obey her great-uncle when he asks her to marry someone she does not love. Opposing him, she causes the force of his tyranny to unleash on her, as it unleashed on her parents, and she finally witnesses the manifestation of all his despotic characteristics. Through her non-compliance, she diminishes his authority and makes his secret scheme fail, which leads their parent-child relationship to its end. Hence, it becomes evident that Mr Rolleston’s sovereignty is essential for his fatherhood of Grace.

Mr Rolleston’s parental authority is closely connected to his physical and psychological presence in Grace’s life, which is an atypical feature of upper-class early Victorian fathers. As mentioned before,

wealthy men were often absent from the household, physically in particular, but also psychologically. Paternal presence was frequently felt only through observing the total control fathers had over their children – as they delegated parenting responsibilities to various other agents – or during rare moments spent together, especially at holidays, when upper-class fathers lavished their children with gifts and took them to various entertainments. In contrast to these fathers, Mr Rolleston is depicted as an “always there” parent. He is necessarily psychologically involved in Grace’s life because she plays the most important role in his plan for revenge, which is facilitated by his great intuition about people that allows him to understand Grace’s motives and therefore manipulate her more easily. Moreover, he is a physically present father, who spends much time with his foster daughter, discussing with her about literature, painting and history, helping her to improve her drawing and foreign languages skills, listening to music and playing chess together.

Depicting a present upper-class father, the novel subverts the Victorian upper classes’ well-established convention regarding the children’s home education. During the nineteenth century, it was customary for upper-class parents to entrust the rearing and education of their children to a complete staff of nannies, nursemaids, governesses and tutors, a traditional and universal practice that was most likely to prevent the establishment of intense parent-child relationships (Burnett 1994: 237, Thompson 1988: 125-126, Mitchell 2009: 150, Frost 2009: 23, 32). Mr Rolleston acts against this custom by concerning himself with the instruction of his foster daughter, regardless of the fact that she is in her late teens, the age when the education of Victorian girls was already finished. He wants her to be excellent in everything she does and to become an intelligent woman with considerable knowledge and deep insight. In order to achieve this, he does not employ any teachers, but takes the time to teach her all the necessary things. His active involvement in Grace’s personal development is an important factor contributing to their close parent-child relationship, which is encouraged by his great benevolence as well.

Similarly to most early Victorian upper-class men, Mr Rolleston is a benevolent father. He lavishes his niece with expensive presents, such as beautiful dresses and valuable jewellery. He provides her with everything a true lady needs, surrounding her with luxury. Furthermore, he takes her to various balls, allowing her to enjoy one of the most popular upper-class

entertainments. Such benevolence is shown to Grace not because Mr Rolleston wants to make her happy, but because by its means he intends to accomplish his ingenious secret scheme. Nevertheless, everything Mr Rolleston does for her fails to guarantee Grace's unquestioning obedience in the end. Notwithstanding that, as a token of her gratefulness for Mr Rolleston's kindness, Grace is submissive to him, she is not corrupted by his wealth and the privileges she may have as his heiress, and she refuses them when Mr Rolleston requires her to marry against her will. However, she becomes his heiress, because Mr Rolleston finally acknowledges his selfishness and pride and is thankful for the transformation that has taken place in his character due to Grace.

The paternal image of the male protagonist of *The Fright* is intricate, combining characteristics that are common for early Victorian upper-class men, such as sovereignty and benevolence, with those, like physical and psychological presence, which mark a departure from the socio-historical paradigm. Moreover, the fact that Mr Rolleston's reason for becoming a foster father is a self-oriented one further complicates his image as a parent. Because his fatherhood is not based on genuine feelings, he displays contradictory parental behaviours, being warm and affectionate when he is obeyed and cold and stern, even despotic, when opposed. In Mr Rolleston's case, as in that of Mr Bradley, parenting is subordinated to other interests. While Mr Rolleston fosters Grace only to take revenge on her relatives who have dared to cross him, Mr Bradley is too busy with his outside occupations to be able to supervise her upbringing and education. Although the father figures of these two men are antagonistic in many respects, there are many similarities between them. Neither of them reflects the socio-historical prototype of the early Victorian upper-class father, nor the Victorian paternal ideal. Instead, both of them represent kaleidoscopic examples of foster fatherhood that seem to indicate that paternal experience, being complex and varied, cannot be contained within any prototypical image and that the nineteenth-century realism did not aim at representing characters and their relationships in one-to-one correspondence with the real templates of Victorian society.

Note

¹ When the term 'benevolence' is used here to describe one of upper-class fathers' characteristics, it refers to fathers' willingness to dispense gifts to their children and to offer them the possibility of enjoying various class-specific entertainments.

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Hi(s)story Gone Wrong. Martin Amis on the Holocaust in *Time's Arrow*

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Abstract

A historical novel told backwards, Martin Amis's Time's Arrow recycles the shared memories of the Holocaust, experiments with narrative representation and uses black irony throughout, in an attempt at healing the past and avenging the dead, while shedding a surgical light on the present and the living. The paper focuses on the aforementioned, analysing the way in which form supports content, and his story (that of a Nazi doctor) rewrites history (which emerges as a series of consecutive dystopias).

Key words: history, memory, representation, irony, intertext, rewriting

Introductory lines

One of the darkest moments in human history, the Holocaust is constantly brought to light, and rightly so, via scientific writing and research, personal histories of survivors and witnesses, literary attempts at recycling the past and offering food for thought. The latter, although controversial, remains the most easily accessible to all, constructs and reconstructs notable representations, thus preserving the memory while formulating pertinent judgements for generations to come. A case in point is *Time's Arrow* (1991) by Martin Amis who overlaps history and fiction to tell a memorable story of an upside down world. The novel's intertext is made up of a series of writings, and is evocative of a number of writers, many of whom are acknowledged in the Afterword of the book.

Two summers ago I found myself considering the idea of telling the story of a man's life backwards in time. Then, one afternoon, [...] (Robert Jay) Lifton gave me a copy of his book *The Nazi Doctors*. My novel would not and could not have been written without it. Probably the same applies to the works of Primo Levi, in particular *If This Is a Man*, *The Truce*, *The Drowned and the Saved* and *Moments of Reprieve*. Other writers, whom I

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found especially helpful, for various reasons, include Martin Gilbert, Gitta Sereny, Joachim Fest, Arno Mayer, Erich Fromm, Simon Wiesenthal, Henry Orenstein and Nora Waln. At the back of my mind I also had a certain short story by Isaac Bashevis Singer and a certain paragraph – a famous one – by Kurt Vonnegut. (I won't list the authors of the medical texts I unenthusiastically pored over; but I am glad to thank Lawrence Shainberg for his entertaining and terrifying book *Brain Surgeon*.) (Amis 1991: 176-177)

Accessing the inventory of shared memories of the Holocaust and adding his personal artistic touch to their novel representation, Amis builds a disturbing (and disturbed) universe, whose reversed time covers approximately seventy-five years, from 1991 to 1916, whose space stretches back from The United States to Portugal, Poland and Germany, and whose protagonist, Odilo Unverdorben¹ (alias Tod Friendly, alias John Young, alias Hamilton de Souza), comes to life in the first person narrative generated by his soul (Amis 2001: 289) – with the unnaturalness of technique supporting the insanity of the events covered.

Puzzling times and the literary puzzle

The novel opens with the protagonist's entry into life following his death, in 1991 apparently. A doctor surrounded by doctors, on a hospital bed, he is confronted with his double.

Presiding over the darkness out of which I had loomed there was a figure, a male shape, with an entirely unmanageable aura, containing such things as beauty, terror, love, filth, and above all power. This male shape or essence seemed to be wearing a white coat (a medic's stark white smock). And black boots. (1991: 12)

The double (or soul) assumes the task of telling the story of an "I" to be clarified later on in the book, whose journey puzzles even the narrator-witness, and which inserts a welcome metafictional comment on the novel's chronotopic frame.

Wait a minute. Why am I walking *backwards* into the house? Wait. Is it dusk coming, or is it dawn? What is the – what is the sequence of the journey I'm on? What are its rules? Why are the birds singing so strangely? Where am I heading? (14)

In Part I, the first chapter of the novel (*What goes around, comes around*) and of the life under focus features Tod Friendly, in America (Boston). The narrated “he” merges with the narrating “I” in a magic realist fashion, with the resulting “we” being allowed a voice also.

Tod Friendly. I have no access to his thoughts – but I am awash with his emotions. [...] and I sense the heat of fear and shame. Is that what I am heading towards? [...] Watch. We’re getting younger. We are. We’re getting stronger. We’re even getting *taller*. I don’t recognise the world we’re in. (15)

Another explanatory aside is woven into the narrative, with hints at the novel’s dynamics through considerations of the date on a daily gazette that seventy-something old Tod keeps buying.

After October 2, you get October 1. After October 1, you get September 30. How do you figure *that*? [...] It just seems to me that the film is running backwards. (16)

The self-reflexivity of the novel discourse, its narrative technique and its underlying intertext are further reinforced by direct and indirect references to ancient myths (of Narcissus and of Faust) and to literary precursors (Joseph Conrad²).

Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection – with his own soul. If you ever close a deal with the devil, and he wants to take something in return – don’t let him take your mirror. Not your mirror, which is your reflection, which is your double, which is your secret sharer. (17)

To narrow down such broad meditations on the essence of things, the erudite narrator shifts the emphasis to Tod’s inner core, a strategy with a powerful proleptic force, announcing the horrors of the Holocaust which haunt our common past, but which lie in the narrative’s future.

[Tod] went back to bed and resumed his nightmare. His sheets have the white smell of fear. I am obliged to smell what he smells, the baby powder, the smell of his nails before the fire spits them out – to be caught in the dish and then agonisingly reapplied to his thrilled fingertips. (18)

Every now and then, however, the narrative is anchored in strict chronology. The Reagan era (1981-1989) – with its belief in individual

freedom, its economic prosperity, and its role in ending the Cold War – is the backdrop to the second chapter (*You have to be cruel to be kind*) and to another stage in Tod's life, embarking on a medical career with the Associated Medical Services (though Canadian in reality) in Wellport (probably Wellfleet, Massachusetts, since Route 6 is mentioned, and the proximity to New York has already been established through remarks about *The New York Times*). Striking here are the head-aching and abnormally reversed dialogues with his patients, training the reader for the double inversions (both at the level of form and at the level of content) which pervade the remainder of the novel.

'Uh, seventy-six. Eighty-six.'
'What's ninety-three minus seven?'
'1914-1918.'
'What are the dates of the First World War?'
'Okay', says the patient, sitting up straight.
'I'm now going to ask you some questions.'
'No.'
'Sleeping okay? Any digestive problems?'
'I'll be eighty-one in January.'
'And you're... what?'
'I don't feel myself.'
'Well, what seems to be the problem?' (35)

Women (re)appear in the protagonist's life (his relationship with Irene is foregrounded) and babies start creeping into the conversations more and more frequently, as marriage and children are in store for the past (!) and as images of Auschwitz atrocities committed against infants are collated into a grotesque kaleidoscopic representation of the recognisable dystopia. Birth, for instance, narrated backwards, becomes a horrifying experience, which at once renders the futility of human existence and formulates harsh, though oblique, criticism addressed to Nazi practices in the concentration camps.

Mothers bring Tod their babies in the night. [...] The mothers pay him in antibiotics, which often seem to be the cause of the babies' pain. You have to be cruel to be kind. The babies are no better when they leave, patiently raising hell all the way to the door. And the moms crack up completely: they go out of here *wailing*. It's understandable. I understand. I know how people disappear. Where do they disappear to? Don't ask that question.

