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The Roaring (20)20s

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…AND THE ROARING 2020s

Editor's Note

This anniversary tenth issue of *Cultural Intertexts* – a Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies – assembles articles on *The Roaring (20)20s*, covering one hundred years of literary and filmic production, as well as of societal and linguistic change, with emphasis on text, pretext, context and intertext. The contributors – scholars from Austria, China, Denmark, Georgia, Greece, Norway, Romania and the United States of America – tackle a wide range of aspects related to the problematic under focus, supported by relevant case studies.

A time of healing the wounds left by the Great War through art, excesses and *joie de vivre*, an era of artistic innovation and profound transformation at all levels, the 1920s provide rich ground for cultural analysis. Of course, the blooming film industry during that time is one of the focal points of interest for cultural studies. Consequently, Part One, *The Roaring 20s*, sets out from an investigation of the evolution, impact and revival of luxury movie theatres, the famous extravagant 'palaces'. The celluloid world of illusion is taken further, from its flamboyant space of consumption to its fabricated 'characters', the silent movies stars, through mediated constructions of womanhood in fan magazines like *Photoplay*. The intrinsic and ever-flowing relation between film and literature is then exploited in a discussion on Woody Allen's transposition of the Kafkian grotesque in the mockumentary film genre. Similarly, the much older connection between painting and fiction finds a place in our collection with a review of the representations of the prodigal son within the European space, which, once again, features the famous misfit, Franz Kafka, but also the ground-breaking Modernist T. S. Eliot and great representatives of Surrealism and Dada, like Max Ernst and Giorgio di Chirico. As the Roaring 20s would be incomplete without at least one emblematic figure of the Lost Generation, strategies of rewriting the American 1920s are identified in John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*. Finally, as the effervescence of the period was not an exclusive Western European or American affair, a journey to Greece is made, to read a Modernist poet's reaction to his critic (Vafopoulos v Karantonis on shifting poetic codes).

The one-hundred-year bridge is, sadly and unexpectedly, 'consolidated' by two pandemics: the Spanish Flu (1918-1920) and the current Coronavirus (2019 – ongoing) whose variations in the fabric of speech acts and the shift from cultural intertexts to inter-texting cultures are approached from a pragmatic and cultural perspective in the first article of Part Two, *…and the Roaring 2020s*. The topical negotiation of identity across cultures is traced in its representation at the level of the literary text signed Mojha Kahf, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*. Then, a return to the famous flight from reality specific to the early decades of the previous century is made obvious once again in the anti-realism of televised fairt-tales, fantasy series and science fiction novels. The analyses centres on telling the story of the characters' literary emancipation and of the death of the author in the fantasy drama television series *Once Upon a Time*, on journeying across a literary heterotopia inspired by classical and modernist sources in Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea series, and on defamiliarizing Georgian society in bio-punk fiction: *Chewing Dawns: Sugar-free*.

As always, the editorial team is honoured by the collaboration with the members of the scientific committee, and grateful for the highly professional peer reviews received before publication.

Michaela Praisler

The Roaring 20s

Luxurious Cinema Palaces in the Roaring Twenties and the Twenty-First Century: Critical Analyses of Movie Theatres by Siegfried Kracauer and Their Relevance Today

Viola E. RÜHSE*

Abstract

Impressive cinema palaces with exterior façades illuminated appealingly at night were significant for the big city life of the roaring twenties. The film screenings in the prestigious buildings were framed by a diverse supporting programme. Siegfried Kracauer dealt critically with the formative tendency towards theatricality in the new large cinema buildings such as the Gloria-Palast in Berlin in 1926. He also discussed the supporting programme and the aspect of distraction in the context of modern mass and leisure culture in a progressive and extraordinary way.

Over the past decade, luxury cinemas have been enjoying a revival. In order to examine today's high-end boutique movie theatres, Siegfried Kracauer's thoughts on large cinemas in the "roaring twenties" in Berlin provide critical impulses. In the first part of my paper, two important texts by Kracauer are analysed. In contrast to previous research, Kracauer's arguments are also compared in greater detail with those by contemporary progressive critics not only in Germany but also in other countries, such as Joseph Roth, Kurt Pinthus, Fritz Olimsky, Kenneth Macpherson, Harry Alan Potamkin and Philip Morton Shand, among others. This also reveals the special nature, quality, and depth of Kracauer's essays. An analysis of modern luxury movie theatres inspired by Kracauer's train of thought follows in the second part of this paper.

Keywords: *Siegfried Kracauer, history of film, luxury cinemas, film palaces, Weimar Republic*

The first permanent cinemas at the beginning of the twentieth century were mostly small and plain. However, larger, more elegant film screening venues were already established in the second half of the 1900s in US and soon afterwards in European cities too (Altenloh 1913: 19f.)[1]. The increasing popularity of film was a major factor in this. In connection with the longer duration and the more sophisticated plots of films, an attachment to high

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culture was also sought architecturally with more prestigious performance locations. Thus, film became more acceptable to the middle classes and was able to establish itself as a mass medium (Korte 1980: 13-89, 55-56).

In the 1920s, movie theatres became even larger and could seat several thousand visitors. They were designed even more luxuriously than live performing theatres. In addition to an increase in pomp, the supporting programme became longer and more diverse (Slowinska 2005: 582). Cinema had thus unmistakably become a socially acceptable leisure activity, where people no longer "went stealthily" but rather paced through a sumptuous entrance in an "evening dress" (Magnus 1929/1930: 967). In Germany, many new film palaces were built or existing cinemas were enlarged after the end of the inflation in 1923. In Berlin, many elegant picture palaces were located around the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church on Kurfürstendamm and served as first-release cinemas (A. [abbr.] 1925).

Due to his training as an architect, Siegfried Kracauer was well suited to critically analyse the new picture palaces in Berlin[2]. Kracauer's first short article on cinema buildings in Berlin is titled "Palaces of Film. Berlin cinemas"[3]. It was published with three photographs in *Das Illustrierte Blatt*, on 21st February 1926 (fig. 1). This weekly illustrated magazine was printed by the Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei, i.e. the same publishing house as the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (FZ), where Kracauer was employed as an editor. In his article, Kracauer draws attention to a general tendency towards theatricality in the new large cinema buildings such as the Gloria-Palast on Kurfürstendamm. However, in his opinion, with this theatre-like style, the architecture does not correspond to its purpose. This view is based on Kracauer's reflections regarding the characteristics of the film medium in his previous film analyses, in which he clearly distinguished film from theatre. According to him, carefully arranged scenes, elaborate actions and intellectual transitions are characteristic of theatre. By contrast, the "spirit of film" corresponds to visibly erratic movement, a tendency to surface and improvisation, and improbable events (Kracauer 2004: 38, 46).

The German print media mostly praised the new picture palaces with many superlatives (Kreimeier 1999: 123f.). For example, the Ufa-Theater Turmstraße is said to have been "unanimously recognized by the press as the most beautiful and modern cinema in Germany" (Anon 1925: 27). Furthermore, the *Berliner Tageblatt und Handels-Zeitung* confirmed that the Gloria-Palast had lived up to its claim to be the "festival theatre of the German film" (Anon. 1926b). The new picture palaces also enjoyed strong popularity and attracted a large number of visitors (Naylor 1987: 22).

Kracauer refrains from such a common panegyric in his article; instead, his arguments show parallels to contributions of other advanced critics. For example, Kracauer's media-aesthetic argument that buildings should take into account the differences between cinema and theatre had already been mentioned by Kurt Pinthus regarding the first more luxurious cinemas prior to the First World War (Kracauer 2004: 204, Pinthus 1913/1992: 366f). In the film magazine *Close Up* (1927-1933), Macpherson also condemned the extended supporting programme and highlighted that cinema and theatre would not go together (1927: 13)[4].

However, Kracauer's remarks are not as polemical as those of the architecture critic Philip Morton Shand, who published an important monograph on early cinema buildings in 1930. Shand favoured modern architecture and therefore condemned the fact that the new film palaces echoed historical buildings as "gaudy opulence of an already bygone age" (17). He condemned the atmospheric film theatres in the US, which also influenced the Gloria-Palast. In addition, Shand compared the picture palaces to cheap novels. According to him, they were "nauseating stick-jaw candy, so fulsomely flavoured with the syrupy romanticism of popular novels" (19)[5]. Despite its brevity, Kracauer's contribution is more profound in terms of architectural theory and film aesthetics compared to other critics, whereby his expertise as an architect and film reviewer becomes clear. His quality and critical perspective – which reveals parallels to other avant-garde film critics – make him quite unusual for the German press coverage at the time. Especially for the *Illustrierte Blatt*, with its main focus on personal and event reports, puzzles, humorous and serial novels, Kracauer's text must be regarded as rather uncommon[6].

Due to the brevity of his work, Kracauer focuses only on architecture in his contribution to the illustrated magazine. In a longer second text, he also discusses the supporting programme and the aspect of distraction in greater detail. In this article "Cult of Distraction. On Berlin's Picture Palaces" published without illustrations in the FZ on 4th March 1926 (1995: 323-330; 2004: 208-213), Kracauer analyses the pomp of the film palaces in the context of modern mass culture. His approach is sociologically more profound than in his first shorter contribution. Kracauer refers to the Gloria-Palast – which he had already dealt with in the *Illustrierte Blatt* – in addition to several other large, well-known new cinemas such as the Ufa-Palast am Zoo (fig. 2) in the west of Berlin in the vicinity of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche (Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church). He also brings up the "American style of a self-contained show"

after Samuel Rothafel who established a supporting programme in the US for film presentations[7]. Such a programme had been first established in Germany in the Ufa-Palast am Zoo. To create a counterweight to the "monotony of the 'silent stage'", Rothafel combined the performances of a symphony orchestra and individual artists with ballet interludes, vaudeville performances, decorative lighting and coloured light effects to create a harmonious supporting programme that is tailored to the respective film (Potamkin 1927/1998: 33; Melnick 2012). The film screening was expanded into a "super show", its entertainment value increased and a theatre atmosphere was created. Rothafel's staff members Ernö Rapée and Alexander Oumansky were hired for the introduction of the programme in the Ufa-Palast am Zoo (Melnick 2012: 252 ff.).

Kracauer already characterises the film palaces in the introduction as "the total artwork [Gesamtkunstwerk] of effects" (1995: 324). The addition of the notion "effects" is significant for Samuel Rothafel's supporting programme. Presentations by the orchestra, individual artists, lighting effects, etc. were put together to form a harmonious programme that "adapts itself prologue-like to the meaning and content of the film", "in order to prepare the mood according to the film work" (Wedemeyer 1925a: 574). According to Rothafel's employee Ernö Rapée – a film composer and conductor – "atmosphere and the main character of your picture" had to be given special consideration (1925: 11, 8). At theatre openings, the film was even selected to match the architectural style. For example, the Gloria-Palast – designed in the baroque style – was opened with the drama "Tartüff" (Germany 1925) by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau based on the play by Molière, whose period of action coincides with the neo-baroque style of the film palace. However, despite the coordination of architecture and performance at the openings, a higher purpose was missing, as in Richard Wagner's concept of the total artwork. According to Wagner, all of the individual genres of art were to be merged into the total artwork, thus enabling a "representation of perfect human nature" (1983: 28f.)[7]. Wagner himself criticised the gimmickry of Giacomo Meyerbeer, for example, because his recipe for success included the achievement of "effect without a cause" (1850-1851/1914: 89). In his text, Kracauer similarly criticises the fact that the magnificent pleasure palaces offer no edification and no collection, but only diversion and splendour.

In "Cult of Distraction", Kracauer deals with the new pompous cinemas in relation to metropolitan leisure culture. In his opinion, modern mass culture is actually only present in the big city of Berlin, because in the

provincial cities the bourgeoisie still dominates, while in the industrial centres the workers orient themselves to bourgeois culture (1995: 324f). In fact, according to contemporary statistics, there were very few cinemas in the industrial cities at that time (Anon. 1926c). By contrast, in 1926 Berlin had 340 cinemas and by national standards a very large number of seats per inhabitant (Anon. 1926.). According to Kracauer, distraction is the necessary counterpart to the alienated everyday working life of people in the big city and it takes place in the same "surface sphere" ["Oberflächensphäre"] as the working world (1995: 325). What is unmistakable in this text is the impact of Georg Simmel's reflections on the nervousness and distraction of the modern city dweller, which also influenced other statements by Kracauer in 1924/5. According to Simmel:

> [t]he lack of the definitive in the center of the soul induces to seek a momentary satisfaction in ever new impulses, sensations, external activities; thus it is only in its turn that it entangles us in the confused perplexity and helplessness that reveals itself sometimes as the turmoil of the big city, sometimes as a travel mania [...] (1903/1995).

In the first sociological study on cinema published in 1913, Emilie Altenloh indirectly refers to Simmel's observation of secret disquietude caused by modern life: "[…] both the cinema and its visitors are typical products of our time, characterized by constant preoccupation and nervous restlessness (1913: 55f.)[9]."

Kracauer's treatment of the topic of distraction was influenced by his studies of Karl Marx in the prior months. For instance, Kracauer associates the distraction that films can provide with revolutionary potential. For him, the earlier performances in simple cinemas are "a reflection of the uncontrolled anarchy of our world" (1995: 327). Thus, they function as a kind of a distorting mirror for the disintegration of contemporary society. According to Kracauer, this is the basis for a revolutionary atmosphere because it is possible to observe the actual constitution of society and change it afterwards. When the "*disorder* of society" is brought before people's eyes, "this is precisely what would enable them to evoke and maintain the tension that must precede the inevitable and radical change" (ibid) [10].

However, the "cult of distraction" that was being pursued in Berlin with the latest magnificent cinemas and the film screenings that had been expanded into a revue significantly prevented the creation of a revolutionary atmosphere, according to Kracauer (328). Due to the

orientation to theatrical performances and the creation of a unity of experience between architecture and programme, a former idealistic bourgeois culture was apparently being restituted in the film palaces, according to him. However, the bourgeois façade was only pretended and the social disintegration was thus veiled by an aesthetic illusory totality. Kracauer considered this to be out of date and devaluated it as "applied art" (ibid.). Kracauer also criticised contemporary revue programmes in the FZ on 11th December 1925 in a manner similar to supporting programmes in the cinemas, albeit in a more sarcastic style. Their magnificent decoration distracted from the unjust structures, because "[w]hen the audience gathered, they would not know what to do; out of boredom they could cause unrest" (Kracauer 2011: 313).

Kracauer's approach to distraction is progressive in the sense that he does not condemn it as a fundamentally inferior pastime; instead, he sees distraction as contemporary and important as a recreation from work (ibid.). On the other hand, in conservative circles, the "exaggerated craving for pleasure" was criticized (Teuteberg 1990: 195). Kracauer's criticism of bourgeois arrogance in "Cult of Distraction" can also be seen as daring: "Their arrogance, which creates sham oases for itself, weighs down upon the masses and denigrates their amusements." (Kracauer 1995: 325) After all, the educated middle-class citizens criticised by Kracauer were among the main readers of the FZ (Bachleitner 1999Ş 114).[11] However, according to Kracauer, economic and social reality had irreversibly changed and bourgeois culture was no longer up to date. Orientation towards middle-class habits would serve to detract from the social damage (326)[12].

Kracauer's integration of sacral aspects is striking in his second text on Berlin's film palaces, whereby the title already contains the word "cult". He indicates that the architectural cinematic frame tends towards the "lofty and the *sacred* as if designed to accommodate works of eternal significance—just one step short of burning votive candles." (327, emphasis in the original) In the same way as religion was an "opium" for the people according to Karl Marx and only allowed "illusory happiness" (Marx 1844: 71f.), for Kracauer the modern metropolitan masses now exposed themselves to illusions in film presentations expanded into a revue. The urban public indulged in mass culture in a religious way. Superficially, the mass audience of the 1920s thus imitated the bourgeoisie, for whom art and culture served as a kind of "substitute religion" in the 19th century.

The large cinemas of the 1920s and 1930s supported cult associations by their furnishing with organs as well as by sacral

connotations of the interior design (Schivelbusch 1992: 53-56). In the US today, some old film palaces such as "Loew's Valencia Theater" in New York actually serve as churches (Macfarquhar 1999). In his article "The Ritual of the Movies" from 1933, Harry Alan Potamkin was particularly critical of the cult of cinema and the uncritical visitors in the great modern "cathedrals" of film palaces:

> In the building of these large temples and cathedrals — and I say they are rightly called temples and cathedrals — everything has been done to merchandise the show. The money changers are in the temple. What have they done in the last few years? Have they improved the pictures? They have done things to the stage show which is part of the ritual (1933: 3).

In addition to socio-critical considerations, Kracauer cites a media-aesthetic argument against the supporting programme. According to him, as a two-dimensional medium, cinema did not need three-dimensional additions, as these run counter to the illusion of film:

> By its very existence, film demands that the world it reflects be the only one; it should be wrested from every three-dimensional surrounding, or it will fail as an illusion (Kracauer 1995: 328).

Potamkin also referred to the media character of film against the introduction of the stage show by Rothafel: "Any artist of intelligence will tell you, that if an art is to transcend the medium, it must do so by virtue of the medium's characteristics." (Potamkin 1927/1998: 34.) He represents the idea of a cinema "which should entertain almost solely with movies" (ibid.). Such media-aesthetic reflections as those of Kracauer and Potamkin are lacking in the common contemporary German press coverage of the supporting programme. However, the supporting programme was received more critically by film reviewers than the magnificent architecture[16]. Due to Kracauer's focus on the socio-critical location of the new Berlin cinemas and the additional introduction of media-aesthetic arguments, the economic motives for the large cinemas fade into the background. For example, in "Cult of Distraction" Kracauer only mentions in a subordinate clause that financing mass entertainment in Berlin is worthwhile because the masses there have become sufficiently large (1995: 325).

In Berlin, Ufa particularly endeavoured to establish premiere cinemas according to the latest standards as well as supporting

programmes based on American models (for example, as outlined in the Ufa-Palast am Zoo and the Gloria-Palast with the engagement of Ernö Rapée and Alexander Oumansky). The "total artwork [Gesamtkunstwerk] of effects" (Kracauer 1995: 324) was also intended to conceal Ufa's financial difficulties (Kreimeier 1999: 124f.). Ufa expanded in the early-1920s and did not suffer so much damage during the inflation period. However, in the mid-1920s the company ran into financial difficulties. With expensive large-scale productions such as "The Nibelungs" (Die Nibelungen, d: Fritz Lang, Germany 1924), Ufa wanted to remain competitive with Hollywood, although the costly films were not sufficiently profitable. In addition, unfavourable contracts with American film production companies had been concluded at the end of 1925 (Kessler 2001: 1179). The large cinemas should achieve positive PR for Ufa and support the success of their film productions with glamorous premieres. The film palaces with their sensational architecture functioned as media-effective "sensation machines" (Sildatke 2010: 13). The Berlin cinemas not only received a lot of attention in Europe (Anon. 1926d) but were also noticed in the US in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* (Anon. 1929).

They were regarded as "showcase cinemas", and cinema owners from Paris and London travelled to the opening of these film palaces, in addition to journalists. In 1924/1925, thirteen new large movie theatres were built or acquired by Ufa within half a year. In 1925, the film company owned a total of 150 cinemas, which also allowed it to exercise more control over film performances (Anon. 1925). Kracauer's rare critical contributions in the German-language press coverage opposed Ufa's strategy of promoting a positive corporate image with the major film palaces. Kracauer exposed the pomp of the cinemas as pseudo-glamour. The builders propagated this as a democratisation of luxury (Naylor 1987: 22, Anon. 1968).

Kracauer also disavows the claim of Berlin as the most modern and "'most enjoyable' city in Europe" (Knickerbocker 1932: 21) by exposing the distraction effect of Berlin's large cinemas as reactionary, because cinemas functioned as a symbol of modern urbanity (Steidle 2011: 15) and thus contributed to Berlin's metropolitan flair. In recent years, a revival of luxurious cinemas can be observed, whereby such cinemas with the possibility to eat directly in the auditorium in the US and England are especially popular. For example, in New York, several dine-in cinemas have opened over recent years, such as the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema in Downtown Brooklyn, Metrograph in Lower East Side and IPIC in South

Street Seaport. Although they no longer attract as much international attention as the major cinemas of the Weimar Republic, the openings are still noticed in the regional press. In some cases, the high prices and the distraction caused by the food are criticised, although in general they receive a lot of positive feedback. For a deeper critical examination of these, Kracauer's treatment of the big screen in the 1920s and the views of other film critics can be very inspiring.

Efforts towards increased luxury in the cinema sector were already made during the last turn of the millennium. Thus, in Australia and the US, some cinemas established improved services such as seat reservations and online tickets, which were not common in film theatres at that time, as well as a concierge service (Redstone 2004). This provided some distance from the megaplexes that try to handle as many cinema visitors as possible in a short time (Lora 2018). The small American cinema chain Muvico even offered childcare and valet parking and provided restaurants next to their cinemas (Montalbano 2010: 19). Finally, some cinemas began to serve food in the auditoriums themselves, rather than only snacks to go. This is considered to be particularly forward-looking in the US today. It is hoped that gourmet food and the latest sound and projection technologies will continue to attract visitors after cinema attendance has been declining for several years. One of the reasons for the lower number of cinema-goers was initially the easy way of renting DVDs by post, followed in recent years by online video libraries and streaming services. The former managing director of Muvico – Hamid Hashemi – founded the American luxury cinema chain IPIC in 2006. At the beginning of 2019, it comprised sixteen cinemas in the US[13]. IPIC connects the film theatre with a restaurant and bar, where food and cocktails are also served in the cinema auditoriums.

The cinemas have various types of leather seating, namely comfortable single chairs, chaise lounges for two people to lie on and so-called "pod seats". In these two-person boxes, you can lean back like in a wicker beach chair and be shielded from the other visitors (fig. 3). At the push of a button, the seats extend to a reclining chair. In 2019, one of them cost 30 USD in the IPIC cinema in the South Street Seaport district in Lower Manhattan, making them the most expensive cinema seats in New York (Lynch 2016)[14]. The pod seats are also equipped with a blanket and pillow (fig. 4). For Americans, the cuddly living room accessories are supposed to look particularly homely and comfortable, because the IPIC concept is intended to combine the comfort that they are used to at home when streaming films with additional services in the cinema. For example, food

and drinks can be ordered directly at the so-called "Premium Plus" pod seats.

In addition, the interior design should appear noble and hip at the same time. Walls and floors are kept in dark colours in the IPIC in the Seaport District, which opened in 2016. Several colourful and decorative urban art murals create a young atmosphere and are ideal for Instagram-suitable photos. The slogans on other large-format neo-pop artworks emanate a positive mood, even if they are not very deep in their affirmation. With such up-to-date decorative art, millennials – who are particularly accustomed to streaming – are also to be lured into the cinema. 90% of IPIC visitors are between 21 and 54 years old, while the average age is 33 (Singh / Hashemi 2018). Put simply, the atmosphere is similar to a chic night club or a design hotel. The ticket counter and the polite greeting staff also remind more of the reception in an expensive hotel.

The luxurious atmosphere at IPIC is intended to induce people to stay longer, take selfies that support social media marketing and of course consume gourmet popcorn, expensive food, and drinks. If a visitor initially only chose a cheap seat in the cinema hall and did not consume so much during the film, this can be made up for by a subsequent visit to the integrated restaurant. Overall, the IPIC chain makes 70% of its profit from food and drink and only 30% from ticket sales, while other multiplex cinemas make about 46% of their profit from ticket sales (Loria 2018, Geiling 2013). IPIC describes itself as "America's premier luxury restaurant-and-theatre brand" (IPIC 2019). However, IPIC does not fit into the earlier concept of luxury for a smaller group of very rich people. In recent decades, luxury goods have instead become more accessible to a mass audience, although the character of luxury in general has also changed (Thomas 2007).

Especially after the financial crisis of 2007-2008, the interest in luxury at lower prices such as perfumes and accessories has increased. Dine-in cinemas are also a kind of "new luxury" for the masses. Instead of having your own movie theatre at home, at least a comfortable lounge will ensure a home-like cinema experience for a few hours. According to the former IPIC owner Hamid Hameshi, his visitors had an average income of 120,000 USD in 2018 (Singh / Hashemi 2018). They belonged to the American middle class (Dogen 2018), which has problems maintaining its former standard of living with this income (Bowman 2017). Even Hameshi's first efforts at Muvico for more luxury in the cinema sector were aptly classified by Shari Redstone of "National Amusements" in the New

York Times as an "upscale moviegoing experience for the masses" (qtd. in Weber 2005). With their glamorous façade and the pastimes that they create, today's luxury cinemas have undeniable similarities to the major cinemas of the Weimar Republic as analysed by Kracauer. Even if they try to surpass Broadway theatres with their luxurious ambience, the film palaces of today distance themselves from the traditional bourgeois cultural institutions through the distraction that they offer. In order to reach as large an audience as possible, IPIC cinemas mainly show Hollywood blockbusters and not more in-depth independent/house films (Guida 2015).

In addition, the food orders in the showroom are remindful of dining in music halls and cabarets. Although some of them are legendary today – such as the "Moulin Rouge" in Paris – they were not considered fine by contemporaries. The IPIC luxury atmosphere is therefore rather a superficial decoration from a cultural-historical and social perspective. In this respect, the installation in IPIC Fulton Market by Los Angeles-based artist Mike Stilkey – who has created similar works for other IPIC cinemas – is also significant (fig. 5). He has placed fairy-tale chimeras on books stacked on a wall in the third-floor gastro lounge[15]. The books are very dysfunctional and purely decorative, although they have an educated middle-class connotation that Kracauer already criticised as artificial and unsuitable for the leisure industry in the 1920s. Some elements of luxury cinemas like the recliners have been quickly taken up by multiplex cinemas. For example, in the past two years, the Austrian Cineplexx chain has also partially or completely equipped movie theatres with comfortable leather armchairs in addition to improved projection technology to justify higher ticket prices, among other things. However, small cinemas will find it difficult to keep up with this development of maximising luxury and comfort.

The contemporary high-end boutique movie theatres intend to increase their consumption and profit. They function as "sensation machines", just like the large film palaces of the Weimar Republic (Sildatke 2010: 13). However, instead of 1920s light organs, they are equipped with 3D urban art murals, and instead of an orchestra of 80 people, they offer state-of-the-art sound and projection technology. In addition to the already very effective Hollywood blockbusters, they also offer spectacular interior design, luxury hotel atmosphere, and maximum comfort and service. With these contemporary eye-catching strategies – which according to philosopher Christoph Türcke are necessary to attract economically

profitable attention in today's "excited society" (Türcke 2012) – the aim is to persuade middle-class cinema-goers to buy a little luxury.

In New York's IPIC in the Seaport district, this mini luxury serves as a short-term distraction from the stressful everyday life of the metropolis, the many hours of work that are common in New York and the alienation that is particularly noticeable there (Langman/Kalekin-Fishman 2012). According to the sociologist W. Peter Archibald, due to the increasing importance of leisure and consumption, paid work is subjectively less important for individuals and they no longer feel the alienating effects of work as intensively as some decades ago. Nevertheless, alienation is increased by the commercialised leisure culture (Archibald 2009). The small luxury of an IPIC visit can indeed serve as a consolation for the fact that greater prosperity is much less attainable for today's middle class than for previous generations. However, with book decorations and art as in the 1920s, a pseudo-bourgeois façade criticised by Siegfried Kracauer is preserved.

Notes

1. The article is based on the research for one part of my PhD thesis submitted at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig in March 2020.
2. Spaces play an important role in Kracauer's oeuvre, for Kracauer's dealing with interieurs see Rühse 2014.
3. Kracauer (2004), 204-206. The original titles and quotations in German can be found in my PhD thesis (chapter IV). Unless otherwise indicated, the English translations from German sources are mine.
4. Harry Alan Potamkin also characterised the theatre as the "traditional intruder into cinema practice" [Potamkin (1927) 1998: S. 33].
5. See also William Archer S. Douglas' critical stance – Douglas 1927: 193.
6. On the subject of the *Illustriertes Blatt* see Barr 2016.
7. See also Bazon Brock's definition of the total artwork – Brock 1983: 23.
8. Altenloh refers to Simmel (1900) 1989, S. 675. – See also Wiemer/Zechner 2005.
9. According to Inka Mülder Bach, this view of Kracauer is a "bold thesis", which has also been criticised in more detail by Helmut Lethen – Mülder 1985: 69; Lethen 2000: 103-5.
10. See also Bloch 1985: 309.
11. See also Kracauer on revues: Kracauer (2011): 313-317.
12. Examples for a critical reception of the supporting programme are Blass 1926, Pinthus 1925, Oly. (Olimsky) 1926, Roth (1924) 1989-1991.
13. However, the IPIC Company filed for bankruptcy in late summer 2019. In November 2019, the ownership of the company changed and two IPIC cinemas were subsequently closed. It remains to be seen whether the middle class as the main audience can still afford IPIC cinema visits after the Corona crisis in 2020.
14. The average cinema ticket price in New York is USD 16.50 (Arkin 2019), although the popcorn included with IPIC on the Premium Plus seats costs about 10 USD in other cinemas, i.e. if you consume popcorn IPIC is only 4 USD more expensive.

15. There are more bookcases in the IPIC in the Fulton Market Building on the third floor, which are also intended as decoration.

Fig. 1) Siegfried Kracauer's article "Palaces of Film. Berlin cinemas" in *Das Illustrierte Blatt*, on 21st February 1926, scan: Viola Rühse.

Fig. 2) Anon., Kurfürstendamm with Ufa-Palast am Zoo and the view of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, photo postcard, Berlin (Verlag Nettke), late-1920s/early-1930s, private collection, scan: Viola Rühse.

From left to right:
Fig. 3) Cinema auditorium in the IPIC cinema, Fulton Market Building, New York, opened in 2016, photo: Bernhard Kastner 2019.
Fig. 4) Cinema seat in the IPIC cinema, Fulton Market Building, New York, opened in 2016, photo: Bernhard Kastner 2019.
Fig. 5) Mike Stilkey, installation ("book sculpture"), 2016, New York, IPIC cinema, Fulton Market Building, photo: Bernhard Kastner 2019.

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Promoting and Containing New Womanhood in the Pages of *Photoplay*: The Case Of "Little Mary" Pickford and Her Mediated Alter Egos on the Cusp of the Roaring Twenties

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Abstract

Actress Mary Pickford is perhaps best remembered for her silent-screen persona "Little Mary." But there was another important aspect to her Hollywood career that is frequently overlooked today: Pickford's rise to power and fame corresponded with the era of the "New Woman" in U.S. society. This article explores the mediated construction of new womanhood as communicated through the coverage of Pickford's career between 1918 and 1921 in the pages of the fan magazine Photoplay. It demonstrates how Photoplay used coverage of Pickford to promote the ideal of new womanhood until 1919, when she became the most powerful woman in American moviemaking by co-founding United Artists with three men. After that, at the start of the Roaring Twenties, the magazine sought to contain new womanhood by presenting Pickford almost exclusively as a child, without continuing to acknowledge her abilities as a savvy movie mogul and grown woman as it had regularly done in the past – until significant changes in her personal life required another noteworthy shift in the magazine's coverage patterns of this star.

Keywords*: fan magazine, feminism, new womanhood, Roaring Twenties, stardom*

Actress Mary Pickford (1892–1979) is perhaps best remembered for her silent-screen persona "Little Mary," the charming, childlike, demure, mischievous, spunky character type she played in so many of the more than 200 movies she appeared in over the course of her career (Felder 1996: 334; Windeler 1973: 7). With her barely five-foot frame, expressive features, and trademark curls, Pickford became widely regarded as America's Sweetheart after she gave up a decade-long career on the stage in 1909 and made her transition into movies. In an era that prided itself on innocence, Pickford emerged as the cinematic feminine ideal, the girl every young man wanted to have—as his sister (Felder 1996: 334). She played a 12-year-

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old when she was 24 (in 1917's *The Little Princess*) (Corliss 1998: 53); she was equally convincing playing the long-suffering, poor little girl (e.g., in 1919's *Daddy Long Legs*) as the poor little *rich* girl (e.g., in 1917's *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*). As entertainment writer Richard Corliss sums up Pickford's appeal to fans:

> Pickford was a household goddess of the silent screen. […] She didn't ooze sex appeal, even of the Lolita type; in her film roles she was closer to daughter than to sweetheart. […] Little Mary struck so deep a chord in the new mass of moviegoers because she reflected the dreams of the immigrant and the pain of those she called "the Great Unloved." [...] Like Steven Spielberg, Pickford made an art and millions from the acute remembrance and reconfiguration of childhood. (1998: 54)

But there was another important side to Mary Pickford that is frequently overlooked by many of her remaining fans today. While on screen Pickford retained an innocent, childlike appeal, off screen she was regarded as a powerful businesswoman in her own right, one who achieved complete control over her own career— "including the contractual right of final cut of her films, by the time she was 25 years old" (Eyman 1990: 2). "It took longer to make one of Mary's contracts than it did to make one of her pictures," producer Sam Goldwyn once remarked, attesting to the star's keen ability to negotiate the most favorable terms for herself in exchange for her much-in-demand performances (Felder 1996: 334). Pickford earned $5 a day when she started working in movies in 1909; by 1916, as a result of her business acumen, she was earning an unprecedented $10,000 a week (Windeler 1973: 6; Felder 1996: 334). She was a pioneer in product endorsement with offerings ranging from Mary Pickford massage cream to the Little Mary radiator cap (Corliss 1998: 53), as well as the first female movie star to helm her own independent production company, Mary Pickford Film Corporation, upon launching it with her mother in 1918 (Felder 1996: 335). The following year, when she founded United Artists along with fellow actors Douglas Fairbanks and Charles Chaplin and director D. W. Griffith at the age of 26, Pickford ranked among the most powerful players Hollywood has ever encountered.

