

TEODOR MATEOC

editor

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**Cultural Texts and Contexts in the English**

**Speaking World**

**(V)**



**Teodor Mateoc**  
editor

**CULTURAL TEXTS AND CONTEXTS  
IN THE ENGLISH SPEAKING WORLD  
(V)**



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## Introduction

### Cultural Texts and Contexts in the English Speaking World: The Fifth Edition

In a comprehensive university like ours, the field of humanities is rather narrow and often frowned upon, if not straightforwardly dismissed as elitist, financially inefficient, self-centered and tribal.

Having said that, I very much doubt whether my distinguished colleagues working in the field of hard sciences, like mathematics, physics, economics or engineering have read a Shakespeare play, although I admit the possibility that some of them saw one performed on stage. Nor am I more optimistic when it comes about my own colleagues-myself included-and their knowledge of the second law of thermodynamics!

The dichotomy was enunciated by C. P. Snow in his famous lecture *The Two Cultures*, in 1959. Snow was an English novelist but also a scientist in the field of physical chemistry and his lecture describes a state of affairs that has not changed much ever since: the gap between a humanistic culture and a scientific kind of education. And, implicitly, a somewhat idealistic belief that the gap could be bridged, by some kind of mutual transfer of knowledge, so as to have a finely balanced intellectual profile.

In an effort to recall what I had long ago learnt in my Physics lessons in high school, I did look up the aforementioned physical law, stopping short at its baffling numerical expression, but comforted to see that not even scientific theories can dispense with words! I was hoping to see whether there is some sort of connection, be it metaphorical, between what is stated as a scientific truth and our field of literary, cultural or linguistic studies.

For a layperson and a humanist, the Second Law of Thermodynamics comes down to the assertion that all kinds of energy in the material world tend towards disorder if they are not prevented from doing so. This constant increase of entropy is posited as the basic law of the universe, the fundamental law of life, ultimately. Disorder is natural, stopping it requires deliberate counteraction

The sense of the world going astray has long haunted the mind and imagination of so many writers if one thinks of Yeats's *The Second Coming*, the literature of the absurd or Pynchon's postmodernist cyberpunk fictions, but examples are in the hundreds.

Is this true at the reception end as well? For aren't the exegetic efforts to arrive at some meaning, be it provisional or personal, an attempt to freeze the chaotic flux of impressions, sensations, experiences and daily occurrences into some coherent vision, so as to make some sense of lived experience? The constraints of interpretation, the imposition of a mental grid on a particular literary text, cultural or linguistic phenomenon are, one may say, efforts to stop the dissipation of meaning, to recapture the initial creative energy and its significance.

Generally speaking, this is what happens whenever academics in the field of humanities gather together to make public their own scholarly endeavors and research. In the sphere of limitless possibilities, to make a personal statement on a text, cultural context or a linguistic phenomenon is to reverse the flow of entropy. If such a statement can only be temporary or subjective, the effort is always commendable.

The fifth edition of our international conference hosted by the Department of English at the Faculty of Letters between 24-25 of March, 2017 brought together the hermeneutic energies of the participants working in the now established areas of scholarly research:

Out of the seven articles in the *British and Commonwealth Literature Section*, four are concerned with Victorian issues. A. Dumitrescu focuses on the connection between social standing and fashion in Jane Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice' where clothing is an identity marker which "attests the belonging to a social class" and helps building "social identities".

Elisabetta Marino chose two of Rhoda Broughton's 'sensation novels' as illustrative for the way late Victorian certainties regarding gender roles, sexuality and the 'doctrine of the separate spheres' were undermined by alternative stories of "unmaidenly maiden" heroines. Such characters subvert 'traditional models of womanhood' and suggest "the ultimate possibility to be released from the shackles of social conventions".

Family relations, especially those between biological fathers, father figures and their daughters are central in Rudolph Nyari's reading of Dickens' 'Little Dorrit'. Such: separate dyads" perform their "separate symbolic roles in Victorian society" within the confining context of "family spheres", seen by the author as 'an ever changing theater of power relations'.

In her article, Eva Szekely suggests a psychogeographic reading of the once extremely popular but now quasi-forgotten (an unjustly so, she believes) comic travelogue, which is Jerome K. Jerome's "Three Men in a Boat". Such a perspective insists on the protagonists' reaction to the geographical environment", complimented here with instances of "social critique of Victorian materialism, hypocrisy and pretentiousness... seen as obstacles in the way of living and enjoying life and one's environment in an honest, meaningful way".

Adela Daniela Tigan is interested in the "connection between self and place" while commenting on two novels that belong to postcolonial literature. Displacement as migration, alienation and identity are key notions with both Hanif Kureishi and Kiran Desai's narratives that deal, ultimately with "the experience of dispersion".

The last two articles in the section deal with cross-cultural encounters: in the case of Dan H. Popescu we have the perspective of two English travellers on "the gems & beauties of Romania's pre-WWII world", while Alexandru Muica brings to our attention the somewhat forgotten short fiction of Princess Elizabeth Bibesco which would belong, in his opinion, to the genre of "impressionistic" literature.

Two of the five articles in the *American Literature* section discuss issues that would fit into the category of ethnic writing. Cristina and Liviu Augustin Chifane write about Jhumpa Lahiri's short fiction. Depending on whether we speak of the first or second generation of immigrants, these stories of displacement and acculturation exhibit, in their opinion, 'a gradual shift from restorative to reflective nostalgia'.

Eniko Maior re-reads a classic text of Jewish American fiction and concludes that in 'Call It Sleep', Henry Roth presents 'a new world that is different but, at the same time, similar to the inhabited and to the fictionalized one'.

Carson Mc Cullers unfinished autobiography reveals both 'her creative inspirations' and 'the horrors and tragedies in her life'. By linking lived experience to fiction, Mihaela Ogasanu takes us to the private space of the writer and chronicles the evolution of her literary career.

In her reading of Paul Auster's novel, Bokos Borbala takes issue with the "traditional concept of the frontier myth". Running away from the confining urban space into the freedom of the frontier 'provides an essential frame of reference for the ethos of restlessness'.

In her article, Ioana Cistelecan offers insightful comments on what came to be known as trauma literature and then looks at how the 9/11 events inspired J. S. Foer's novel, a narrative in which "national trauma is deeply connected to individual trauma".

In the *Cultural and Gender Studies* section of the conference the interest of the participants ranged from feminine/feminist or gender issues, to science fiction films, the mind-expanding effects of alcohol consumption, migration issues or cityscapes.

Nora Sellei writes about the patchwork quilt and sees its “multi-layered structure” as metaphorically illustrative for women’s self-narratives. She then looks at how this works in both a short fictional text and in a movie, concluding that in both cases we witness a reinterpretation of the aesthetic “from the perspective of gender politics’. By drawing on women’s experiences, traumas and wisdom, these narratives ‘provide a textual-political code which has a function in the text rhetorically and thematically alike’.

’Muslim-ness’ and Australian identity’? Jillian Curr examines a memoir of a Palestian-Australian writer and focuses on the ’contentious issue’ of the headscarf, largely seen in the West as symbol of female oppression by a controlling Muslim patriarchy. On the contrary, we read, a growing number of Muslim women would disagree: instead of being ’a symbol of male oppression oppression, it is liberating in that it protects women from the male gaze which reduces them to a sexual object’.

Andrada Marinau’s article is concerned with Victorian fashions. As expected, this is a time when “clothing styles were dictated by propriety and English garments were a sign of respectability” and also “a type of language, sending signals to others about their class, status and attitudes”.

The next article takes us to very recent, twenty-first century issues. By commenting on several science fiction movies, Iuliana Borbely is interested in the way they depict the connection between technological progress and emotions. These utopian/dystopian future worlds, she argues, are focused on’ how humans respond to...changes and whether they can or are willing to retain their human nature under challenging circumstances’

The psychedelic function of opium, wine and, mostly in the Slavonic space, vodka.is discussed in Andrzej Dorobek’s article. He considers the case of several well and less known European authors and works, including examples from his native Polish culture with the intention of arriving at “some vital cultural generalizations’.

Variety of topics and diversity of approach are key features in the field of cultural studies, as illustrated by the last two articles in this section: the first deal with “migrant issues” looking at the fate of first and second generation of Italian migrants during the Depression years. According to Delia Maria Radu, Mario Puzo’s novel exhibit some of the general issues to be found in this kind of writing: ‘the mixed

reception....in the country of arrival’, ‘racism and hostility’, and ‘the sense of rootlessness and the search for identity which can result from displacement and cultural diversity’.

The second is home-bound and investigates, “through gender lens” the familiar space of the city of Oradea. Giulia Suciú believes that urban, ‘social space ceases to be indistinguishable from mental and physical space’. By focusing on the issue of advertising, she concludes that although this is “meant to persuade consumers to buy products, it does more than sell products: it sells “*values and concepts*’.

Two out of the seven articles gathered under the heading *Language and Translation Studies* examine the challenges of translating either in and from Romanian, especially when it comes about cultural issues and humor. Madalina Pantea looks at some very recent and popular American TV comedies and holds that ‘the translation of cultural specifics.....constitutes one of the most challenging areas of intercultural transfer, to the extent that cultural references are traditionally regarded in the literature as being ‘untranslatable’. Is the situation different when we deal with a literary text? By looking at the English translation of one of the most remarkable contemporary novels, Dana Sala is of the opinion that “Blinding. The Left Wing” is a work of art which follows every breath of the original” (M. Cartarescu’s ‘Orbitor’) “and recreates in English the same waves of language and the same explosions”. Her paper considers then some “translation techniques with a special focus on the theme of the double, also relevant for the condition author-translator”.

Somehow related to the previous two articles is Adina Pruteanu’s semantic and pragmatic considerations on the elusive notion of ‘meaning’. Her article focuses on the difference between lexical meaning contained in the ‘content’ words and grammatical meaning expressed by ‘function’ words’.

Relative words and relative or adjective clauses is the topic of Claudia Leah’s article. The focus is mainly on the ‘structures, positions, confusions and differences’ related to these syntactic constructions. Relatively ‘uncomplicated at first sight’ they may ‘raise difficulties in understanding and use’, the author believes.

David Finbar Brett’s article stands out in its method and novelty of approach. By using corpus linguistics techniques, a field of studies in the ‘embryonic stage’, he considers the issue of character interaction in three Shakespearean plays from the perspective of Social Work Analysis.

The last two articles are concerned with innovative teaching methodologies. In the first, Titus Pop shows how our reading experience and comprehension can be intensified by the use of the augmented e-book, ‘a digital textbook accompanied by sound, timelines, video shows,

maps, digitalized manuscripts or links'. He also provides a teaching plan for 'introducing literary texts to the "digital natives", as the new generation is called nowadays'.

Last, but not least, Laura Rebeca Stiegelbauer article is a feedback on her experience as a CELTA trainee. The outcome is multiple: refreshing my teaching methods, getting closer to the needs of the...learner and enabling students to understand more and have the desire to learn more English'.

*Teodor Mateoc*

**BRITISH AND COMMONWEALTH  
LITERATURE**



## Physiognomy of Fashion in Fiction: Jane Austen

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**Abstract:** Clothes, hairstyles and make-ups are considered nonverbal signs. The relation between the body and clothes, between clothes and their accessories can deliver additional information about the person who wears them. Beauty and clothing are in close relation during these times and also in “Pride and Prejudice” where marriages were often fixed according to the family's social status and outward appearance.

**Key words:** attire, fashion, social class, appearance, conventions

We live in a period of time characterised by visual images when people are usually judged by their *appearance*<sup>1</sup> because the first impression is rendered by the outward look. The artefacts refer to the communicative value of clothes and accessories. Everyone is responsible for his/her physical appearance and for the first impression provided by the personal aspect and clothes that are considered to be a symbol of the social status.

The attire represents what Goffman (1974) calls the element of the formal behaviour which is revealed by the allure, clothes and style and which can provide to the entourage the personality of the respective person. By his/her outfit a person can create a personal image which is made strictly speaking for being gazed upon.

Clothes, hairstyles and make-ups are considered nonverbal signs. The relation between the body and clothes, between clothes and their accessories can deliver additional information about the person who wears them. It is well known that the information from the outward look is used to interpret feelings, attitudes, moods and emotional states. Sometimes, even if we don't talk with a stranger, we may still get some information about him/her through the nonverbal cues, such as clothes, accessories, and gestures. The hierarchy of a society is clearly marked

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<sup>1</sup>the state, condition, manner, or style in which a person or object appears; outward look or aspect <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/appearance>

creating obvious distinctions between different social classes. People of noble origin labelled their rank as apparently as possible. Emblems, attire and accessories are all used to display their power and dignity.

The topic of social class is a central theme in *Pride and Prejudice*. Therefore, fashion has a dominant implication within the text as it embodies the social class of the person. The characters in *Pride and Prejudice* used to dress in the style of the Regency Era. Printed cottons in white or pastel colours became favoured by the middle and upper classes. Women of that period used to wear comfortable dresses which consisted of long flowing muslin dresses similar to the ones worn in ancient Greek and Roman times.

Balls were great opportunity for young ladies to meet new suitors and show off your wealth through wardrobe. For example, when Mrs. Bennett recounts the important events from the first ball to her uninterested husband she speaks about the appearance of Mr. Bingley's sisters: "Oh! my dear," continued Mrs. Bennet, "I am quite delighted with him. He is so excessively handsome! and his sisters are charming women. I never in my life saw anything more elegant than their dresses. I dare say the lace upon Mrs. Hurst's gown —"(Austen, 1994:13). Mrs. Bennet is obsessed by the charm of these women whose wealth is reflected by their clothes admired by all.

Beauty and clothing are in close relation during these times and also in *Pride and Prejudice* where marriages were often fixed according to the family's social status and outward appearance. In the novel, Jane is quickly labelled as not only the most beautiful of Bennet sisters but also of the whole town. Mrs. Bennet is sure that Jane will attract the attention of Mr. Bingley with her beauty and this is also confirmed by the others. Mr. Darcy tells his friend, Mr. Bingley, that he is "dancing with the only handsome girl in the room". The latter agrees saying: "Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld!"

Beauty was not only highlighted for women of *Pride and Prejudice*, the men were characterised both by their wealth and look. Mr. Bingley was described as being "quite young, wonderfully handsome, extremely agreeable [...] Nothing could be more delightful." (9). He was the perfect husband for any single daughter because he had wealth and beauty. When Jane and Elisabeth talked about their impression on Mr. Bingley, the latter said that "he is also handsome, which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete". (Austen, 1994:13). Even Elizabeth, the more intrusive of the two, realises the importance of looks. Mr. Darcy was also admired for his appearance and wealth. He was very attractive and actually he was richer than Mr. Bingley:

Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance of his having ten thousand a-year. The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley. (Austen, 1994:10)

Fashion and beauty are present all over the story but not only in a positive light. For example, Mr. Darcy, despite his fine qualities, has a rude behaviour and makes insulting comments about Elizabeth. Based on his first impression of her, he seems too proud to express any interest: "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me." (Austen, 1994:11)

Austen enjoys painting her characters with visual precision regarding taste and colour, however in her novels the description of the physical appearance of the characters uses general terms, allowing the reader to image any detail of them. In *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Bingley observes that Elizabeth is "very pretty".

Using an aesthetic terminology in describing her characters, our novelist "directs the reader's attention to the act of viewing and its ultimate subjectivity in creating couples united in their affections". (Volz, 2017:38) The schematic images have the role to awake the reader's mind eye in order to create the reality of the story.

Austen uses physiognomy in order to emphasize the moral qualities through physical description. But the more the characters know each other the more their look become unimportant.

In chapter eight, Elisabeth walks to Netherfield to care her sister Jane who was very sick. This part of the novel is important in the emphasis of fashion and beauty, because Lizzy is ridiculed by Miss Bingley and Miss Hurst. She is labelled to have "no conversation, no style, no taste, no beauty". (30) They criticised her because she walked three or four miles alone and got her clothes dirty, showing little class in their eyes. She is perceived as being unsuitable for any gentlemen because of her independence and her careless appearance, contrasting their fancy clothes and fashion sense. In conclusion, fashion and beauty are both extremely important in Austen's society heavily influenced by money, particularly in regard to young women pursuing marriages for the sake of financial gain.

"I have an excessive regard for Jane Bennet, she is really a very sweet girl, and I wish with all my heart she were well settled. But with such a father and mother, and such low connections, I am afraid there is no chance of it."

"I think I have heard you say, that their uncle is an attorney in Meryton."

"Yes; and they have another, who lives somewhere near Cheapside."  
"That is capital," added her sister, and they both laughed heartily."  
"If they had uncles enough to fill *all* Cheapside," cried Bingley, "it would not make them one jot less agreeable."  
"But it must very materially lessen their chance of marrying men of any consideration in the world," replied Darcy."(30-31)

During Austen's time, societal conventions dictated that a woman's petticoat, which was worn so closely to her body, ought to be kept in the utmost condition of cleanliness. Therefore, when Mrs. Hurst remarks, "Yes, and her petticoat; I hope you saw her petticoat, six inches deep in mud" (30), Caroline, the gentlemen listening to the conversation, and Austen's contemporary readers understood this statement's implications. Margalit comments on this statement: "By indicating that Elizabeth's petticoat is "six inches deep in mud," the sisters insinuate that it contrasts with the accepted norms of modesty, the rule being "that garments next to the skin should be white, to conform with the purity of the mind" (Cunnington 20, quoted by Margalit n.p.).

In disapproving Elizabeth's dress, the Bingley sisters were not only criticizing Elizabeth's provincialism, but also suggesting to Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley who were present during this scene, that Elizabeth showed an outrageous disrespect for the conventions of female propriety and modesty. The Bingley sisters are therefore invoking social convention to condemn Elizabeth. Of course, divergence from social conventions will only provide grounds on which to criticize Elizabeth if the sisters themselves place a great deal of importance on adherence to social conventions.

Austen utilizes this dialogue between the Bingley sisters to reveal, not only Elizabeth's character, but also the character of the sisters. Margalit states, "Their censure of Elizabeth, using her appearance as ammunition, is ironized by the text, ultimately reflecting on the soiled and superficial nature of their own ostensible gentility rather than on Elizabeth's honor" (n. p.).

The Bingley sisters thought that, by being violent supporters of social propriety and what it dictated in regard to women, they were triumphing over Elizabeth, but, in reality, it showed their blind obedience to the limits society and their narrow-mindedness. Margalit summarises it: "By noting the socio-cultural significance of the petticoat at the time *Pride and Prejudice* was written we are able not only to understand why the Bingley sisters insistently refer to it, but also to pick up on the ironic undertone of the dialogue which foreshadows the text's final rejection of mock propriety, propriety that has everything to do with appearances and nothing to do with true gentility" (n.p.).

In fact, Elizabeth remains an attractive heroine (both to Mr. Darcy and to Austen's readers) in large part because her principles give her something to fight for.

The characters whom Austen paints in a negative light are caught in their society's system and do not think to question it. However, examining their behaviour allows us as readers and critics to question this system of conventions, which is likely a part of Austen's intention in writing. Elisabeth is not only the one who is imprisoned in the social conventions of the day. Mrs. Allen (*Northanger Abbey*) is her opposite because she is far more concerned with fashion and dress.

Austen states that,

Dress was her passion . . . our heroine's entrée into life could not take place till after three or four days had been spent in learning what was mostly worn, and her chaperon was provided with a dress of the newest fashion" (965). Mrs. Allen also takes so long in dressing that Catherine does not get to the ballroom and the dance till the room is crowded (965).

Love of fashion dominates Mrs. Allen's thoughts and occupies her actions. Mrs. Allen's passion for fashion, however, is not limited to having fashionable dress for herself. Her desire always to have the newest fashions also makes her jealous of anyone who is more in sync with the latest dress than herself. For example, upon meeting her old acquaintance Mrs. Thorpe, Austen states that, "Mrs. Allen was now quite happy . . . She had found some acquaintance . . . and, as the completion of good fortune, had found these friends by no means so expensively dressed as herself" (973).

The subject of fashion also influences Mrs. Allen's attitude toward others. Fashion and dress were part of suitable subjects for the contents of a woman's mind, due to the fact that they were trivial and consequently not dangerous. The female's preoccupation and skill in such a subject as fashion apparently did not impress Jane Austen. In portraying Mrs. Allen's obsession with the latest dress and fashion, Austen is marginalizing her character, because she thinks that her heroine is more concerned with the clothes which covered her body than with the mind.

Within the social interactions, clothes can offer accessible information which allows the creation of characters' portrait- physical and spiritual. The connection between the person dressed and the society that proposes a dressing code can be measured according to the main changes which alter the clothing system. A woman's outfit has a major importance because it expresses the social status and moreover her personality. The aspect of the clothes establishes a borderline between the rich and the

poor. This is the reason for the idea that clothing attests the belonging to a social class and it helps build social identities. Jane Austen portrays this prejudice in her novel *Pride and Prejudice*, where the clothing that one wears defines how they are perceived and thus their overall rank in society. Elisabeth is the character who fights against this prejudice and succeeds in life due to her mind and not to her appearance.

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## “Unmaidenly” Maidens: Rhoda Broughton’s Controversial Heroines

Elisabetta Marino

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**Abstract:** Together with conduct manuals and domestic novels, celebrated literary works such as *The Angel in the House* (a narrative poem by Coventry Patmore, first published in 1854)<sup>1</sup> and ‘Lilies. Of Queen’s Garden’ (John Ruskin’s 1864 celebrated lecture) forcefully contributed to moulding the Victorian feminine icon of untainted purity, graceful composure, and flawless perfection that every proper lady strived to conform to. While constructing women as morally superior to men yet intellectually and physically inferior, both Patmore and Ruskin also validated the assumptions that lay behind the so-called *doctrine of the separate spheres*, thus relegating the consecrated Vestals of the “temple of the hearth” (Ruskin 1865: 91) to the sheltered (albeit stifling) domestic environment, where traditional standards of respectability and decorum could be easily enforced. Furthermore, contemporary medical treatises on female sexuality played an important part in fostering the Victorian ideal of self-sacrificing, ethereal womanhood, by convincingly arguing that, unlike prostitutes, dignified ladies were positively immune to sexual excitement and thoroughly indifferent to sensual pleasures.

**Key words;** Victorianism, sexuality, conventions, gender, fictional genre

In the words of William Acton (1865: 134-135), a highly reputed physician, “a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband’s embraces, but principally to gratify him; and, but for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved from his attention. [...] The married woman has no wish to be treated on the footing of a mistress”.

Starting from the 1860s, however, what came to be known as the *sensation novel* (a mass-produced and mass-consumed kind of narrative that appealed to the *senses* of a wide-ranging readership, across social classes) began to challenge gender expectations, besides exposing their

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<sup>1</sup> Patmore’s work was inspired by the innumerable qualities of his first wife, Emily Augusta Andrews, who was an author of children’s stories; she bore the poet six children, before she died in 1860.

obvious limits. Due to their huge popularity especially among women (the most avid consumers), sensation novels were regarded with growing anxiety as potentially threatening social stability, since they turned modern-day, seemingly untouchable, upper-class British homes into the privileged sites of contemptible crimes: murder, forgery, arson, adultery, bigamy, infanticide. Moreover, the most vicious and ruthless offenders featured in their lurid plots were cherub-like, blond and blue-eyed maidens, whose immaculate, untarnished appearance clashed against their dissipated nature and rapacious appetites, thus insinuating that the *angel in the house*, with her countless virtues mirrored in her innocent and delicate façade, could be an artificially fabricated, counterfeit product.

Compared to an infectious disease<sup>2</sup> by Henry Longueville Mansel who, in 1863, thundered against the widespread “craving for this kind of unnatural excitement” (1873: 250) from the columns of the *Quarterly Review*, “the feverish productions” of “the school called sensational” (Oliphant 1867: 258) were severely censored by Margaret Oliphant, in her famous article on contemporary novels published in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, in 1867. After blaming both women writers – for concocting such poisonous, addictive plots – and female readers – for “accept[ing] as a true representation of themselves and their ways the equivocal talk and fleshly inclinations herein attributed to them” (Oliphant 1867: 275) – she reminded them of the “duty of invaluable importance to [their] country and [their] race” (Oliphant 1867: 275) their sex had long been entrusted with: “the duty of being pure” (Oliphant 1867: 275). Hence, in her view, in order to patriotically protect the welfare of Great Britain, the abominable specimens of perverted womanhood showcased in sensation novels had to be replaced with more wholesome and truthful paradigms of femininity.

Rhoda Broughton (1840-1920) was singled out by Margaret Oliphant as one of the disgraceful *queens of circulating libraries*, together with Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Ouida. An economically independent, refined and cultivated lady (the daughter of a clergyman, as well as being Sheridan Le Fanu’s niece), Broughton chose to pursue an artistic career and never considered marriage as a possible option. In the time-span of fifty years, therefore, she published twenty-six, acclaimed novels and several short stories, thus earning quite a comfortable living from her pen.

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<sup>2</sup> As Mansel (1873: 249) pointed out, “Regarding these works [*sensation novels*] merely as an efflorescence, as an eruption indicative of the state of health of the body in which they appear, the existence of an impure or a silly crop of novels and the fact that they are eagerly read, are by no means favourable symptoms of the conditions of the body of society. But it is easier to detect the disease than to suggest a remedy”.

Focusing on her first two novels, both released in 1867, namely *Not Wisely but Too Well* and *Cometh up as a Flower*, this paper sets out to explore the way the author subtly undermined and eventually subverted traditional models of womanhood, by introducing her readership to *unmaidenly* maidens, whose carnal desires were neither suppressed nor concealed. Aiming to secure substantial profits from the sales of her volumes, however, Rhoda Broughton strived to please even the most conservative among her readers. Accordingly, the controversial heroines’ violation of the Victorian rules of propriety was apparently chastised by the writer at the end of both narratives, given its unavoidable connection with a lethal disease that, like a Biblical plague, either corrupted the body of society (in *Not Wisely but Too Well*), or caused the female protagonist’s untimely death (in *Cometh up as a Flower*). Nonetheless, as this essay will try to demonstrate, far from signifying the author’s intention to finally refrain from deviance and endorse conformism, illnesses and epidemics paradoxically provided her leading characters with the ultimate possibility to be released from the shackles of social conventions, thus enabling them to choose an alternative ending for their own story.

Even though *Not Wisely but Too Well* was composed well before *Cometh up as a Flower* (the novel was allegedly written in just six weeks, in 1863), it was rejected in favour of her second, supposedly less scandalous literary endeavour by Richard Bentley, and eventually published by his competitor, William Tinsley, in the conclusive months of 1867 (Marino 2016: 4). The initial part of the narrative is set on the Welsh coast, where the orphaned protagonist, Catherine Chester, and her two elder siblings lead quite an uneventful life, hosted by their uncle. At a ball, Kate falls *unwisely* in love with Colonel Dare Stamer, a dangerous but fascinating man she is on the verge of eloping with. Nevertheless, when he confesses that, in a moment of weakness, he has already married a loutish woman below his station, disappointed Kate moves with her sister Maggie to a town on the outskirts of London where, repentant of her misdeeds, she becomes a *district visitor*, a volunteer charity worker. There, she deepens her friendship with two men, who both end up fancying her: a long-time acquaintance, James Stanley (a clergyman and a volunteer himself), and her own cousin George. During a visit to the Crystal Palace, Kate runs into Dare Stamer, who persuades her to flee with him the following day. Alerted by her tell-tale, odd behaviour, James talks her out of her self-destructive plan. After recovering from an access of brain fever (caused by her profound emotional distress), Kate devotes all her energy and efforts to helping James in his fight against a rapidly-spreading malaria epidemic which, in the end, causes his own death. After a hasty courtship, Maggie and George announce their intention to wed;

the day before the ceremony, during a party, Dare Stamer is injured in a carriage accident and dies in Catherine's arms. At the end of the story, she decides to join the Sisters of Mercy and, as readers gather, she peacefully passes away a few decades later.

Twenty-year-old Kate Chester is definitely *not* an angel-like character: she is “not a beauty” (Broughton 2013: 49); she is endowed with “a great deal, though no miraculous quantity [... of] neither wholly red nor wholly brown” (Broughton 2013: 49) rippling hair; her ordinary green eyes – “not peculiarly luminous or eloquent” (Broughton 2013: 49) – are only lit up with “the torch of passion” (Broughton 2013: 49). Quite unlike her slender and elegant sister, graced with her “17-inch wasp-waist” (Broughton 2016: 55), she is rather plump, as a result of her voracious, unladylike appetite. Her trasgressive passion for Colonel Stamer, “a dissipated, self-indulgent man” (Broughton 2013: 67), is certainly *not* stirred by his high moral and intellectual stature<sup>3</sup>: quite the opposite, she is thoroughly captivated by his muscular body “much developed in many a boxing-match” (Broughton 2013: 67), by his “iron-thewed, gladiator form” (Broughton 2013: 89), by his “herculean shoulders” (Broughton 2013: 92), elsewhere in the novel described as “Atlas-like” (Broughton 2013: 269). Physically excited, dazed at her own “wild, mad, reckless fervour of passion” (Broughton 2013: 66), Kate eagerly surrenders to what the anonymous narrator of the story (an old-time, undeclared suitor of the young lady) jealously defines as “that muddy, polluted flood of earthly love” (Broughton 2013: 66). Assimilated several times to a “siren” (Broughton 2013: 69, 361), a “sorceress” (Broughton 2013: 151, 325), or a “little witch” (Broughton 2013: 77, 95, 151), Faust-like Kate would even exchange the eternal blessings of heaven (which, however, she is *not* remotely interested in) for some more precious moments with her lover:

O, such a minute as that would overpay centuries in hell! I could make a bargain this minute that I should have Dare all to myself for just one month—to be with him always—that he should love me as I love him (ah, no, he could never do that!)—but that he should love me just a little, as I have so often fancied he did—that I might be everything to him, as he is everything to me, just for one month, only a month, and then to die and live in tortures for the countless ages of eternity—why, I'd do it this second, that I would, without a moment's hesitation. (Broughton 2013: 89-90)

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<sup>3</sup> He is described as “a bad man” who “had not done one atom of good to any human being, but, on the contrary, had done a good deal of harm” (Broughton 2013: 67).

At the request of her publisher, Rhoda Broughton had to tone down and erase some of the most shameful and explicit descriptions of the two lovers’ encounters. Consequently, as Helen Debenham (1996: 14) has elucidated, in *Not Wisely but Too Well* the protagonists’ erotic impulses are strikingly displaced onto nature, which acts as a mirror. The scene of the first kiss is set in a conservatory, an artificially created garden of Eden where “gorgeous, stately flowers” (Broughton 2013: 133) exhibit their exotic graces with no affected modesty, “reveal[ing] their passionate hearts, fold after fold” (Broughton 2013: 133), the way Kate herself would love to shed her garments. The girl’s reprehensible desire for defloration is symbolically projected onto the lush, tropical blossoms, with their exhilarating scents, their voluptuous softness, and tantalizing colours: “Kate was in ecstasies. She ran hither and thither, smelling first one, and the another. ‘Delicious!’ she cried. ‘wonderful! I wish I was gardener here. Flowers are one of the very few weak points in my character. O, O!’” (Broughton 2013: 134). It is not by chance, therefore, that the second occasion to be lured by Dare Stamer into a sinful liaison takes place at the Crystal Palace, immediately after visiting the Exotic Court, with its hot and “luxurious” (Broughton 2013: 265) climate and its “tropical plants, big-leaved and spiky, flourishing and greening under the cold glass dome” (Broughton 2013: 266), an image that well captures the natural, fleshly impulses encapsulated and inhibited by decency and a severe moral code. Be it said incidentally, the Crystal Palace itself, standing as a landmark to Victorian innovation and grandeur, was also frequently perceived as a disquieting and transgressive space, where men and women from all social classes could meet without restraint, thus alarmingly blurring every boundary.

As Pamela Gilbert (1997: 116) has argued, Kate’s sexual passion (or her unclean and polluted thoughts, to paraphrase Mansel and Oliphant) “is figured forth as disease, and, as she works to cure herself, she actually spreads contagion wherever she goes”. Indeed, the very minute she recovers from a brain fever (originated from her strenuous resistance to temptation), an infectious illness seems to pass from her enfeebled frame to the body of society. Remarkably enough, the epidemic is compared to a tropical plant, the most commonly employed emblem of exuberant – and therefore *improper* – sensuality in *Not Wisely but Too Well*: “Fed by the fog, and the river mist, and the warm drizzle, the fever shot up like a tropical plant, from an infant into a full grown giant” (Broughton 2013: 310). Herself immunized against contagion, Kate may be held indirectly responsible for the death of the men who loved her: Dare Stamer (in a fatal accident) and James Stanley, who regarded her as a temptress, as a feverish distraction from his philanthropic activities, to

such an extent that he read her warm letters holding them “between his finger and thumb, as if cholera, typhus, and small-pox lurked in every fold of them” (Broughton 2013: 247).

Kate Chester’s hasty decision to eventually become an Anglican nun has been interpreted by Pamela Gilbert (1997: 65) as a “carnavalesque reconciliation of opposites” since, traditionally, conversion narratives and sensation novels (albeit a peculiar kind of sensation novel, given the absence of a criminal plot and the focus on sensual self-expression) were believed to be separate and conflicting genres. Nonetheless, Kate’s unconvincing resolution to turn into a Christian penitent actually adds another insightful facet to her transgressive, vibrant and untameable personality. Instead of following in the steps of her elder sister, who quietly settles for a convenient marriage and “having fulfilled her destiny, may sit down and grow fat and comfortable over it” (Broughton 2013: 373), she finds a valuable, more exciting alternative that grants her respectability as well as an extraordinary freedom of movement and a capacity for action certainly unknown to any *angel in the house*. As Kate observes, “I must go and find some work in the world to do” (Broughton 2013: 374): “With the protection of the name and dress I shall have, I may go anywhere unmolested; that is an undisputed fact” (Broughton 2013: 350).

Despite the general perception of *Cometh up as a Flower* as a less unconventional and outrageous text<sup>4</sup>, Rhoda Broughton’s intention to violate borders and evade cultural and social strictures can be detected in the very choice of the genre(s) the narrative can be ascribed to: a combination of sensation novel (for its sexual innuendoes and forgery plot), conversion narrative (in the conclusive section), *Bildungsroman* (or “aborted *Bildungsroman*” according to Pamela Gilbert [2010: 19]), and domestic fiction, considering the importance attached by the author to sisterly relations. As Caroline Martin (2015: 5) has underlined, this mix of distant genres anticipates one of the most thought-provoking hypotheses advanced in the volume, namely the fact that “female identity is [...] multilayered and not able to be written off into so simple a category as ‘angel in the house’”. The subtitle of *Cometh up as a Flower*, however, further reveals that, in truth, the novel is “an Autobiography”, presumably composed by the protagonist, Nell Lestrangle, in the last days of her life.

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<sup>4</sup> In a letter to Richard Bentley dated July 3, 1866, Geraldine Jewsbury (one of the official readers and reviewers for Bentley’s publishing house) had deemed *Not Wisely but Too Well* immoral and inappropriate: “an improper book as bad as any French novel” (Heller 2013: 379). Hence, in a letter to Richard Bentley, written on December 30, 1866, Rhoda Broughton wished that her newly submitted volume (*Cometh up as a Flower*) would “avoid offending [his] Reader’s delicate sense of propriety” (Heller 2013: 381).

The first-person narrative form implies an unusually *active* role on the part of the main female character, who refuses to be silenced by patriarchal social norms and values, and grows into a responsible agent of her own destiny (however tragic), eager to publicly share a story worthy to be told (conversely, as mentioned before, Kate Chester’s vicissitudes in *Not Wisely but Too Well* are related by a male narrator).

The plot is centred on nineteen-year-old Nell, the younger daughter of the decayed but ancient Lestrange family, who dwells in a dilapidated mansion in the English countryside, together with her elderly father, Sir Adrian (a widower), and her sister Dolly. One night, while wandering through the nearby churchyard, she accidentally glimpses Major Dick M’Gregor (a handsome but poor dragoon) and she is immediately attracted to him. They officially introduce one another at a party and, after a number of clandestine meetings, they become secretly betrothed. Nell strenuously resists the courtship of Hugh Lancaster, a well-to-do, middle-aged gentleman with a bent for hunting. When Dick is stationed in Cork and neglects to reply to her copious letters, however, she unwillingly accepts to become Hugh’s wife, hoping at least to restore her father’s health by paying off his debts. Quite the opposite, Sir Adrian passes away immediately after the wedding, leaving her forlorn and miserable. Eventually, when Major M’Gregor steals into her house to bid her a final adieu before being posted to India, Nell realizes that Dolly had cunningly forged her handwriting in a farewell letter address to him, which would rid her sister of an embarrassing lover, besides pushing her into Hugh’s wealthy arms. After initially harbouring revengeful thoughts, Nell forgives Dolly, who blissfully marries into an affluent family. At the end of the novel, Nell dies of consumption, aged twenty-two, like a flower picked well before time.

Even in *Cometh up as a Flower* the heroine does not remotely conform to the canons of Victorian beauty and innocence. She is quite an awkward young woman: unusually tall – she is “five foot six inches” (Broughton 2010: 124) –, with a mass of “untidy ruddy locks” (Broughton 2010: 42) matching her “lobster”-like (Broughton 2010: 40) complexion<sup>5</sup> when she blushes. Her “potato face” (Broughton 2010: 53) is dominated by “a wide mouth” (Broughton 2010: 51), and she gladly wears handed down clothes coupled with the “most unladylike glove[s], perforated with many holes” (Broughton 2010: 81) she does not care to mend. Her “not angelic temper” (Broughton 2010: 104) generates what

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<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere in the novel, she is once again debased to the rank of an animal; commenting on her own lack of sense of humour, Nell says: “when I attempted to be funny, it was like a cow standing on her hind legs—nobody could understand what she would be after” (Broughton 2010: 82).

her father scornfully defines as an “unmaidenly behaviour” (Broughton 2010: 73) which, rather inconveniently, prompts her to fall in love with a peculiarly coquettish and effeminate soldier, whose sturdy, Viking-like body is also characterized by “yellow love lock[s]” (Broughton 2010: 212), “so curly as to excite in envious, lank-haired brother officers a suspicion [...] of the agency of tongs” (Broughton 2010: 55). Unchaperoned, Nell freely meets Dick at late and improper hours of the night: enthralled by passion, she “forget[s] to be scandalized” (Broughton 2010: 107), while candidly admitting that, impatient to feast on his beauty, she would go to “meet him in a dungeon, in a charnel, in death’s stronghold itself” (Broughton 2010: 122). Like Kate Chester, she even rejects heaven as a tedious place, since bodily encounters are not contemplated: “when we meet next, shall we be two bodiless spirits, sexless, passionless essences, passing each other without recognition in the fields of ether? God forbid that it should be so” (Broughton 2010: 106). As a married woman, she unsuccessfully begs Dick to take her with him to India, since she would “rather go to hell with [her lover], than to heaven with [her husband]” (Broughton 2010: 300).