Never ask it. It's none of your business. The little children [are] sad to be going. In the very last months they cry more than ever. And they no longer smile. The mothers then proceed to the hospital. Where else? Two people go into that room, that room with the forceps, the soiled bib. Two go in. But only one comes out. Oh, the poor mothers, you can see how they feel during the long goodbye, the long goodbye to babies. (40)

The sensitive subject of babies is actually the focal point of the memory recorded in *Time's Arrow*, a stratagem for stirring extreme compassion and counteracting dangerous complacency. Babies populate Tod's dreams, witnessed by the narrating "I" aware of horrible deeds in the protagonist's intentionally misdirected past.

And then in darkness with a shout that gives a fierce twist to his jaw – we're in [the dream]. The enormous figure in the white coat, his black boots straddling many acres. Somewhere down there, between his legs, the queue of souls. I wish I had power, just power enough to avert my eyes, Please, don't show me the babies... Where does the dream come from? He hasn't done it yet. So the dream must be about what Tod will eventually do. (48)

Within the broader frame of world history (and the recollection of its dominant belligerent acts) and with time moving in the opposite direction (yet with chronological landmarks inserted for guidance), the dreams of dying babies start taking an increasingly material shape during and brought about the Vietnam War (1975-1955).

There is another war coming. Oh, yes, we do know that. A big war, a world war, which will roll through villages. [...] There's exactly twenty-five years to go before it starts. (58)

The year is 1964, therefore, and Tod is forty-eight years old, growing younger and more poignantly aware of something terribly wrong in his future, awareness triggered by the coming World War Two – setting the stage for the crime scenes somehow exiting fiction and entering reality.

I've seen the dates. We're nowhere near young enough for the present war, but when the world war comes – we'll be just right to fight it. We are, after all, a superb physical specimen. Our feet aren't flat. Our vision is clear. We're not club-footed or Marxist or nuts. We have no conscientious objections or anything of that kind. We're perfect. (59)

The guilt, as well as the blame, looms larger in the context of Tod's preparing to engage in the war. His already Aryan remarks and the planned course of action eliminate all excuses and make his case one of murder rather than manslaughter, amplified ad infinitum to evidence the genocide. His only defence or attempt at inducing pity and soliciting clemency resides in his torture by dark dreams of the future that was.

So maybe these are the things we're heading towards: the white coat and the black boots, the combustible baby, the soiled bib on its hook, the sleet of souls. The wooden room where something lethal will be lugubriously decided. Everybody dreams about being harmed. It's easy. Much tougher to recover from the dream of harming... (72)

Resumed in numerous such descriptions of "poor" Tod's affliction (of his suffering from sleep terror), the main character's victimisation produces the opposite effect by juxtaposition with the mirror image of the Nazi doctor emerging ever more forcefully.

Chapter three (*Because I'm a healer, everything I do heals*) takes the reader one step nearer to the latter, disclosing how the protagonist undergoes a further metamorphosis while embarking on a new journey and assuming another identity, that of John Young. Facilitated by Reverend Nicholas Kreditor for a large sum of money, this new identity allows for practicing medicine in a New York general hospital, in a way which reminds of the concentration camps doctors.

You want to know what I do? All right. Some guy comes in with a bandage around his head. We don't mess about. We'll soon have that off. He's got a hole in his head. So what do we do. We stick a nail in it. Get the nail – a good rusty one – from the trash or wherever. And lead him out to the Waiting Room where he's allowed to linger and holler for a while before we ferry him back to the night. (85)

The babies, symbols of the ugliest inflicted death, reappear in these wards, and make John's medical fame:

With the children, at the hospital, in Pediatrics where the light is never off, where the little victims whom we patiently deform lie drugged and lost and itching – with the children John is at his briskest. (89)

It is as if he had been trained thoroughly before... Otherwise, young Dr John Young is busy avoiding women with children, and having sex with Irene and with the nurses (Nurse Judge, Nurse Davis, Nurse Tremlett, Nurse Cobretti, Nurse Sammon, Nurse Booker, Nurse Elliott, Nurse Del Puablo), while the world is changing back to the early fifties.

Time passes. Cars are fatter and fewer, and imitate animals with their fins and wings. Syringes are no longer disposable. [...] We even use pipettes: so unhygienic. [...] Last week they came and took away my colour TV. They gave me a black-and-white one. [...] Clothes everywhere become more innocent. Everyone becomes more innocent, constantly forgetting. Central Park is cleaner but no safer. We are fewer. (98-99)

The return to innocence and forgetfulness translates with Amis into an apocalyptic end of life and memory, synonymous with a Yeatsian 'second coming'³, which also offers glimpses into a fresh beginning and new choices on the same old path to self-destruction.

In Part II, the fourth chapter (*You do what you do best, not what's best to do*), opens with the year 1948, and covers the journey to Europe and the war, eastward across the Atlantic. Emerging from the crossing is Hamilton de Souza, the "aristocrat" surrounded by servants, living a quiet life in the countryside of Portugal, then travelling (back) to Spain and Italy, where new documents are presented to him once more, this time by an Irish priest, Father Duryea, who "baptises" him Odilo Unverdorben. Once Odilo again, the protagonist heads to Brenner and the Austrian border, "to the towns and cities of [desolate] middle Europe" (122) – which seemed to be awaiting "the colour of fire", "the hooves and treads of armies" (122), but whose people gave out gold –, eventually reaching "the final farm, within view of the River Vistula" (123) in Poland, where the gold received was buried.

With Chapter five (*Here there is no why*⁴), the illogical nature of the narrative is denounced by the ironical, perverse first line "THE WORLD is going to start making sense..." (124), introducing Odilo's arrival at Auschwitz. The uncertain "then" and "there" are replaced by the actuality of "now" and of the concentration camp, while the subject and the object become one, with the double an active participant in the déroulement of events.

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Now. I, Odilo Unverdorben, arrived at Auschwitz Central somewhat precipitately and by motorbike, with a wide twirl or frill of slush and mud, shortly after the Bolsheviks had entrained their ignoble withdrawal.

Now. Was there a secret passenger on the back seat of the bike, or in some imaginary sidecar? No. I was one. I was also in full uniform. (124)

Moreover, at this stage in the metamorphosis of the self, a clear (though harsh), narrative voice is regained and the language of the other is assumed as one's own.

I was astonished by the power with which my German crashed out of me, as if in millennial anger at having been silenced for so long. (125)

With this awakening, there comes the realistic, almost palpable, description of the Auschwitz situation and the crimes committed by the notorious Josef Mengele (alias Uncle Pepi, as he was called by the children lured with sweets into the experimentation laboratories / torture chambers, and appearing as such in the novel) – playing God with his fellow beings, aided by cohorts of other death doctors like the narrator himself. Added, however, is a magic/meta dimension, an artistic credo which explains the incoherent narrative frame adopted so far, with hints at the absurdity of the historical abomination justifying that of the netting of his story.

What tells me this is right? What tells me that the rest was wrong? Certainly not my aesthetic sense. I would never claim that Auschwitz-Birkenau-Monowitz was good to look at. Or to listen, or to smell, or to taste, or to touch. [...] Creation is easy. Also ugly. *Hier ist kein warum.* Here there is no why. Here there is no when, no how, no where. Our preternatural purpose? To dream a race. To make a people from the weather. From thunder and from lightning. With gas, electricity, with shit, with fire. (128)

What is unjustifiable is history itself, the Zyklon B, the Sprinklerooms, the crematoria, the 10,000 deaths a day.

Chapter six (*Multiply zero by zero and you still get zero*) takes the twenty-five year old Odilo out of Auschwitz, which “covered 14,000 acres, [but] was invisible” (147), to Berlin and his pregnant wife, Herta. The year is 1942, and “the Jews were being deconcentrated, were being channelled back into society” (149). The personal story runs parallel to the public one,

the similarities resulting from the fantastic image of the “German baby of startling dimensions” (147) growing inside Herta and the grotesque one of a weeping Jewish baby being born back into life and leading “a batch from the mass grave, in the woods” (149) to the town centre.

The corrected historical version of events (with naked people from the grave directed to mounds of clothes and temporary shelters) is further developed as the train stops at Treblinka on Odilo’s journey from northern Poland to the Reich.

Every station, every journey, needs a clock. When we passed it, on our way to inspect the gravel pits, the big hand was on twelve and the little hand was on four. Which was incorrect! An error, a mistake: it was exactly 13:27. But we passed again, later, and the hands hadn’t moved to an earlier time. How could they move? They were painted, and would never move to an earlier time. Beneath the clock was an enormous arrow, on which was printed: Change Here for Eastern Trains. But time had no arrow, not here.

Indeed, at the railway station in Treblinka, the four dimensions were intriguingly disposed. A place without depth. And a place without time. (151)

The title of the novel is thus suddenly explained, graphically illustrated and metaphorically charged. If time does have an arrow (direction / path, but also purpose / dream / hope), then it must also have a future (just as it has had a past). What happens when time is stripped of its arrow? It loses structure and coordinates. Its future becomes its past and vice versa. And people manage to escape today only by dreaming of yesterday and dreading tomorrow. This reversed physics and grammar of Amis’s literary text formulates a modernist aesthetics in its own right, trapped between the conventions of realism and the exaggerations of high postmodernism – both incapable of creating convincing characters and meaningful tales, and having greatly contributed to the death of the novel in a moribund society – idea possibly suggested by the ending references to “Schloss Hartheim, near Linz, in the province of Austria⁵” (152), where they produced people who “weren’t any good anymore.” (154)

Chapter seven (*She loves me, she loves me not*) is, as a consequence, the section in which

THE WORLD HAS stopped making sense again, and Odilo forgets everything again (which is probably just as well), and the war is over now (and it seems pretty clear to me that we have lost), and life goes on for a little while. Odilo is innocent. His dreams are innocent, purged of menace and sickness. [...] Odilo is, it turns out, innocent, emotional, popular, and stupid. Also potent. (157)

Here, forgetfulness opposes memory, and the past is obliterated. Only publicly, however. Privately, it is preserved (or “pickled”, to be “tasted” later, as Salman Rushdie⁶ might say). Ironically, the philosophy of *Carpe diem* is what escapes us (the social “he” and the personal “I”).

He forgets. I remember. This tormented groping. [...] And I know something he seems unable to face: it will never happen again. The future always comes true. Sadly we gather forget-me-nots. She loves me... (162)

The “I” detaches itself again from the “he”, placing the latter under the lens and questioning his becoming. Odilo, the man without a past (or future?) is no longer a monster; he becomes human. He gets married, goes to med school, looks after his mother in hospital, experiences adolescent love. The world, on the other hand, is showing signs of madness. This, of course, is nothing new, nothing so extraordinary as to be turned into the stuff of fiction. The obsessive return to the situation of the Jews is, nonetheless, extraordinary. The only problem is that it almost feels unreal, therefore fictional. It needs real-isation instead. This is mainly achieved by endless repetition and foregrounding of historical detail already inscribed in the collective unconscious.