Pickford's rise to power, fortune, and fame corresponded with the era of the "New Woman" (Singer 1996: 177) in U.S. society, which came into being in the years between 1880 and 1920, and it reached new heights at the start of the Roaring Twenties, a decade filled with significant social, cultural, and lifestyle changes for American women and others (Hourly

2017). During this period, new conceptions of a woman's legitimate domain emerged that deviated from the stringent expectations of women during the Victorian era. As film studies scholar Ben Singer (1996: 177) has noted, substantially reduced fertility rates and the growing range of widely available, labor-saving products and machines provided lower-, middle-, and upper-class women alike greater freedom to pursue activities outside of the home. "Whereas only about 10 percent of women worked in paid labor in 1880," he writes, "this figure had almost doubled by 1910, or tripled if one looks only at the urban population. By 1910, over 40 percent of young, single women worked for several years before marriage, and the figure was probably over 60 percent in urban areas" (Singer 1996: 177). In addition to the workplace, Singer explains that the ongoing development of amusement parks, department stores, movie theaters, and music halls encouraged the increasing presence of women in the public sphere during this period, as did enhancements in mobility enabled by electric trolleys and the heightened popularity of bicycles as symbols of female emancipation.

As the United States moved into modernity at the turn of the century and beyond, the increasingly pervasive cultural image of women as able to stand on their own began to displace outdated notions of female dependence on men (Singer 1996: 178). The trademarks of the New Woman included energy, independence, initiative, self-reliance, and direct interaction in the extradomestic world; print media became preoccupied with these attributes and their corresponding cultural construct of modern womanhood as they continuously endeavored to articulate, caricature, critique, define, detail, and mythologize its various dimensions (Singer 1996: 177-178). These were not always easy tasks, however. Ultimately, popular magazines and other publications in this period ended up seeking to contain the New Woman almost as frequently as they sought to liberate her, as many began to highlight "a general disintegration of public civility coinciding with the greater independence of women in an urbanized America no longer protected by Victorian structures of social decorum" (Singer 1996: 187). One type of publication that played a substantial role in this process was the fan or movie magazine, which, as film scholar Gaylyn Studlar emphasizes, offers "a crucial index of the ideological and historical dimensions of the cinematic field of the 1920s and a neglected source for assessing how women were positioned" (1991: 7) in U.S. culture during that era. At cover prices typically ranging from five to twenty-five cents per copy, fan magazines were widely available to and popular among a broad

segment of the U.S. population, and their visual and textual contents offered readers endless complex and (frequently) contradictory messages about the cultural construction of new womanhood (Studlar 1991: 8).

The present article explores the mediated construction of new womanhood as communicated through the coverage of Mary Pickford's career between 1918 and 1921 in the pages of one such fan magazine, *Photoplay*. Established in 1911, *Photoplay* was among the most popular fan magazines during this era of intensified and anxious gender awareness, achieving a circulation of approximately two million copies for each of its monthly issues by the early 1920s (Studlar 1991: 8-10). Like its journalistic counterparts, *Photoplay* "explored, albeit in ideologically contradictory terms, the historically specific locus of women in American cinema, culture, and society during the 1920s" (Studlar 1991: 8), providing a comparatively "progressive view of women's changing sexual and economic roles" (Studlar 1991: 10).

An analysis of Pickford's treatment by this fan magazine in feature articles about the star and in the monthly column "Plays and Players," which offered regular updates and commentary about motion pictures and their stars, reveals that Pickford was covered in relatively standard ways—with accounts alternating between foregrounding the childlike and adult aspects of her star persona—until she became the most powerful woman in American moviemaking by co-founding United Artists with three men in April 1919. Thereafter, she was presented almost exclusively as a child, without explicit acknowledgment of her talents as a savvy movie mogul and grown woman, within the pages of *Photoplay* for approximately one year. This changed yet again as soon as the shocking news of her marriage to actor and United Artists business partner Douglas Fairbanks seized headlines worldwide, when presentation of the childlike qualities of Pickford's star persona were banished from the pages of *Photoplay* for approximately one year, and coverage focused almost exclusively on Pickford the movie mogul and grown woman. The ideological implications of these coverage patterns with regard to the cultural construction of new womanhood are identified throughout the analysis that follows.

May 1918 to April 1919: Standard Coverage of "Little Mary" Pickford

During the twelve-month period preceding *Photoplay*'s first feature article about the formation of United Artists, coverage of Pickford was approached in ways typical of reporting throughout the first decade of the

star's movie career. Since by this time it had become clear that America's Sweetheart would likely never be fully accepted as "the woman" on screen, Pickford devoted significant energy to constructing herself as "the girl" in her movie roles and as a combination of girl and woman in her personal life. In front of the cameras, she wore flats, trussed her bosom, and performed in oversized sets to appear smaller and younger, and she preferred to work with significantly taller actors opposite her (Corliss 1998: 58). Since she so frequently played young girls and early adolescents, Pickford had mastered the art of transforming her expressions to include a range of cuteness, innocence, poutiness, and sweetness, which she utilized regularly in both her professional and personal lives. Because the dichotomy between child and adult was so germane to Pickford's star persona, typical media accounts alternated between foregrounding one side of Pickford's persona (childlike or womanly) while simultaneously, though more subtly, reminding the reader of the other.

Coverage of the actress in *Photoplay* prior to the formation of United Artists in April 1919 is no exception to this trend. Examination of the feature articles about the star and her mentions in the monthly "Plays and Players" column by Cal York during the period of May 1918 to April 1919 reveals that Pickford was frequently presented as a successful adult and savvy businesswoman as well as a childlike being. The five feature articles focusing on the actress during this period, for example, are divided with regard to the side of Pickford's persona they choose to foreground. The feature "'Colonel Mary'—of the 143rd" from the May 1918 issue of *Photoplay* foregrounds Pickford's adult side, explaining that the actress "adopted" the 143rd Field Artillery regiment and visited the troops at their San Diego-area base to inspect them (Anon. 1918a: 64). "She is the first woman to have that honor," the article states, explaining that Pickford dined with officers, was guest of honor at a regimental ball, and led the grand march during the event (Anon. 1918a: 64). In the photographs accompanying the text, Pickford is clearly dressed as a grown woman and embracing her role as such, amid the company of tall, strikingly handsome military men. In contrast to this presentation, however, the related short feature "Colonel Mary of the 143rd Field Artillery, U. S. A." from the September 1918 issue of this fan magazine features Pickford photographically as an overgrown child in a borrowed military outfit and reports textually that the soldiers in the regiment she adopted have come to be known as "Mary's lambs," further foregrounding the childlike side of

Pickford's persona through the connection to a child's nursery rhyme and by referring to the military men as "boys" (Anon. 1918b: 71).

The remaining three feature articles—"Star Dust" from June 1918 (Quirk 1918), "Mary Pickford, the Girl" from July 1918 (Evans 1918), and "Has Mary Pickford Retired?" from October 1918 (Anon. 1918d)—similarly reveal the dichotomous tension surrounding print media portrayals of the star. Written by James R. Quirk, "Star Dust" addresses the key components of Pickford's star quality. Foregrounding Pickford's adult side, the article refers to the actress as "the best example of a star in the world of pictures" and identifies the fact that she is a "brilliant woman" to be the secret to her unprecedented success (Quirk 1918: 18). "Every admirer knows that this charming person appearing as a bit of a child is a mature woman," Quirk states, noting that Pickford's marriage is well known to all picture fans and acknowledging that she is far more than simply "a pretty girl with a lot of curls" (1918: 18-19). Similarly, the article "Has Mary Pickford Retired?" focuses exclusively on Pickford the successful adult and savvy businesswoman, highlighting the star's knack for negotiating profitable business deals, her commitment to consistently providing top-quality narratives with competent direction, and her possible plans to travel to France to contribute to war-relief efforts (Anon. 1918d: 85).

In contrast, the feature article "Mary Pickford, the Girl" (Evans 1918)—described in the issue's table of contents as being "the *real* Mary Pickford" (Anon. 1918c: 6)—foregrounds the childlike side of the star visually by presenting a collage of more than 35 photographs of the actress in her most famous roles as a young girl or early adolescent that spans two pages. Although the accompanying text refers to Pickford as a talented performer who promotes war bonds and is well-connected in Hollywood, it simultaneously continues to foreground her child side by relaying Pickford's reaction during an incident in which an inconsiderate person at the studio irritated her—"Hurt, she fled to her dressing room, covering her face with her hands and crying like a little child" (Evans 1918: 90)—and by emphasizing her dependence on her mother: "And Mary says, 'Mother is my world'" (Evans 1918: 111).

Pickford's appearances in Cal York's "Plays and Players" column during this period reveal similar patterns of reporting. The actress receives two mentions in York's July 1918 column; the first foregrounds Pickford the child, as she stands on a stepping board to appear taller beside Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin in a photograph, while the second foregrounds Pickford the woman, who is being sued for more than

$100,000 by individuals claiming to have previously been in her employ yet who have received no compensation for the work they provided (York 1918a: 108). The actress appears twice in York's October 1918 column (York 1918b), as well. Her first mention foregrounds Pickford the child, photographically portraying her as a youth in a bathtub during the filming of *The Mobilization of Johanna*; her second mention, on the next page of the column, foregrounds Pickford the adult, who is shown behind the wheel of an automobile on the set of *How Could You, Jean?* (York 1918b).

As previously stated, the practice of reporters alternating between foregrounding one side of Pickford's persona over the other was a standard approach to covering the actress from the earliest days of her movie career, so it is no surprise that Pickford is featured this way in the pages of *Photoplay* during the year before her involvement in United Artists was officially announced. What *is* surprising, however, is that this standard approach to reporting on Pickford did not continue unabated in the months after she became one of the "Big Four" founding members of United Artists. The reality that *Photoplay* significantly altered its approach to reporting on the actress in the aftermath of that historic announcement—thereafter presenting Pickford almost exclusively as a child (rather than an adult) for approximately one year—provides an ideal opportunity for exploring ideological processes associated with the mediated construction of new womanhood.

May 1919 to April 1920: "Little Mary" Becomes "Littler Mary"

Pickford emerged as the most powerful woman in Hollywood when she went into partnership with Chaplin, Fairbanks, and Griffith in April 1919. "Of the quartet of luminaries who founded United Artists [that year]," writes Richard Corliss about the star, "Pickford wasn't simply the token girl. While Charlie Chaplin fussed at his films and Douglas Fairbanks gallivanted and [D. W.] Griffith moved back to New York, she ran things" (1998: 54). Pickford's popularity continued to increase in the months after United Artists was formed, as did her earnings: by 1920, America's Sweetheart had become a multimillionaire (Felder 1996: 335). Little Mary also began to devote more and more time to her various productions, serving as an accomplished producer and director (and, occasionally, as writer) in addition to her role as star (Corliss 1998: 60). As biographer Scott Eyman explains about Pickford:

> We are, nowadays, used to strong, dominant women who mold their own show business careers. Stars like Jane Fonda, Barbra Streisand, or Jessica Lange produce their own pictures, officially or *de facto*. We admire them; from the heavy, sighing interviews in which they talk about the burden of it all, that admiration is obviously important to them. Yet the fact is that Mary Pickford was doing all this more than seventy years ago. In addition to managing her own career, […] she was instrumental in setting up and running United Artists, a major movie distribution company. Mary Pickford, in fact, was the first female movie mogul. On the scale on which she worked, she was, perhaps, the *only* female movie mogul. (1990: 3-4, original emphasis)

Clearly, Pickford revealed herself to be the epitome of new womanhood the moment the ink dried on her contract with her three partners, proving incorrect the various Hollywood insiders who felt that she and the others—being "childlike, insecure, flighty creatures" (Whitfield 1997: 192)—could not profitably run such a company. "[W]e produced and financed our own pictures," Pickford remarked of the experience, "and if they had lost money—which they never did—we were prepared to accept the losses as well as the profits" (Windeler 1973: 111). This unprecedented experiment in movie distribution turned out to be a success for Pickford and her colleagues; however, Pickford's role in the partnership received remarkably little coverage in the pages of *Photoplay* during the entire first year of its existence.

Photoplay made brief mention in its April 1919 issue of an early announcement asserting that the Big Four (along with William S. Hart, who soon withdrew from the potential arrangement) would unite to distribute their own product (York 1919a), but it was not until the following month that the fan magazine devoted a feature article, and a giant photograph of the four major players involved, to these historic developments. In this article, titled "All They Say Is: 'See Our Lawyer!'" Pickford is prominently featured as an equal to her three male partners, both in the text of the piece and in the accompanying photograph (Anon. 1919a). It is communicated that she is able to hold her own, and pull her own weight, as one of the "Big Four."

With the exception of brief mentions in Cal York's "Plays and Players" column during that same month (York 1919b) and during the next (York 1919c), this is the last time that the adult side of Pickford's persona is foregrounded in the magazine's coverage for nearly one full year. If it is at all possible for members of the press to "infantilize" Little Mary, that is

precisely what happened in the pages of *Photoplay*—Pickford was no longer presented in the traditional way as Little Mary, a combination of both the childlike and adult sides of her persona; instead, she was presented almost exclusively as a child, without explicit acknowledgment of her talents as a savvy movie mogul and grown woman, in a revised portrayal that I have termed "Littler Mary." Reporter pressures to contain new womanhood, whether explicitly or implicitly communicated or perceived during this era, can be invoked to help explain this shift in reporting approach.

In June 1919, the editors of *Photoplay* launched a new monthly feature called "Movy-Dols," which promised to present a different movie star every month "with character make-ups just as they appear in real life" (Reeves 1919: 91). The concept behind this monthly offering was that fans could clip out a paper doll of the featured star "as herself" (Reeves 1919: 91) and then adorn the doll with accompanying costumes worn by the star's most popular characters. Although this feature faded from existence within four issues, it is noteworthy that the subject selected for the first installment, devised and drawn by Percy Reeves, was Mary Pickford.

At a time when she had become the most influential woman in Hollywood history, the editors of *Photoplay* opted to present her as a "doll" to be played with and admired, rather than in ways more befitting of her newfound status. Two months later, when Pickford was featured as part of the magazine's monthly "Duotone Art Section" (Anon. 1919b), again the actress was presented as a child rather than an adult, unlike all of the other actors and actresses presented as part of the same feature (including Richard Barthelmess, Dorothy Gish, Evelyn Gosnell, Mollie King, and Bryant Washburn). The caption accompanying the girlish photograph of Pickford reads, "The quaint charm of curls and crinolines is Mary Pickford's. She might have stepped out of an old frame in a colonial drawing room to grace these pages" (Anon. 1919b: 21).

But perhaps the most shocking example of *Photoplay*'s revised approach to covering Pickford appears in the magazine's March 1920 issue, with the article "Mary Pickford—Director" by M. Lewis Russel (1920). Again, during the period in which Pickford emerged as the most powerful female director in Hollywood, the magazine chose to infantilize Little Mary by portraying her as Littler Mary in this piece. The subtitle of this article reads, "Demonstrating that often a little girl can best direct little girls" (Russel 1920: 93), and its primary aim apparently is to show how much this grown woman actually has in common with the little girls she directs. "Remember, now, I'm a big old bear, and I'm going to get you if you don't

do just what I tell you! G-r-r-r-r," Pickford is quoted as instructing her young actresses, to which the three dimpled youngsters erupt in gleeful laughter (Russel 1920: 93). She is featured in a photograph sharing chocolates with two of the young girls, who are adorned as cherubs, as if Pickford is simply enjoying carefree moments with her playmates. "No wonder she is so successful with them," the article concludes, "when, after two hours of hard work, she can leave them with [a happy] feeling. Perhaps the secret of it is that after all she is, at heart, 'Just a little girl'" (Russel 1920: 94).

Here again, the impressive accomplishments of Pickford the woman are virtually ignored, overshadowed by seemingly intimate glimpses into the world of Pickford the child. The star is presented similarly in Cal York's "Plays and Players" column during this period, which in July 1919 discusses the birthday celebration thrown for Pickford by her mother—gifts included "a canary or two" and "a saddle horse" (York 1919d: 116)—and in March 1920 explains that a body double had to be hired for the fragile star in order to "save Miss Pickford the tedious task of standing in front of the camera merely for the purpose of getting the focus and height range before even rehearsals can begin" (York 1920a: 96).

As film scholar Gaylyn Studlar has noted of this era, the "unprecedented rise of the fan magazine's popularity in the 1920s took place within a broader ideological framework marked by women's growing economic and sexual emancipation and the widespread belief that changes in women's behavior were contributing to a radical subversion of American gender ideals" (1991: 9).

Accordingly, it seems more than likely that *Photoplay*'s shift in its approach to covering Pickford in the months following her rise to the apex of female power in Hollywood occurred as a result of the perceived pressure by journalists to contain the New Woman they were simultaneously seeking to liberate, if she became too great a threat to the male-dominated social order of the times. By infantilizing Little Mary more so than usual—in the form of Littler Mary—following the formation of United Artists, the writers and editors at *Photoplay* served to symbolically strip Pickford of her cultural capital in the eyes of the magazine's readership. As such, the most immediate threat posed by the cultural construction of new womanhood—significant independence of the New Woman to the point that she poses a challenge to the entire male-dominated world of business—was (temporarily) symbolically thwarted.

May 1920 to April 1921: "Littler Mary" Becomes "Big Mary"

One significant question thus arises: Given the effectiveness by which an emphasis on portrayals of Pickford as a childlike being could enable the smooth functioning of the hegemonic patriarchal social order, why would *Photoplay*'s coverage change so dramatically in May 1920, shifting instead to portraying the star almost exclusively as the successful movie mogul and powerful woman that she had become, and virtually eliminating coverage of Pickford the child for nearly one full year? The answer lies in developments that unfolded on the evening of March 28, 1920, when the recently divorced star married her recently divorced United Artists' business partner, Douglas Fairbanks, making them Hollywood's first supercouple (Schmidt 2012).

As Booton Herndon explains in his book *Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks: The Most Popular Couple the World Has Ever Known*:

> After the first glow of their marriage, Douglas and Mary were afraid that their fans, in the third decade of the twentieth century, would not accept the marriage of two divorced persons. Relatives and business associates had advised them against marrying, but they had gone ahead. Now, though they were genuinely in love, they were fearful that the world might not understand, and might stay away from their films. (1977: 2)

The couple certainly had cause for concern. Mary in particular suffered moments of anxiety and anguish, fearing that her fans would come to view her as far less innocent than her on-screen persona, turn their backs, and leave her with empty theater seats (Herndon 1977: 184). She knew that Fairbanks had had an easier time divorcing his spouse—wife Beth was the one who had filed for divorce—than she'd had divorcing first-husband Owen Moore, which involved payment of an undisclosed sum of money (believed to be approximately $100,000, but rumored to be as much as $1 million) to Moore for her freedom as well as charges of collusion stemming from her enacted plan to receive a quick divorce in Nevada, a state known for having comparatively liberal divorce laws (Herndon 1977: 185-187). As a result, Pickford and Fairbanks kept their marriage a secret for three days, before news of the event exploded worldwide and reporters inundated the stars at their homes (Herndon 1977: 187). Reporters' reactions to the news were mixed, but many felt there was a sense of scandal surrounding the romantic developments. When Pickford and Fairbanks departed for their honeymoon sailing trip to Europe nearly two months later, they still feared

that they may have sacrificed both of their careers for love (Herndon 1977: 188).

Photoplay's first mention of Pickford's divorce from Moore appeared in York's (1920b) "Plays and Players" column in May 1920, and it was followed by a feature article about Pickford's marriage to Fairbanks in the following month's issue. In "The Pickford–Fairbanks Wooing" (Bates 1920), writer Billy Bates recounts the perceived scandalous nature of the union between the two stars as it was shouted from oversized newspaper headlines worldwide and insiders' hopes that the furor might soon die down. He also attempts to convert any negative feelings that fans may be harboring toward the couple. "Far above the sly eye-winking and the rib-poking of the scandal monger and the rumor-peddler," Bates writes, "is the love of a woman—a love that has come after great sorrow; a love that would willingly sacrifice the fame that came before it. […] When Mary Pickford stood before the minister, she stood there as any woman might stand, radiant with love for the man at her side, a bit tearful perhaps for the tender memories left behind, but with smiling hope for the future" (1920: 70, 73). Bates then provides the highlights of the blossoming of the Pickford–Fairbanks romance from the day they met into the present.

Given the intensity of these somewhat unexpected developments, I contend that it would have been virtually impossible for the writers and editors of *Photoplay* to continue their coverage of Pickford almost exclusively as a childlike being from this point onward, as they had done so consistently in the year leading up to these events. The resulting coverage shift following the news of Pickford's divorce and remarriage, however, likely had little (if anything) to do with a conscious decision as to how new womanhood would be presented with regard to developments in Pickford's personal life and career. Instead, I believe that *Photoplay* had no choice but to begin acknowledging the adult side of Pickford's persona in the aftermath of these sexually charged (and potentially scandalous) developments. Why the magazine's coverage approach shifted so dramatically from one extreme to the other (child to adult) for the next twelve months or so is less certain, although eventually the periodical returned to its standard approach to covering Little Mary—rather than what I have termed to be "Big Mary" with regard to coverage between May 1920 to April 1921—by the middle of 1921.

During *Photoplay*'s coverage of Pickford as Big Mary, feature articles and her mentions in "Plays and Players" focused almost exclusively on Pickford the movie mogul and grown woman, to the exclusion of

references to the childlike qualities of Pickford's star persona. In August 1920 the magazine ran a two-page feature of Pickford and her new spouse titled "A Western Union" (Anon. 1920b), identified in the issue's table of contents as "Douglas and Mary Pickford Fairbanks as they are today" (Anon. 1920a: 6). The layout features two large photographs of the grown-up lovers taken in the garden of their California mansion, Pickfair, along with a simulated Western Union telegram that reads: "Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks. Honeymoon Lane. Happiness Always. Come home. All is forgiven. Photoplay" (Anon. 1920b: 65). Pickford's next significant appearance in a feature occurs in the February 1921 issue, when a special etching by Walter Tittle (1921) of the mature Pickford is included as part of the "Rotogravure" section.

In the pages of "Plays and Players" during this period, Pickford is similarly portrayed as successful movie mogul and working woman rather than as a child. A May 1920 entry in this column notes that Pickford and ex-husband Moore are managing to work on the same studio lot (York 1920b). August 1920 finds stars Pickford and Chaplin appearing as extras in Fairbanks' most recent movie (York 1920c). September and October 1920 provide updates of Pickford and her husband's worldwide sailing expedition (York 1920d, 1920e), and November 1920 brings news of the couple's recent presence as a performance of the Ziegfeld Follies (York 1920f). December 1920 brings news that Pickford and Fairbanks intend to make a series of films around the world (York 1920g), and January 1921 finds the couple burying their favorite dog, Rex, before Pickford heads to Carmel, California, to film scenes for her new picture (York 1921a). February 1921 reveals that Pickford now owns a "home on wheels" containing a "kitchenette, library, dressing table and other comforts of home" that she uses when she is not on the set (York 1921b: 72), and March 1921 reveals that Pickford and Fairbanks may have to postpone a planned springtime trip to Europe in order to fulfill their current moviemaking commitments (York 1921c). Certainly, gone from the pages of *Photoplay* are glimpses of Mary the childlike being in any noteworthy form.

Concluding Remarks

By the middle of 1921, *Photoplay* eventually returned to its initial coverage approach to Pickford as Little Mary, rather than as Littler Mary or Big Mary. A feature article titled "Little Mary Remembered 'When'" from the March 1921 issue of the magazine began this coverage shift back to its

original state of affairs, blending textual imagery of Pickford both as a young child and as an accomplished actress (Anon. 1921a). Similarly, a photograph of the mature Pickford in the June 1921 issue is accompanied by a caption leaving the decision of whether to think of her as "Miss Mary Pickford" or as "Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks" entirely up to the viewer (Anon. 1921b: 16). This culmimating state of affairs seems only logical, not only because it marks a return to the coverage approach granted to Pickford during the majority of her career up to that point, but also because it acknowledges the complexity associated with the mediated construction of new womanhood and its simultaneous containment.

The extreme cycle of containment that began in the weeks following Pickford's emergence as a powerful partner in United Artists, with its virtually exclusive focus on attributes of childhood, rebounded to the opposite extreme when the star's womanhood could be denied no longer in the weeks following her much-publicized divorce and remarriage. However, an exclusive focus on Pickford's adult qualities and accomplishments was as threatening to the prospects for containment as an exclusive focus on the star's childlike qualities was to the emergence and promotion of new womanhood. Eventually the situation could be expected to return to its initial "happy medium," as it did, as the reporting cycle had run its course. It would not be long before Pickford's Hollywood reign would be challenged by an emerging group of younger stars, including Clara Bow and Gloria Swanson (Schmidt 2012). And by the time the Roaring Twenties came to their end, the silent pictures she was best known for had run their technological course, being replaced by the talking pictures that so rapidly superseded them.

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Disappearance of the Self and Its Constitutive Outside in Kafka and Woody Allen's *Zelig*

Lukas MOZDEIKA*

Abstract
Although parallels between Kafka's hybrid characters and Woody Allen's Leonard Zelig have been noted in literature studies (Bruce 1998), the underlying interpretative synergy is not exhausted and occasions a revisit, timely in light of the social tensions of the century-later-present. Juxtaposing counterfactual history with actual highbrow commentary in quasi- or mockumentary film genre allows Woody Allen to transpose Kafka's grotesque into American realm of the 20s and thus Americanize it. The contention of this article is to suggest that Leonard Zelig, a changing man, is a derivative of Kafka's characters, primarily cat-lamb in Hybrid, but Allen's postmodern visual language in Zelig radically alters their inner metamorphoses and hybridity serving as a social critique, if only seen through triviality of its humour. Interpreting Zelig alongside Kafka's Metamorphosis and Hybrid, we can trace genealogy of themes of anti-Semitism, racism and fascism resolve into contradiction of individualism versus petit-bourgeois mass culture marked by commercialization, commodification and assimilation, features that still define our present. The takeaway may be phrased in terms of a constitutive outside. That is, Leonard Zelig, the omnipresent-self, renders certain truth about society predefined by the cult of individualism by re-constituting his lack of individuality as inherently social phenomenon – constitutive outside, and thus disturbing it. In an ironic twist then, Zelig, released around the time of Margaret Thatcher's famous denial of society, can be read as a structuring-absence revealing fiction, that of a non-existent society.

Keywords: *Franz Kafka, Woody Allen's Zelig, the Metamorphosis, roaring twenties, social ontology*

It is somewhat enigmatic and certainly hilarious that a quirky little gem of Woody Allen's, just like Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, has gradually traversed cultural theory in diverse interpretations offered (Bloom 1988: 144-6; Perlmutter 1991; Bruce 1998; Michaels, 1998: 95-6; Lawler 1999: 111-6; Gaddis 2007; Johnston 2007; Nas 2012; Feyerabend 2015), yet unlike the novel, the film itself remains little known or remembered, perhaps not even

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by Woody Allen's fans themselves. This mirrors *Zelig's* story arc centred around a fictional character named Leonard Zelig, "the phenomenon of the '20s" (Z 2), as announced by Susan Sontag in the opening of the documentary-like (mockumentary) sketch of manipulated vintage footage alongside commentary of actual prominent American writers and cultural theorists from the Twentieth century. "His story reflected the nature of our civilization, the character of our times, yet it was also one man's story" (Z 6-8), reiterates Irving Howe followed by Saul Bellow's observation on the irony of it having so "quickly […] faded from memory" (Z 12), given the scale of his extraordinary achievement, and admission that he "touched a nerve in people, perhaps in a way in which they would prefer not to be touched." (Z14-5). As argued in the following, the juxtaposition of cultural commentary with Zelig's portrayal through factuality-alluding footage helps Woody Allen transpose Kafka's grotesque into a self-parody of American culture, which achieves social criticism if only seen through its melancholy and trivial humour, sustaining *Zelig* as a satire, an absurdist fictional comedy and as such, seemingly, yet unluckily, undeserving of a serious reading.

Given the references to Kafka present in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* (1977) and the Kafkaesque themes in his *Shadows and Fog* (1991), it is hardly surprising that *Zelig* (1983) resembles Kafka's characters, as already noted and explored by Iris Bruce (1998). Approaching Leonard Zelig and Gregor Samsa as both suffering from, in her own term, mysterious Illnesses, Bruce surveys parallels between Zelig's and Gregor's predicaments, which include their belonging to a lower-middle class and holding similar occupations: Leonard — a clerk, Gregor — a travelling salesman; both being victims of their circumstance: Leonard — an outcast of a dysfunctional Jewish family with proclivity to violence, while Gregor — a sole supporter of family's dwindling finances after father's business bankruptcy, which serves the cause—relentless overwork—for his sudden sickness. Importantly, there are references and allusions to anti-Semitic and racial stereotypes conflating Jew with a lizard, reptile, Oriental, vermin, present both in *The Metamorphosis* (Bruce 1998: 185), and in *Zelig*, which supply the transformation of Gregor and Leonard its allegoric weight and embed in the historical context of the early twentieth century. For Bruce, anti-Semitism is just one cause of their illnesses, the rise of unfettered capitalist commodification and commercialization being another and no less prominent, ultimately rendering Gregor's and Leonard's metamorphoses intelligible for their historical period, a period in which

myths and stereotypes are re-produced, multiplied and fragmented through mass media, marketing and advertising channels, oscillating between iconoclasm and religious, civic, social idolatry, between the reign of individual freedom and the disappearance of the self in the mass society amidst the looming tendencies of fascism. As such, mid-late capitalist milieu makes the discrepancy of appearance and identity all the more resonant in the reading of Kafka's novel and Woody Allen's film, although the timespan separating the publishing of *the Metamorphosis* and the release of the film — 1915 and 1983, allows for a genealogical inquiry, which is the chief aim of the following analysis.

Comparing *The Metamorphosis* with *Zelig* in terms of how they depict the society on its path towards commodification and commercialization at the turn of the century, one can discern the key difference between the two. *The Metamorphosis* backgrounds Gregor's miserable situation as a travelling salesman, figuring as an alienating force emanating from the outside world to the interior of Gregor's room. In *Zelig*, quite on the opposite, it is fleshed out explicitly, in full vitality and American splendour of the Jazz age, which Bruce quite aptly contrasts with Kafka's "Europeanness" (186). While this contrast is merely hinted in Bruce's study, I would like to advance this thesis building on her reading of the mystery of Gregor's and Leonard's illnesses and the urge to cure them as symptomatic disguise for deeper causes residing in the society itself (197) and propose a renewed reading as for the 2020, the ensuing racial and social tensions, global pandemic and the prospect of economic downturn, all of which rings compliment to Irving Howe's closing note in *Zelig*, doubting whether anything has changed in America at all (Z 1082).

Assuming we are familiar with *The Metamorphosis* protagonist, Gregor Samsa, who one morning wakes up turned into a verminous insect, let us now acquaint with Leonard Zelig, who may be said to embody a catalyst of Gregor's lonely metamorphosis. Narrated in Transatlantic accent, an 'objectifying' broadcast tonality, the story commences in a Long Island party of socialites, where F. S. Fitzgerald takes note of a curious little man by the name "Leon Selwyn or Zelman" (Z 31). He appears as an aristocrat extolling "the very rich [and speaking] adoringly of Coolidge and the Republican Party" (Z 33-4). To Fitzgerald's astonishment, an hour later he is conversing in coarse accent with the kitchen help and claiming to be a Democrat (Z 37-8). Such events recur across the States until a "strange-looking oriental" (Z 80), fitting the description of a missing clerk Leonard Zelig, is traced to Chinatown and is taken to Manhattan Hospital, where he

suddenly turns Caucasian and is mistaken for a doctor by an on-duty psychiatrist Dr. Eudora Fletcher. The proceeding storyline revolves around public fascination of the human chameleon, "the changing man" (Z 194), adopting personalities—appearances and behaviours—of the people surrounding him, arousing bafflement and speculation by scientific community of "what could be the scientific medical phenomenon of the age, and possibly of all time" (Z 147-8), undergoing outlandish experiments with no betterment other than anomalous side-effects, and gradually suturing into an idol, "the Zelig phenomenon" (Z136), to be mimicked, danced to his songs, marketed into toys, clocks and dolls (Z 341-2), portrayed in Hollywood and exploited for profit as "a performing freak" (Z 404) by relatives of his own delinquent family; lastly, turned into the scapegoat by mass political movements amidst the depths of the great depression, proclaiming Zelig the capitalist man: "A creature who takes many forms to achieve ends, the exploitation of the workers by deception" (Z 269), or even worse, "a triple threat" (Z 274) to the Ku Klux Klan by his ability to transform into a Negro or Indian, all the while being Jewish (Z 272-4).

Eudora's attempts to cure him of his "unique malady" (Z 476), mostly unsuccessful at first, slowly progress through hypnosis sessions compelling Leonard to confront the underlying causes of his urge "to fit in" (Z 405), as does their relationship of doctor and patient evolve into romance and eventual marriage, serving as a conventional backbone for film's otherwise convoluted plot, fraught with scandals, disappearances and comebacks of Leonard as per his shifting—deteriorating and alleviating—condition. His culminating, most heroic conversion occurs when Zelig, assimilated into the mass crowd of Nazi Germany, heeds Eudora's gestures during Hitler's speech, ruining his "good joke about Poland" (Z 1029), and is subsequently chased off by SS squad. Leonard and Eudora manage to escape, but only by Leonard's transformation into a pilot during their flight, which to top it off, sets a record for "flying nonstop across the Atlantic upside down" (Z 1052), a remarkable achievement given Leonard had never flown before in his life (Z 1068). This double conversion: returning to his true yet fragile—unstable and mundane—self due to powers of mutual love, and transforming again into the other in order to save himself and Eudora, is what eventually redeems Leonard's fame after a rupture of preceding scandals, widespread claims of Leonard's paternity and condemnations for various misdeeds he allegedly perpetrated under his different personalities. These accusations emanate from mass public

and flood news and courts each day, making it impossible to distinguish genuine claims from seemingly opportunistic ones, such those of Leonard smashing a brand-new car (Z 904) and painting a house disgusting colour (Z 907). Due to Leonard's dis-ability, which he cannot deny, he has no other recourse but to publicly accept responsibility for the misdeeds and endure a never-ending legislative limbo, allusive to Kafka's Trial, which consequently motivates his disappearance in search of solace that he temporarily finds in the fascist society, just to escape from it and return back triumphantly. Such oscillation, encapsulated in Saul Bellow's observation that "his sickness was also at the root of his salvation" (Z 1073), is more a reflection of shifting and clashing societal norms externalized onto Leonard, than a phenomenon to be ascribed to an individual as such.