Compared to *Not Wisely but Too Well*, in *Cometh up as a Flower* the character of the protagonist’s sister plays a much more significant part. Apparently, Dolly is the epitome of what a young lady was supposed to be. She is first presented on stage as:

a very fair woman to look upon; a small oval face, liquid brown eyes that had a way of looking up meekly and beseechingly, that no man less self-contained than St. Senanus could resist, a little sharp cut nose absolutely perfect, a sweet grave mouth, and an expression nun-like, dove-like, Madonna-like; she looked as if her life must be one long prayer. (Broughton 2010: 50)

However, the remark that immediately follows this portrait of more than earthly perfection – “I do not think it was though, or if it was it was a prayer said backwards” (Broughton 2010: 50) –, discloses Dolly’s real, treacherous nature, thus introducing the two interrelated subjects Rhoda Broughton provocatively wished to delve into: the fabrication of the Victorian angel, and the marriage market. While the *unmaidenly* maiden Nell honestly expresses her natural feelings for both her lover and her beloved father (whom she tries to relieve from the burden of debts by selling her only costly belonging, a watch with a jewelled case), every gesture, every word, every action performed by Dolly is calculated to achieve her goals and to satisfy her boundless greed. When her mother dies, she immediately takes possession of all her jewels, pretending they

are cherished tokens of remembrance; when her father also departs, she cries a little “but not enough to disfigure herself”<sup>6</sup> (Broughton 2010: 283), while quickly collecting china and other valuables before creditors come calling. When Dolly first gets engaged, she carefully selects a “pink-eyed young man of immense property” (111) who, quite unpleasantly, passes away one week before the intended wedding day; when she eventually seizes her prey, she manages to marry a Lord and, as she coarsely observes, “Lords with £80,000 a year don’t grow on every hedge; it is worth while eating a little dirt for one of them, isn’t it?” (Broughton 2010: 321). The seemingly pious angel, with her revealing “black hair coils” (Broughton 2010: 238), shows her serpentine and blasphemous nature when she declares she would sell her very soul for gold (Broughton 2010: 234); in her opinion, “money! Money! Money is power; money is a god!” (Broughton 2010: 204). Moreover, referring to her forgery, she even invents the *eleventh commandment*, “peculiarly appropriated to a woman’s use. ‘Thou shall not be found out’” (Broughton 2010: 317). Far from being a submissive daughter, a dutiful sister, and a selfless companion, therefore, Dolly demonstrates that the *angel in the house* may be an artful construction and that “conventionality”, in the words of Lindsey Faber (2006: 157), “is the biggest act of all”.

On the other hand, Nell becomes a sacrificial victim of the marriage market, harshly criticized by Rhoda Broughton who, for herself, chose celibacy and independence<sup>7</sup>. When manipulative Dolly persuades her to marry into money, in order to save the financial situation of her family, Nell feels like an animal going to slaughter, her flesh sold to the highest bidder (Hugh Lancaster): “[I] feel as if I were going to have a leg or an arm cut off, and as if Hugh was the operator” (Broughton 2010: 258). His romantic proposal is called a “business” (Broughton 2010: 259) and her wedded life “a bondage” (Broughton 2010: 263), since she will be just another “occupant of [his] seraglio” (Broughton 2010: 306). Sadly enough, Nell turns into a fine piece of commodity “worth [her] price” (Broughton 2010: 275), into the “property” (Broughton 2010: 269) of her sole master:

has not he every right to kiss my face off if he chooses, to clasp me and hold me, and drag me about in whatever manner he wills, for has he not bought me? For a pair of first-class blue eyes warranted fast colour, for

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<sup>6</sup> Conversely, Nell cries herself “into a state of semi-insensibility” (Broughton 2010: 283), since she experiences genuine grief at her loss.

<sup>7</sup> Broughton was described by her contemporaries as a rather unattractive lady, thus justifying her celibacy; as R.C. Terry (1983: 104) recalls, quoting Michael Sadleir, she was “on the large side, with a decidedly county air, pugnacious demeanour and rather mannish appearance”.

ditto superfine red lips, for so many pounds of prime white flesh, he has paid down a handsome price on the nail. (Broughton 2010: 269)

The conclusion of *Cometh up as a Flower* has been regarded by most scholars as “not entirely convincing” (Garrison 2011: 103), quoting Laurie Garrison, besides being labelled as rather predictable and conservative. In fact, contemporary medical studies, such as Sir James Clark’s *Treatise on Pulmonary Consumption*, linked tuberculosis, especially in women, with the “disappointment of long-cherished hopes, slighted affections, loss of dear relations and reverse of fortune” (Clark 1835: 236-237). Likewise, in the very final pages of the novel, once recovered her forgotten faith, Nell regrets that “all the love and aspirations [she] had to bestow had been squandered on that intense earthly passion which seemed to be eating up body and soul” (Broughton 2010: 332). In Christine Sutphin’s view (1998: 375), the author employed both conventional suppressive “strategies for reconditioning [...] desire”, namely death and reformation; according to Marilyn Wood (1993: 24), instead, “unfortunately Rhoda Broughton’s desire to finish the novel swiftly also led her into the trap of the convenient death bed so beloved by Victorian readers”. Conversely, it could be argued that death, invoked as a solution just before her wedding – “Oh, why could I not die of consumption, like the girl I took the jelly to yesterday?” (Broughton 2010: 263-264) – is acknowledged as an ultimate, revolutionary act of rebellion against the biological destiny of the *angel in the house*, whose growth into womanhood inexorably implied her transformation into a solicitous mother, and a wise but stern grandmother. Just like Kate Chester, opting for an unmarried (and, therefore, liberated) life in a convent, Nell LeStrange, the *unmaidenly* maiden, eventually chooses to remain coherent to herself. After longing to escape her husband’s seraglio in the most definitive way (through death), she finally breaks the patriarchal mould by refusing to be buried “between a mouldering grandpapa and a mouldered great-grandpapa” (Broughton 2010, 36); as she states in the opening page of the novel (i.e. the beginning of her autobiography), her own demise will offer her the rare and invaluable opportunity to claim, at last, “a room to [herself]” (Broughton 2010: 36), under the big, old ash tree.

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## “Unmaidenly” Maidens: Rhoda Broughton’s Controversial Heroines

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## Introduction to Elizabeth Bibesco's Literary Works

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to introduce the readers to the literary portfolio of a neglected writer: Princess Elizabeth Bibesco. In this respect, it is my intention to prove that her prose fits in the sphere of literary Impressionism, and to bring forth her writing's characteristics, which give the author credit to be called an impressionist writer of the beginning of the twentieth century. Between 1921 and 1940, Princess Bibesco had an intense literary activity, publishing three collections of short stories, four novels, two plays and a book of poetry. In this attempt, I will focus on her prose only, offering an insight to her most popular collection of short stories "Balloons" published in 1922 and reaching her last published novel "The Romantic" published in 1940. This brief presentation of her prose is nothing else than a walk-through of her writings, since the moment Princess Bibesco had started to publish, until her prose gained a certain maturity. I invite the curious reader to trace together Princess Bibesco's path of literary development.

**Key words:** impressionism, biography, historical context, syntax, youth, adulthood

Before unveiling the curtain over her fascinating writings, one should feel somehow indebted to know at least a few facts about Elizabeth Bibesco's life. She was born in England, in 1897, a future Princess and a writer, the first child of Herbert Henry Asquith and Margot Tennant. Her father, Herbert Henry Asquith, the Liberal Prime Minister of the United Kingdom between 1908 and 1916, was a well-known figure leading the United Kingdom into the First World War. Being part of a good, reputable family comes with a price; therefore, since her childhood, Elizabeth caught the attention of the public's eye, being acquainted to many cultural personalities of the time. Although developing a precocious wit and becoming aware of her privileged position, Elizabeth was no better than other children in her earliest childhood. In her autobiography, her mother Margot Tennant describes her as follows: "In spite of constant reference to 'Gawd' my baby is a wicked little creature of sudden temper and violent impulse which distresses me."(Asquith 1922:44) Nevertheless,

Elizabeth became a well-cultivated child and, as sometimes life prepares one for what is about to come, she grew up preparing for one of the roles she accomplished with success: the role of a Princess. In 1919, her marriage with Prince Antoine Bibesco, a Romanian diplomat in London at that time, marked the entrance into the fascinating world of the European aristocracy. Due to her husband's position, the couple travelled and lived in some of the most important cities of Europe: London, Madrid, Paris, and Bucharest. Moreover, Princess Bibesco became acquainted to the European intelligentsia of the epoch. One of the best examples was her friendship with Marcel Proust who, later on, became the godfather of the Bibesco's only daughter, Priscilla.

Marrying a Romanian diplomat brought challenges to the young Princess. Her husband, born in a Boyer family, owned vast Romanian estates in Corcova, near Strehaia. His father, Alexander Bibesco died in 1912, leaving Antoine and his brother to run the family business. During his entire life, Antoine was deeply fond of his Romanian legacy, growing, before all, a Romanian diplomatic career. It is probably a less-known fact that Princess Elizabeth Bibesco had a strong enough link to Romania during her life through her marriage to Prince Antoine Bibesco. He and Princess Bibesco were in Romania during the First World War, where the Princess died of pneumonia at the age of 47, being buried in the family vault at their Mogoșoaia estate near Bucharest. The Bibescos suddenly interrupted their link to Romania after the Second World War, when Antoine, being alone, moved to 45 Quai Bourbon in Paris, where he remained until his death in 1951. The Communist regime nationalized all Bibesco estates marking the end of the story of a great aristocratic family.

Antoine's qualities in particular convinced the Asquiths that the Prince is the perfect match for their daughter. There is no doubt that Antoine Bibesco was raised and educated as a French gentleman. A major contribution to his artistic inclinations came no doubt from his mother, Helen Bibesco. Her figure dominated the artistic Parisian life as she kept the Parisian Salon, the heart of arts and culture at the turn of the twentieth century. In his mother's Salon, Antoine had the chance to meet several of the most important musicians like Debussy or Delibes, writers like Anatole France and Marcel Proust. As a consequence, due to his mother's major contribution, Antoine became a well-cultivated man, who loved arts and who himself wrote some plays in French like *Mon Héritier* and translated others which were played on Broadway.

Under such circumstances, there was no wonder that after marrying Elizabeth, her husband had a real desire to cultivate in his wife an inclination towards writing. Nevertheless, Elizabeth Bibesco had been surrounded by cultural personalities since her childhood due to her

family's position; it was only after marriage that she began to take seriously her writing career. Thus, between 1921 and 1940 Princess Bibesco had an intense literary activity, publishing three collections of short stories, four novels and two plays. *I Have Only Myself to Blame* was Princess Bibesco's first collection of short stories, published in 1921. It was followed by *Balloons*, published in 1922, today best known to the public. In 1924, her first novel, *The Fir and the Palm* was printed followed afterwards by a second novel, *There is no Return* in 1927. Elizabeth Bibesco dedicated herself to poetry as well, publishing her first book of poetry under the name of *Poems*, in 1927. The end of her literary career was marked by two of her novels, *Portrait of Caroline* printed in 1931 and the last novel, *The Romantic* printed in 1940. This is a walk-through of her writings since the moment Princess Bibesco started to publish, until the moment her prose gains a certain maturity. Thus, the reader shall easily trace the path of her literary development.

Bearing in mind this short overview of her main writings, one cannot discuss Elizabeth Bibesco's prose without understanding both the historical and personal contexts leading to the author's beginning of writing. The historical context points to the end of the First World War, a delicate period where the psychological effects of the war were still present. The European society of the twenties was well-conscious of life; that generation was able to live in the present as it suffered the loss of the dear ones, and in their attempt to move on, people tried to enjoy life with its ups and downs. Princess Bibesco's prose is the mirror of the psychological state of the society she lived in, reflecting in her prose daily and usual conversations that composed one's life. At the core of her writings stands the focus on one's personality, her characters living a rich inner life where the stream of consciousness becomes the main way the reader is introduced to them, the stress being on their psychological experiences.

From a personal point of view, the beginning of writing for Princess Bibesco was not necessarily favorable for her future writing career. Being perceived as what one can call a spoiled of fate, the Princess could not exceed the title of amateur who considered writing a means to avoid the monotony of a life that lacked any material pursuits. Unfortunately, her contemporaries, especially writers like Virginia Woolf or Katherine Mansfield who were part of the well-known Bloomsbury group, never gave her any credit, contributing in a less favorable way to the creation of her image as a writer who indulges in the act of writing just to pass time. However, there is a noticeable pattern regarding the characteristics of Elizabeth Bibesco's prose. Her earlier writings, mainly the short stories could be characterized as the kind of writing only for family and friends. She wrote, indeed, for the love of thing but one should

not misinterpret her writing as superficial. Her first short stories were unsophisticated; the setting was simple, often describing common facts put on a piece of paper, transforming life into literature, succeeding in writing a "true to life" type of literature.

Before discussing specific examples, it would be appropriate to become acquainted to several general characteristics of her prose. Princess Bibesco's writing style bears the stamp of her personality as Elizabeth Bowen describes her writings so well in *Introduction to Heaven*. Elizabeth Bowen states: "The stories and poems of Elizabeth Bibesco bear, above all, the stamp of a personality – stories and verse are the overflow from a brimming-over capacity for life." (Bowen 2008: 253). In other words, Elizabeth Bibesco is one of those authors who transposes herself in her writings, her personality being easily deduced from between the lines. She is the type of author who has nothing to hide, so transparent and sincere that the reader has to be prepared to face a plentitude of feelings and sensations that simply burst out from each passage. Her prose is mainly characterized through sensibility and sensation, the writer being able to create plurisenzorial images out of each passage described with accuracy. Elizabeth Bibesco's writing can be characterized as a manner of seeing life as usual daily conversations as well as episodes witnessed on the streets represents her main subjects. The writer's capacity to attribute symbolic value to common things such as the balloons, gives her credit to be associated with the Impressionist literary tradition.

In order to follow Princess Bibesco's literary development, it is useful to have an insight of her writings. In this respect, the most relevant would be to discuss her earlier prose and compare it with the prose she wrote when she reached her maturity. One of the best known short stories that stand for a perfect example of her earlier prose is *Balloons*. As already mentioned, *Balloons* was published in 1922, the collection of short stories containing a series of episodes. The story called *Balloons* is set in Paris, in a casual day at the beginning of spring. The story opens as follows: "All my life I have loved balloons – all balloons – the heavy English sort, immense and round, that have to be pushed about, and the gay, light, gas-filled French ones that soar into the air the moment you let go of them." (Bibesco, 1922:24) As already mentioned, Princess Bibesco chose her subjects mainly from common daily things and conversations. This is the case of this short story where the centerpiece is the colorful balloons the author so much enjoys. Nevertheless, the subject should not be mistaken as simple because the author uses these objects as a symbol of joy and happiness falling, thus, under the tradition of literary Impressionism. The writer acts like a receptor whose perceptions

transform everything into sensations, creating multi-sensorial images and sharing them with the reader. The following passage would serve as an argument: “I was walking down the Champs Elysees, sniffing secret violets in the air and feeling as joyous as if the world were entirely full of primroses and larks and light-hearted passers-by whom I would never see again. In the distance a barrel organ became more and more distinct and as I drew nearer and the noise grew louder, I wanted to dance and sing. It was in tune with my mood. A symbol of crescendo of life.”(Bibesco 1922:24). One can easily notice the use of the coloristic and sonorous words that overlap in order to produce sensations:

[...] Though I avoided her and the day was as lovely as ever, I had become conscious that the world was inhabited and that there were people who didn't whistle –or want to whistle- in the streets. I tried to think of larks and primroses, but my thoughts were dragged back to thick, half-drawn red curtains, black woolen shawls and silver photographs frames.(Bibesco 1922:24)

As the author reaches adulthood, her prose becomes more serious as she as an adult gains awareness of the social effects of the war. The best example for this kind of writing is her novel, *The Romantic*. The main characters of the novel, Lisa and Cuthbert, are the inhabitants of a special milieu; their inner life is so rich that they cannot sort out their own feelings and sensations. From the beginning of the novel, one can notice that Princess Bibesco's prose continuity doesn't rely on linking scenes together, but rather, the characters' feelings mark the link between the scenes. As an example, one notices that Lisa remains anchored in the past, becoming nostalgic, contemplating about what she misses from her youth; after enumerating some memories, the narration continues with a conversation between herself and her sister-in-law, ending in an analysis of her reasons of marriage; the time of the narration moves from the past to the present and back, but this stream of thought is obtained by the multiple feelings and sensations that overwhelms the character. Beginning to describe the relationship between Lisa and Cuthbert, a newly married couple, she reaches so profound ideas which lead to the comprehension of life as she states: “Love, hate, happiness, pain, all the larger cards can be trumped by life. Life keeping her two for an ace, since she is entitled to a little fun. After all, she has dealt the hand.” (Bibesco 1940:162) This reveals a highly personal manner of writing which leads to uniqueness as well as a deep understanding of the meaning of life.

From a linguistic point of view one can also perceive the impressionistic content of the novel as it reveals a schematic syntax

transposed in the usage of the inverted word order, the suppression of conjunction, the predominance of the active voice over the passive voice, the use of the imperfect tense which gives the prose an airy and fluid characteristic and last but not least the use of the metaphor as it allows a great amount of freedom of speech. The following passage sustains this argument:

Lisa would look out of the window – grey fields, gray walls, a grey sky, ribbons of roads made luminous with some wet silver, the declining day sinking in a phosphorescence of rising mists. The rooks croaked a pattern of silence in the air, Lisa felt lost and absorbed into the impersonal rhythm of nature. [...] Her hair was anointed with dew. It is a charming way of becoming gray-headed. They walked slowly the crumbling gravel rasping in its loudness.(Bibesco 1940:139)

The scene reveals a symbiosis with nature as if the characters are part of an impressionist painting. The private thoughts of the characters in this novel are brought to such minutiae that reality is replaced by their inner voices.

*The Romantic* can also be considered a cosmopolitan writing. As mentioned in the beginning of the article, after marriage, Princess Bibesco lived abroad, travelling between Paris, London, Madrid, Washington, Mogoșoaia; that was a way of life that enabled the Princess to understand different mentalities which she transposed afterwards in her writings. This characteristic is obvious at the linguistic level through the frequent usage of French in dialogues, through the many places she describes such as Poland, Tibet, hotel Ritz in Paris, when travelling back in the past, and not least, the novel is populated with characters of different nationalities like French and Poles, betraying a deeper knowledge of the author in regards with those nationalities. Unfortunately, the novel was not popular among the readers and it totally lacked reviews, a fact that might be explained that the novel was published after the war, when the Bibescos were already in Romania and where the Princess died in 1945.

To conclude one can recognize that Princess Elizabeth Bibesco's life is worthy of attention, no matter if one refers to her personal life or her literary career. Elizabeth Bibesco was what can be called a spoilt of fate being, since childhood until reaching maturity, surrounded by the intelligentsia of the epoch, who had a good influence upon her. Her marriage extended the cultural borders for her, opening a door and giving her the opportunity to be in contact with the most famous European writers, diplomats and artists. The lifetime friendship with Marcel Proust could stand as one of the best examples. Her marriage with Antoine

Bibesco brought her another advantage: she became a Princess, a title that she proved to be so worthy of. During their marriage, her literary inclinations developed, her husband encouraging her permanently to write. After all, this support was not in vain as between 1920 and 1940, Princess Bibesco published three collections of short stories, four novels and one book of poetry registering an intense literary activity. Unfortunately, she was an author to whom critics did not give too much credit although her writings could be compared to those of Virginia Woolf or Katherine Mansfield. These two writers were part of the Bloomsbury group, a circle where Elizabeth Bibesco was never welcomed due to, mainly, personal affairs than literary related reasons. Her literary work is unique, the sensibility and capacity to change any subject into a symbol in her prose, give one reasons to include Princess Bibesco among the Impressionist writers.

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## Problematic Domesticity in Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit*

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**Abstract:** Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1857) posits the problematics of family affairs emphasizing domestic interactions between more than one father-daughter relationships. The novel presents two father figures and two daughter figures within the same domestic framework, intricately involved in parental-filial relations with one another in any possible combination. The ongoing vicissitudes of the Dorrit family, creating frequently controversial interactions among William Dorrit (the biological father), Frederick Dorrit (William's brother, a symbolic father figure), Amy Dorrit (Little Dorrit, William's daughter), and Fanny Dorrit (Amy's elder sister, William's daughter also), are embedded in a unique, initially tangible, later on metaphoric, oppressive cultural context: a prison, or imprisonment. In my presentation I shall assert that without a strong, culturally/economically viable daughter figure (Amy), not even a frail domesticity (status quo in prison) is tenable. This means that without this daughter figure's instinctive as well as commonsensical role fulfillment in the symbolic order, the Dorrits (most of all, William Dorrit) as a barely circumscribed house, would not have a chance to survive their own primary vicissitude (mental imprisonment) generated by the father figures themselves.

**Key words:** Victorianism, domesticity, family, power relations, class values

Looking upon the two father figures and the two daughter figures as separate dyads, by far the greatest narrative emphasis falls on the William-Amy relationship. The William-Fanny, Frederick-Fanny, and Frederick-Amy dyads serve only as metaphoric props to direct attention primarily to the Amy/William role fulfillment in the family spheres functioning as an ever changing theater of power relations. It is important, however, to see that Frederick's and Fanny's presence within domesticity is indispensable for William to be able to live to his blind familial ethos, thereby making it possible for Amy to appear as the *only* figure who can always see and show which direction to take for the Dorrits to have at least the chance to fulfill their separate symbolic roles in Victorian society.

Dickens lays unusually great emphasis on the primary daughter figure of Amy Dorrit, especially compared with her siblings' representation,

even to the point of portraying her as a cultural outsider, which however, always amplifies her influential (domestic) presence along the master plot, because beside her uncle, who indeed recognizes and acknowledges Amy's crucial role in supporting the Dorrit house, her biological father, her sister, and her brother are symbolically blind—blind to everything that Amy does for the sake of redeeming the Dorrits not only from their physical imprisonment but also from their self-imposed mental confinements.<sup>1</sup>

Amy Dorrit is a daughter figure who can define the symbolic as well as physical distance between herself and her father, doing this independently of her father's domestic presence- or absence-as-influence. As Barbara Hardy points out, "Little Dorrit herself is no complex psychological study, but a very effective character who manages to be both symbolic and sufficiently a creature of time and place. She has a certain grotesqueness—a stuntedness and sexlessness—which helps both to stylize her character as an image of virtue and to make her a more natural prison-child" (1985: 16). Amy's *natural* presence in any domestic space is never missing. Despite her "certain grotesqueness," her natural ability to conform to altered domestic circumstances, at the same time not deceiving herself in connection with her father's immovable mental state, shows her as an indisputable 'domestic survivor.'<sup>2</sup>

However, due to lack of strength in his uninfluential position in the family, Frederick Dorrit, as an exceptionally weak father figure (seemingly even weaker than William), can merely call attention to Amy's symbolic role enhanced by her capable domestic presence, without rendering her efficient help, which, combined with the other Dorrits' passive or even negative attitude to Amy, culminates in a self-redemption on Amy's part. Only she enjoys freedom in any sense of the word, and even at the end of the novel, everyone else within (or beyond) the Dorrit household, in one way or another, is still metaphorically imprisoned. As Mary Lenard observes,

[i]n a very real sense, this novel seems to begin in a prison and never to get out of it, simply because imprisonment manifests itself in so many ways that to be freed from one prison only means entering another. Characters

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<sup>1</sup> It is not by accident that the only son figure, Edward Dorrit, is marginalized in the novel compared with his sisters. He all too frequently appears as an inept, immature boy than a son figure who one day would be able to govern the Dorrit household. His present cultural inability anticipates his inadequate, future domestic role fulfillment (Dickens 1994: 75-77).

<sup>2</sup> Comparing Amy with other Dickensian characters, Hardy calls her "Dickens's most successfully heroic character since Oliver Twist" (1985: 16), especially as Amy, the embodiment of domestic virtue, is finally able to overcome the hardships inflicted on her by her own family, and it is precisely because "Dickens is interested in the conditioned character, but includes in his fiction a continuing fantasy about the ideal, the unconditional virtue. And in Dickens virtue is often the survivor" (1985: 4).

suffer not only in physical prisons such as the Marshalsea and the Marseilles jail that begins the novel, but also in metaphorical prisons like the Circumlocution Office and the polite society of the Merdles and the Barnacles, psychological prisons such as those of Henry Gowan and Miss Wade, and religious prisons like the rigid Calvinism of Mrs Clennam.<sup>3</sup> (2014: 343)

A prison or an imprisonment as various inescapable contexts of the novel's domesticity originate in, and are maintained by, dubious financial transactions behind the scenes, which as mainsprings, influence the direction and evolution of the Dorrit domesticity, as well as the peripheral families related to the Dorrits. To shed some light on the underlying importance of several, surreptitious and not less erroneous money transfers referred to as, for instance, a "codicil" (Dickens 1994: Bk. 2, Ch. 30) or an inherited "fortune" (Dickens 1994: Bk. 2, Ch. 34), not to mention certain comprehensive, that is why vague, occasionally economic, terms such as a "fraudulent conduct" and "fraudulent secrets" (Dickens 1994: Bk. 1, Ch. 22, 27), the narrator illuminates, through the words of Mr Pancks (a rent collector), the financial predicament of the whole period stemming from the irresistible urge to make money<sup>4</sup>:

A person who can't pay, gets another person who can't pay, to guarantee that he can pay. Like a person with two wooden legs getting another person with two wooden legs, to guarantee that he has got two natural

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<sup>3</sup> To grasp the significance of various physical/mental incarceration forms in *Little Dorrit*, it is worth quoting here Michel Foucault: "There is an economico-moral self-evidence of a penalty that metes out punishments in days, months and years and draws up quantitative equivalences between offences and durations. Hence the expression, so frequently heard, [...] though contrary to the strict theory of penal law, that one is in prison in order to 'pay one's debt' " (1995: 232-33). This notion of 'paying one's debt' is what is clearly expressed—even desired—by Mrs Clennam (self-incarcerated old woman in her house), and her foster son Arthur (incarcerated in the Marshalsea in the concluding chapters of the book). Dennis Walder points out, furthermore, that Mrs Clennam is a victim of "a rigidly mechanistic conception of sin and guilt so as to 'pay' for withholding the codicil which would have released the Dorrits from servitude" (1981: 188). Lenard, however, reminds us that at the end of the novel, it is only "Little Dorrit [...] [who] frees both Arthur and his mother from the prison of their guilt" (2014: 343).

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Engels, referring to the Victorian (lower) middle-class, asserted in 1845 that this layer of society "really believe that all human beings [...] and indeed all living things and inanimate objects have a real existence only if they make money or help to make it" (1968: 312). To this Georges Letissier adds that "money becomes invested with enormous fictitious value leading to the emergence of a new imaginary with regard to wealth itself. Precisely, *Little Dorrit* registers such a transformation and the coming onto the scene of the *homo economicus*, the hypothetical actor of political economy, craving gains, to the exclusion of all other pursuits" (2010: 266-67).

legs. It don't make either of them able to do a walking match. And four wooden legs are more troublesome to you than two, when you don't want any. (Dickens 1994: 273)

Mr Pancks's simplified reasoning for the encoded failure affecting the Victorian economic system haunts virtually every family in the novel, seriously endangering the appropriate fulfillment of their roles in the symbolic order. Oddly enough, however, once a family becomes bankrupt—even to the point of suffering incarceration—in time, they are prone to “regard insolvency as the normal state of mankind, and the payment of debts as a disease that [only] occasionally broke out” (Dickens 1994:88).<sup>5</sup>

An uncommonly huge financial crisis caused by contingencies shakes both the symbolic and economic foundation of William Dorrit's household to such a degree that it leaves an indelible mark on the father-daughter relationships in general, and on the whole Dorrit family's relation to Amy, to her attitude to life, in particular:

[A]lthough they had before them, every day, the means of comparison between her and one another and themselves, they regarded her as being in her necessary place; as holding a position towards them all which belonged to her, like her name or her age. [...] [T]hey viewed her, not as having risen away from the prison atmosphere, but as appertaining to it; as being vaguely what they had a right to expect, and nothing more. (Dickens 1994: 94)

The menacing “they” as familial authority collides with the peripherally impersonal “her” as a subject of negligible importance. The consequence as family sentence is signified with the narratorial use of the legal verb “appertaining,” aiming to imprison Little Dorrit at least mentally, if

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<sup>5</sup>Warning in rudimentary form against a speculative investment leading to a possible financial collapse can also be found earlier in Dickens's fiction, in *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), where Barnaby's mother with her seemingly down-to-earth mindset solemnly admonishes his son about the perils of hazardous dealings with riches as gold: “You do not know [...] what men have done to win it, and how they have found, too late, that it glitters brightest at a distance, and turns quite dim and dull when handled.[...] Nothing bears so many stains of blood, as gold. Avoid it” (1988: 354). The point, of course, is not the amount of invested money, but the manner it is dealt with, as is also seen in the last novel of Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), where a ‘business transaction’ is narrated between Edwin Drood and an old woman addicted to opium: “ ‘Give me three-and-sixpence, and I'll lay it out well, and get back. If you don't give me three-and-sixpence, don't give me a brass farden. And if you do give me three-and-sixpence, deary, I'll tell you something.’ He counts the money from his pocket, and puts it in her hand. She instantly clutches it tight, and rises to her feet with a croaking laugh of satisfaction” (1988: 139).

physically it is not possible. Naturally, this familial approach to Amy, in the course of time, turns into a fundamental family regulation: "It was the family custom to lay it down as family law, that she [Amy] was a plain domestic little creature, without the great and sage experience of the rest," culminating in the synoptic definition of the novel: "This family fiction was the family assertion of itself against her services. Not to make too much of them" (Dickens 1994: 234).

The cultural difference as a self-driven wedge between Amy and the Dorrits carries not a small contrastive importance. Galia Benziman, in connection with child representation in Dickens's fiction, argues that "[t]he poor child-as-other serves as a juncture of textual contradiction, with a politically reformist impulse that is infiltrated by residues of stereotypes against working-class children as biologically inferior, morally untamed, and inherently, threateningly, different" (2012: 159). At first, one could immediately point out that Benziman's statement does not apply to *Little Dorrit* since the Dorrits belong to the middle-class, which means that Amy is necessarily a middle-class-born child. However, the way she, in fact, feels the moral/economic necessity to work for her family, makes her much more a representative of an ideal working-class child than anything else: She is "the servant of servants," says Avrom Fleishman, "the last and the least" who "reaches an absolute of servitude itself: she is the perfect servant, who loves those she serves" (1974: 580, 581).<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, she posits a threatening anticipatory force being projected towards the rest of her family suggesting their seemingly unavoidable relegation to the much-hated lower (working) class.

William's and especially Fanny's contempt toward the working layer of society is obvious, because, as Nancy Armstrong remarks, "middle-class intellectuals pitted representations of working-class culture as lacking all the individuating and hierarchizing features that characterized the bourgeois ideal of the family" (1986: 643),<sup>7</sup> which ideal, to a degree inexplicably, excludes from the family circle such a daughter figure as Amy

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<sup>6</sup> Fleishman significantly adds that Amy "is not of the children of this world: she is the Child of the Marshalsea, the lowest of the low, and therefore of the blessed poor [...] and her power is to lead the wretched, the servants, the prisoners, to bear their degradation with love" (1974: 580).

<sup>7</sup> Earlier, Armstrong points out that the motif behind the hatred and anger toward the working-class is the fear generated by "mechanization," stating that "diverse groups blamed mechanization for virtually every problem troubling England, including poverty, food shortages, bouts of inflation, crippling illiteracy, demographic dislocation and widespread unrest among the laboring poor" (1986: 642). In this respect, it seems natural that Amy (her work ethos) is quickly identified with problems stemming from the "unrest among the labouring poor."

for her order of values.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, a specific narrative intent focusing on Amy is inscribed in the novel, which Benziman defines as “the othering and suppression of the socially inferior child” on the part of the Dorrits, but this “occurs as part of the process of constructing the child-as-self as a target for identification” (2012: 159). Without the Dorrits’, and especially William’s, conscious marginalizing behavior, Amy would be quickly lost from sight, and probably Fanny (and not the barely manifest son figure, Edward) would become the filial protagonist of the novel.

However, the more Amy is suppressed, the greater symbolic contrast between her and the others exists, at the same time, the more obvious the inadequate role fulfillment is of William, Frederick, and Fanny in the symbolic order. Amy’s identification, by all means, entails the identification of the whole Dorrit house, defining their vulnerable domestic superstructure as their very own ethos. Their perverted narrative *communiqué* of domestic ideology (“It was the family custom to lay it down as family law, that she [Amy] was a plain domestic little creature, without the great and sage experience of the rest” [Dickens 1994: 234]), even whose nonverbal manifestations in the novel contribute to drawing an explicit demarcation line between the master plot and the several, meandering, auxiliary plot-lines, is a significant case in point anticipating domestic problems emerging from the father-daughter dyad.

Initially, Amy Dorrit’s symbolic significance is represented by her narrative insignificance. Her first appearance very much reminds us of Florence Dombey’s fictional *début*: “Affery, what girl was that in my mother’s room just now?” “Girl?” said Mrs Flintwinch in a rather sharp key. “It was a girl, surely, whom I saw near you—almost hidden in the dark corner?” “Oh! She? Little Dorrit? *She’s* nothing; she’s a whim of—hers” (Dickens 1994: 39-40, italics in the original). This dialogue takes place between Arthur Clennam (the future husband of Amy) and Affery Flintwinch (an old servant of Arthur’s mother) immediately following Arthur’s return from China to the Clennam house, and appropriately depicts Amy’s often invisible, nevertheless always angelic, presence till the end of the novel in the life of those surrounding her.

A narrative reminiscence helps to trace the origin of Little Dorrit’s labor morale, which remains until the end of the novel diametrically opposed to the other Dorrits’ approach to work (to life). In early

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<sup>8</sup> On the bourgeois family and its value system, see, for instance, Heather Brown’s *Marx on Gender* (2012: 43-44), James Kilroy’s *The Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (2007: 6, 12, 41), and Karen Chase and Michael Levenson’s *The Spectacle of Intimacy* (2000: 6, 76, 160). These works seek to find answers for the cultural ambiguities surrounding the Victorian bourgeois family.

childhood, she is already described as someone who “was inspired to be something which was not what the rest were, and to be that something, different and laborious, for the sake of the rest” (Dickens 1994: 71). Her self-sacrificing nature enables her to see beyond the prison bars, to imagine a possible symbolic redemption for her whole family, and

[n]o matter through what mistakes and discouragements, what ridicule (not unkindly meant, but deeply felt) of her youth and little figure, what humble consciousness of her own babyhood and want of strength, even in the matter of lifting and carrying; through how much weariness and hopelessness, and how many secret tears; she drudged on [...]. She took the place of eldest of the three, in all things but precedence; was the head of the fallen family; and bore, in her own heart, its anxieties and shames. (Dickens 1994: 71-72)

Due to the continual hardships as a result of the Dorrits' inanity in family affairs, Amy very early becomes the symbolic (and economic) “head of the fallen family” so that the Dorrits may remain a family—at least as for its outward appearance, however fragmented it is—instead of falling into the state of a disconnected group of people related only by the same (empty) paternal cognomen, which utterly fails to embody Jacques Lacan's definition concerning its symbolic significance: “It is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the basis of the symbolic function which, since the dawn of historical time, has identified his person with the figure of the law” (2006: 230, italics in the original).<sup>9</sup>

With her needlework, Amy invisibly helps old Mrs Clennam to lead a more or less comfortable life, at the same time, she earns money to support her impoverished and imprisoned family, who again barely observe her benevolent presence in their domestic affairs. Especially the male members of the Dorrit family are reluctant to see and acknowledge Amy's hidden hand in anything blissful and *blessful* in their domestic events. As Catherine Golden reminds us: “The selfless Victorian angel approaches the divine on earth by functioning as the holy refuge for her brother, father, or husband, all of whom, in most cases, do not deserve her. Still, the angelic Dickensian

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<sup>9</sup> Lacan, later on to clarify the father figure's relation to the law, states that “the father's relation to this law must be considered in its own right, for one will find in it the reason for the paradox whereby devastating effects of the paternal figure are found with particular frequency in cases where the father really functions as a legislator or boasts that he does—whether he is, in fact, one of the people who makes the laws or presents himself as a pillar of faith, as a paragon of integrity or devotion, as virtuous or a virtuoso [...]”. He adds, furthermore, that “[t]hese are all ideals that provide him with all too many opportunities to seem to be at fault, to fall short, and even to be fraudulent—in short, to exclude the Name-of-the-Father from its position in the signifier” (2006: 482-83).

woman offers unconditional love and support to her less moral male counterpart even if he unquestionably burdens her until he dies” (2000: 7).<sup>10</sup> This is precisely the case with William and Frederick Dorrit, whose mere presence in Amy’s life is tantamount to continual physical and mental burden on her until they both die (“[T]hey were lazily habituated to her” [Dickens 1994: 94]). Amy’s name itself (the derivation of the French verb ‘aimer’ meaning ‘to love’), similarly to Florence Dombey’s, conceals her fundamental merit connected to her seemingly predestined life to serve others selflessly, primarily in the Dorrit household, where she tries to live up to the expectations of the Dorrit family ethos which is dangerously approaching what Patricia Johnson defines as the “domestic ideology,” which is “rested on the exploitation of the working-class woman, both working double shifts in working-class homes and working for low pay as domestic servants in middle- and upper-class homes” (2001: 7).