Blind and deaf Jews can now wear armbands [...]
Jews allowed to keep pets [...]
Jews permitted to buy meat [...]
Jews empowered to have friendly relations with Aryans [...]
Curfew for Jews lifted [...]
On Krystallnacht [...] we all romped and played and helped the Jews. (164-165)

The final section, Chapter eight (*Because ducks are fat*) covers the early years in Odilo’s life: from 1929 to his birth thirteen years before. The three memorable moments recounted here are significant for the whole narrative content. The first, paradoxically anticipating the past, is a “sentimental

journey" to Auschwitz, "the place where the numbered Jews, and all the others, who had no number, came down from the heavens; the place where, for a time, there was no why" (169). The second is a fleeting instant in three-year-old Odilo's life in native Solingen, also "the birthplace of Adolf Eichman" (170), portrayed in child language, along infantile lines, evocative of a worse version of Stephen Dedalus.⁷

'Mummy? [...] You can't eat chicks. [...] Because chicks are good. You can just stroke them and everything. But you *can* eat ducks. Because ducks are fat.'

Wait. Mistake there. Mistake. Category... We brang. We putten. We brang, we putten, their own selves we token all away. Why so many children and babies? What got into us. Why so many? We were cruel: the children weren't even going to be here for very long. I choiced it, did I? Why? Because babies are fat?...

The third is the intimate, carnal, unnatural relation with the mother (as ultimate recipient welcoming him), forwarded, together with the worldview shaping itself on twisted premises, via sophisticated, Mephistopheles language.

I must make one last effort to be lucid, to be clear. What finally concerns me are questions of time: certain durations. Even as things stood the Jews were made to wait too long in city squares [...] for much too long... [...] He pauses for a moment. [...] Only a moment. There are no larger units of his time. He has to act while childhood is still here, while everything is still his playmate [...] (172-173)

The inner "demon" serving and ultimately reaping the soul of the damned Odilo emerges as the actual protagonist, the puppeteer consciously handling Odilo and assigning him roles at the frontier between the real and the fictional (à la Conchis with his Nicholas, as staged by John Fowles⁸).

When Odilo closes his eyes I see an arrow fly – but wrongly. Point first. Oh no, but then... We're away once more, over the field. Odilo Unverdorben and his eager heart. And I within, who came at the wrong time – either too soon, or after it was all too late. (173)

Read in this key, the concluding paragraph of *Time's Arrow* reveals ironical reconsiderations of the self of fiction, as well as of the self in fiction – with

the writer's intervention inside the writing, and with the inner, private dimension allowed a narrative voice while the public one is silenced.

Ending lines

Martin Amis's world – where babies die, old men are born, restaurants are vomitoriums, the trash is brought in each morning, people pay their employers, patients consult doctors – is an angry cry for logic and rationality in the future that gets written outside the covers of the book. His dystopia is not imagined, but lived. Conversely, though far from building hopes for utopian sequels to the story of mankind, the novel invites at readjusting our compass and at navigating in the right direction. *Time's Arrow* thus emerges as a cathartic account of the Holocaust, recycling our shared memories of history and reassembling the disparate pieces into a remarkable narrative experiment, a daunting and haunting project which Amis continued to pursue, and which resulted, twenty-three years later, in *The Zone of Interest* (2014).

Notes

1. The English equivalent of the protagonist's surname would be *unspoiled, untainted, undefiled, innocent, and pure* (<https://en.langenscheidt.com/german-english/unverdorben>). At the opposite end, his Christian (ironically!) name, Odilo, is resonant of Odilo Globocnik (Globus), the notorious Austrian Nazi and SS leader, an associate of Adolf Eichmann in Operation Reinhard.
2. See his allegorical short story, *The Secret Sharer* (first published in 1910).
3. See William Butler Yeats's high modernist poem, 'The Second Coming' (first published in 1920).
4. The phrase was borrowed from an anecdote in Primo Levi's memoir of Auschwitz, *Survival in Auschwitz*. Suffering from thirst and noticing an icicle, he reached out to get it. When a Nazi guard slaps it out of his hand, Levi asks *Why?* The answer he receives is the irrational *Here there is no why*.
5. Built in 1600 by Jakob von Aspen, Hartheim Castle is situated in Alkoven, near Linz, Austria. During the Second World War, it was used as a Nazi euthanasia killing centre.
6. Reference is made to the last chapter of *Midnight's Children* (1981): 'Abracadabra'.
7. See the opening pages of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (first published in book form in 1914).

8. Under focus is the interaction between the central characters in *The Magus* (first published in 1965).

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Memory and Identity in *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* by Neil Gaiman

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Abstract

In his novel The Ocean at the End of the Lane (2013), Neil Gaiman has succeeded in telling another spellbinding “fairy-tale” for adults. It is unique among Gaiman’s novels, as it features a child protagonist and his specific worldview. Despite being a fantasy novel, with a narrative filled with magic and wonder, it tells the traumatic tale of memory, identity, self-sacrifice, and survival. It portrays the essential role of memory as a coping mechanism, necessary for survival, and the ways in which childhood occurrences ultimately shape the adult’s identity. This article aims to address and analyse the identity formation and the role of the memory in this process in The Ocean at the End of the Lane, through the lens of memory studies, and structuralist theory.

Keywords: *Fantasy Literature, memory studies, subjectivity, personality, identity, myth.*

The Ocean at the End of the Lane is often referred to as a “fairy-tale for adults” (Meloan 2013), or as a “modern day fairy-tale” (Hamm 2014). *It is widely praised, seen as “an overpowering work of the imagination, a quietly devastating masterpiece, and Gaiman’s most personal novel to date”* (Rothman 2013). The novel takes the form of a frame narrative, where the outer story, a modern day homecoming of the protagonist, frames the subjective recounting from memory of a childhood experience. This process of remembering long forgotten memories of the narrator’s childhood is located in the consensus-reality mnemonic chronotope. The inset is conceived as a “memorate”, or “a first-person story about a personal supernatural experience” (Langlois 2008: 615). The past is accessed through the chronotopic motif of “mnemotope”, which is the “chronotopic motif that manifests the presence of the past, the conscious or unconscious memory traces of a more or less distant period in the life of a culture or an individual” (Purdy 2002: 447). *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* is marketed

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as a book for adults, despite featuring for most part of the book a child protagonist, due to its treatment of such difficult subjects as: suicide, abuse, adultery, vices, etc. The novel contains numerous scenes not intended for young audiences, which however are toned down and less explicit, mostly because they are seen through the eyes of a child. Since, the child seeing them, does not entirely understand them, they are not overtly explicit, which makes some of them even more gripping. The novel belongs to the Fantasy genre, as it contains magic, supernatural elements embedded in the everyday reality of an unspecified Sussex small town.

The Ocean at the End of the Lane starts with the protagonist's return to his hometown to attend a funeral. After the funeral, he drives randomly around town, and suddenly realizes he has arrived in his old neighbourhood. After slowing down to examine his old childhood house, he drives to the end of the narrow country lane. The road, now a black tarmac that progressively becomes narrower, and windier, "packed earth and knobbly bone-like black flints" (Gaiman 2013: 5), is still how the protagonist remembers it, "when nothing else" is any longer (Gaiman 2013: 5). Driving down the lane feels like he has "driven back in time" (Gaiman 2013: 5). During this revisiting of his childhood neighbourhood, the protagonist is able to retrieve specific memories that became part of the associative context of his childhood space. It can be explained through the memory process called "cued recall" (Tulving 1983: 93). Seeing that every memory formation consists of an encoding of a bundle of features, specific to the encoded event, called engrams (Tulving 1983: 151-160), its retrieval process begins with the perception of a retrieval cue, leading to the activation of a latent engram, and the transformation of the cue and of the engram into ecphoric information (retrieving a memory) (Tulving 1983: 175-176). The process ends with the recoding of the information for later use, which brings changes to engram, thus explaining why memories of events change (Tulving 1983: 164-165).

In the novel, seeing the flint lane, and then the Caraway farm, unlocks specific memories related to these places, but what takes the protagonist by surprise, is seeing the Hempstocks farm, as he has completely forgotten it, despite the fact that "the flint lane always ended there" (Gaiman 2013: 5). When the protagonist gets out of the car, all his senses are aroused by the visual and olfactory cues: the stench of cow muck, the smell of bread baking and wax furniture polish and old wood

(Gaiman 2013: 6). A memory resurfaces slowly, and he is convinced that he has been there before, but fails to remember more, as the protagonist states: "Childhood memories are sometimes covered and obscured beneath the things that come later, like childhood toys forgotten at the bottom of a crammed adult closet, but they are never lost for good" (Gaiman 2013: 5). Entering the house, meeting Mrs Hempstock, remembering Lettie, the narrator realizes that everything is slowly coming back to him, that "memories were waiting at the edges of things, beckoning" (Gaiman 2013: 7). So, he asks for the duck pond, and is directed to it. Getting to the duck pond, seeing how small it is, he remembers that Lettie used to call it her "ocean", which unlocks a torrent of memories that the protagonist is unable and unwilling to stop: "I remembered that, and, remembering that, I remembered everything" (Gaiman 2013: 7).

The focus in memory studies has shifted lately from science to philosophy and social sciences, because "memory is a crucial component in creating and maintaining individual and communal identity" (Van Dyke, Alcock 2003: 3). As a result, the interest in narrative accounts of personality and identity within in the field of memory research developed as well (Rathbone, Moulin, and Conway 2008: 1403). Personal narratives play an important role not only in identity formation, but also in survival. According to Rosenfield, "identity" and personality represent "the brain's abstraction of the totality of our "memories" and "experiences" (1995: 202). These suggest that our personality is closely related to the recall of personal history, as it is constituted from "self-defining memories" (Rathbone, Moulin, Conway 2008: 1403). It is comprised of a "self schemata, including cognitive representations developed from specific autobiographical events, as well as general representations" (Rathbone, Moulin, Conway 2008: 1404). These general representations are related to age, sex, nationality, relationships, etc., while the autobiographical events are remembered depending on what is important, or what is relevant to our personality and preferences. This way not only our personality depends on our memories, but our memories depend on our personality as well. This accounts for the different perception and recollection of the same event in different subjects.

When it comes to the image of the individual in literature, the latter is considered to be dialogically constructed, in relation with other individuals or characters. Subjectivity, which is the "sense of a personal identity an individual has of her/his self as distinct from other selves, as

occupying a position within society and in relation to other selves, and as being capable of deliberate thought and action" (McCallum 1999: 3), is characterised by its "internal dialogism", formed through interaction (Bakhtin 2008: 350). The consciousness or identity formation is an ongoing process, shaped through dialogue with society, language, culture, and is subject to rapid and radical changes (McCallum 1999: 3-10). The novel is also dialogic, as is its discourse (Bakhtin 2008: 284), and therefore subjectivity is an integrated part of any discourse, including the novelistic one. It is especially true of children's and young adult fiction, but also of all the narratives written from a child's point of view, as "subjectivity is intrinsic to the major concerns of adolescent fiction" (McCallum 1999: 3). This subjectivity is affected by language, society, culture, and ideology, and it enters in a dialogic interaction with the above mentioned: language, society, ideology or conflicting ideologies, as well as with other textual voices. In the novel, the protagonist is a seven-year old, whose personality and subjectivity are influenced, formed and defined by his relation with his family, his nanny, his relationship with the Hempstocks, and the culture and society he inhabits.