Bruce traces the "mysterious" (Bruce 1998: 176) illness of Leonard to Susan Sontag's thesis against interpretation, wherein she notes that "diseases thought to be multi-determined (that is, mysterious) […] have the widest possibilities as metaphors for what is felt to be socially or morally wrong" (Sontag in Bruce, 1998: 176). It is, thus, the mystery of his illness that turns Leonard Zelig into an enigmatic subject compelling the public urge to categorize, pre-define and ultimately make sense of him, as a way to secure its own sense of collective consciousness or identity of the time that is being mirrored onto itself through the spectacle of mass-media propelled by Leonard Zelig's phenomenon. Yet this urge, unlike in the case of Gregor, who is eventually explained away through a sudden, absurd and grotesque transformation into an insect, cannot be satisfied in the case of Zelig, who by his very mysterious nature resists and evades definition. Embodying an excess of societal equilibrium, Leonard cannot be integrated into present societal, material or symbolic configuration and thus manifests as an illness in need of remedy, despite both his commercial and heroic nation- as well as worldwide success. Leonard is hailed as the national pride and denounced as a convenient scapegoat, a source and an outcome of social discontents all at once, motivating his assimilation into others and his comebacks.

It is only tendentious then that the crude medical and scientific attempts to cure Leonard mask the true source of his malady, which remains invisible precisely due to its social origin, coinciding with his lack of individuality and calling for a personal and intimate engagement provided by Dr Eudora. Leonard, much like Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis*, finds himself pressured by his family into unbearable societal conditions, which in turn feed back into and reinforce

dysfunctional familial relationships: "As a boy, Leonard is frequently bullied by anti-Semites. His parents, who never take his part and blame him for everything, side with the anti-Semites. They punish him often by locking him in a dark closet. When they are really angry, they get into the closet with him" (Z 123-7). In Gregor's case, societal pressure immobilizes his being. Gregor laments the high-pace of salesman's life and the constant change of human relationship which he condemns before attempting to scratch an itch and change his body position: "worries about train connections, irregular bad food, temporary and constantly changing human relationships which never come from the heart. To hell with it all!'" (Kafka, 1915: 4).

Bruce's reading of Gregor's transformation as a turn from an ambiguous signifier into a subhuman signified (1998: 180), a dirty Jew (183), a vermin (182), whose death coincides with the eventual loss of ambiguity and signification (180, 185), i.e. he becomes it — "common anti-Jewish stereotype of the day" (185), serves an insight into the transition from Gregor's pathology depicted in grotesque humour and gloomy interior of the novel to Woody Allen's portrayal of American culture in its full vibrancy of the 20s and the heyday of multiculturalism around the release of the film in 1983. Whereas Gregor's "turn" is a sudden, invisible and irreversible transformation into an anti-Semitic stereotype, that of vermin, Leonard's transformations are continual, multiple and marketable, thus both the source of his national and worldwide fame as well as his misfortune. In other words, Leonard Zelig, unlike Gregor Samsa, stands for an ever-shifting signifier exceeding, rather than receding—perhaps the reason why *The Metamorphosis* is grotesque and bizarre—in signification. The lack of agreement on the meaning of Leonard Zelig (Z 835), results from the excess of significance, not from its recession into an insignificant insect. Leonard's social self, alluding to William James' notion, is excessively social to the point of undermining the self, resembling a type of a peculiarly American character of an "other-directed person", a "new kind of man", emerging, according to David Riesman,

> in the upper middle class of our larger cities: more prominently in New York than in Boston, in Los Angeles than in Spokane, in Cincinnati than in Chillicothe. Yet in some respects this type is strikingly similar to the American, whom Tocqueville and other curious and astonished visitors from Europe, even before the Revolution, thought to be a new kind of man. Indeed, travellers' reports on America impress us with their unanimity. […] It all adds up to a pattern which, without stretching matters too far,

> resembles the kind of character that a number of social scientists have seen as developing in contemporary, highly industrialized, and bureaucratic America: Fromm's "marketer", Mills's "fixer", Arnold Green's "middle class male child" (Riesman, 1962: 19).

The other-directed person, vis-a-vis tradition- and inner-directed personality types, shares in common dependence on others, "either those known to him or those with whom he is indirectly acquainted, through friends and through the mass media", a capacity that is internalized for guidance in life early on (21). In his landmark study, Riesman identifies this type with that of the American and in turn with a contemporary man (19), the grounds of which he seeks not in certain essentialist features of American culture or "character-forming peculiarities" (20), but rather in its historically contingent breakaway from Europe, evading feudalism and co-opting globally emerging trends of capitalism, industrialism and urbanization (20). Having come out in the 50s, roughly half-way *The Metamorphosis* and *Zelig*, it serves a cue of a genealogical shift from the inner subjectivity broadly construed as European to the outer, or other directed one, that makes for a compelling transition between Kafka's "European alienation" and "Allen's Americanization" identified by Bruce (1998: 186). In this regard, Leonard's and Eudora's flight from Europe back to the United States is a particularly telling highpoint of the story, for it marks America's final breakaway from the continent, the beginning of its golden age, and simultaneously encapsulates a riff, a counter-story or a radical twist to Kafka's depiction of an estranged, alienating and grim time-space preceding roaring twenties and anticipating looming tendencies of totalitarianism and holocaust in continental Europe after them.

Prominent stylistic differences separating Kafka's grotesque from Woody Allen's playful postmodern transgressionism can be traced in the development of the characters, rendering *Zelig* and *The Metamorphosis* very different pieces of fiction despite their similarities. Unlike Gregor, whose escape is an ultimate transformation into an antisemitic stereotype, Leonard "appears to have adjusted to life. Somehow, he seems to have coped, and then, increasingly strange behaviour" (Z 133-135). Inquired under hypnosis about the very first signs of his malady, Leonard confesses that he had lied to his classmates out of shame of not having read *Moby Dick* (Z 280-3). The lack of taste that still defines Leonard's later remedied self is a telling feature in Zelig, not only because it follows logically from the fragility of Leonard's identity, but also in that it illuminates the cause of

it: Inability to situate himself firmly in the cultural landscape, accustom with a sign and ground it in a signified, but instead become the very cultural catalyst that spurred roaring twenties to re-produce cultural artefacts, including its own sources of cultural reference, not the least by assimilation and mimicry fortified by the rising art of mass media and marketing. Hence, Leonard's lack of taste is true to its historical milieu, but by failing to mask it under the pretence of taste and displaying it openly once cured instead, Leonard remains too much alike the mass to relieve him of controversy, as observed by John Morton Blum:

> Oh, his taste was terrible. He was the kind of man who preferred watching baseball to reading Moby Dick. And that got him off on the wrong foot, or so the legend goes. It was much more a matter of symbolism. To the Marxists, he was one thing. The Catholic Church never forgave him for the Vatican incident. The American people, in the throes of the Depression as they were, found in him a symbol of possibility, of self-improvement and self-fulfilment. And of course, the Freudians had a ball. They could interpret him in any way they pleased. It was all symbolism, but there were no two intellectuals who agreed about what it meant (Z 825-35).

In view of such heterogeneity of the self that is embodied in Leonard's personae, the more apt precursor to Leonard may be traced to the crossbreed creature the cat-lamb in Kafka's short story *A Hybrid* (also known as *A Crossbreed),* rather than Gregor Samsa after all. If Gregor's deteriorating condition may be said to entail the waning of his identity, however miniscule, until the eventual death alluding to the death of Christ (Bruce 1998: 186), Leonard Zelig is more adequately thought of as a master of sustaining and internalizing or naturalizing transformation itself. He inheres, in line with Reisman's point on early internalization of other-directedness (Riesman 1962: 21), his transformation in-and-through his being, emerging in history and quickly fading away, leaving but a mere remnant of "this curious quirk, this strange characteristic" (Z 1077), which is to say, a remnant of his identity reduced to his mere capacity, a character trait. While little to nothing of Leonard Zelig's birth and early life is known other than few discovered clues, his death coincides with having just started reading Moby Dick (Z 826), prompting an ironic cause of it and suggesting that his life as a mythical character, a cultural artefact, Leonard Zelig, entailed a temporal gap between an innocent lie, a pretence of taste, to daring develop it. This parallels the opening of Kafka's story *A Hybrid*, narrated in first person. The first thing we learn about the cat-lamb is that

although inherited from narrator's father, it has only begun to develop in his own (narrator's) lifetime, acquiring more of cat's characteristics so as to level out its previously prominent features of a lamb (Kafka 2014: 603). Kafka notes subtle proclivities—likes and dislikes—of cat and lamb present in varying degrees in the cat-lamb, yet not fully developed, somewhat recessed and controlled, e.g. the cat-lamb lurks for hours near hen-coop without attempting to kill (603). During Sunday visit time children pry adoringly and bring cats and lambs along expecting a "recognition scene" (603), which does not take place as animals "obviously [accept] the other's existence as a God-given fact" (603). And yet, the story closes with an admission that the cat-lamb "not content that it is a cat and a lamb, […] almost wants to be a dog as well. […] It has the restlessness of both creatures in itself, that of the cat and that of the lamb, however different they are. But this is why it is uncomfortable in its own skin" (604). The recognition scene that does not take place encapsulates precisely the moment of Zelig. Leonard's recognition of himself in others is naturalized to the extent of making up his very own yet fragile identity, the ambivalence of which disturbs American society of the roaring twenties writ large. Important to notice here is the shift from the discomfort of the cat-lamb to that of the society disturbed by Zelig, "who [himself] seems to have coped" (Z 133), attesting to the reversal of roles between the inside of the character and the social forces outside it in these two respective pieces of fiction. Whether Woody Allen actually drew inspiration from the cat-lamb is not so pertinent to our appreciation of the underlying continuity and evolution of the transformations theme, offering a reading of Leonard Zelig as a likely derivative, as well as Americanisation and alteration of the cat-lamb for the postmodernity of the 80s and onwards.

In Kafka and the Universal, Anna Glazova reads *A Hybrid* as a representation of a mix of natural and cultural history wherein the cat-lamb stands for an unfinished phylogenesis, which in virtue of remaining unfinished secures a succession of generations endowing it its specificity (2016: 199). Leonard Zelig may likewise be read as a phenomenon of the twenties ensuring continuity of the collective American conscience, not the least through its own forgetfulness. In contrast to the cat-lamb, Leonard Zelig is a simulacrum. Rather than preserving, Leonard effaces differences through on-going assimilation, accumulating the very constancy of change of human relationships alluded to by Gregor (Kafka 1915: 4), and transforming them into symbolism, an image of false change that cannot be ultimately resolved, but merely lent to marketing and advertising. The

accompanying sense of nostalgia and superfluity of humour helps to tie this symbolism to a historical memory of the period, a history that can be remembered not through its reference to identities of those who came before, but the semblance with the existing symbolic attachments and arrangements now. In other words, *Zelig* renders the 20s familiar by annulling differences between now and then, by mythicizing the forgetfulness entrenched in the transformations of Leonard and the hectic change of the society itself.

The irritation elicited by Leonard's phenomenon is particularly telling in view of a society defined by American exceptionalism and the cult of individualism. Read against the famous denial of society—by reducing it to individuals and families—by Margaret Thatcher roughly around the release of the film, *Zelig* may be conceived as a structuring-absence revealing fiction, that of a non-existent society. If a myth sustaining the symbolic ontological structure of a society proclaims its absence, its reduction to an individual, it takes fiction of a non-individual, such as Zelig, to demystify or expose the myth in the eyes of the society members themselves. Zelig does this by recasting the lack or omnipresence of the self into its constitutive outside – the different roles that make up the social fabric and its symbolic structure. Juxtaposed to Kafka's Metamorphosis, this marks a genealogical shift from the disappearance of the self in the crowd to the disappearance of the crowd by reaffirming the individual. While the former is to be associated with totalitarianism and the latter with the individualistic ethos of classical liberal paradigm, it is the capacity of fiction and the prowess of fiction writers to deconstruct this ideological distance as itself deceptively short, an outcome of the convoluted history of modernity, a bifurcation or a supposed opposition, in the words of its chief critic, Alasdair MacIntyre, of "individualism and collectivism, each appearing in a variety of doctrinal forms" (1984).

Re-reading Kafka alongside Woody Allen's *Zelig* may thus prove a worthwhile exercise in light of the present social frictions in the United States, unabated populism's march in Europe and the contentiousness of cultural politics across the western World more generally. The apparent fact that we still laugh-out-loud of the trivial awkwardness and peculiarity of the historical situation portrayed in *Zelig*, failing to recognize him as the predecessor of our mythical superheroes such as X-men, Wolverine and other occupants of the infinity-alluding symbols at the edge of the alphabet, is telling of *Zelig* as still before its time even if it is already forgotten. This leaves us to concur with Howe's affirmation of the doubt whether America

has really changed much - "I don't think so" (Z 1082). Perhaps neither have we.

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No More Hugs: Depictions of the Prodigal Son in 1920s Art and Literature

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Abstract
This essay examines the parable of the prodigal son in the New Testament and compares it to different visual and literary representations from the 1920s in Europe. The story of the prodigal son revolving around themes such as family, home, resistance, order and restoration will be juxtaposed with texts and art works from the so-called Lost Generation, a generation of artists and thinkers developing and rebuilding new art in a continent shattered by the atrocities of World War I. The essay examines the conflict between generations and worldviews that emerges in the 1920s and the prodigal artists' reorientation in a fragmented world in which it is hard to feel at home.

Keywords*: 1920s, prodigal son, Franz Kafka, Giorgio di Chirico, Max Ernst*

The 1920s is a very interesting decade, with many points of interest for researchers, such as the father-son relationship or the generational conflict in the 1920's. The young generation, called by American author Gertrude Stein *the Lost Generation*, growing up during World War I, tried to deal with what they inherited from the older generations. After having witnessed the atrocities in the trenches during WorId War I (1914-1918), faith in humanity and the belief in traditional structures and customs were lost.

Reacting against the old-world order meant that the new generation of artists had to reinvent themselves. This, in turn, resulted in a great deal of innovation and exciting new stylistic and formal experimentations leading to the avant-garde and movements such as futurism, surrealism, dada etc.

In order to delve into this schism between the old world and the new world, I will select a few literary and visual works of art and examine how they engage with one of the most well-known parables in the Bible: the story about the prodigal son, which can be found in the New Testament

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in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15, verses 11-31. The scope of this essay is to explain how the depiction and the interpretation of the prodigal son changed after World War I and how the simple parable with a happy end became reshaped and recontextualized in the depictions created in the 1920s.

To put it briefly, the central story of the parable is as follows: at the beginning of Luke, chapter 15, it is written that tax collectors and sinners gather around Jesus, causing a negative reaction from the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law. As a way of correcting them, Jesus tells an illustrative story about a father and his two sons. The father owned an estate and divided his property between his sons. The younger son packs his belongings and leaves for a distant country, while the older son remains at the estate, working for his father. The travels turn out to be of little success, so the younger son returns to his father's estate, penniless and destitute. The father is thrilled to see his son and welcomes him back with a warm embrace, instantly announcing a grand feast in order to celebrate his son's return. The older son is not happy about that, saying his brother in no way deserves that kind of special treatment after living a life in sin that cost a substantial part of the family's fortune. The parable concludes with the father's words: "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'" (Luke 15, 31-32).

The parable has fascinated many thinkers, theologians, writers, and artists throughout centuries. As Dr Alison Jack writes about the prodigal son: "One of the longest and most narratively complex of all of the parables attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, it deals with universal themes of family, home, rebellion, and return" (2019: 2).

The parable has often been interpreted as an image of God's love and forgiveness of our sins. The father is thus universally identified with God, and the two brothers serve an allegorical significance. This has been the dominant hermeneutical prism especially in pre-modern teachings, but these interpretations can also be found today, for example in conservative Christian ministries in the USA (Jack 2019: 6).

Other exegetes have focused on the relationship between the family and the societal context and the "contradiction between expectations of justice and the force of family ties which, for most, naturally tend towards reconciliation" (12). The actions of the father can be interpreted as rather progressive or going against the grain of societal norms. In the honour-

based collectivist culture pervading 1st-century Palestine, which Jesus and his followers were part of, the reception has most probably been very different from contemporary readings. The prodigal son was probably regarded as someone bringing shame upon his family. The father would have been expected to sanction the younger son at his return and not even allowing the son to part with a share of the fortune to a distant country in the first place (Eng 2019: 196).

For contemporary readers it is hard to grasp how radical the father's embrace and forgiveness presents. For the pre-modern readership or for people living today in honour-based patriarchal cultures it might be easier to connect on a personal level with the story. The parable of the prodigal son has been referenced in works of literature and it is a short and illustrative story with a simple home-away-home structure as is common in so many stories all over the world.

Many artistic representations (e.g. paintings by Albrecht Dürer, Hieronymus Bosch, Peter Paul Rubens, Salvator Rosa and Max Beckmann) have either focused on the prodigal son in a distant country living in debauchery or placed emphasis on the return and the father's embrace of the prodigal son and the spontaneous display of affection (such as the paintings by Caravaggio, Barbieri, Esteban Murillo and James Tissot).

Rembrandt van VIjn, 1668: The Return of the Prodigal Son.
Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain.

However, the most famous example is probably the Dutch painter Rembrandt van Vijn's painting *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. This very piece of art is an example of Rembrandt's chiaroscuro-technique, the distribution of light and dark tones or variations of light and shade. It has been noted by many beholders of Rembrandt's painting that there seems to be a special warm glow emanating from the father. The Dutch priest and

writer Henri Nouwen spent years analysing and admiring the painting. According to him, the embrace expressed in Rembrandt's painting is not only signifying a parent's love and forgiveness for an unruly child. It is also a representation of the way God shows unconditional love and forgiveness, despite of all of mankind's rebellion spanning the time period Adam and Eve spent in the Garden of Eden until present modern times (2013: 6).

The prodigals of the 1920s

Yet, if one asked the artists of the 1920s, one would probably be provided with a different interpretation of the parable**.** Many novels and paintings in the 1920s do not show a happy return of the prodigal son, but rather versions of the parable that are ambiguous, enigmatic or even traumatic.

Let us begin with the literary representations. Even though there are literary works mentioning the prodigal son at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as in Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim* from 1901, Andre Gide's novel *Le retour de l'enfant prodigue* from 1907, Rainer Maria Rilke's poem *Der Auszug des verlorenen Sohnes* from 1907 and Henry James' short story *The Jolly Corner* from 1908, in what follows, I would like to focus on the representations from the 1920s.

Around 1920, Czech author Franz Kafka wrote the short story *Homecoming* (Heimkehr) – although it was not published until 1936, after Kafka's demise. *Homecoming* has often been compared to the biblical parable of the prodigal son. The traditional definition of the parable is that of a short fictitious story illustrating religious teachings or a moral principle. If Kafka's story is a parable, it is hard to find the morale. Written in the 1st person and without any introductory description of characters or setting, the story recounts a young man's return home.

> I have arrived. Who is going to receive me? Who is waiting behind the kitchen door? Smoke is rising from the chimney; coffee is being made for supper. Do you feel you belong; do you feel at home? I don't know, I feel most uncertain. My father's house it is, but each object stands cold beside the next, as though preoccupied with its own affairs, which I have partly forgotten, partly never known (Kafka 2012: 493).

The young man is too afraid to enter the house. There does not seem to be anyone welcoming the protagonist. He feels alienated and describes the secrecy shrouding the family. The story concludes at the doorstep, omitting the encounter between father and son.

How that encounter may have unfolded we can only surmise by turning to Kafka's *Dearest Father (Brief an den Vater*) written the year before and published posthumously in 1952. It is a letter Kafka wrote to his father consisting of 100 hand-written pages which his father apparently never knew about. It is an extensive account of a deeply rooted father-son conflict and grants insight into the complex feelings Kafka had for his father. As Jattie Enklaar writes in her article *Sohnschaft in Der Krise*:

> The contrast between "father-house", "my father's house" and "distance" shows his desire to return to the father, to tradition, as insinuated in connection with Kafka's well-known letter "Dearest Father", in which coldness, alienation and consciousness of guilt prevail. (2005: 293, my translation).

The original expression for *prodigal son* in German, the literary language used by Kafka (as well as in my mother tongue, Danish) is "The lost son" (Der verlorene Sohn or Den fortabte søn). The English term *prodigal* denotes living beyond your means, being a spendthrift or wasting money and resources but it can also be understood as a morally neutral lavishness, as the original Latin word, *prodigos*, denotes. The German word *verloren*, on the other hand, denotes a loss. Either something or someone is missing or there is an existential loss, which is the context in which Kafka's version of the parable is most often understood. As Enklaar writes: "the worst way of forsakenness is the anxiety of being in the world" (2005: 295, my translation). This was the mood of the 1920s, described by many artists, such as Edvard Munch, Egon Schiele, Franz Kafka etc.: Existential angst, a feeling of being lost in the world. There is no home to return to, because returning home fills you with *Verfremdung* ("alienation"). You are lost and no one finds you again.

The warm embrace of the father described in the Bible (and painted by Rembrandt) - "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him" – is nowhere to be found in Kafka's letter to his father. Kafka asks his father why he has been treated so harshly and why the father was never "directing a friendly word my way, by quietly taking my hand or giving me a kind look" (*Dearest Father*).

He recalls a memory from his childhood, when he, a small child, was whimpering in the night because he wanted water, and as a punishment his father, forcefully and without explanation, removed him

from his bed and placed him outside in the corridor. This leads Kafka to reflect upon the aggressiveness of his father, this huge manly authority figure, and how small and inferior he feels in comparison to him, physically and mentally:

> I was already weighed down by your sheer bodily presence. I remember, for example, how we often undressed together in the same cubicle I skinny, frail, fragile, you strong, tall, thickset. Even in the cubicle I felt a puny wretch and not only in front of you, but on front of the whole world, because for me you were the measure of all things. (*Dearest Father* 2019).

Henri Nouwen reflects upon the sons in the biblical parable, i.e. the reckless and irresponsible younger son and the hard-working, tradition-bound and judgmental older son. After lengthy introspection, Nouwen admits that he shares some of the moral shortcomings with them, however, his true calling is to aspire to be like the father in the parable, warm-hearted, striving for peace and full of mercy and forgiveness. This description does not correspond with Kafka's father. The very first sentence in *Dearest Father* describes *fear.* Kafka is afraid of his father and of potential repercussions. This is why he writes the long letter, finally being able to explain himself to his father – although the father was never shown the letter.

The biblical parable of the prodigal son describes an intuitive and clear communication between the father and his sons. The father disregards societal norms pervading the society and, instead, he favours reconciliation and forgiveness. In contrast, Kafka's father is of the conviction that Kafka should build a family to conserve the family name. Kafka feels torn about marriage and twice he breaks off an engagement with a hopeful fiancée, thereby bringing shame upon the tradition-bound Jewish family. This is a deep source of conflict between Kafka and his father. In comparison with the parable, it seems that the father prefers to heed the advice of his older son and adhere to social norms and expectations rather than meet his prodigal son in a forgiving embrace. As Thomas Anz writes in the epilogue to *Dearest Father*, it can be argued whether one can equate Kafka and the narrator in the book and whether it is to be read purely as an autobiography. The sharp contrast between the strong and powerful father and the weak and fragile first-person narrator is rather stylized, so the conflict between the father and the son can be comprehended as

> the standard theme of the Expressionist generation and that of just blossoming psychoanalysis and arises amidst their conflicts with powerful societal representations and institutions. (2006: 84, my translation)

When Kafka comments on his father's disappointment with his son, "if you unconsciously refuse to accept that it is the result of your upbringing, then it is precisely because your method and my substance were at odds with one another," (*Dearest Father*) it can also be read as a statement programmatic for the new generation of artists breaking free from the old-world order. More than just a generational conflict, the young generation in the 1920s was one of broken and wrecked bodies – emotionally, spiritually and physically. Though estimates vary, it is often claimed that 9.4 million soldiers were killed during The Great War and that another 23 million were wounded. In the French and Russian armies, three-quarters of the men were casualties. The civilian losses were considerable and the cities in Europe were full of invalids having survived military service in World War I. After the catastrophic destruction in the war, everything was called into question and the older generations were losing their natural authority. (Tucker 2005: 2) The unbearable confrontation with death and destruction created an atmosphere of gloom and hopelessness for Kafka and his contemporaries during the 1920s. A notable example is Anglo-American author T. S. Eliot, famous for his 1922 ground-breaking poem *The Waste Land*. In his 1920 poem, *Whispers of Immortality*, death takes the form of a crouching jaguar: "And even the Abstract Entities / Circumambulate her charm; / But our lot crawls between dry ribs/ to keep our metaphysics warm" (*Selected Poems*, 42-43). The poets find it hard to maintain paternal ideals and preach mercy and forgiveness when the bodies are piling up around them.

Max Ernst: Pietà or revolution by night, 1923, Wikimedia Commons, Public domain

At a young age, German Surrealist painter Max Ernst was employed as an artillery engineer during the war. He witnessed the horrors in the trenches, which had a devastating effect on him. In his autobiography, he writes: "Max Ernst died 1st of August 1914. He resuscitated the 11th of November 1918 as a magician and to find the myth of his time" (Ernst, Derenthal 2005: 8). Ernst is signaling that working at the front and being a witness to the brutality of the war made him die inside so he had to reinvent himself. He also discarded much of what he used to believe in and rebelled against his staunchly Catholic father and the strictly religious upbringing.

Apart from a critique of religious tradition, Ernst's pictures also show a degree of fragmentation, in Ernst's words "systematic displacement" (Max Ernst Retrospective 8) or perhaps an active rediscovery of the myth of the 1920s. There is displacement at work in the painting *Pietà or revolution by night* from 1923, which is more a reference to the Virgin Mary holding her crucified child than to the parable of the prodigal son. However, the painting corresponds with the overall pattern of 1920s artists problematizing paternal ideals. Pietà is believed to be a self-portrait of Ernst and the man with a hat and a moustache bears resemblance to Ernst's father.

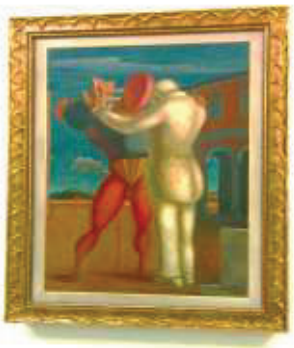
In the parable of the prodigal son, the father anticipates the son's return even from afar and says to the older son that he was lost and has been found. In many interpretations the father is recognizing the returning son from afar with an inner vision rather than with normal eyesight, such as in Nouwen's reading of the Rembrandt painting (2013: 99).

In Ernst's painting it is the other way around. The bodies seem at first immobile and expressionless, but in contrast to the somnambulant and achromatic father, the son has his eyes open and is clothed in vivid colours. In the picture one can observe a faucet sticking out of a brick wall, and in the background, one perceives the contours of a bandaged man walking up a staircase.

What does the picture convey? Is it the father bringing the son, who was lost, back to life? Or is it, as some interpretations claim, a dreamy transition state, Ernst's surrealist vision of a new reality to come? The faucet might be a channel to a new world, and the man in the background can be climbing to a higher degree of consciousness. Commentators have often suggested that the man is either Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, or Guillaume Apollinaire, the French Surrealist poet (Jones, *The Guardian*).

Kafka describes himself as weak and powerless compared to the menacing authority of his father. That is not what I would call the father figure in Ernst's painting. If anything, he is passive, even comical. It can be observed that the son's foot touches the man on the staircase. Perhaps it is a sign of what is to come – that the son breaks free from the constraints of the father's embrace and embarks on a rediscovery tour up the staircase to new horizons?

A similarly enigmatic picture of a vagrant son is created by the Greco-Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico, who was also fascinated by the parable of the prodigal son and painted the motif in different versions throughout his career. The first version was revealed in 1922 and that is the one we will have a closer look at now.



Giorgio de Chirico: Il figliol prodigo, 1922, Wikimedia Commons, Public domain.

In de Chirico's painting, the encounter between the father and the son takes the form of an embrace. But, like in Ernst's painting, there seems to be an incompatibility present. It is not entirely clear who is who, but it might be that the white stone figure portrays the father while the son is the figure consisting of different geometrical forms and who appears to have haphazardly undergone reconstruction. The figures are faceless and even more expressionless than in Ernst's painting - hardly human. The figures have a hand on each other's shoulders, and their heads seem to be close to one another. It almost looks as if they are trying to dance.

The large red head facing the viewer is devoid of facial features and there is a fan-shaped object between their legs. Or is it a seashell? The object looks unmistakably like the shell from which Botticelli's Venus emerges symbolizing the advent of *Primavera* (the season of spring).

The location is a wide plain without any vegetation in sight, and a colonnade can be seen in the background, so the mixed associations of nature and culture and of withering and blossoming make it unclear whether the figures are at home or "in a distant country," like the prodigal son at the beginning of the parable.

What is conspicuous in paintings from the 1920s such as Ernst's and de Chirico's is the absence of the Albertian central perspective. The much-revered Renaissance tradition was entirely omitted together with humanist ideals about the genius of man and the perfect human form. Contrastingly, the new artists painted instead hollow impassive figures on a smooth surface, requiring reorientation to discern what was foreground and background, what was front and centre. De Chirico painted mannequins rather than the Vitruvian man.

> In de Chirico's paintings the mannequin is always presented as man's fragmented, dismembered, incomplete alter ego, a disquieting product of memory and an enigmatic cultural construct. Belting also notes how the fragments of statues that populate de Chirico's paintings represent the traces of a lost, irrecoverable antiquity (Storchi 2009: 309).

De Chirico and Carlo Carrà were proponents of *arte metafisica* (metaphysical art), an art form which, similarly to surrealism, strived to create a form of art which represented objects detached from their usual semantic connotations and, in this decontextualization, creating a sense of estrangement and dissonance. But *arte metafisica* was different from other art movements such as surrealism and Dadaism, among other things, because it claimed that in existence there is an underlying mythic world to be rediscovered (Storchi 2009: 299). Rather than portraying existential angst or an irreconcilable divide, examples of which one would encounter in works by Kafka and many expressionist artists, de Chirico and the metaphysical artists of the 1920s were more engaged with the enigma and the inaccessibility, as well as the mystery of the object.

> The relationship between subject and object was one between two completely separate spheres and could only exist as an 'aesthetic' relationship, that is, as a translation between two totally different languages. Such a conception highlighted the fundamental disconnection between subject and object, man and thing; it refused to place man at the centre of the cognitive universe and shifted the emphasis onto the object as a receptacle of deep meaning. In this context man himself was no longer

> conceived as a subject, but rather as an object, a mannequin, a statue. Such a change in perspective was meant to emancipate him from the constrictions of subjectivism and provide a wider cognitive horizon (Storchi ibid.).

Musing on the Rembrandt painting of the return of the prodigal son and the concept of homecoming, Henri Nouwen writes: "'coming home' meant, for me, walking step by step toward the One who awaits me with open arms and wants to hold me in an eternal embrace" (2013: 6).

But that dream was far away and not a dream that appealed to the artists of the 1920s. Hungarian art critic and philosopher György Lùkacs set the tone in his seminal work published after World War I, *Theorie des Romans*. He described a general "*transzendentale Obdachlosigkeit*" i.e. a transcendental homelessness, indicating that there is nowhere to return home to (2008: 12).

Many artists in the 1920s would agree with Lùkacs. They were critical of Christianity and organized religion. De Chirico and Ernst were heavily inspired by German philosopher and philologist Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of Christian morality and his view of art as a potentiality for life-affirmation and dissolution of boundaries. Another source of inspiration was Arthur Schopenhauer and his idea of the redemptive power of aesthetic contemplation in a world governed by blind forces and fleeting representations.

Conversely, the representations of the prodigal son in the literary and artistic oeuvres of the 1920s exemplified by Kafka, Ernst and de Chirico illustrate that there is either no paternal embrace to return to, or that the embrace is suffocating and claustrophobic. Hence, they aimed for new discoveries in "a distant country".

Perhaps one can even go so far as to conclude that artists in the 1920's did not want to be found again. A famous quote by Max Ernst thus reads: "A painter is lost if he finds himself". Max Ernst considers his sole virtue to be that "he has managed not to find himself." (Ernst, Derenthal 2005: 6).

Conclusions

In this paper, I attempted to shed light on different aspects of the parable of the prodigal son and compared it to visual and textual representations from the 1920s. I described the generational conflict, the schism between

the old world and the new world with the World War I being the primary dividing line.

The Expressionist writings of Franz Kafka are in stark contrast to themes of joy and forgiveness in the biblical parable. Kafka, an exponent of the existential angst of his age, underlines the divide between the authorities and institutions in society and the Lost Generation, hereby implying the impossibility of a happy reunion between a prodigal son and the father - universally generalisable to a whole generation influenced by the war.

The works of Max Ernst and Giorgio de Chirico also express a generational conflict. They reject traditional aesthetic norms and initiate an artistic and philosophical rebellion. In a state of transcendental homelessness there is no home to return to and all they were able to find was estrangement and obsolete structures. Therefore, the artists leave home and embark upon a spiritual journey of reorientation, decontextualization and rediscovery. Drawing his inspiration from psychoanalysis, Ernst sees dreams and the exploration of the unconscious as a vital vehicle to reach a new reality, whereas de Chirico continues to draw mankind as hollow beings and regards aesthetic contemplation as the main reference point in an inconceivable world of enigmas and fragmentation.

To conclude, the prodigal sons of the 1920s art world did not return to a happy reunion for they discovered that their home, the world around them, and everything they had been told by the older generations to believe in had been shattered in the catastrophic war. As everything had fundamentally changed, they left to find their own paths disregarding the risks of getting lost along the way, outside an order embodied by an all-embracing father on earth (and perhaps in Heaven, too).

This essay is merely a preliminary examination and does, of course, not exhaust the research topic in question. There are many other aspects of the parable I could have dwelled upon, for example the prodigal's experiences with famine, his sexual escapades, the father bringing him his best robes, the role of the older son or the significance of the fattened calf and the feast.