As was noted before, Amy’s early detailed description, her hardly palpable feminine presence, is suggesting marked narrative intention to draw attention to her by *hiding* her figure-as-significance as much as possible. The narrator depicts her with as simple sentences as possible suggesting a sheer factuality for her peripheral existence:

Little Dorrit let herself out to do needlework. [...] [F]rom eight to eight, Little Dorrit was to be hired. Punctual to the moment, Little Dorrit appeared; punctual to the moment, Little Dorrit vanished. What became of Little Dorrit between the two eights was a mystery. Another of the moral phenomena of Little Dorrit. [...] She had an extraordinary repugnance to dining in company; would never do so, if it were possible to escape. Would always plead that she had this bit of work to begin first, or that bit of work to finish first [...]. It was not easy to make out Little Dorrit’s face; she was so retiring, plied her needle in such removed corners, and started away so scared if encountered on the stairs. (Dickens 1994: 52-53).

Despite Amy’s name being repeated here *ad nauseam*, her narrative importance as a flesh-and-blood character remains obscure for a long time, as if what counts is what is being done, and not at all by whom. She behaves as a truly self-imposed outcast, who demonstratively sets her

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<sup>10</sup> Golden also writes that “[t]he Dickensian angel demonstrates a model of womanhood, exceedingly popular in the 1840s and 50s, that seems too saccharine, self-effacing, and domestic to a late-twentieth-century readership [as well as to us].” She, moreover, adds that Agnes in Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1850) “[a]cting as surrogate wife to her rapidly deteriorating father and sister to David, [...] embodies the qualities of the angel in the house, immortalized in Coventry Patmore’s sequence of poems *The Angel in the House* (1854-63): patience, unselfishness, earnestness, faithfulness, and devotion” (2000: 6).

activities ahead of her self. It is especially seen in the oppressive middle-class *milieu* surrounding her either in Mrs Clennam's house or in the Marshalsea: in the circle of bankrupt (former) middle-class people. Her often barely visible presence, however, frequently anticipates subversiveness, due to her puritanical work ethic, which unavoidably separates her from the whole Dorrit family. Amy (as well as Fanny) cannot receive proper education meant for decent middle-class daughters on account of their father being incarcerated in the Marshalsea: "There was no instruction for [...] them at home; [...] she [Amy] knew well—no one better—that a man so broken as to be [...] [her father], could be no father to his own children" (Dickens 1994: 72), but of the two daughters, Amy, unlike Fanny, is able to lay down the foundation of a future household due to her strong life instincts proved by her common sense and untiring work.<sup>11</sup>

The daughters' father, despite his respectable title imposed upon him<sup>12</sup> ("the Father of the Marshalsea" Dickens 1994: 65), and the subsequent, scattered, patriarchal allusions ("a great moral Lord Chesterfield, or Master of the ethical ceremonies of the Marshalsea" Dickens 1994: 229, "the Chief of the important tribe" Dickens 1994: 434), is represented, at the time of his incarceration, as a feeble paternal figure who is prone to drift with his not-necessarily-adverse circumstances. William Dorrit never and nowhere suggests an ability to act efficiently in his own interest, strangely enough, not even in the Marshalsea prison, in this unique patriarchal world tailored to his mundane needs. As the narrator gradually reveals towards the end of the novel, his sociological as symbolic survival unavoidably rests in the hands of his daughter, Amy.

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<sup>11</sup> "Would-be reformers of women's education, of whatever hue," writes Simon Morgan, "tended to begin from the premise that the middle-classes were educating their daughters as decorative toys; in other words as 'ladies', possessed of fine accomplishments, such as drawing, dancing and singing, but very little else." He further adds that "such an education made women worse than useless; superficially charming in the flower of youth, perhaps, but incapable of fulfilling any serious role in society. Most reformers believed that girls' education should enable them to cope better with what would be expected of them in life, so raising them from being idle parasites to a position of social utility" (2007: 36). Fanny always appears before us as a useless spoiled 'lady,' whereas Amy's worth lies in always acting as a useful 'little mother,' among others, towards her sister and her idle brother Edward (Dickens 1994: Bk. 1, Ch. 7.).

<sup>12</sup> Originally, oddly enough, William Dorrit inherited his respectable title from a turnkey who looked upon him with almost religious devotion: "The Marshalsea wouldn't be like the Marshalsea now, without you [...]. When I'm off the lock for good and all, you'll be the Father of the Marshalsea.' The turnkey went off the lock of this world next day. His words were remembered and repeated; and tradition afterwards handed down from generation to generation [...] that the shabby old debtor [...] was the Father of the Marshalsea" (Dickens 1994: 63-64, 65).

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# More than a Literary Friendship: the Romanian Ties of Patrick Leigh Fermor and Sacheverell Sitwell

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**Abstract:** The paper aims to reveal the Romanian ties of the two well-known British authors who wrote significant books on Romania and its realities, following their travel there in the 1930s. Some of the people who knew and supported their cultural and literary endeavours are either given room or simply hinted at, in order to make the writers' approach thoroughly understood by the competent reader.

**Key words:** travelogues, 1930s Romania, Anne-Marie Callimachi, Balașa Cantacuzène

## 1. First encounter(s) or Introduction

“I can't exactly remember when I first met Sachie, which is odd, because I had been an admirer of his poetry from the age of thirteen when I remember finding thin white, beautifully printed pamphlets of them – Doctor Donne and Gargantua “The Hundred and One Harlequins” on sale, rather surprisingly in our local stationers in Northamptonshire.” (Leigh Fermor, 1991 NS)

This first paragraph from NOTES ON SACHIE (written to help Sarah Bradford on her monograph of Sacheverell Sitwell) – and with the underlined words exactly as I could read them in the copy of the annotated version from the archive of Patrick Leigh Fermor<sup>1</sup> –, marks the moments, in the late 1920s, when the Sitwell brothers were still at the height of their fame. A very young Leigh Fermor was gradually discovering the fascination of literature, and in the 1990s notes he remembers how much he liked their poems, Osbert's and Edith's as well, but “Sacheverell's best”.

What is of significance for our research is the reference, in the very next paragraph, to their first meeting, in 1936, “in the house of Princess Anne Maria Callimachi”, the Romanian aristocrat who had invited Sacheverell – or Sachie, as friends used call him –, to travel to Romania

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<sup>1</sup> Hosted by the National Library of Scotland, in Edinburgh

and write a book about it. Since Patrick – or Paddy, as friends used to call him –, “had just returned from more than three years of travel, much of it on foot, ending up for one year in a charming and tumbledown country house in High Moldavia” (ibid), they must have had a lot to talk about.

Both of them were going to write challenging, I dare say seminal, books about Romania. Sachie was the first, as his *Roumanian Journey* was published in 1938, one year after his four weeks travel. Paddy published his *Between the Woods and the Water*, about Hungary and Transylvania, much later, in 1986. And it was only after his death that *The Broken Road*, about Bulgaria and Romania, was edited by his literary executors, in 2013, from an unfinished manuscript. What is really intriguing is that he wrote two books about his up-to three-year travels in the 1930s across Europe, Romania included, but he managed to produce just a few pages on his staying – from 1935, though with intermissions, to 1939 –, in the Moldavian “charming and tumbledown country house”.

Sometime in 1936, while in England during one of those intermissions, Paddy was getting on quite well with Sachie “because he was fascinated with my (Paddy’s) impressions of Rumania.” (ibid) One year later, as Paddy recalls it, “We were in England again when their party went to Rumania, most efficiently bear-led by Anne-Marie”.(ibid) “We” in this quote stands for him and his first great love, a cousin of Anne Marie’s, Princess Balaşa Cantacuzène, who was also a co-owner of the Moldavian estate.

They had met in Greece, when Paddy had just finished his Mount Athos adventure, and they decided to move to Romania, at Băleni, where they spent their time reading, painting – Balaşa was a skillful painter, as she had studied fine arts in Paris –, riding, hunting and writing. Paddy had decided that he would become a writer, and it seemed that certain environments were more favorable than others. Also in the NOTES, Paddy recollects the fact that, after Sachie’s returns from Romania, “I went back to my old haunts in Moldavia and stayed there, trying to write a book until war broke out”.

## 2. Random Romanian references

I had read somewhere that the average life of an infantry officer in the First World War was eight weeks, and I had no reason to think that the odds would be much better in the Second. So I thought I might as well die in a nice uniform” (Cooper 2013, 120)

Given his half-Irish descent, Paddy wanted to join the Irish Guards, but they seemed to have no openings for him in the autumn of 1939, when he

returned to England. Eventually accepted as a cadet and submitting to a shocking regime, he got seriously ill in December. According to his biographer, after being discharged from hospital, he was looking forward to spending Christmas “with the Sitwells at Weston<sup>2</sup>.” (idem, 121) Actually, he had been a guest there, “part of October and part of November” (Leigh Fermor, 1991 NS), as they had found out about him being broke and invited him to stay with them “till the Irish Guards could have me” (ibid)

In the NOTES, Weston Hall is described as a heavenly refuge, whose dwellers were engaged in more or less war-like activities. “Sachie (later commanding the local Home Guard) wrote all morning in a room at the top of the house” – a sober, yet impressive residence, from the outside, but “full of delights and surprises” inside –, while “Georgia was doing some work, driving somebody’s car in a very smart uniform” (ibid) As for Paddy, he took the opportunity to finish a translation he had done  $\frac{3}{4}$  at Băleni, of *Isabeau de Bavière*, a historical portrait by the controversial French author Paul Morand, “whom I knew when he came to Rumania, as he was married to Helène Soutzo (Șuțu) there” (ibid)

At Weston, surrounded by “unconventional pictures and books”, Paddy and the Sitwells would listen to music, with “Sachie in a claret-coloured smoking-jacket.” (ibid) It was there that Paddy was introduced to compositions by “Saint Saëns and Delibes or Chabrier”. And it was also there that they had talks about Transylvania, in the company of “records of the Hungarian and Rumanian music collected by Bartók and Kodály.” In his *Roumanian Journey*, Sachie had stated that another great Hungarian composer, Franz Liszt, might have composed his Twentieth Rhapsody “while he was the guest of Count Teleki, at his castle near Cluj.”, which accounted for its “Transylvanian and Wallachian motifs... with unmistakable strains of the Hora” (Sitwell, Google books).

Paddy believed that such preoccupation for Romanian realities and history had been expressed even in the choice of the middle name for one of the Sitwell inheritors, two little boys who “added to the charm of the place, being very lively and precocious and funny.” (Leigh Fermor, 1991 NS) Francis, the younger one, “was sometimes called Trajan”, and Paddy thought that the second name had been inspired by their travel in Romania, “where it is a common first name, from the Roman conqueror of the Dacians”. (ibid) Yet, when checking for Francis’ obituary, in *The Guardian*, we could read that he had been born September 17 1935, i.e. two years before the

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<sup>2</sup> Weston Hall was one of the Sitwell residences, located near Towcester, Northamptonshire. The other residence, Renishaw, belonged to Osbert Sitwell and it was located near Eckington, Derbyshire

Romanian endeavour of his parents. As for his second name, the author of the obituary said that it had been given after “the Roman emperor who was the subject of (Sachie’s) work in progress at the time.”

There are other Romanian references in the NOTES, some of them rather random, since they are not reiterated, like the one on Morand, for instance, or the one on a “dashing Russian girl, H el ene Zanesco” who, when the Sitwells returned from Romania, “married to a Rumanian diplomat called Paul Zanesco”<sup>3</sup>, but later “separated and re-became H el ene Yourievich and made many a heart beat faster in Western Europe”. It is difficult to assess the sentimental, at the most, value, of this reference, given Paddy’s reputation with women, and we cannot tell whether the name made its way into Sarah Bradford’s monograph, nor that we can see the purpose of it.

### 3. Marooned in the War

#### 3.1. “The Orient Express, my mental home!”

....a sort of pantomime of energy and talk, nicknamed “Fregoli” by her cousins, because of her versatility, after the Italian quick-change music-hall artist and clown. (ibid)

The Romanian person most frequently referred to in the NOTES is Princess Anne Marie Callimachi, who is given the above affectionate portrayal by Paddy. She had been married into the Callimachi family, but she was a descendant of the even more famous family of Vacaresco. The Callimackis (as Sachie would write the surname) traced their origins from the Orhei area of Bessarabia. After having changed their original name C alma su in the Greek fashion, some of the Callimackis, starting with the mid-seventeenth century, came to prominence as highly ranked boyars and even princes of Moldavia or Wallachia. The Vacarescos, although never rulers of any of the two principalities, traced their roots in even more ancient times, as early as the 12th century.

Since Sacheverell Sitwell was himself from an aristocratic family – thirty years after his travel to Romania, in 1968, when his brother Osbert died, he became the 6th baronet Sitwell –, he must have felt at large in the

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<sup>3</sup> As for Paul Zanesco, we could find his name in a letter addressed by Paddy to an English friend who had visited him in Romania in 1938, and in the last part of his 1930s travelogue. Zanesco-actually Zanescu, nicknamed Alcover, himself an occasional guest at 5 Baleni-, was a brilliant young diplomat who, according to Paddy, in The Broken Road, committed suicide years later. We have found some information on the internet about his burial plot in Pere Lachaise, and that he lived between 1907-1948

company of one of their descendants. When reading, for instance, what he wrote in *Roumanian Journey* about Anne Marie's residence in Romania, "rebuilt by her grandfather upon the family estates some fifty to sixty years ago", one could easily feel not only the art critic's pleasure in describing the architecture and the interior design, but also the comfort he took in a *milieu* that might have reminded him of his own residence back home in Britain.

It is, in its way, a monument of that time, and one which is impracticable to alter. Moorish verandas and a tower of lattice work are prelude to the interior, which is furnished in large part by the fournisseur or ébéniste to Napoleon III and has the stamp of that imperial patronage upon the underneath of many of the chairs and sofas. (Sitwell, Google books)

Anne Marie was one of the people who "came to stay" at Weston Hall, as she and the Sitwells were close friends. She became a good friend to Paddy, too, and a post-Christmas episode speaks forth about that. On 8 January 1940, Paddy was admitted to Redhill County Hospital, being later diagnosed with influenza and pneumonia. According to Paddy's biographer,

the

most exciting moment of his convalescence was ... a surprise visit from Anne-Marie Callimachi... dressed in black satin and sparkling with diamonds". (Cooper 2013, 122) an extravagant, if not flamboyant appearance, yet very much like her, and that definitely added to Paddy's "glamour-value among the nurses. (ibid)

Later, after Paddy had left for Greece, where he had been assigned as an Intelligence officer and helped to organize the Cretan resistance against the German occupants, she succeeded to get in touch with him via the Sitwells, as seen in a letter from 18<sup>th</sup> June 1944: "The last I have heard of you was from a lovely ... long letter Georgia read us during my last Weston weekend. I must say I enjoyed it, your descriptions were so vivid & gay!" She also expressed her pessimism with regard to the future of her country and the displeasure she took when meeting her compatriots, with the notable exceptions of Eileen and Matila Ghyka<sup>4</sup>. "I have now for so long lived *marooned*<sup>5</sup> in our fortress island", she confessed, but luckily for her, friends were there to offer their support – "Seen lots of the Sitwells lately", she wrote before ending the letter.

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<sup>4</sup> Both Eileen and Matila, her husband, the Romanian prince from the Ghyka family, were among the regular guests at Baleni, where Paddy lived before WW I, and recurring figures in Paddy and Balasa's correspondence. Paddy also wrote an introduction to Matila's memoir, *The World Mine Oyster*

<sup>5</sup> Italics ours

After the war, the same Sitwells persuaded Anne Marie to publish her memoir, and according to the author of a chroniquette in *The Spectator*, she followed the example of Sir Osbert Sitwell and had been encouraged by Sacheverell – “You have a vivid gift of phrase: you are frank and amusing about yourself: and you are certainly, one of the persons of the widest reading I have come across.” (Ashton-Gwatkin, 1953) A vividness the princess wonderfully illustrates when she underlines her power to easily connect to each and every corner of Europe: “The Orient Express, my mental home ! In your narrow berths and small compartments, I felt as much at ease as in the house of my birth.” (ibid)

Writing about Romania in a book with a very inspiring title, *Yesterday Was Mine*, Anne Marie Callimachi was lamenting, in 1949, in a nostalgic tone, the disappearance of the unique world to which she used to belong – “Alternating strong passions and Eastern apathy give my country its marked personality and the penetrating, destructive yet potent charm of which most foreigners are strongly aware.” (ibid)

### **3.2. The other Princess and Romania’s lost world**

I went to Weston once or twice before the War but can’t remember if I stayed, I think I did. My great friend Balaşa Cantacuzène did certainly because I remember Sachie begging her again and again to imitate village gypsies in Moldavia grunting to each other in their gruff voices.(Leigh Fermor, 1991 NS)

Unlike Anne-Marie, Paddy’s “great friend” (read “his lover”, and who was sixteen years his senior, but nobody in their world seemed to be bothered by that) Balaşa Cantacuzène had chosen to remain in the Nazi-allied (starting with 1941) Romania during the war, and that made her communication with Paddy, now a guerilla officer operating in Crete, extremely difficult. The owners of Weston, where they had spent lovely moments entertaining themselves with funny memories from Romania, would boost Paddy’s morale, while keeping him informed about Balaşa. A telegram from that time – apparently reaching him in Egypt, where officers of his specialty were taken away from operational areas after a certain period in order to avoid the Germans’ reaction –, ran like this: “MARCONI RADIO TELEGRAPH COMPANY OF EGYPT S.A.E./ Associated with/ THE EASTERN COMPANY LIMITED/ 1 JULY 1944/ AXC2227/ TOWCHESTER/ 28/27 28/ NLT LEIGH FERMOR/ BALASA WELL/ LETTER DATED BUCHAREST FEBRUARY JUST RECEIVED/ HOPING SEND HER YOUR ADDRESS/ HOW ARE YOU/ LOVE/ GEORGIA SITWELL/ WESTON HALL TOWCHESTER,/ NORTHAMPTONSHIRE/ TEL:

SULGRAVE 213/ STATION: BANBURY/12 April 1980” Their worlds, close to being united, before the war, were now falling apart.

After the war, looking back at other precious moments and memories, also from Romania, in a letter from her estate, on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1946, Balaşa wrote: “All say the same. Paddy sweet, when rode in Băleni fields ... shouting “Mount joy St. Denis”, you were preparing your life.” And in another, half-dated letter, on 1<sup>st</sup> July (probably 1947), from “Mangea Bunar (read Costineşti) by the sea”, she acknowledged the fact that somehow when the war had been declared their separation had been made acceptable, almost natural – “The war separated us, and in a way I am glad that our wonderful years were cut off so abruptly. You were so terrible young, my darling.”

They packed their things, his and Henry Neville’s, a nephew of Eileen Ghyka who had also spent a glorious summer in Romania, and “dashed ...to Bucarest”, where neither Eileen, nor Balaşa “said a word to keep (them) a bit longer”. After seeing them off, both women, the lover and the aunt, went into Nestor’s<sup>6</sup>, the famous confectionery, where “it was breakfast time for the gourmets”, took a table and asked for two coffees, as they “could not face any of (their) friends just then.” Balaşa concluded the 1947 letter with a profound sense of reassessment and reassurance: “After that, darling, there was the war. We have each had our share of the nightmare. We must forget in order to live again. We must find the *real*<sup>7</sup> values again.”

#### 4. The Collector

What she did not know was that her nightmare, and other Romanians’, was yet to come. Sacheverell Sitwell should have considered himself lucky for travelling in Romania in 1937. In a foreword to a new edition of *Roumanian Journey*, written on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1991, when Sachie had been dead for three years already, Paddy was stating that his friend had been the perfect man for the job, visiting the country

at precisely the right time. A year after its appearance, 1938, would have been too late: Roumania<sup>8</sup> was already clouding over with the threat of a

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<sup>6</sup> One of the most famous confectionaries in Bucharest, together with Capsa and Casata.. Nestor was renamed Republica during the communist regime. Nevertheless, it preserved the high quality standards it used to boast before WW I. Unfortunately, it was destroyed in the Massive earthquake of 1977

<sup>7</sup> Italics ours

<sup>8</sup> The different spellings of Romania, either Rumania or Roumania, which might be confusing for the readers, follow the way we found them in the manuscripts, both in the public and the private epitext. The same is true foar Balasha vs Balasa

war that nobody had their heart in, and when it burst, the country was dragged into a chain of events that ended in half a century of tyranny from which it has only recently emerged. (Leigh Fermor, 1991 F to RJ)

Paddy builds his case in Sachie's favour, as being the perfect man for the job, through arguing upon the latter's attitude "towards the countries he visited" (ibid) Sachie was neither a reporter nor a typical travel-writing author. "The glance he cast was a collector's" (ibid) and in this respect he resembled, yet up to a certain extent, his ancestors/compatriots who, on their Grand Tour through either Greece or Italy, would crate "marbles and canvases to be shipped home to the Shires" (ibid). Actually, Sachie had all the intellectual equipment, erudition and sensitiveness to capture the finest nuances and items he came across and consequently "Rumania was an ideal maze to wander in." (ibid)

He had previously written great scholarly books, such as *Southern Baroque Art* or *The Gothic North*, so he was in most ways prepared, and therefore able to tell the difference, when encountering "this late flowering of the Byzantine world, long after Byzantium had fallen" (ibid) So he could find the right connections and analogies to such a degree of refinement that he may be excused for omitting Vlad the Impaler, or for not "having lingered in" Transylvania, although his book on Romania began in Sighișoara – a place which Paddy himself only pretended to have visited during his very first travel.

## 5. Instead of Conclusion

However, a slightly different perspective is to be found with the person who had been Paddy's mentor in the pre-WWII years. In the paradise-like environment of Băleni, Paddy had found "a set of people among whom he felt he belonged and was understood" (Cooper 2013, 119), Balașa and the Cantacuzenes had offered him "several of the opportunities afforded by a university education" (ibid) They helped him to understand Romania's history, to polish his French, to refine his manners while remaining (the enthusiastic) himself. Bălașa, although rather maternal from an outsider's angle, engaged him in multi-layered conversations, in which others joined as well:

How {Balasha and H el ene and Paddy} could talk... {They} argued and discussed and pleaded, their voices moving in and out, each speech a recital yet part of the pattern, a creation, seemingly tireless, endless. An afternoon, an evening would pass, and the voices would go on. Talking

was not a luxury, or a duty, it was a work of art to be practised seriously<sup>9</sup>  
(Cooper 2013, 117)

Mentoring Paddy was not an easy job; nevertheless, the results proved spectacular, in both the man and the writer he later came to be. In the previously mentioned letter to him, from 27<sup>th</sup> January 1946, Balaşa added: “I know that you have done the most wonderful things, the things no one would have attempted.” In other letters she thanked him for the books he had sent her, his own included: “Let us talk about your books. *The Cretan Runner* has come at last. So we have them all. I have read it just now. How like you to have translated his book and not have written your account of those days”. What she was pointing at was the famous episode of capturing the German general in command in Crete by a commando led by Paddy, in 1944. Different materials came out of that adventure, among them *The Cretan Runner*, which is a translation by Paddy of the book produced by one of the Greek partisans involved.

Balaşa was an avid and very critical reader, usually opinionated in the beginning of a new reading enterprise. However, from the letters she sent to Paddy along the years – especially after the suspicion on her spying for the French had melted down, so Romanian authorities no longer interfered in their correspondence<sup>10</sup> –, one could notice the changes in her appreciations of some writers, sometimes spectacular, as it was the case with Lawrence Durrell, an after-war friend of Paddy’s.

As for Sachie, Balaşa had her reserve, somehow part of the larger Sitwells’ frame of reference. In a letter from 21st December 1966, she wrote of Edith Sitwell’s sense of humour as “laboured and often in poor taste, and her darts and arrows at poets or critics... sour and bitter”, and she concluded that Sachie’s elder sister was the image “of an unfulfilled human being.” In Sachie’s books, she thought she had detected “something static”, the result perhaps of a sort of artificiality she could perceive at the other family residence, hinted at in a previous line in the letter with the phrase “the Renishawes”. In this respect, “one feels that he (Sachie) has looked at and fingered a stone or broken statue, perhaps taken out of a glass case a coin” and from there “he writes a book jumping analogy to every subject.” (ibid)

She wondered whether that kind of effort was indeed valuable, but at the same time she felt reluctant to let Sachie know about her opinions: “Keep

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<sup>9</sup> From Bidy (nee Branch) Hubbard’s account of the summer she spent at Baleni, in 1938. Bidy was the sister of Guy Branch, an English friend of the Canatcuzenes, who died flying his plane in the Battle of Britain, on 11th August 1940

<sup>10</sup> That was what we realized when we studied, at the Archives of the former Romanian Secret Police, the surveillance files on Balaşa.

this to yourself”, she asked Paddy, “You know that I am fond of Sachie, but growing old I have the right *to sort out the values I have admired*”<sup>11</sup> (ibid)

Could this be the unfortunately acquired wisdom after having lost her property at Băleni and been removed in the south of the country, in an attic she had to share with her sister and her brother in law? There she kept writing letters to people she loved, most of them to Paddy. One can only regret their exchange not being accessible, as most of Paddy’s letters seem to have been lost. Nevertheless, her more than 200 letters to Paddy, in his archive at the National Library of Scotland, are still waiting for an editor, to bring to the surface some of the gems & beauties of Romania’s pre-WWII world.

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<sup>11</sup> Italics ours.

## Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* as *Dérive*: A Psychogeographic Reading

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**Abstract:** According to Guy Debord, psycho-geography is the study of the “specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.” Originally, Jerome K. Jerome intended ‘Three Men in a Boat’ to be a practical guidebook for people interested in boat trips. It turned out to be something markedly different: a comic and immensely popular travelogue that since its first publication in 1889 has never gone out of print. In my paper I shall analyse the novel as the recount of a *dérive*, i.e. an experimental journey meant to combat the malaise and boredom of modern city life, a journey during which the traveler drops the usual relation and received preconceptions regarding the various elements of the landscape and focuses on the genuine emotions that various sights and places engender in him.

**Keywords:** Jerome K. Jerome, *Three Men in a Boat*, psychogeography, *dérive*, Victorian travelogue

### Jerome K. Jerome: an Unjustly Neglected Author

As Jeremy Nicholas has pointed out in a preface written to the most recent biography of Jerome K. Jerome, a book written by Carolyn Oulton entitled: *Below the Fairy City: A Life of Jerome K. Jerome*, there is a “lightweight tag” (Oulton: 7) attached to the name of Jerome K. Jerome. This alone may account for the fact that he has been grossly neglected by the literary establishment, for, in spite of the lasting popularity of his comic travelogue: *Three Men in a Boat, to Say Nothing of the Dog*, and in spite of his productivity, (Jerome K. Jerome was a prolific humorist, playwright, essayist, journalist etc.), there are only four or five biographies written about him, and only half a dozen scholarly articles tackling the work that made his name.

The extent to which literary critics go in neglecting the book is simply appalling. Published in 1889, *Three Men in a Boat* is a comic travelogue relating the adventures and mishaps of three city boys taking a

week-long boating trip on the Thames, and, yet, it is not once mentioned in Marjorie Morgan's *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, a book which deals with such topics as the meaning and mechanics of travel, landscape, climate, religion, history, the discourse of national identity in Victorian Britain, all themes that are amply tackled in Jerome's book. And this is but one example of scholarly oversight.

Much of the present-day neglect of Jerome K. Jerome stems from the way in which this author was viewed by the literary establishment of his own time. *Three Men in a Boat, to Say Nothing of the Dog*, while very popular among fin de siècle readers, had a very negative reception on the part of influential contemporary literary journals. Jerome's gift of capturing middle and lower-middle class experience in a comic form was deemed vulgar and amoral. He was considered a "New Humorist" and in fin de siècle England the adjective "new" meant anti-traditional and immoral.

Yet the book's continuing success, in spite of the datedness of many of the realities that are mentioned in it, speaks for itself. It has been unjustly overlooked by critics. Though deemed as a comic travelogue, the articles dealing with *Three Men in a Boat* have simplistic tendencies and discuss it mainly as a comic novel and either overlook or dismiss the parts that describe the landscape, both man-made and natural, and the people that inhabit it. In an attempt to make up for this neglect, the present paper will look at the novel through the lens of psychogeography.

### **Guy Debord, the Situationists, and Psychogeography**

Psychogeography is a concept used for exploring and reading the man-made (mainly urban) environment in new ways, investing the place or landscape it explores with new meanings. The term itself emerged in the mid-1950s and it was used with a subversive political purpose by Guy Debord and other avant-garde artists and activists associated with the Lettrist International and Situationist International.

The situationists were a group of avant-garde artists that came together in 1957, led by the Marxist Guy Debord. They desired a life free from the conditioning of the capitalist system, which they used as inspiration for their political and artistic undertakings. In their hands, psychogeography became a tool in an attempt to transform urban life, first for aesthetic purposes, but later for increasingly political ends.

Guy Debord wrote the situationists' most influential manifesto of ideas under the title *Society of the Spectacle* (1967). The main concept behind the manifesto is that mass media and advertising create an artificial reality in which true everyday existence is hidden behind. This artificial reality Debord called the Spectacle. As a way of reacting to this

dominance over society by the media, the situationists developed methods for everyday experimentation, the most notable being psychogeography. Guy Debord defined the term Psychogeography as “the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals.” (Debord: “Introduction to a critique of Urban Geography”)

Debord's most remarkable concept within psychogeography was his notion of the *dérive* (or drift). The *dérive* was an unplanned walk through the urban landscape, which was navigated by the individual's emotional reaction to the surrounding cityscape. It was a method of wandering, in which the subjects trajectory was determined by the city's psychogeographical mapping. It was an inventive method for exploring cities, aimed at helping pedestrians to sway from their predictable trajectory. The ideal outcome was that pedestrians would become more aware of their overlooked urban surroundings and would begin to see new possibilities of experiencing everyday life in the city.

The emotions engendered by various cityscapes were not the only thing that psychogeographers drew attention on. The situationists encompassed other intellectual devices into their walks. When they were manoeuvring within the landscape they would try to be aware of how their surroundings could be used to draw them toward the past. Cities were seen as *historical landscapes*, whose structure and appearances were shaped by temporal events that were buried but never completely erased. The situationists' notion of psychogeography managed to draw attention to the importance of maintaining a link with the cities' historical past and enticed many to explore the city with a new perspective.

### ***Three Men in a Boat as a Dérive***

The *dérive*/drift is an unplanned walk through the urban landscape, which is navigated by the individual's emotional reaction to the surrounding cityscape. It is an experimental journey meant to combat the malaise and boredom of modern city life, a journey during which the traveler drops the usual relation and received preconceptions regarding the various elements of the landscape and focuses on the genuine emotions that various sights and places engender in him and aims to connect in new ways with his environment. *Dérives* are usually taken in small groups.

In late-Victorian England there was a vogue for recreational boating on the Thames and In the novel, Jerome and his two friends, Harris and George and their dog, a fox terrier called Montmorency, attempting to escape the stresses of city life, decide to take a boat trip in order to relax and rejuvenate. The trip commences when the narrator discovers he has

every disease except housemaid's knee and basically exhibits "a general disinclination to work." (Jerome 8) And so the trio decides: "What we want is rest." (Jerome 9). But what they find instead is one hapless catastrophe after another, so that, instead of the expected joy and relaxation, the emotions they experience are helplessness, anger, disgust, and contempt.

It's true that the three friends: Jerome, George and William Samuel Harris do consult a map when preparing for their trip, but their trip (just like the city walks suggested by the situationists) is not meticulously planned. They simply decide to rove from Kingston on the Thames till Oxford and back. In the course of their trip it becomes obvious that each participant has a different agenda in mind when visiting places. This is also important for a rich psychogeographic experience of the environment. Jerome, the most bookish of the three protagonists, sees the river, the landscape and the places that they visit or pass by through the lens of the Romantic poets or through his idiosyncratic understanding of ancient Roman, medieval and Renaissance English history.

Harris's chief ambition is to visit cemeteries and tombs.

Harris ... revels in tombs, and graves, and epitaphs, and monumental inscriptions, and the thought of not seeing Mrs. Thomas's grave made him crazy. He said he had looked forward to seeing Mrs. Thomas's grave from the first moment that the trip was proposed—said he wouldn't have joined if it hadn't been for the idea of seeing Mrs. Thomas's tomb. (Jerome 56)

In spite of the fact that J. and George do not enjoy visiting cemeteries in the course of the journey we see some, because they have to accommodate Harris. With Jerome as the narrator of the trip, the reader does not really find out what Harris finds attractive in these graveyard visits. He (the reader) is only made aware of Jerome's annoyance and disgust at such sights.

I don't know whether it is that I am built wrong, but I never did seem to hanker after tombstones myself. I know that the proper thing to do, when you get to a village or town, is to rush off to the churchyard, and enjoy the graves; but it is a recreation that I always deny myself. I take no interest in creeping round dim and chilly churches behind wheezy old men, and reading epitaphs. Not even the sight of a bit of cracked brass let into a stone affords me what I call real happiness. (Jerome 54)

George, the leader of the group, the most practical of the three friends has a penchant for pubbing and no other ambition during the journey but to keep his body well fed, sleep and relax as much as he can. As a consequence, while he is the one whose opinion is most respected, and the one who makes most of the trip, he is the least interesting member of the trio.

Jerome is the most sensitive and the most introvert of the three characters and the one, whose experience of negative emotions are most acute. The most frequent feelings that he experiences when interacting with his friends and various people (railway employees, villagers, fishermen, boating groups, pub-owners, oversensitive ladies etc.) that they meet during their trip are distress, shame and anger. He finds peace and solace only when he disconnects from all these and when he focuses on nature or the history of various buildings or places.

Starting with Chapter Two the readers are regularly presented with English landscapes and geography. When not quarreling with his friends or chagrined at the various mishaps on their journey, Jerome enthuses over the perceived beauty of the landscape seen at a distance: “the quaint backstreets of Kingston, where they came down to the water’s edge looked quite picturesque in the flashing sunlight, the glinting river with its drifting barges, the wooded towpath, the trim-kept villas on either side...” (Jerome 43). He also seems to believe that the embracing of nature is a manifestation of man's best self. In Chapter 7, he writes:

It was a lovely landscape. It was idyllic, poetical, and it inspired me. I felt good and noble. I felt I didn't want to be sinful and wicked any more. I would come and live here, and never do any more wrong, and lead a blameless, beautiful life, and have silver hair when I got old, and all that sort of thing (Jerome 54).

The lyrical descriptions in this passage are typical of Romantic writing, as is the notion that nature can bring out a person's best self. Because of these qualities, the above passage is similar to other sentimental descriptions that appear in the novel. However, Jerome shows a sense of self-awareness here that he does not always demonstrate elsewhere. By wrapping up the description with “all that sort of thing”, he suggests an ironic distance from Romantic conventions, and gently mocks their sentimentality even as he seems to sincerely embrace their ideas.

In spite of the fact that there are many descriptions of the natural landscape that the three friends come by as they drift on their boat, because Jerome sees it through the lens of the Romantic poets his descriptions do not sound authentic. Nature in *Three Men in a Boat*, when at its best, it is a poetically transfigured nature. Whenever Jerome views nature as it is, then he sees the polluted river, a river where there are no fish, and on which drift corpses of animals and humans. Only at the end of the book do we encounter authentic descriptions of nature when it starts to rain, but then the three friends decide to finish their trip and take the train back to London.

Jerome frequently slips into historical musings, intertwining the action currently at hand with events which happened “on this very spot” X number of years ago:

I mused on Kingston, or “Kynningestun,” as it was once called in the days when Saxon “kings” were crowned here. Great Caesar crossed the river there, and the Roman legions camped upon its sloping uplands. Caesar, like, in later years, Elizabeth, seems to have stopped everywhere: only he was more respectable than good Queen Bess; he didn’t put up at public-houses. She was nuts on public-houses, was England’s Virgin Queen. There’s scarcely a pub of any attractions within ten miles of London that she does not seem to have looked in at, or stopped at, or slept at, some time or other. (Jerome 42).

Here, Jerome fuses historical “facts” with humorous irreverence, cultural iconography (the public-house), and geography (the river and its “sloping uplands”).

Jerome’s use of concise, accessible historical accounts peppered with humorous detail was unusual for the time in which the novel was written. In the Victorian period, history texts tended to use formal language, presenting information in a stiff, politically correct manner. Jerome’s lighthearted, gossipy account of Henry VIII’s courtship of Anne Boleyn – and his jokes about Queen Elizabeth’s drinking habits – brings history and its protagonists (who in Jerome’s rendering behaved like actual humans, with failures and desires) closer to the reader and takes away much of the reverence with which they were supposed to be treated.

In addition to English history, Jerome also satirizes current and contemporary topics in English culture: Victorian work ethic, the chaos at Waterloo station, where Jerome and Harris manage to deviate a train, the Maze at Hampton Court: a source of extreme distress for any visitor, the pollutedness of the river, all the haphazard of a boating holiday, including the rovers’ lack of training and stamina, unsuitable clothing, the inclemency of the English weather, the meanness, lack of manners and lack of empathy of fellow boaters etc.

In some parts of the novel, social criticism comes to the fore when Jerome comments on social issues such as poverty, greed, superabundance of wealth and excessive accumulation of possession, and above all, the selfishness and pretentiousness of the rich. Angry J. soothes his indignation by indulging in criminal fancies:

The selfishness of the riparian proprietor grows with every year. If these men had their way they would close the river Thames altogether. They

actually do this along the minor tributary streams and in the backwaters. They drive posts into the bed of the stream, and draw chains across from bank to bank, and nail huge notice-boards on every tree. The sight of those notice-boards rouses every evil instinct in my nature. I feel I want to tear each one down, and hammer it over the head of the man who put it up, until I have killed him, and then I would bury him, and put the board up over the grave as a tombstone. (58)

Indulging in fancies and projecting one's desires over reality is one of the chief topics of the novel, and one of the chief sources of humour as well, as our author exposes mercilessly the inflated self-image and hypocrisy of the people: rich and poor, educated and coarse.