In *The Needs of Children*, Kellmer Pringle proposes a classification of a child's needs into four categories, "the need for love and security; for new experiences; for praise and recognition; and for responsibility" (1986: 34). The need for love and security "is met by the child experiencing from birth onwards a stable, continuous, dependable and loving relationship with his parents" (Kellmer Pringle 1986: 34). In *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, the child protagonist benefits from such a relationship until his family faces financial troubles. Despite having no friends, the child is content by his family's relationships and does not seek others. However, when his parents start worrying more about finances, it brings their implicit absence from home and a string of nannies to care for children. So, when the things get tough he finds himself in a world where he has nobody, whom he can ask for help. Since they are not around to form a dependable relationship, the child is used to rely on himself, "I do not know why I did not ask an adult about it. I do not remember asking adults about anything, except as a last resort" (Gaiman 2013: 47). It is also reflected in the following instance, "I knew enough about adults to know that if I did tell them what happened, I would not be believed. Adults rarely seemed to believe me when I told the truth anyway. Why would they believe me about something so unlikely?"

(Gaiman 2013: 28). The protagonist does not trust the adults to be around when he needs them, but he also fears them, because they tend to spin the truth, “‘just go with it. It won’t hurt’” I stared at him. Adults only ever said that when it, whatever it happened to be, was going to hurt so much” (Gaiman 2013: 132). And they usually seem to notice children only when they misbehave, as the protagonist’s father does, “I was terrified of him when he was angry. His face (angular and usually affable) would grow red, and he would shout, shout so loudly and furiously that it would, literally, paralyse me. I would not be able to think. He never hit me” (Gaiman 2013: 67). Although his father does not hit him, the effect of his shouting on the protagonist is traumatic, as “in the school stories I read, misbehaviour often resulted in a caning, or the slipper, and then was forgiven and done, and I would sometimes envy those fictional children the cleanness of their lives” (Gaiman 2013: 67). The imbalance of power between adults and children scares the protagonist, as in the following instance, “She was also an adult, and when adults fight children, adults always win” (Gaiman 2013: 87).

When his family denies him affection and understanding (his father becomes intolerant, his mother is absent, his sister mocks and taunts him), and the nanny threatens his existence, the Hempstock women are the ones that save him from annihilation, and restore the order of things. They feed, dress, encourage, protect him, and provide emotional care, thus replacing the child’s absent mother and offering him a safe medium. The three women represent the feminine archetype: the crone, the mother and the maiden, introduced by Graves in *The White Goddess*, as the “triple-goddess” (1971). They could be seen as the Greek Moirai or Roman Parcae, or even as Norns. These triple goddesses appear throughout Gaiman’s works: as both Erinyes and Moirai they appear in *Sandman*, as Norns they appear in *American Gods*, and in *Stardust* as the three witch queens. In *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* they can be seen as incarnations of the triple goddesses of fate, the Moirai, due to Old Mrs. Hempstock snipping and stitching parts of the protagonist’s dressing gown, in order to remove the traumatic event from the past, and the boy’s parents’ memory: “just a little snipping, then a little sewing, and it’ll all be good as gold” (Gaiman 2013: 97). Moreover, this is supported by the fact that the Moirai are also seen as the representation of the triple moon-goddess in her death aspect (Coulter, Turner 2000: 177). In the novel, they are constantly associated with the phases of the moon. For example, when the protagonist is intrigued by the

constant, full moon at the farm, Lettie tells the protagonist that, "Gran likes the full moon to shine on this side of the house. She says it's restful, and it reminds her of when she was a girl" (Gaiman 2013: 105). The triple moon-goddess is characterised by her changing aspect, as well, which can be seen in the novel in the protagonist's confusion when returning to the Hempstocks' farm as an adult. Initially, he meets Old Mrs. Hempstock, and then Lettie's mother Mrs. Hempstock joins them, however when he leaves, he is under the impression that he only saw Old Mrs. Hempstock: "'It's funny. For a moment, I thought there were two of you. Isn't that odd?' 'It's just me', said the old woman. 'It's only ever just me'" (Gaiman 2013: 177). The association of the past, memory and fate altering with the Hempstocks is consistent with another allusion to Greek mythology in the protagonist's friend's name is Lettie, which can be seen as one of the possible spellings of Lethe, the river of oblivion, one of the rivers of the Greek underworld (Coulter, Turner 2000: 289). Interpreted this way her name is an allusion to the protagonist's difficulty to remember Lettie and a part of his childhood, as memory and forgetfulness are some of the novel's main themes. This combination between the actual working of memory and trauma effects on human psyche with mythological and fantastic characters and settings can be interpreted either literally, as an "adult fairy tale", or metaphorically, as an allegory filled with biographical elements.

In the novel, when the narrator doubts his recollections, he asks the old Mrs Hempstock: "Is it true? [...] Old Mrs Hempstock shrugged. What you remembered? Probably. More or less. Different people remember things differently, and you'll not get any two people to remember anything the same, whether they were there or not. You stand two of you lot next to each other, and they could be continents away for all it means anything" (Gaiman 2013: 173). The above statement reflects the current views on the links existing between memory and identity in psychology and neuropsychiatry. An important role in identity related memories plays the formation of individual memories, because their formation also depends on our personality. However, remembering the past can be also unwanted, and certain events and recollections may be buried deep in our consciousness and forgotten, especially when these are traumatic. In the novel, the inset is based on such traumatic events. It is introduced by, "I remembered that, and, remembering that, I remembered everything" (Gaiman 2013: 7), which serves as the beginning of the memorate. It is

organised around crisis and rebirth of the protagonist, and it is written in the first person, as a recounting/confession, enumerating the trials that have led to the hero's transformation. One of the themes of the novel is the search for personal identity through forgotten places, people, memories, as in, "I stared at the house, remembering less than I had expected about my teenage years: no good times, no bad times. I'd lived in that place, for a while, as a teenager. It didn't seem to be any part of who I was now" (Gaiman 2013: 4); and another important theme is the relationship and disconnectedness between adulthood and childhood, as in "I thought about adults. I wondered if that was true: if they were all really children wrapped in adult bodies, like children's books hidden in the middle of dull, long books. The kind with no pictures or conversations" (Gaiman 2013: 113). The return home (in the novel) frames the inset of narratives of trauma, which start with seemingly insignificant episodes that progressively escalate leading to protagonist's amnesia. The notion of trauma "refers to the self-altering, even self-shattering experience of violence, injury and harm" (Gilmore 2001: 6). For an event to be considered traumatic, it has to determine the experience of an event outside the range of human experience (Brown 1995: 100). Usually traumatic experiences are characterised by "a feeling of helplessness, of physical or emotional paralysis, is fundamental to making an experience traumatic" (Van Der Kolk, Van Der Hart 1995: 175).

In *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, the protagonist's problems start with his family financial troubles. Initially, he lives in a safe, loving environment, but when his family finances diminish, the boy loses his room and has to share his sister's bedroom, as his parents rent it to various tenants. His birthday comes and nobody attends it, which at first does not appear to affect the boy, except for his sister's taunting about it. He finds consolation in books and his pet, as he sees himself as fairy tale Dick Wittington with his cat, in his imaginary world. The lack of finances determines his mother's employment, as she cannot afford to stay at home any more. This entails a number of nannies, and distancing from his parents, which make the boy feel even lonelier. Then the opal miner, who is the family's tenant, kills the boy's pet. And one morning, while his father prepares breakfast, they get a call from the police, about their car being abandoned at the end of the lane. Suspecting the neighbourhood's kids, the boy and his father go there, only to discover that their tenant, the opal

miner, had committed suicide in the back of the car. The boy is the one that finds him, as he wants to retrieve his comic from the back seat. He is so shocked by the dead man's face that it subsequently keeps resurfacing in his nightmares.

The opal miner's visceral longing for money, as he killed himself over gambling away all of his and his friends' money, wakes a primeval monster. It starts providing people money, except it does it with a twist, as a neighbour goes mad upon finding her mattress full of money, and does not want to leave the bed over the fear of losing it. Another neighbour gets accused of prostitution, when her husband finds bills stashed in her purse. The protagonist chokes on an antique silver shilling, and his sister accuses him of throwing coins at her. Lettie, whom the boy befriends when she takes him home from the suicide investigation, tries to prevent the monster from further harming people. So, she takes the boy and together they try to bind the monster, but in sensing the boy's loneliness, and when he lets go of Lettie's hand, the monster gains access to the human world through the boy's foot and travels with him home.

There, it transforms into a hired nanny and takes over the boy's house. Since it is afraid the boy could call for help, it punishes the boy, and prevents him from exiting the house, while it also takes over the boy's family. Gradually, it works its way into their hearts by cooking their meals, offering presents and attention. As the protagonist refuses its meals and attempts to control him, the monster punishes the boy, first, by locking him up, and second, by demonstrating its power over his family members. Under its influence, the boy's father loses his temper, punishes his son, and almost drowns him in the bathtub:

I was horrified, but it was initially the horror of something happening against the established order of things. I was fully dressed. That was wrong. I had my sandals on. That was wrong. The bath water was cold, so cold and so wrong. That was what I thought, initially, as he pushed me into the water, and then he pushed further, pushing my head and shoulders beneath the chilly water, and the horror changed its nature. I thought, *I'm going to die* (emphasis original) (Gaiman 2013: 72).

The scene is perceived through the eyes of the seven-year old protagonist, who cannot understand how his father can act so "unfatherly". The boy's horror is accentuated by the violation of the well-established order of

family relationships. And when the boy finally escapes the house, he witnesses his father's adultery with the nanny, which adds to his feelings of despair, uncertainty and loss: "my parents were a unit, inviolate. The future had suddenly become unknowable: anything could happen; the train of my life had jumped the rails and headed off across the fields and was coming down the lane with me, then" (Gaiman 2013: 80).

As if these were not enough, while the boy makes an escape for Lettie's house, the monster catches up on him, and the boy literally wets himself. He is saved by Lettie, however all these lead to a final showdown with the monster, and the hunger birds, where out of gratefulness for friendship and love when he literally lost everything, seeing that the hunger birds start devouring our world, the boy decides to sacrifice himself. The hunger birds attack him, Lettie tries to prevent them from harming him, and gets hurt instead. Here the protagonist's memory duplicates, because he literally remembers two versions of the same events:

A ghost memory rises here: a phantom moment, a shaky reflection in the pool of remembrance. I know how it would have felt when they took my heart. How it felt as the hunger birds, all mouth, tore into my chest and snatched out my heart, still pumping, and devoured it to get at what was hidden inside it. I know how that feels, as if it was truly a part of my life, of my death. And then the memory snips and rips, neatly (Gaiman 2013: 157).

The reader might interpret it as a suggestion that the boy might have died after all, either literally, or figuratively, as his new personality was reborn out of the ashes of the previous one. When the boy recovered, seeing his friend Lettie unresponsive makes him feel "the survivor's guilt", so he starts humming to himself a children's tune, clearly affected by what has happened to him. The Hempstocks take care of him, and when finally Mrs Hempstock takes him home, she convinces him that Lettie has gone to Australia to be with her dad, and that he attended her "going away" party. It helps him forget and repress all the instances of trauma, thus allowing him to cope with the guilt, fear, pain, loss and despair. On the ability of the human brain to forget certain traumatic events depends the victim's survival, as memory loss is the brain's way to cope with trauma.

The effects of trauma on memory depend on "victim's age, personality, emotional history, rearing environment, predisposing factors,

and the nature of the trauma may differentially contribute to the stress response including any disturbances of memory" (Joseph 1998: 172-173). Since, as stated by Joseph, "under excessive and prolonged conditions of stress, excitation, and arousal, learning and memory may be completely eclipsed, inducing a profound amnesia, and abnormal activity and injury to the hippocampus" (1998: 169-170). It is called adaptive forgetting, and "is a matter of inhibiting information as opposed to discarding it entirely" (Freyd 1994: 317). For example, the boy's memory of his father's attempt to drown him in the bathtub is a traumatic event. Its forgetting is triggered by the brain's self-protection mechanism vital to the subject's survival. Seeing as, "amnesia enables the child to maintain an attachment with a figure vital to survival, development, and thriving" (Freyd 1994: 307), it explains the adaptive forgetting, as a means of coping and survival.