Moreover, I am certain that there are other art works from the 1920s that could bear comparison to the parable of the prodigal son. Admittedly, this examination is quite male dominated. I have not been able to find works of art from the 1920s by female artists thematizing the prodigal son. Furthermore, the focus has been Eurocentric, and I could have included art works from other continents and other traditions. On a positive note, this

means that there is vast space and possibility for complementing future research on this interesting topic.

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Transfer Points: Artistic Intersections and Cultural Transitions in John Dos Passos's Fiction of the 1920s

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Abstract
John Dos Passos conveyed multiple intersections of art and culture and the spirit of the 1920s in his prose. His novel Manhattan Transfer is characterized by intermediality: a combination of theatre, film, and visual art. With this novel, Dos Passos became a chronicler of American life. A passionate critique of modern society runs through Manhattan Transfer. The city is presented in this novel as a site of cultural intersections and transition and this focus is matched by the fragmentary qualities of the text. From his war novel Three Soldiers through his city novel Manhattan Transfer, Dos Passos places his readers in the swirl of the human currents of his time and argues for the human spirit against the forces of a mechanistic world that would crush them. The harshness of the vibrant city is illustrated through the strivings and affairs of these immigrants, Broadway stage performers, journalists, and business aspirants. The relationships between Dos Passos' experimental fiction and modern art and film are explored, along with the cultural transition of the American 1920s.

Keywords: *John Dos Passos, fiction, art, culture*

John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) presents the modern city as a complex, fragmented point of convergence. Here meet the arts, textuality, and lives engaged in the difficult art of living in the modern world. Jazz age modernism, exemplified by Dos Passos's text, is characterized by intermediality: the innovative work of writers who drew upon and interconnected many of the arts. Visual art and film influenced John Dos Passos's approach to *Manhattan Transfer* (1925). The novel suggests how American culture in the 1920s emerged at a transfer point; shedding its Victorian ghosts, it stood on a platform overlooking the wasteland, and then plunged into cities of ferocious motion, advertising and credit, passing into a new era. Dos Passos caught a glimpse of this new world.

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Manhattan Transfer is not a novel of narrative order. The fragmented nature of this work reflects the simultaneity of cubism and montage. There are juxtapositions and structural schemes and images. This novel gathers fragments of news clippings, voices, songs, and the elements of popular culture. Dos Passos's notebooks show that the sections of his novel were written separately. He intentionally broke sections of his work into parts and then edited them, as a filmmaker would do. In Dos Passos's novel we can see a mechanical world spilling forth immigrant energy, people caught in urban industrial life, seeking love and meaning in the web-like cables of bridges and the shadows of skyscraper aspirations. Dos Passos rejects modern systems that depersonalize and overwhelm people. He seeks to reshape words and form, to humanize, to find power again in words, to affirm the human spirit, to save humanity. To accomplish this, he reinvents the novel. He is interested in innovating and utilizing cinematic techniques, to attempt to grasp human consciousness fully alive. His art engages a radical politics and theatre and in *Manhattan Transfer* a nation is reflected in a city mirror. For D. H. Lawrence, this novel was a very complex film of New York City (1927: 72). It was also a precursor to Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* trilogy, in which he further developed his artistic and filmic techniques.

Through fiction, Dos Passos provided his readers with a sociological and historical rendering of his culture. He commented: "The business of the novelist is, in my opinion, to create characters first and foremost and then set them in the swirl of the human currents of his time, so that there results an accurate and permanent record of a place in history" (*Business* 4). As a critic of his time, Dos Passos was particularly incited about the effects of modern systems, from politics to corporate business to warfare, upon the individual. His emphasis upon visual and structural techniques in his fiction may suggest that he increasingly distrusted words (Nanney 1998: 127). Against the mechanistic forces that would crush him, the fragmented world of the individual must be given voice or be newly formulated. The novel itself would be a new construction, an architecture that would involve the reader in a visual aesthetic and in the new rhythms and patterns of a changing world. The fragmented individual would find integrity within the diverse features of this world. In Dos Passos's view, no mechanistic ideologies or empty rhetoric should manipulate the person or deny the individual's hope.

This vision was, in part, forged on the battlefields of Europe in the First World War, when Dos Passos was an ambulance driver. It was also

informed by modern art, which he had studied while at Harvard and further discovered while in Europe. Dos Passos's search for form, from his earliest novels, *One Man's Initiation* and *Three Soldiers,* to *Manhattan Transfer*, was a sign of the times. When readers first encountered the impressionism of his character John Andrews in *Three Soldiers*, Dos Passos had begun painting quite seriously. He returned to Europe after the First World War and he also lived in Greenwich Village in New York City. There he had started writing experimental drama for theatre, creating plays like *The Moon is a Gong*, later called *The Garbage Man*, and he sought to integrate themes, characters, and style. As a writer and painter, Dos Passos developed a synaesthesia, drawing upon many of the arts.

Dos Passos's art developed a uniquely spatial sense, as well as a curiosity about time. World War I confined space into a broken field: a muddy, blasted zone of territorial combat. Paul Fussell has written of the "gross dichotomies" of safety in the trenches and "no man's land" (1977: 79). Officers attempted to control time in coordinated movements of troops. However, an individual's personal experience of time, or *durée*, was quite something else, as Proust, or Bergson would show. Time was indeed out of joint. Post-war writers like Joyce, Faulkner, Dos Passos, and Woolf would explore the simultaneity of events within consciousness.

Space and time were reconstituted in visual art by the cubists. Paul Cezanne worked to redefine ways of seeing and imagining landscapes and space. Cubism emerged from his innovations. These Cubist painters would present multiple angles of vision simultaneously along a series of planes. The changing view emphasized subjectivity. Writers like Dos Passos were drawn to cubism in developing their styles. *Three Soldiers* by Dos Passos would attempt to reflect a convergence of simultaneous happenings and, in this respect, would be a precursor to his more developed cubist style in *Manhattan Transfer* and his *U.S.A*. Trilogy.

The "impressionistic" technique used by Stephen Crane in *The Red Badge of Courage* preceded Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers*. Crane records the impressions or sensory moments of Henry Fleming's experience of battle as they occur. Dos Passos works similarly, moving into the consciousness of each soldier and placing them in juxtaposition to suggest simultaneous experiences. The sensory experiences of these soldiers intersect with each other. As Gertrude Stein claimed, the war advanced cubism and reflected fragmentation (498). The works of Pablo Picasso and Juan Gris were a visual complement to the experimental tendencies in John Dos Passos. For

Dos Passos, visual art informed his seriously playful encounter with words and ideas. Affected by his experience of the Great War, he challenged society with his art.

In Dos Passos's war fiction the war brings a shattering. This account of war offers us Dos Passos's imaginative extension of his first-hand experience. Dos Passos became a member of the Norton Harjes Ambulance Corps in 1917. His background was somewhat unique among the drivers. He was a multi-talented artist who had attended Harvard and he could work in several media, including painting, theatrical scene design, and poetry.

In *Three Soldiers* the military machine tears through the Loire Valley, betraying the artistic beauty of the place. The world can no longer express "an ideal state of wholeness" or provide "a basis for… a faith in man" (*Three Soldiers* 87). As John Andrews is arrested, a windmill positioned against the sky is "turning, turning," like a circular machine: a wheel of fortune gone awry. John Andrews searches for meaning amid the disintegration of values. Fuselli comes from San Francisco and Chrisfield comes from the Midwest. John Andrews is a musician from Virginia who, like Dos Passos himself, has gone to Harvard. Their war is one of mechanism and devastating irony, much like we see in Stanley Kubrick's film *Paths of Glory*. H.L. Mencken applauded Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers* as the best of the war novels to appear soon after the war. About three to four thousand copies were distributed and they sold well.

In *Three Soldiers* (1921), we see John Andrews in a hospital, thinking about the disintegration of all that people value; all that has been preserved in intellectual tradition has been shattered. Andrews muses: "There must be something more in the world than greed and hatred and cruelty" (87). The wisdom of "Democritus, Socrates, Epicurus, Christ" seems to have been devoured. The culture that Matthew Arnold once prized, that of the best that has been thought, has been turned into empty clichés. Andrews imagines that he might turn misery into music, recalling the rebellious John Brown in a composition he will title "The Body and Soul of John Brown." For how else, he wonders, can a man find meaning when he is trapped in mechanism in which past values no longer seem to matter? Dos Passos's readers encountered his arguments against dehumanization. The individual, lying in a hospital bed, has been subjected to formation in "Making the Mould" and has been blasted by a cruel war of "Machines," "Rust," and "Under the Wheels." In his introduction to the 1969 reprinting

of *One Man's Initiation*, 1917, Dos Passos called Woodrow Wilson's change from American neutrality to involvement in the war "a bitter disappointment" that turned him toward Socialism. For, it soon became clear that "war was the greatest evil" (*Fourteenth* 69-70).

Three Soldiers cuts through the mythology of glory and contrasted with the image of American participation in the Great War as glorious. This was controversial and raised the ire of those who disagreed with Dos Passos's perspective. Dos Passos made use of several perspectives, as would a painter, to show these issues of war and Western civilization from a variety of angles.

The novel was not universally accepted. Conigsby Dawson criticized the novel in the *New York Times Book Review* for its "calculated sordidness" and "blind whirlwind of rage", adding that it was either "a base lie or a hideous truth" (*Critical Heritage* 2). Harold Norman Denny, writing in the same newspaper section two weeks later, rejected Dos Passos's portrayal of soldiers, asserting that he had never seen any soldiers like that during his time of service (*Critical Heritage* 12). Norman Shannon Hall, in *Foreign Service*, simply called Dos Passos a liar. However, several critics applauded the novel, which just goes to show the variety of reading responses that any work can generate. Heywood Broun in *The Bookman* called the novel "honest" and he wrote: "it represents deep convictions and impressions eloquently expressed" (*Critical Heritage* 14). James Sibley Watson, writing as W.C. Blum, noticed the novel's "well-chewed rage" (*Critical Heritage* 13) and Henry Seidel Canby recognized in it "sufficient passion and vividness of detail to count as literature" (*Critical Heritage* 3). Sales suggest that many common readers also embraced the novel, or at least were curious enough about it to buy it. One veteran wrote: "This is the truest damn book ever written" (Carr 1984: 187). "It is magnificent," A. Hamilton Gibbs told Carl Brandt, he found in Dos Passos's book "a combination of Barbusse and Sassoon and Frankau, an extraordinary mixture of poetry and terrible prose pictures, one after the other without a thought for sequence or so-called rules" (187). Gibbs's comment reveals that he perceived in *Three Soldiers* Dos Passos's gradually emerging methods of fragmentation and montage, which anticipated his later work in *Manhattan Transfer* and *U.S.A.*

Manhattan Transfer was begun upon a return from Europe and it was further developed during another trip overseas and there is a clear through-line from scenes of destruction and concern for civilization in the

early novels to those in *Manhattan Transfer*. In *Manhattan Transfer* the turbulent life of New York is seen through the minds of dozens of people. The text shifts focus rapidly. The centre of focus is a vignette that proceeds for a few pages - a love affair, a business deal - only to shift into some other focus. The stories of Ellen Thatcher and Jimmy Herf and Bud Korpening are loosely held together in a cityscape where people enter our awareness and then exit. There is motion and fragmentation: reflections in a revolving door, passengers entering and exiting trains at rush hour.

Manhattan Transfer is the novel in which Dos Passos's artistic style of quick juxtapositions begins to appear. It also extended his criticism of elements of the modern world. In his review in the *New York Times Book Review*, Henry Longan Stuart contrasted John Dos Passos's narrative technique with that of James Joyce. He viewed Dos Passos's image of New York as more pessimistic than it need have been. Dos Passos was called one of those young writers who experience "the challenge of New York to their imaginations and descriptive powers." Stuart's own descriptive writing filled much of his review. New York, he wrote, "a piled-up mass of humanity, amorphous and heterogeneous at one and the same time, is a storehouse of impressions…" (*Critical Heritage* 61). Dos Passos's novel offered impressions, scenes, and sharp glances of light off of the towers of the city. He showed that there was much energy in the small space of Manhattan. Stuart saw in the novel "no vestige of a plot" but recognized that "one story runs through it" (*Critical Heritage* 61). Dos Passos later noted, in his essay "What Makes a Novelist," that he had given attention to "reportage" of New York City. When he had arrived back to New York from his time in Europe and the Mideast, he wrote in "Best Times," "New York was a continent in itself" (*Best Times* 32). His novel painted images and summoned up voices of the many lives that made up that continent.

When Dos Passos arrived in Manhattan on a boat via Havana he described the city as "like a badly drawn cartoon" (Carr 1984: 173). Dos Passos found in New York City a theme of fragmentation. He jotted in his notes a series of descriptive words: "skies-buildings-garbage cans" (174). He began to write *Manhattan Transfer*, the novel that Lionel Trilling would call "an epic of disintegration." In writing *Manhattan Transfer*, Dos Passos pursued something organic, voicing humanity in a 1920s culture of billboards, ads, subways, and Times Square. The centre of his novel is the city itself: its movement and the people who live and work in its busy swirl of activity. Dos Passos sensed that visual art and the written word might

capture a sense of consciousness and the cultural energy in New York City in the first decades of the twentieth century. With *Manhattan Transfer*, Dos Passos abandoned traditional storytelling methods and chronology. He saw around him a polyglot city of tumultuous motion and to convey his sense of this, he juxtaposed scenes and joined several shots to create a single image. Dos Passos made use of fragmentation in *Manhattan Transfer* and then he learned to control this to a greater degree in his subsequent novel, *42nd Parallel*.

It has often been noted that Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* suggests filmic qualities, although it was written prior to his exposure to the work of Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. In his 1926 introduction to the novel, Sinclair Lewis observed the filmic quality of Dos Passos' transitions. "It is indeed the technique of the movie, the flashes, its cutbacks, its speed," he wrote. More than any other writer of his generation Dos Passos used these techniques, Lewis added (*Critical Heritage* 6). In his film *Intolerance*, D.W. Griffith had introduced montage experiments while telling four stories: the fall of Babylon, crucifixion, the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, and a strike in a modern setting. Eisenstein's work would contribute the development of montage. Critics have considered Dos Passos's novel alongside the films of V.I. Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein, in which pieces are linked and each visual shot is like a cell that collides with other cells. There is in Dos Passos's novel, as in those films, a montage of parallels that intercut each other.

Dos Passos's initial inspiration for this technique came from visual art rather than from film. The fragmentation and intercutting emerged from movements he knew well in painting: Cubism and Futurism. Dos Passos sought the simultaneity of cubism and montage. Dos Passos could see a similar technique at work in the poetry of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. The verbal fragmentation in his text further emphasized his sense of the machine age and a splintering of the self in the modern city. His exposure to Russian film later underscored this perception. He would capture the world moment to moment, frame by frame, as a motion picture would record it. Dos Passos was a consummate combiner of the verbal and the visual arts: an artist of intermediality. He drew upon Cubism, Futurism, the motion of narrative, and the techniques of film and experimental theatre with a sharp awareness of modernist trends.

In film, a contemporary parallel with *Manhattan Transfer* is the Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand creation *Manhatta*, an abstract film of New

York City which introduces subtitles from the poetry of Walt Whitman. *Manhattan Transfer* appears as filmic at a time when Dos Passos, whose primary inspiration was from modern art, was just beginning to explore the medium of film and images of the city like those in *Manhatta*. In the 1920s, the city was a principal subject for painters, like Charles Sheeler in *Aucassin and Nicollette*, Charles Demuth in *Machinery* (1920), and George Ault's *Brooklyn Ice House* (1926). In drawing upon Cubism, Futurism, and the motion of narrative, Dos Passos investigated a theme of fragmentation. Dos Passos rendered a picture of the jazz age- its social fragmentation, its energy and life- as social criticism, providing us with a complex image of the times.

Manhattan Transfer begins by evoking the city's power in sections called Metropolis, Dollars, Tracks, and Steamroller. Next, fragments of communication are introduced: nursery rhymes, slogans, newspaper clippings. There are sound bites that appear in rapid succession. The narrative of the final section of the novel moves into a Biblical tone, suggesting apocalypse. There is Nikelodean, Revolving Door, Skyscraper, and the Birth of Nineveh. Throughout the text, Dos Passos gives us a sense of the city as a place of collision and opposition. Joseph Warren Beach saw in *Manhattan Transfer* "an atomistic world, a moral chaos" (1960: 42). Blance Gelfant has asked whether we can identify with these characters: have we any emotional engagement with these readers or do we simply observe them? (1961: 62) It is fairly clear that we do, if we happen to read our own human vulnerability and dreams alongside theirs.

The lives of Jimmy Herf and Ellen Thatcher are at the centre of *Manhattan Transfer*. We discover their histories and emotions and how they respond to the city and a corrupted ideal of success. Ellen learns how to dance in an effort to capture her father's affection. She becomes a dancer and actress, a fashion periodical editor, and a superficial success. Jimmy, returning from abroad with his mother, sees the Statue of Liberty in the harbour. He wants to join the 4th of July celebration and waves his little flag, disembarking near the immigrants who are arriving in America. As an adult he decides that will not enter the family banking firm and its version of New York and success. He refuses to be caught in a revolving door, or to be grinded out like meat (*MT* 119-20).

Ellen marries John Oglethorpe, gets into the theatre in musicals, and advances her career by flirting with theatre producers and rich men. She falls for Stan Emery, who commits suicide and leaves Ellen pregnant with

his child. She then conveniently marries Jimmy Herf. But they divorce. Jimmy is a news reporter. In this role he sees urban corruption and collects bits of news stories. We see Ellen's distance, her loss of humanity in a "metal green evening dress" and hear of her "dollself" and loss of authenticity (*MT* 261).

Jimmy Herf becomes disillusioned with his news work and with his profession's uses of language. Reporters are "parasites on the drama of life," he asserts (*MT* 320). News reporting has become dehumanizing work in which he feels like "a traveling dictograph" and "an automatic writing machine" (*MT* 344). With Jimmy Herf's disillusionment, the novel carries a critique of the public press and journalism. In contrast with the quick, ephemeral words of journalism are "the old words" of immigrants, American ideals, and something that lives above technology and machines. Jimmy Herf symbolizes America as he questions values and the fate of America. The foundational formulations of 1776 are what he deems important, not superficial materialism. Amid the skyscrapers, Jimmy seeks to reclaim "the old world. /"Typewriters rain confetti in his ears." He says, "If only I had faith in words" (*MT* 365-66). He imagines finding a way to get out of the city machine to become whole again. As Dos Passos creates a narrative voice that tells Jimmy Herf's story, he introduces other fragmented individuals. He uses cubism to recognize simultaneity in time and the variety of city life: something not static but always in motion.

In the novel's first section, Steamroller, we witness the human confrontation with deterministic forces. Ellen is obviously ambitious. She travels with Oglethorpe to Atlantic City for a honeymoon. She discovers that he is bisexual. They change trains at Manhattan Transfer: a railway station in New Jersey, where trains run on electric power. Ellen's associates see right through her ambitions. To get ahead "she'd marry a trolley car" says an actress of Ellen (*MT* 156). Her goal is to be "glamorous."

Jimmy Herf's story and Ellen's story are brought together across time shifts and cuts as the novel brings us other disturbing characters. Broken people meet a broken textual landscape. Bud Korpenning from Cooperstown, for example, appears in the first five chapters. He goes to New York to be "at the centre of things" (4). He is exploited and cheated and lives in a flophouse, unable to sleep. A Bowery bum tells him to get out of the city while he can (*MT* 122). But he was the victim of domestic abuse. He walks over the Brooklyn Bridge, "a spider work of cables" (*MT* 124). This is a callous city and his death comes from this.

While some readers saw pessimism in the novel, others found abundant energy. In his introduction to *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), Alfred Kazin commented on how Dos Passos's prose rhythms and images had captured the rhythm and energy of Twentieth Century America. In this sense, he recognized one of the key features of Dos Passos's fiction: to express the voice of the people had become central to the work of John Dos Passos. He once described his project as one of an effort to take in his times, across the broad range of life (vii). He wished to close the distance between high culture and popular culture. In *Manhattan Transfer*, Dos Passos attempted to make his novel's action objective while experimenting with fragmented structures. As a painter, Dos Passos was keenly aware of innovations in visual art during his time. He wished to apply this to fiction. He was involved with experimental theatre for several years and critic Edmund Wilson remarked that this had much to do with shaping the style of Dos Passos in his U.S.A. trilogy (Looking Back). The new art of film caught Dos Passos' interest. In 1928, he visited the Soviet Union to look at the Moscow theatre and the work of dramatist V.E. Meyerhold. He became interested in Sergei Eisenstein's technique of montage and synthesizing and became aware of Vertov's concept, the kino-eye. In his U.S.A. trilogy "Camera Eye" becomes the viewer, much like one who is watching a film (Fourteenth 386). Dos Passos was an intermedial artist: one who combines artistic techniques across a variety of media.

Attention to Dos Passos, the artist, is sometimes overshadowed by comment about Dos Passos's politics. The political perspective of Dos Passos shifted across his long career. In the 1920s he was a liberal voice in fiction and experimental theatre for "industrial and white-collar working classes" (Carr 1984: 20). Later, Dos Passos was a conservative. In the 1920s, he was a writer who was interested in socialism, although he remained independent of the Communist Party and eventually became suspicious of it. He set *Manhattan Transfer* in the thriving city of working people and new immigrants. His theme was human freedom and authenticity. His works announced the human struggle against institutions which de-humanized people. In the mid-1920s, Dos Passos participated in developing set designs for the stage. At the same time that *Manhattan Transfer* was being published, an article by Dos Passos, "Is the Realistic Theatre Obsolete" appeared in *Vanity Fair*, suggesting alternatives to Broadway theatre. For *The New Masses*, Dos Passos wrote "Toward a Revolutionary Theatre" (December 1927), in which he discussed the limits

of iconoclasm in political theatre, and "Did the New Playwrights Theatre Fail?" (1928). He gained exposure to the music of Igor Stravinsky while assisting with set construction for a production. He was fascinated with Daighilev's choreography of dancers. This awareness of the arts of music and dance is not often discussed in Dos Passos criticism, which tends to devote attention to painting. As Donald Pizer points out, most studies focus upon a single modernist strain such as film or visual art (2013: 34). However, Dos Passos was an intermedial artist who drew upon various art forms and upon the new technologies of film, radio, and the phonograph.

Rhythm and sound are conspicuous in *Manhattan Transfer*. In the novel we discover an art that is abstract and sensuous. *Manhattan Transfer* offers a verbal dance that moves amid an intercutting of images and voices and sounds. A Bakhtinian heteroglossia is in evidence in this play of voices throughout Dos Passos's novel. The city jostles life; it blares forth sound; it dances. During this time of modernist experimentation, poetry and painting dissolved representation content and brought colours, sound, motion, in a movement toward abstraction. Dos Passos participates in this movement.

He also brings tensions to this many voiced, often disrupted text, offering a verbal parallel to harmonically unresolved music. Stravinsky once asserted that music is most interesting when it encounters tensions, dissonance, and harmonic conflict. This is Dos Passos's city. It is a symphony embodying disorder. Stravinsky gave his audience sonic terror, musical ambiguity in which the tension between music and noise was an affront to their expectations. Stravinsky's music was provocative: breaking patterns, incorporating folk songs, threshing out harmony like he was putting chords through "a cubist machine," as Jonah Lehrer has put it (133). Likewise, Dos Passos broke with convention, as he had earlier done with his manipulation of point of view and challenge to myths of victory in *Three Soldiers*.

In his fiction, John Dos Passos placed fiction and history in dynamic connection. He worked through an individual's perspective to comment on history's changes. The media of his day - newspapers, advertisements, radio, and film - became central to this project. In 1925, *Manhattan Transfer* made a start in this direction. However, it was in the 1930s and after, in the *U.S.A.* trilogy, that Dos Passos's new style came into its own. "Newsreel" scatters fragments of headlines, news stories, tabloid announcements and pop songs across the page. "Camera Eye" provides slices of life, angles of

vision. The result is a montage of items that might be likened to our evening news: a collection of images, sound bites, and news stories.

The first novel of the trilogy, *42nd Parallel* looks at the years before World War I and American culture at the beginning of the war period. Women had recently won the right to vote, yet, in Dos Passos's view they were still under the control of cultural forces that hearkened back to the Victorian era of the late nineteenth century. In his character Ellen Thatcher in *Manhattan Transfer*, sex appeal was a form of power, something she could use to manipulate her way toward the kind of success she dreamed of. Ellen substituted a notion of sex and power for real relationships. Her dreams were ones of shallow materialism seeking respectability. Yet, the alternative was obscurity and vulnerability to the large forces of a male-dominated world. Dos Passos argued that the modern world made mechanical beings of people. In the mad rush along the road of modern life civility seemed to break down.

In *42nd Parallel*, "Mac" McCreary, a printer, enters the politics of unions and the labour movement. Mac is working man, who might suggest today's middle-class worker waving an Occupy Wall Street sign. Monopoly capitalism is emerging and Mac feels troubled by it. Mac is also a Fenian, an Irish nationalist, a man with an immigrant background looking back at his heritage. However, his feisty spirit of reform faces harsh forces of nature and culture that limit him. He has sought the promise of an American dream but soon retreats from it and from participation in the labour unions.

In contrast with working class men like McCreary and with the middle class are Wall Street tycoons like J. Ward Moorehouse. He has gained success in manipulating sales images. In his view, the First World War is America's "great opportunity" for economic advancement (*42nd Parallel* 237). Dos Passos portrays Moorehouse as a seeker of power and wealth who cares much about profits and little about the patriotism of the young men who have fought overseas. He represents a betrayal of the principles of America's founding fathers. He reflects the politician who seeks power rather than liberty, justice, and freedom for people he is supposed to represent. Dos Passos's critique goes further, as the story unfolds Moorehouse's affairs. Material success is seductive for Janey and Eleanor. Janey is a secretary in a Washington law firm, who becomes the executive assistant to Moorehouse. Eleanor is an interior designer who

seeks taste, culture and prestige; she is quite opportunistic, and she exploits her relationship with Moorehouse.

The roots of this social critique can be found in Dos Passos's early novels, where his fiction objected to a mechanistic culture that undercut authenticity and vitality in human beings. He equated this with the dehumanization that he had perceived in the First World War. The proletarian lives of Jimmy Herf, Bud Korpening, and thousands of other people appeared to be held down by this mechanization and by pretentious and self-serving individuals who held the means of production. Dos Passos asserted that this created alienation and fragmentation. Jimmy Herf's complaints about the newspaper he works for echoes Dos Passos's own concerns about the theatre becoming an entertainment machine more than a social organ of cultural expression, critique, and community. Berthold Brecht had challenged such conventionality in the theatre, insisting that the stage be made available for ideas. A similar concern would later be articulated by Arthur Miller. While Dos Passos makes use of snippets of popular songs in *Manhattan Transfer*, the novel suggests a breakdown of musical culture, which parallels the criticism of capitalism in the cultural observations of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. For Dos Passos, art got lost in this situation.

Jimmy Herf becomes increasingly detached from the work that he produces. He is among Dos Passos's characters who are caught in a system that exploits their work. From this arises the city. They face a world in which someone like Ellen becomes false and loses all authenticity in order to get what she wants. They become socially determined and conditioned characters who are not free. In the third part of the novel American flags, representing freedom, fly from windows over Fifth Avenue. "Dollars whine on the radio, all the cables tap out dollars… In the subway their eyes pop as they spell out APOCALYPSE, typhus, cholera, shrapnel, insurrection…" (*MT* 271). Jimmy says, "Well, there's the Statue of Liberty" (*MT* 275). One may wonder where liberty is amid chains of economic and social oppression. Dos Passos protests a condition that is antithetical to American principles and the hopes of America's founding fathers. The politically minded artist protests through modernist style. Yet, the theme is one that Dos Passos developed in novels and essays that led to *Manhattan Transfer* and that continued afterwards. In "A Humble Protest", he wrote: "Has not the world today somehow got itself enslaved by this immense machine, the industrial system?" (1916: 5)

When he observed the textile mills strike in Paterson and Passaic New Jersey in 1926, John Dos Passos was uneasy to be a "privileged outsider," says his biographer Townsend Ludington (48). He wrote in *New Masses*, June 1926, about the struggle of the workers. That concern filtered into his subsequent novels in which his experimental techniques grew in force. Through techniques drawn from modern visual art, film, dance, music, and design, John Dos Passos built drama into his narratives. In this work we see John Dos Passos's unique way of constructing stories. However, by looking at his experimental fiction we can also see tendencies in modernist practice as a whole.

In 1978, Dos Passos recalled this early period of his work: "Some of the poets who went along with the cubism of the painters of the school of Paris had talked about simultaneity. There was something about Rimbaud's poetry that tended to stand up off the page…" (What Makes a Novelist 31). Then he expressed what he believed was the fashion in which the modern artist ought to present his perspective to the world: "The artist must record the fleeting world the way the motion picture film has recorded it" (What Makes a Novelist 31). The new technique was built upon his sense of the motion of modern society and his deep working familiarity with modern art. This multi-faceted intermedial synthesis was John Dos Passos's creative contribution. It is not for his politics, his shifting views across the years, for which he ought to be remembered but for his art, his social panoramas, and his commitment to upholding human dignity.

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Criticising the Critic: The Greek Modernist Poet G.T. Vafopoulos on Greek Literary Critic Antreas Karantonis

Dimitris KOKORIS*

Abstract
Was the chief literary critic of the 1930's, Antreas Karantonis (1910-1982), spiteful and unfair in his critical texts about the poetry of G.T. Vafopoulos (1903-1996) and was Karantonis a critic who adapted to the poetic evolution? The prominent poet of the 1930's generation has expressed the opinion that Karantonis has been unfair to his poetry but research on the critical texts shows that, besides the negative views, Karantonis also expressed some positive ones regarding Vafopoulos' poetry. In addition, the constant critical adaptability that comes as a result of the critic's communication with the shifting poetic codes, and for which Karantonis' work is reproached by Vafopoulos, could be considered as an essential – perhaps even the most essential – virtue of the dynamic function of critical discourse.

Keywords: *modern Greek poetry, literary criticism, G. T. Vafopoulos, Antreas Karantonis.*

It is common belief that the study of both the artistic expression as well as the litterateurs' analytical thought shed light not only on their work, but also on various aspects of literary theory and criticism. G. T. Vafopoulos' (1903-1996) diverse literary work includes depositions of an analytical type. For the development of our topic, material has been mainly drawn from his book *Ποίηση και ποιητές* (Vafopoulos 1983) with the sufficiently enlightening subtitle "Μελετήματα", as well as from the text *Το πνευματικό πρόσωπο της Θεσσαλονίκης* (Vafopoulos 1980), which Vafopoulos defines as a "chronicle" (Vafopoulos 1983:12 and Vafopoulos 1980: 4), although initially – and in general correctly – describes as a "short essay" (Vafopoulos 1980: 7, 27, 49, 50, 63,66). Vafopoulos also provides us with many information on literary criticism and its representatives in his *Σελίδες αυτοβιογραφίας* (Vafopoulos 1970-1975) but, as far as the investigation of his opinion about Antreas

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Karantonis (1910-1982), one of the most important literary critics of the 20th century, is concerned, we regard that it is best to delve into analytical documents which are founded on more composed and reasonable lines of direction through their textual nature, instead of approaching autobiographical texts, which give forth an emotional warmth of high level on the one hand, but are not accompanied by the author's obligation of the highest possible impartiality on the other. Passing some stages of his poetic course in review with a main line of direction his first collection of poems *Τα ρόδα της Μυρτάλης* (1931), G. T. Vafopoulos also touches upon Antreas Karantonis. Initially, he does this in an indirect way, restoring T. K. Papatsonis' avant-garde role as well as his poetic value in both of the aforementioned reports (Vafopoulos 1980: 18 and Vafopoulos 1983: 39),[1] because it is well known that one of the main critical misfires of Karantonis was the lack of recognition and underestimation of Papatsonis' poetry (Vayenas 2011: 209-210). Vafopoulos then proceeds to mention that 'he was very impressed by [...] the book [...] *Ο ποιητής Γιώργος Σεφέρης*' (Vafopoulos 1983: 40)[2] and talks about a 'prodigy' (Vafopoulos 1983: 41) — he is right, if we think that Karantonis' critical age was much more mature than his actual one: the essay of reference in mention, which impressed Vafopoulos, was published in 1931 when Karantonis was only twenty-one years old. At length, Vafopoulos underlines Karantonis' disdainful position against him, talking about "a negative, [...] almost hostile stand of this critic towards a man that was definitely not the worst author of Modern Greek literature" (Vafopoulos 1983: 42).

In his two main studies, *Εισαγωγή στη νεότερη ποίηση* (Karantonis 1958) and *Γύρω από τη σύγχρονη ελληνική ποίηση* (Karantonis 1962), studies that were unified in one edition at one point and thereon, Antreas Karantonis does not mention Vafopoulos at all, while from the poets of Thessaloniki he mentions with positive comments Zoe Karelli, Giorgos Themelis and Manolis Anagnostakis (Karantonis 1984: 284, 290, 291, 294, 323, 326). In his book (Karantonis 1976), the chapter 'Giorgos Vafopoulos' is composed by two earlier book reviews; the first refers to the collection of poems *Η μεγάλη νύχτα και το παράθυρο* which was first published in 1956 and the second to the collection of poems *Επιθανάτια και Σάτιρες* which was first published in 1967 (Karantonis 1976: 56-59). In the first review we read: "There is a certain unbridgeable gulf between the soul that becomes aware of the sentiment and the mind that processes it poetically. During this process what happens is that the sentiment, the poetic breath, are lost,

evaporated and what is left is only the intellectual process. Vafopoulos is more of an intellectual poet than is needed for him to preserve his poetry and instil it to us" (Karantonis 1976: 54).