The hypocrisy and lack of empathy in *Three Men in a Boat* is appalling. This is a society where people have lost connection. The saddest episode of the novel is the scene in which the trio comes by the corpse of a young woman who drowned herself. Jerome's commentary about the case is as unemotional as the reaction of any of the bystanders: "Of course it was the old, old vulgar tragedy. She had loved and been deceived or had deceived herself. Anyhow, she had sinned, some of us do now and then, and her family and friends, naturally shocked and indignant, had closed their doors against her." (Jerome 137)

### **Conclusions: *Three Men in a Boat: a Psychogeographic Novel?***

*Three Men in a Boat* was written in 1889, while the term psychogeography was coined only in 1955. Yet, psychogeographers did not invent urban wandering. Long before the emergence of the situationists there were writers, such as Baudlaire, William Blake or Daniel Defoe, Robert Louis Stevenson, Thomas de Quincey etc., who had recorded their urban strolls and their emotions engendered by various sites in the cities. (Coverley 31-57). It is true that the three protagonists of the novel do not simply take a walk in a city, but cruise the English countryside with a boat, yet the three friends take many stops along the journey in various cities: Kingston, Marlowe, Oxford etc. They leave the boat and go for a walk to visit a church, a churchyard, a pub, a hotel etc. If we accept Guy Debord's definition of psychogeography, which claims that psychogeography is about our reaction to the geographical environment, there is no reason for which psychogeographic novels should be expected to limit their setting(s) to towns only. The experience of the Thames and of the English countryside can also be included. Furthermore, the rowing and towing of the boat in the novel resembles in its aimlessness (and often cluelessness) very much the *dérive*/drift that

psychogeographers advise us to take, so as to experience the environment in new, meaningful ways.

The psychogeographical experience of the city is always aesthetic and political. *Three Men in a Boat* has no explicit political agenda, but there is plenty of social critique of Victorian materialism, hypocrisy, and pretentiousness, which are seen as obstacles in the way of living and enjoying life and one's environment in an honest, meaningful way. While there is no clear-cut aesthetic agenda, either, the author makes frequent commentaries of the way in which the design and the decoration of various buildings (The palace of Hampton Court and the confusing Hampton Court maze, or the depressing oak-paneled room in Kingston are but a few examples in point.) influence the mood and the behavior of the people.

And last but not least, the psychogeographic novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries are characterized by "absence of plot and digressive style" (Coverley 21). Though written at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, because of its uneven style and the countless random flashbacks *Three Men in a Boat* has been deemed not only a parody of Victorian travelogues but also a stream of consciousness rendering of Jerome's, the narrator's mind. The idiosyncrasy of the way in which the trip is presented, the various narrative styles employed by the author are acknowledged features of any contemporary psychogeographic novel.

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## **Displacement and Its Effects in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of the Suburbia* and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss***

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**Abstract:** Displacement was regarded in many writings as the loss of self and place and was used as a synonym for “migration”. Displaced people became alienated as they lost their cultural space and suffered psychological damage, loss of confidence and a fall in status. On the contrary, a sense of place, of rootedness, can provide stability and a source of identity. This article will examine the struggle of postcolonial subjects in Hanif Kureishi and Kiran Desai's novels.

**Keywords:** displacement, migration, alienated, loss of place, postcolonial subject, identity.

Displacement is one of the main issues presented in postcolonial writer's novels. Postcolonial writers are the ones that give us an insight on this matter through their writings, from both an individual perspective and a national one. Their critical view reveals the struggle and torment of colonized people, embodied in meticulously shaped characters and a plot inspired by historical events and experiences from that period. Postcolonial writers have addressed and analyzed these critical aspects and predicted their consequences in their writings.

Among those writers of Indian origin we find Indian female writer, Kiran Desai, illustrating displacement in *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) and Hanif Kureishi, highlighting hybridism, displacement and the search for identity in *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990). These two novels reveal characters facing displacement in a different way, continuously trying to fit in, in the colonizer's world. Characters in postcolonial writings seem disturbed by being the former colonized people, peripheral or marginal people, so they try to erase their roots and create new ones, by living in the centre, that is, where the colonizer lives. There, they think they will feel less marginal, rejecting their own culture and taking a new identity. But moving away doesn't erase their inherited identity and what

they discover is that migration leads to an erosion of an active sense of self and the relationship between culture, place and identity.

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin define displacement in their book, *The Empire Writes Back*:

A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being: the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place.... A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 9)

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin underline the idea of connection between self and place. Losing place means losing one's identity and creating a psychological imbalance thus leading to violence, riots, killings and madness.

Hanif Kureishi's novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, is an example of post-imperial writing; the novel "propagates an emancipation of ethnic difference from both the discriminatory stereotyping institutionalized by current multiculturalists discourse as well as the postcolonial migrant's subject propensity for self-oppressive role-play and Anglophone mimicry". (Schoene, 1)

Britain needed a background change that would free it from its imperial past and cure the identity crisis in which it is currently enmeshed. Current postcolonial debates focus on appraisal of newly emergent identities, which have managed to "emancipate themselves from colonial hegemonies or tend to problematically emulate them." (Schoene 111) Also, rather than seeking to deconstruct the Orientalist self vs. other opposition, much postcolonial literature and scholarship pronounce little more than the latter's inversion. They celebrate the formerly marginalized other's response to the now "disempowered self, while unselfconsciously perpetuating the insidious ethnocentric fear of sameness and the compulsive assertion of cultural difference." (Schoene 111)

As a novelist, Kureishi approached themes like racial prejudice and ethno-English identity. His writings reveal portraits of tension between Anglo-British suburban people and post-imperial national desire for cultural excellence that are shattered when the reality of inner-city life is acknowledged. His novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, is filled with

postcolonial issues like race, sexism, ethnicity, gender and class, viewed from a cosmopolitan Britain window. He doesn't offer the readers an analysis on the various quandaries of postcolonial dislocation, but "discloses the ferment of the 'tropical' element in Britain's currently rather unstable cultural disposition. Kureishi sets out to redeem the advantageous aspects of what has hitherto categorically been decried as the detrimental processes of societal homogenization. In Kureishi's view, homogenization does not necessarily mean anglicization." (Schoene 112)

After the collapse of the "regime of truth of the Anglo-British Empire" (Sedgwick 177) its ideologies were inapplicable and culturally unintelligible. The British Empire fragrance is dissipated and replaced by a post-imperial residue of dysfunctional ignorant people. Describing the present dilemma of middle class English people, Kureishi signals the exempt from identity crisis of the upper social class. This pervades the culture in contemporary England. The upper class have perpetuated a superior position by replacing a racial barrier formed in colonial era, by a social class barrier. This led to frustration, as we can observe in Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* if we pay attention to what Karim says, The Buddha's son and main character of the novel:

What infuriated me - what made me loathe both them and myself - was their confidence and knowledge. The easy talk of art, theatre, architecture, travel; the languages, the vocabulary, knowing the way round a whole culture - it was invaluable and irreplaceable capital ... this language was the currency that bought you the best of what the world could offer. But for us it could only ever be a second language, consciously acquired. (Kureishi 177-178)

Karim's frustration derives from the tolerance he observes society has regarding traditional upper-class ideologies. Their knowledge is still influential and that gives them value and helps impede the homogenization process of post-imperial cosmopolitanism.

British Imperialism institutionalized race instead of social class to divide the English middle classes from the upper class. The de-classed English society excluded middle classes from the "grand narrative of Anglo-Britishness and, according to Kureishi, they still find themselves at a loss for appropriate strategies to reconstitute an identity that would buttress their facade of communal importance." (Osmond 114)

A strategy to do so would imply assimilating one's alterity to overcome cultural exhaustion. This is visible in *The Buddha of Suburbia's* suburbanites which seem eager to embrace the exotic (a highly marketable commodity). Karim states that Eva (his father's lover)

compares him with a fashion accessory: “Then, holding me at arm’s length as if I were a coat she was about to try on, she looked me all over and said, Karim Amir, you are so exotic, so original! It’s such a contribution! It’s so you!” (Kureishi, 9)

The fragrance of exotic Indianness is irresistible in middle-class suburban. Haroon becomes a worshipped figure, the savior amongst the fetishized alternative culture, “the sandalwood Buddhas, brass ashtrays and striped plaster elephants which decorated every available space” (Kureishi 30).

The centre needed to regain its power, this time using the need for cultural substantiation. Being left without a central authority, Kureishi’s English characters - most notably Eva and her son Charlie, are endowed with a strong, legitimate identity– “finding themselves in a limbo marked by acute disorientation. Pertinently, Mr. Kay, the husband and father, is absent, recovering from a nervous breakdown in a nearby therapy centre. The traditional hierarchy grounded in a patriarchal imperialism has broken down, releasing formerly subordinate identities into a world in urgent need of meaningful re-semblage.” (Osmond 115)

The novel reveals a chaotic mixture of identities and self-authentication. Karim experiences both positive and negative discrimination, distinguishing himself from the upper class, only by the colour of his skin. Eva and Charlie are intensely disturbed by their cultural invisibility living in England’s suburbs.

Other characters, like Uncle Anwar and his daughter Jamila, “border between histrionic pose and authentic being.” (Osmond 116) Jamila rejects the idea of an arranged marriage and her father, Anwar, childishly threatens to starve himself to death if his daughter declines his patriarchal commands. He lived as an Englishman most of his life and allowed his daughter to adopt the English life, but suddenly turns to the customs of his native country - which he himself describes as “a rotten place” (Kureishi 64). His daughter’s consciousness of ethnic authenticity is destabilized by serious inconsistencies, as she discovers she cannot get accustomed to an identity she never had. “Defining herself as Indian, she rejects her Englishness as a colonial imposition. She is then forced to realize that the only true violation of her selfhood is inflicted upon her by the native traditions of her own country.” (Osmond 117)

Jamila does not accept an arranged marriage due to her western belief in a woman’s right to choose for herself. But in the end, she seems to accept her dependency for authenticity renegotiating her social position, marital status and ethnic identity.

In contrast to Kureishi’s novel, in a different setting, but illustrating the same issues, is Kiran Desai’s novel, *The Inheritance of*

*Loss*. The novel's plot highlights the contribution of colonization to displacement for the peoples of Kalimpong, a peaceful Himalayan town in India, and the effects of displacement – violence, chaos, corruption.

From the land of peace and harmony, Kalimpong turns into a land of rebellion, conflict, both for tourists and outsiders. British administrators and wealthy British people built bungalows there to enjoy the beauty and peace of the town. Local people were displaced from their homes and couldn't fight against it because the settlers were powerful colonizers. This trend was followed by rich Indians in postcolonial era, turning the local inhabitants into minority in their own town. This creates discomfort and tensions between the elite Indians and the locals and generates violent conflicts. We feel the tension in Desai's book right from the beginning of the novel:

In Kalimpong, high in the northeastern Himalayas where they lived—there retired judge and his cook, Sai, and Mutt—there was a report of new dissatisfaction in the hills, gathering insurgency, men and guns. It was the Indian—Nepalese this time, fed up with being treated like the minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs.

Here, where India blurred into Bhutan and Sikkim, and the army did pull-ups and push-ups, maintaining their tanks with khaki paint in case the Chinese grew hungry for more territory than Tibet, it had always been a messy map, The papers sounded resigned. A great amount of warring, betraying, bartering had occurred; between Nepal, England, Tibet, India, Sikkim, Bhutan; Darjeeling stolen from here, Kalimpong plucked from there—despite, ah, despite the mist charging down like a dragon, dissolving, undoing, making ridiculous the drawing of borders. (Desai 9)

The setting is the 1980's, and, as we can tell from the description, the protagonists, Sai and her grandfather – the judge, are from the elite Indians who do not socialize with the locals, nor they want to do any harm to them. At a close analysis, we can say that they are also displaced, following British ideology and culture. They are served by a lower social class cook, whose name is not mentioned in the novel. He is the typical Indian who dreams to escape his subaltern position, and for him, his way of escaping is seen through his son's emigration, and fuelled by his letters. Biju reveals to the reader the real life of immigrants in the USA. He has a strong desire to update his status and earn enough money to accomplish his dream. He believes that migrating is the key to do so, but realizes that he won't be able to fulfil his dream. When he wishes to

return home, his father answers “Stay there as long as you can. Stay there. Make money. Don’t come back here” (Desai 191). These words might give the reader a clue on the concept of international migration. Biju’s generation is a new industrious and determined one that sees migration and displacement as a way out of their social status, although what they find is not exactly encouraging.

Another representative young character, Sai’s tutor, Gayan, who is an educated displaced Nepali Gurkha, strives to reach a higher status by getting an education but, in the globalized field, competing with the powerful majority, he doesn’t stand a chance. He is given a voice to reveal his community’s hopes and views. He is not part of the armed resistance of rebels but supports their actions, because he is aware of the reasons they are rebelling: unemployment and oppression. His relationship with Sai becomes a romance. However, their difference in social status destabilizes their relationship.

Gayan’s frustration is depicted in his dialogues with Sai:

“Christmas!” said Gyan. “You little fool!” .... Christmas had neverbothered him before— .... Don’t you have any pride? Trying to be so Westernized. They don’t want you!!!! Go there and see if they will welcome you with open arms. You will be trying to clean their toilets and even then they won’t want you. (Desai 174)

In comparison to Gayan, Sai is a modern Western educated Indian woman. She is a hybrid Indian who can speak English and a little Hindi: “She (Sai) who could speak no language but English and pidgin Hindi, she who could not converse with anyone outside her tiny social stratum” (Desai 176). Due to her lack of ability to communicate, her lifestyle is also restricted.

Displacement affects all these characters (the judge, Sai, Gayan, Biju – the cook’s son from the USA as well as the cook himself). They manifest a psychological and physical struggle.

Both novels deal with the effects of displacement and the loss of identity and place.

The colonial history reveals displacement as an important issue for the colonized people. Displacement has significant impact on postcolonial writers. The conflict between the centre and periphery is always reflected in postcolonial writings. The marginal want to regain independence from the centre while the centre tries to keep its superior position. England was the source of the problem, because British colonists establish it is the centre and its colonies as periphery. But after the colonies regain their independence, the ideology remains the same. USA and Europe are still

considered the centre, mostly because of their economic power and technology. Because of this, there is a constant battle between Western (centre) and periphery culture, the cultural division comes out in the relation between the two. Bhabha explains in *The Location of Culture* (44-45) why marginal people are attracted to the Western culture. When they attempt to reach the centre, they face displacement from a cultural and psychological point of view. These displacements create a hybrid human being, a peripheral individual without a precise identity and a sense of belonging somewhere. He is from neither here, nor there. He is somewhere in between. But this displacement does not only entrap him and distort him, but also confuse him about his position in the inner societal structure. He follows the Western culture and education, learn their language, and draw a line to divide the elite from the marginal, subaltern people. And only the elite have power and voice. The subalterns are poor people, with less education and less or no power, and they have no voice. However, if they manage to obtain the voice, they may have the opportunity to raise their societal position and become heard. Therefore, they won't be regarded as marginal anymore.

The two novels, Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, reveal the tension created by this gap, people threatening to regain power (the Nepali Gurkas for example, in *The Inheritance of Loss*). Although the novels' background is different, representing different societies in the postcolonial era, the struggle for displacement and its effects are the same. This desire for power acts as a propelling source for actions, that shape this inside and outside battle for freedom and prosperity. This continuous fight makes displacement a significant element which complicates postcolonial society's power play. Postcolonial writers, being victims of displacement themselves, write from a subjective perspective, revealing evidence of the consequences of displacement and the loss of one's identity. The damage is irretrievable and its effects are seen in more than one generation. Although, Kureishi being born and bred in England, identifies himself "not as a displaced subject but primarily as English or British. He doesn't write back to the imperial centre, but from it. He has established himself as a cultural spokesman of Asian/Pakistani community in Britain." (Schoene 4)

Using a narrative technique that "scrambles time and scale" (Sabo 377), Desai reveals the experience of dispersion that diaspora provokes. "Readers are thus compelled to "migrate" textually between different narrative threads and interweave India, England, and the USA as well as colonialism, nationalism, and globalization. By depicting diasporic and immigrant others in several national as well as transnational contexts, the novel also asks audiences to imagine the illegal immigrant, the foreigner,

and the stranger, and to find ways of accommodating them in the nation-state” (Sabo 377). As a postcolonial subject who tries to “resist a mere celebration of global hybridity, Desai anthropologises the heritage of the Euro-United States more deliberately” (Spivak 157). This account of Desai’s writing helps us understand the idea of inheritance in the novel’s title “not as an unquestioning embrace of Euro-American history and values, but as a critical reading of its continuing effects in our contemporary world marked by inequalities, suffering, and loss on psychic, social, and cultural levels” (Sabo 379).

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# **AMERICAN LITERATURE**



## Rewriting an American Myth: on Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance*

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**Abstract:** According to Howard Temperley and Malcolm Bradbury the creation of the American myths and images had to face a constant revision, a process of change and reinterpretation (30). The influence of Americanization due to the amazing technological growth, cultural pluralism, and sense of independence from the past, is best expressed in the phenomena of modern rootlessness and alienation<sup>1</sup> (38). The myths of the Frontier, the westward expansion, the (con)quest, and the freedom of the individual from the social constraints provided the narrative which served as the strong basis of the American creation myth. For a long time in history, being on the road, discovering wild, uninhabited places, surviving and prospering in harsh conditions construed a major part of the general American spirit. In this paper I want to look at the ways these concepts are questioned and/or transformed in Paul Auster's novel *The Music of Chance*.

**Key words:** myth, frontier, journey, discovery, popular culture

One of the most distinctive traits of Paul Auster's writing emerges in recurring tropes like enclosure within rooms and walking in the "inexhaustible" urban labyrinths. This has called forth various critical explanations which attempted to shed light on the meaning of these tropes as well as the way they function in Auster's entire oeuvre. The wanderings of the solitary *flâneur* are often considered to be a futile postmodernist quest, leading to the disintegration of the self into final nothingness.<sup>2</sup> Such manifestation of the solitary traveller can be found in *The Music of Chance*, a road novel (1990), as well as road movie (1993),

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<sup>1</sup> A great number of studies explored this topic, for example David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950).

<sup>2</sup> Rheindorf, Markus. "Processes of Embodiment and Spatialization in the Writings of Paul Auster," *Reconstruction* 2.3 (2002). 30 January 2008 <<http://www.reconstruction.ws/023/rheindorf.htm>> and Shiloh, Ilana. *Paul Auster and Postmodern Quest: On the Road to Nowhere*. New York: Lang, 2002.

one of the best examples of deconstructing a well-known American myth: being on the road.

Compared to the heroes of the traditional picaresque American novels written by Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Jack Kerouac, the protagonist of Auster's novel differs from the highly romanticized and/or "beatnik" figure of the traveller. In the novel, Jim Nashe, a Boston fireman abandoned by his wife, inherits a great fortune from his estranged father. He leaves his daughter with his sister, buys a red Saab and drives restlessly through the USA for a whole year. When his money is running out, he meets and befriends Jack Pozzi, a professional gambler, who plans a great poker game against two millionaires Flower and Stone. Nashe provides him the money, but the plan fails: they lose everything, and become in debt of the two millionaires. To pay them off, they agree to build a wall from old stones on the rich men's property, but the work becomes oppressive and the atmosphere prison-like. Pozzi tries to escape, and Nashe finds his (supposedly) dead body the next morning. At the end, Nashe finishes the wall, and celebrates with his captors at a bar, but when they let him drive his Saab back home, he accelerates and drives into an oncoming truck.

The first aspect related to the transitory nature of the frontier myths can be found in the mythological dimensions of Pozzi's narration. When he first meets Nashe, his story resembles very much a Wild West movie, rather than a true biographical account. The details of his adventures are exaggerated; he takes pleasure in his identity of a professional gambler. His role as a traditional tall tale teller fails, as the audience – that is, Nashe – has no reaction to the narrative.

According to Oberman, Auster's preoccupation with myths and archetypes related to the American dream, centres specifically on the theme of freedom (145). Nashe is the prototype of the existentialist individual on the open road, whose obsessive wandering limits his freedom, as he lacks commitment to any kind of responsibility. He never returns home, experiences no romantic epiphany, gains no greater knowledge of himself or the world, thus the novel provides no clear-cut resolution (194-96). Nashe is obsessively addicted to driving, but his quest for the ideal freedom paradoxically leads to imprisonment and oppression. Quoting Sartre's statement on the freedom inherent in imprisonment Oberman argues that Nashe's situation is an escape *from* freedom, not *to* it (199).

One can clearly find in the text that for Jim Nashe the open road signifies a restless mobility, an unfulfilled desire, an infinite line of possibilities:

Nashe realized he was no longer in control of himself that he had fallen into the grip of some baffling, overpowering force. He was like a crazed animal, careening blindly from one nowhere to the next, but no matter how many resolutions he made to stop, he could not bring himself to do it. (Auster 6)

This lack of control signifies the madman's choice and the inability to put an end to this crazy, never ending cycle, as Sartre explains "our freedom itself creates the obstacles from which we suffer (qtd. in Oberman 197).

Nashe's journey is an oscillation between hope and despair, a conflict that lies in the centre of the American dream. This seems to be parallel with his actions of being in his car and on the road over and over again. The car becomes his second home, a microcosm, symbolizing isolation and freedom at the same time. The image of the car in American literature and pop culture can be seen as the metaphor of exactly these "ambivalent dream/nightmare experiences" (Dettlebach qtd in Herzogenrath 166). The search for freedom in the case of Nashe ends up in repetitive actions, an endless series of getting on the road again: "he soon found himself travelling in the opposite direction. That was because he missed the ramp to the freeway. (...) Nashe understood that there was no difference, that both ramps were finally the same" (Auster 5).

In contrast with Oberman's ideas Markku Salmela argues that Nashe experiences some kind of phenomenological purity while driving. As his body remains immobile and inactive while everything else is moving brings about an effect of omnipotence and invulnerability, thus positioning the self in the centre of the perceptible universe (16). Thus, being on the road brings about a sense of being nowhere, of being in-between. Yi-Fu Tuan argues that place can signify "pause" when compared to the free movement allowed by space. He opposes the "security and stability of place" to "the openness, freedom, and threat of space", thus being lost involves the lack of a sense of security, of a place (Tuan qtd in Salmela 102)<sup>3</sup>.

In the case of Jim Nashe, the lack of a proper home, and more precisely the loss of a sense of family after his wife's disappearance induces the feeling of "being nowhere." The all-pervasiveness of the threatening space brings about a certain "unsettledness," and brings about more and more disorientation. According to Markku Salmela, the protagonist is dependent on this condition of aimlessness and detachment

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<sup>3</sup> In another attempt to define the differences between *space* and *place*, Edward Casey argues that place is a geographical location of the self, for which space functions as a void-like context. Contrastingly, De Certeau argues that space is produced by action that intrudes the void of place (qtd in Salmela 139).

from the surroundings, which liberates the mind from the bounds of reason (103). “Empty roads were always preferable to crowded roads (...) and because he did not have to pay attention to other cars, he could drive with the assurance that his thoughts will not be interrupted” (Auster 11). Thus, the concept of the *nowhere* becomes a refuge for the mind, and the absence of any anchoring points can bring about the feeling of freedom.

Salmela points out that the desire to get lost in the nowhere, the refusal of attachment to a place represent something like a late modern frontier impulse of a modest, urban sedentarist scale (17). For Nashe freedom can be achieved through accepting events by chance:

it was a dizzying prospect – to imagine all that freedom, to understand how little it mattered what choice he made. He could go anywhere he wanted, he could do anything he felt like doing, and not a single person in the world would care. As long as he did not turn back, he could just as well have been invisible. (Auster 5-6)

According to Oberman the novel can also be read as an existentialist critique of late-capitalism, and the motif of gambling, the promise of free money provides another way that capitalism maintains class distinctions (199). Quoting Erich Fromm’s thesis about our desire to escape our freedom, Oberman even argues that Nashe becomes a “nonperson,” as he welcomes his new status of surveillance, developing what Fromm calls “an instinctive wish for submission” (200). Indeed, Nashe never acquires selfhood, and working on the wall represents another way of escaping from the responsibility, that of making further decisions: “It was almost a relief to have the decision taken out of his hands, to know that he had finally stopped running. The wall would not be a punishment so much as a cure, a one-way journey back to earth” (Auster 100). For him, this subordination brings about joy and pleasure, a delusive feeling of stability. It is another way of losing himself; this time, however, not by driving/moving, but by a repetitive, seemingly never-ending work. Paradoxically, it is his entrapment and the repetitive job he performs that convey him a sense of inner liberation.

The political undertone is also obvious through Stone’s “The City of the World,” an enormous scale model rendering of a city, representing all aspects of society, including the lives of Flower and Stone.

Willie’s city is more than just a toy”, Flower said, “it’s an artistic vision of mankind (...) it’s what you might call utopia – a place where the past and future come together, where good finally triumphs over evil (...) If you look at the Prison, you’ll see that all the prisoners are working happily at various tasks, that they all have smiles on their faces (...) they

are glad they've been punished for their crimes, and now they are learning how to recover to goodness within them through hard work (Auster 72).

The artificial prison in Stone's city stands for false democracy, for a totalitarian control, revealing the will to power of its creator, as well as foreshadowing Nashe and Pozzi's imprisonment. Nashe concentrates almost exclusively on the prison, and finds that "for all the warmth and sentimentality depicted in the model, the overriding mode was one of terror, of dark dreams sauntering down the avenues in broad daylight. A threat of punishment seemed to hang in the air" (Auster 87-8). Nashe and Pozzi are captured, threatened, and exploited, becoming the victims of a repressive ideology. When they start to build the wall, they become parts of Stone's crazy world, similarly to the marionettes acting in the artificial City of the World. The film adaptation emphasizes this idea by employing the cross cutting technique: when they build a part of the wall, an immediate shot presents Stone's hand putting the miniature rocks in the same position on the artificial meadow.

As Tim Woods argues the novel's focus on power and its operation as means of social control takes on a Foucauldian twist, as power is demonstrated through measures of surveillance (Nashe and Pozzi are supervised by Murks, who has a gun; Pozzi is violated after his attempt of escape), and through the invisible and intangible force such as capital itself (Flower and Stone have the ultimate authority) (153). Thus, the system of late twentieth-century capitalism becomes the main evil in the novel, represented by the two venture capitalists, Flower and Stone, who acquire their fortune through winning the lottery.

Paradoxically, money has a double role: it liberates Nashe from responsibilities, but it also brings about his imprisonment. Similarly to the endless circulation of the money, the motif of the movement connected to the frontier myth undergoes a radical change: the omnipresent economic order obstructs the frontiersman's improvement.

In the case of Jim Nashe, the traditional concept of the frontier myth acquires a new sense. Nashe is similar to but also the opposite of the typical frontiersman, as his movement without a purpose cannot be seen as exemplary for a quest and adventure, but the journey itself becomes important, since it can be interpreted as a form of breaking away from the urban cultural order. Auster's text provides an example for the shift of perspective upon this myth, as Markku Salmela argues "when the city is left behind and a voyage into (real or metaphorical) wilderness begins, the myth of the frontier still provides an essential frame of reference for the ethos of restlessness" (200).

To conclude, the overwhelming urge felt by Nashe corresponds to the overall desire still present in American imagination as well as reflected in the popular culture: the mythical liberating promise of the frontier. However, this journey towards the frontier is stimulated by a personal trauma, a loss, which transforms the road of endless possibilities into reaching the final frontier: death.

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## Spatial and Temporal Nostalgia in Jhumpa Lahiri's Unaccustomed Earth (2008)

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**Abstract:** Dealing with the elusiveness of nostalgia, this article aims at highlighting the fact that such an ineffable concept is in fact a decisive factor in determining the (re)actions of most of the protagonists in the short stories included in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). From this perspective, our intention is to clarify whether the nostalgic desires affecting the characters represent a longing for a particular place or for a different time and to what extent this longing could be either appeased or on the contrary the recovery of what was once lost is indeed irretrievable.

**Key words:** nostalgia, space, time, past, memory, immigration

First coined in 1688 by the Alsatian physician Johannes Hofer, the word nostalgia comes from the Greek words *nostos* (return home) and *algia* (painful condition) and was initially used to describe a physical ailment. Apart from the emphasis on the spatial dimension of nostalgia, its medical meaning was preserved throughout the eighteenth century. Much later on, Hutcheon and Valdés noticed the transformations the concept underwent to the extent of becoming "less a *physical* than a *psychological* condition; in other words, it became psychically internalized. It also went from being a *curable* medical illness to an *incurable* (indeed unassuageable) condition of the spirit or psyche" (1998/2000: 19). For the two theoreticians, the transition from one understanding of the term to the other reflects "a shift in site from the spatial to the temporal" (19); the yearning to return home is thus replaced by a longing to a past time which is in fact irrecoverable.

Steinwand's definition of nostalgia includes both its spatial and temporal dimensions: "Nostalgia is a sort of homesickness, a pain (algos) or longing to return home (nostos) or to some lost past." (1997: 9). The immediate implication is that something has been lost and the person passing through nostalgia needs to return to some space or time offering

the sensation of “wholeness and belonging” (9). Because of the inherent phenomenon of forgetfulness, the recollection becomes vague and almost always idealized for imagination is summoned to supplement memory. Along these lines, nostalgia pervades postcolonial literature as a means of coping with the feeling of longing and of overcoming homelessness and alienation with the result of creating “a more aesthetically complete and satisfying recollection” (9) which does not genuinely reflect the loss, but its nostalgic projection. Nevertheless, Steinwand admits that the issue can be more complicated in the sense that “nostalgia cannot be dismissed as merely an imaginative improvement on the lost past. Rather the possibility should be retained that nostalgia offers a compensation for the lost proximity by supplementing a memory invigorated through absence, which displaces forgetfulness brought on by the immediacy of presence” (10). Tackled in this manner, the nostalgic recollection is transformed into a necessary tool which helps individuals to live with the events of the past and at the same time answer the demands of the present: “Nostalgia, in other words, can be seen in a different way: as an impersonal, highly literary mode of idealization responding first and foremost to the concerns of the present” (Santesso 2006: 13). To put it in a nutshell, the nostalgic moment is generated by a sense of lack and the necessity to fill a certain void in the present; although the moment in the past which is perceived as possibly filling that void cannot be recuperated, its idealization offers the strength to face the present and the hope for such a moment or a similar one to be reiterated in the future.

In her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym distinguishes between two different types of nostalgia in compliance with the functions they accomplish: restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia. By no means absolute, this distinction is meant to provide some clarification to a concept which generally escapes any strict categorization. Accordingly, if restorative nostalgia “puts emphasis on nostos and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps” reflective nostalgia “dwells in algia, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance” (Boym 2001: 72). In addition, restorative nostalgia takes the form of two main narrative plots: the restoration of origins (which proves essential in postcolonial or immigrant literature) and the conspiracy theory. It is also supposed to answer the ache of temporal distance and displacement: “Distance is compensated by intimate experience and the availability of a desired object. Displacement is cured by a return home, preferably a collective one.” (2001: 76). Unlike in the case of restorative nostalgia, reflective nostalgia does not focus on “recovery of what is perceived to be an absolute truth but on the meditation of history and passage of time.” (2001: 83). In spite of the fact that they are both triggered by the same

mechanisms of memory, the two types of nostalgia differ in the sense that while restorative nostalgia “ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space” (83). Nostalgia of the latter type is “ironic, inconclusive and fragmentary” and “does not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home” (84) because nostalgics of this type are aware of the passage of time and are more interested in narrating their story in an attempt to understand themselves and the present.

Viewed in the light of nostalgia with its different types and various meanings, Jhumpa Lahiri's 2008 collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* reflects the author's own nostalgic search for her Indian background as her parents were Bengali even if she was partly raised in England and partly in Rhode Island, USA. Accordingly, Munos notices the “melancholic *absence-in-presence*” pervading Jhumpa Lahiri's volume in which “second-generation members of the Indian diaspora retrace, or simply allude to their childhood” (2013: XXXI). The eight short stories included in the collection feature protagonists who are Indian immigrants to USA, to that “unaccustomed earth” mentioned by Nathaniel Hawthorne in the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*. Not accidentally, Jhumpa Lahiri chooses a fragment from this introduction as a motto to her collection which bears the same title as the first short story in the volume: “Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth.” (Lahiri 2008: 1). Critics of Lahiri's work mentioned the fact that “the metaphor of unaccustomed earth reflects both particular Bengali-American experiences and the universal inevitability of intergenerational change [...]” (Cardozo 2012: 6). Perhaps the main message Lahiri wants to transmit is that she adheres to the positive meaning attached by Hawthorne to life in what he calls “unaccustomed earth”, that is unfamiliar environment that may lead to nostalgic remembrance from time to time, but may also contribute to a full development of one's personality.

In the short story opening the volume, nostalgia is present from the description in the very first paragraph. An Indian immigrant to the USA, Ruma's father spent his entire life in the New World, but paradoxically, when he retired, he did not want to go back to India; instead, he spends his time “travelling in Europe, a continent he'd never seen” (2008: 3). Although his choice may seem rather odd to his daughter, it is understandable if interpreted in terms of the nostalgia of somebody belonging to the former colonies for the imperial centre, in this case not

only for Great Britain, but for Europe as a whole continent symbolizing the idea of colonial power. The visit Ruma's father pays to her daughter in Seattle is an opportunity for a double introspection into the thoughts and feelings of both father and daughter as representatives of the first and second generation of immigrants. Whereas Ruma plunges into nostalgic recollections of her mother as a means of coping with her unsettling current status of housewife taking care of her first born and expecting the second, her father seems to have accommodated to his American life and to have learnt many things from his experiences throughout the years.

Her mother's death left Ruma with a sense of loss and longing reminiscent of what Lacan called the Desire for the Mother or the desire for the recuperation of that sense of wholeness the child experiences during the Imaginary Order in which it has the illusion of control over its environment; Ruma's nostalgic memories of her mother reminds the readers of the "mother's reverence" (Lacan 2006: 579) or the "mother's omnipotence" (619). In her frequent mental comparisons between her parents, Ruma always gives her mother the upper hand emphasizing the crucial role she played in her daughter's life: "It was her mother who would have been the helpful one, taking over the kitchen, singing songs to Akash and teaching him Bengali nursery rhymes, throwing loads of laundry into the machine. Ruma had never spent a week alone with her father. When her parents visited her in Brooklin, after Akash was born, her father claimed an armchair in the living room, quietly combing through the *Times*, occasionally tucking a finger under the baby's chin but behaving as if he were waiting for the time to pass." (Lahiri 2008: 6). Ruma's emotional attachment to her mother does not exclude her fear of reiterating her mother's destiny and thus of becoming her replica as an exponent of patriarchal Bengali traditions: "Growing up, her mother's example – moving to a foreign place for the sake of marriage, caring exclusively for children and a household – had served as a warning, a path to avoid. Yet this was Ruma's life now." (2008: 11). Nevertheless, her mother remains her connection to her Bengali roots and her personal attempt to restore her origins; copying her mother, Ruma tries to teach her little son Akash to speak Bengali, but she lacks her mother's perseverance in speaking exclusively this language to her daughter in the first years of her life. In this respect, Pandey argued that "linguistic loss" becomes in fact "linguistic gain" with second-generation immigrants experiencing a so-called "mother-tongue loss" doubled by "proficiency in western languages" (2016: 203-4) necessary for a better assimilation into the new culture.

What Ruma gradually begins to realize is that the past cannot return and thus she steps from the realm of restorative nostalgia into that of reflective nostalgia with a special emphasis on the passage of time.

Although Ruma frequently reminisces about her mother her three-year-old son has no memory of his grandmother as she died when he was only two. The fact in itself is disturbing for Ruma who was deeply attached to her mother and counted on her support and advice in everything. Sensing his daughter's longing for her mother, Ruma's father behaves unlike his ordinary self which Ruma remembers from the time her mother was still alive; by contrast to his former, rather indifferent attitude, during his present two-week visit he gets involved into his daughter's life listening to Ruma's problems and taking care of Akash in order to offer her the necessary time to deal with the demanding domestic chores. To Ruma's great surprise, he even advises her to get a new job not just for the sake of financial stability, but more importantly, for her mental stability. In doing so, he tries to save his daughter from the negative influence of a misplaced prolonged nostalgia; in other words, he wishes "to counteract Ruma's commitment to her mother's model" and make her "adopt a centrifugal definition of female identity" (Stoican 2015: 208).

The unfortunate event of Ruma's mother's death has affected Ruma and her father in different ways. It is nostalgia for his wife who prompts Ruma's father to go on his first trip to Europe in the organized tour in which Ruma and her mother would have gone if her mother had not died. However, perhaps realizing that life is too short to waste any precious moment, he starts changing his old behavior to the extent that his daughter "was struck by the degree to which her father resembled an American in his old age" (Lahiri 2008: 11). Apart from his changed attitude to his daughter, he also starts a relationship with a Bengali woman whom he meets during one of his trips and with whom he was "generous" and "attentive in a way he's never been in his marriage" (2008: 9). For Ruma, her mother's death makes her pay more attention to her Bengali roots and to her present life; she wishes she could allow herself to confide in the healing power of restorative nostalgia, yet she understands that only reflective nostalgia can help her cope with both the past and the present: "There were times Ruma felt closer to her mother in death than she had in life, an intimacy born simply of thinking of her so often, of missing her. But she knew that this was an illusion, a mirage, and that the distance between them was now infinite, unyielding" (2008: 27). In spite of her deep nostalgia for her mother, Ruma is now willing to accept her disappearance and to develop a new relationship with her father in whom she discovers a changed man who had probably loved and missed her mother as his gesture of planting a hydrangea in her honour proves to her. All in all, the two weeks they spend together are mutually beneficial giving them the necessary strength and balance to embrace their common nostalgia and move forward with their souls at peace.

Nostalgia for their shared Bengali roots brings together Pranab Chakraborty and Usha's mother in *Hell-Heaven*, the second short story of Lahiri's collection. The 25-year-old man whom young Usha calls uncle by Bengali norms was studying engineering at MIT when he storms into their lives by trailing along one day after Usha and her mother driven by the latter's traditional Bengali outfit. From that moment onwards Pranab becomes a constant presence in Usha's family spending a lot of time in the company of the little girl and her mother with her father being content with dedicating his time to microbiology research. Usha's nostalgia for the past and her need to deal with the disappointments in her love life as a grown woman uncover the simple sad truth of a forbidden unrequited love story between Pranab Kaku and Usha's mother. Suffering from the initial culture shock of having to handle things on his own in America after his comfortable life in a wealthy family in Calcutta, Pranab is driven to Usha's family by restorative nostalgia which makes him find a perfect refuge within the confines of their apartment where he can use Bengali appellatives, eat delicious Bengali food and talk to Usha's mother about things and people they both knew back home:

They were from the same neighborhood in North Calcutta, their family homes within walking distance, the facades familiar to them once the exact locations were described. They knew the same shops, the same bus and tram routes, the same holes-in-the-wall for the best jelabis and moghlai parathas. (Lahiri 2008: 64)

The same type of restorative nostalgia is at the core of Usha's mother's attraction for Pranab who "transported my mother back to the world she'd left behind in order to marry my father" (2008: 65). From the young narrator's innocent recounting of the story the readers understand that more than love what Usha's mother feels for Pranab is a deep longing for her origins: "Pranab Kaku listened to these stories with interest, absorbing the vanishing details of her past. He did not turn a deaf ear to her nostalgia, like my father, or listen uncomprehending, like me." (2008: 66). Under the circumstances, nostalgia seems to involve that original meaning of medical illness which requires special care and treatment. When Pranab becomes infatuated with a young American woman called Deborah, Usha's mother's life turns into what she herself calls a "hell-heaven" (2008: 68); she allows herself to fall in the grip of depression which culminates with her attempt to commit suicide by setting herself on fire a few weeks after Pranab's marriage to Deborah.