When it comes to the effects of trauma on identity, "if there are predisposing factors, an emotional shock may induce an amnesia so profound even personal identity may be forgotten" (Joseph 1998: 172). When it is not completely forgotten, it can be altered, so that "extreme trauma creates a second self" (Caruth 1995: 137). This second self can store the traumatic events and completely isolate them from the other personality. Certain "chronic amnesias tend to occur after repeated traumatization in childhood" (Van Der Kolk, Van Der Hart 1995: 173). These traumatic events however, are not lost for good, as certain stimuli can evoke the repressed memory. Seeing that "traumatic memory is evoked under particular conditions, and it occurs automatically in situations which are reminiscent of the original traumatic situation" (Van Der Kolk, Van Der Hart 1995: 164), the narrator's return to the Hempstocks' farm represents such a circumstance. The conditions for recollection are satisfied through "cued recall", when the senses are incited by stimuli similar to those related to the traumatic events. The fact that the protagonist seems not to be aware of these memories before arriving at the farm can be explained through dissociative amnesia. For the people suffering from it, some of these experiences exist in memory, without victim's knowledge or awareness of them. The subjects with personality dissociation, or hypermnesia, are not aware of what exactly is missing, sometimes they are not even aware that they have forgotten something (Van Der Kolk, Van Der Hart 1995: 175-176). In life-threatening situations or any other traumatic situations, the brain focuses on survival and self-protection. The subjects "experience a mixture

of numbness, withdrawal, confusion, shock, and speechless terror" (Van Der Kolk 2000: 9). All of these can be identified in the novel, in such instances as, "I was terrified of him when he was angry. His face (angular and usually affable) would grow red, and he would shout, shout so loudly and furiously that it would, literally, paralyse me. I would not be able to think" (Gaiman 2013: 67); "I was a seven-year-old boy, and my feet were scratched and bleeding. I had just wet myself. And the thing that floated above me was huge and greedy, and it wanted to take me to the attic, and, when it tired of me, it would make my daddy kill me" (Gaiman 2013: 86); and "I was pulled up with him, soaked and spluttering and angry and crying and scared" (Gaiman 2013: 73). The risks of not dealing with the trauma can have dramatic effects on the subject's personality, leading to psychiatric disorders. The recovery from posttraumatic effects, or from survivor conflicts, cannot really occur until that traumatized self is reintegrated, because these traumatic events are unassimilated overwhelming experiences that need to be integrated into the mental schemes and to be transformed into narrative language for the subject to recover from them (Van Der Kolk, Van Der Hart 1995: 175-176).

Lately, as suggested by Gilmore, trauma has been central in contemporary self-representation (Gilmore 2001: 3). As a result, narrating the trauma is another way of dealing with it, especially since, as stated by Douglas, "the autobiography has become a mechanism for mediating between the past and the present, between the child and the adult self, and between trauma and healing" (1974: 110-111). Nevertheless, not all writers prefer working with autobiography, as it implies "baring one's soul". They choose to write any genre allowing disguising their personal knowledge and history, because, as stated by Bakhtin, at the novel core lays "personal experience and free creative imagination" (2008: 39). As it was stated above, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* is the most personal of Gaiman's novels, as the author admits it has some autobiographical elements, which makes us wonder, as the book's adult narrator does, how much of this story is imagined and how much is actually a narration of the adult writer's repressed memories. The fact that Gaiman has chosen to write the account as a fantasy novel or an "adult fairytale", as some critics consider, does not make it less personal and does not reduce its influence on its readers. Similarly to fairy tales, fantasy novels allow their readers to deal with their repressed feelings and fears, by offering them the protagonist's place and

helping with the integration and assimilation of overwhelming experiences. Since, unlike the myth hero, "once the fairy-tale hero has achieved his true identity at the story's ending (and with it inner security about himself, his body, his life, his position in society), he is happy the way he is, and no longer unusual in any respect" (Bettelheim 2010: 57), which makes him/her easy to identify with.

The Ocean at the End of the Lane exhibits realistic functioning of the memory and recollection, through "cued retrieval"; it depicts trauma, induced by prolonged stress, feelings of terror, powerlessness, loneliness, and betrayal. It features a traumatic recollection of past traumatic events, induced by the setting, which is reminiscent of the original traumatic situation. The novel can be seen as an example of writing as means of therapy, displaying an instance of art used as a relief valve for the "overflowing" psyche, transforming traumatic events into narrative language. It is the only Gaiman's novel written from the point of view of a first person narrator. The narrator's name is unspecified, although it is mentioned in the novel that he had a "silly pet name" – "Handsome George" (Gaiman 2013: 135), which does not necessarily mean that his real name is George. The reader can only assume that the unknown narrator is the writer himself, as certain events in the book coincide with biographical events in Gaiman's life. For example, in the novel, the death of the unknown narrator's father mirrors the death of Neil Gaiman's father. The death of a loved one is a traumatic event in itself, which resurfaces unresolved issues and situations, and oftentimes memories. Written in the aftermath of his father's death, the novel deals with such unresolved issues, some of them probably described literally, while others being most likely just metaphorical reflections of the real issues behind them. Another such event is the suicide of a tenant in the family's car, which actually happened during Gaiman's childhood. According to Apgar, "writing provides the survivor with a psychological distance that allows her the possibility of analyzing her past" (1998: 48), as she writes about women victims; however, the quote can be applied to the male survivors of trauma, as well. In *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, narrative recounting allows the reintegration of the protagonist's traumatic memories, and the reassessment of the self schemata of his personality, through their recollection.

The novel is dedicated to Gaiman's wife, Amanda Palmer, and the dedication states: "For Amanda, who wanted to know". It implies a sort of confession, and while Gaiman admits to be inspired by the landscapes and laces of his childhood, and his seven-year old bookish self, it might be tempting to look for other parallels between his childhood and the events depicted in the novel. Although, it is a work of fiction, and a fantasy novel, as stated by his wife, "*it's unlike anything i've ever read...it's an explosive combination of dark and light, and it's incredibly intimate. and the most important thing i can tell you (that maybe neil can't) is that it was hard for him to write, and while he's insanely excited for its release [...] it's also scary for him to put out into the world. he doesn't usually write things that are so personal [sic]*" (Palmer 2013). As a result, the reader might be tempted to read it as a fantastic, metaphoric reinterpretation of a traumatic, autobiographical narrative, and a recollection of the writer's childhood.

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Textual Hybridity in Orhan Pamuk' s

The Black Book

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Abstract:

The aim of this article is to explore the way memory and identity intertwine and are reflected by textual hybridity in one of Orhan Pamuk's most acclaimed writings, The Black Book. As an admirer of great writers such as Borges or Calvino, who redefined and innovated traditional narrative discourses and styles, Pamuk also chooses to experiment, break fictional confinements and go beyond established patterns. The Nobel winner succeeds in creating a well-crafted intertextual network that teems with all sorts of playful allusions, rewritings, references to and evocations of Islamic texts, Turkish literature, Oriental allegories and Western literature. Configuring one's identity and coming to terms with memory both find a unique and intriguing expression in a labyrinthine universe.

Keywords: *memory, identity, textual hybridity, intertextuality, postmodernism*

What exactly sets the novel apart from other genres? The 2006 Nobel prize winner for literature, Orhan Pamuk, trusts that one could include anything into it: lists, radio soap operas (a reference to Mario Vargas Llosa's *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*), poems, sequences from other novels (thus embracing intertextuality), essays on different subjects such as history and science, philosophical texts, encyclopaedic information, anecdotes and all sorts of things we could come up with. (2012: 142) This is, in brief, Pamuk's belief about the art of the novel, which he chooses to express in his volume of literary essays, *The Naive and Sentimental Novelist*.

There is no denying that Pamuk has built many of his fictional discourses in a postmodern manner, but our aim is to take a closer look at some of these postmodernist techniques and the way they lead to the fascinating textual hybridity that defines the author's famous *Black Book*. Pamuk himself suggested that as he followed in the footsteps of Borges and

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Calvino, his approach to traditional Islamic literature was based on a reinterpretation that let go of the reactionary and political views:

I never thought I could do anything with that material. But once I was in the United States, I realized I could go back to that material with a Calvinoesque or Borgesian mind frame. I had to begin by making a strong distinction between the religious and literary connotations of Islamic literature, so that I could easily appropriate its wealth of games, gimmicks, and parables (Pamuk 2007).

Without venturing to offer a precise definition of a long-disputed concept that has pervaded many cultural fields a long time ago, Ihab Hassan singularizes postmodernism (1987) referring to irony, indeterminacy, Anti-Narrative/Petite Histoire, dispersal, deconstruction, play, intertext, a stand against interpretation, misreading etcetera. Indeterminacy, for instance, would relate, in Hassan's opinion, to uncertainty or to Bakhtin's dialogic imagination (and intertextuality as well). Fragmentation, a possible cause for indeterminacy, is the sole basis of trust for a postmodernist and explains the choice for collage, metonymy, paradox and the propensity for brokenness. Irony stands for play, allegory, even self-reflection, as they are the only means to elucidate truth, or at least getting somehow closer to it. Assurances are left aside in favour of ambiguity. Hybridity takes part in this game, as well.

With regard to hybridization, Ihab Hassan points out that the mutant replication of genres (parody, travesty, pastiche) may be as reasonable as the original source. The point of hybridization is not mere imitation, but an expansion of the past into the present, augmentation: "In that plural present, all styles are dialectically available in an interplay between the Now and the Not Now, the Same and the Other" (1986).

As opposed to centring, determinacy, hierarchy and even purpose, the constant interrogation concerning identity easily turns into a matter of pluralism and ambivalence, digressing to a dilemma of copy and original. As Hassan put it, "postmodernism veers toward open, playful, optative, provisional (open in time as well as in structure or space), disjunctive, or indeterminate forms, a discourse of ironies and fragments, a white ideology of absences and fractures, a desire of diffractions, an invocation of complex, articulate silences" (Hassan 1987).

Milan Kundera indirectly mentioned the “hybrid” novel (in his novel *Immortality*), underlining that giving up the traditional discourse patterns, such as the rule of unity of action, is actually taking the composition of the novel one step forward. Kundera compared the “traditional novel” to bicycle racing, where the only thing that mattered was the outcome, the end of the story. The writer argues in favour of a novel written as a “treat” which consists of many “dishes”... just as Pamuk detailed.

A partisan of polyphony and including short meditations in the novel, Kundera sees an enrichment of the novel not only through the combination of literary genres, but also of discourses and styles that can break formal confinements. Thus ensues textual hybridity: “Outside of the novel, one is in the realm of assertions: everyone’s a philosopher, politician, concierge—is sure of what he says. The novel, however, is a territory where one does not make assertions; it is a territory of play and of hypotheses.” (Salmon 1984) Very much like the Czech writer, Pamuk has a self-questioning aesthetic conscience and relies on relativity and ambiguity, a rejection of fixity: “It’s fun, and a challenge, to experiment with form and style, and language and mood and persona, and to think about each book differently (Pamuk 2007).”