This is definitely a negative critical assessment, nevertheless not a malicious one nor — to be fair — entirely unfounded. In the second review, Karantonis' concluding deduction is that 'if the *Σάτιρες* were gone — or if they were printed separately — the *Επιθανάτια* would gain one more area of sanctity' (Karantonis 1976: 59), so he is in part negative in his review of Vafopoulos' collection. Other than that, he is absolutely positive to the point of praising Vafopoulos' work highly — one cannot argue that sanctity as a characteristic of poems does not belong to the negative statements of literary criticism. However, the last words of the review of 1956 of Vafopoulos' work are more revealing: "It seems like Vafopoulos gets every now and then carried away by such inconceivable little spites. And in these we have to include the passion with which he tried to push forward the fact that Palamas was hiding his age, as well as the pettiness with which he commented on a trip of Palamas' to Thessaloniki in 1929, as far as we know. How can a poet be interested in such matters?" (Karantonis 1976: 56).

'And why not?' would be a fair response, when we know that some of the most functional verifications of the philological and ideological field of modern Greek literature came from the critical and philological contribution of the poets (it would be a verbiage to name any here). On the other hand, Karantonis indicates his faith in the old romantic stereotype of a poetry of which its creators should not dismount Pegasus and step on the 'wasteland' of philological and factual trivialities. It is pointless to comment in length on Karantonis minor chronological error — Palamas' trip to Thessaloniki was in 1927; besides, the 'as far as we know' indicates his uncertainty of the year he mentions. It would be useful, though, to trace the reasons of the negative characterisations (inconceivable little spite, pettiness). Texts by G. T. Vafopoulos were published in issues of the literary magazine *Νέα Εστία* in 1950 (15 May 1950, 01 July 1950, 01 August 1950) in which it was claimed — and not without good cause — that Kostis Palamas was probably born in 1857 rather than in 1859. The claim was refuted by Spiros Melas implicitly and in a direct way by Harilaos Sakellariadis — Sakellariadis' refutation was published in the magazine *Ελληνική Δημιουργία*, of which the editor was Melas. Sakellariadis used insolent characterisations regarding Vafopoulos, like 'disrespectful',

'ungrateful', 'illiterate' (Vafopoulos 1983: 148-149), while Karantonis, even six years after the dispute, does not seem to embrace Vafopoulos' viewpoint.

In a letter to the magazine *Νέα Εστία* (01 May 1954), G. T. Vafopoulos refutes a publication of Antreas Karantonis' in the aforementioned magazine (01 March 1954 – Vafopoulos 1983: 273-278), in which, according to Giorgos Katsimpalis and his assertions, Vafopoulos appears during a conversation as an amusing denier of Solomos, in the presence of Palamas. The latter, according to Karantonis, 'starts to recite in a deep, passive voice verses from Solomos' *The Cretan*. That was the answer of Palamas to the young man's nonsense!' (Vafopoulos 1983: 273). Vafopoulos offers his own convincing version and explanation of the incident, which is needless, of course, to expand on anew here. As is known, Vafopoulos had published a text in the newspaper *Μακεδονία* (Vafopoulos 1983: 126) right after Palamas' visit to Thessaloniki (= December 1927), in which text he was outlining the exaggerations on behalf of Palamas' devotees as well as those of his sworn enemies. He elaborated further on this central idea much later in his lecture 'Ο Παλαμάς ανάμεσα σε δύο υπερβολές' (Vafopoulos 1983: 132-145), which was 'given in the lecture theatre of Y.W.C.A. of Thessaloniki, on 08 May 1954' (Vafopoulos 1983: 132).

> It was natural for the anti-palamic view of Apostolakis at the University to cause the contradiction. The corrosive influence upon the souls of the youths had to be confronted with some kind of antidote. And, since that strange aficionado of heroes had no peers either within the University or outside of it, it was imperative that the screws should be tightened. A circle of Palamas' devotees reflected that only the poets' presence in Thessaloniki could play the role of the screw on the fence that would restrain the movement that was created from Apostolakis' view. And an invitation was sent to Palamas and a reception schedule was organised in the same way as the receptions of political leaders are organised on the eve of an election [...] The unsuspecting people of Thessaloniki were applauding the poet without even knowing why and they were wondering who that important man might be, for whose sake those spectacular events with the band were taking place, which were the sole privilege of the Republic's President or the Prime Minister (Vafopoulos 1980: 30-32).

Antreas Karantonis deserves the characterization of the *palamist* and that of the favourably disposed towards palamic poetry – when he was nineteen

years old, in 1929, he printed the study *Εισαγωγή στο παλαμικό έργο*, in 1932 he published the volume *Γύρω στον Παλαμά*, while in 1971 a second volume of the same title was published. Maybe he was annoyed, because Vafopoulos entered the fields of karantonian criticism. He must have arguably been annoyed by Vafopoulos' correct political evaluation that those who organised the triumph of Palamas in Thessaloniki were 'all known venizelian agents', having as a result the strong reaction of "the anti-venizelian press, with an exemplary diligence towards the spirit of the time. So, an affair that commenced as an intellectual substrate and was now taking on an expression of a secularist movement could not avoid the partisan characterization (Vafopoulos 1980: 132 and Vafopoulos 1983: 126).

Note well that throughout his entire critical course Karantonis — as well as a significant portion of the so-called 'bourgeois intelligentsia' from the interwar era onwards — strongly supported the deeply conservative view of liberating the important literary expression from the political events and facts. Let us not be confused, for instance, by the aforementioned (Karantonis 1984: 323, 326) favourable view on Anagnostakis, which simply indicates that Karantonis was a competent reader: he felt that the exclamatory political charge was absent from the poet's allusive and pithy expression, while the existential parameters functioned together with the anguish and the deeper traumas the political partisanship brought. It seems that Karantonis was becoming aware that the latter only covered but a part of the expressive and emotional landscape of the poems, long before the creator himself distinctly clarified that he is both a love poet as well as a political one (Fais 2011: 59).[3]

Karantonis' negative predisposition towards Vafopoulos was enhanced by the latter's intellectually warm and friendly relationship with I.M. Panagiotopoulos. It is well known that I.M. Panagiotopoulos 'expostulated through the pages of magazine *Νέα Εστία* in 1947 [...] with the clique' (Vafopoulos 1983: 279) which, according to him — an opinion that was shared by many in the long run! — was constituted by Seferis, Karantonis and Katsimpalis.[4] However, when Vafopoulos published his short essay *Μια τραγική αντινομία* (Vafopoulos 1983: 279-284), in which he entirely and evidently stood with I.M. Panagiotopoulos' side in regards to the context of that particular dispute, Karantonis had already passed away (27 June 1982), whilst when Vafopoulos' very praising *Χαιρετισμός* to Panagiotopoulos in 1979 (Vafopoulos 1983: 247-269) was published, Karantonis' critical opinion was already shaped and known. Nevertheless,

the critic already had arguable evidence regarding G. T. Vafopoulos' support of I. M. Panagiotopoulos dating back to the 1950's: dedications of poems from one to the other (one in particular, was made to Panagiotopoulos, in Vafopoulos' collection *Η μεγάλη νύχτα και το παράθυρο*, which received a negative review from Karantonis in 1956), as well as a glorifying text of Panagiotopoulos regarding Vafopoulos' poetry in the magazine *Καινούρια Εποχή* (Vafopoulos 1983: 258, 261, 262).

Cited below, is a passage from G. T. Vafopoulos' text about *Τα ρόδα της Μυρτάλης* (Vafopoulos 1983:39-46), in which the poet's opinion regarding the critic is clearly stated (the first syntactic period refers to the influence that was exerted on Vafopoulos' poetic thought by Karantonis' study *Ο ποιητής Γιώργος Σεφέρης* — 1931): "[...] I had almost accepted Karantonis' theory about this internal change of poetry within the external frameworks, as these were shaped by Solomos and Palamas.

Karantonis' posterior work constitutes a confirmation of the theory that criticism does not break fresh ground, but walks along with the poets on their own course. Seferis was a poet, namely the one who applies the laws of aesthetic rules and not the one who encodes them. And much later, he gave a new form in his poetics, shattering the external frameworks, which he no longer found of use. So, Karantonis' brave new theory underwent a test and was contradicted by the poet himself. And the new critic rushed into encoding Seferis' new poetic elements, inventing yet another theory, based on the new seferic forms. The power of his persuasiveness influenced a lot the youths of his time. Yet not those who had served term for a long time in the realm of aesthetic theories. Because this brilliant intellectual, in spite of being fully capable of being a leader, he chose instead, perhaps due to an acquired weakness, to play the part of a follower. He kept adjusting his critical belief to the given facts of the times. He later became the advocate of surrealism in the most extreme form of the manifestations associated to it, almost convincing the youths of the time that poetry would thereon be tailor-made in the atelier of Aragon and his school. In his rejection of the surrendered forms, he accomplished, with remarkable mastery, not to touch upon the palamic work. His persuasiveness managed to reconcile, as often as the justification of his theories demanded it, the most warring trends of poetry. And, eventually, his poetic theory gained the elasticity of adjustment, within the context of Seferis' and Elytis' poetry, in all its subsequent forms. Once again, poetry proves its catalytic power (Vafopoulos 1983:40-41).

Karantonis' constant critical adjustability is, indeed, remarkable and it is precisely this critical adjustability of his that may have had a share in Karantonis being considered not just the main representative of literary criticism of the 1930's, but also the first critic that brought out the modernistic trends in our poetry and fought for their sway (Vayenas 2011: 209).

A sign of his adjustability is that he removed T. K. Papatsonis' name from the unfortunate remark regarding the 'incoherence and contorted delirium a la Papatsonis' (this particular phrase can be found in this form only in the first edition of the study *Ο ποιητής Γιώργος Σεφέρης* — see Karantonis 1931: 22 / Vayenas 1999: 328-329 / Vayenas 2013: 26 / Kokoris 2006: 25-27); a sign of his tendency to be in harmony with the poetic developments is that when he, such a biting naysayer of Ritsos' poetry, realises its complexity (political projections aside) and its existential reserves, he begins a critical note in 1966 with the phrase: "Yiannis Ritsos will one day complicate matters for criticism with many and difficult questions" (Karantonis 1966 and Karantonis 1976: 296).

Let it be noted here that both Papatsonis' demerit of work and the rejection of a large part of Ritsos' poetic works are considered — and are, indeed — two of Karantonis' biggest critical misfires.

Literary creation and its criticism are linked together, through a complex nexus of relationship interactions. It is familiar and platitudinous, but — definitely — and the comparison is correct, within the context of which, if criticism is considered as a strong branch with healthy offshoots, artistic creation can be considered as the tree trunk. Criticism is necessary but by nature secondary, since, even though some aspects of literary modernism and deconstruction have pronounced themselves against the contrary, it cannot replace primary literary creation. Consequently, Vafopoulos' reproaches concerning a critic who never became a leader but remained a follower are considered rather excessive. In addition, Vafopoulos reports on Karantonis' constant critical adjustability in a negative spirit. The sense that we get today by the reception of our older literary criticism outlines that our great critics' steadfast (from a point of their critical course and on) philosophic-aesthetic principle — let us remember, for instance, Fotos Politis' Hellenocentric idealism, Kleon Parashos' and Tellos Agras' neo-symbolistic construct of a romantic nature or Markos Avyeris' viewpoint on ethics through a Marxist scope) led to their works having a lesser draw than Antreas Karantonis' contribution to

criticism has had. In other words, his constant critical adustability born of the communication of the critic with the shifting poetic codes, for which Karantonis' work is reproached by Vafopoulos, could be considered, having as a criterion the texts' endurance through time, as an essential — perhaps even the most essential — virtue of the dynamic function of critical discourse.

Around the mid-1970s, a superficial treatment of the facts would outline a diminution of the gap between Vafopoulos and Karantonis. However, the emerging improvement of their personal relationship does not prove any important change in their points of view. Karantonis' positive assessments, which were received by Vafopoulos as a 'repentance' (Vafopoulos Ε': 249) on behalf of the critic, do not refer to Vafopoulos' poetry, but on *Σελίδες αυτοβιογραφίας*, volumes Γ' and Δ' (Vafopoulos Ε': 250, 255).[5] Moreover, their short meeting 'at a tavern in Pallini of Athens' (Vafopoulos Ε': 256) and Karantonis' offering of books to Vafopoulos 'with cordial dedications' (Vafopoulos Ε': 256) reflects both men's affability and good will. In addition, they both cover the serious and publicly stated divergences.

The texts show that Karantonis as a critic and Vafopoulos as a poet, who judged his critic, had a complicated relationship. Karantonis' positions on Vafopoulos' poetry were not only negative. Finally, Karantonis' critical adjustment to the new poetic evolution is not a drawback of a critic, as Vafopoulos believed, but an advantage.

Notes

1. Vafopoulos had also noted in Σελίδες αυτοβιογραφίας (Vafopoulos 1970-1975, Α': 373-374): 'Along with Cavafy, the honour of the one who was the first to apply the new poetic expressions belongs to Papatsonis'.
2. Translations of phrases from Greek into English have been prepared by Dimitris Kokoris.
3. 'I have been characterized from time to time as a political poet. Personally, I do not think I am a political poet. I am both a love poet as well as a political one. These two are combined. It was the times that combined the two'.
4. The reverberations of the conflict were also transferred in the issue of magazine Νέα Εστία that was dedicated to I.M. Panagiotopoulos: 1329, (15 November) 1982.
5. Karantonis' two positive comments about the third and fourth volumes of the work in question were published in the magazines Τηλεόρασις (3 February 1974) and Νέα Εστία (15 April 1976), respectively.

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...and the Roaring 2020s

Inter-*Texting* Cultures during Pandemic(s): A Pragmatic Approach and Beyond

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Abstract
*Pandemics are characteristic of both The Roaring 20s, with 1920 being the aftermath of the Spanish flu, and 2020s being the onset of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. In such a case, pragmatics (along socio- and psycho-linguistics, discourse analysis, behavioural and mass psychology, and NLP only in the latter '20s) is changing as we speak (literally!), forcing us to either adapt or no longer be an active participant in a speech event. We are granted a rare, even if unfortunate, opportunity to witness change in the very fabric of speech acts. Both the linguistic (or the verbal) and the extra-linguistic (or the nonverbal) are now facing tremendous pressure from people living in isolation and from restrictions imposed by authorities, which have resulted in extensive changes in context and in the entire process of communication. Yet, the pandemic has proved, without a shadow of a doubt, that people crave human interaction and need to inter-*text *their cultures, their beliefs, their realities, and ultimately themselves to (the) others, in a struggle to avoid alienation and anxiety, to avoid becoming 'the other.' Hence, both in the 1920s and in the 2020s, we notice a shift from cultural intertexts to everybody inter-*texting *their cultures as their only means of communicating themselves.*

Keywords: *pragmatics, context, communication, change, adaptability*

Originally, I had thought of a somewhat different topic to tackle for this article - that is, before I laid eyes on what the editor-in-chief had in store for this issue. What she had envisioned this time made parts of my research and interests and, why not, vision, click into place after bits and pieces had spent some time drifting through my mind, not finding one another. Just because the perfect opportunity had not yet presented itself. The first thought that came to my mind when I was trying to grasp the Roaring '20s in the present, the 2020s, was that we are roaring in silence and isolation now. We have been, for some months now, since the world came under attack from an invisible, microscopic, enemy that forced us all into

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lockdown. We are the quarantined roaring in silence and isolation, for our own sake and to protect the others.

The 'funny' thing is that, if you think of it from a historical perspective, the 1920s were quite similar in terms of the socio-economic and medical background. Well, the background that a linguist has access to and manages to understand, as I would not want to start an argument with fellow historians and economists who undoubtedly know better. It is just that, from the point of view of pragmatics, discourse analysis, socio- and psycholinguistics, people experienced almost the same scenario. 1920 means the aftermath of the terrible Spanish flu, people lived in lockdowns back then as well, and they had to wear masks everywhere, even when they were allowed out, in the streets. Does it sound familiar to you? It sure does to me.

As we are learning to cope with this full-blown SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, I just could not help noticing the similarities in context when comparing and contrasting the two sets of '20s:

- We have to obey the same social distancing rules, that are only meant to protect us;
- We all share the same fear of contagion, when faced with a ruthless biological enemy that we have no defences against for now;
- We see the same image of locutors and interlocutors alike: an impersonal, everybody-looks-the-same masked face that creates a feeling of alienation both from the others and from the self;
- We share, to a smaller or greater extent, the same alienation and anxiety mix in isolation.

When you put all these together, and you remember that, in a nutshell, pragmatics is language in context, you may even conclude that it feels like you are becoming 'the other,' especially if you keep comparing and contrasting your life before the pandemic to the one you are living now.

However, there is one very important distinction to be made today, as contrasted against the 1920s: electronic communication is now everywhere. Think of smart phones, e-mailing, all sorts of applications and platforms, a wide range of social networks, and other such things that I am not really good at (I have reached the conclusion that I must possess some kind of DNA disturbance that literally repels technology, as we must both compromise to get along). The mere existence and availability of such

technology today has changed people's response to a previously similar situation, but similar only up to this point.

This is the part of our modern world during this SARS-CoV-2 pandemic where I can see cultural intertexts shifting towards inter-*texting* cultures, because this is precisely what we are all doing: we are texting instead of engaging in face-to-face human interaction. We are texting information, we are texting our feelings, we are texting our humour, our cultures… We are texting who we are.

I am quite positive (couldn't resist the pun) we are witnessing the emergence of a new niche in linguistics, particularly pragmatics, discourse analysis, socio- and psycho-linguistics, branches that go beyond the written and into the intended, into the realm of the invisible meaning, of the under- and over-stated, into the kingdom of the mighty context.

And context has definitely changed for many of us. Some can only communicate in writing, not possessing the technology or the skills to do more than that, and this may very well enhance alienation and anxiety. Others manage to resort to video communication as well, which makes them perhaps less alienated and anxious, but they feel the impact of isolation nonetheless.

A novel manner of communicating is emerging, as people come up with new ways of communicating ideas, thoughts and feelings under any sort of electronic form exclusively, but especially craving to communicate the self. This is because in communicating yourself to others, you are also reinforcing that very self to yourself, which allows for less alienation to creep in.

What is more, people are indeed making efforts, walking the extra mile to have their message received and decoded, either by changing the verbal, or the nonverbal, or the speech event itself. It seems to me as if we were now applying Roland Barthes's text distinction between the *lisible* (readerly) and the *scriptible* (writerly) to conversation and communication in general: if wanting to achieve successful communication, no actor is passive any longer, but they are actively joining efforts in conveying their own stories and histories. In conveying themselves to the world.

This effort is even more commendable as fear of contamination has changed fundamental concepts in communication, impacting the same branches of linguistics mentioned earlier on, as people shy away from direct face-to-face communication, thus altering the very fabric of speech acts. Your interlocutor, if not on screen during a video call, is now always

wearing a mask that no longer allows you to read micro-behavioural indicators that have always benefited the perlocutionary. If indeed during a video or, even worse, just audio call, you are totally dependent on the context of that particular communication, shared knowledge, intonation and tone of voice of your interlocutor to retrieve the elusive invisible meaning that keeps pragmatics alive.

It is not only pragmatics which is affected by this pandemic, but other sciences as well, and their impact on language is undeniable. If we consider behavioural and mass psychology and their close connection with psycho- and socio-linguistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis (CDA, i.e. critical discourse analysis, in particular), we cannot help acknowledging the influence of the extra-linguistic on communication. Although both the verbal and the nonverbal are under tremendous pressure nowadays, given the circumstances, it is the absence of the latter that hinders meaning recovery. We just cannot rely on behavioural indicators to help us retrieve meaning, especially the invisible part of meaning, when our interlocutors wear masks or are partially on a screen, where we cannot resort to body language interpretation to get the entire, or, why not, the real message. Thus, the perlocutionary is seriously affected and manipulation is much more possible on the part of the locutor, leaving the interlocutor with fewer resources to retrieve the genuine message hiding behind the linguistic.

In this respect, such a situation hinders Grice's concept of implicature, as the receiver of the message or the hearer finds it more difficult to perform reasonable inferencing. At the same time, Grice's principle of cooperation between speakers has to rely on a new array of elements, in order to contribute to successful communication (1975).

If we go even further, into sociolinguistics, we notice that we may even tackle the concept of interactional patterns, if we combine linguistic forms and social values, within which the message is constructed. Thus, at a pragmatic level, language users can choose whether to resort to patterns or not, or even to select the type of pattern to be employed:

> Some of their motivated choices can be pattern-reforming, and some others pattern-reinforcing. In the former case, speakers play more directly and overtly with language and they and their listeners are prompted to more evaluative viewpoints; in the latter case, communicators develop a more pregnant affective convergence. Research has found that rules for existing patterns will be conformed to rather than departed from (Ţuchel 2004: 48).

This holds valid for traditional ritualization of interaction, in the case of what we may call normal social roles and speech events, but, in difficult times as a pandemic, the whole context is affected, including these very interactional patterns and ritualization of interaction, which are both perturbed.

Yet, the rich, interdisciplinary nature of pragmatics allows us to resort to behavioural psychology, in an attempt to correct such alterations, although speech acts, as we have mentioned before, have been facing obstacles of their own.

Within applied behavioural psychology, Peter Collet provides us with very useful tools meant to help the hearer decode both the verbal and the nonverbal message, and even make predictions about the interlocutor's future course of action or discourse. He identifies a wide variety of micro- and macro-behavioural indicators, pertaining mostly to the nonverbal, but dwelling on the verbal as well, with a view to decrypting that invisible meaning that may even be hidden from the locutors themselves. Such indicators may range from very short micro-signals, called "micromomentary expressions" (Haggard and Isaacs 1996) to hidden or authentic ones, to "signature"-type indicators, or even inter-contextual ones, to predictive indicators, or those that give us away (*apud* Collet 2011: 17-30).

Indeed, behavioural patterns have proved to be predictable, once you understand what to look for, and micro- and macro-behavioural indicators play an important role in this process of discovering and anticipating behaviour and context in communication. Such a concept applies both to the people at large and to the people in control, such as boards, parties, governments, Parliaments, etc., i.e. (country) management.

Therefore, even in the absence of or considering the present-day scarcity of behavioural indicators, paying attention to some aspects that make up the overall context may prove helpful, such as the geo-political context, the socio-economic context, history and, most importantly, details of every country or individual under scrutiny. Thus, patterns emerge that usually allow for behavioural and decisional predictions not only at the level of separate individuals, but also at organization or country management level. For instance, authorities may choose to willingly 'leak' a document to the press or to the public, only to assess the reaction of the population to the measures that are to be taken anyway, although authorities take the official stand of condemning the leak and initially

stating that the document and its content only fall in the category of possibilities, not certainties (where it actually lands three days later, after having successfully assessed people's reaction to it). In such a case, the context relies heavily on being able to identify the pattern of such behaviour, but, once pattern identification occurs, context and real meaning recovery is much easier to perform.

However, we find ourselves in a very specific international context: a context of fear of contamination and of economic collapse, a mistrust in official information and a rise in conspiracy theory scenarios. How could communication fare in such troubled times? Very poorly, indeed. And it is not 19th century English hindering it, but an alteration in the very fabric of speech acts. We need to understand that part of the speech act theory is changing before our very eyes and that we must adapt it to present conditions and circumstances in communication. Or rather reconsider the contribution of behavioural psychology to the whole process. We can no longer rely on the extra-linguistic to the same extent as before, because our interlocutors now either wear masks (in the ever rarer case of face-to-face conversations), or are reduced to a small image on our phones or laptops (in the case of various platforms used for video-conferencing or online teaching). Or, even, worse, they are just reduced to voices during an audio call, in which case, besides the verbal (repetitions, choice of collocations or words, front or end focus, etc.), we are simply left with intonation, tone of voice and rhetorical or unintended breaks in their locutionary act.

Furthermore, the entire locutionary – illocutionary – perlocutionary connection is bound to undergo unexpected transformations that could never have been predicted. In such troubled times, as dealing this terrifying SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, people switch even from professional communication (which is expected from them in certain situations) to communicating the self, to steering the exchange towards a more personal approach, meant to diffuse some of the tensions they are under. For instance, I experienced this first-hand during online teaching sessions: some students felt the need to impart the news of them and/or of their parents having lost their jobs and express their feelings towards such a situation, while others made sure I understood that they needed to voice their own fears, frustrations and anxieties as a result of the quarantine and other such aspects connected to the present pandemic. They obviously needed to communicate themselves, their worries for their health and economic well-fare, rather than be 100% focused on the academic subject at

hand. Before the pandemic, this usually happened during regular office hours, when they used to come and discuss personal situations with me, either in the hope for a solution, or, most often, just to fulfil the need of being listened to. We need to adapt to that, as well, and not just coldly force them to return to academic subject matters exclusively.

Because being a professor is not just a job. And the university is not just sterile academic context. A professor should, or I dare say must, communicate himself / herself when teaching, as this is a very complex type of communication: while conversing on and debating the academic subject, we also communicate ourselves, our views, our experience, our beliefs, with a view to helping our students prepare for their future lives and careers. And, perhaps, quite often, time has shown me it is the formative role of the teacher, not the informative one, that which lingers through the years in his/her students' memories, long after they may have forgotten what the academic subject was about. It is the undeniable imprint, and a tremendous responsibility and honour in doing so, that a professor leaves on his/her students, as we are given a rare opportunity to literally touch people's lives while they are still in the process of becoming grown-ups, of becoming themselves.

Yet, this extraordinary type of communication is being affected as well: from not being able to properly see your students' faces and correctly assess language or concept acquisition, to not being able to reach some of your students who do not possess the material means to keep in touch with you because of financial difficulties. There are so many students who do not have either a laptop, or a phone, or internet connection, which should not be the reality of the 21st century we are living in. Hence, you adapt to the best of your abilities, making sure communication is still there. You call them and end up teaching or explaining concepts on the phone, you organize charity campaigns meant to provide them at least with older, second-hand electronic devices that you and other people can spare. Anything, just to make sure they keep in touch, just to make sure they inter-*text* themselves on a phone.

After all, communication can definitely be considered as a basic human necessity, in all its intricacy, with its fascinating blend of the linguistic and the extra-linguistic. I believe that this quarantine proved, without a shadow of a doubt, that people crave human interaction, and that they are willing to put up with all sorts of alterations in the fields of the illocutionary and the perlocutionary, as long as their locutionary act does

not fade into nothingness, but fulfils its original purpose, that of being received and decoded by an interlocutor. No matter the obstacles piling up in our way, we need to at least inter-*text* ourselves to (the) others, as an ultimate proof of the existence of that very self.

Hence, it becomes clear that the only thing that has always allowed us to move forward and that will continue to do so until the extinction of mankind, the main concept in this fight for the very survival of communication is *adaptability* - of language, of communication, of encoding and decoding information, of behaviour, of teaching (which simply requires more heart and soul and a more genuine student-focused approach), of reacting to all sorts of stimuli. We need to adapt to a new pragmatics and CDA both in our professional and in our personal communication, and we must understand that we have a rare, even if unfortunate, opportunity to witness verbal and nonverbal change.

This is where, unlike the 1920s, the 2020s can rely on a field of research absent 100 years ago: Neuro-Linguistic Programming, or NLP. According to Joseph O'Connor and John Seymour,

> NLP is the art and science of excellence, based on researching the manner in which successful people from various domains of activity achieve remarkable results. These communications skills can be acquired by anyone with a view to efficiently act both personally and professionally (2019: 13).

Interestingly enough, NLP has built models of excellence particularly in the fields of *communication*, business, *education*, and therapy. The best thing about NLP is its highly practical nature, as its "ultimate purpose […] is to be useful" (14-15), and the models, skills and techniques included in it are only meant to allow both locutor and interlocutor to discover what works and what does not work in communication, which obviously leaves room for improvement. For adaptability.

Moreover, to better suit people's complex needs and relying on scientific research, "NLP developed along two mutually-complementing directions. Firstly, as a process of discovering patterns of excellence in any field. Secondly, as efficient manners of thinking and communicating used by remarkable people" (26). We can, thus, notice that communication is at the core of NLP, when communicating either to oneself, or to others. In fact, communication should first start within, which would build knowledge of

one's own context, and only then move outwards, where context shifts with every speaker and with each situation.

Therefore, from the point of view of this new pragmatics that would enhance our chances at communicating our messages and ourselves, we may choose to adapt by resorting to the following useful techniques (or, rather, mind-frames):

- direct *problems* towards *objectives*;
- turn *why* into *how*;
- reposition *failure* into *feedback*;
- rebrand *necessities* into *possibilities*;
- replace *assumptions* with *curiosity and fascination* (apud O'Connor and Seymour 2019: 30-32).

NLP also supports the utmost importance of the extra-linguistic in communication, emphasizing the fact that most of the message heavily relies on the non-verbal elements of the exchange. In fact, research showed that, either when having one interlocutor, or when public speaking is involved, 55% of the impact of one's message is determined by body language (posture, gestures, face mimic, visual contact), 38% by the tone of voice, and only 7% by the content of what one is saying, i.e. the words used when speaking (*apud* Mehrabian and Farris, 1967: 248-252). Therefore, it becomes clear why we are dealing with difficulties at the level of the illocutionary, but especially at the level of the perlocutionary during such troubled times as pandemics, either in the 1920s and in the 2020s, when faced with a staggering 93% of communication taking place at the level of the nonverbal.

When overlapping this overwhelming importance of the extra-linguistic in communication, we can even think of adapting the Kübler-Ross (1997) change curve and Marian Staş's perspective on it (2015) to this very process of adapting context and the locutionary – illocutionary – perlocutionary to the pandemic at hand. In such a case, our five stages of this change curve would consist in:

1. *denial* (when people deny the necessity of adapting to a new type of communication and try to ignore the restrictions imposed),
2. *anger* (when people get angry at being forced to resort to this new type of communication resulting from the restrictions imposed),
3. *numbness* (when people simply lack the will to communicate, considering how many changes this would imply in a new context with so many restrictions imposed),

4. *early win* (or *bargaining*) (when people negotiate first with themselves and then with others and begin to realize that they can communicate again, if they adapt to the new conditions and circumstances), and
5. *consolidation*, with the emergence of a new pragmatics and an altered way of communicating.

In its turn, this change curve may lead us towards a three-stage process that would practically organize the manner in which we adapt to the new context: awareness, acceptance, and action. We first need to be aware of the on-going state of affairs in communication, then accept what is happening and what consequences this has on context and on the very process of communicating, and only then can we act accordingly and adapt to the change that is required of us.

This type of process, though, comes with its own challenges, which make it even more difficult to complete. We have to tackle intricate issues, such as changing one's mentality, teaching by example, as well as understanding and internalizing flexibility and the concepts of pragmatics and efficiency in communication. And it is adaptability that will eventually determine who stays an active and efficient actor in speech acts and speech events, and who remains passive either forever, or until inner belief or outward circumstance forces them to adapt.

If we could sum up the most important pragmatics-related things that this pandemic has definitely taught us so far, it would come down to the fact that context can change in the blink of an eye, that we crave human interaction and end up inter-*texting* our cultures, our beliefs, our realities, and ultimately ourselves, that we have the rare opportunity to witness pragmatic change within language, that we have been granted the time to turn inwards instead of being almost permanently focused on the outwards. As St. Augustine said, "People go and admire the heights of the mountains, the huge waves of the sea, the wide riverbeds, the endless shores of the Ocean or the clusters of stars, but no longer heed themselves" (*Confessions*, 8: 15). It was high time we turned within, so that we might perform better outwardly.

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The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf: Constructing Diasporic Muslim Identities in a Coming-of-Age Narrative

Lin LING*

Abstract

The paper explores the representation of diasporic Muslim identities in a coming-of-age narrative: Arab American female novelist Mojha Kahf's bestseller The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf published in 2006. It examines how the religious diasporic hybrid identity is mobilized within the female protagonist Khadra Shamy, including the ways she struggles to negotiate her identity across different cultural terrains and gendered, racialised, intergenerational configurations. It attempts to show how these literary representations construct – and help conceptualize – the ways we understand diasporic Muslims in the U.S.

The individual experiences as narrated in the novel illuminate a series of essential socio-political questions facing the community as a religious minority in a secular context. This study will address these questions through the representation of cultural hybridity in the literary narrative within the framework of postcolonial theory. It focuses on three constructs of the novel central to the conceptualizing of a hybrid identity of the female protagonist: firstly, the mirror images and moral panics that generate cultural clashes in the East-West encounter, which foreground, secondly, the predicament of an ambivalent existence of the protagonist as a diasporic individual, and thirdly, the ways she forges her hybrid identity as a New Woman within the diasporic context.

Keywords: *hybrid identity, American Muslim, post-colonialism, coming-of-age narrative*

This study explores the representation of diasporic Muslim identities in a coming-of-age narrative: the Syrian American woman writer, Mojha Kahf's novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, published in 2006. It examines how the religious diasporic hybrid identity is mobilized within the female protagonist Khadra Shamy, including the ways she struggles to negotiate her identity across different cultural terrains and gendered, racialised, intergenerational configurations. It attempts to show how these literary representations construct – and help conceptualize—the ways we understand diasporic Muslims in the U.S.

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Mohja Kahf was born in Damascus, Syria to a family of practising Muslims and migrated to the United States in 1971 at the age of four. Brought up in Indianapolis, Kahf has experienced "some of the worst years of her life" (Koon 2007: 14). These are the hard times for many of the immigrants experiencing backlashes to the post-1965 immigration tide and growing racial tension. Such experience, however, has also led Kahf to finding a voice in her writing. This semi-autographical novel by Mohja Kahf is a coming-of-age story of a Syrian immigrant girl, Khadra Shamy, who grows up in a devoutly observant Muslim family in 1970s Indiana. The East-West culture clashes, along with her encounters with practicing and secular Muslim individuals within the community with varying interpretations of Islamic codes, has compelled her to continually explore the fault lines between "Muslims" and "Americans". She goes through stages of teenage militancy, of uncertainty as her vision broadens, and of a short disastrous marriage to Juma, her overbearing Kuwaiti husband. Khadra then makes a trip to her homeland, Syria, where she begins her healing process and recovers her faith. On returning to America, she takes care to stay away from Indiana where the past traumatic experience still haunts her. Later, her job sends her back to Indiana to cover a national Islamic conference, whereby she finds signs of changes on the familiar ground and a bond with her old community.