Born and raised in the USA, Usha does not suffer from similar bouts of nostalgia for the origins as her mother or Pranab. On the

contrary, she is more drawn to Deborah and the American lifestyle blaming her mother for making her feel different from the other adolescents of her own age: "They were not taken to Calcutta every summer, they did not have parents who were clinging to another way of life and exhorting their children to do the same." (2008: 75). In the Bengali circle of Usha's family, Deborah was blamed for stripping Pranab of his origins, yet when they finally get divorced after twenty-three years of marriage, Usha's mother discovers that it was Pranab who insisted on never reconciling with his parents or maintaining ties with other Bengalis in spite of Deborah's efforts to persuade him in this respect. In terms of nostalgia and its influence on Pranab Kaku, his behavior could be interpreted as a passage from restorative nostalgia during the time he spent with Usha's family to a complete rejection of nostalgic moments during the years he spent with Deborah and a belated attempt to cherish his past in the arms of reflective nostalgia by falling in love with a married Bengali woman and destroying two families in the process. On another level, his gesture could be read as a confession that he loved Usha's mother too, but at the time he did not have the courage to pursue his love and is thus trying to reconstruct that safety island he once had in Usha's family at the side of another Bengali woman. At the end of the short story, Usha herself admits that in time she has learnt to understand and appreciate her mother who has used reflective nostalgia to tell her daughter the story of her unrequited love for Pranab Kaku in order to help her cope with her own love problems: "It was to me that she confessed, after my heart was broken by a man I'd hoped to marry." (2008: 83).

Dissatisfaction with his marriage and an inner urging to come to terms with the time he spent as a student at Langford Academy in Berkshires are among the hidden reasons why Amit in *A Choice of Accommodations* chooses to take his wife Megan and drive all the way from New York with the official aim of attending Pam Borden's wedding. The narrator notices that Langford Academy is a period in Amit's life he seems to have done his best to completely shut off since he associates it with what he perceived as his parents' act of forsaking him to a different country. Amit's jettisoning of his Langford years could be read similarly to Pranab Kaku's rejection of his Bengali roots; both their attitudes are born out of suppressed pain and frustration: "After graduating, Amit had not kept in touch with his Langford friends. He had no nostalgia for the school, and when letters came seeking alumni contributions or inviting him to the succession of reunions, he threw them out without opening them. Apart from his loose connection with Pam, and a sweatshirt he still owned with the school's wrinkled name across the chest, there was nothing to remind him of those years of his life. He couldn't imagine

sending his daughters to Langford – couldn't imagine letting go of them as his parents let go of him.” (Lahiri 2008: 86). For fear of resembling his parents, Amit develops a warm relationship with his two daughters Maya and Monika; he does not come only to Pam's wedding, he comes back to a tormenting past which he still has problems coping with. As the story unfolds the readers learn that Amit was so affected by what he saw as his parents' betrayal and rejection that while at Langford his hair started to turn gray and by the age of twenty-one he had no strands of black hair at all: “He'd read it was possible, after a traumatic experience, for a person's hair to turn gray in youth. But there had been no sudden death he could point to, no accident. No profound life change, apart from his parents sending him to Langford.” (2008: 93). Born and raised in America, Amit could not understand his parents' decision to go back to Delhi especially since they seemed to have adapted so well to the American lifestyle: “[...] his parents, unlike most other Bengalis in Massachusetts, had always been dismissive, even critical, of India, never homesick or sentimental.” (2008: 95). What can be inferred between the lines is that they were actually affected by a sense of dislocation and a feeling of not belonging anywhere; after four years in Delhi, they moved back to America in Houston and after five years there, they moved again to Lausanne, Switzerland. Their own restlessness unintentionally impregnated their son who felt out of place both during his visits to Delhi where his broken Bengali was of no use and at Langford where he was the only Indian student and where the others assumed that he had been born and raised in India and not in Massachusetts. Amit's first few months at Langford are in fact a perfect reflection of the sense of alienation any immigrant feels whenever confronted with a place where all things and people are new and different; even if Amit grew up in America and the readers might expect him to be already accustomed to the American way of life, it is at Langford that he experiences the acute cultural shock because he loses the connection with his parents who ensured the balance between their Bengali roots and his American upbringing.

Pam's wedding is an occasion for Amit to reconsider both his past and his present life with Megan and his two daughters: “[...] yet there were times Amit felt as alone as he had first been at Langford.” (2008: 114). His traumatic experiences of the past have deeply affected him in spite of his efforts to suppress any nostalgic recollections of the days he spent at Langford and of the love he felt back then for Pam, the bride whose wedding he is now attending. When he allows himself to be caught up in the net of nostalgic remembrance all his anger and frustrations resurface and he makes a fool of himself by getting drunk and leaving his wife alone on the night of the wedding party. His morning wandering through the school's corridors together with Megan becomes a quest for his past and a

belated opportunity to make amends for his decision to suppress those memories from his life: "He was free of the school, it no longer touched his life in any way. But instead of feeling grateful, he wanted to relive those confused days, that life of discovery, to be bound to those round tables and lectures and exams." (2008: 122). The frenzy with which Amit makes love to his wife in one of the rooms of his former dorm is his act of defiance against the constraints of the past and a celebration of his present life.

*Only Goodness* is the story in Jhumpa Lahiri's collection which focuses once again on family relationships, this time mainly on a sister's affection for her brother coupled with a sense of guilt arising from her feeling responsible for her brother's alcoholism: "It was Sudha who's introduced Rahul to alcohol, one weekend he came to visit her at Penn – to his first drink from a keg and then, the next morning in the dining hall, his first cup of coffee." (Lahiri 2008: 128). Being the first born in a family of Bengali immigrants to America, Sudha had been affected by the alienation their parents must have felt much more than her brother who was born six years later when they had already grown accustomed to the American lifestyle. For Sudha, restorative nostalgia comes with "an overwhelming sense of regret" for the past and a desire to have the power to change it: "Even as an adult, she wished only that she could go back and change things; the ungainly things she'd worn, the insecurity she'd felt, all the innocent mistakes she'd made." (2008: 137). If Sudha is highly perceptive of their parents' passage through restorative nostalgia, Rahul completely ignores the importance of their origins for his parents: "While Sudha regarded her parents' separation from India as an ailment that ebbed and flowed like a cancer, Rahul was impermeable to that aspect of their life as well" (2008: 138). In turn, their parents have chosen to ignore their children's problems considering that their coming to America "guaranteed them an existence free of suffering" (2008: 144); consequently, Sudha's attempts to draw their attention to Rahul's addiction to alcohol were met with blind stubbornness and denial.

Both Sudha and Rahul respond to their parents' obtuseness in their own manner: Sudha makes a life of her own away from her parents and her alcoholic brother finishing her studies, getting married and having a baby in London whereas Rahul drops out of university returning to live in his parents' house for a while and then disappearing one day with all his mother's jewelry. Now and then, Sudha feels pangs of guilt for not trying to help her brother more and allows herself to fall into the arms of nostalgia: "Sudha thought of Rahul often during her pregnancy, invaded by memories and dreams of their childhood, recalling the existence that had produced them both, an experience that was within her and behind her and that Roger would never understand." (2008: 159). This is also the

reason why she is willing to give her brother another chance when after a year and a half he shows up on her doorstep in London; nostalgic recollections of their childhood trips to Calcutta bring them together one more time and Sudha is willing to believe that he has given up drinking. Her shock could not be greater when she decides to trust Rahul to take care of her son Neel while she and her husband go to a movie and upon their return they find the baby alone in the bathtub and Rahul asleep after he obviously consumed a large quantity of alcohol. For the first time in her life, Sudha is forced to accept the reality of Rahul's alcoholism; she tells a raging husband the truth and drums out her irresponsible brother. Nevertheless, the end of the short story shows that her sense of guilt is still present as she reflects on the way she represents "only goodness" (2008: 173) to her little son with whom she probably intends not to repeat the mistakes she had made with her brother. A brief remark reveals the fact that her parents were looking for a flat in Calcutta as they were planning to return to India; their gesture is an indication that they could never get over their nostalgia for their Bengali origins instead of accepting their past and paying more attention to their and their children's lives in their new environment.

The fifth short story included in the collection is entitled *Nobody's Business* and is a nostalgic projection of a young American's first meeting and infatuation with a Bengali girl. Paul and his unshared love for Sang with whom she shares a house near Harvard make up the pretext for a closer look into the life of a Bengali girl who strives to find a middle way between her Indian roots and her current status in America. From the perspective of nostalgia and its function in the story, what may be of interest in particular is the way Sang is perceived by the Bengali men who call for her with the intent of getting married with her without ever seeing her before or actually knowing her. Sang is exasperated by what she understands as her parents' attempt to lure her into an arranged marriage according to Bengali tradition; she thinks that for all these men she is nothing but a nostalgic personification of their Indian past: "These men weren't really interested in her. They were interested in a mythical creature created by an intricate chain of gossip, a web of wishful Indian community thinking in which she was an aging, overlooked poster child for years of bharat natyam classes, perfect SATs." (2008: 176). Rebellious against the idea of playing the role of the obedient Bengali girl, Sang does not only drop off her Harvard studies, but she also gets involved with an older man with whom she develops a toxic relationship because she virtually becomes his slave accepting to do his house chores or to live in separate houses. Paul blames himself for not letting Sang know immediately of her boyfriend's affair with another woman in the same

way Sudha had blamed herself for her brother's failure in *Only Goodness*. The grief to which Paul is witness when Sang finally discovers the truth about her boyfriend and which makes her seek a refuge at her sister in London triggers Paul's reflections on the implications of dislocation and the denial of one's roots; if Sang had accepted to at least give a chance to any of her many Bengali suitors, she might have not fallen prey to emotional abuse and have been spared the consequences of a traumatic experience.

The second part of Jhumpa Lahiri's collection bears a title made up of the protagonists' names (*Hema and Kaushik*) in a set of three interconnected stories: *Once in a Lifetime*, *Year's End* and *Going Ashore*. If the first short story springs out of Hema's nostalgic remembrance of the first moments she spent together with Kaushik and is narrated by Hema in the first person singular, the second short story switches the narration to Kaushik's subjective point of view focusing on the traumatic experience of his mother's death whereas the third short story is written in the third person skipping over a long period of time and following the protagonists in their brief but intense love affair in Italy. What Hema remembers is that her parents and Kaushik's parents were best friends at Cambridge when the boys' parents decided to go back to India; Hema's affective memory skips over an interval of six years to the unexpected moment when Kaushik's parents express their intention of coming back to America and ask her parents to stay with them until they find a house of their own. Unaware that the real reason for their return is Kaushik's mother's breast cancer, Hema's parents perorate on the uselessness and impossibility of rebuilding the lost home and implicitly of the negative effects of restorative nostalgia: "Whatever the reason you were coming, I gathered from my parents' talk that it was regarded as a wavering, a weakness. 'They should have known it's impossible to go back', they said to their friends, condemning your parents for having failed at both ends." (Lahiri 2008: 228-29).

On the same wavelength, in the second short story Kaushik tries to use restorative nostalgia to return to a place and time when his mother was still alive yet he soon understands that their house could never be his home again especially since his father brought there his new family: "I had hated every day I spent under your parents' roof, but now I thought back to that time with nostalgia. Though we didn't belong there, it was the last place that had felt like a home. In pretending that my mother wasn't sick and being around people who didn't know, a small part of me had been able to believe that it was true, that she would go on living just as your mother had." (2008: 291). Overprotective of his mother's memory, Kaushik has an emotional outburst when he finds his step sisters

looking at her photos and chooses a life of wandering through the world; by burying his mother's photos in a box in the ground he hopes he can bury his memories of her too. He travels from one country to another as a photojournalist refusing to settle down anywhere because of his traumatic experiences in the past:

His mother had set up households again and again in her life. It didn't matter where she was in the world, or whether or not she was dying; she had always given everything to make her homes beautiful, always drawn strength from her things, her walls. But Kaushik never fully trusted the places he'd lived, never turned to them for refuge. From childhood, he realized now, he was always happiest to be outside, away from the private detritus of life. (2008: 309).

Both spatial and temporal nostalgia bring Hema and Kaushik together making them fall in love but also aware that their insecurity and emotional instability cannot allow them to have a life together: "Their parents had liked one another only for the sake of their origins, for the sake of a time and place to which they'd lost touch. Hema had never been drawn to a person for that reason, until now." (2008: 315). Kaushik's accidental death on an island in Thailand leaves Hema with a life-long ailment which may be cured by her unborn baby resulting from her arranged marriage with Navin.

All in all, most of the characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* suffer from both spatial and temporal nostalgia primarily for their Bengali roots. The yearning for what was left behind is far more dominant in the case of the first-generation immigrants who experience the physical and psychological pain of making the transition from one culture to another; this is the reason why they try to answer the ache of spatial and temporal distance and displacement by means of restorative nostalgia. Women are much more affected by the effects of this continuous longing because they were practically driven by their parents and the power of tradition into arranged marriages and followed their husbands to a completely alien environment where they needed to find the inner strength to adapt. As a consequence, they find a refuge in restorative nostalgia and make everything they can to rebuild their lost Bengali home in the American environment like Ruma's mother in *Unaccustomed Earth* or Usha's mother in *Hell-Heaven*.

For the second-generation immigrants, nostalgia remains a pervading element in their lives whether they are aware of it or not or whether they are willing to accept it or not. The difference between the first and second generation of immigrants is that there is a gradual shift

from restorative to reflective nostalgia. Sooner or later in their lives, characters like Ruma in *Unaccustomed Earth*, Usha in *Hell-Heaven*, Amit in *A Choice of Accomodations*, Sudha in *Only Goodness*, Paul in *Nobody's Business* and Hema in *Once in a Lifetime* and *Going Ashore* become highly conscious of the passage of time and are interested in rememorating their past in order to fully understand its meaning and implications in the present. From such a perspective, nostalgia still preserves its dose of sadness and melancholia, but it also acquires a positive dimension in the sense that remembrance of the past has a cathartic effect on the characters helping them to learn more about themselves, to pass over the traumatic experiences and to face the challenges of the future.

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## **9/11 Turned into Trauma Fiction. J. S. Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close***

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**Abstract:** The present paper focuses on the impact 9/11 tragic events had on and got displayed into the very recent contemporary narrative, the way these episodes generated a freshly new literary genre: the so-called *9/11 novel*, its inner features and most of all its own dealing with trauma. The paper will also focus on J. S. Foer's book *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, in an attempt to reveal the frail balance between trauma, guilt and personal healing as far as the novel's characters are concerned, with a special interest in the protagonist's recipe of coping with trauma.

**Key-words:** 9/11, trauma, trauma fiction, guilt, personal and collective trauma

According to Shoshana Felman<sup>1</sup>, "*The twentieth century can be defined as a century of trauma*". September 9/11 2001, a universally shared traumatic event, inspired writers to "express their feelings about what had occurred", so that readers could relate to the books "on a highly personal level" (says Karen Ruffle, researcher of Islamic and Muslim civilization). *9/11, 2001* consequently started a new period in both literature and history: even current events have a tendency to be explored through the prism of *9/11* episode.

There are many generic definitions of *trauma* – and quite a few of them can be found in Cathy Caruth's collections of essays named *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996). This one, by Caruth herself, seems to sum up what they all have in common: "In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> an American literary critic and professor; see Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious. Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 2002, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p.11.

In Dominik LaCapra's opinion<sup>3</sup>, the very fact that the event was overwhelming for the victim means that the victim's brain was not prepared for a shattering experience. The victim was not ready to feel pain and anxiety, thus experiencing in Freud's term the process of *Angstbereitschaft/ belatedness*<sup>4</sup>.

Cathy Caruth gives her own definition of this phenomenon at the very beginning of her introduction to *Trauma*:

While the precise definition of post-traumatic stress disorder is contested, most descriptions generally agree that there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event.<sup>5</sup>

In this respect, the most essential feature of trauma is that the victim is not aware of the trauma at the time of the occurrence. Because of the unexpectedness of the event, the brain is not able to process the shock immediately, thus creating a gap between the occurrence of the trauma and the return to full consciousness. Freud already defined this latency in his speculative study of Jewish history, *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), where he came to the following conclusion:

It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave physical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has developed a 'traumatic neurosis'. This appears quite incomprehensible and is therefore a novel fact. The time that elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is called the 'incubation period', a transparent allusion to the pathology of infectious disease... It is the feature one might term **latency**.<sup>6</sup>

A large part of the trauma consists not only in having survived but rather in having survived without really being aware of it, which is a logical

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<sup>3</sup> Dominick LaCapra, an American historian, a professor of Humanistic studies at Cornell University.

<sup>4</sup> See Sigmund Freud, the study *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895).

<sup>5</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 1939, p.84.

consequence of the inherent latency. It is through the flashbacks that the victim is confronted for the first time with the mystery of his or her own survival, as opposed to the mystery of one's near death experience. "Repetition, in other words, is not simply the attempt to grasp that one has almost died but more fundamentally and enigmatically, the very attempt to claim one's own survival", Caruth adds<sup>7</sup>. But not all traumatized people can be seen as a victim in LaCapra's opinion. In some cases, the ones traumatized by a certain event are perpetrators and these cannot be treated in the same way as the actual victims. LaCapra thinks that "historical trauma is specific, and not everyone is subject to it or entitled to the subject position associated with it"<sup>8</sup>.

To summarize Cathy Caruth's thoughts on the nature of trauma, a quote belonging to her introduction to *Unclaimed Experience* would be appropriate: "For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence"<sup>9</sup>.

But since this would mean that nobody's trauma is accessible for other people who were no part of the event in question, she adds to this, a few pages later, that "*trauma* is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas". Consequently, this would explain then why so many novels and movies have been made about devastating incidents, because people need to share their trauma, in order to overcome it.

Thus, Anne Whitehead's *Trauma Fiction*<sup>10</sup> delineates what she identifies as the emerging *genre of trauma fiction* and traces how trauma and fiction are implicated in each other. Whitehead rightly points out that postmodern fiction, like trauma fiction, is largely concerned with the politics of memory and forgetting. Furthermore, she notes that *trauma fiction shares with postmodern fiction a tendency to fragmentation and unreliability*

Nevertheless, the *9/11 novel* has gone through significant transformation: from the central topic, September 11, 2001 has become a frame or a single occurrence in the plot, or even only an assumed reference. The novelists have emphasized the scene or have put a conscious distance between the historical events and literary forms, trying

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<sup>7</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 78 – 79.

<sup>9</sup> Cathy Caruth, quoted edition, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> See Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction*, Edinburgh University Press, 2004.

to build a counter-narrative to the destructive narrative of the post 9/11 decade. Novels ultimately demonstrate the interplay between reality and fiction, emphasizing the existing fragile link between the two notions. The following features stand out in the characterization of the 9/11 trauma novel: the author's approach (informational, emotional/ empathic); the role of the protagonist, which symbolizes personal and collective trauma; a nonlinear and fragmented plot and language of the 9/11 novels, which echo the fragmented flashbulb memories and describe the present state of the country; a large amount of the referential truth and the fact-fiction dimension; and, lastly, the significance of the setting, which may serve as a password among the witnesses and readers. The 9/11 novel often includes criticism of the consumerist society and the overpowering role of the mass media. Novelists discuss social inequality, the lack of morality and harsh real-life situations. Thus, the aim of the 9/11 novel is to reveal the tragedy not only of one character, but of the society in general, that is to expose collective trauma.<sup>11</sup>

*Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* is set in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Oskar Schell is a nine-year-old boy grieving the loss of his Dad, Thomas Schell, who died in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Oskar is a very precocious boy: he's extremely intelligent and curious, making up all sorts of esoteric inventions, but he also is scared and traumatized. Oskar feels incredibly guilty because his Dad left five phone messages on the morning of September 11, but he hasn't told anyone about them; more importantly, he hasn't told anyone that he was actually in the apartment for the final time that Dad called, but he was too afraid to pick up the phone. Oskar, who was never as close with his Mom as with his Dad, is growing even farther away from her. He has a loving and loyal relationship with his Grandma, but he's still lonely and sad. Oskar finds a key in his Dad's closet; the key is in an envelope marked "Black". Oskar decides to track down every person with the last name "Black" in New York City to try and figure out what the key unlocks. One of the people Oskar contacts happens to live in Oskar's apartment building. Even though this particular Mr. Black hasn't left his apartment for twenty-four years, he accompanies Oskar on his expedition. Oskar's expedition takes him to every corner of New York City. He must conquer many of his fears: he rides the subway, eats non-vegan food, crosses bridges, and entrusts himself to the mercy of strangers. Oskar and Mr. Black travel to the top of the Empire State Building to meet Ruth Black, whose husband

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<sup>11</sup> According to both Anne Whitehead and Dominick LaCapra and their already quoted studies.

had been dead for many years, and who hasn't left the top of the Empire State Building ever since; Mr. Black quits the expedition after that, which makes Oskar feel just as lonely and abandoned as when he'd begun his quest and inner adventure.

Being both constructed in multiple narrative layers and displaying itself as a typical account of traumatic experiences, the novel also has a parallel storyline about Oskar's grandparents. Grandpa, who is also named Thomas Schell, was in Dresden, Germany, during World War II, when the city was firebombed. Practically all the people dear to Grandpa - Grandpa's lover, Anna, his unborn son, and his parents - were killed in the explosion. The trauma and aftermath caused Grandpa to lose his ability to speak. He has "YES" and "NO" tattooed on his hands, and he carries around a daybook, on which he writes notes to communicate. Several of the chapters are in the form of letters written by Grandpa to his "unborn son": this "son" could either metaphorically be Oskar's Dad or the child that Anna, his lover, was pregnant with when she died in Dresden. After the firebombing of Dresden, Grandpa moves to New York, where he meets Grandma. He recognizes her from Germany: Grandma is Anna's sister. Grandpa can't speak at this point, but they communicate through gestures and the daybook he permanently carries. Grandma poses nude for Grandpa, who is a sculptor, but the sculpture just ends up looking like Anna. Despite the fact that Grandpa's still in love with Anna, he and Grandma marry. They designate certain areas of the apartment as "Nothing" and "Something" and elaborate rules that limit their contact with each other. Nevertheless, Grandma gets pregnant, breaking their rules. Before Oskar's Dad is born, Grandpa leaves Grandma and flies back to Dresden. On September 11, Grandpa sees the bombing on television, and he reads Dad's name in the obituaries. Grandpa immediately gets on a plane to Manhattan, even though he hasn't been to the United States in forty years. He phones Grandma, even though he can't talk, then leaves her notes; eventually, she lets him move back into the apartment, though only into the guest room.

In addition to the letters from Grandpa, Jonathan Safran Foer includes a long letter from Grandma to Oskar, spread across several chapters. Grandma is writing to Oskar about her past. At the end of the novel, the letter finally reveals that Grandma and Grandpa are now living in the airport: she has convinced him to stay with her in this limbo land instead of flying away following the events of Oskar's quest.

The two stories - the young protagonist's expedition and his grandparents' history - converge when Oskar finally meets "the renter" - that is, Grandpa - and Oskar tells him the entire story about Dad and the search for the lock that the key supposedly opens. Oskar also checks the

phone messages for the first time in eight months and discovers a message from Abby Black, the second Black he'd visited. She says that her husband, William, knows what the key is for. The message cuts off halfway. When Oskar visits Abby, he learns why the message cuts off in the middle — that's when Mom picked up the phone, and Abby told her everything. Mom has been monitoring the expedition the entire time, it appears. (So has Grandpa, actually.) Oskar goes to William's office and gives him the key, which William says is for his dad's safety deposit box. William offers to let Oskar come with him when he opens the box, but Oskar refuses.

On the second commemoration of Dad's death, both Oskar and Grandpa go to the cemetery to dig up Dad's empty coffin. Grandpa buries the unsent letters addressed to his son into the grave.

In all these respects, trauma seems to extend its wings and imprint its anguish on all characters in the novel. For instance, Oskar Schell, the protagonist of the story, is not quite a typical nine-year-old. The author describes him as an inventor, a letter-writer and amateur detective. He experiences major psychological problems caused by the loss of his father. The main reason for Oskar to go on the quest for his father's key is the fact that on the day of the attacks Oskar was actually at home when his father called. Not knowing what to do, Oskar listens to the messages that are already on the machine when he gets home from school, but when his father calls for the last time, while Oskar is right beside the telephone, he is unable to pick it up. Oskar seems to be virtually paralyzed, this particular image acting as a complex metaphor that Foer brilliantly induces: both physical and especially mental paralysis often come along with a traumatic experience. Besides the fact that Oskar seems to be paralyzed, Foer does not describe his protagonist's reactions to the event in great detail. Instead, he concentrates on the way Oskar deals with his traumatic recollections and he reveals to his readers the paradoxical process of attraction and repulsion that is so distinctively marking the post-traumatic memories. Sien Uytterschout already mentions this dichotomy when discussing melancholy and mourning in Foer's novel: "Typical reactions to trauma comprise either a repression of all trauma-related memory or an endeavor to remember the event and fit it into a coherent whole"<sup>12</sup> Oskar listened repeatedly to the messages and he even timed the last message his father left on the answering machine: "it's one

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<sup>12</sup> Sien Uytterschout concluded the MA programme in American Studies (Universiteit Antwerpen) with a dissertation on trauma in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close: Melancholy and Mourning in Jonathan Safran Foer's Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, 2008.

minute and twenty-seven seconds. This means it ended at 10:24. Which was when the building came down? So maybe that's how he died"<sup>13</sup>. This uncertainty adds to the original trauma and it thus enhances it because Oskar is not able and quite not ready to let go of his father memories. Moreover, Oskar is obviously bothered because his mother does not seem to be as troubled as he is, as far as his father's death is concerned. Although making his mother happy is one of Oskar's inner purposes, he blames her for moving on so quickly, with her new friend Ron. He hopes that he can find out more about his father's death – another obsession of his – by finding out as much as he can about 9/11, although he never explicitly refers to the event by its name. Instead, he calls it “the worst day” or “what happened”. In this respect, Uytterschout stresses that Oskar also tries to avoid certain situations because there is “a lot of stuff that made him panicky”<sup>14</sup>. He still feels this way although two years have passed from the tragic event, thus proving the long-term effects of traumatic events. This avoidance of stimuli concerning the trauma is what Cathy Caruth already mentioned when she discussed the paradoxical nature of trauma in her study released in 1995. In these cases, people tend to avoid anything that makes them think of their traumatic experiences and that could *trigger* their traumatic memories. Both the avoidance and attraction regarding these triggers are parts of the melancholic process LaCapra described as *acting out*<sup>15</sup>. What is essential for Oskar in order to arrive at the so-called process of *working-through* is that, rather than avoiding the painful intrusions of these triggers, he should confront them and try to engulf them into his every-day life. By learning to understand and deal with these repetitive memories, he would eventually and properly learn to grieve and mourn the death of his father. At certain points in the novel, the author shows the readers that Oskar cannot get rid of his fears of planes and terrorists. Even when he visits the Empire State Building, Oskar cannot help but think about catastrophic scenes: “Even though I knew the view was incredibly beautiful, my brain started misbehaving, and the whole time I was imagining a plane coming at the building, just below us”<sup>16</sup>. This particular insight shows that trauma is something the brain cannot process in a simplistic manner. During his evolution from *acting out* to *working-through*, Oskar also has to deal with his emotions because the sorrow and the pain of the trauma are constantly bubbling under the surface. As a consequence, Oskar also feels the urge to

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<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Verbestel 2009, p. 302.

<sup>14</sup> See both Sien Uytterschout and Jonathan Safran Foer!

<sup>15</sup> See Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra and their already quoted studies.

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud...*, quoted edition, p. 244.

invent things. These inventions range from birdseed suits to singing teakettles and in one way or another are all linked to Oskar's father. The birdseed suit, for instance, is one of Oskar's inventions that could have saved his father when the towers came down; the teakettle on the other hand has to serve as a replacement for his father's voice. He even invents horrible ways of dying when he visits his grandmother and she is not at home. By imagining alternative versions of reality, Oskar shows that he is not content with the way his life is now. This guilt also presents itself in the bruises Oskar gives to himself. In other words, the very process of inventing things has become a substitute for the presence of his father. He especially misses him during the evening ritual. Oskar says that being with him his "father made my brain quiet. I didn't have to invent a thing"<sup>17</sup>. The importance of the evening ritual and the quality time spent with his father is emphasized again later on in the novel when Oskar mentions that the inventing gets to be "worst at night". Moreover, Oskar is a passionate reader and thus knows many encyclopedic facts as well. This constant urge to possess knowledge about everything in the world is a recurrent motif within the novel. Oskar mostly mentions these amusing facts and figures when he talks about his feelings concerning the trauma, in an attempt to use his knowledge as a protective shield against the overwhelming nature of his own emotions. Besides gaining encyclopedic knowledge, Oskar is an enthusiastic "writer", as he continuously writes letters to famous people all the time to let them know about his inventions but especially to ask if they want to be his teachers. This way, Oskar searches for someone who can replace his father as a role model. Nonetheless, these letters take his mind off of more horrible things: "A few weeks after the worst day, I started writing lots of letters. I don't know why, but it was one of the only things that made my boots lighter"<sup>18</sup>. This tendency to write letters is a common denominator as far as Oskar's grandparents are regarded. Throughout the story, Oskar presents the reader with the photographs he makes with his grandfather's old camera, a present from his grandmother. The photographs constitute some sort of pictorial diary for the young protagonist. One of the last images in this diary is seen as an 'invention' of Oskar as well. This slide-show Oskar creates at the end of his pictorial diary is also the most striking example of Oskar's general unhappiness with his own life. It consists of a slide-show that reveals to the reader, when flipping rapidly through the pictures, a man floating upwards into the sky. The picture of this man, most commonly known on the internet as 'The Falling Man',

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<sup>17</sup> Idem, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Idem, p. 11.

appears for the first time as a single photograph and it portrays one of the people who jumped from the WTC towers after the attacks. Oskar believes this man to be his father: "I printed out the frames from the Portuguese video and examined them extremely closely," Oskar remarks. "There's one body that could be him. It's dressed like he was, and when I magnify it until the pixels are so big that it stops looking like a person, sometimes I can see glasses. Or I think I can. But I know I probably can't. It's just me wanting it to be him"<sup>19</sup>. Although the diary contains some photographs that are related to Oskar's life, they do not show actual scenes from his life. Instead, Oskar mainly chooses to collect images from the internet into his diary. Again and again, Foer shows his readers that his protagonist would rather avoid the confrontation with his own trauma instead of incorporating it into his diary<sup>20</sup>. Unfortunately, Oskar finds the key that unlocks someone else's trauma instead of his own. By connecting both traumatized characters to each other and having them help each other, the narrator actually supports and literary exemplifies Cathy Caruth's pertinent observation: "trauma, is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas"<sup>21</sup>.

Jonathan Safran Foer's style of storytelling is visual as well as narrative. When characters either take photographs or describe images, these often appear in the body of the chapter. The novel ends with Oskar's flip-book of a man falling from the building, but in reverse order, so the man appears to be falling up.

On the other hand, Oskar's Grandpa is also tremendously affected by both trauma and guilt. After the Dresden firebombing, Grandpa eventually stops talking; he has such tremendous survivor's guilt that he actually becomes unable to speak.

On several occasions, Foer's characters seem to accurately exemplify Cathy Caruth's claim that trauma demands "a language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding"<sup>22</sup>. For example, because Oskar is unable to speak about his guilt, he spends nine hours making a bracelet for his mother, a seemingly meaningless piece of jewelry until the audience finds out that the bracelet is actually his father's last message converted into Morse Code; however, Oskar's mother fails to understand this non-linguistic form of communication. Another muted traumatized character, Thomas Sr. also tries to call his wife and reconnect only to

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<sup>19</sup> Idem, p.257.

<sup>20</sup> See Ellen Verbestel's article *Trauma and Post-9/11 novels: Foer, McEwan and McInerney*, Ghent University.

<sup>21</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience...*, quoted edition, p. 24.

<sup>22</sup> Idem, p. 6.

codify his message by tapping out an undecipherable numerical message, suggesting the insufficiency of a simple, algebraic understanding of psychological pain. Caruth asserts that “history, like trauma, is never simply one’s own, [and] history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other’s traumas”. Therefore, traumatized individuals like Foer’s characters seem to be carrying “an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess”<sup>23</sup>. Thus, Oskar’s quest teaches him this private lesson: sharing his narrative of trauma does not reveal objective historical answers about what happened to his father, but other subjective experiential narratives of trauma.<sup>24</sup>

Many of the guilt feelings that trauma normally induces and generates become resolved indirectly through the novel, rather than directly. Oskar does not ever get to say a proper goodbye to his Dad, but the key unexpectedly provides closure for William Black, who has been attempting to process his own father’s death. Grandpa does not get to reconnect with his son, but he connects with his nephew instead. Guilt definitely connects everyone in the novel, and although characters might not be able to help themselves directly, they can help each other. Tragedies might not have a direct solution, but by many indirect routes, the guilt can become bearable. Building community is presented as a way to deal with trauma and guilt: things that are crippling to bear alone can become manageable if there are others around to at least help spread the load around, if not lessen it. The symbolic nature of the novel becomes even more clear when one sees the intertextuality in the novel. By including other traumatic narratives into the story, Foer creates another layer in his own traumatic narrative. By allowing Oskar play the role of Yorick in Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet*, the author basically brings more depth into his story. Shakespeare’s famous play *Hamlet* acts as a metaphor for Oskar’s relationship with his deceased father. Oskar could be compared to Hamlet, looking for answers about the mysterious death of his father. Thomas Schell’s presence in the novel is haunting Oskar, just as the Ghost of Hamlet’s father is haunting Hamlet throughout the play. Both ‘ghosts’ encourage the protagonists to go looking for answers. The fact that Oskar is playing the part of Yorick, the court’s jester and a friend in need for Hamlet, could mean that Oskar has to be his own savior. He has to figure out the solution to his problems on his own. Although he is not alone in the beginning and despite the fact that he receives help from

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<sup>23</sup> Idem, p. 24; respectively p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> According to Bryan M. Santin, Representing the Trauma of 9/11 in US Fiction: Jonathan Safran Foer, Don DeLillo and Jess Walter, p.29

Mr. Black, his upstairs neighbor, and Abby Black, Oskar has to face the final part of his quest alone. Without a real testimony, one cannot experience the healing effect of the traumatic narrative. The writer emphasizes this by letting his characters act out until the end of the story, underlining that they have not worked through their traumas yet<sup>25</sup>.

*Trauma and guilt* are very closely connected throughout *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*. Throughout the novel, several characters demonstrate what psychologists call *survivor's guilt*. National trauma is deeply connected to individual trauma within the novel. The major national trauma of September 11 becomes intertwined with the major personal trauma of Dad's death. Oskar and his family have to deal with both the huge, public tragedy of 9/11 and their own individual disaster that shakes them to the core. Oskar feels incredibly guilty about the phone messages that Dad left on the morning of September 11, 2001. Oskar hides the answering machine tape with his Dad's voice because he is too ashamed to admit to his Mom that he heard his Dad but didn't pick up. Oskar continues to obsess over his Dad, and his quest to find out who "Black" is becomes his own personal way of trying to cope with the guilt that going through such a traumatic experience has produced.

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<sup>25</sup> According to Ellen Verbestel's quoted article, p. 46.

## American or Immigrant? Caught Between Two Cultures

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**Abstract:** Henry Roth's novel *Call It Sleep* (1935) presented the ghetto life of the newly arrived immigrants struggling to find a new identity. The novel got very positive criticism and most of the critics and newspapers called it a remarkable novel. In the book edited by Hana Wirth-Nesher, *New Essays on Call It Sleep* (1996), one comes across several critical opinions, as, for example, John Chamberlain's in *The New York Times*: "Mr. Roth has done for the East Side what James T. Farrell is doing for the Chicago Irish...The final chapters in the book have been compared to the Night town episodes of Joyce's *Ulysses*; the comparison is apt" (2). Another review appeared in the Sunday *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, where Fred T. Marsh described the novel as "the most compelling and moving, the most accurate and profound study of an American slum childhood that has yet appeared in this day...Henry Roth has achieved the detachment and universality of the artist" (2-3)

**Key words:** identity, culture, Yiddish, Bible, autobiography

Philip Roth's novel disappeared from public attention for more than twenty-five years until it was reprinted for the anniversary of the Phi Beta Kappa journal. Leslie Fiedler (qtd. in Wirth-Nesher ed. 3) stated:

For sheer virtuosity, *Call It Sleep* is hard to best; no one has ever distilled such poetry and wit from the counterpoint between the maimed English and the subtle Yiddish of the immigrant. No one has reproduced so sensitively the terror of family life in the imagination of a child caught between two cultures. To let another year go without reprinting it would be unforgivable.

The novel made a triumphant comeback and became a classic. Critics like Irving Howe, Leslie Fiedler and Alfred Kazin (qtd. in Wirth-Nesher ed. 4) considered the novel "a document of cultural passage, the one they had made from Eastern European Yiddish-speaking homes to American university and the last stronghold of Protestant culture, the Department of

English”. Consequently, the book has become a major work of Jewish literature.

Gershon Shaked (qtd. in Fried ed. 402) affirms that “Henry Roth describes the inner disintegration of the community (the collapse of paternal, divine, and communal authority), only after which does the problem of the individual’s identity and his relations with the external world arise”. The immigrants had to redefine their new identity. The old shtetl life was gone, the closely-knit family ties were cut. It was easier for the children, because their identities were not formed. They were more open to the new way of life. This is why Roth uses the character of David to experience this new world. He does not have to carry the burden of the past like his mother (an unfortunate love affair with a gentile) and father (being guilty of his father’s death).