When he was asked by *The Paris Review* magazine if he had taken a model in order to be more modern and experimental, Pamuk confessed that he had moved on from Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Stendhal, or Thomas Mann to writers such as Woolf, Faulkner and Proust. (2007: 436) *The Black Book* echoes, for instance, Albertine’s departure by reinventing it as a central theme that puts the main character, a lawyer, in a constant state of anguish after he is left by his wife. He begins to question everything he had ever known about himself, his wife, his big, annoying family, the anarchic city he lives in and Turkey.

Pamuk’s prose in general involves postmodernist gimmicks (like the intrusion of the author in the text, very frequent) and all sorts of digressions that build textual hybridity. In fact, hybridity favours the recounting of Galip’s and Celâl’s wayward movement towards a blurred, unreliable memory especially through common Islamic stories, both from the Ottoman culture and from contemporary Turkey. The plot is built in

and of itself on intertextuality, paratextuality and hybridity. They are not limited to Islamic allegories or parables, but include Western literary works as well (besides *In Search of Lost Time*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, Dostoyevsky could be mentioned, although he does not really fit the Western categorization). Moreover, all the epigraphs in the novel succeed in carrying on a subtle dialogue with world literature, actually showing how both storytelling and identity concerns are very much the same anywhere in the world. Reaching out to cultural memory, either in the East or the West, shows how identity cannot skip relating to fundamental, universal values.

The innovation behind the fictional discourse in *The Black Book* is this bold combination of a traditional narrative structure, journalistic style, historical topics from Ottoman culture (the Hurufis, the eighteenth-century sheikh named Galip etc.), short meditations and Oriental allegories and parables (some of them made up), that is sustained by the dispersal and fragmentation of meaning. The novel thus reflects a great concern for the split Turkish identity, caught between a fascination for the West, the tradition of the East and a tendency towards the radical, falsely secure national ideology. Set in the late seventies, *The Black Book* talks about memory, the magic of writing, the purpose of storytelling, the struggle of being oneself, the suffering of loss, and loneliness.

Galip starts searching for his wife, Rüya, by turning his attention to the strangest signs and hints around him, very much like in a detective novel (for instance, her ex-husband's political past reflected in leftist magazines or the detective novels which Rüya used to read), also getting distracted by people who knew or are looking for Celâl, but this search is actually one of his own self. Which makes him recall happy memories of his childhood with Rüya, her cousin. Galip is somehow torn apart by the wish to be someone else, more precisely, to be like his journalist cousin, Celâl. *The Black Book* might in fact be regarded as a metaphysical detective story because it is life in general that requires elucidation, more than Rüya's disappearance, which is only a pretence for finally dealing with identity issues. Furthermore, if we take into account the fact that Galip prefers to be a naive detective, lying to himself, trying to delay facing the truth, that Rüya has simply gone to her stepbrother, Celâl, thus attempting

to mislead the readers, the novel might also be an anti-detective novel - if not an utter parody of searching one's identity, then an ironic approach of it, with a teasing twist:

When he looks at these clues, this man sees his own past, the past he shared with his beautiful wife. He doesn't know who she's run off with, or else he doesn't want to know, because wherever he goes, whenever he stumbles onto another clue that talks to him of the past he shared with his wife, he can't help thinking that the man she's run off with, and the place she's hiding resides somewhere in his past. (2015: 101)

Galip seems to enjoy his new detective role so much that he even considers himself the hero of a detective novel, rigorously listing places where he might find Rüya and Celâl.

I must be myself, one of Celâl's column titles, becomes the main issue that haunts Galip's conscience and carries him in a dreamlike labyrinth. His walk through Istanbul, portrayed as a dark, chaotic and mysterious city, is marked by Rüya's and Celâl's absence, as well as by the latter's articles, so much so that Galip wishes he lived in the obscure world conceived and interpreted by Celâl. Grasping one's true *self* and one's identity here becomes a process that implies pluralism, faces indeterminacy and highlights the displacement of the real through simulacrum, replica, and imitation. This shift makes the characters wonder what the original source of a story is after all and makes it impossible for them to distinguish who copied whom. But that is not necessarily a bad or abnormal thing in shaping an identity: "Please don't misunderstand me: Imitation is a formative art. Unless we were always trying to be like others (...) life, I think, would quickly become impossible." (2015: 116) The displacement generates a valid replication, as the stories it carries only lead to other stories. In other words, enlargement and augmentation, forms of hybridization: "It was not long before this world – "where everything was a copy of something else, where people were at once themselves and their own imitations, and all stories opened out into other stories – grew to look so real"(2015: 165).

Textual hybridity is also obvious in the characters themselves: Galip's obsession for his cousin's columns could be his wish to bring an

undetermined, unclear past into the present, to decode the history of another whom he tries to copy in order to paradoxically be himself. Celâl's restlessness regarding personal and cultural identity and the need of magnifying his sense of self is reflected by Mevlevî's story (known as Jalal Rumi, the 13th century Persian poet): "Rumi had been searching for his other, the double who might move him and light up his heart, the mirror who might reflect his face and his very soul. (...) Rumi needed to be able to draw from a storehouse of alternative identities." (2015: 255-256) As a matter of fact, Celâl might well be a travesty attempt of Jalal (the homonymity is obvious), a contemporary, charlatanic version of him, preoccupied by Istanbul's unexplored, peculiar and forgotten stories, such as the debris one could find in Bosphorus.

The columns, which are written playfully, with a melancholic erudition by the mysterious and sullen Celâl, an individual who would rather avoid his relatives by shutting himself off or roaming around strange places in Istanbul, alternate with narrative sequences that follow Galip's wandering in the city. This alternation succeeds in both disrupting the story and enhancing it, especially through self-reflection on the act of storytelling (for example, the dialogue between Galip and three famous journalists on how to write). Not centring the plot is in fact a significant mechanism that supports one of the ideas behind the story – "the loss of mysticism in Oriental and Turkish mindsets: "F. M. Üçüncü offered a detailed analysis of the loss of mystery. In his view, there existed in both Eastern and Western traditions the idea of a centre hidden from the world (...) a civilization that lost its notion of such a centre could not help but go out of kilter" (2015: 304).

Physically absent, yet very present through his writing, Celâl has an insane obsession with memory loss (comparing memory to a garden), causing a similar disquiet in Galip. They are both affected by Istanbul's melancholy, the decay in spirit and thinking in Turkish society and they feel the weight of this general wish to be like the Europeans in the West, illustrated by the story of the useless, disembodied mannequins.

The playfulness and openness in structure mentioned by Hassan, in relation to Bakhtin's dialogism, are indisputable due to the combination of different voices and points of view: besides Galip's and Celâl's perspectives, and the heterodiegetic narrator, a communicative, yet coy

author turns up towards the end of the story. The author's intrusion into the text, in the most natural postmodern way, may partly be explained by a need to point out the intentions regarding polyphony. His concern, though it ruins the whole fictional pact, is a stand against fixity, as he asks the reader not to be completely influenced by what he had just read, but instead resort to his own wit and playfulness. The author rejects his authority as the mastering mind and empowers the reader:

Reader, dear reader, throughout the writing of this book I have tried – if not always successfully – to keep its narrator separate from its hero (...) but please allow me to intervene just once.(...) I would prefer to leave you alone on this page – alone, that is, with your memories. It would be best, I think, if I asked the printer to submerge all the words on the pages that follow with a blanket of printer's ink. This would allow you to use your own imaginations to create that which my prose can never hope to achieve. (2015: 442-443)

Commenting upon his own work, Pamuk concisely described textual hybridity and the fusion of styles when he mentioned that some Oriental cultures (China, India, Persia) contain common allegories that survive through oral storytelling, such as the mystical poem *Beauty and Love* (*Hüsn ü Aşk*), which plays a part in Rüya's and Galip falling in love and crosses Galip's path frequently. The novelty here is that they were treated in a unique manner and put into a space imbued with possibilities, contemporary Istanbul: "It's an experiment – put everything together, like a Dadaist collage; *The Black Book* has this quality. Sometimes all these sources are fused together and something new emerges. So I set all these rewritten stories in Istanbul, added a detective plot, and out came *The Black Book* (Pamuk 2007)." Textual hybridity is therefore an innovative view on storytelling, benefiting from intertextuality, the intertwining of history and fiction and different types of discourses.

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“Tea first. Then war!” - Alan Ayckbourn’s *Neighbourhood Watch* (2011): A reflection on Great Britain’s 21st century internal security policy and its citizens’ need for safety?

Maria WIEGEL*

Abstract

In a time when terrorism has become a regular topic in newspapers and on television, security appears as a recent and urgent issue. CCTV cameras and surveillance operate in a great part of western public space and life. This article focuses on the ways in which the radicalized internal security policy of the Bluebell Hill Development, in Alan Ayckbourn’s play Neighbourhood Watch (2011), reflects on Great Britain’s security policy and society’s need for safety and security throughout the early 21st century. Security policy is one of the main issues in the western countries of the late 20th and the early 21st century. The paradox of using surveillance - a restriction of freedom - for the protection of freedom can be seen in Neighbourhood Watch. The result of contradictory security measures, as argued in this article, leads to paranoia. Neighbourhood Watch functions as a mirror to present-day Great Britain’s security measures, while using the microcosm of a small neighbourhood.

Keywords: surveillance, theatre, paranoia, security, Great Britain

Introduction

The attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on the 11th of September 2001, were a huge motivation for several nations to increase their safety measures (Evans 2013: 1-2). As the sociologist David Lyon argues, those “[...] anti-terror initiatives introduced since 9/11 have also included mobile phone locations and message tracing as a means of both investigating and even pre-empting

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violent acts" (2006: 218). The attacks drew attention on a lack in western civilisation's security and thus led to an increase in security measures and surveillance (cf. Bauman 2013: 126-127).

After the Australian activist, hacker and founder of the online platform *WikiLeaks*, Julian Assange, released secret U.S. documents belonging to the government, he had to hide in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he has been living until today¹. Assange's case has raised the question how far a nation should be allowed to go to protect its national safety, since Assange fears persecution by the United States of America that, on the other hand, feels threatened by the rest of the world after Assange's leak of secret governmental documents, which, again, proved that the US government surveilled private individuals (Synnestvedt Jensen 2013: 29).

It seems paradoxical that a nation's freedom should be gained by restricting the citizens' freedom and right to privacy. In his play, *Neighbourhood Watch*, Alan Ayckbourn deals with the problem of safety and the obsessions which are born therein. The result, but also the foundation, of the absurd security measures used by the neighbourhood watch, as argued in this article, is paranoia. In a funny while exaggerated way, Ayckbourn depicts the absurdity of Great Britain's nowadays common security measures and shows in what ways the fulfilment of security can lead to a restriction of freedom.

Internal security policy in 21st century Great Britain

Before going deeper into the common security measures in Britain and their potential dangers, as also depicted in *Neighbourhood Watch*, it is important to define security. Dan Caldwell and Robert E. Williams Jr. define security as "[...] a condition or state of being free from the threat of harm. There are both objective and subjective aspects of this condition. Security thus involves both material circumstances and the psychological state produced by those circumstances" (Caldwell and Williams 2012: 7). Therefore, norms play an important role in a state's definition of security. In a governmental context, security is defined as 'internal security'. In its *17th Report of Session 2010-12*, the British Council does not give a clear definition of the term 'internal security', but describes it as a measure to protect the state against crime:

The main crime-related risks and threats facing Europe today, such as terrorism, serious and organised crime, drug trafficking, cyber-crime, trafficking in human beings, sexual exploitation of minors and child pornography, economic crime and corruption, trafficking in arms and cross-border crime, adapt extremely to changes in science and technology, in their attempt to exploit illegally and undermine the values and prosperity of our open societies...