The novel is not written as a sociological treatise intending to represent American Islam. Kahf, however, pulls us into a compelling story of the individual experience of a Muslim American girl as a triple minority in the American society. As Kim argues, "by collecting dispersed experiences and constructing them into a story, the experiences can be located as a signified unit in this society and history" (2012: 53). As such, Kahf's story provides insights into the complexity of wider issues in the lives of Muslim American community: cultural clashes between Islamic and American social mores and norms, inter-generational conflicts between first-generation Muslim immigrants and subsequent generations, race relations among Muslims with differing cultural origins and theoretical allegiances, and the varying interpretations of Islamic codes among the community. Islam, once thought to be primarily a faith alien to the Judeo-Christian tradition of the American society, has grown to be one of the most prominent and rapidly-growing religious movements in America since the 1960s and the political and cultural life of American Muslims as a religious minority has received much scholarly attention. While a wide range of socio-political studies have revealed social contexts and statistical information about the community,

textual analysis of Muslim-authored literary works will provide a research paradigm that explores the individual Muslims' emotional responses to the diaspora experience.

As discussed in this paper, the individual experiences as narrated in the novel illuminate a series of essential socio-political questions facing the community as a religious minority in a secular context: How can they reconcile their Muslim identity with the host culture in their integration into the American society? How can the basic ethics and theology of Islam be made relevant to their current conditions? What are the fears, hopes and aspirations for their social life? This study will address these questions through the representation of cultural hybridity in the literary narrative within the framework of postcolonial theory. It focuses on three constructs of the novel central to the conceptualizing of a hybrid identity of the female protagonist: firstly, the mirror images and moral panics that generate cultural clashes in the East-West encounter, which foreground, secondly, the predicament of an ambivalent existence of the protagonist as a diasporic individual, and thirdly, the ways she forges her hybrid identity as a New Woman within the diasporic context.

East-West Encounter: Mirror Images and Moral Panics

Like many diasporic writings, the novel begins with the protagonist embarking on a journey, thus establishing immediately its preoccupation with place and displacement. The journey in this narrative is used to explore a sense of individual identity, where voyages over geographical space become a metaphor for the journey into the self. The narrative begins with Khadra Shamy going back to Indiana on a work assignment. The onset of the narrative presents the image of the protagonist as a secluded woman with anxiety of displacement and her journey back enacts the retrieval of the past.

As Khadra recalls growing up Muslim in Indiana as an immigrant, the narrative revolves around the journey of her family into settlement. The scenes surrounding the cultural clashes between the Shamys and their white neighbours following their settlement, however, problematize an idealized vision of America which promises the successful realization of cultural diversity. The culture clashes range from taunts of 'raghead' by the white boy Brian, and the white neighbour Vaughn throwing glasses at their doorsteps, to the shouts from Vaughn's father to "go back where you came from" (Kahf 2006: 6-7). At times, the conflict takes the form of organized social activism, as the anti-Islamic group the American Protectors of the Environs of

Simmonsville asserts that Muslim community "will destroy the character of our town" and charges with Immigration and Naturalization authorities that the Dawah Center of Khadra's community harboured illegal immigrants (42-43). Anti-Islamism and racism become interspersed as part of everyday reality and culminate in the Ku Klux Klan violence that murders Khadra's friend Zuhura, as well as vandalism of the Islamic Dawah Center during the Iranian Hostage Crisis. Through the lens of the Muslim immigrants, the novel charts the larger anti-assimilationist trend that gripped America in the 1970s.

The novel concurrently details the culture shock and lurking dangers felt by the Shamys as new Muslim immigrants to America. Fears arise when they discover that "pork was everywhere" and it is not "merely a matter of avoiding the meat of the pig". Soon their eyes are opened to the fact that "pig meat came under other names and guises in this strange country" (12). The horror of little Khadra is detailed when she finds the candy corn her kindergarten teacher gives her to eat contains "pig", as "pig" invariably implies filthiness and even health hazards in her Islamic upbringing. And there is also Khadra's fear felt in her middle school when the bullies tear off her head scarf repeatedly, and her teachers pretend not to notice.

The contrast established between Islamic *codes* and American cultural norms is at the heart of East-West encounter narratives within the novel. This not only defines flashpoints of cultural clashes but generates a mirror image whereby Khadra's parents as devout Muslims see themselves as morally superior to Americans. As mission-minded Muslims, Khada's parents are devoted to their work for the local Dawah Center, aspiring to spread the word of the Prophet and to help fellow Muslims perfect their practice of Islam. They transported the 'home space' with them when they settled in the U.S. Like many similar emigrants, they seek to re-create nostalgically and reflectively the cultural and emotional particularities of locations and connections left behind. It does not matter to them if the practice of their religious rituals is incongruous with common practices of American society. In fact, the practices of Muslim families are portrayed as the models of a good society, which claim to represent the true essence of humanistic behaviour through a collective culture with a sense of cleanliness and morality. Khadra's mother, Ebtehaj, in this sense, provides a model of womanhood of a devout first-generation Muslim immigrant. Her sense of moral superiority and resistance to American culture are manifest in her intolerance of dogs and beers in American life, which are treated as "impurities" in Islamic *codes*, and her constant efforts to ensure that kids "didn't turn into lazy American

children" (21). She keeps on ranting when the children are found to be dirty and wet after playing outside: "Do you think we are Americans? Do you think we have no limits? Do you think we leave our children wandering the streets?" Then "she sobbed, her face twisted in grief": "We are not Americans!" (67) In this context the voices of the Muslim community are constructed to make themselves as distinct from the host culture as possible. The Islamic codes as observed by Khadra's parents thus essentially serve as a marker of difference to set boundaries between "good" Muslims and "impure" Americans. These differences become elevated, as characteristics of the 'other', and the American indigenous culture is devalued as "shallow, wasteful and materialistic" while "Islam could solve many of their social ills, if they but knew" (68). This construction of binary oppositions derived from mirror images of the 'other' further unfolds in a moral panic felt by Ebtehaj in her perception of the Americans as "a crashing sea of unbelief in which the Dawah Center bobbed, a brave boat" (67). Years later, one of the aunties in the community explained to Khadra what it was like for her parents to attempt to build a safe Islamic haven in America as a strange land. She said, "We were scared, afraid of losing something precious...of being swallowed up by this land, reduced to nothing" (405). This fear of "being swallowed up" by a strange host culture epitomizes the totalizing view of Khadra's parents of "Americans", who are homogenized into disagreeable stereotypes while the cultural differences are essentialized at the expense of commonalities and parallels, thus constructing an image of "us" vs. "them" in opposite poles.

Cultural Hybridity: A Place of Ambivalent Existence

Against the backdrop of culture clashes in a world divided between "us" and "them", a self-image conceived by the protagonist as defender of her religious faith is revealed in the narrative:

> …she'd been through at school, defending her identity against the jeering kids who vaunted America's superiority as the clincher put-down to everything she said, everything she was. Wasn't she supposed to be an Islamic warrior woman, a Nusayba, a Sumaya, an Um Slamah in exile, by the waters dark, of Babylon? (Kahf 2006: 141)

Khadra's doubts and anger reach new heights when her family goes to court for U.S. citizenship and to her, "taking citizenship felt like giving up, giving in" (141), much in the sense of betraying her Islamic identity. To Khadra's

parents, however, the decision is anything but a sharp turn. Khadra's father, for his support of the Islamic movement that sought to overthrow the Syrian dictator, was hunted as a political convict by the Syrian government and the family's 'dream of return' to homeland was thwarted downright by the political upheaval and massacre back there. In a flashback, the novel recounts the emotional turmoil Khadra goes through:

> …eleven years away from the girl who cried into her pillow at the defeat the day the U.S. citizenship papers came, caught between homesick parents and a land that didn't want her. Not just didn't want her, but actively hated her, spit her, made her defiant in her difference, yet at the same time made her unfit to live anywhere else. (391)

For Khadra, it is a moment of crisis to become conscious, more than ever, of being caught in a place of ambivalent belonging and existence – a place of origin on the one hand and a place of displacement on the other. A hyphenated identity of an Arabian American Muslim forces its way in to dismantle her self-image as an Arabian Muslim brought to America for the cause of Dawah.

While going through the emotional turmoil of identity crisis, Khadra poses as a rebellious young woman seeking radical actions. She "donned black headscarves with a surge of righteous austerity that startled her parents" as they thought a young girl "should be wearing lighter colours" (149); she hangs out with her Shia friends, "on purpose choosing to identify with the sect opposite her Sunni background" (153); and she grows "impatient with traditional Islamic scholarship, with its tedious, plodding chapters" on rituals and scorned the "moderate Islamic revival movement" of her parents and the Dawah people "for it did not go far enough down the revolutionary path" (150). In these narratives the conflicting values of her religious radicalism become entwined at the site of her individual consciousness, only under the disguise of her black-scarf defiance. As Hussain argues, "in order for hybridity to merge two cultures, a narcissistic sense of inclusion (contentment with identity) and a transgressive sense of extension (adapting to surroundings) are prerequisite conditions" (2005: 12). Khadra, however, finds herself trapped in a predicament where she can no longer feel contentment with her Islamic upbringing or the sense of inclusion with her community while concurrently reacting against the host culture.

Within the novel, Khadra's feeling of being suspended in-between cultures is further captured in her experience in the German Islamic studies

professor's class, which makes her aware that the belief system of her parents and their circle, including the Dawah Center, is "just one point on a whole spectrum of Islamic faith" and "just one little corner of it" (Kahf 2006: 232). It is "terrifying" for her, however, to find herself being caught in a flux between two conflicting sets of Islamic teachings, "the view of Islam she'd grown up knowing" and the one that "she was catching glimpses of" in her college class; she feels "as if she were standing atop two earth plates grinding as they moved in different directions" (234). As discussed in *The Location of Culture*, this is revealing of the pain and awkwardness of a diasporic individual being "continually positioned in space between a range of contradictory places that coexist" (Bhabha 1994: 47).

Much of the female protagonist's story of being torn between Islamic and American social constructions of gendered identity, revolves around the *hijab*, the emblem of Islamic womanhood. The narrative of the novel exposes how the veil is fetishized and politicized in dominant Western discourses as a sign of disempowerment and oppression of Muslim women. The hijab, as a stark marker of Islamic womanhood, tend to create binary positions – the veiled position and the feminist position, each of which has exposed sharply contrasted views on both sides of the debate. In this debate, there is no power of ambiguity or hybridity for the *hijab*: the veiled woman is either 'virtuous' subscribing to Islamic values or 'oppressed' in colonial discourse. And it is not the veil per se that is oppressive, but the way it is portrayed and reinforced in people's imaginary. One of the growing-up experiences in America that Khadra continues to recall is when she was harassed and mocked repeatedly at school for veiling. These narratives represent the dominant cultural gaze that constructs the gendered identity of the protagonist as a veiled woman in dichotomous terms.

Juxtaposed with the scenes of East-West culture clashes is the encounter between Khadra and her Iranian-American roommate, Bitsy, who freaks out when she sees Khadra wearing her veil and asks her "You're not one of those fanatics, are you?" (Kahf 2006: 363). Later it became clear to Khadra that Bitsy's parents were both killed in the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the very scene of being surrounded by Muslim women in *hijabs* with "Islamic phrases ringing out all around" her was embedded in little Bitsy's memory as "the scariest time" of her life (375). This account conveys the message that the Islamophobia is in fact rooted in a homogenized image of the Muslim community, which would invariably revitalize a politicized, monolithic stereotype of veiled Muslim women.

The Muslim veil has almost invariably become a defining feature of Muslim female subjectivity, despite the fact that it is not the only distinctive emblem of Muslim identity, nor do the majority of Muslim women wear the veil. (Scott 2007: 4). Many Americans view the Islamic head covering as the hallmark of a controversial and repressive religion (Chan-Malik 2011: 112). In dichotomous terms of neo-orientalist discourse, Muslim women are 'othered' through the fabricated images of the veil as a sign of disempowerment and oppression. On the other hand, there is a view among practising Muslims that Muslim women are valued only if they observe Muslim female dress codes. In these binary conceptions, mandatory acts of veiling and unveiling have become representations of the irreconcilable values of the old world versus the modern. Kahf works towards the unsettling of these binary constructions within the novel. Kahf challenges such neo-orientalist discourse by exploring a new narrative that "includes veiling as a particular expression of Muslim Americanesss, rather than foreignness" (Addurraqib 2006: 63). A defining moment for the protagonist was during her journey to Syria when she decided to exercise the autonomy over veiling, as she realized that:

> The covered and the uncovered, each mode of being had its moment. She embraced them both. Going out without *hijab* meant she would have to manifest the quality of modesty in her behaviour, she realized one day, with a jolt. It's in how I act, how I move, what I choose, every minute (Kahf 2006: 312).

In this narrative, acts of veiling and unveiling represent different stages in the maturation of the protagonist as a Muslim woman, and the veil is no longer associated with the sign of a "moral badge" (Ahmad 2008: 100). As Ahmad points out, the problem with the veil as an emblem of moral distinction, is its exclusion of unveiled Muslims, no matter how devout they might be. Freeing herself from the routine commitment of veiling, however, heightens Khadra's emotional attachment to the *hijab* as a sign of Islamic heritage whereby she would claim her religious identity in pride on the American land:

> She wanted them to know at Customs, at the re-entry checkpoint, she wanted them to know at O'Hare, that she was coming in under one of the many signs of the heritage. And she wanted her heart to remember, in the dappled ruffle and rustle of veiling and unveiling. How precious is the heritage! A treasure fire cannot eat. (Kahf 2006: 313).

When Khadra comes to the realization that "veiling and unveiling are part of the same process, the same cycle … both are necessary" (309), she is no longer trapped in the gulf between veiling and unveiling as binary oppositions. Rather, she finds herself in an in-between space where the true spirit of religion exists and is more at peace with her inner self. This space of ambivalent existence has afforded emancipating power for her to forge hybridity -- she becomes anew by using the power of ambivalence to create an identity that is intercultural, fluid, and potentially empowering:

> The sunlight on her head was a gift from God. Gratitude filled her…Here was an exposure, her soul an unmarked sheet shadowing into distinct shapes under the fluids. Fresh film. Her self, developing (309).

The veil, in this sense, functions as an "impetus for self-definition within a framework that allows women to be both Muslim and independent" (Droogsma 2007: 296). The protagonist, as a young woman living in a nexus between two cultures and as a member of a minority faith in the American society, is carving out a space for the development of an autonomous self with the use of this potent religious symbol. As Rhys Williams and Gira Aashi points out,

> *Hijab* carves out a cultural space for young Muslim women to live lives their mothers could barely have imagined... and still to be publicly Muslim. These young women are active agents and are able, to some degree, to create their own lives (2007: 283).

For Khadra, the act of veiling and unveiling works as a sign of autonomy and marks a step towards her maturity as an independent woman.

The Diasporic New Woman

The feminist ideal of the "New Woman" emerged in the late 19th Century and constituted a cultural and literary arm of feminist activism of the early 20th-Century America. The term "New Woman" in literary textual configuration depicted the changing image of women from the established and accepted role-model to a more radical figure. It referred to women "who exercised control over their own lives be it personal, social, or economic" (Bordin 1993: 2). Often positioned in a late 19th and early 20th century context, the term "New Woman" is also applicable to the reading of *The Girl in the Tangerine*

Scarf. The protagonist Khadra becomes a "New Woman" as she recognizes herself as an individual and chooses a strategy to overcome the pressure to conform to the role others want to see her enact. The strategy used by the protagonist as a "New Woman" involves a journey into herself, within both a psychological and a geographical context, questioning convention and tradition (Hussain 2008: 60). As a diasporic religious individual, moreover, Khadra's quest for self-identity entails negotiating differences across cultures and an exploration of her religious faith in the changing cultural contexts.

The protagonist's idealized vision of Islamic practices gradually comes under scrutiny as she grows older. The important encounter occurs during Khadra's pilgrimage to Mecca with her family. The idealization of the religion, experienced and sustained by the immigrants in the diaspora, is much exposed in this context where the Islam of the Dawah Center comes to an encounter with the Islam of Haj, and of Saudi Arabia more specifically. Khadra awakens one morning to the Adhan to a dawn prayer in a Mosque "as if to the call of love" (Kahf 2006: 166); however, she is restricted by the guards from entering the mosque because only men are allowed to pray there and women must worship at home. For Khadra, "the *Hajj* morphs from a spiritual journey into a cultural journey: she has visited the true homeland for Muslims, and she has found that she is an unwanted stranger" (Lashley 2013: 53). What further increased her sense of alienation and estrangement is the joy ride experience with her cousin's Saudi friends. They pulled off her *hijab*, harassed her and threw taunts on her, "What is it… what is the big *deal*… we're not doing anything you have to worry about... you grew up in *America* … don't tell me you never do stuff like this in America." (Khaf 2006: 177). As a girl brought up in America, she was thus 'othered' with "internalized negative stereotypes concerning American women", with "the assumption that she is American and therefore immoral and sexually permissive." (Lashley 2013, 54) These encounters on the land of Haj have brought Khadra to an awareness of the vulnerability of her idyllic world:

> And even though she was in a Muslim country at this moment, and not just any Muslim country but the Muslim country where Islam started, she had never felt so far from home. There was a nip in the air all of a sudden (Kahf 2006: 177).

As Khadra becomes aware that the wider practice of Islam is in fact divorced from her idealized vision, she begins her quest for an equilibrium that allows her to hold on to her faith while acknowledging the limitations and the

contradictions at the heart of its many practices. The novel further captures the ambivalence of her cultural hybridity that has come to the fore during her pilgrimage. For Khadra, changes in her Islamic consciousness necessarily entail realigning her conception of American identity. As she recalls later, "going overseas was what enabled her to see that she was irrevocably American", as the way she was labelled by her Saudi counterparts would constantly remind her of her American identity, although it is what "in some way she couldn't pin down" (391).

The novel presents heterogeneous images of the Muslim women of different cultural origins by exposing the protagonist to a variety of lifestyles of practicing and secular Muslim individuals. Black Muslim convert Aunt Khadija who came to Orthodox Islam by way of Nation of Islam, for instance, contests little Khadra's idea that "You have to *practice* Islam to be a real Muslim" and holds that when *Shahadah*, Declaration of Faith and Belief in Oneness of God, "enters your heart and you surrender to it, you are a Muslim" (24). There is Tayiba, a hybrid of a white American convert and a Black Muslim, who works as a volunteer for a Mosque and half a dozen Dawah committees while appearing to be a "mod" or modernist look Muslim girl in Khadra's eyes. And Hanifa, Khadra's neighbour, as the first Muslim woman in Indianapolis to be a professional driver in a car race, represents an alternative image that challenges Khadra's notion of Islamic womanhood. Among Khadra's friends, Maryam, an independent and successful assistant public defender, had "mapped Muslim space in a way new to Khadra". In Maryam's conviction, "service to the poor is service to God. That's the *Sunna*" and she does not have to be working only with Muslim issues. She believes that she is "manifesting Muslim values" in her life "by representing impoverished defendants". She contends with what her father embraces as the separatist "Do for self" philosophy of Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam[1] and stands up for an integration of black Muslims into American life (367). These models of Islamic womanhood are set within the novel as reference groups for the protagonist, which has added to her knowledge of varying paths to Muslim life in America and opened up spaces for her to explore, beyond the confines of her Islamic upbringing, her own interpretation of Islamic codes in the American context.

The protagonist's quest of individual self as a diasporic New Woman is best manifested in the account of her marriage, where she finds her life torn between the patriarchal outlook on Muslim womanhood and her own definition of gender roles in family. This dichotomy of difference constitutes

the basis for the turmoil in her marriage. The reader is witness to the awakening of a strong ego in her as she reflects on her family life:

> Where was it, this will of hers, this misshapen self? She needs to know it…It was not vain-glorious to have a self. It was not the same as selfish individualism, no. You have to have a self to even start on a journey to God… She had not taken even a baby step in that direction. Her self was a meagre thing, scuttling behind a toilet, what she hadn't given over of it to Mama, to Juma. Too much, she has given away too much. She will not give the last inches of her body, will not let them fill her up with a life she does not want. (248)

The conflict between individualism and communalism, however, builds on Khadra's resistance to the assigned gender role. She finds herself positioned against her Muslim community by initiating a divorce with Juma after choosing abortion as she is convinced that she cannot "stay with Juma without changing who I am. Who I essentially deep-down am." (243) The whole community seems to have turned its back on her for her defiance as she senses "their whispers feather around her" and "Dawah Center poster girl had fallen" (Kah, 2006: 251), which leaves her feeling "in a free fall, unmoored, safety net gone, and nothing nothing to anchor" her (265).

As R. Radhakrishnan argues, for a diasporic individual, the feeling of being impoverished and abandoned in the host country will inevitably evoke in him a homing desire, a dream of return to home (1996: 208). When Khadra felt the first part of her life "is coming to an end", and she does not know "what is yet unborn inside" (Kahf 2006: 265), she embarks on a journey to Syria, the ancestral mystical home in her memories, as distant as what she imagined in her childhood as "where the sky touches the ground" (16). A gradual metamorphosis occurs in Khadra during her journey to the shelter of her cultural roots. There Khadra comes to learn about her mother Ebtehaj from Teta, her great-aunt in Syria, who reveals stories unknown to her. Ebtehaj's secular stepmother had been harsh on her for the veil because during those times, as Teta recalls, "The city was against it, the tide was against it" (275). Teta narrates "she tried everything - she'd yank it right off her head. I heard she put it in the pot and shat on it" and she is so embarrassed to be seen in public with her veiled stepdaughter that she makes Ebtehaj walk on the other side of the street. She does not allow Ebtehaj to continue with her Quran circle and tries to force her into marrying a man "who drank and whored, just to make her misery lifelong" (276). The

revealing of the past brings Khadra to a better appreciation of her mother, who had gone through such agonies to hold on to the veil and her faith no matter what the trend was at the time. To Khadra, the veil loaded with stories of the past goes beyond a mere marker of Muslim womanhood to incarnate a heritage of Islam, "a treasure fire cannot eat" (313). As such, Khaf's attachment to her homeland and its cultural heritage is exemplified in Khadra's conception of the veil. As Regina Lee emphasizes, diasporic people, whose exile can be voluntary or forced, can display two types of consciousness in their writings. The first type is "homeland idealism", a strong attachment to their country of origin. The second type is the diasporic subjects' consciousness of being 'exotic' or 'other'. Given the minority status of the diasporic people, they may "sometimes play up the fact of their differences, highlighting their visibility" as a means to gain social acceptance and cultural identification (Lee 2004: 54) Khaf's narrative is characterized by this double consciousness as she takes pride in the cultural heritage of her homeland while expressing her difference as a strategy for acceptance. *Hijab* is inserted into this complex relationship between home, diaspora and identity to personify the problem of negotiating Muslim immigrant identity in an American context. During her journey, Khadra comes to a strong bond with Teta, whose past experience sheds a new perspective on her life. Teta had been a telephone operator among "the very first wave of working women" in Syria. Resisting the then public discourse that "a telephone girl's job was a bad thing, a thing for floozies", she joins her fellow workers in solidarity asserting their aspirations "to be the New Woman", "women who cherish themselves, women who are cherished" (Kahf 2006: 271-272). Teta reveals to Khadra how she defied her parents' disapproval of her marriage with a non-Arab immigrant and how she had witnessed the upheaval in Syria in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 when she lost her husband. Teta's narration of history shows on Khadra the virtue of fraternity and human bond as paths to God. In this context, the journey to the protagonist's country of origin is constructed as a means of self-discovery, not only through re-entry into a collective historical experience, but also an exploration of self. This journey allows Khadra to finally begin her healing process in soul-searching and leads her into finding an association with God, humanity, and self, which would be embodied in her ideal of building "a Teta-mosque" in which:

> You'd pray, then you'd listen to music and poetry and wisdom from all over the world. You'd go walking arm in arm with your counterpart in every other religion and just relate as humans under the sun. Everyone would be

> beautiful --- there'd be a special sort of lamplight that made you beautiful (328).

This idealistic picture of worship and revelation that builds on interfaith dialogues and human bonds, however, is juxtaposed with Khadra's haunting memories of anti-Islamism and racism that culminated in the murder of Zuhura in Klan violence in the 1970s. The narratives of Khadra wailing aloud on the very site of the murder years later, on her way back to Bloomington, incorporate images of dark night, broken moon, muddy creek bank with night crawlers into a scene of horror and shadowy misery. This wailing scene becomes a metaphor for Khadra's mourning over "all of the hate and hardness" that lead to culture clashes as she comes to the understanding that "there is no Oneness" of God "in all that hard separation" (429) between cultures.

Awakening in this inner light, Khadra sheds the negative feeling of being caught in the flux between cultures and moves towards an appreciation of both. With the historical setting of the narrative evolving into the 1990s, Khadra sees that there have been signs of change towards multiculturalism in American society in the new decade as school teachers are "into this new multiculturalism curriculum" and "words like 'celebrating diversity' and 'tolerance' tripped off their tongues" (378). On the other hand, there is also a movement within her old community towards social integration and further, with the second-generation Muslim immigrants coming of age, interfaith communication and ties are strengthened, which is symbolized by Khadra's younger brother Jihad's interfaith band "the Clash of Civilizations" with a mix of Mormons and Muslims. She is also aware, however, that there has always been resistance to such changes just as "every Middle Eastern crisis dredges up more American hate" (424). This reference in the narrative is particularly revealing of the impact of 9/11 on the American Muslim community. In an America traumatized by 9/11, "Muslim women who wore the *hijab* bore the consequences of blatant stereotyping." (Haddad 2007: 263). Despite the backlashes to the Muslim community, in the post-9/11 context, many Muslim women adopted the practice in an effort to represent Islam, to assume a public Islamic identity, or to define what it means to be a Muslim living in a pluralistic society. (Westfall 2016: 772). In fact, as anti-Muslim rhetoric and incidents have increased since 9/11, American Muslim women have increasingly been wearing the hijab. (Smith 2009: 108) During those hard times, the protagonist would not let go her *hijab* as "it was the outer sign of an inner quality she wants to be reminded of" (Kahf 2006: 425). She realizes

that it takes time for cultural boundaries to be tested before cultures and faiths are able to coincide in mutual respect. She emerges as a strong New Woman defining her true self as she acknowledges the importance of East and West to forging her identity.

Note

1. Nation of Islam was established in the 1930s as a semi-religious Black Nationalist organization with its members known as "Black Muslims". Since the early 1970s, under the new leadership of Wallace Muhammad, Nation of Islam has evolved from its original radical separatist stance to Orthodox Islam and integrationist Americanism with its name changed into "the American Mission".

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Once Upon a Time:
The Author Is Dead! Long Live the All Mighty Quill!

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Abstract
Perchance the world's greatest advertisement of fairy-tales, Once Upon a Time, the fantasy drama television series featured on Netflix, goes past its entertaining marketing strategies and brings to the fore one of the longest enduring and most polemical poststructuralist theories, i.e. the death of the author and the literary emancipation of characters. The aim of the current paper is to prove, above anything else, that the primary object of Once Upon a Time, the TV series can be construed as one of telling the story of the characters' literary emancipation and the inherent death of the author.

Keywords: *death of the author, literary emancipation, scriptor*

The Beginnings

> *'We know a world is an organism, not a machine. We also know that a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (a world that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world. […] My characters still exist, and in a reality no less, or no more, real that the one I have just broken. Fiction is woven into all, as a Greek observed some two and a half thousand years ago. I find this new reality (or unreality) more valid; and I would have you share my own sense that I do not fully control these creatures of my mind, any more than you control – however hard you try, […] your children, colleagues, friends or even yourself.'* (John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 1969: 41-42)

Fairy-tale characters, writers whose names are invoked in a poststructuralist present that dismisses *the author*, inking *words* that have the all *mighty power* to encage or set characters free are carefully wrought

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and wonderfully coexist in(to) the wor(l)ds of *Once Upon a Time* (2011-2018), whose producers are Edward Kitsis and Adam Horowitz.

Perchance the world's greatest advertisement of fairy-tales, *Once Upon a Time*, the American fantasy drama television series featured on Netflix, goes past its entertaining marketing strategies and brings to the fore one of the longest enduring and most polemical poststructuralist theories, i.e. *the death of the author* and the *literary emancipation* of characters.

From the first season to the seventh (conceivably, one might perceive *Once Upon a Time* and its seven seasons as faintly alluding to and resembling the Biblical story of God and the World's creation), the past of our childhood stories is continuously rewritten on the white screen of the TV set which becomes yet another stage where characters have the power (and the *qu/will*) to tell their own stories about themselves, outside of their own mind (transposed by means of a giant *collective unconscious* – the tape of the film).

As young children, we used to look for and read fairy tales mainly because they included beautifully coloured illustrations interwoven with words of uncertainty and wonder that stirred our curiosity and gave birth to *sensationalist* adventures. *Sleeping Beauties* or *Damsels in Distress*, *Princes Charming* or *Villains*, fierce *Pirates* or powerful *Wizards,* we all mimicked at least one of these characters, if not all of them as young children. And yet, our stepping into adolescence, this path we all take from childhood to maturity, brought along some sort of *amnesia* where we were bound to forget all these magic adventures until the moment when, as grownups reading the same bedtime stories to our children, we rediscovered this space of magic and mystery, and we indulged ourselves, yet again, in this land where dreams come true and the world's wisdom is collected in one single pulsating heart, the magic wor(l)d. With these fairy-tales the impossible has become possible again and the world has suddenly turned into a place of multiple coexisting heroes, each writing their own story of adventurous deeds.

Past and present, old and new, most of the characters in the series are taken out from the renowned fairy-tales of The Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen, popular European literature, Arthurian legends, and Greek mythology, as well as from Disney world. The producers of the TV series thus create a postmodernist, intertextual mix verging on the metafictional, where characters of various fairy-tales meet, interact and redesign/rewrite their fictional paths, thus transcending the boundaries

and altering the course of their original stories. If Pirandello was boldly experimental(ist) and absurd(ist) in the 1920s, sending his ready-made characters in search of an author, for the latter to write their story *exactly as it had been meant to be*, the twenty-first-century literary games translated into visual representations in *Once Upon a Time* no longer bother (*too much*) with this 'requisite'. Postmodernism has done away with it, and post-postmodernism is now reaping its fruit. Barthes's '*murder*' of the author and Foucault's turning of the latter into a mere textual function concur with fragmentation, parody and intertext in this metafictional enabling of characters to take over the story. The antiquated formulae "the king died and then the queen died" – as story – and "the king died and then the queen died *of grief*" – as plot (Forster 1927/ 2012: 61) no longer suffice. *What* 'happens' and *why* that is move to the background when *how* is decidedly coming into play. This last question is answered, in a poststructuralist manner, via discourse, whose 'agents' become the emancipated characters and the interwoven spaces that they carelessly transcend. Kings and queens may die in *Once upon a Time*, either of grief or of other (mostly magical) causes, but they are no longer peripheral because they assume the (re)writing process. *I write therefore I am*, the characters of *Once Upon a Time* might say. And since *they are*, they do not need an author to take them down the paths of fiction, though they may still cling to that imposing *morphology of the folktale* outlined by the Formalists also in the 1920s.

Just like a white page waiting for its stories to be written down, their *fictionalized space* (allegorically bordered by four *corners* (sic) of the world, i.e. *Wonderland, Neverland, Oz* and *Arendelle*) directs stories into making characters what they are, enabling or preventing protagonists from building themselves out of stories that run in parallel dimensions and sometimes overlap the fictionalized *reality* of the coastal town of Storybrooke, Maine, in the *Land Without Magic*. As such, the film becomes a *storyteller* whose purpose is not that of telling us what to think but rather of giving us food for thought on *dead authors*, providing us with new options for reading the text, empowering *readers (scriptors)* with the freedom to interpret the text on its own merits.

Magic Doors and Wishing Wells, Help Me Get to Storyb(r)ook(e) Again

> *Adoption Agent: 'I've never heard of Storybrooke'.*
> *Regina: 'Oh, it's a hidden gem. […] It's like a fairy tale.'*
> *Adoption Agent: Storybrooke, Maine is a Land without Magic.*

When interviewed by *The Hollywood Reporter,* Adam Horowitz stated that all throughout the series, their one and only drive had been that of doing "a show that had optimism at its heart" as they "felt like there was so much darkness in the world." (J. Bentley) Kitsis, in his turn, affirmed that they "like to see the world half full not half empty" and "among all the trials and tribulations of life you can preserve and find light among the darkness, (…) that ability to think that life will get better." (J. Bentley)

Jennifer Morrison, the star embodying Emma Swan, the daughter of Snow White and Prince Charming in the Enchanted Forest, told *The Calgary Herald* that the whole film is "a show about positivity and connectivity which encourages people to believe in themselves and believe the best versions of themselves and to have hope to have the life that they have" (Volmers 2018*).*

Throughout all the seasons of *Once Upon a time***,** the postmodernist concept of man's *alienation* seems to have taken the shape of a *curse of forgetfulness* meant to eventually delete the *reality* of all the characters that have ever existed in the realm of never-ending stories. The more people forget about Snow White and her Wicked Stepmother, Prince Charming and his brave deeds, Captain Hook and Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel and Ariel, or Beauty and the Beast, i.e. Rumpelstiltskin – these are but few of the characters entangled in the story –, the more these characters' lives start fading away depending on the fragile thread of people's belief in the characters' power to be outstanding. In the world of *Once Upon a time*, which is geographically marked on the map of the world as the city of Storybrooke, in Maine, stories have to be read (by real people) and stories have to be told (by characters themselves) or they die; and when they die, they will not be remembered, nor will they know who they are or what their purpose in life is.

From the beginning to the very end of the film, the story of *Once Upon a Time* seems to be gravitating around the idea that there is no beginning or no ending to a story, and each of the characters caught in it arbitrarily chooses the moment of experience wherefrom to look back on or where to look ahead. As listeners (and viewers) of the stories that get unfolded as we speak, we seem to demand some sort of redemptive act so that the one who falls be given the chance to restore their name, although we simultaneously fear the price of restoration and what that might involve.