Roth admitted that he started the story as an autobiography but he could not resist the possibilities granted by fiction. The protagonist of the novel, David Schearl arrives to the Golden Land with his mother. The story is told from his perspective, as the child tries to find his way and identity in this new, unknown world. David is caught among several languages: Yiddish symbolizes the language of home, coziness and of the Yiddish neighborhood of the Lower East Side. Roth reproduces the cadence and musical rhythm of Yiddish without caricaturing it. On the other hand, we have Hebrew and Aramaic. David goes to the cheder (traditional school or classes teaching the basics of Judaism and Hebrew language) to study the Law of the Fathers and the liturgy of Jewish ceremony. Hebrew appears as the language of the Divine bearing power. The other language is Polish, the language used on the old continent.

David is shut out of the world of his mother and her sister. They share their secrets in this language, David can only guess or invent the meaning of the words. We can divide all these languages into two groups: Hebrew, Aramaic and Yiddish, standing for the Jewish languages; English and Polish for the Gentile ones. The first group ties all Jews together destroying all geographic and historical barriers. The second group puts him into a new world where he has to find his Jewish-American identity. David’s consciousness travels through this world of languages and dialects.

It is interesting to look for the meaning of the name of the main hero. David in Hebrew means beloved while “schearl” in Yiddish stands for scissors. In Yiddish the surname denotes the vocation of the individual. So in our case, it can mean a tailor. David plays an important role in the history of the Jews. He was the most beloved King of Israel, the ancestor of the Messiah. We can conclude that “to call him David Schearl is to make him representative in the most complex of ways. It is

to call attention on the very act of calling” (Wirth-Nesher ed. 11). He will define the new identity of the second generation immigrants. He will defeat Goliath, like his predecessor, but, in our case, Goliath represents the immigrants’ fear of the new world. The immigrants were not threatened by physical annihilation, but they had to deal with the problem of accommodation, assimilation and acculturation. The casualties of the war were the children of the immigrants who forgot about the Law of the fathers and praised the American drive. They wanted to become part of the big American dream and the only way was to get assimilated into it.

The book can be called a mythic book. According to Leslie Fiedler, Roth was influenced by James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) and T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922) at the moment he wrote the novel, though later Roth denied it by saying that he was influenced by many great American and European writers and not only by these two modernists.

Roth, as the child of immigrant parents, used the Torah and the Haggadah for Pesach (this contains the order of the Passover Seder) as his source for inspiration. During the Passover Seder the text of the Haggadah is read and the Aramaic “Chod Godya” is sung. This song will appear in the novel bearing several connotations. In the New Testament, this Passover Seder ceremony is turned into the Last Supper, as Jesus transforms into Christ, and Easter displaces the Passover. By the end of the novel, David, after his near electrocution, will be reborn into a different person; he will be free from the bonds of Judaism. The exclamation after David electrocution, “Christ, it’s a kid!”(420), contains the American slang, but also the translation of the Aramaic song of the Jewish ritual. It destroys the border between Judaism and Christianity, between Old World values and New World values.

Roth used the modernist tools in rendering his subject. The final chapter of the novel is representative from this point of view. Roth tries to render the mixture of languages spoken by his characters through the modernist technique. This part resembles very much the above mentioned Night town episode by Joyce. Roth experiments the modernist tool of combining the language of the immigrants with the inner voice of the main protagonist. It appears like a poem but one which contains parts in prose. Roth’s language experiment destroys the existing language barriers of this new world.

As I have mentioned earlier, Roth uses the clash between the languages at full. We have the feeling of being at the Tower of Babel where God punished people by mixing their languages:

- 1 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.
- 2 As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.

4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building.

6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.

7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

8 So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.

9 That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth (Genesis 11: 1-9)

God punished them because people wanted to forget about Him and make a name for them. I agree with Leslie Fiedler who states that, though the word Babel appears only once in the novel, the setting of Roth's novel puts us into the world of newly arrived immigrants from all over the world and who are unable to understand each other. In Leslie Fiedler's opinion this new Babel came as a punishment from God because people tried to build a new Eden, a secular one. That is why America has been called the Golden Land.

David has to find the balance between his inherited culture and the one that wants to assimilate him. His identity is going to be different from that of his parents'. After reading the novel for the first time, Leslie Fiedler wrote a poem which suggests that David's task is to strike a balance between Ying and Yang, bad or good, in other terms:

*Call It Sleep*

One must kill,

One betray.

Yang's anger,

The yielding of Yin.

Under the random evasion of play,

How does the child begin? (qtd. in Wirth-Nesher ed. 28).

A communication gap is installed between the characters of the novel. David cannot find the street on which he lives because no one can understand the name of the street. He has to ask gentiles for help but, because he does not speak English well, they are unable to help him "Losted, eh? And where do you live? "On a hunnder 'n' twenny six

BoddehStritt,” he answered tremulously. “Where?” he bent his ear down, puzzled. “What Street?” “On BoddehStritt.” “BodderStritt?”...”You mean Potter Street” (97). Finally, the policemen figure out the name of the street and call his mother to take him home. David’s teacher at the cheder cannot understand his pupils when they start speaking English. He does not feel the sacrilege when one of the boys chants “someone had been chanting “fot God Yaw” instead of Chad-Godyaw” (232). In the pronunciation of the lower East Side “fot” would be “fart” and this is why they start laughing. The rabbi does not hear the underlying word play here.

On their turn, the boys cannot understand Hebrew and Aramaic, so the teacher obliges them to learn by heart the verses without understanding the lines. Only David is able to recite the whole song in Yiddish. Of course, this is presented to the reader in standard English. The song describes a power chain that David will look for between the car tracks: ”Blessed be He,” he repeated hurriedly, “killed the ox, who drank the water, that quenched the fire, that burned the stick, that beat the dog, that bit the cat, that ate the kid, that my father bought for two zuzim. One kid, one only kid!” (233). The refrain “One kid, one only kid” will come back also in the final part of the novel, when David is electrocuted. He identifies with the solitary kid from the story.

The child has to find his own way in this new world. The setting of the novel, New York, is the place of isolation. The presence of the city is overwhelming in the novel. The family ties are loose and the individual is left alone. The inhabitants of the faceless urban community do not care for one another. The blocks of flats appear like giants in the eyes of the frightened child who is even afraid to go downstairs alone because of the badly lit stairs. Mario Materassi contends about the environment:

No slice of New York touched on the novel, no single component of that myriad background maintains throughout the text the connotations with which it was charged when initially introduced. As if placed under the converging beams of various spotlights switched on now singly, now in pairs and now all together, each stoop, each cellar or sidewalk, each jagged profile of tenement or spire or bridge spanning the East River is bathed in a distinctive light that for while sets the tone, and then suddenly is flooded with lights of different color which evoke new associations and produce further layers of meaning (qtd. in Wirth-Nesher ed. 52).

We have a shifting urbanscape that Roth uses in order to convey his message to us.

From their arrival to the Golden Land, David and his mother do not feel as really free. The Statue of Liberty, which is a generally accepted

symbol of freedom and safety, appears like a terrifying object “Against the luminous sky the rays of her halo were spikes of darkness roweling the air; shadow flattened the torch she bore to a black cross against flawless light—the blackened hilt of a broken sword” (14). They are afraid of this new environment and the promise of the Golden Land fades somehow “This was that vast incredible land, the land of freedom, of immense opportunity, the Golden Land. Again she tried to smile” (16). This hinders the end of the myth of the Promised Land. The dreams are killed by the pursuit of material wealth.

David has to adapt to this new environment, he has a great hunger for learning and for exploring his neighborhood. He somehow feels that he is not welcome in his family; his father thinks that he might not be his son and this uncertainty is projected onto their relationship. David is afraid of him and his father punishes him many times without a proper reason. David has to suffer for something that he has not committed. After his arrival, he experiences the drawbacks of not knowing his environment. Everything seems too big for him, he is thirsty but he is too small for the faucet so he has to ask his mother for help. “When am I going to be big enough?” he asked resentfully as he took the glass in both hands. “There will come a time,” she answered, smiling...”Have little fear” (18). David’s mother is in fact his teacher at the beginning but, as David grows, he, in a way, out-masters his teacher. David will help her mother to learn about America. The teacher will become the pupil. Genya Schearl cannot accommodate herself to the new world, as she does not speak English and is afraid of everything new. David represents everything for her. She had to leave the old continent because of an unhappy love affair with a gentile. After the incident, she turned inward and had to marry a man whom she did not love. Because of her love affair, she has become an outcast in her old community and family. But the marriage did not lift the burden from her soul. She had to leave the old world because of her parents and not because of the historical events. She has a strange relationship with David and a seductive behaviour toward her son. Their relationship is very intimate.

David learns from his friends and feels personally that life is short and cruel. He has his first sexual experience in a cupboard where traps are set for mice and rats. This ambiguity will follow him in his pursuit of a self. He is attracted to and afraid of death. He asks his mother what people do when they die “They are cold; they are still. They shut their eyes in sleep eternal years”(69). No one can help him and slowly he starts questioning his trust in his mother and father “Don’t believe Don’t believe. Don’t believe. Never!” (114).

With the arrival of Aunt Bertha, things get heated in the family. The hidden conflicts come to the surface. She does not want to keep the truth

secret, but wants it to be known. She unveils the past of the mentally disordered father and the unhappy love story of the mother. David can hardly wait to find out the truth, though he cannot understand the language in which all these secrets are whispered. Yiddish becomes the language of isolation, not of socializing. The richness of Yiddish cannot help David to accommodate himself to this new world. He is more and more aware of the fact of being alone. Religion cannot help David, either. He goes to the cheder, but this cannot “compensate for the fissure caused by this mass immigration and for the atomization of the metropolitan city” (qtd. in Wirth-Newsher ed. 68). His father wants him to go in the hope that he might become “at least something of a Jew” (210) and his mother thinks that it would help him to find his way in the world, though he already knows how hard it is to be a Jew “And as for learning what it means to be a Jew, I think he knows how hard that is already” (210). David himself thinks that he may be able to find in the Hebrew text taught at the cheder the origin of the authentic power. But it is his teacher who prevents him from attaining this knowledge. His imagination is set to work by Chapter 6 of Isaiah:

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me (Isaiah 6: 5-8).

This chapter is among the most dramatic of the Bible, so it is not surprising that David’s imagination is triggered by it. He associates coal with filth because it is black. He thinks that the same coal was used to purify Isaiah, but he cannot believe in the purity of it. In the last chapter of the novel, David will finally experience the purifying coal of God during his electrocution. David desires to become a new Isaiah whose lips can speak the truth. David learns from the cheder that in this new world he cannot rely on the cultural and religious inheritance of the old one. His heritage is the disintegration of tradition. Faith cannot be used as a healing source for the problems of the soul. He cannot perform the ritual burning of the *khometz* (leavened bread or pastry); he is embarrassed by another immigrant.

A few lines later, he is chased by some gentile boys and, in order to save himself, he denies his Jewishness. He does not know why he

should be proud of being a Jew. His encounters with such anti-Semitic acts are relatively mild, if we compare them to the historical events of Europe. David is somehow freed from his origin. The American idea of individualism appears here. He is free, but, at the same time, he does not belong to any community which has negative impacts on the individual. David cannot learn from the experiences of his ancestors. The past is lost for him.

As the story unfolds step by step, he overcomes his fears and doubts. But he cannot learn from his own experience, either. Only an illumination can help him out of what surrounds him. David is in search of power and, with throwing the ladle into the crack, he tries to gain power over his father. His father, Albert, appears as a violent, aggressive and embittered man. He sends David to get his salary and clothes from his former employer and there David finds out the terrible truth about his father. Everybody thinks that he suffers from some mental illness because he thinks that other people mock at him. As he cannot overcome his aggressiveness, he behaves like a madman. Later, David, in his dream, imagines seeing his father trying to hurt him with the hammer "Above the whine of the whirling hammer, his father's voice thundered" (427). But, at times, he is very weak: he sends David to get his salary from his former employer; he trusts Joe Luter who tries to seduce his wife. Albert shares some common features with the type figure of the schlemiel. First of all, he is of Jewish origin and he is like an outcast. He cannot find his place in this new social order. He changes workplaces before David is able to learn their names. He is not able to judge people. He praises Leo but does not observe that he only envies his wife and would like to spend a nice hour with her. He believes that David is not his legitimate son but, at the same time, he introduces him to Leo as the one who will say the Kaddish for him after his death "And that over there," he pointed to David, "is what will pray for me after my death" (29). Kaddish is a prayer for one's departed which is recited daily during the first year after a person's passing. The most detailed description of this ritual is given by Leon Wieseltier in his novel, *Kaddish* (1998). Kaddish is one of the most important rituals of Judaism. It is the task of the child to perform it for the welfare of the parents. Albert wants David to say the Kaddish for him, to lift his soul into the Gan Eden (the Garden of Eden). Though he is not a religious Jew, he finds it important to have someone to say the Kaddish for him.

We have to notice that the place depicted by Roth is not the real city. The environment is distorted in order to fit the writer's reality. The novel is not a sociological document. Most likely, the neighborhood was

not so mixed as it is in Roth's work. Aunt Bertha enjoys being in the city, she praises the beauty of it and thinks that it was worth coming there:

True I work like a horse and I stink like one with my own sweat. But there's life here, isn't there? There's a stir here always. Listen! The street! The cars! High laughter! Ha, good! Veljish was still as a fart in company. Who could endure it? Trees! Fields! Again trees! Who can talk to trees? Here at least I can find other pastimes than sliding down the gable on a roof (153).

For Bertha, America is the place where her dreams can come true. She can buy clothes that were unaffordable in the old world. She embraces the possibilities offered by the Golden Land.

David looks for friends and his friendship with Leo Dugovka is very representative in this respect. Leo is a Polish blond, blue-eyed boy who is four years older than David. They meet on the roof and, in David's eyes, this appears like a vision. David is attracted to Leo because he is Christian. He thinks that they have many things in common. He learns the secret of her mother and, because of his father's suspicion, he himself thinks that his father is the cantor with whom his mother has had a short-lived love affair. Leo is free to do what he wishes. He flies kites, has skates and does everything that is forbidden to David. The latter even helps him to "play bad" with Aunt Bertha's step daughter, only to get a rosary. He thinks that the rosary has some miraculous effect and he is willing to do everything to possess it. He denies the Jewish ritual items because Leo thinks that they are funny and useless.

David feels a certain religious need, but the teacher at the cheder cannot fulfill it. He has an ardent feeling for purification. He even breaks in the cheder to read once again Isaiah's story and he thinks that he might have seen it in the East Side, when he drops a sheet on the live electric wire under the trolley car. This light inflames his imagination and he associates it with the fire mentioned in Isaiah's book. David tries to give his life meaning and figure out his new identity. Rabbi Yidel Pankower defines this new generation of American Jews as not real Jews. He curses them because they have got so well accustomed to the American way of life that the old rituals, lifestyles are forgotten. They are not the obedient sons who want to live according to the covenant with God; they are free from the bonds of this contract. They want to live their lives without the constraints of Judaism:

A curse on them!...The devil take them! What was going to become of Yiddish youth? What would become of this new breed? These

Americans? This sidewalk-and-gutter generation? He knew them all and they were all alike—brazen, selfish, unbridled. Where was piety and observance? Where was learning, veneration of parents, deference to the old? In the earth! Deep in the earth! (373-4).

The rabbi stands for the older generation that is opposed to the new. He even says that physical punishment was better than skating. He does not understand that in America the old ways are not useful any longer. He cannot force the children to study the Torah by physical punishment. Life has changed and he has remained behind. He, in a way, is like David's father who thinks that beating can solve the problems. They do not have time for discussion, but accept aggressiveness. David is beaten by Albert many times, without a good reason: "Suddenly he cringed. His eyelids blotted out the light like a shutter. The open hand struck him full against the cheek and temple, splintering the brain into fragments of light. Spheres, mercuric, splattered, condensed and roared" (83). The rabbi does not want to face an American reality which does not have time to be pious and observant. The second generation children of the immigrants have to find their identity choosing certain features from their Yiddish cultural heritage and others from the American one. They are raised in a Yiddish family but, from the kindergarten to the university, they have to accommodate themselves to the American way of life. They will have to build an identity which will be able to explain the hardships they will have to face during their lives.

The last pages of the novel present the world of the immigrants from all over Europe. We can point out to such characters as the oiler Jim Haig, the prostitutes Mary and Mimi, the Salvation Army singers, Huskey O'Toole, Callahan, the watchman Bill Whitney. These mirror the neighborhood in which David has to build up his own identity. They are close to him, but he succeeds in reaching the third rail:

The hawk of radiance raking him with talons of fire, battering his skull with a beak of fire, braying his body with pinions of intolerable light. And he writhed without motion in the clutch of a fatal glory, and his brain swelled and dilated till it dwarfed the galaxies in a bubble of refulgence—Recoiled, the last screaming nerve clawing for survival (419).

He survives electrocution and explores a state of unconsciousness. Every action of the neighborhood is filtered through his mind. David overcomes

his fears with his last action. In his mind, all the major elements of the novel come to the foreground. His vision of the prophet Isaiah comes into his mind, and we can say that, through electrocution, his mouth will be purified just like Isaiah's was through the coal. He fights his fears. The old world is contrasted to the new one. David wins over his father with this act. When he is taken home, he accepts him as his son "My sawn. Mine. Yes. Awld eight" (437). His mother accepts her guilt by saying that she wanted to protect David from his father and sent him downstairs many times. David is able to transcend reality through dream: "He might as well call it sleep. It was only toward sleep that every wink of the eyelids could strike a spark into the cloudy tinder of the dark, kindle out of shadowy corners of the bedroom such myriad and such vivid jets of images... One might as well call it sleep. He shut his eyes" (441).

David's rebirth is the beginning of his new life, with a new identity. David's quest for an identity is like the artist's quest for a new world. Roth said about the novel: "What I think American Jewish literature represents is the interface between the immigrant and the host society. What is being described is the feeling of what is happening as the process takes place, a process in which one culture begins to impinge, to enter into, or to permeate the other culture" (Lyons 56). What Roth presents is a new world that is different but, at the same time, similar to the inhabited and to the fictionalized one.

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## Revisiting the Unfinished Memoir-A Cautionary Tale of Early Success

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**Abstract;** In the fiftieth and final year of her life (1967), Carson McCullers began composing her autobiography, structured around her creative inspirations (“illumination”) and the horrors and tragedies in her life (“night glare”). The publication, based on two typescripts housed at the University of Texas, is the draft she dictated to a group of friends, family members, and secretaries from her bed in Nyack, NY, before suffering a final stroke. As intended by McCullers, the appendixes include the outline of her first novel, *The Mute*, written in 1938 and published as *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), and the first publication of World War II correspondence between McCullers and her husband, Reeves. In this significant contribution to literary scholarship, editor Carlos Dews provides an interesting biographical introduction with comments on the omissions and “exaggerations” in the autobiography. We find ourselves as immersed in this work as in McCullers’s fiction and feel sad when it ends abruptly.

**Key words:** autobiography, fiction, illumination

Perhaps more important than any of the specific content in the autobiography are the traces of Carson’s personality found just beneath the surface of the narrative of “Illumination and Night Glare.” McCullers’s rare, cherished illuminations helped her survive the more frequent and lasting night glare because they provided her, like her character Mick Kelly in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, an inner room to which she could retreat to recover, create, and protect herself. As a journal of her travel to the private space of her inside room, “Illumination and Night Glare” provides the reader not only the details of the night glare which forced Carson to retreat inward but, perhaps more important, provides a chronicle of the inspiring illuminations which ultimately restored her soul. *Illumination and Night Glare* is a rare invitation to join Carson on a visit to her own inner room.

Over thirty years after she set out to trace and preserve the story of her life, McCullers’s autobiography is available to serve as

an inspirational and cautionary tale for future generations, as she intended.

McCullers's autobiography is somewhat like her life i.e. fragmentary, unlike the Rousseau classic pattern of a chronological retrospective ordering. It is painful, flitting, sad, and short. The book consists of three segments. First is a novella-sized fragment, which is more vignettes than narrative, but is marred by repetition and a time line that keeps hopping about. The second segment contains the World War II correspondence between Carson and Reeves, her alcoholic and suicidal husband. Her letters show Carson's love but also her insecurities, sexual ambiguity, illnesses, depression that undoubtedly contributed to her drinking problems. Finally, the third segment includes an outline of "The Mute"—which metamorphosed into McCullers's highly acclaimed debut novel *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. Her unfinished memoir remains a major piece of the puzzle for literary historians to reassemble the intricate personality of the Southern author.

This unfinished draft of a retrospection includes the illuminations for *The Member of the Wedding* and *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, and the "night glare" of her paralysis and multiple strokes. In the last year of her troubled life McCullers described her projected autobiography as a means by which both future students and she herself could understand her life. She stated in an interview with Rex Reed for *New York Times* :

I think it is important for future generation of students to know why I did certain things, but it is also important for myself. I became an established literary figure overnight, and I was much too young to understand what happened to me, or the responsibility it entailed. I was a bit of a holy terror. That, combined with all my illnesses, nearly destroyed me. Perhaps if I trace and preserve for other generations the effect this success had on me, it will prepare future artists to accept it better.<sup>1</sup>

Her overnight literary success with *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and her "holy terror" career and her crippling diseases, are all explained in detail in her memoir. As for her unreliable husband she could see Reeves mirrored in a book written by the psychiatrist Hervey Cleckley, called *The Mask of Sanity*, a psychopath, living on his charm, his good looks and the "weaknesses of wives and mothers"<sup>2</sup>. The work's very title reflects her

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<sup>1</sup>*Illumination and Night Glare: The Unfinished Autobiography of Carson McCullers*, edited by Carlos L. Dews, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999) p. XI.

<sup>2</sup>*Illumination and Night Glare: The Unfinished Autobiography of Carson McCullers*, edited by Carlos L. Dews, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999) p. 76.

moments of creative inspiration (illumination) and periods of utter depression (night glare). In fact she calls herself despondent and addicted to Dr. Mary Mercer, a psychiatrist:

I was breathless by the time I actually faced Dr. Mercer. She was and is the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. Her hair is dark, her eyes gray-blue and her skin very fair. She is always impeccably dressed and her slim figure radiates health and grace. She always wears one strand of pearls. Most of all, her face reflects the inner beauty of her noble and dedicated mind.

I not only liked Dr. Mercer immediately, I loved her, and just as important, I knew I could trust her with my very soul. There was no difficulty in talking to her. All the rebellion and frustration of my life I handed over to her, for I knew that she knew what she was touching<sup>3</sup>.

The autobiography is McCullers's poignant testimony of her misfortune, deterioration and fall. Venturing in what editor Dews calls "de-mythologizing and re-mythologizing," McCullers recollects her childhood and adolescence in Georgia and her passionate friendship with her childhood music teacher, Mary Tucker, her love both for the Swissémigrée Annemarie Clarac-Schwarzenbach, and for her therapist, Dr. Mary Mercer. Because of her rapidly failing health she had to dictate the memoir to friends and hired secretaries.

Stuart Sherman recalled details of McCullers's writing during the final months of her life in his article "Carson McCullers", *BOMB: Artists, Writers, Actors, Directors*, Fall 1990: pp.60-62:

Every day she wrote, but not manually. She made up sentences in the presence of a secretary, and the secretary copied those sentences onto paper. On some days sentences came hard and there were only a few of them after several hours' effort. But the effort was always made and some sentences were always produced. That year – the last year of her life – she was working on two books: her memoirs and a study of people who had "triumphed over adversity." The memoirs were tentatively titled "Illuminations and Night Glare" and the study, "In Spite Of" (the latter's prospective roster included Helen Keller and Arthur Rimbaud!).

When I think of Carson as writer, when I think of Carson in the act of writing or (as she was ultimately compelled to do by illness and

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<sup>3</sup>*Illumination and Night Glare: The Unfinished Autobiography of Carson McCullers*, edited by Carlos L. Dews, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999) p. 74.

physical incapacity) speaking for transcription, I am now – as I was then – stunned into giving only the merest factual account of the process as I observed it<sup>4</sup>.

A conversational tone mingles with a looser prose style, at times even with an unpolished construction in a fragmentary narration. Nevertheless the text provides us the illuminations, as well as the nightmarish glares the writer experienced in her brief, unhappy life. What Carson McCullers left us is a masterful odyssey through the trials, minor joys, and *ennui* of the life and times of the author herself, visiting childhood, marriage, remarriage, miscarriage, grief, sexual ambiguity, illnesses. We glimpse in the distance from these windows into her life, the changing face of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and we also see the evolution or involution of women's position in society.

To conclude, let us quote Carlos Dews's insightful opinion expressed in his Introduction to the unfinished memoir:

On a personal and emotional level, writing the autobiography was an opportunity for Carson to explain herself to herself. But beyond Carson's personal motives for writing the autobiography, the night-glare details of her experience chronicle the life of a southern woman artist of the first half of the twentieth century struggling with the anxiety inherent during a period of global, social, and political upheaval<sup>5</sup>.

We might also link the personal reasons behind the writing of the autobiography with Carson McCullers's desire to apologize for her not being able to control success, finding herself equally unprepared for failure. To our mind this is but a modern version, an echo of admixtures among the typical *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, practiced ever since antiquity, thoroughly based on self-justification, *Historia Calamitatum*, *Confessions* or *Liber Amoris*.

Consciously or not, conforming to Cellini's earlier mentioned advice to venture on the splendid undertaking to write the story of her life being "over forty", Carson McCullers produced the unfinished autobiography as her most subjective document. As for us, with her memoir, it is exactly the open unfinishedness reminiscent of Sheherezade's stories that keeps us reading, eager for more...

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<sup>4</sup>*Illumination and Night Glare: The Unfinished Autobiography of Carson McCullers*, edited by Carlos L. Dews, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999) p. XV.

<sup>5</sup>*Illumination and Night Glare: The Unfinished Autobiography of Carson McCullers*, edited by Carlos L. Dews, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999) p. XXII.

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# **CULTURAL AND GENDER STUDIES**



# **The Humane in Twentieth-Century Sci-Fi Films: Technological Development against the Backdrop of Emotions**

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**Abstract:** The notion of scientific progress had been associated with reason and ideas of growth and development and until roughly the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, science – and approaches to matters governed by reason- were seen as the best way to improve human condition. However, in sci-fi films the idea of technological advancement is impregnated by a feeling of unease. Whether presenting a race against time in space or a flight from shady government agents on the still-recognizable Earth, twenty-first-century sci-fi films depict the technological aspects of progress in the context of emotions. These films suggest that scientific progress, either improving or harming the individual or the collective sphere, is not to be considered without human emotions. Representations of utopian or dystopian worlds are permeated by questions such as what it means to be human and how we can retain our humanity in the face of change generated by scientific development. The focus in these films is how humans respond to these changes and whether they can or are willing to retain their human nature under challenging circumstances. I propose to investigate how (technological) development is portrayed in the context of emotions by means of close reading of the most popular sci-fi films of the beginning of the twenty-first century.

**Key words:** sci-fi films, technological development, emotions, consciousness, humane.

## **Introduction**

The title card at the beginning of Mark Romanek's 2010 film says that the breakthrough in medical science in 1952 allowed life expectancy to pass 100 years. In the following images children and teachers go by their daily business in an English boarding school. Only a few small details indicate that something is amiss: parents or family are never mentioned, and children are to die terrible deaths should they step outside the fences.

They are constantly reminded that keeping themselves healthy is of paramount importance, they queue for regular medical check-up and the highlight of the day is the thrift fair at the school where they can spend their so-called treasures. A cassette is purchased by a boy, presented to a girl, who plays it using headphones in a vast girls' bedroom. The girl longingly listens to a song entitled "Never Let Me Go" daydreaming about the boy. Eventually, they will have to let go of each other because they are the medical breakthrough: schools of children especially harvested for their organs when they grow up so that others may live more than 100 years.

Romanek's film epitomizes the governing thought of twenty-first-century sci-fi films: progress, whether technological, medical or of any other kind, ought to be seen in the context of human emotions. They investigate questions such as what it means to be human, what is human consciousness, what differentiates humans from any other form of consciousness. Progress is always to be seen in the context of human dimension.

Presenting a visually fascinating, impressive future technology is not enough anymore. Due to the endless possibilities of producing visual images at the disposal of both filmmakers and non-professional individuals, something more is needed in order to catch the viewer. Blending the rational (technological development) with the emotional (part of human nature) can be attributed to the possibilities offered by our highly digitalized and computerized environment. Sobchack attributes this inability to fascinate the viewer to the CGI effects used in filmmaking, "this loss of privilege is the result of exponential increase in the CGI cinematic and televisual effects and their diffusion across a variety of genres" (284: 2014). In her reading, the ability to offer visual spectacle now belongs to the genre of fantasy. Furthermore, due to the internet and our smart devices, our experience of space, time, cognition and process have been reformed. She explains that modes of non-linear and associative thought, contraction of time, spatial interconnectedness, and temporal simultaneity are the result of the uses of these devices – and the return to what she calls magical thinking. The progress of technology brought about what Jameson calls "the end of this or that" (1: 2003) in this case, the end of 'pure' science fiction. In this new context, sci-fi films do no longer rely only on the visual spectacle, but expand their range and offer a more refined analysis of typically sci-fi topics such as humans' interaction with aliens, artificial intelligence, human memory and our perception of reality, space and time travel, and post-apocalyptic worlds. Most post-2001 sci-fi films include an emotional dimension as well by presenting characters that show their feelings, or that are even motivated

by emotions. Be it a mutual respect in an action sci-fi (*Edge of Tomorrow*, Liman, 2014) or the romantic relationship between a man and an A.I. operating system (*Her*, Jonze, 2013), emotions guide characters through the narrative, dictate their choices and influence the outcome of the story. Hence, sci-fi films tackle questions pertaining to scientific progress in the face of human emotions. These films focus on Man and the way we experience our emotions against the backdrop of (rational) scientific development. No longer able to conjure advanced, yet-inexistent but possible science-fiction material, creators of sci-fi films bring Man and human nature to the foreground.

### **Blending Technology and Emotions**

In this context non-action-based films such as *Gravity* (Cuarón, 2013) become successful since these highlight the human element that goes along technological development. The film portrays one single female astronaut whose ship breaks down in space yet through determination and will power she manages to land on Earth. The focus is not on her struggle aided by the advanced technology aboard the ship, but her emotional tribulations, those of a woman who has recently lost her loved ones and who is all alone in the space. Her emotional struggle and desire to live are highlighted against the background of technology.

From the point of view of representations of technology, its exact opposite *Never Let Me Go* also blends progress with the emotional aspect of human condition. In a seemingly non-scientific environment (set in the 1970s, the depiction of the times is most realistic) children are harvested and grown up for their organs. The ethical aspect does not matter: how these children were born is not known. The *in medias res* beginning shifts the focus onto questions like what it means to be human. “What I am not sure about is if our lives had been so different from the people’s we save. We all complete. Maybe none of us really understand what we lived through. Or feel we had enough time” (*Never Let me Go*, 01:35:00-01:35:15).

Technology and emotion blend in films that tackle the notion of artificial intelligence. Questions such as the meaning of life, the role of emotions, A.I.s’ ability to feel/experience emotions, Man’s responsibility towards the robot it creates and what is human are explored. *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (Spielberg, 2001) introduces a post-apocalyptic world in which due to climate changes the icecaps melt, starvation sets in, the procreation of children is forbidden, and instead, robots are created because they do not demand food. Technology and the spectacle of the various A.I. robots are not allowed to dominate the narrative - emotions

are present on two levels. On the one hand, they surface in the motivation of the scientist who creates a child A.I. robot capable of love. He is driven by the pain felt upon the loss of his own child. The ability to love, considered being the key to having a subconscious – hence, be human – raises other questions as well. What does it mean to be human, who is more humane: the Mecha (a humanoid capable of displaying emotions) who selflessly helps the young boy find what he is looking for, or the boy's human mother who abandons him in the forest because she cannot handle his half human half robot nature. This aspect raises another question, that of the responsibility the creator, and the owner, of a humanoid have. The film explores the interaction between human and humanoid and the avenues their interaction can take in the face of their condition. However, the narrative seems to suggest that this interaction is doomed to failure. An everlasting communion between the two is not possible since the mother, being human, dies, and David, being a humanoid, cannot tap into real emotions. David displays a slavish attachment to his mother, which scares her at times; also he cannot handle his human brother who, being jealous, always causes him trouble; most importantly however, he is kept in a cocoon mostly due to his mother's inability to look beyond the fact that he is a robot. Following a row between the human and the robot son, the mother - though full of remorse - abandons her humanoid son, she does not return him to the laboratory where she got him from, but leaves him in the forest apologizing that she had not told him about the world. In contrast with the "civilized" world of David's parents stands Flesh Fair, the circus-like establishment intended to destroy artificiality by means of destroying cast-out, ugly, non-functional Mechas. However, the beast-like nature of this world full of squalor is broken when the Mecha to be destroyed is a boy and thus David escapes. Under the guidance of Joe Gigolo, a Mecha created to satisfy romantic longing, David explores emotions even if he does that on a rational level: he wants to find out where the Blue Fairy (from Pinocchio's story) is so that she can turn him into a real boy and thus gain his mother's love. At a Q&A robot establishment David and Joe learn where the Blue Fairy is located – she is a submerged icon of a Fun Fair. He finds her and while asking her to change him, he freezes for two thousand years. His being awakened after this period suggests that the focus is not on the abilities humanoids have – David cannot understand metaphor, since he does not grasp the notion of a fairy and believes she does exist. The focus is David's unrelenting desire to experience the love of his mother. His belief is so strong that he endures 2000 years and is eventually found by tall, slender creatures who tell him that he is the enduring memory of the human race which has died out by that time.

More than a decade later, *Ex Machina* (Garland, 2015) explores the question of humans' responsibility towards their own creation employing a more common undercurrent: the possibility of romantic attachment between human and humanoid. Technological advancement is present through the highly digitalized setting the action takes place, an ultra-computerized bunker in the middle of a remote, Eden-like lush environment. In a highly digitalized, but otherwise undefined urban world, the young programmer, Caleb wins a trip to a well-known programmer genius's property to test an A.I. robot. Seemingly, emotions are not involved, since the issue is not the love between mother and child, but examining a young female creation, Ava, based on the Turing test. Man's role as God turns against him, since Ava manages to outwit both her arrogant creator, Nathan and the well-intended but uncaring tester, Caleb. The central question, which Ava poses to Caleb during the test, is what happens if an A.I. fails the Turing test – and most importantly, who is qualified to decide when the A.I. has passed the test or not. Ava's question indicates such a high level of consciousness that the difference between human and robot becomes indistinguishable. So much so that in the closed bunker in which only Nathan Man playing God, - his creation, Ava, and Caleb who is at Nathan's will, live, the latter starts doubting himself as a human so he tests his organic nature cutting his veins to make sure blood is running through him and not wires. If David, in *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, willingly subdued to humans and later, the evolved creatures, in *Ex Machina* Ava revolts against her creators for their inhuman treatment. She uses the sexual dimension of her consciousness to make Caleb like her and eventually lure him to help her escape.

Power games between robots and humans in which either tries to outwit the other one is not the only representation of artificial intelligence in action. Set in a highly developed, undefined future *Her* presents a world in which due to developed digital technology, people have become enmeshed in their own individual world playing computer games on their holograms at home alone and hardly interacting with each other. Although the possibility of human interaction does exist since the main character, Theo, does have human friends, he chooses an artificially intelligent operating system as his constant companion that is programmed to listen to him, to understand and to know him. Samantha, as the OS calls herself interacts with Theo through his computer and smartphone, thus gradually growing into something much more than a computer operating system. They go on double date with real people, and Samantha becomes not only his partner, but also a haven that allows him not to deal with the realities of his life. Samantha becomes so highly developed and articulate as far as emotions are concerned, being even able to discern whether she needs time to think about emotional issues or

not, that the limit between human beings and artificially intelligent entities becomes blurred. Theo's wake-up call that she IS only a non-human entity is when he realizes that Samantha talks to and is in love with others as well. She works as a therapeutic element, once she leaves Theo's computer – being recalled by manufacturers – he manages to deal with the real world: apologize to his ex-wife and become romantically involved with a real person. The difference between Samantha's consciousness and that of a human may be very little. Although she may learn to have emotions and respond properly to those of others, her not having been made tangible in the form of a robot suggests that artificial intelligence in *Her* is part of neither a utopian nor a dystopian world but the natural development of a highly digitalized society.

### **Mind Games**

Although permeated by representations of emotions, sci-fi films bring to the foreground matters of the mind as well. From attempts to clean the memory of someone from a person's mind (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, Gondry, 2004), to its opposite: planting an idea in someone's head (*Inception*, Nolan, 2012), there is wide range of mind games played by these films.

Imbued with emotions, the mind games displayed in these films present the way in which the mind can be influenced, and to what effect several layers of reality are presented. Whether it is the layers of man's consciousness or the workings of the memory at the core of the narrative, the film also follows suit since the films employ flashbacks, flash-forwards, or other visual means to indicate the level of diegetic reality presented. Based on intricate theories, these films are usually action-based and dictate a fast pace.

Spectacular visual representations are coupled with stories that challenge our perception of reality and time, suggesting that meddling with the brain always involves to some degree emotions as well. Either motivated by emotional issues such as longing to see family again (*Inception*) or avenging having been used due to loss of child (*Minority Report*, Spielberg, 2002) the question these films revolve around is not what it means being a human but rather how our mind and soul, reason and emotion work together.

Though not displaying high technology, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* is not the typical sci-fi film. Based on the advanced medical idea that the memory can be cleaned of certain elements, the narrative implies that reason is always driven by emotions. The story focuses on the workings of the mind, specifically that of the memory. The

narrative, presented in a frame, starts with a sequence from the end: Joel takes his car with a dent on the front door, and instead of going to work, he goes to the beach. From here the narrative gently takes us back and forward until we gradually realize that Joel asked his memory be cleaned of Clementine, his beloved girlfriend. Realizing midway that he still loves her, he does not want to go on with the medical procedure, yet he cannot find any way to let the medical team know. Therefore, instead of trying to reach out, he escapes into his childhood and hides Clementine there. The procedure proves to be entirely useless, as what is destined to happen, will happen, the film suggests since Joel and Clementine meet under new circumstances and their relationship seems to have the same trajectory. However, the inefficiency of the procedure is yet again proven by the secretary of the medical office performing this procedure, who despite being “cleaned,” seduces the doctor performing the procedure, as she did before. Thus, emotions prevail over the mind.