The concept of internal security must be understood as a wide and comprehensive concept which straddles multiple sectors in order to address these major threats and others which have a direct impact on the lives, safety, and well-being of citizens, including natural and man-made disasters such as forest fires, earthquakes, floods and storms. (House of Lords 2011: 11)

In other words, the Council defines internal security as a political sector that is concerned with the fight against and prevention of several kinds of serious crime. Since crime seems to be largely supported by the development of technology and science, a nation's internal security requires increasing scientific and technological knowledge to be able to protect the citizens. High-tech measures such as placing CCTV-cameras in public areas and using x-rays in airports should help protect a country and its citizens and show the technological possibilities of the government (Nayland 2006: 1).

The internal security policy in Britain can also be seen as a symptom of modern life, as argued by Torin Monahan who wrote in the preface to the book *Surveillance and Security – Technological Politics and Power in Everyday Life* (2006) that “[t]he desire for security permeates modern life. In a world perceived as increasingly unstable and insecure, surveillance has become a key mechanism for contending with threats of terrorism and crime” (Monahan 2006: ix). Surveillance, therefore, has a calming effect on citizens. In a society wherein terrorism has become part of everyday life, it simulates security. Thus, besides fighting against crime, surveillance helps to calm the more and more threatened society, wherein it becomes an instrument of social control (Björklund and Svenonius 2013: 1). Furthermore, it can function as a deterrent to crime and thus prevent crime by discouraging potential criminals (Björklund and Svenonius 2013: 1).

However, citizens are not only watched by the government when they pass through passport control or while they operate in the public

space (cf. Zurawski 2007: 25). Since Edward Snowden's 'whistle blowing' scandal in 2013, in which he revealed the NSA surveying private households, it became common knowledge that governments survey their citizens in their private homes. In the United Kingdom, the mass surveillance that Wall describes is accomplished by "[...] the ECHELON network, a joint USA/UK government-run interception system that surveils large numbers of 'transmissions and uses computers to identify and extract messages of interest from the bulk of unwanted ones.'" (Wall 2006: 343-344) Thus the government tries to ensure security for its citizens by invading their privacy at the same time.

Just as internet access is monitored, private conversations on the (mobile) phone are wiretapped (Lyon 2006: 211). Therefore, the price for security seems to be the lack of privacy. In this case, improving technology does not liberate people, as believed by sociologists such as Georg Simmel (qtd. in Lyon 2006: 211). It rather limits the citizens' freedom. According to Björklund and Svenonius, the technological development that took place in the past seven to ten decades and is still going on today does not only bring advantages and technology that make life easier but "[...] there is also reason to be very wary of how ICTs [information and communication technologies] are deployed" (2013: 1).

In Great Britain CCTV is a very present and widely seen method of surveillance (Nayland 2006: 2). In a safety-seeking society such as Great Britain, CCTV-cameras are often not seen as an invasion of privacy anymore, since they serve the safety of the state and its citizens. Since, "[...] argumentation for the effectiveness of CCTV differ[s] between societies[,] [t]he general public has to be convinced that cameras have safety benefits and/or it has to be persuaded that video surveillance is a sufficient and necessary means of combating crime" (Björklund and Svenonius 2013: 7). Consequently, the measures for surveillance are possible and internal security is needed as citizens are longing for safety and security.

However, according to Zygmunt Bauman and David Lyon, surveillance is not a guarantee for safety and security for the individual citizen, since security nowadays is often defined as national security, which does not inevitably mean security for the individual (2013: 126). Many crimes the government is fighting against do not concern the individual citizen per se but the whole nation that the individual is part of. An

increase in security measures brings restrictions and new dangers to the individual and the nation, as “[...] often the attempt to achieve greater security has the unintentional result of threatening security” (Caldwell 2012: 253). A society becomes dependent on its security measures so that a lack in one security measure might cause greater harm to society, since it relies on the flawless functioning of security measures.

Therefore, internal security measures often function by violating the citizens’ privacy. Often, citizens are not only surveilled in public but in their homes as well. However, although citizens have to face the violation of their privacy, safety is not guaranteed for the individual. The extent to which the need for security can create an environment of control and paranoia is depicted in an exaggerated way in Alan Ayckbourn’s *Neighbourhood Watch*, which will be discussed in the following section.

Security policy in Alan Ayckbourn’s *Neighbourhood Watch* (2011)

From the very first scene of his play, Ayckbourn creates an atmosphere of paranoia and vigilantism. The play tells the story of the siblings Martin and Hilda, who move to the Blue Bell Hill neighbourhood. After Martin’s favourite gnome is thrown through their window, Martin and Hilda mobilise the neighbourhood to establish the Bluebell Hill Development Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. Throughout the play, the methods of the neighbourhood watch become increasingly radical. This radicalisation reaches its peak with Martin’s death at the end of the play. When Martin catches an unknown boy climbing over the fence into his garden, he immediately believes the boy is a criminal and takes away the boy’s clarinet case (Ayckbourn 2013: 9-10). To protect his private property Martin does not ask the boy about his identity and motives for entering his garden. Later he finds out that the boy was not a criminal.

Luther. Ethan Dudgeon, the young person whom you set upon and robbed whilst innocently on his way home from a music lesson with my wife [...] Did you even ask him, what he was doing there, Mr Massie?

Martin. I didn’t get a chance to, did I? [...] (Ayckbourn 2013: 33-34)

The newly gained information changes their roles. Ethan, the boy, becomes the victim, while Martin turns into a criminal. This incident, therefore,

reflects the precarious relationship between citizens and the surveillance measures introduced by the government, such as body searches. While protecting his property, Martin violates Ethan's rights by taking away his property.

As stated earlier in this article, 9/11 is seen as a trigger for stricter security measures in the western world. Therefore, parallels can be traced between the real life events of 9/11 that brought about an increase in safety measures and those determining the establishment of the neighbourhood watch in Ayckbourn's play. As in the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, it was a flying object in the play that caused a stricter internal security policy in the Bluebell Hill Development:

*[...] Before anyone can leave the room, there comes a sudden, ear-splitting crash of breaking glass as the window is shattered and a projectile lands in the middle of the carpet where a few seconds ago some of them had been standing. **Magda** screams, **Dorothy** and **Hilda** cry out in surprise. The men express alarm. (44)*

This situation triggers a radicalised security policy in the neighbourhood and the declaration of war against crime and terrorism. The new security measures would cause more damage to the residents rather than prevent it (see Caldwell and Williams 2012: 253). A similar paradox, one might say, has been experienced by citizens in western cultures whose freedom and privacy have been restricted by security measures, as stated by Langdon Winner in his essay *Technology Studies for Terrorists – A Short Course* (2006): "Indeed, the institutional responses to 9/11 have caused far more damage than the initial attack did" (2006: 279). With Martin changing his attitude towards radical security measures (41), the play mirrors the western cultures' shift towards stricter security policies.

After the aforementioned incident, paranoia is revealed in the neighbourhood, which seems to be the main reason why Martin and a group of neighbours establish the Bluebell Hill Development Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. This paranoia goes hand in hand with prejudice against an estate near the Bluebell Hill Development.

Rod. The estate down there, the Councillor Mountjoy Estate, it's a cesspit. All the local scum gathered down there. Drugs, violence ... incest. (15)

The residents of the Bluebell Hill Development are prejudiced not only against the Councillor Mountjoy Estate, but, seemingly, also against Eastern European immigrants:

Rod. There's dozens of them. The country's flooded with them. Eastern Europe. Never should have torn down the Iron Curtain. Biggest mistake we ever made. (13)

Therefore, prejudice and paranoia are very present in the characters' behaviour, so it seems paradoxical that Hilda does not want the Bluebell Hill Neighbourhood Watch to be run on fear ("We never intended to run our neighbourhood watch scheme on fear, did we?" – 90). However, it is rather salient that the neighbourhood watch has been established by safety seeking residents out of paranoia, fear and distrust of people with a different background or simply living in a different neighbourhood.

Furthermore, distrust is shown not only towards other citizens, but also towards the government that is considered to be in charge of the citizens' safety. This is, firstly, pointed out by Rod, who on the one hand identifies himself with the government, on the other hand he criticises it for tearing down the Iron Curtain. Secondly, the government's motives are mistrusted: Martin believes that the Members of Parliament lack interest in England and its citizens, and that they only seek to become rich (8). Finally, Rod, who used to work for a security service (15), lost his trust in the police after they failed to help him get back his hedge trimmer, which, in his opinion, was stolen by a resident of the Councillor Mountjoy Estate (18-21). Hence, Rod suggests working without consulting the police:

We can do this without the police. They'll be worse than useless as far as we're concerned. [...] There are a considerable number of people – and this is a tragic reflection of the times we're living in – but it is a fact of life that there are an increasing number who have developed a natural mistrust of the police. [...] They no longer trust them. Been victimised once too often. Needlessly stopped and searched. Gratuitous traffic violations. Day by day the rift is growing. The breakdown of trust. Many of us are now fearful of the very people we are paying to protect us. (42)

Not only does Rod state that the number of people mistrusting the police is growing day by day but he also suggests that people are scared of the police instead of feeling protected by them. The mistrust of government and specific groups of citizens reminds of a populist notion. According to Ernest Gellner, populism is "[...] anti-capitalistic, anti-urban, as well as xenophobic and anti-Semitic" (Gellner 1969: 3). Therefore, their disbelief in governmental institutions, as well as their fear of people from other Estates and of different origins, mirrors the members' similarity to political groups considered to be populist.

Also, the restriction of freedom by security measures is reflected in the play by the limitation of space. To protect their private property, Martin and Hilda, who were fond of their view when they moved in their new house ("I'm glad we don't have a great high fence [...]" – 7), build a higher fence, at Rod's recommendation, as a first measure to prevent crime against their privacy ("Rod. No, take my tip, a fence. First thing you need. [...] First rule of security, get yourself a fence." – 15). The open space, which they can see through their window, seems to be considered dangerous, while the closed space, which they create by building a high fence, is seen as safe. The notion of a closed space being a safe place becomes clear when Hilda asks Martin why people would put up fences. Martin provides a short and simple answer to her question: "Security, probably." (7) The idea of building fences in order to protect a community today is widely connected to the US-president Donald Trump². Although *Neighbourhood Watch* was written five years before Trump was elected, the depiction of paranoia and fear by building walls and closing borders is seen as a strong but grotesque security measure.

The open space seems to be a symbol for freedom. While Hilda and Martin live under the restrictions of the neighbourhood watch they have created themselves, Hilda seems to be freed from those restrictions after the fence is torn down. Only then does she live her homosexuality openly and moves together with Magda who "impulsively kisses Hilda" (104). Martin, on the other hand, sees his romantic relationship to Amy, which he lives out outside the Bluebell Hill Development, as a "Doorway to freedom" (95).

The restriction of freedom through strict security measures is addressed directly by Luther's notion of the neighbourhood watch. He sees

Bluebell Hill as a prison rather than a safe and free place: “[...] You’ve turned a nice, peaceful, respectable neighbourhood into a prison camp” (46). In fact, Martin and his neighbourhood watch build high fences and therewith turn the neighbourhood into a high security zone (47). The prisonlike conditions in the neighbourhood are claimed to help obtain security for the residents, so that they have the freedom of living without fearing violence.