And yet, apart from the characters' power to shape their own lives by the *power of imagination*, there is something more prevailing than that, the *all mighty quill*, a fundamental instrument of *thought* which turns narrative imagination into stories: a single strike of the pen, a single word or phrase uttered has the power to look into the future, predict, plan and explain choices made by characters at certain points in their lives. All the characters in *Once Upon a Time* are storytellers and their lives are part of a huge network of stories, which is why there is not a stronger bond between them than storytelling. They all belong, just as in Jonathan Gottschall's *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*, to "a species" and they "are addicted to story", so much so that "even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories" (2012: 9).

> All are creatures of an imaginative realm called Neverland. Neverland is [their] home, and before [they] die, [they] will spend decades there. (...) Story is for these characters 'as water is for a fish – all-encompassing and not quite palpable.' While their 'body is always fixed at a particular point in space time', their 'mind is always free to ramble in lands of make-believe. And it does. Yet Neverland mostly remains an undiscovered and unmapped country (2012: 9).

Threatened by oblivion, alienated in the modern world, all the characters who had been cursed in *Neverland* dream about their own stories, the only narrative thread that connects *Neverland* to the *real* world. As such, the stories they dream about literally make their world and when they need to change the world, they only need to change their dream-story.

Once Upon a Time, the TV series, is nothing but a matrix of fairy-tales in a new attire as it has already adapted itself to and embraced modern life: many traditional fairy-tale characters known to us since childhood have been deconstructed and metamorphosed into modern characters that mirror back the psychological demands of the contemporary audience in the postmodernist cultural environment of alienation, otherness and glob(c)alization that longs for *the enchanted* in life, activating an inexhaustible creativity.

By means of unambiguous visual and textual clichés which are kept in a well-balanced interaction, this multifaceted *narrative* has legitimized the importance of local values and led to their dissemination and serialization worldwide, one that dislocates the brevity of the tale itself which, by the *power* that has been invested in the *quill* no longer remains in

the lost world of magic but is constantly written and rewritten in a *future* which has already become a *stereotyped present*.

Leaving aside all lessons of hope and trust for a better life, the aim of the current paper is to prove that the primary object of *Once Upon a Time*, the TV series can be construed as one of telling the story of the characters' *literary emancipation* and the inherent *death of the author*.

As a rule, the *author's death* is a well reputed and equally controverted catchphrase suggesting the poststructuralist *amputation* of the author and indicating persuasively that the author does not matter; only the *text* does.

In his 1969 lecture, *What Is an Author*, Foucault assigns an entire paragraph to what he refers to as the "the kinship between writing and death" which appears to invert an age-old theme according to which most Greek epics were "destined to perpetuate the hero's immortality" (Major-Poetzl 1983: 116). He grounds his argument in *One Thousand and One Nights,* where the main motivation, theme and pretext of the *story* is to not die. Although centuries apart, it would only seem that *Once Upon a Time* shares the same motivation, theme and pretext with *One Thousand and One Nights*. Strange as it may seem, this theme, initially programmed to keep *death* at bay, has undertaken various metamorphoses so that "writing is now tied to the sacrifice of life itself" (1983: 117) and eventually "the work whose duty it was to bring immortality has now received the right to kill, to be the murderer of its author." (117)

Mighty Quill and Magic Ink, the Author's Writing in a Blink

> *'I've got the Author and I've got the ink. I wanted you to witness the moment he writes me my heart's desire' (Regina to Zelena).*

Along the lines of Foucault's allegation that "all this is known; and for quite some time criticism and philosophy have taken note of this disappearance or this death of the author"(117), in *Once Upon a Time* "the Author's true job is to record the stories, not to create them" (*Once upon a Time, The Apprentice*) alluding somehow not only to the author's implicit role of *typist* (instead of *creator*) but also to the *characters' emancipation,* since the latter now hold complete control over their own lives: "so, no matter how many stories you may have already written, you must choose each time how you will use the pen" (T*he Apprentice* to the *Author*).

Once Upon a Time does not only *dismiss* but also *invokes* the author (seen as a mere tool which engages the *quill*) because, just as with Barthes, *the death of the author* actually institutes a relation in which both the reader and the characters desire the author and impose on him what to write when things get rough and stories do not unfold according to their dreams.

In *Once Upon a Time* the author is dead, at least from a metaphorical point of view, since, as in Fowles's Chapter 13 of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, he does "not fully control these creatures" of his world: in the film series, author and characters repetitively fictionalize their own lives.

We know that "all novelists wish to create worlds as real as but other than the world that is" (Fowles 1969: 41). Correspondingly, "a world is a mechanism not a machine" and "a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (a world that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world. It is only when characters and events begin to disobey that they begin to live." (42) *Once Upon a Time* turns out to be a mechanism which is independent from its creator and where characters are constantly disobeying the *All Mighty Quill* each and every time it starts planning their world. The characters are woven into fiction and they are constantly pulled towards the reality of the creative process while keeping themselves at a distance from the illusion of the product created by the characters' world. They refuse to allow their creator his liberty and so he is morally and aesthetically bound to obey them.

On the one hand, the *All Mighty Quill* assumes the role of a god-like narrator who, since art mimics life and its endless prospects, creates what and how it pleases; on the other hand, as readers of the visual story of the characters, the viewers witness a comparable slice of life to which they need not respond, since what they read (*see*) is just entertaining food for thought (a *show*).

Like Fowles's his(s)tory, *Once Upon a Time* breaks down the irreconcilable difference between reality and its mirrored image, and manages to create a different moral and human connection between art and life for the film genre. *Once Upon a Time* plays literary games whose rules the watchers learn as the characters move on and about: there is a particular inner motivation entailed by the process of creating the fairy tale universe, one which makes authoritative demands upon the *Author*, compelling him to abandon any plans before putting *quill* to paper.

The *narrator* (the TV series) rushes to assure readers (watchers) that *he* is not disproportionately artificial or reserved, since the act of creating a

self-contained world similar to our world is a very natural act for each viewer.

Watching *Once Upon a Time* is similar to a question-and-answer session between the narrator (in this case the *TV series*) "Have I disgracefully broken the illusion?" (Fowles 1969: 42) and the readers of the visual co(n)text, constantly challenged to put the pieces of the puzzle together. And yet, since "[m]y characters still exist, and in a reality no less, or no more real than the one I have just broken" (42), one could just as easily claim that this *new reality* is the watcher's *new illusion*. For the onlookers, fiction is *'woven into all'*; on another level, they are drawn into the reality of the creative process while remaining distanced from the *illusion* of the product created, the *character's world*.

Throughout the entire series, the concept of *death* is symbolically portrayed by means of *replacement*: once fallen in disgrace for having used the quill for personal benefits, Isaac Heller, *The Corrupted Author,* is downgraded, punished and replaced by Henry Mills, *the Current Author* because, even though it can be used to change the past, the *Author's Pen* can never (be allowed to) change the past that it has not created and which characters have designed for themselves (through *literary emancipation*). Made of enchanted wood, the *All Mighty Quill* is a *magical energy*, a living, breathing entity: "pen and ink are enchanted with magic. They are so powerful I can do more than just write people's stories… I can change them." (Isaac Heller to Cruella de Vil)

As such, the *Author's Pen* is an avatar of Roland Barthes' *scriptor*; it turns into a *conceptual space* where all the countless potential meanings of the text are contained: *the magic ink* (replaceable by the blood of a person who sacrificed themselves heroically for someone else) runs through the *quill* and bonds itself to the *Author's will*/writing hand, which can be used to record people's stories or write something into existence. It can be used to rewrite someone's story or change people's memories by creating a past in their minds but, to make this possible, the ink must be infused with the Saviour's darkness (see *'Heart of Gold'*, *'Mother'*, *'Operation Mongoose Part 1'*, *'Operation Mongoose Part 2'*).

In his essay on the D*eath of the Author*, Barthes contends against the practice of reading and criticism as being grounded into an author's personality to filter meaning from the author's work. In this type of criticism against which he debates, the experiences and biases of the author serve as an absolute 'clarification' of the text. Nevertheless, for Barthes, this

method of interpretation may be deceptively uncluttered and appropriate but is, in fact, untidy and inconsistent: '*To give a text an author*' and assign a single, corresponding interpretation to it '*is to impose a limit on that text*. (1988: 167)

The Trinity

> *'To be honest, I'm looking for stories with a bit more pizazz. A great story always needs just a sprinkle of magic' (Isaac Heller).*

From the first to the last season, *Once Upon a Time* constantly challenges the practice of traditional *reading* and *criticism* as being rooted into *the author's* personality, so that the *Text*, the *Author* and the *Reader* become part and parcel of the cast of the film. The *All Mighty Text* is given the part of the *Sorcerer*, never to be seen, only to be feared because of its incommensurable authority that almost pertains to the *enchanted;* the *Author* is powerless and *dead* since it has turned into a mere typing hand and the *Reader, the Apprentice,* is almost as influential as the *Sorcerer.*

For centuries, the *Sorcerer* and his *Apprentice* have chosen an *Author*, whose sole duty is to record stories in a storybook using a magic quill and ink. With a view to finding *the story* of his career, the latest *Author*, who turns out to be a *Corrupted Author*, Isaac Heller, goes back in time as far as the 1920s, in England, where he falls in love with a charming girl, Cruella, and uses the pen's writing capacity to his personal interest: he gives her a necklace and earrings. Infatuated with Cruella, Issac asks her to run away with him; pretending to fear her scheming mother, Cruella is provided with the ability to control animals by Isaac. However, Cruella secretly steals Isaac's pen, which he only discovers after Cruella's mother, Madeline, discloses her daughter's vicious persona to him. After Cruella kills Madeline, Isaac repossesses his pen, managing to dip it into the ink bottle just before the ink splashes all over Cruella's face, turning her blond hair black and white, and changing her appearance. She suddenly corners him but Isaac manages to write on paper that she can never kill again *(*see *'Sympathy for the De Vil', 'Operation Mongoose Part 1').*

Later on, Isaac abuses his role as *Author* by manipulating the *Apprentice* into infusing Maleficent's child with darkness and expelling the baby to another realm. While Isaac is in the midst of writing in a storybook, the *Apprentice* confronts him about his interfering, to which the *Author* casually remarks that it made for a better story. Considering him *corrupt*

and *unworthy* of being an *Author*, the *Apprentice* formally asks Isaac to forfeit the pen, before banishing him into the book *('Best Laid Plans')*.

Reading Once Upon a Time with the *Death of the Author* in mind, it is easy to understand that the *Apprentice's* main goal is that of separating the storybook (the literary work) from its *creator* (Isaac Heller, the *Corrupted Author*) in order to liberate the text from interpretive tyranny, so that each piece of writing contains multiple layers and meanings. Like *Cruella* (her coat and body, i.e. her skin, her hair), *Once Upon a Time* becomes a text, "a tissue (or fabric) of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 1988: 171) rather than from one, individual experience. Like Barthes' scriptor (born out of the confrontation between *author* and *authority*), the *Corrupted Author* is no longer the focus of creative influence since he *occurs* to produce, not to enlighten the work, and "is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate" (170). Read through this lens, *Once Upon a Time* appears not to create its meaning in the past but rather in the present continuous, *here and now*, with each re-reading, because the *origin* of meaning lies exclusively in *language itself* and its impressions on the reader.

Enchanted Forests and Neverlands Keep Us Safe from the Magicless Land

> *'**Heroes and Villains** is close to my heart. It's been a passion project for longer than you would believe. I wrote it because I think folks are sick of heroes getting everything in these classic fairy tales. Hence, the radically different endings for Snow White, Prince Charming and all the rest. Something different for a modern audience. What happens when villains win the day?' (Isaac Heller)*

Intending to get rid of her sister Zelena, Regina takes the *Author's* pen from Mr. Gold, before magically carrying herself and Isaac to her vault. There, he explains the ink must be infused with the Saviour's darkness in order to rewrite a story. Realizing the darkness meant for Emma is already in Emma's friend Lily, Regina steals some of Lily's blood for the pen, so Isaac can write Zelena out of existence. However, when Regina changes her mind and backs out of the plan, Isaac betrays her by using the pen and the ink to send himself to the pawnshop, where Mr. Gold conjures another book, *Heroes and Villains*, for him to write new happy endings *(see 'Mother')*.

Isaac finishes writing the story and concludes the storybook with the words, '*The end*'. As result, a bright flash fills Storybrooke and everyone, aside from Henry, is taken into *Heroes and Villains*, where they have alternate lives *('Operation Mongoose Part 1')*. Henry unexpectedly joins the power of the pen, becoming the next *Author*. Isaac warns him that without ink, Henry isn't writing anything, but, by using Regina's blood as ink, Henry undoes all of Isaac's villainous work and reverts everything back to normal *('Operation Mongoose Part 2')*.

At a first glance, *Once Upon a Time* might seem like just another film adaptation of fairy tales and yet, apart from its being the world's most comprehensive advertisement of fairy tales, it takes us to another place, where heroes are never born heroes but strive to become heroic, and villains are always good people who have been wronged and pushed to embrace this transformation. Good is not innate and neither is evil, and behind every choice there hides the *power of the quill* in a strong relationship with the *Author's* hand. With no imperfections to be brought to light there would have been no stories to tell, and, although it is a vital human discomfort, *imperfection* is one trait of character which is required for the story to exist, empowering us to see through the eyes of others, gradually becoming the *other*.

The quill has never had one single reigning *Author*, and the *Author* needs to be morally fit to deserve its servant once he starts putting the quill to his own selfish use, he becomes unfit, is punished and replaced by another, although there are no instruction manuals on how to use the quill but one's personal *moral compass*. And, just like old times storytellers who sat and told stories by the fire, disguising themselves into their own story, the quill is magically used not only to record everyone's stories, but its own story as well.

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"Only in Dying Life": Ursula K. Le Guin's Dry Land and Its Cultural Contestations

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Abstract
In his seminal essay theorizing the concept of heterotopia, "Of Other Spaces", Michel Foucault insists that his main focus is on external spaces. However, given the ability of certain spaces, especially those associated with trauma and torment, to simultaneously be inhabited and inhabit the psyches of their denizens, it stands to reason that some heterotopic spaces are internal as well. One such example is Ursula K. Le Guin's Dry Land, an inner hellscape which appears throughout her Earthsea series. The Dry Land serves to mirror, invert, and contest not only the world of Earthsea, but also the pervasiveness of Western literary and cultural influences on the genre of fantasy itself. Inspired by classical and Renaissance sources (Homer and Dante) and modernist ones (Rainer Maria Rilke and T. S. Eliot), the Dry Land, a jarring spatial and literary aberration in the context of Earthsea's Taoist framework, serves to confront both the resistance to the finality of death and the supremacy of the Western literary canon. In doing so, it demonstrates Le Guin's desire to distance herself from Western canonical influences, while nevertheless highlighting the fact that, given the cyclicity of literary rebellion, she is, in fact, walking in Dante's and T. S. Eliot's shoes.

Keywords: *Le Guin, Earthsea, heterotopia, Dry Land, canon*

In "Of Other Spaces", Michel Foucault prefaces his classification of spaces with a note on the work of Gaston Bachelard and other phenomenologists, who, in Foucault's words, "have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous or empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps fantasmatic as well" (1986: 23). However, he concludes, while these analyses are "fundamental for reflection in our time, [they] primarily concern internal space" (23). By contrast, Foucault's main focus in this essay is "external space" (23). The question rises, of course, whether the heterotopias he defines as real spaces which exist "outside of all places" and which are "absolutely different from

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all the sites they reflect and speak about" (24) can be considered unambiguously external. For example, external spaces like libraries and museums, which occupy physical spaces and house collections of physical artifacts, also function as loci of cultural preservation and memory, conserving not only the products of a particular era and/or location, but also, ideally, its spirit and worldview. Also, in cases where no physical relics of a culture exist to be placed in the external space of a museum, a culture can continue to exist within those who have experienced it, becoming, of course, more diluted with every generation, as experience is replaced with its reconstructions. Or, in the case of oral cultures which produce few physical artifacts of importance, the culture lives exclusively within its members, so that its museums are, in fact, housed in human minds. In a grimmer example, concentration camps begin as external spaces for their prisoners, but in time the relationship between inhabitant and inhabited space becomes ambiguous and even reversed: while at first the prisoners are the inhabitants and the concentration camp the inhabited space, after a while the concentration camp starts inhabiting the prisoners. Even after the physical, external space of a concentration camp is destroyed and perhaps replaced so that no trace is left, it continues to live in its former prisoners, a dark space of fear, torment, and hopelessness. It is thus possible that 'other spaces' exist internally as well – as psychological representations of physical worlds, as Hells or Heavens, or as mysterious spaces which are the exclusive domain of the imagination.

Among the darker heterotopias postulated by Foucault are the cemetery, which he considers a "highly heterotopic place" and an example of "the other city" (1986: 25), the prison, and, according to Elana Gomel, the concentration camp (2014: 21). Dehaene and De Cauter note that "[f]rom military camps via refugee camps and from labour camps to detention centres and secret prisons, the camp is the grimmest symptom of a postcivil urbanism, which follows the disintegration of the state" (2008: 5), yet argue that heterotopia "is the opposite of the camp" (5). It is difficult to see how this could be the case, considering that camps fit neatly within the description of Foucault's heterotopia of deviation: they are 'other spaces' removed from the heart of the city, just like contemporary cemeteries, and inspire disgust and fear of illness and contamination. As argued above, although such heterotopias are external, they also insidiously occupy an internal space as well, becoming difficult or impossible to dislodge from the psyches and imaginations of those who experienced them.

From the depths of the imagination come the 'alternative worlds' of the fantasy genre (a term coined by Hunt and Lenz), which are, by dint of their fictional nature, "secondary worlds," as J.R.R. Tolkien explains: "What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator'. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter" (Tolkien 1964: 36, cited in Hunt 2001: 14). In other words, these fictional worlds are spaces of ideas[1], accessible only to the mind and only through the suspension of disbelief, and therefore not only 'secondary,' but also 'other'. Tolkien's Middle Earth, Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea and Western Shore, Terry Pratchett's Discworld, Terry Brooks' Shannara, or Philip Pullman's multiverse are examples of such secondary worlds. To further complicate matters, however, some of these worlds include alternative spaces of their own: tertiary worlds, perhaps, which are also spaces of ideas and which frequently function as a more evident representation of mental spaces than their shell worlds. Often, as is the case with Le Guin's Dry Land, Brooks' Forbidding, or Pullman's World of the Dead, they are dystopian spaces which fit the criteria of Foucault's dark heterotopias as listed above: concentration camps for tormented souls (the Dry Land and the World of the Dead) or Pandora's boxes containing (in both senses of the word) an infinite number of monstrous beings (the Forbidding).

Le Guin's Dry Land, an underworld/otherworld within the Earthsea universe where the souls of the dead, stripped of either joy or pain, languish in a state of eternal stagnation, is perhaps the most complex of the dark heterotopias enumerated above, given that it functions on two highly abstract levels. As a world-within-a-world, it is simultaneously a representation and an inversion of Earthsea itself (Foucault's mirror[2]), a spacetime anomaly, a disruption of the life-death-rebirth cycle, a perversion of magic, and a closed space which can only be accessed by those who meet special conditions (Foucault's heterotopia of deviation[3]). On the metaliterary and metacultural level, its otherness is even more evident, for the Dry Land as a notion is woven out of numerous Western literary strands, which places it in stark contrast with the Taoist architecture of the Earthsea world. As such, it functions as a covert critique of the Western (Classical and Christian) idea of an afterlife, and of the perceived supremacy of the Western literary and philosophical canon.

Although the Dry Land is introduced as early as the first book in the Earthsea series and features prominently in the third, an exact explanation of its origins does not come until the sixth and final book, *The Other Wind*,

in which it is revealed that human envy of the dragons' realm, which the latter were able to access in both body and soul, led human mages to create an artificial enclosure in "the west beyond the west" (Le Guin 2001: 227), protected by a stone wall which no one could cross – human or dragon – as the transgressors feared the wrath of the dragons. However, the endeavour has an unexpected effect: "But as the wall was built and the spell laid, the wind ceased to blow, within the wall. The sea withdrew. The springs ceased to run. […] Those that died came to a dark land, a dry land" (227-228). The implication is that immortality is an indivisible part of the natural cycle of life and the condition of living on is to become part of everything else. Any attempt to preserve the self against the laws of nature leads to an anomalous admixing of states. The result is not eternal life, but a state of suspension between life and death, which Le Guin does not directly name, but which could be considered a form of undeath.

It is important to note here that the Dry Land does not occupy a physical space, but an inner one, which can only be crossed in the mind and from which only powerful mages or those under their protection may return. Although not every incursion into the Dry Land, of which there are many throughout the series, takes place in a dream, Le Guin makes it clear that the travellers' bodies remain outside of its boundaries, and that only their minds (or souls) can cross the low stone wall. Every journey undertaken by a living being into the Dry Land is a journey into a dark part of the mind in which the self is confronted with its fears of death and dissolution, but also with the tragic consequences of a culture's inability to accept the finality of the self as it joins, transformed, the cycle of rebirth.

As per Foucault's definition, the Dry Land functions as both a representation and an inversion of the living world throughout most of the series, before its second opposite, 'the other wind' (the dragons' mysterious and infinite chronotope) even comes into play. On the one hand, its landscapes are filled with villages and cities populated by the shadows of those who once lived, which creates the illusion of uninterrupted normalcy and community, of a recognizably human realm. Yet, at the same time, its very name is antithetical to that of the living world – the Dry Land versus Earthsea – and its features reflect both literal and metaphorical inversions: whereas Earthsea is an archipelago world, both surrounded and crossed by water, the Dry Land's streams and rivers are dust; while in Earthsea, journeys over water lead to great personal transformation, in the Dry Land there are no journeys, no actions, and no changes – only stagnation. The

road towards the light, which passes through the Mountains of Pain, is forbidden to the dead, who have no journeys left to undertake.

A clear indication of this inert state lies in the fact that the stars are also strange here – different, few, and fixed, marking the fact that time is frozen: "Unmoving they shone, unwinking. They were those stars that do not rise or set, nor are they ever hidden by any cloud, nor does any sunrise dim them" (Le Guin 2012: 220). This suggests that the Dry Land is a spacetime anomaly, for one, but also that it is part of another universe. After all, these are not unmoving versions of Earthsea's stars, but different ones altogether, and it is implied that everything existing here suffers under an ill-boding star – a pronouncement of adversity and misfortune rather than an omen, since there is no future to foretell in this place.

As a result of the stillness of time, nothing happens anymore to those who enter it to stay. Even the mage Cob, whose irresponsible use of magic opens the door between the human world and the realm of undeath in *The Farthest Shore*, the third book in the series, despairs that the space "draws" him and "sucks at" him, and that inside it he is deprived of agency (Le Guin 2012: 231): "I must go through it and come back here, into the dust and cold and silence. […] I cannot leave it. I cannot close it" (231). This is due to the fact that, in his pursuit of immortality, Cob (whose name suggests either a dry husk or a spider's cobweb) has lost his place in the natural order of things and now exists "between the worlds", where there is neither life nor death (229). As Ged explains during their last confrontation, "you sold the green earth and the sun and stars to save yourself. But you have no self. All that which you sold, that is yourself. You have given everything for nothing" (231). To put it another way, had he done nothing (in good Taoist spirit) and allowed himself to stay part of the cycle, he would have become one with the earth, the sun, and the stars upon his death instead of being stuck in this nightmare. Not coincidentally, Cob is physically blind, having gouged his eyes out, and, more importantly, metaphorically blind to what truly matters and to the consequences of his actions. The result of this foolish, Faustian bargain is a sense of devouring emptiness which not even the entirety of the living universe could possibly fill and satisfy. Although he appears to wield enormous power, he is, in fact, prisoner to the Dry Land; he cannot transcend his condition or gain control over it because he is part of a frozen timespace 'bubble' where becoming is inconceivable. Ironically, he who

imagined himself master of this heterotopia of deviation has become its impotent slave.

This is a place of negation and passivity for its dwellers, the opposite of the life-death-rebirth cycle, which is in permanent motion and allows for the existence of free will and action. Accordingly, the inhabitants of the Dry Land are devoid of desire, of song, of craft, of magic, and of the ability to recognize those they once knew and loved: they stand with "quiet faces and empty hands" (220); they are "healed from pain and life", "freed from anger and desire" (221) and empty of hope; the markets are empty and still, as there is "no buying and selling here, no gaining and spending. Nothing was used, nothing was made" (220); "the potter's wheel was still, the loom empty, the stove cold" (221); "no voice ever sang" (221); mothers and children, star-crossed lovers, all pass indifferently and silently by each other. This inversion of the living world clearly has a corrupting effect on language as well, inverting the established meanings of words and turning healing and freedom, respectively, into a disease of the soul and inescapable captivity.

In addition, deep in the Mountains of Pain, hides the abomination through which life and light and magic are being sucked into the Dry Land, the door between worlds which Cob has opened. This is a "dry, dark springhead, the mouth of dust, the place where a dead soul, crawling into earth and darkness, was born again dead" (234), a grotesque, obscene inversion of Earthsea's origin story, in which life rises out of the waters, and of the process of human life itself: that which is born from the water of the womb stretches towards the light and away from the earth in which it will be buried. This inversion signals the fact that the Dry Land is a festering wound and a destabilizing fracture in the fabric of the universe, which, if not mended, will extinguish all life.

The closing of the door between the two worlds at the end of the third novel temporarily fixes an immediate problem but does not address the fundamental 'wrongness' of this aberrant slice of spacetime, which is situated 'elsewhere' and functions in frozen time. Its continued existence points to the fact that, even though various other conflicts and disruptions are resolved in the course of the series, the world of Earthsea is never free from its malignant influence. As a medical term, 'heterotopia' refers to the abnormal growth of tissue in atypical places, which therefore invites the comparison between the Dry Land and a metastasizing cancer which, in the final novel of the series, begins to spread to the world of the living.

Consequently, the destruction of the Dry Land in *The Other Wind* suggests that the mending of the world and the restoration of its natural processes and cycles can now begin in earnest.

If, on one level, the concept of heterotopia is used to explore anxieties surrounding death and the dissolution of the self, on another it serves as an opportunity to question the supremacy of Western literary and philosophical influences, as they apply to the understanding of death and to the construction of the fantasy genre. In order to grasp why the Dry Land is 'other' from this point of view, we must understand Earthsea's default framework first. According to Nora Gallagher (cited in Lindow 2012: 41), Le Guin has defined herself as "an unconsistent Taoist and a consistent unchristian". Lindow notes that "[a]s a Taoist, she does not recognize a conventional God, but mythology and deity are everywhere" in her work[4], "revealing her own attempts to make symbolic sense of the world" (41). Accordingly, the universe of Earthsea is built on a foundation of Taoist thought. It has no gods, with the exception of the Kargish pantheon, part of which is harshly contested in the second novel, *The Tombs of Atuan* (the Old Ones), and the rest largely irrelevant (the younger gods). Its governing principle is the Equilibrium, a delicate balance which is evident in the name of the realm itself (earth and sea), which implies a "balance of the powers of the physical landscape" (Cummins 1990: 25), and which is invoked in *The Creation of Éa*: "Only in silence the word, / Only in dark the light, / Only in dying life: Bright the hawk's flight / On the empty sky". Fertile silence and fertilizing word, darkness and light, death and life, movement and stillness, although opposites, are sides of the same coin, inextricably bound to each other in "a cosmic balance" (Cummins 1990: 25). Beyond this, there is an understanding that magic must be used wisely, in accordance with the fact that for every action, there is a reaction. This is why Ged's summoning of the Shadow in the first novel or Cob's attempt to control the realm of undeath in the third have disastrous consequences not only for themselves, but for the entire world of Earthsea. As Elizabeth Cummins points out, the "principle of balanced powers, the recognition that every act affects self, society, world, and cosmos, is both a physical and a moral principle of Le Guin's fantasy world" (26).

Although the concept of Equilibrium is introduced in the first book of the series, it is the third book which provides a clarification of the natural relationship between life and death in the context of the Earthsea universe – the same book which documents Ged and Arren's journey across the Dry

Land. As the Archmage Ged explains to young prince Arren prior to their descent into the otherworld, "[d]eath and life are the same thing – the two like the two sides of my hand, the palm and the back. And still the palm and the back are not the same … They can be neither separated, nor mixed" (Le Guin 2012: 95). The creation of the Dry Land enforces this unnatural separation, segregating the living and the dead, and preventing the latter from accessing the natural cycle of existence. At the same time, the opening of a hole in the world through which the sea and the light are leaking out (197) and which allows the magic of Earthsea to be siphoned into the Dry Land, represents the forbidden mixing, which, if left unattended, will turn the entirety of the world into a husk. "There are two, Arren, two which make one: the world and the shadow, the light and the dark" (174), the Archmage continues, adding:

> The two poles of the Balance. Life rises out of death, death rises out of life; in being opposite they yearn to each other, they give birth to each other and are forever reborn. And with them all is reborn, the flower of the apple tree, the light of the stars. In life is death. In death is rebirth. What then is life without death? Life unchanging, everlasting, eternal? What is it but death – death without rebirth? (174).

Arren's follow-up question points to an erroneous, hierarchical understanding of the world: "Who allows? Who forbids?" (174), and while Ged admits that he does not know, the correct answer is 'no one' – there is no supreme being ruling over Earthsea. The Equilibrium creates a state in which the cycle takes place naturally in the absence of tampering. It is precisely this human interference, in its arrogance and irresponsibility, which led to the creation of the Dry Land following the divergence of man and dragon, eons ago, and which the mage Cob exploits in his quest for immortality. Eventually, though, perhaps working through humans and dragons, the Equilibrium restores Earthsea to its naturally harmonious state in the final book.

Against this framework of Taoist thought, the fact that the Dry Land is woven out of various Western influences is unsettling. Among these influences are the ancient Greek concept of Hades, Dante's *Inferno*, Rilke's 'Land of Pain' described in his tenth Duino elegy, and T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" and "The Hollow Men". This is not a matter of interpretation, as Le Guin herself, in a February 9, 2004 interview with *The Guardian,* writes:

> The dark, dry, changeless world after death of Earthsea comes (in so far as I am conscious of its sources) from the Greco-Roman idea of Hades' realm, from certain images in Dante, and from one of Rilke's Elegies. A realm of shadow, dust, where nothing changes and "lovers pass each other in silence" – it seems a fairly common way of thinking about what personal existence after death would be, not a specifically modern one.

The Greco-Roman source that Le Guin refers to is Homer's *Odyssey*, and, in particular, Book XI, which documents Odysseus' journey into the underworld and his encounters with several souls. Undoubtedly, the image of Odysseus' ship reaching "the limits of the world" (Homer XI.2), repeated in *The Farthest Shore* as "the end of earth" (Le Guin 2012: 214) and "the last shore of the world" (216), is what inspired the title of the novel. The "certain images in Dante" come from the *Inferno*, and particularly Cantos I, III and XXXIV: the landscape, the descriptions of the torments endured by the souls of the damned, and the descent and re-emergence of Dante and Vergil, figures mirrored and inverted by Ged and Arren. While at the conclusion of the *Inferno* Vergil carries Dante out of Hell, in Le Guin's novel, prince Arren carries the Archmage, now drained of his powers, out of the Dry Land. Rather than reaffirming the strength of tradition, signified by the master, this episode marks the beginning of a transition of power: as the magic star of the Archmage sets, the secular one of the future King in Havnor rises. The specific Duino Elegy is most likely the tenth and final one, which provides a close equivalent to the Mountains of Pain, including the name, as it documents a young man's incursion into the land of the Keening/Lament people, and also supplies inspiration for the pebble which Arren finds in his pocket at the end of his journey through Hell and which serves as a reminder of the terrible weight of this place upon the world. Finally, the one source which Le Guin does not mention, but whose influence is evident, is T. S. Eliot, via two of his poems of the 1920s, namely "The Wasteland" and "The Hollow Men"; the latter, in particular, has most likely provided inspiration for the emptiness and paralysis of the souls trapped in the Dry Land.

The detached figures which "pass each other in silence", devoid of any human emotion or connection, are an important thread which passes through Homer, Dante and Eliot. The beginning of this thread can be traced to Odysseus' encounter with Achilles, who asks why the son of Laertes has descended among "the senseless dead, the phantoms of men outworn"

(Homer: XI.44), implying that the dead are now but shadows of themselves, perhaps remembered by others, but lacking any agency and will of their own. Although he has not been reduced to a gibbering apparition, Achilles admits that he no longer is a "champion under the sun, so mighty a man as once I was" (XI.47).

The thread continues through the *Inferno*, to a place where "sighs, with lamentations and loud moans, / Resounded through the air pierced by no star" (Dante: III.21-22). Of particular interest is the starless air, an image reminiscent of the Dry Land's few immobile stars or of the direct reference to "this starless space" (Le Guin 2012: 223). Here we encounter "the wretched souls of those, who lived / Without or praise or blame, with that ill band / Of angels mix'd, who nor rebellious proved, / Nor yet were true to God, but for themselves / Were only" (III.34-38) – that is, those who passed through life indifferently, neither faithful nor resistant to Dante's God, barren of passion and conviction. This is the state Le Guin chooses for all the denizens of the Dry Land, as a sign that she considers the absence of will and desire a worse fate than eternal torment.