The mind is worsted in the action-packed *Minority Report* as well. Set in 2054 the film shows a team of agents who are able to stop crime before that even takes place should that crime be premeditated. John Anderton and his team base their work on the visions of three so-called pre-cognitives (pre-cogs), a woman and two men kept in a water tank with brains wired to a computerized system. Emotion and cognition blend in both the case of the pre-cogs and that of Anderton. The visions the pre-cogs have affect them emotionally, while Anderton’s motivation to do this highly rational job is that his son was killed. The outcome of the story indicates that technological progress, unless motivated by positive emotions and honesty, cannot take place. The coupling of emotions and reason is most poignantly represented in the case of Agatha, one of the pre-cogs, who once given the possibility to escape from the water tank and become independent, begs to be left alone having become exhausted of all the visions. In Anderton’s case the emotional impulse is somewhat external as he realizes he had been manipulated into leading the Pre-crime unit. His external motivation is his son who died prior to the diegetic time of the story. With the mystery being solved, original order is restored: the Pre-crime unit is dissolved, and the pre-cogs are set free as if suggesting that one cannot and should not escape one’s feelings.

Escape into another world, with the former being driven by emotions, works as the leitmotif of *Inception*. The narrative of the film displays several layers of diegetic reality corresponding to the layers of consciousness of several characters who step in the mind game at various stages. Cobb, the main character, an architect and a mind-extractor, is driven by his desire to see his children again and assembles a team in order to implant an idea into someone’s head. He specializes in extracting

ideas from people's head while they are asleep, yet he can perform the reverse as well, i.e. implant an idea into one's head while that person is dreaming. The motivation behind this intricate cognitive process is emotion-based again: Cobb has performed inception on his beloved wife, who having confused reality with dream has committed suicide and therefore, Cobb had to leave his children and run away as he was accused of causing his wife's death. The influence of emotions over our decisions and cognitive abilities is the issue explored in Cobb's mission as well, since he and his team have to implant the idea of splitting his company up into the head of a young man who has a troubled relationship with his father. His bond to his parent determines his actions, and it is into his emotions that the team must tap into in order to perform the inception.

Emotion and memory intermingle in a different perception of reality in *Edge of Tomorrow* (Liman, 2014). Perception of reality is conditioned by memory which does not seem to be shared by everybody. In a technology-ridden but not very distant future English forces are preparing for a mission similar to D-Day in a war against the robot-like extra-terrestrial creatures called Mimics. Major Bill Cage caught in the fight wounds one of these creatures and is infected by the fluid that stands for the creature's blood. This infection changes the working of his memory, and thus the way he perceives reality, a view which not shared by anyone but an English sergeant, Rita Vataski: Cage relives the same day repeatedly, as if in a time-loop. He is the only one who perceives time the same way Mimics do, and after having relived the same day for several times he is able to destroy them with the help of Vataski. The narrative is based on the notion that time is not linear consisting of a never-returning past, a present and future, but time is a matter of our memory, namely one can relive one's past anytime and thus be able to improve their present and future. The mind game consists of learning to avoid the mistake made the previous day - therefore, emotions only feebly seep in the story: Vataski's fight against the Mimics is motivated by the death of her boyfriend, while Cage gradually learns to like her. Despite its action-based narrative, the emotional line is emphasized by the end when wakening to a new, victorious day, Cage visits Vataski suggesting the issuing romantic relationship.

### **Space and Aliens – Litmus Paper of Human Nature**

The emotional line of the narrative strengthens in films that for some reason are slightly far removed from Earth and/or humans. In the space or among alien creatures display of emotion abounds, and even if diffused emotions are still present.

Conceived as a mockumentary, *District 9* (Blomkamp, 2009) presents prawn-like aliens with the basic bone structure of humans being stranded in Johannesburg, South Africa. The way they are dealt with neither mystifies nor demonizes the aliens, who if left alone, keep to themselves, do not engage in unnecessary conflict and are not intent on conquering the humans. The only advantage they seem to have over humans is that their weapons are built using biotechnology, i.e. only attached to alien DNA do these weapons work. Cohabitation of humans and aliens is modeled on that of slums and developed areas of the non-diegetic world. Aliens are not mysterious entities far-removed from humans either in looks or in development; they are part of the reality one can easily grow accustomed to. In their attempt to relocate the aliens due to sanitary considerations, the government sends in teams led by a Vickers de Merwe who eventually is infected by alien blood and gradually becomes one. The narrative follows his emotional development. His transformation from an insignificant man raised to important position due to marriage, an uncaring office worker who smilingly kills small alien eggs when on field trying to evacuate aliens to a man who matures, accepts his role and the changes he suffers. Vickers learns to understand the depth of the relationship between the local humans and the refugee-seeking aliens the hard way, i.e. due to infection, he turns into a prawn, but not before being forced to fight against his own, human race. When his change becomes visible, he becomes an asset to humans and is treated accordingly: put to tests and made to man alien weapons. Therefore, he escapes to the slums of the aliens. Hunted by both the government and the Nigerians (who want to eat him and retain his power), he is forced to fight together with the aliens and help two of their specimen fly away with the spaceship they came to Earth twenty years prior to that. Though turned entirely into an alien, he retains some of his humanity, signified by the rose he makes out of a can and leaves at his wife's front door.

Space travel in the other direction – humans leaving Earth in search of a better place to live in – involves even more emotions. In a film based on complex scientific theories and explanations, emotions seem to be the only driving force behind characters. On an Earth where the population is close to extinction due to lack of food, Cooper a pilot-engineer turned into farmer accepts an assignment to leave Earth with a small group of scientists in search of a new home for humanity. The journey to several distant planets, on which either time or physical space posed great challenge, takes him through a black hole and back - a journey that lasted a whole lifetime on Earth, but was much shorter in space – rests on a cornerstone that belongs to the emotional realm: love. Seemingly a high-tech sci-fi, action in *Interstellar* is motivated by

emotions: the father leaves Earth to find a better living space for his children, his daughter is angry with him for leaving her. In addition to this, one of the scientists on board of the ship decides they should check out a certain planet based on emotional considerations (it is her love whom has been sent to that planet to colonize it). In the final stage of the journey the narrative introduces the concept of five-dimensional beings governed by love who present the solution of the problem Cooper is sent to find a solution for, which he manages to pass on via an asset that has emotional undercurrents. In a scene that suggests time being a loop instead of a linear dimension, Cooper in a black hole finds his way to his daughter's bedroom – which he now perceives from the outside – where his and her emotional turmoil began. The 5D entities allow him to see both the past and the present, as he sees both his young daughter crying at his having left her and his grown-up daughter visiting the house of her childhood. Being in different dimensions, the only way to transmit any message is by sending it to his daughter in Morse code on a watch that he gave her and trusts her getting the message because there are positive emotions attached to this item.

## Conclusion

In a most recent film *Arrival* (Villeneuve, 2016) aliens have become only a pretext to explore how we communicate with each other, our relationship and interaction with each other. Aliens are a blurred presence, the only important pieces of information we have about them is that they have seven legs, they write by issuing ink-like gas into circle-like figures that each seems to be a sentence on its own. Despite posing an intellectual challenge, they act as mere catalyzers which help the human characters discover something about themselves. Nevertheless, it is symptomatic of the sci-fi films of the twenty-first century since it merges matters of the heart, the brain, and technology.

Irrespective of the degree they present either of these elements, twenty-first century films indicate that portrayal of technological development or its effects – either negative or positive – cannot be portrayed without reference to emotions. Thus, post-2000 sci-fi films seem to refute the idea of “waning of affect” (Jameson 15: 2003) – or at least, reinterpret Jameson's reading of the word, which therefore, does not refer to style anymore, but the content of the films. Progress, be it spectacular or not, should always be considered in the context of human emotions. Whether it is the intricate working of the mind in *Inception*, or our perception of time, as presented in *Interstellar*, *Minority Report*, *Edge of Tomorrow*, emotions cannot be left out. Even the most complicated

scientific idea is motivated by emotions as well as reason. Another idea present in these films revolves around the question of responsibility and the intricacies of creating entities similar to us who will eventually outgrow us, like David in *A.I. – Artificial Intelligence* or Ava in *Ex Machina*. *Hers* represents a somewhat different approach – the OS finally retreats, and Theo has the chance to form a relationship with real human beings – but the essence is the same: progress cannot be portrayed by itself, but holistically, i.e. taking into consideration emotions as well.

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## Headscarves and Hijabi Fashionistas: A Way Forward

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**Abstract:** The so-called Muslim ‘veil’ or ‘headscarf’ has become a contentious issue in many Western countries with Muslim minorities being perceived not only as a reflection of foreign-ness but also as a symbol of the oppression of Muslim women by an over-reaching Muslim patriarchy. This patriarchal system it is argued constrains women’s movements and bodies by controlling what they wear. However, in Western countries there are a growing number of Muslim women who contradict this image arguing on the contrary that there is no incongruity with wearing a headscarf and Feminism. Rather than the headscarf being a symbol of male oppression it is liberating in that it protects women from the male gaze which reduces them to a sexual object. What is referred to as ‘hijabi’ fashion has hit the high streets with international fashion shows, internet shopping, hijab wearing models appearing in Western fashion magazines creating new public spaces which challenge discourses of female victimhood and oppression. Arwa El Masri’s *Tea with Arwa* describes her search to belong as a Muslim Feminist and an Australian

**Keywords:** hijabis, public spaces, headscarf, Muslim feminism.

### Background

Since the events of 9/11 Muslims living in the West have been under pressure to prove their trustworthiness as citizens including their loyalty to so-called Western democratic values propelling Muslim women into active engagement with Islam and women’s rights as a consequence of the heightened scrutiny Muslim communities were subject to by the Media and government surveillance. Thus Islam has become part of the political debate.

Women’s bodies had become central to the debate. This manifested itself in the identification of the ‘veil’, being the most obvious symbol of Muslim-ness as proof of Muslims’ unwillingness to integrate, living parallel lives and as proof that they are the ‘enemy within’.

Some Muslim women turned to Islam and the Qur’an for answers to questions about how Islam’s emphasis on social justice and gender

equality could be re-imagined to challenge these narratives and their own positioning within the national story.

One of the most visible symbols of Islamic belief is women's dress; consequently, women's bodies have become sites for the debate around reconciling Muslim identity with the case of Arwa El Masri, Australian-ness.

### **Muslim dress, 'the veil'.**

Presently, there are two main arguments around the 'veil'.

... Asma Barlas believes ... In traditional Muslim discourses, the veil is meant to protect men by hiding the impure, but enticing, female body from them. However, the very power of this body to arouse men also makes it vulnerable to their sexual depredations, which is why it must be veiled. Far from signifying female virtue, the veil points to a licentious and easily provoked sexuality, especially male sexuality, that can only be kept under wraps by literally wrapping up the female body itself. (Barlas 2009:2)

On the other hand some Muslim women living in the West see the wearing of the 'veil' as empowering. For them, the wearing of the headscarf is a command of God as God in Islam is neither masculine nor feminised. It is rooted in the Prophetic precedence of the Qur'an as the word of God. The 'veil' is a symbol of their piety in that the more righteous is the one who is most conscious of God. For these women it means taking control of their bodies from the male gaze by determining how much of their bodies are on show in the public arena. This then protects them from being reduced to sexual objects, hence, they are judged on their inner selves. These 'hijabis' as they like to call themselves see Western dress as oppressive to women in that their worth is judged on the basis of their physical attractiveness.

Both views sexualise women, Muslim women have to hide their bodies from unwanted attention as it is the female body and sexuality that excites Muslim men, while the Western woman's body is fetishized, an object of male desire.

However, these 'hijabis' believe their faith and modernity go hand in hand. These Muslim women have disengaged with Western concepts of fashion and have created their own styles and 'brand' that challenge the mainstream with new 'Muslim sheik' that is modern, in addition, to maintaining Muslim values of modesty and piety.

## Tea with Arwa – A Memoir

In her memoir Palestinian- Australian writer Arwa El Masri explores her journey to womanhood (wife and mother) Muslim-ness and Australian identity. This search began “at the end of high school” when she began to “search for equality and justice; but where would it be? In God’s rules or man made rules?” (El Masri 2012: 134) This search would take me on a journey of self- discovery.

Arwa believes that wearing the headscarf is a choice and doesn’t reflect a rejection of Australian values but an adaption of them to suit her personal circumstances in reconciling her multi-layered identities.

Choosing to wear the veil for me is a feminist decision. I didn’t choose it only because I was required as a woman in Islam. I did it because I believe in it. After careful thought and constant questioning about my place in the world and a questioning of all women in society I choose it for what it stands for. I didn’t look for my rights as a woman in the feminist movement, I looked for them within Islam and I found that feminism exists in Islam. I have seen and felt the differences of being a woman with and without the veil.(232/3)

Arwa El Masri frames her memoir in opposition to stereotypical images of Muslim women in the media as oppressed and subservient in a male dominated community. Her story negotiates her place not only within the Australia community but also as a Muslim woman gendered and racialised.

She resists practices which restrain women’s movements under the guise of family values and acquiescing to appear vulnerable to be deserving of a man’s respect. It is through the curtailing of a woman’s movements through keeping her housebound that Muslim men are able to negate women’s rights. It is this image that feminists think that Muslim women need rescuing from. Saba Mahmood believes that women wear the ‘veil’ either because they believe it is a divine command subject only to the will of God not manmade rules. ‘Veiling’ as understood as a bodily practice is in fact a symbolic act because it assumes a different relationship between the subject’s exteriority and interiority. Bodily acts apply to both an expression of and a means to realization of the subject.

Because Islam does not have an official clergy who codify rules and interpretation of religious texts belief is very much directly articulated around a highly personal relationship with one’s deity and faith. For Arwa every aspect of her life is an articulation of her faith whether it is a manifestation of her inner religiosity or the outer physical demonstrations of her faith. “... My religion is not a separate room that I

visit once or twice and then leave. It is a natural part of everything I do.” (El Masri 2011: xi)

Clothes are a site where images of Muslims and Muslim identity are contested and she sees governments who ban the wearing of the headscarf as a step backwards for women in that it “... take[s] away the basic human right of any woman to wear the hijab ... [and] right to dress in the manner that makes her feel comfortable.” (El Masri 2012: 90) .In other words, for these women wearing the ‘hijab’ has given them ownership over their own ‘images’ and ‘branding’ in the public arena.

What we see here is that Muslim women living in Western countries have utilized Western discourses of human rights and freedoms to negotiate new spaces for Muslim women in the public arena while at the same time allowing them to express their Muslim-ness by actively engaging with their faith through what they wear. Veiling therefore allow Muslim women agency over their public persona rather than being objectified and fetishized through the negative stereotyping of Muslim women in the media which pervaded after the events of 9/11 demonizing Muslims as ‘terrorists’, backward and in the words of the Australian Prime Minister John Howard, failing to accept Australian values. Comments reported in the Sydney Morning Herald made by the Prime Minister such as "We want people when they come to Australia to adopt Australians ways" and “There is within some sections of the Islamic community an attitude towards women which is out of line with mainstream Australian society.” (SMH Feb 20<sup>th</sup> 2006: 1)

John Howard’s comments reflect an on-going debate around the place of Islam for those Muslim communities living in Western countries but also hegemonic discourses that marginalize and demean alternative ways of framing Australian-ness. It is through these interventions by the ‘hijabis’ in challenging these discourses and presenting new hybrid identities which utilize Western discourses of human rights, freedom of expression while maintaining outward manifestations of Muslim-ness that do not contradict each other. These ‘otherings’ rather than being oppositional enhance difference by conflating it with the narratives of non-Muslim women in terms of Feminist discourses. In other words, national discourses are turned on their head through the narratives of inclusivity championed by Muslim women through their stories being brought into the public arena by such women as Arwa El Masri.

At the time of writing her memoir Arwa El Masri was married to Lebanese Australian Hazem El Masri, a rugby league player, known for his goal kicking expertise as well as being a devout Muslim and therefore a role model for his community. During this period Arwa was often interviewed by the print media and on television. During one of these

interviews she discusses her Muslim-ness and the wearing of the veil and her opinion of those women who don't and if she thought they invited the wrong kind of attention.

I don't think any woman invites that," she says. "If people want to sexualize you, they will - no matter what you're wearing ... If you choose to wear jeans, I respect that. But this is my expression of modesty. I want to be able to control how much of me you see. People always assume Hazem or my father has made me do this. I can't possibly as a woman choose to be modest? That to me is insulting." In this interview Arwa contends "... that Islam also demands modesty from men manifesting itself in the changing rooms. "Not one football player will tell you he's seen Hazem's bits."

"The truth is my faith and my Australian identity goes together very comfortably" she says. "How much more Aussie can you get than marrying a rugby league player? (SMH November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011)

This difference in Arwa's thinking towards her husband's 'covering of his bits' in the club's changing rooms from the other players being the same as covering the entire body except for the face of a woman is problematic. Although she claims that Islam also demands modesty for men but the difference is that male modesty isn't supported or demanded of in a female definition of what is 'male dress' although female dress is encoded into religious and tribal codes of honour. No male is ever flogged in public in the name of Islam for wearing trousers, or for not covering his entire body as have women in Afghanistan and Sudan.

For Arwa it is her choice how much of herself she wants to be seen in public which also conforms to patriarchal readings of female dress and honour. For a man his genitals become the marker of male modesty whereas for a woman it is her entire body and it is body that shoulders her family's honour.

Asma Barlas contends that these practices resulted from incorrect readings of the Qur'an. She contends that why the Qur'an has been read as patriarchal text that "privileges males and teaches female inferiority and subordination to men has to do with its readings in/by patriarchies" in the Middle Ages by a small number of scholars who used a conservative method which was supported by the state. (Barlas 2001:120) These incorrect readings have over time become cultural practices and it is these incorrect or mis-readings of the Qur'an are now being reinterpreted by young Muslim women who wish to take control of their bodies while retaining their Muslim-ness as well as becoming trend-setters. For Arwa wearing the hijab is taking control of her public persona.

For other women or 'hijabis' wearing the hijab is part of their personal jihad. This jihad is to "make oneself a more rounded, productive,

merciful and compassionate human being.” (Janmohammed 2016: 38/9) Young Muslims often reject their parent’s Islam particularly jihad which they feel has been “taken out of its Islamic context and reframed in new languages.” ( 39) “They insist on reclaiming the word from its distorted meaning. The ‘greater jihad’ as dictated by Islamic teachings is the struggle against the inner self. Only in times when physical self-defence is required whether personal or at a national level, does the physical (lesser) jihad take place.”(38)

Arwa’s argument for wearing the headscarf is that is part and parcel of her. They are one and the same thing. For her there is no separation between self and its religious embodiment, that is, the headscarf. However, on the surface these attitudes that seem to perpetuate patriarchal values of the subordinate position of woman pose a problem in terms of challenging the privileged position of male values. For Arwa this doesn’t pose a problem in that dressing modestly in public doesn’t impinge on her independence or public persona as a woman in her own right not just a fixture of her husband’s success as a rugby player. Arwa states ...”I had to deal with the fact I was now married to a sportsman who, no matter how decent he was, had a label attached to him. As a footballer it was assumed he was only interested in a woman who was sexy and beautiful to look at regardless of her brain – in other words, a trophy wife.” (El Masri 2012: 219)

Arwa’s memoir looks back on how using the teachings of Islam for answers she was able to negotiate her own space as a footballers wife, challenging images of scantily dressed women with her own Muslim fashion in opposition to the pressures placed on footballers’ wives by the fashion industry. Western feminists often contend that the fashion industry objectifies the female body for male consumption. Arwa, on the other hand, has taken traditional positions of female subordination, the home and cooking, to assert her agency turning conventional theories of female liberation which ‘liberates’ women from the confines of the ‘house’ on its head although is it that so-called feminine virtues such as modesty, humility and shyness provide the only entrance into the public arena for women? Therefore has Arwa El Marwa internalized these patriarchal values thus contributing to her own subordination although contending her independence of male domination and finding a way for women to enter the public arena on their own terms?

Saba Mahmood argues that ‘the desire’ to be ‘free’ from patriarchal practices must also be taken into account, however, in tribal societies it is the duty of the husband/father to protect his family/women and therefore by stepping outside the perimeters of male domination also is to give up that protection, consequently no only to challenge but reject

the basic social conventions of tribal societies. Feminist theories have taken the concept of ‘freedom’ in a Western sense of individuality as the norm for all women, in other words, assuming all women want to be ‘free’ of ‘the male’ in all forms and relationships. Therefore any compromise is perceived as an acceptance of subordination which conflicts with Western feminist ideas of ‘liberation’ seemingly reinforcing Western views of Islam as a patriarchal system which restricts women’s agency.

What Arwa’s religiosity reflects is totally modern in that it is personalized, challenging reconceived gender roles, it disrupts the public sphere with female presence, and it doesn’t correspond to a fixed place, territory and institution. Her emphasis on personal choice, individualism suggests that rather being a regression into traditionalism and/or a rejection of Western ways it is in fact that it is not only an assertion of choice and identity highlights the individual autonomy thus highlighting the modern rather than conformity to a dictate of female dress handed down by a patriarchal community.

Saba Mahmood argues to fully understand ‘freedom’ and the concept of individual autonomy “the concomitant elements of coercion and consent” (Mahmood 2012: 11) are critical to its understanding. She argues that by giving one’s consent even to seemingly illiberal actions this constitutes freedom as long as it doesn’t involve coercion and involve a consenting individual. Consequently in this line of argument Arwa’s desire to be a good housewife, mother, cook does not make her subordinate as long as these actions are freely chosen. However, people don’t operate in a vacuum but rather in communities which all involve embedded social and relational norms, rules and regulations. Therefore, does it mean to reach independence and/or autonomy operating outside societal norms? This would therefore involve redefining not only female roles but male roles as well and would this result in their subordination.

Saba Mahmood believes “that the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibly and effectively.” (Mahmood 2012: 14/15) Viewed in this way, what may be perceived as passivity and/or subordination can reflect an agential capacity to resist by subverting societal norms that have become naturalized. Therefore Arwa’s cooking and home-making resist Western notions of the ‘exotic other’ through the universalization and/or normalization of cooking and home-making to all societies regardless of religion and cultures. What may appear on the surface as subordination may be freely chosen rather than coerced.

## Muslim Feminism?

Lila Abu-Lughod contends that in Western feminist narratives there is this desire to reduce Muslim women to one of servitude to Islamic oppression. She argues that in the “nineteenth century women of the Orient were either portrayed as downtrodden victims who were imprisoned, secluded, shrouded, and treated as beasts of burden or they appeared in a sensual world of excessive sexuality” (Abu-Lughod, 2013:88), however, in the late twentieth, early twenty-first century their protagonists exemplify feminist ideals of women who seek liberation from being trapped in their strange to the Western gaze sordid worlds. They seek freedom and this freedom is represented by escaping to the West from their oppressive lives in the Islamic world.

Rather than celebrating the diversity of women in the Islamic world Western feminist narratives have equated ‘choice’ with the acquisition of Western values of political crusades for the liberation of women in Muslim countries from a situation “of coercion, and lack of consent, absence of choice, and unfreedom.” (91) This then becomes problematic in that Western ideals of freedom in terms of some feminist theories doesn’t allow for differences in the way some Muslim women define their position within not only the family but the community and for them these ties, responsibilities and duties are perceived as oppression but as a way women can express their individuality, place but more importantly place within the community. People don’t live or operate in isolation; they live in communities/ societies within a framework of shared values, norms, rules and regulations. How people interpret, define, redefine all the time asserting their agency is an individual matter as not all people think, do all things the same way there are always variations. “The veil is a life commitment that a Muslim woman chooses. It is not only a cover for your hair; it means much more than that. The veil also protects the modesty of a woman’s dress. A woman’s clothing should cover her body and not be seen through or tight fitting; any of these things negate the intention implicit in wearing a veil.” ( El Masri 2012: 231/2) Modesty in Arwa’s view is not so much an attribute of the body as it is characteristic of the individual’s interiority, which is then expressed in bodily form through her dress and relationship with God.

Choosing to wear the veil for me is a feminist decision. I didn’t choose it only because I was required as a woman in Islam, I did it because I believe in it. After careful thought and a constant questioning about my place in the world and a questioning of the position of all women in

society, I chose it for what it stands for. I didn't look for my rights in the feminist movement; I looked for them within Islam and what I found is that feminism exists in Islam. I have seen and felt the difference of being a woman with and without the veil. ( El Masri 2012: 232/233)

For El Masri the wearing of the veil is not only a religious duty but also a reflection of 'self'. However, in Saba Mahmood's book another reading of 'the veil' is perceived by the women in her research in Egypt with the mosque movement participants. For these women who struggled with working in secular environments where men were present who weren't close relatives or being on public transport created challenges in how to maintain their pious lifestyles with the demands of day-to-day living. Mahmood maintains that all Islamic virtues are gendered highlighting the most "feminine of Islamic virtues, al-hayā' (shyness, diffidence, modesty)" and considered like Arwa El Masri a necessary achievement by the mosque participants. (Mahmood 2012: 155)

However, how one acquires these virtues involves individual and unique manifestations rather than some standardized code of understanding and fulfillment. For the mosque women it wasn't enough just to act shyly in public as this would be hypocritical because you had to feel it inside. Although one is not shy it isn't inconsistent with learning how to make oneself shy from the inside. Amal one of the mosque participants says "given her lack of natural shyness [al-ḥayā']. Explaining the word istiḥyā as making oneself shy, even if it means creating it [Ya'ni ya Saba, yi'mil nafsu yit-kisifḥattalauṣana'"(156) This, however, Saba Mahmood argues, is not just "an instance of the internalization of standards of effeminate behaviour", consequently, therefore how does it relate to agency?(157) Mahmood argues that it isn't enough to think of "agency" simply as a "synonym for resistance to social norms but as a modality of action". This then raises the question of the "relationship between the subject and the norm, between performative behaviour and inward disposition." According to Saba Mahmood "this is no innate human desire but it is a sequence of practices and actions one is engaged in that determines one's desires and emotions. In other words, action does not issue forth from natural feelings but creates them."(157) By wearing the of veil in public it becomes naturalised and therefore feels unnatural or undressed without it for the Muslim woman and this therefore for Arwa creates the public image of her as a Muslim woman she wishes to promote rather than having society imprint its interpretations of being submissive and unthinkingly accommodating so-called patriarchal values onto her own self-image. It is her representation independently made without coercion of herself.

This, however, creates a problem of Islamic jurisprudence in that under the where according to Scott Kugle in legalistic Islam access to a wife's genitalia becomes the husband's property. Although technically a husband doesn't own a woman's body parts he does have access to them, this, therefore create a legal rational justifying a husband being able to control his wife's dress and movement outside the home on the basis that access to her genitalia moves with her body in daily activities. Therefore this becomes problematic in determining what has the wife agreed to in terms of her movements and dress and does a man's legal access to his wife's genitalia negate choice and lack of coercion. Arwa talks about making a free choice devoid of coercion which reflects on the concept of agency so does the husband's rights negate the female's agency and does this simply means compliance on the woman's behalf to the prescriptions of a patriarchal society which restricts not only the movements of woman but their choices.

Asma Barlas argues that there is a difference between Muslim tradition and what the Quran says concerning women's bodies as well as the Islamic God is not gendered and is like nothing else. What is of importance are the sexual and political implications of these differences.

Veiling, we know, inscribes the body literally, by covering it and figuratively, by serving as a marker of identity. This is not to say that the veil itself has only one form or that veiling means the same thing to all women. For some, it is a freely chosen symbol of protest and a public assertion of independence, visibility, difference, especially in secular societies. For others, it is a socially-enforced mode of subordination to men that is enacted through the anonymity and conformity of concealment in public. Yet, in all cases, the veil is seen as an embodiment of female virtue even though Muslim tradition regards the female body itself as morally corrupt/ing. (Barlas 2009: 2)

However, according Barlas this wasn't always the case and in the early centuries of Islam both men and women could expose those parts of the bodies that weren't prudential, however, in the thirteenth century some exegetes considered the entire body a free woman to be pudendal and by the seventeenth century even the hands and face. She also argues that this is also written in the hadith which were written long after the Prophet's death. These hadith's portray women as 'evil temptresses', 'morally and intellectually inferior', 'unclean during menstruation', and from this develops the need to protect from the 'impure' and 'enticing' sexualized female body through the veiling of women. For AsmaBarlas the Quran is ambiguous and allows scope for interpretation as well as prescribing piety to both men and women.

What is at stake is its political and social manipulation to serve specific agendas of the time, place and culture, however, even this changes according to Barlas in the modern world laws have been designed to protect women from sexual abuse and harassment not dress and therefore dress has become obsolete in terms of protecting a woman's modesty and/or body in the unsafe world we live in and even covering doesn't protect women from harm. This may have been appropriate in tribal societies where women were under the protection of men.

This then suggests Muslim women's dress codes down the ages in terms of religiosity have not been fixed but have also adapted to the political and social changes taking place at the time. She believes that in the early centuries and from passages in the Quran that both men and women were responsible to dress modestly in the spirit of the Quran and duty bound to and abide by covering those parts of their bodies that were considered pudendal equally. Women's bodies have not become sexualized and objects of men's erotic desires but this changed as women's bodies becomes exteriorialised as "vessels of the demonic power of sex and out of this fear of the uncontrollable, dangerous, and yet fascinating power of sex develops the tendency to see all the dreaded (hence hated) aspects of life in woman." (Barlas 2009:3). By considering the changing position of women and women's roles in society particularly in the public arena this is also reflected in the changing patterns of women's dress code in traditional Muslim society but these changes are now being reflected by Muslim living in Western countries.

Abu Lughod and the changing demands of women in rural areas of Egypt whose husband's have migrated to Europe for work due to economic instability and lack of employment leaving the women to shoulder the restraints and burden of maintaining their families honour, consequently, having their public actions scrutinized by the clan/tribe while their husbands often take foreign mistresses and/or wives in whatever country they are living in, it is the woman's behaviour that becomes problematical not the man's who may have stopped providing for his first wife in favour of supporting his European family. This has also led to the breakdown in "traditions built on mutual obligations [which] have been undermined by rapidly changing, desperate economic circumstances and by political instability. Men are no longer able to meet their obligations to women or fulfill their ideals of honor, protection, or generosity." (Lughod 2013: 52) This and Islamic revivalism has provided spaces where women can resist and negotiate within the framework of traditional tribal and/or patriarchal societies particularly against customary ideas about the propriety of arranged marriages.

On the other hand Fatima Mernissi believes that the members of the ulemā (male jurists/theologians) in writing the hadiths have in fact not only stamped their own interpretations of various sayings/ rulings attributed to the Prophet Mohammed but have over the centuries made these hadiths favour men over women in order to preserve the patriarchal system have in fact distorted the sayings of the companions and the egalitarian potential of its founding reflected in the Quran and juristic texts. By claiming rights over women's bodies and therefore their sexuality to one of inherent sexual power which if left uncontrolled would wreak havoc on a male defined order, hence, the necessity to control women's sexuality through veiling, segregation and legal subordination promoting the ideal of a passive, silent, and obedient woman under the guise of Islamic modesty which Arwa El Masri aspires to but as something that both men and women are obligated to. Is Masri subjectifying these so-called 'false' readings of the Quran and juristic texts highlighted by Fatima Mernissi and Asma Barlas rather than defining female agency independent of patriarchal systems of identity. Here arises the problem of authenticity and who is right and wrong in terms of interpretation highlighting the extreme difficulties in coming to precise conclusions but placing it in terms of a dynamic on-going process of reinterpretation and identification as something transient as well as being constructed in lieu of contemporary events and discourses.

In the West 1970's and women's liberation, the changing role of women, the demand for equality and increased presence in the public arena and demand for the 'law' to protect the female body from sexual abuse in the form of having it set in law that a husband can be charged with rape if he forces his wife to have sex against her will, laws against so-called sexual predators and inappropriate physical touching of women by men has changed becoming criminalized and written into the legal code which is reflected in historic crimes of sexual abuse from the sixties and seventies coming to court now and men being convicted reflect these changes in attitude as well as new discourses of ownership of the female body.

What can be seen throughout these narratives is the co-incidence in the increased presence of the Muslim female in the public arena in modern societies as well as the increased number of women choosing to where the veil although women throughout history in Muslim societies have been present in the public sphere in farming communities and women have been traders running market stalls so although the presence of women in the public arena is not new the way their presence is being viewed is new as women adjust to the demands of modern living styles and living in Western non-Muslim majority countries.

Therefore when deconstructing the wearing of the veil it cannot be de-historicized as women's actions often reflect and/or drive political and social changes within those societies.

With Arwa El Masri who conscience decision to wear the veil as not only a religious duty but as a symbol of her identity and independence as a Muslim woman living in a Western country and adapting to the cultural demands of that country as being married to a high profile Muslim rugby player, challenging Western concepts of football players' wives/wags as appendages of their husbands by accompanying her husband to his matches in what would be considered full Islamic dress as well as being interviewed with her husband as her own person. For Arwatbis wearing of Islamic dress is not just an external covering but is intricately tied up with her Islamic beliefs.

Choosing to wear the veil for me is a feminist decision. I didn't choose it only because I was required as a woman is Islam, I did it because I believe in it. After careful thought and a constant questioning about my place in the world and a questioning of the position of all women in society I choose it for what it stands for. I didn't look for my rights as a woman in the feminist movement, I looked for them within Islam and what I found is that feminism exists in Islam. I have seen and felt the difference of being a woman with and without the veil. (El Masri, 2012 ,232/233)

This then comes down to who controls a woman's body? As Mahmood states crucial to the mosque women's understanding of "al-ḥayā' as an embodied practice is an entire conceptualization of the role of the body plays in the making of the self, one in which the outward behaviour of the body constitutes both the potentiality and the means through which interiority is realized."(Mahmood 2012:159) This all hinges on who in the end owns a woman's body, herself or her husband and if so this would negate choice and/or free will and subject a women's body to the male terrain and therefore male domination through masculinist representations on female behaviour deemed to conform to representations of modesty in Islamic terms.

ShakiraHussain believes that there are various reasons why women where the hijab are varied and may not be religious and may change not only how and why it is worn but also for how long also highlights these differences in terms of how wearing a dupatta can be a statement of defiance and female independence in the public domain in that by complying to so-called Koranic dress codes you are at the same establishing a place for women in the public arena that is also consecrated/established inQur'anicconventions and therefore inviolable. By complying to Qur'anic conventions they women become untouchable

that is their right to being active in the public arena cannot therefore be questioned and/or challenged because by doing so you are in effect questioning/challenging 'God's word'.

The other argument is sameness assimilating migrants so they look and think like every other Australian by looking more like 'us' not having an identity other than the one created by Anglo-Australians. In Australia as in other countries 'the veil' as the Islamic covering of women's head has become referred to is the icon most associated with the supposed inability of Muslims to integrate, in other words their inability to conform to so-called 'Australian values' even though "veils are not the only visible sign of difference that attaches to religious Muslims, not the only way a religious/political identity can be declared. Men often have distinctive appearances (beards, loose clothing) and behavior (food preferences, aggressive assertions of religious identity tied to activist politics), yet these are not considered to be as threatening as the veil ...." (Wallach Scott 2007: 4) having been banned in recent times in France as well as being banned in Turkey, Central Asian States under Stalin as well as by the first Shah of Iran. Wallach Scott believes that this is historical as well as being linked to colonialism in that ... the veil has figured as a potent political emblem. It has conjured up fantasies of domination and submission as well as of seduction and terror; for some it is an expression of agency, for others a sign of victimization, for many a practical instrument of warfare. (89)

### Conclusion

Embracing Islam for Arwa is not a rejection of Australian/Western ways/values but an adaptation of them to suit her personal circumstances which for her is not only empowering but also a way to reconcile 'sameness' and 'difference'. For Arwa wearing the headscarf and embracing Islam is a liberating experience, one of empowerment reflected in her comment about controlling how much of herself others are allowed to see. This also parallels with a sense of righteous superiority. By placing oneself on a level of spiritual purity supported by claims of authenticity one therefore is not only setting oneself apart but above that of others. By claiming authenticity one by implication negates the beliefs of others. However, in Islam as there is no clergy or body to authenticate one's personal beliefs as there is no body to verify authenticity so claims are personalized or imply an essentialised Islam or naturalized version, by nature this is so.

Arwa's use of Islamic symbols such as the headscarf "is an agent of acculturation and not a return to a lost authenticity." (Roy 2002:19/20)

“Ethnicity and religion are being marshaled to draw new borders between groups whose identity relies on a performative definition: we are what we say we are, or what others say we are. These new ethnic and religious borders do not correspond to any geographical territory or area. They work in minds, attitudes and discourses.” (Roy, 2002, 20)

It is the deterritorialisation of Islam which lead to a quest for definition, because Islam is no longer embedded in territorial cultures and it is this unmooring and fluidity which induces Muslims to find new ways of framing identity.

Consequently, Islam has the ability to define itself in terms of modern problems and society giving insight into ways Muslims, particularly those living in Western non-majority Muslim countries ways to adapt to living in these countries without compromising their Islamic beliefs and customs retaining their ways of imagining and actualizing their Islamic/Muslim identity, however, on the other hand deterritorialising Islam allows for those with particular political agendas to claim authenticity without recourse to Islamic jurisprudence and scrutiny hence the proliferation of Islamist groups all claiming they represent the ‘true, authentic, unadulterated Islam devoid of Western contamination’ all aspiring to represent Muslim identity.

Through telling her story, Arwa has attempted to demystify the veil by breaking down stereotypes in that she believes regardless of faith, we are all looking for the same things, safety, love, family and a sense of home ... and in Arwa’s mind also a good meal which for her is “a personal act of diplomacy”.(El Masri 2012: xii)

The framing of the veil as empowering for Muslim women in taking control of their bodies is problematic in that, does the use of the Qur’an as discourse lend itself to its secularisation and/or desacralize it? However, through the interventions of modern Muslim women living in the West have by their physical presence in their headscarves are continually navigating their place within the framework of more personalized ‘Islams’.