Martin. Regular patrols, all for your own safety, Mr Bradley. So you can sleep peacefully in your bed at night... [...] Pensioners, you can walk safely in daylight on your own street without feeling threatened, without being subjected to nine foot high, obscene graffiti on every street corner! Parents, you can feel confident your children are free to go outside to play! Women, you now can walk without fear alone at night! (48-49)

According to Martin’s argument, safety brings freedom that, for Hilda and her father, does not exist without restrictions: “Unfettered freedom is the devil’s delusion...” (96).

In fact, it seems that privacy is often restricted by the Bluebell Hill Development Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in order to reintroduce values that seem to be “unfashionable these days” (3) and to accomplish utopian aims, like the ones Hilda mentions in her speech in the prologue of the play:

Hilda. It must be allowed to grow until every parent loves the child; every child respects the parent. Every husband honours the wife; every wife respects the husband. Till every neighbour reaches in friendship to neighbour. Till no stranger is turned away from our door. Till love becomes the only arbiter, and God the final authority. (3)

The re-establishing and maintenance of specific values is an essential part of the definition of security (Caldwell and Williams 2012: 9). The neighbourhood watch protecting those values mirrors the fact that different cultures have different notions of security.

Moreover, it seems that, as in real life, surveillance is more and more taking place in the residents’ private space. Martin and Hilda are interested in tracking the residents’ lives and are shocked to hear that

Gareth does not know where his wife is (51). Hilda even goes as far as paying someone to spy on her brother and Amy (83). Thus, just as the internal security policy of Great Britain surveils its citizens in private places by using spyware to gain information about suspicious citizens and potential terrorists (cf. Wall 2006: 342-343), Hilda is obviously following Martin and Amy. Her purpose is to protect Martin from Amy, whom she considers to be "the devil" (58) and a threat to the neighbourhood:

Hilda. What sort of example is she setting to the rest of Bluebell Hill? With her open drinking and her loose behaviour? Her appalling language, suggestive innuendos - ? What sort of example is that for our young people? They see behaviour like that going unchecked, unpunished and they say to themselves, oh, if she can, the wife of a committee member, if she can behave like that, then why can't I...? [...] (86)

Amy is acting against the values of the neighbourhood watch and stands for values which are not accepted by the committee. Besides losing her protector, Martin, Hilda fears that Amy could function as a bad example for young residents and cast a bad light on the neighbourhood watch.

However, the Bluebell Hill Development Neighbourhood Watch Scheme's main aim is to protect its neighbourhood from "weapons, drugs and alcohol" (53). After forbidding the consumption of alcohol in public, the neighbourhood watch wants to forbid it inside private households too (53). Besides alcohol, the neighbourhood watch is also fighting against "Anti-social behaviour" (60) and "Foul language in a public place" (61). Those aims indicate how much freedom is restricted by security. Like the government, the Bluebell Hill Development Neighbourhood Watch Scheme takes on a teaching role to keep their values. They forbid the residents an unhealthy and unsocial behaviour, and limit the freedom of making their own decisions regarding their way of life.

It does not take long until the neighbourhood watch becomes more organised and, therefore, more radical. Instead of patrols carried out by volunteers, they build higher fences and create a border control point that checks the inhabitants' "Official Bluebell Hill Development Identity Card" (48), while entering and leaving the development (62). Besides proving the intruder's permission to enter the neighbourhood, the Official Bluebell Hill Development Identity Card helps the committee control the residents by

surveilling their moving in and out of the neighbourhood (47). Furthermore, the committee tries to surveil the behaviour of its residents and guests by searching their bodies and bags (53). Therefore, the neighbourhood watch uses measures for controlling and maintaining security that are similar to those used by the government.

Another measure against crime and rude behaviour in the Bluebell Hill Development seems to be punishment. As a method of punishment, the Bluebell Hill Neighbourhood Development Watch Scheme uses historical instruments of torture, such as stocks (52). Although first sceptical about stocks, the committee decides to use them, even though not often enough in the constructor's opinion:

Gareth. The stocks, the ones I took time and trouble building. I'd like to say, I'm dismayed, not to say disappointed, at their lack of use. They appear, in my view, to be underused. In the end, it's not for me to say how or when they should be used. That's down to the D and P sub-committee.

[...]

[...]

Rod. [...] Gareth, when you've a minute to spare, you might consider reducing the size of those foot apertures. Some of these anorexic teenage girls they just slip out of them, walk away laughing, calm as you like. Makes mockery of justice [sic].

Gareth. (*Huffily*) I didn't design them for teenage girls, Rod. I designed them for – mature wom [sic] – people. (61)

This conversation between Gareth and Rod shows that stocks are even used by the neighbourhood watch to punish teenage girls. Thus, not only adults are educated by the neighbourhood watch to adopt certain patterns of social behaviour but also children have to face the same kind of punishment as adults. Furthermore, Gareth's original intention by building the equipment seems to be sexual. During his conversation with Rod, he almost expresses the real purpose of the devices by pointing out his intention to use them with mature women.

Besides the use of stocks, further methods for punishing are introduced by Gareth, who finds them in history books.

So I was wondering if you'd given any thought, you know – during your researches – into historic punishments, as to one which might fit the crime,

if you see what I mean? Fitted this particular crime. Her crimes. Whether you'd come up with anything, during the course of your research? (87)

This affinity to violence turns into a striving towards war when Martin's gnome Monty is thrown through Hilda and Martin's window. Martin reacts to this incident in an irrational way: "If this is how they want it. This is war. War." (45). Here, Ayckbourn depicts how radical reactions can evolve when values are violated³.

The values protected by the neighbourhood watch are part of a strong Christian belief, which is the confession of the majority of western civilisations' citizens. Hilda's speech at the opening of Martin's memorial does not only depict the aims of the neighbourhood watch. It also shows how important God and Christianity are for Hilda and Martin and, therefore, for the neighbourhood watch. In the prologue, Hilda mentions Martin being a devout man whose only aim was to protect his loved ones:

Is it not typical of him that he died protecting his loved ones, protecting his home, unarmed and unafraid, clasping in his hand the symbol of his belief, the final words on his lips the name of our Blessed Saviour? (2)

After his death, Martin becomes a saviour himself, being depicted as a Jesus-like figure. Martin is seen as a sort of messiah by Hilda and other members of the committee. Hilda's speech mentions that "Martin was a man driven by faith and powered by love. Love for his fellow men and women" (2). The neighbourhood watch seems to be dependent on Martin, who takes on the position of their chairman (92). Furthermore, while the Jesus statue in Hilda and Martin's garden is introduced to have the function of watching over the neighbourhood⁴, Martin takes on a Jesus-like position as the messiah and leader of the neighbourhood by becoming the chairman of the neighbourhood watch. Consequently he becomes the observer of the neighbourhood. Moreover, after Hilda finds out that Martin has an affair with Amy, Martin points out to Hilda that his relationship with Amy is of noble nature:

Hilda. How could you consider living – co-habiting with a woman like that? You? You, of all people? A truly good man grovelling in the dirt ... for that worthless ...

Martin. [...] Well, there are noble precedents for that, you know, Hilda. For good men to consort with prostitutes. Surely?

Hilda. Yes, maybe there are. But He only used them to wash His feet, didn't He? (97)

While Hilda is worshiping Martin as a good man, Martin refers to another noble man helping out sinful women. Hilda immediately makes the connection to Jesus, who helped out a sinful woman by letting her wash his feet (See Book of Luke 7, 36-50). Finally, after Martin's death, his similarity with Jesus becomes explicit when the Jesus statue is nowhere to be found.

Amy. Oh dear, oh look. You've lost your little man, haven't you? I mean, sorry, Jesus. You've lost Jesus, haven't you? You must miss him. I suppose they must have taken him as evidence. Ironic, isn't it? Mistaking Jesus for a lethal weapon. [...] (103)

Besides the irony that Jesus is considered to be a weapon, Amy shows how much Jesus is to be connected to Martin. One can interpret Amy's statement as a hint to Hilda not only losing her brother, but also her initial connection to Jesus, since Amy's expression seems ambiguous in the first place. It is not clear in the beginning of her exclamation, whether her "little man" refers to Martin or Jesus.

To conclude, Alan Ayckbourn reflects on the increasing security measures in western countries by staging the real-life situation of this macrocosm in the microcosm of a fictional neighbourhood. The characters react in a grotesque way which mirrors the real-life situation the western society finds itself in. Martin being shot in the end is the climax of the monstrous paranoia of our society. It is worth noticing that the action is performed by a governmental institution – the police. Mistaking a Jesus statue for a weapon depicts the government's paranoia, believing danger and threat is to be expected everywhere, even in a private garden, situated in a small neighbourhood. The paranoia of the microcosm is finally directly and explicitly connected to the paranoia of the macrocosm.

Conclusion

"Tea first. Then War!" (45) This sentence perfectly describes the 'normality' of strict security measures in our western culture. While security measures

violating the citizens' privacy became part of western everyday life, in his 75th play, Alan Ayckbourn shows in a funny and exaggerated way to what extent the need for safety can lead to paranoia and the restriction of freedom for the individual. The play does reflect on security policies in the western world. Public areas in London are not only teeming with tourists, but are also full of hanging cameras. Private individuals are filmed, recorded and surveilled everywhere and all the time. Surveillance is argued for as being a measure meant to increase safety for citizens and tourists. In fact, under this pretext, the government is violating its citizens' privacy.

Alan Ayckbourn used exaggerated narrow-minded characters in his play to evoke the contrast between the security seeking, calm society and the revengeful and strict law enforcer. This absurd combination of middleclass society between tea and war shows the absurdity of the British internal security policy. Since paranoia and fear have come to play a major role in the residents' lives, small occasions such as the offence of the wallpaper colour or a broken gnome can both lead to war. Far from stating that the attacks on the World Trade Centre were a small occasion, the current paper hardly assumes that Ayckbourn's intention was to express such an opinion. Rather, it would seem that Ayckbourn is trying to draw the spectator's or reader's attention to whether all the measures of the current security policy are actually necessary to prevent crime and terror.

Finally, it is worth noticing that fear and paranoia have become part of our daily life. Security measures violating the individual's rights are their symptoms. Without the citizens' fear, increasing populism would not have been possible. Ayckbourn depicts the exaggerated result of a radicalised security program and provides therefore a warning which points out that it is not possible to be entirely safe and free at the same time.

Notes

¹ On June 19, 2012, the Australian citizen Julian Assange showed up on the headquarters of the Ecuadorian Embassy in London with the purpose of requesting diplomatic protection from the Ecuadorian State, invoking the norms on political asylum in force. The requestor based his petition on the fear of an eventual political persecution of which he might be a victim in a third State, which

could use his extradition to the Swedish Kingdom to obtain in turn the ulterior extradition to such country. (Schiffbauer 2013: Chapter B II)

² Trump is considered to have populist characteristics. See, for example, Stephen Collinson, CNN, June 6, 2017.

³ When talking about the problematic situation in the neighbourhood, Martin also says: "All quiet on the western front." (Ayckbourn 2013: 97) This sentence refers back to the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) by Erich Maria Remarque, which deals with the cruelties of the First World War. Therefore, this is another reference to war, describing the situation in the play as warlike.

⁴ **Martin.** [...] What have you done with Jesus? I can't see him anywhere. [...] Ay, yes there he is, I see him. In the shrubbery, there, peeping out of the shrubbery. What's he doing in the bushes?

Hilda. Keeping an eye on things.

Martin. He's Jesus. He shouldn't be lurking in the bushes [...]. (Ayckbourn 2013: 6)

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