Lastly, the thread passes through T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men", perhaps the most evident (and strangely unacknowledged) influence, reflected in the construction of both landscape and shades – symptomatic for the twentieth century. As far as the setting is concerned, Le Guin's barren, desiccated, cold space echoes Eliot's "death's dream kingdom" (20), "twilight kingdom" (38), "dead land" (39) – perhaps the most overt reference, "cactus land" (40), "hollow valley" (55), and "broken jaw of our lost kingdoms" (56), lit only by "the twinkle of a fading star" (44). The name of the Dry Land appears to be a combination of "the dead land" and "the cactus land", both in terms of meaning (cactus – dry) and sound (dead – dry). There is, of course, the insistence on "dried voices" (5) and "wind in dry grass" (8), and, once again, a reference to a pallid star – perhaps Eliot's own allusion to Dante's *Inferno*, given the similarities between the figures populating their respective Hells. Eliot expands Dante's description of the inert souls via "hollow men" (1), "stuffed men" (2) with "quiet and meaningless" (7) voices who "avoid speech" (59) because they are incapable of mustering any passion for or any opposition to anything. After all, they are not "lost / Violent souls" (15-16), but "[s]hape without form, shade without colour, / Paralysed force, gesture without motion" (11-12), incarnations of emptiness and inertia. As a nod to Homer, perhaps, Eliot's hollow men are "[g]athered on this beach of the tumid river" (60), like the

senseless dead deposited by Charon at the end of the earth. Similarly, Le Guin's dead have "quiet faces and empty hands" (2012: 220) and "there was in their shadowed eyes no hope" (221), suggesting both the absence of thought and emotion, and the abandonment, in Dantesque fashion, of all faith. More devastating than the disillusionment which both Dante and Eliot expressed towards their respective ages and towards indifference and indecisiveness is Le Guin's depiction of broken connections, and especially of those which are meant to endure the vagaries of time:

> the mother and the child who died together, and they were in the dark land together; but the child did not run, nor did it cry, and the mother did not hold it or ever look at it. And those who had died for love passed each other in the streets (221).

Given both the unmistakeable presence of these sources of inspiration, which pass from the Classical Antiquity through the Renaissance, Romanticism, and Modernism, as well as Le Guin's acknowledgment of her deliberate choices in this matter, the Dry Land becomes striking in its "wrongness" within the philosophical context of the Earthsea universe. As Mike Cadden correctly points out, the Dry Land, having been shaped by Western literary influences, stands in stark contrast to Earthsea's concept of Equilibrium, which casts life and death as sides of the same coin and which is Taoist in nature and congruous with Le Guin's own philosophical leanings. Cadden goes as far as to qualify the Western model of the Dry Land as "another trap or influence of tradition" (2005: 181). The implication of this assertion is that Le Guin, a voracious reader of Western literature and a scholar of medieval French poetry, may have walked unwittingly into the trap of familiar tropes.

Considering the lucidity with which she analyses the ways in which the first novel of the series, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, published in 1968, walks a fine line between fitting into the canonical framework of the fantasy genre, largely defined by Tolkien at that point in time, and subtly subverting the genre's assumptions about the age and race of wizards, gender stereotypes, and the nature of the conflicts a fantasy novel should depict, it is very difficult to believe that Le Guin blindly walked into an influence trap. She admits to ensuring that her novel was "conventional enough not to frighten reviewers" (2018: 128) while being a new and original kind of work. Thus, the imagery of the Dry Land is more likely to have been designed to function as a double-edged sword, meant to simultaneously induce a sense

of familiarity in her readers, many of whom would have undoubtedly been able to recognize classical allusions, and to very subtly question the undisputed supremacy of Western literary influences upon the fantasy genre. While some of today's most celebrated fantasy writers, like Andrzej Sapkowski or Nnedi Okorafor, draw freely on culturally marginalized traditions, this was certainly not the case in 1967, when Le Guin began writing *A Wizard of Earthsea*, and thus her decision to create a space which is 'other' due to its familiar Western-ness, rather than due to its exoticism, comes across as an audaciously defiant gesture. The re-emergence of the Dry Land in the sixth book, *The Other Wind*, published in 2001, and its consequent destruction, could also be interpreted as a message to her Western readers: by this point in time, Le Guin had acquired considerable clout as a highly literary science fiction and fantasy writer, and she may have decided, in her usual irreverent, no-nonsense manner, that she was done catering to old-fashioned expectations.

A third and somewhat bold possible interpretation of the Dry Land as a heterotopic space comes from the realm of geopolitics. While Le Guin used the Afterwords to her novels to engage extensively with her texts and their literary and theoretical politics[5], she did not provide, to my knowledge, a political interpretation of the low stone wall. After all, the separation of otherworldly realms from human ones is an established literary trope which facilitates the undertaking of inner journeys; the mind, with its personal Heavens and Hells, is an impenetrable bastion. However, taking into account Le Guin's deep understanding of Eastern-European history and politics, as evidenced by her *Orsinian* series (*Orsinian Tales*, *Malafrena*, and "Unlocking the Air"), there is perhaps an unacknowledged political dimension of the Dry Land, focusing on its function as a heterotopia of deviance. The stone wall could be an oblique reference to the Berlin Wall, while the isolation and stagnation of the entire realm may be an allusion to the cultural and socio-economic stasis which the region endured for five decades, separated from the rest of Europe. The destruction of the wall, which comes to pass only after the various Earthsea factions agree to work together, involves a physical dislodging of the stones rather than a magical dissolution, and is strongly reminiscent of the way Berliners chipped away at their own wall with hammers and chisels on the night of November 9, 1989. In the absence of more evidence, this interpretation remains purely speculative, although it is relevant that *The Other Wind* was published in 2001, long after the initial trilogy, and

following "Unlocking the Air" (first published in 1990), Le Guin's last Orsinian tale, in which she explores the Orsinian version of a 1989 velvet revolution. Le Guin never returned to Orsinia to delve into its transition period, but it is possible that the matter continued to preoccupy her.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Le Guin was certainly not the only writer who drew on canonical Western sources when constructing a land of the (un)dead, although her ability to design a heterotopic space which operates on multiple levels remains unmatched. Philip Pullman's version is remarkably similar, although nowhere near as jarring in its context given that his *His Dark Materials* trilogy is a subversive retelling of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. According to Richard Butler, who interviewed Pullman at length, *His Dark Materials* "has its origins in the writings of Milton, Blake and Kleist" (2007), although Pullman taught Homer extensively in the past and is unlikely to not have been influenced by the ancient poet's depiction of the afterworld. Considering that Pullman's trilogy was published between 1995-2000, two decades after the first *Earthsea* trilogy, it is also possible that he drew some inspiration from Le Guin's work, despite his avowed disinterest in fantasy (Fried).

Beyond the similarities between the Dry Land and the World of the Dead, both *Earthsea* and *His Dark Materials* contest the classical and Christian frameworks which traditionally have informed the fantasy genre, opting instead for non-Western philosophical influences (Le Guin's Taoist universe), or for a radical, jubilantly 'heretical', revision of Judeo-Christian thought (Pullman's republic of Heaven). In recent years, other fantasy and speculative fiction writers, like Nnedi Okorafor, have been envisioning futuristic and post-apocalyptic worlds which take their inspiration from African cosmology, mythology, and folklore in a manner which mostly bypasses Western templates. While Tolkien's writings, drawing on the trauma of the two world wars and the anxieties surrounding rapid modernization, echo and embrace the Anglo-Saxon nostalgia over the inexorable passing of an age, the works of these late 20th/early 21st century fantasy writers mirror the disillusionment of now-canonical authors like Dante Alighieri and T. S. Eliot with the failings of their respective ages and demonstrate a desire to leave behind the 'wastelands' of a depleted past. As they engage critically with the genre, questioning and subverting its canonical literary, religious, philosophical, and cultural underpinnings, they look ahead with joy, rather than wistfulness, to a future shaped by a more diverse set of influences. The irony, of course, is that the act of

distancing oneself from a particular tradition is not new in itself, but rather part of the cyclicity of literature and art in general.

Notes

1. Hunt proposes a different definition for "places of ideas" (2001: 13), by distinguishing between mappable worlds, which can exist in and of themselves, and whose existence can be presumed to both precede and outlast the events of a particular narrative, and worlds which "spring up, as it were, when they are needed by the action" (12), "spaces for action and allegory" (12) which do not have "a separate existence" (13). It is the latter which he describes as "places of ideas", although perhaps a more precise designation would be 'dynamic' spaces. After all, both types of spaces belong firmly to the realm of the mind due to their fictionality, regardless of their ability to come across as three-dimensional.
2. Foucault defines heterotopias as spaces "that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (1986: 24). As far as the mirror is concerned, he notes that although it is a real site, "it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy" (24) which serves to substantiate presence in the physical world by means of the illusion of presence ("shadow") created in the virtual space of the mirror. Paradoxically, one can only see oneself by examining one's ethereal, intangible double produced in the depths of the mirror, and, following its gaze, return to oneself. This is highly reminiscent of the four verses from *The Creation of Éa*, Earthsea's oldest song, which preface the first and fourth of the *Earthsea* novels: "Only in silence the word, / Only in dark the light, / Only in dying life: Bright the hawk's flight / On the empty sky". As Darko Suvin notes, the poem encapsulates the Taoist duality of the world of Earthsea. However, he also argues for "an order of preference in each verse which one suspects may harbour a hierarchy" (2006|: 489). This interpretation contradicts Le Guin's own disavowal of a hierarchical universe and relies on an understanding of "in" as "from", which the text does not justify. On the contrary, the preposition "in" serves to highlight the contrast between the elements of each pair and to imply that absence enhances presence, just like the act of dying amplifies the intensity of living.
3. Foucault explains that "[h]eterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place" (1986: 26). In the case of heterotopias of deviation, exit is also tightly regulated.
4. Lindow refers here to Le Guin's poetry specifically, but the assertion can be fairly applied to her science fiction and fantasy as well.
5. Also see Le Guin's 1992 lecture "Children, Women, Men, Dragons," later printed as "*Earthsea* Revisited".

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Cyber Experience as a Resource for Making Alternative Worlds in the Georgian Postmodernist Novel *Chewing Dawns: Sugar-Free*

Irakli KHVEDELIDZE*

Abstract

The paper analyses a contemporary Georgian novel – Zura Jishkariani's Chewing Dawns: Sugar-free. The novel belongs to the sub-genre of bio-punk. The aim of the paper is to identify the defamiliarized and ironized socio-cultural processes taking place in the contemporary Georgian society, considering the narratological concept of alternative worlds and the theoretical framework of conceptual metaphor. The outcomes of the research draw the cultural-intellectual orientations of contemporary Georgian society. Based on these two conclusions, the paper aims to find an age-long similarity between the social-political challenges of the 1920s and the contemporary problems of the Georgian society. Research has proved that numerous systems of values have been deconstructed and carnivalized by means of a play with alternative worlds. The development of the world depends on the activation of the human brain capacity, which ensures the cognition of the "higher reality". The literary text under analysis reflects current achievements in cognitive sciences. The mental trips reflect the capacity of the human brain. The text describes the protagonist's aspiration towards manipulating and stimulating the human brain. This is the only way to overcome the banality of life. The manner of narration and the idealization of the aim serve the purpose of describing the revolutionary spirit.

Keywords*: alternative worlds, conceptual metaphor, cyber experience, social protest, Georgian bio-punk*

Introduction

The twenty-first century is considered one of brain research. In this regard, great scientific progress is related to cognitive sciences. The knowledge accumulated in cognitive neuroscience, cognitive psychology, cognitive philosophy and cognitive linguistics yields scientifically grounded answers to numerous questions asked by humankind for centuries (Damasio 2018,

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Schacter 2008, Dennett 1991, Pinker 2013). Parallel to the development of cognitive sciences, artificial intelligence has been developed, turning into the main symbol of the twenty-first century. The knowledge obtained in the field of cognitive sciences raises the feeling that consciousness is complex, interesting and boundless like the universe. At the same time, scientists agree that numerous aspects of the functioning of human consciousness are still unstudied. This increases the interest towards this phenomenon (Damasio 2018). Similar scientific tendencies are revealed in science fiction and fantasy, which, in turn, are divided into subgenres, such as cyberpunk and bio-punk (McHale 2010), the latter being the topic of this paper.

The term bio-punk consists of two parts: 'bio' is related to the modern possibilities of intervention into the human brain. At the level of the plot, such fiction reflects an imaginary model of brain capacity enhanced as a result of biochemistry or surgery. 'Punk' implies the social protest described in the literary discourse (McHale 2010). Bio-punk requires additional study within the national literature created in the post-totalitarian context. This has been the reality of Georgia since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Achieving social progress has been hard since the declaration of independence (Aprasidze 2009). The bureaucrats at the head of the State, creation of the elite, who have become rich and live in luxury, have caused natural protest within different layers of the society. Bio-punk is a reflection of this protest. Besides, thanks to modern technology, the above-mentioned groups have access to communication/information; hence, they witness the increased human capacities in the modern world.

The paper focuses on Zura Jishkariani's novel *Chewing Dawns: Sugar-free* (2017). Alongside with social protest, the text shows the author's delight at the capacities of the human brain. The text under analysis is full of revolutionary spirit, resembling the spirit of texts written a century ago. In the second decade of the twentieth century, the Tsarist regime was overthrown in Russia. As a result, active social perspective was made possible due to the opportunity of higher education for all. Hence, the possibility of revealing human talent was enhanced. For instance, Georgian autobiographical texts written in the 1920s represent the delight of the autobiographers with reference to the Bolsheviks (*Lost History – Memory of Repressed Women* 2012). The authors of this period are actively involved in the implementation of these ideas. It should be mentioned that their choice

eventually became their punishment, because very soon they fell victim to repressions. The author of *Chewing Dawns: Sugar-free* protests against the reality which has been created by his ancestors. He notes the age-long uniformity of social problems. Yet, the reader feels that the author's ideas of enhancement of human capacity and of manipulation by human brain may turn into a threat facing not only a concrete certain society but the entire world.

Based on the analysis of *Chewing Dawns: Sugar-free*, the research aims to define the socio-cultural processes in the contemporary Georgian reality. It is important to draw the conclusions based on the relationships between the socio-cultural developments described in the text and the cultural developments of the 20s of the previous century. Another main aim of the research is to define the cultural and intellectual orientation of contemporary Georgian society. For this purpose, the research aims at the studying the genre peculiarities of the text under analysis and at defining its poetic aspects.

The research of the text is based on the knowledge accumulated in the field of literary studies with regard to the analysis of postmodern texts (McHale 1987). In addition, the study is based on the concept of alternative worlds (Bell and Ryan 2019). In the postmodern context, including bio-punk, epistemological issues are replaced with ontological ones. Therefore, the above-mentioned narratological concept is optimal for the analysis of the poetics of the text. Alongside the traditional means of description of alternative worlds, Jishkariani uses conceptual metaphors, which serve as the main meeting-point between the alternative worlds. The study of the aspect outlined before rests on the attitude of cognitive linguistics, which proves that metaphorical thinking forms the basis of the human intellectual system (Lakoff and Johnson 1999).

Theoretical Framework

Cyberpunk is a sub-genre of science fiction. It describes the future of the universe, every field of which is transformed by means of technological innovations: "The prefix cyber- comes from cybernetics, indicating the genre's concern with today's information technology and the '-punk' refers to the subversive outcasts and street kids the genre usually casts as its protagonists" (Walker 2008). The characters represent a marginalized layer of the society; these persons, at the same time, are full of revolutionary spirit. As a rule, in Cyberpunk, a dystopic world is described, and the

Apocalypse is announced. It should also be noted that social phenomena are defamiliarized and carnivalized by this genre. Hence, the motive described in cyberpunk is closer to cognition rather than technology (Cavallaro 2000).

For the purpose of this paper, we should quote Brian McHale: he distinguishes a subgenre of cyberpunk – bio-punk. According to McHale, this subgenre describes new, additional aspects of the ego which is devoid of coherence and integrity. In bio-punk, the electronic and mechanical surrogates of a person are replaced by a pluralized ego, an identical ego created as a result of bioengineering. The reader realizes that diverse personalities may be diffused at the conscious level. Such transformation usually takes place as a result of drug abuse, which stimulates brain neurons and causes hallucinations (McHale 2010; see also Cavallaro 2004). It should also be mentioned that bio-punk is interested in mental trips rather than spatial journeys.

Conceptual metaphor

Metaphor is a cognitive mechanism which enables a human being to perceive and realize abstract phenomena based on personal temporal-spatial experience (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Based on the analogy of mental images formed by means of sense perceptions (seeing, hearing etc.), a human being attempts to grasp abstract phenomena. Abstract phenomena also include mental processes. In order to visualize mental processes, a human being mostly uses spatial experience:

> This conceptual metaphor (or system of metaphor) uses the physical experience of mobility as a model for what the mind does. Some of its entailments include THINKING IS MOVING, IDEAS AND EMOTIONS ARE LOCATIONS, REASONS IS FORCE, A LINE OF THOUGHT IS A PATH AND UNDERSTANDING IS FOLLOWING. When we say that our minds are "racing" or "wandering", that we are "forced to a conclusion" or "moved" by someone's story, we unconsciously express entailments of this conceptual metaphor in language (Bradburn 2011, Kindle edition).

According to modern cognitive neuroscience, the separation of human body and consciousness is impossible (Damasio 1994). Thus, the basic mental images which operate the process of cognition serve to create metaphors and are related to spatial experience. The use of spatial

metaphors as a strategy of description of consciousness has been thoroughly studied by Elizabeth Brandburn (2011). For the purpose of this paper, it should be underlined that metaphor is, above all, considered here a cognitive phenomenon rather than a language phenomenon. Creation of metaphors is a sign of the functioning of the human conceptual system. The use of metaphors is an inalienable part of daily cognition (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Based on this theoretical framework, it can be concluded that the comparisons in literary texts are signs of metaphorical thinking.

Alternative Worlds as a Game/Means of Defamiliarization of Totalitarian Reality

In order to instrumentalize the concept of alternative worlds for the study of (post)modernist texts, the actual world of the text should be defined as the initial one, because it is perceptible for every character and vivid at the level of the plot. The inner worlds and dreams of different characters form alternative worlds are opposed to the actual world (Ryan 1991). Based on this concept, it is possible to study the causal system and modality of the text. The key factor developing the subject in modernist texts is the incompatibility between alternative worlds (inner worlds of the characters, their wishes, aspirations, epistemological competence) and the actual world.

It should be noted that the concept of alternative worlds in postmodern texts is no longer a tool for the relativization of the characters' inner worlds. In postmodernist texts, the world does not have a metaphorical meaning. These texts allow the parallel existence of different worlds (Martin 2019, Schuknecht 2019). The actual world consists of the physical, temporal-spatial reality, with reference to which, alternative worlds are placed on either a vertical or a horizontal line. The horizontal line denotes the overlap between the actual and alternative worlds, whereas the vertical line denotes the existence of essentially different worlds.

With regard to the text under analysis (*Chewing Dawns: Sugar-free*), one more peculiarity of postmodernist texts should be mentioned, namely, playing with alternative worlds: the readerly play involved in delineating textual possible worlds is a defining feature of "postmodernist fiction" (McHale 1987: 10), where worlds tend to be multiple, complex, or even kaleidoscopic in nature. Postmodernist fiction instantiates an aesthetics of play in which ontological questions about the sorts of worlds characters

inhabit and the ways in which readers orient themselves to these worlds constitute a central readerly concern.

The play of alternative worlds creates a kind of Carnival effect. This term, created by Mikhail Bakhtin, implies that in postmodern texts the effect is achieved by means of disorienting the reader's perception by interlinking different worlds, by the unexpected coexistence of multiple worlds. Such play of alternative worlds destroys the hierarchical system of the reader's perception, thus causing the Carnival effect (Wang 2019).

Postmodernism as a literary phenomenon is of large scale. It unites various sub-genres. The text analysed in this paper is postmodernist. Yet, as it was mentioned above, its narrow genre frame is bio-punk. Despite such differentiation, the basics of bio-punk poetics are made precise by means of the concept of alternative worlds worked out for the general purpose of the interpretation of postmodern texts.

Short Description of the Text

The main character of the text is the narrator whose name is *Alien*. The name unites two semantic codes: on the one hand, it shows the genre framework of the text – the protagonist represents a marginalized layer of society, an alien (the name in the original version is Chuzhoi, which means 'alien' in Russian). On the other hand, the name is a Russian barbarism which underlines the fact that a part of the mental journeys (trips) described in the text embraces this layer of the character's consciousness (Soviet experience).

The novel is set in Tbilisi. The main character is an active drug abuser and drug dealer. From time to time, real physical objects and phenomena are sublimated and represented as a reflection of a certain world. The plot is divided into two parts. The first part represents the daily routine of the main character and his friends in an empirical time and space, their protest against the social context and occasional mental trips caused by drug abuse. As for the second part, it entirely reflects the mental trip of the main character in the virtual space. The aim is to implement a cosmic mission, update the algorithm of the Second Coming and save the Messiah, trapped in the virtual world due to the error in the algorithm, from the attacks of gamers.

In the second part of the text, the play of alternative worlds, defamiliarization of social-intellectual layers and carnivalization are achieved by means of cooperation between the drug abusers and the

clergy, the latter being the most authoritative class of the contemporary Georgian society. They are supported by historical figures like David the Builder (an outstanding Georgian King of the 12th century). Apart from these three segments, the main character's virtual trip is supported and organized by the Soviet KGB. The Soviet experience is inseparable from the recent past of Georgian society; the Soviet past has not yet been fully realized and evaluated. Therefore, in the text, this historical level is also integrated into the process of cosmic importance – salvation of the Messiah.

When describing the mission implemented in the virtual world, attention should be paid to the use of conceptual metaphors for the creation of the computational model of social-religious processes. In order to create conceptual metaphors, the narrator uses computer terms: the main character and some clergymen called the Reformers attempt to support the Second Coming, because, in their opinion, the world must be *re-designed*. In the text under analysis, the Messiah must be saved, because there has been a*n error in the program,* and Messiah is trapped in the virtual world. In this virtual world, Messiah is left without a physical body. There is only His consciousness. Therefore, He should be transferred to some *Android* for the purpose of penetrating into the physical world.

The main character, who finds himself in the virtual world, tries to find Messiah's consciousness and save the latter from the attacks of gamers. When the main character offers the Messiah the chance to enter an Android, the latter refuses and decides to penetrate the main character's body. After the completion of the mental mission, the Messiah returns to the physical world in the body of Alien. However, it turns out that one of the leaders of the Reformers, Bishop Jobe, is a traitor who supports the bureaucrats in their attempt to prevent the change of the world. When Bishop Jobe learns that the Messiah resides in the body of the main character, he kills him with a revolver.

The Revolutionary Spirit of Cyberpunk: Social Protest and the Desire to Perceive Worlds

> "If a dance is genuine, it ends in a revolution. If it is not, at dawn the people leave the club with a severe hangover and melancholy caused by the failure of the revolution. Why are you dancing, alien?" This is the question asked by one of the holograms to the main character. What kind of revolution does the world strive for? (Jishkariani 2017: 186)

The narrator protests against a certain totalitarian regime. This is "the total control of reality". This reality is caused by two circumstances: the first is the governing of the State by bureaucrats, and the second is the failure of human beings to use their brain capacity which is activated as a result of biochemical intervention. If one of the features of classical totalitarianism was the closed border with the outer world, the context of modern totalitarianism is the enclosure of a contemporary human being in this world, the absence of the capacity to observe parallel worlds. The protest against this reality and the intellectual interest towards the authentic, diverse, boundless space of the universe/universes are simultaneously described in the text:

> According to the reformers, psychedelic visions enable us to perceive the endlessness of the world [...] and escape from the total control of reality. Once the station producing this awful drug was built on our planet. This station emanates harmful drugs into the atmosphere. As a result, we are aggressive, we are unable to see other dimensions. According to the reformers, "reality" must be annihilated so that we can see other dimensions [...] **the guards** struggle against these substances. They are afraid that people may discover other realities and find out that there is no death. In such case, the authorities will lose control, and our **line of reality** will be erased (117).

Who are the guards in the above-mentioned quotation? In an attempt to grasp the totalitarian features of daily life and perceive the relationships between abstract worlds, the narrator activates computational concepts and mental images. Based on the analogy with this experience the narrator represents the status of "our reality" within other worlds: "Our reality is a **pirate copy of another, original reality,** it is a pilot version, created for an unknown purpose [...]; it resembles **a wrongly-written code**" (114). By representing the world as a program, an algorithm, the narrator enables a human being to undergo computational operations – updating or deleting the existing reality:

> If our world is a shadow of some other world, its pirate copy, it means that it has been **copied** by someone who uses it for a certain experiment [...] Hence, from time to time **the timeline of our reality** must be visited by certain **algorithms** or **gamers**, perceived by human beings as gods, who check the situation, make the necessary corrections or, what is worse, **cancel** the line" (114).

The computational model of worlds' coexistence makes it possible to redefine the status of another element of the other reality, the transcendental being: God is represented as an algorithm governing the functioning of the timeline of our reality. Representation of the temporal dimension *in the form of a line* enables to perceive the past as part of the present. The past has not disappeared, it is intrinsically linked to the entire line of "our reality". In this context, apart from contemporary citizens, the Soviet KGB is involved in the cosmic war. According to the text, KGB is divided into two parts. One group is termed Guards of the Reality, who prevent the algorithm, God, from changing the timeline of "our reality", i.e. their aim is to postpone the Apocalypse:

> One group, known as the "Guards of the Reality", argues that we have to identify the place and cause of every intervention and eliminate all alien algorithms, so that the line of our reality is preserved. Moreover, we must try to launch a virus into the original version, so that the original, and not the copy, is eliminated. "This is the war of the worlds", declared the guards (115).

According to the text, current authorities are also part of this KGB group. They wish to preserve the timeline of the universe, i.e. preserve totalitarianism. This will ensure their luxurious life. The narrator is against such scenario.

Another KGB group is called "Reformers". Their aim is to support the coming of the Messiah, the updating and licensing of the pirate copy of "our reality". The second coming, the Apocalypse, will lead to the abolition of the totalitarian regime:

> When the stars and computer calculations proved that the Apocalypse was about to begin, both groups entered into the active phase: the Guards needed information that would help prevent the algorithm of "Second Coming" and hamper the total re-design of reality. For the Reformer, this was a chance to destroy the castles of reality and control once and forever (118).

Messiah must be transferred from the digital dimension into the physical one, and this operation can be performed by a human being who has the experience of mental travel to different worlds. According to the text under analysis, theologians have knowledge of the algorithm of the Second

Coming, but they have no experience of existence in the digital world. Therefore, they cannot perform a mental journey to the virtual world to save the Messiah. For this purpose, they use the narrator, whose brain is trained in diverse mental journeys due to a longstanding practice of biochemical stimulation. Through fictional data, the reader is allegorically indicated that the escape from the total control of our reality is possible only by means of stimulating brain capacity:

> If we observe the abusers of psychedelic substances, we see that on daily basis they visit higher forms of reality without taking account of this fact. Every day, their brain undergoes radical transformation. At certain moments, they escape from the effect of "reality" emitted into the atmosphere. [...] If they can bear such trips, their brain might withstand such transfer (120-122).

In the text under analysis, a *trip* is the key metaphor which implies a mental journey to diverse worlds. *A trip* starts after the abuse of diverse drugs.[5]

Conceptual Metaphor as a Tool of Perception of "Higher Reality"

As mentioned above, metaphorical thinking forms a fundamental cognitive system of a human being. It functions separately from the language. A human being generally uses familiar mental images in order to perceive abstract phenomena or new, unfamiliar objects. Frequently, these mental images are formed in the process of the journey within the human body. Human consciousness is inalienable from the body. In the novel *Chewing Dawns:* Sugar-*free*, the body is no longer a dominant space of cognition for the narrator. It is a kind of Avatar. Consciousness is alienated. The mental images on which conceptual metaphors are based and which serve the purpose of perception of the worlds and abstract phenomena, are formed by means of the narrator's computational experience:

> When you move around the city intoxicated, the most interesting thing is that from time to time you disappear and escape from the tissue of reality. Your body seems to be here, moving around like others, but you yourself are not present in the body. Your **consciousness is elsewhere,** while your body is simply your **Avatar**, a social android walking in the street (26).

In the previous section, I brought examples of conceptual metaphors in order to prove the revolutionary spirit of bio-punk. The narrator has

activated his computational experience in order to create these metaphors: the Second Coming as an algorithm; God as a gamer; updating of the world, its restart and re-design; launching a virus in the original version of the world and destruction of the latter. The narrator frequently activates his cyber-experience for the perception of "higher reality". I will bring several examples proving this fact: *"in my trips, terminators walk around the garden of Eden without any function or target. Without realizing what they are doing, they destroy the trail left by God and Adam. Thank God, we do not argue about whose trip is "right"* (20). This shows two worlds: the Biblical-sacral and the technological one. The Biblical world is defamiliarized by means of opposition with the technological world. Hence, the Biblical world loses the battle.

In order to underline the power of the exchange of information between brain neurons by means of synaptic nodes, with the aim of achieving the consolidation of diverse information, the narrator addresses the mental images of waves and screen. Alternative worlds and higher reality exist. However, until chemical and electrical signals are transmitted at due speed by means of neuro-transmitters in the human brain, the codes of these worlds are mechanically gathered in the brain, creating certain chaos and noise, resembling the noise of the TV screen until the antenna receives the frequency of waves which are transferred into an image:

> I am a big green grasshopper, a citizen of vast valleys and magic forests. **Antennas grow f**rom my fertile brain. These antennas sway like fans and, by means of satellite power, **catch the green waves of the universe** for the vegetation television of grasshoppers [...]. A journey in the world of Caucasian ethnogenesis ... The waves of panic block the signal, and National Geographic makes **a hissing noise on the imaginary screen** (82)**.**

The use of the metaphorical concepts of waves, antennas and the screen for the description of brain functioning is interesting from another viewpoint as well: it enables the overlap between the alternative worlds and helps create the effect of a Carnival. The mental images accumulated in the human brain as a result of daily perception in fact represent an artefact, a code of different worlds, and decoding is possible by means of changing the biochemistry of the brain. In such cases, a human being realizes the simultaneous existence of diverse worlds in one and the same plane. The choice of the world for the journey depends on "biochemistry": "your

biochemistry defines the scenario of your Apocalypse. The apocalypse of a drunkard is completely different from that of a psychonaut" (20).

Due to the overlap of the alternative worlds, on the background of simple, ordinary things, various worlds are projected in the narrator's consciousness:

> Now I am the entire city. Its streets and movements are in my body. If somewhere a car hits a tree or rusted Soviet wagons bring new parties disguised as scrap-iron, I feel this inside me [...] the fountains where the gypsies splash [...] and the asphalt melted in the August heat–these are the neurons of my brain (23).

The quotation above shows the opposition between two worlds: the clash of a car in the present reality is linked to the past militarist reality of the Soviet period. The ordinary urban reality – fountains and melted asphalt – causes the projection of the narrator's mental world. In general, by means of *projection* or *reflection,* the narrator denotes the relation between the worlds located on the vertical line. The same relation is denoted by the conceptual metaphor of the war. All this is linked to the mental Odyssey of a group of reformers aimed at the salvation of the Messiah. One half of the text is dedicated to the description of this Odyssey. When describing this mental trip, with the aim of defamiliarization, the author draws three worlds on the horizontal line – religion, Soviet reality and contemporary Georgian life. On this horizontal line, human beings use their brain for performing simple tasks. Due to this, they live in the lower reality, in the pirate copy of reality. These are the worlds that should be updated by means of the algorithm of the Second Coming.

Conclusions

The analysis of Zura Jishkariani's novel, *Chewing Dawns: Sugar-free* has proved that contemporary Georgian socio-political reality is still in a transforming state and the expectation of large-scale changes raises a revolutionary spirit. People feel that the static state is incompatible with human capabilities. Hence, they dream of a better future. In the Georgian reality of the beginning of the twentieth century, the dream was to overthrow monarchy and get rid of the spineless aristocracy. The charm of intellectual activity and the desire to overcome economic hardships by means of active social movement led to the establishing of schools, making

education available for all. Georgians travelled abroad and studied at European universities. They were delighted with Bolshevik ideas (Lenin, Trotsky); they opposed the Tsarist regime and supported the socialist revolution, the victims of which they themselves became a bit later. Zura Jishkariani's text underlines that, once again, the time has come for radical changes. The reality in which contemporary Georgians find themselves is of secondary importance. The valuable, higher reality implies a re-design of the society. A change in the current reality does not only mean economic reforms. The main aim is to develop consciousness and activate the capacity of its main platform – the brain. Sublimation and connection of diverse worlds is so convincing in the text that the reader believes in the possibility of mental trips in time and space.

Since cognitive sciences are developing at a rapid speed, discovery of new capacities of the brain will undoubtedly stimulate the development of science fiction in future. However, when reading science fiction texts, it is obvious that the technical progress and enhanced knowledge of brain capacities raise certain doubts regarding the system of cultural values created by mankind in the process of evolution. Taking into account previous examples, the scale and speed of changes pose a logical question: are these revolutionary innovations safe and, what is more, useful for humanity? The text under analysis proves that nowadays the world is roaring, just as it used to roar a century ago.

Notes

1. In 2018 Zura Jishkariani won the main literary prize "Saba". He has created several chatbots like "CyberGalaktion". He cooperates with Ilia State University and promotes such contemporary specialties as narrative design. Zura Jishkariani has participated in a literary project dedicated to the development of the memory of internally displaced people from Abkhazia (a region of Georgia which is no longer under Georgian jurisdiction and is governed by separatist authorities). Interestingly enough, with the aim of semantization of his own autobiographical memory, Zura Jishkariani applies the same strategy, which is dominant in *Chewing Dawns: Sugar-free*: the narrator autobiographer creates conceptual metaphors, the key lexical units of which represent computational terms.
2. In 1879, the "Society for the Promotion of Literacy among the Georgians" was founded in Tbilisi and was active until 1927. This society developed the educational system: schools and libraries were established. In 1918, the first university in the Caucasus was opened in Georgia. The historical overview of the society's activities is available at https://society.iliauni.edu.ge/
3. In the present article, modernism and postmodernism are treated according to McHale's conception. He argues that these terms denote poetic dominants of literary texts: The dominant of modernist fiction (classic authors: William Faulkner, Henry James and

Joseph Conrad) is epistemological, whereas for postmodernist fiction (classic authors: Samuel Beckett, Alain Robbe–Grillet, Carlos Fuentes, Vladimir Nabokov and Thomas Pynchon) the ontological is superior (McHale 1987: 6-12).

4. The text is translated into English by the author of the article.
5. With regard to drug abuse, contemporary Georgian literature reveals an interesting tendency: a marginalized main character/ narrator forms a certain typical creative image of a Post-Soviet man.

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