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## ***Psychedelia- Alcoholica? Mind-Expanding Aspects of Alcoholic Intoxication in Socio-Cultural and Political Reference as Highlighted in Selected European Cultures***

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**Abstract:** Initially, the skepticism towards the psychedelic powers of alcohol shall be discussed: with special stress upon such authorities as Leary, denying this substance any mind-expanding qualities, or Witkacy, classifying it as a „realistic poison”. Afterwards, it shall be argued that, among alcoholic drinks, it is especially wine that is mentioned in the mind-expanding context: see Baudelaire's *Artificial Paradise*, or selected writings by the E. T. A. Hoffmann. In the Slavonic cultures it is rather vodka that sometimes assumes psychedelic functions, almost in the Jungian sense (*The Wedding Party* by S. Wyspiański). However, it is more often used as a spiritual „painkiller”, which, roughly corresponding to the effects of some narcotic/psychedelic substances, hardly has any mind-expanding relevance. Finally, it shall be observed that vodka may be seen a Slavonic equivalent of opium (considering e. g. the final part of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* against Mussorgsky's symphonic poem *Night on Bald Mountain*) and, consequently, some vital cultural generalizations shall be proposed.

**Key words:** psychedelia mind-expansion narcotics consciousness stupefaction

We owe the notion of „psychedelia” to Humphry Osmond, a British psychiatrist and a pioneer of the scientific investigation of LSD in the UK and the US (Hofmann 2001: 63). He coined it in 1956, on the basis of two Greek words: *psyche* meaning “soul”, and *delos* meaning “becoming visible, clearly seen, or accessible”. The notion is thus considered synonymous with “mind-expansion”, i. e. advancing one’s mental powers far beyond the limits of everyday, commonplace cognition, often with the aid of appropriate substances. Termed as “psychedelics”, the latter are generally known to act rather upon the mind than the body and, consequently, do not produce metabolic dependence: see peyote (also in the chemically processed form of mescaline), marijuana, or Bannisteria caapi, (better known under the Indian name of yage), as listed by William

S. Burroughs, one of the greatest authorities in the field, in his most famous novel (Burroughs 1982: 239-254). Charles Baudelaire, in the equally relevant essay, generally referred to in English under the abbreviated title *Artificial Paradise*, would definitely add hashish to this list, while Timothy Leary, the mastermind of the 1960s' Psychedelic or Hippie Revolution, would probably put LSD, the most renowned mind-expanding substance of the time, at the very top, according it almost religious status (Leary 1998: 186).

There is, however, a group of related substances, known for producing physical dependence and thus qualified as "narcotics". Albert Hofmann, a Swiss chemist whose main claim to fame was synthesizing LSD in its best known variant LSD-25, usually referred to as "acid", puts them into the category of "Energetikum": exemplified by energy stimulants, such as heroin, cocaine, or amphetamine, and opposed to "Fantastikum" that embraces psychedelics (Hofmann 2001: 50).

The problem is, nevertheless, that the substances generally qualified as narcotics are widely known to have mind-expanding qualities: to mention at least opium, considered by Baudelaire as one of the keys to "artificial paradise" of the mind. The qualities in question may be also associated with alcohol: even though the latter, as logically included in the "Energetikum" category (Hofmann 2001: 50), seems to be held in remarkable contempt by the seekers of genuine psychedelic initiation. Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (better known as Witkacy), arguably the most versatile and talented artist of Polish modernism, classifies it, along with cocaine, as a "realistic poison", which, in contrast to peyote, does not provide the possibility to experience the aforementioned initiation, i. e. "the metaphysical strangeness of being"<sup>1</sup> (Witkacy 1979: 123-124). Leary goes farther, relegating alcohol almost to the bottom of his hierarchy of consciousness levels and corresponding substances: the lowest one (of numbness) being occupied by barbiturates and narcotics [*sic!*], and the higher ones being reserved for LSD, mescaline, psilocybin, hashish, or other genuine psychedelics (Leary 54). Thomas De Quincey, the author of the autobiographical *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, a pioneering work of psychedelically/narcotically-informed literature, also disparages alcohol, even in the context of the substance mentioned in the title of his work; he states that while the former puts a man into mental and emotional stupor, the latter provides his mind with the highest order and harmony (De Quincey 1982: 85)<sup>2</sup>. Don Juan, the hero of Carlos Castaneda's renowned

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<sup>1</sup> Translations from Polish mine.

<sup>2</sup> Just as significantly, Jean Cocteau, another famous literary opium eater, arrives at a similar conclusion in his comparative evaluation of these substances (Cocteau 1990: 81).

anthropological fictions, similarly dismisses alcohol that blurs the vision in favour of genuinely psychedelic *mescalito* that makes it clearer (Castaneda 1996: 80).

Nevertheless, Baudelaire, in his historic study of the artificial-paradise-seeking, i. e. virtually mind-expanding experience, highlights wine as still another legitimate means to this end, thus suggesting its psychedelic potential. Maria Janion, arguably the greatest contemporary Polish authority on Romanticism, follows in this direction, referring to E. T. A. Hoffmann in the psychedelic/narcotic context (Janion 1991: 38): possibly on the strength of the French poet's observations that this remarkable German artist owed his mind-expanding experiences almost exclusively to wine (Baudelaire 1992: 12).

As shall be seen, it is in quite a number of European countries, from France to Germany, Poland, or Russia, that alcoholic intoxication happens to be quite frequently accorded mind-expanding qualities, in Anglo-American circle more readily associated with genuine psychedelics or opium. We shall attempt to identify the socio-cultural background of this phenomenon as well as provide some hypothetical explanation; first of all, however, we shall have to produce an analytical review of *psychedelia alcoholica* within the aforementioned literary realm. It would be only natural to begin this review with selected works by E. T. A. Hoffmann: one the most versatile and unpredictable geniuses of the Romantic era.

Psychedelic qualities of wine, his favourite alcoholic drink, are prominently featured in the novel *Devil's Elixirs* (*Die Elixiere des Teufels*). Its main character, a monk named Medardus, having drunk some amount of delicious wine from Siracusa, becomes possessed by devilish insanity, personified by his loathsome double. Thus, according to the logic of the psychedelic experience, the application of some alien substance profoundly influences the monk's personality – activating, to disastrous effects, dark forces of his psyche, i. e. unbridled sense of pride and lust for carnal pleasures. In psychoanalytic terms, this process may be described as a journey to the dark realms of the unconscious, in psychiatric ones – as a special case of schizophrenia, in popular psychedelic jargon – as an exceptionally protracted case of „bad trip”, in the literary sense – as a virtually pioneering effort, since the motif of „a double” later became one of the trademark features of Gothic fiction in a wide sense, inspiring, among others, Fyodor Dostoyevsky's story *A Double* (*Dvoynik*, 1846) and *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde* (1886), a famous novella by Robert Louis Stevenson.

A brighter side of wine-induced psychedelia is featured in the ambitious, Sterne-influenced novel *Cat Purr's Views Upon Life...* (*Lebenansichten des Kater Murr...*), where the conductor Johannes

Kreisler, portrayed as a typical Romantic artist, praises the levitating power of champagne<sup>3</sup>. Still, it is not only wine-related drinks that are attributed the mind-expanding power in Hoffmann's writings.

Of special note here is the novella *The Golden Pot* (*Der Goldene Topf*): arguably the most adequate example of the unpredictable interplay of the fantastic and the commonplace, generally characteristic of Hoffmann's fictions that prefigure what, more than a century later, came to be rather vaguely termed as „magical realism”. Still, it should be immediately observed that the infringements of fantasy upon the world of everyday reality are due, first of all, to extensive alcoholic consumption and its unexpected mind-expanding effects. Thus, a few characters become exposed to nightmarish hallucinations having drunk some weird punch: they envision people transformed into loathsome birds, which may suggest analogies to the symptoms of „bad trip”, associated with the consumption of LSD, the most popular mind-expanding substance of the 1960s' Psychedelic Revolution era. Moreover, at the end of the story, the narrator experiences a „heavenly” vision of Arcadian landscape and human nature as reunited with its divine essence: almost in the spirit of pathetic mysticism, if not of a LSD-stimulated „blissful trip”. However, the feeling of most sublime happiness, produced by drinking some hot arrack<sup>4</sup>, becomes identified by him as a fleeting moment of poetic fancy, sharply contrasted with his poor existence. Thus, the narrator's ultimate discovery clearly prefigures the uninspiring end of a typical psychedelic scenario, perceptively observed by Baudelaire with reference to hashish (Baudelaire 52-54). Let it also be remembered that shortly before the *fin-de-siecle* era Jean Arthur Rimbaud gave this experience probably the most adequate definition, concluding colourful mind-expanding phantasmagorias with the disheartening image, or even syndrome of *muddy pool* (Rimbaud 1970: 210) in his renowned poem „The Drunken Boat” („Le Bateau ivre”). Quite significantly, in the Modernist era Witkacy came to a similar conclusion in the description of his night-time psychedelic visions disappearing into oblivion with „breakfast and morning wash” (Witkacy 1979: 146).

The Polish writer's mind-expanding adventures, in this particular case, were caused by peyote, which, in the form of mescaline, inspired Huxley's historic essay *The Doors of Perception* (1954). Rimbaud, for his part, was known as an avid consumer of absinth (to return to our path of

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<sup>3</sup> Similar aspects of wine's mind-expanding qualities are referred to in the autobiographical story „Octavia” (1854) by Gerard de Nerval, a French writer considered a typical Romantic decadent, along with Baudelaire or Hoffmann.

<sup>4</sup> One of main ingredients of the aforementioned punch.

*psychedelia alcoholica*). This drink, obtained from wormwood and, other than the majority of liquors, accorded genuine psychedelic status, was understandably held in special esteem by *fin-de-siecle* bohemians. One of the most adequate examples here is provided Jan Parandowski, one of the most erudite Polish writers, in *Król życia (King of Life)*, the fictionalized biography of Oscar Wilde; the author maintains there that absinth made his hero imagine himself to be living in ancient Rome (Parandowski 1955: 267)<sup>5</sup>. Whether it was this particular drink that actually propelled Rimbaud's voyages on "the drunken boat", remains a matter for speculation, considering that he was initiated into opium and, possibly, hashish<sup>6</sup>; it is evident, though, that absinth's mind-expanding qualities were recognized also by Polish poets of the time, first and foremost by Antoni Lange. Among his *Drunken Ballads (Ballady pijackie)* we come across the one entitled „Absinth” („Absynt”), where the wormwood liquor is claimed to be „superior to any other alcohol” (Lange 1965: 306), due to its power of transporting the mind into the realm of heavenly bliss. Curiously enough, coffee is accorded practically the same power in Lange's another poem, not surprisingly entitled *Coffee* („Kawa”): even though this drink happens to be included, along with alcoholic ones in general, in the category of „Energetikum” (Hofmann 2001: 50).

The category in question also embraces vodka: a strong alcoholic drink, most readily associated with Slavonic cultures. Generally regarded as a „realistic poison” and used as a temporary spiritual painkiller that unavoidably stupefies the mind, it is, nonetheless, admitted genuine psychedelic relevance, sometimes even simultaneously: however paradoxical it might seem.

The paradox in question found its classic exemplification in *The Wedding Party (Wesele)*, a drama by Stanisław Wyspiański: one of the greatest masterpieces of Polish literature as well as one of the boldest and profoundest attempts at the analysis of national psyche in the historical situation of the country having lost its independence more than a century earlier. The main instrument of diagnosing the consciousness of the Polish society at the time appears to be vodka, drunk profusely during the wedding party of a writer from Cracow and a peasant girl from a nearby village. As a result, a number of characters undergo experiences that quite neatly conform to Gothic, psychoanalytic or, ultimately, mind-expanding scenarios: around midnight (the hour of ghosts), having taken more than

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<sup>5</sup> Which would definitely support the theory of consciousness expanding in time, put forward approximately one hundred years later by Stanislav Grof, a Czech-American psychiatrist and one of the leading experts on the psychedelic states of human consciousness (Grof 2000: 168).

<sup>6</sup> At least according to an Austrian expert in the field: see Fischer 1965: 58.

„a pinch” of the Slavonic liquid „psychedelic”,<sup>7</sup> they encounter the projections of their subconscious, e. g. Polish historical figures, who personify their complexes, fears, dreams or painful memories. Assuming that these projections may exceed the realm of an individual psyche, as the figures in question belong to the wide pantheon of national mythology (Stańczyk, standing for bitter patriotic wisdom, vs Branicki, personifying high treason), the interpretation in the Jungian sense is naturally invited, the archetypes of the collective unconscious of humanity having been narrowed down to the archetypes of the collective memory of the Polish people. Another relevant analogy that appears here is provided by Stanislav Grof, exploring the deepest, transpersonal level of his patients’ subconscious with the help of LSD<sup>8</sup>.

At the same time, however, vodka reveals here its purely stupefying power, neatly exemplified by the behaviour of Nos: the character conceived as a compilation of Tadeusz Noskowski and Stanisław Czajkowski, two *fin-de-siecle* painters, known for excessive drinking. Portrayed as a classic spokesman for the decadence characteristic of the period, he treats vodka as a short-term medicine against *Weltschmerz* claiming that „Chopin would be drinking/Were he alive” (Wyspiański 1972: 264), or „*Après nous la deluge*” (Wyspiański 1972: 266).

Similarly non-psychedelic seem to be the alcoholic experiences of the wedding party’s Host. Visited at night by a half-visionary Polish historical figure, who assigns him with the task of preparing a national uprising and leaves a material token of the visit, in the early morning, slowly recovering from alcoholic stupor, he recalls the crucial event with utmost difficulty. Consequently, the final hypnotic dance of the wedding party members who were supposed to fulfill the patriotic mission may be considered not only as a symbol of the spiritual and political inertia of the Polish society at the turn of the 19th century, but also, in a more literal sense, as a symptom of collective hangover<sup>9</sup>.

A more drastic instance of alcoholic stupor, also in the collective variant, is highlighted in „Honky-Tonk Moscow” („Moskva kabatzkaya”) by Sergei Yesenin: arguably the most genuine bohemian among the poets of early Soviet Russia. In this poem, he portrays the types usually associated with the social margin: degenerates, losers, criminals, prostitutes, who, like himself, feel lost in the new communist reality as

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<sup>7</sup> To quote Humphry Osmond’s classic definition of the psychedelic experience.

<sup>8</sup> See Grof 2000: 165-204.

<sup>9</sup> It is worth remarking that they dance to the music played by the Strawman (Chochoł), revealed here as the symbol of stupefaction and inertia, commonly known as the ultimate consequences of the alcoholic experience.

well as hopelessly alienated from their native rural patriarchal Russia, rapidly disappearing at the time. The only remedy against the resultant depression is „the moonshine vodka that flows like a river” (Yesenin 1971: 104) and, at least for a while, integrates this community of outcasts: far from any idea of mind-expanding initiation.

Still, the latter comes to be quite prominently featured in Yesenin’s another famous poem, entitled „The Black Man” („Czornyj czelovek”): a monologue of the author’s port-parole who feels his „brain ravaged by alcoholism” (Yesenin 1971: 212), most probably also involving moonshine vodka. Then monologue is reciprocated by the story told by „the black man”: an abominable creature, revealing to the interlocutor the details of the dissolute life of some poet of peasant origin, i. e. the speaker (author) himself, and ultimately proving to be the latter’s vicious double. The analogy with the psychedelic aspect of Hoffmann’s *Devil’s Elixirs* is quite evident: even though a remarkably different alcoholic drink is involved in each case in question.

Considering a wider variety of the texts of Russian culture, one would probably come to the conclusion that the stupefying power of vodka is most frequently mentioned: to quote only *Stalker*, Andrei Tarkovsky’s famous film adaptation of the science-fiction novel *Picnic on the Roadside* (*Piknik na oboczinie*, 1972) by Arkady and Boris Strugackiy, where some characters regularly drink themselves to stupor for fear of confronting their destiny or even the Absolute itself by entering the mysterious Zone, known for making anyone’s dreams come true. Still, there is at least one more text dealing with this liquor’s mind-expanding qualities that deserves our special attention.

We mean here *Sorotchintze Fair* (*Sorotchinskaia iarmarka*, 1876-1878), the unfinished comic opera by Modest P. Mussorgsky. It is its orchestral intermezzo, frequently performed as an independent symphonic poem under the title *Night on Bald Mountain* (*Nocz na Lysoj Gore*), that seems to be particularly relevant for this discourse. One of the characters, a young Ukrainian farmhand, having listened to many stories about devils and drunk some amount of vodka at the local inn, falls asleep and consequently imagines a sabbath of devils and witches, traditionally associated with the mountain in question. This episode, not to be found in Nikolai Gogol’s eponymous story, used as the basis for the libretto, was probably inspired – the composer’s profound experience in alcoholic consumption notwithstanding – by the final part of Hector Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* (1830). In this classic example of Romantic programme music, the symphony’s hero falls asleep in the fields under the influence of opium and ultimately finds himself in „Sabbath’s Night Dream” (to quote the title of the work’s finale).

Whether Mussorgsky's intermezzo/symphonic poem could be considered the legitimate Slavonic (East European) equivalent of the blasphemous conclusion of the Latin (generally West European) orchestral work by Berlioz, is a matter of controversy: remembering that the former originated from the folklore of Slavonic peasants, while the latter was a product of the sophisticated artistic mind of a Romantic individual (the symphony's hero being virtually the composer's porte-parole). There is, in other words, a distinct note of socio-cultural contrast involved here: if we take into account that similar, arguably psychedelic visions in West European cultures since the early 19th century have been predominantly attributed to opium, while in East European ones – to vodka.

Having stated this, we may feel tempted to consider opium or wine consumption as a sign of belonging to a more advanced as well as more sophisticated civilization: remembering that in the European history the consumption in question is most immediately associated with Great Britain or France, traditionally seen as most developed and productive in the socio-political, economic, or cultural sense. Consequently, the preference for vodka in Slavonic countries would appear as a sign of their being plainly underdeveloped in all the aforementioned aspects. One could additionally argue that in Russia or Poland, where either social classes or whole nations used to be substantially oppressed for centuries, vodka was especially requested in its lowest function of spiritual painkiller, instead of any mind-expansion resulting in stupefaction or „animal” sleep. The latter point finds most adequate exemplification in *The Wedding Party*, where Stańczyk sums up the spiritual condition of the Polish society of the time in the ironic words: „And still you prefer sleeping” (Wyspiański 1972: 207), understanding „sleep” in a remarkably wider sense.

At the same time, however, it should be remembered that Wyspiański's drama, though probably too enclosed within the realm of Polish historical and cultural references to be universally understood, was immediately appreciated by the famous American director Elia Kazan, who, having watched Andrzej Wajda's film adaptation of *The Wedding Party*, wanted to get into immediate contact with the screenwriter<sup>10</sup>. It should be also recalled that the story “In an Opium Den” (“W palarni opium”), along with the aforementioned works by De Quincey and Cocteau belonging to the classic studies on the qualities and effects of opium, was written by Władysław Stanisław Reymont, the Polish Nobel laureate in 1924 for the thematically unrelated novel *Peasants* (*Chłopi*,

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<sup>10</sup> Kazan obviously did not realize that the script was practically the same with the classic text of Polish literature, written approximately seventy years before Wajda's film was made – as the director recalled in a Polish TV interview, shortly before his death.

1902-1909). Finally, it needs to be stressed that Witkacy's book on diverse narcotics and psychedelics, originally titled *Nikotyna, Alkohol, Kokaina, Peyotl, Morfina, Eter + Appendix* and published twenty two years before Huxley's *The Doors of Perception*, offers a remarkably wider and more balanced perspective upon the issue of psychedelic/narcotic consumption. While the English writer concentrates only on mescaline, his Polish predecessor discusses, according to the title, nicotine, alcohol, cocaine, peyote, morphine and ether. While the former proposes an unequivocally positive assessment of psychedelic journeys into "artificial paradise", the latter, following in Baudelaire's footsteps, perceptively stresses the possible dangers of similar experiments, suggesting the transient, if not illusory nature of resulting initiations.

In fact, works such as *Nikotyna...* or *Artificial Paradise* ultimately make the reader aware how hazy the very idea of the psychedelic experience is. As the practice of mind-expanding "trips" shows, the border between the actual expansion of the scope of one's mental perceptions, i. e. "seeing more" (as probably the best Polish band of the Hippie Revolution era put it)<sup>11</sup> and mindless indulging in colourful phantasmagorias that Baudelaire was so skeptical about is sometimes uncomfortably indistinct. For example, Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panther Party, a prominent figure of the late 1960s' American counter-cultural movement, voiced substantial doubts about the real mind-expanding power of LSD, the chief weapon of the Psychedelic Revolution. He found it to be "a counter-revolutionary drug, sapping the will to change the world by replacing it with a false new one" (Cope 1996: 70), which, to an extent, could be referred to alcohol, even in its stupefying function. However, it also ought to be stressed that, as has been shown above, the latter substance sometimes betrays an unexpected power to represent or symbolize diverse states of individual as well as collective consciousness, in different cultures and countries.

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<sup>11</sup> The name of the band was Anawa and the title of the opening track of their historic album, originally titled *Korowód*, i. e. „Procession”, was „Widzieć więcej”, i. e. „To see more”.

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## WOMEN'S VICTORIAN FASHIONS IN A NUTSHELL

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**Abstract:** This era in fashion ranged primarily from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s. It's named for the influential English queen of the time, and her style came to define one of the most memorable periods in modern history. Queen Victoria greatly influenced how women perceived themselves and how men perceived them. A woman's "job" was in the home, as wife and mother. Wealthy women of the time followed Victoria's lead in dress and leisure pursuits.

**Key words:** crinoline, petticoats, corsets, sewing machine

The British queen, Victoria, has given her name to the era between 1837 and 1901, the years of her reign. The Victorian era was a period of world as well as British history, for the queen ruled at a time when Britain had a vast global empire, including a quarter of the planet's population.

Victorian prosperity for elite was built on the development of new machinery, new work methods and an underpaid workforce consisting of adults and children living in wretched poverty. Many people previously rural became urbanised by the new rail transport. Country families often drifted into towns to stay with other relatives whilst seeking work.

By 1850 half the country's former peasants were squashed into Britain's cities. The growth of industry, the building boom, the swift population spurt and spread of the railway changed the character of Britain too rapidly for many to understand.

The advances of the Industrial Revolution continued to make production of all types of goods faster and more mechanized. In 1846, Isaac Singer introduced the first successful sewing machine for garment factories. Before long, knitting machines started appearing in clothing shops. These made the production of garments such as elastic stockings and gloves fast and easy. Shortly after the French Revolution, shops in Paris began selling prêt-à-porter, or ready-to-wear, clothing.

Garments were created in distinct sizes, rather than sewn to fit an individual's body. Now people could buy clothing off the rack, rather than having to be measured and then waiting for the clothes to be made.

By the mid-1800s, shopping became a popular pastime all over Europe. Before long, the first department stores appeared. These allowed shoppers to browse many different items of finished clothing under one roof. By 1889, sewing machines were sold for use in the home. Fashion was more accessible than ever.

Despite the prim and proper feminine ideal of the day, fashions of the Victorian period created an often exaggerated, ostentatious look. Tight corsets, gigantic hoop-skirts, and outrageous bustles make today's fashion trends look sedate by comparison.

Clothing styles were dictated by propriety, and stylish garments were a sign of respectability. The copious amounts of fabric used in the creation of Victorian skirts usually meant that most women owned few outfits. Detachable collars and cuffs enabled a woman to change the look of a garment for a bit of variety. Of course, wealthier women owned more garments made of finer fabrics using more material and embellishments.

The general principle of women's dresses did not change a great deal over the Victorian period. The loose high-waist dresses of the Regency disappeared before 1830. Low-necked daytime clothing, which had been worn for three centuries, was seldom seen after 1840. The basic shape for the rest of the century involved a fitted bodice that came at least to the base of the neck, long sleeves, and a small waist. The skirt, made of the same material as the bodice, was at least moderately full and came down to the shoes.

At the beginning of the 1840s, skirts had no special padding to hold them away from the body; they were full but more or less natural in shape. Petticoats then grew increasingly heavy and stiff. By the mid-1850s, the fashionable skirt was enormously full and supported by crinolines or steel hoop. "The word crinoline comes from the French word *crin*, meaning "horsehair," because early crinolines were made from horsehair and wool. Elegant ladies of the mid-nineteenth century wore very wide skirts, and stiff horsehair crinolines held the skirts out from the body. Some crinolines measured more than four yards around the bottom, and women wearing these skirts had to move carefully to avoid knocking things off of tables as they moved around a room. It was said that an average sized room could hold only two or three women wearing crinolines." (Pendergast, 2004: 617)

By the late 1880s, women had had enough of the inconveniences of extremely wide skirts and crinolines passed out of fashion as slimmer, more tailored-looking skirts became popular.

From the 1860s until the end of the Victorian era, women's fashions went through major changes as the crinoline fell from favour. Late-Victorian women aimed for a curving "hourglass" figure with a tiny

waist and large hips and bust. This was achieved with long, shaped corsets which were tighter laced than at any time since the 1830s. The fashionable female shape also grew taller and more imposing, with high heels and hairstyles piled up on top of the head.

The bustle shrank to a small pad in the late 1870s, only to reappear in an exaggerated form in the 1880s, when it stuck out like a shelf, 0.6 m behind the wearer. This shelf was achieved with half hoops of steel bands, sewn into the lining of underskirts.

Fashionable clothing required a great deal of expense and care. Women's dresses were not bought ready-made until the very end of the period, because the closely fitting tops required that bodice, shoulders, and sleeves be individually measured and cut. A middle-class woman might have a dressmaker to do the cutting and fitting but then does the hand stitching of all the seams and hems herself. Poor women generally wore second-hand garments that fitted badly, or ignored styles and made themselves looser bodices in which they could comfortably do physical labour.

Most middle-class women wore two or three woollen dresses in rotation. Most dresses were not washable. Clothes were sponged, brushed, and protected by layers of underwear. To remake a dress for another season, a woman unpicked the seams and gently hand-washed the pieces. She could make a few changes in style and trimming when she sewed it up again. A middle-class woman had a plainer garment to wear while doing chores at home. When a woman dressed in the afternoon, it did not mean that she had been wearing her nightclothes all morning, but rather that she changed from her working dress into something better. Servants' clothing was made of cotton fabric with very little in the way of ruffles or trim; it could be washed easily and frequently.

In 1864 the designer Charles Frederick Worth<sup>1</sup> decided that it was time to do away with the crinoline, now worn by even poor women. In its place he designed a dress which was flat at the front and sides, with a long train behind. It had a cushion padded with horsehair sewn to the back of the skirt, later called a bustle.

Piled over the bustle he put a mass of cloth in folds decorated with ruffles and bows. Worth's new look made the fabric tumble behind, like a waterfall. It required far more fabric than the crinoline and it was much

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Frederick Worth (13 October 1825 – 10 March 1895) was an English fashion designer who founded the House of Worth, one of the foremost fashion houses of the 19th and early 20th centuries. He is considered by many fashion historians to be the father of haute couture. Worth is also credited with revolutionising the business of fashion.

more impractical to wear. It was heavy, making the dress trail along the ground, and it was difficult to sit in comfortably. Worth saw the bustle and train, this was soon to be the height of fashion, as his greatest achievement.

By the late 1860s the crinoline was history. Women's dresses for the next two decades passed through a series of shapes created by pulling fullness to the back, sometimes with the support of a bustle or some other kind of padding. At the end of the century skirts were long and flowing but not padded.

Once sewing machines were available, dressmaking became less time consuming. Women's magazines began selling paper patterns in the 1850s. In the 1870s, women of the intellectual and artistic middle class took up a style known as Aesthetic. Most well-to-do women continued to wear stiff and tightly fitted clothing, but there were acceptable alternatives. Women professionals and office workers in the 1890s happily adopted a new costume: the skirt and blouse. One dark skirt, carefully brushed, could be worn every day with a change of blouse; the lightweight linen or cotton blouses were easily washed.

Those with the upper-class status, would wear elaborate clothing made of fragile fabrics, which made moving difficult and required a servant's help to dress. Truly fashionable women changed clothes several times a day. Women wealthy enough to pay calls in their private carriage could wear a carriage dress, which was cut according to daytime fashion but made in brightly coloured silk with feathers or lace for trimming. Tea gowns, worn on a country estate, were loose and comfortable, though made of delicate fabrics. Dinner dress was somewhat low-cut and usually made of silk or velvet. Ball gowns had short sleeves and were cut still lower. Older women wore light silks and large hats.

The Victorians used clothes as a type of language, sending signals to others about their class, status, and attitudes.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the clothes of women were simple and comfortable so that they abandoned the heavy garments of the previous century and wore the lightest, sheerest of dresses, such as the robe en chemise, modelled after styles worn by ancient Greeks. The muslin or silk fabric of these dresses was so delicate that it could not support pockets, so women began to carry pocketbooks. Most commonly white or light in colour, these dresses had short sleeves, high waists, and long, straight skirts. Women did wear light corsets beneath them, but the dresses were meant to show off more of the female form than ever before in Europe

A middle- or upper-class Victorian woman was not expected to do any work, for she had servants to do everything for her. Her role was to be the "chief ornament" of her husband or of her father's household.

The ideal woman of the 1840s was supposed to be quiet, modest, and shy. Modesty was reflected in clothing styles. Dresses worn in the daytime, which had previously revealed a woman's shoulders, now covered her whole body, from the neck to the feet. Shoulders were only revealed by evening dresses worn at balls and dinner parties. Wide hats, worn until the late 1830s, went out of fashion, giving way to narrow bonnets, tied under the chin, which covered the sides of a woman's face.

As it was fashionable to look small like Queen Victoria, who was 1.52 m tall, women wore flat shoes, like slippers. The new dress shapes also made women look smaller, with tight sleeves, dropping shoulders, and long, narrow waists. Skirts were full and heavy, touching the floor, so that only the toes of a woman's shoes were ever seen. The preferred colours of the 1840s were modest dark greens and browns.

The glove, the fan, the parasol, and the vanity set helped women create a sense of who they were, with important consequences for how they experienced gender, class, and race in the Victorian period. By accentuating the hands, face, and head, accessories marked the significance of the female body.

In the mid-Victorian era 1870-1880 a group of talented artists, poets, writers and some actors were known as the Aesthetes. The Aesthetic movement which they led was a revulsion to what they saw as ugly machine made products of the Industrial Revolution and to certain artefacts seen at the Great Exhibition of 1851. This ranged from a distaste felt for the ugliness of false veneers to the crudeness of aniline dyes and the over working of Victorian imagery. It ignored the fact that those on low incomes wanted to be able to have cheap goods that imitated upper class elegance and which could only be made by cheap mass methods.

Aesthetic dress may also have been a revulsion to the over use of the sewing machine which allowed excessive embellishment of dresses simply because it could achieve over trimming more easily.

Aesthetic dress was a protest against the contemporary fashion for bustles in various forms and restrictive corsets. In fashion history terms only a very small section of the community ever wore it initially, but it did spread to middle class intellectuals, to artistic and literary people. Aesthetic dress was made of wool or Liberty silk or velvet fabrics.

Aesthetic fashions were cut looser and were unstructured in the style of medieval or Renaissance garments with larger sleeves. The dress appeared loose compared with figure hugging fashion garments of the era. Loose waisted corset free women were considered to have loose morals and it did not help that many of the Aesthetic women were thought slightly Bohemian and beyond the normal social conventions and morals of the time.

When it comes to jewellery, during the 1820s, "women wore lots of jewellery with their evening dresses, including earrings, necklaces, gold chains with lockets, bracelets, and armlets, but by the 1840s, such display had come to be seen as vulgar and showy. The modest woman of the 1840s often wore no more jewellery than a pair of bracelets and a chain for her bottle of smelling salts." (Chrisp, 2005: 9)

As the Victorian Period encompasses 64 years, it's often divided into three sub-periods known as The Romantic Period, The Grand Period, and The Late (or Aesthetic) Period. Different motifs, gemstones, metals, and fabricating techniques were popular in each sub-period, but often times they carried through to the next one.

During this time, the Industrial Revolution surged ahead and factories opened at an unprecedented rate. Trades and industries flourished. Jewellery began to be mass-produced and was no longer being made strictly by hand.

Early Victorian jewellery was usually fabricated in 18k gold. But, gold was becoming scarce and in the 1850s, lower karats of gold were often used, in addition to various gold plating techniques. Then, in 1848, the California gold rush occurred and alleviated England's shortage.

Brooches fabricated during The Romantic Period had their pins extended past the body of the brooch and were fastened with a simple "C" design clasp. Also, gemstones were often set in claw-like prongs or collet settings, metal that encircled the outer rim of the gemstone.

Gradually social taboos about the restrictive rules of wearing clothing were being eroded and the real reform came after the First World War when simpler garments became acceptable and filtered into sportswear. The nineteenth century saw phenomenal growth in sporting activities, for women as well as for men, particularly between 1870 and 1900. All manner of new sports came into favour, and it was impossible to practice them with any comfort in the formal dress of the day. Clothes had to be adapted accordingly, but progress was slow, especially for women. Lawn tennis became a popular sport in England in the 1870s. However, women's clothes made few concessions to the sport. Women played in dresses with high-necked bodices, layers of petticoats, and floor-length skirts that made it virtually impossible to bend over to retrieve tennis balls. "As a result, by the 1880s special tennis aprons, often beautifully embroidered and furnished with large pockets to accommodate the balls, had become fashionable tennis attire for women." (Pendergast, 2004: 629)

The late nineteenth century saw several attempts to reform the way that both men and women dressed. Some reformers claimed that Victorian clothes, especially those worn by women, were unhealthy and

impractical. Others rejected them on grounds of aesthetics (concern for beauty).

In 1897, as the century drew to a close, *The Tailor and Cutter*<sup>2</sup> looked back at the strange fashions, such as the crinoline and the bustle, worn throughout the Victorian era. The journal predicted, "Sixty years hence we shall probably appear as ridiculous in the eyes of that generation as our ancestors appear today in ours."

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<sup>2</sup> *The Tailor & Cutter* was the magazine for the bespoke trade for more than 100 years. Established in 1866, it survived as a weekly publication until around 1971.

## **Between Two Worlds: Migrant Issues in Mario Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim***

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**Abstract:** A part of an on-going larger study, our article deals with migrant issues in Mario Puzo's novel "The Fortunate Pilgrim", focusing on life of Italian migrants to the U.S. during Depression, to see how the first and the second generation of migrants perceive, deal with or are affected by migration.

**Keywords:** migration, the U.S.A., identity, change, Puzo

Around 200.000 Romanians left for "The Promised Land" at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The journey to America meant for the first Romanian migrants a month-long journey. They left their poor Transylvanian villages by cart, took the train to German harbours and crossed the Atlantic by boats which made regular voyages from Europe to America, the land of hope where, supposedly, the sidewalks were paved with gold. One of them was my grandfather. If he hadn't come back, I might have been an American.

Yet, his story is one of the many others, kept in the memory of descendants or written in order to become published and read novels world-wide. According to King, Connell and White, migrant literature often focuses on the social context in the migrants' country of origin which prompt them to leave, on the experience of migration itself, on the mixed reception which they may receive in the country of arrival, on experiences of racism and hostility, and on the sense of rootlessness and the search for identity which can result from displacement and cultural diversity. Some of the most telling accounts of the immigration experience are the works of authors who are not immigrants at all, but who are, in some way, the product of past migrations. (2003:XI)

In 1965, when he published his novel *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (entitled *Mamma Lucia* in the Italian version), Puzo was not the well-known author of *The Godfather*, as he is known today. Yet, Lucia Santa, the matriarch of the family in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, is a reflection of Puzo's own mother, of her difficult life, strength and resilience.

Born and raised in New York, in the poor neighbourhood known as Hell's Kitchen, Puzo was the son of an illiterate railroad labourer who abandoned his family when Puzo was twelve, leaving him and his six siblings in the care of their mother, Maria Le Conti Puzo, who ran her household under strict rules. (see Schmitt, 1998)

In the *Preface* to the edition of 2004, the author explains how he wrote it, while struggling to become a famous author, able to earn enough money to live of his writing: "the plan was to make myself the hero. It was supposed to be the story of a struggling writer, poorest of the poor [...], to show my rejection of my Italian heritage and my callous disdain of those illiterate peasants from which I sprang." (Puzo, 2004:7) He also reveals that his mother was not only the hero of this novel, but also the image behind the Godfather: "Whenever the Godfather opened his mouth, in my own mind I heard the voice of my mother. I heard her wisdom, her ruthlessness, and her unconquerable love for her family and for life itself [...] I know now, without Lucia Santa, I could not have written *The Godfather*". (Puzo, 2004:8)

### **First generation migrants**

Before focusing on migrant issues in Mario Puzo's novel, we need to remember that there are several ways in which migrants cope with their displacement. Talking about how migrants adapt themselves to the new culture, J. W. Berry suggests four alternatives, i.e. *assimilation*, *separation*, *integration* and *deculturation*: "Assimilation entails the adoption by the minority of the majority culture; separation consists in a parallel existence of the two distinct cultures, with neither affecting the other; integration refers to a blending of the two cultures in some balanced fashion; while deculturation describes the loss of the minority culture". (Scott, 1989:14)

The waves of migrants arriving in the U.S. followed a certain pattern, new arrivals seeking the help and initial support of fellow countrymen. Neighbourhoods were vital. As Judith E. Smith notes, the structure of migration contributed to the development of immigrant settlements, as family members and fellow villagers tended to follow earlier migrants and depend on them for initial housing (Smith, 1985:11)

Paul White (in King, Connell and White, 2003:3) talks about the migrants' attempts to re-create elements of former lives (possibly accentuating significant icons of that existence into quasi-talismans of high symbolic or ritual significance); attempts to integrate or assimilate completely (which may be blocked by a number of mechanisms within the 'host' society); or the creation of a new identity which is characterised by a feeling of independence from both the society of origin and the social structures of the destination.

In Puzo's novel, in the community of Italians, people try to regain the feeling of home by recreating patterns, habits and the "village voice", the groups of (elderly) women knowing and judging everything that goes on in the "community":

Each tenement was a village square; each had its group of women, all in black, sitting on stools and boxes and doing more than gossip. They recalled ancient history, argued morals and social law, always taking their precedents from the mountain village in southern Italy they had escaped, fled from many years ago. [...] Ah, Italia, Italia; how the world changed and for the worse. What madness was it that made them leave such a land? Where fathers commanded and mothers were treated with respect by their children. (Puzo, 2004:12)

Their role is to keep the ties with the old way of life, to maintain that sense of community people used to have back home. They live in what J. W. Berry calls separation, i.e. a parallel existence of the two distinct cultures, although the new culture does affect the old one, as the second generation is too soon tempted to forget the old rules and be more independent, stirring the criticism of the women who keep comparing the new realities with the way of life back in the "old country":

Ahhh, the disrespect. *Figlio disgraziato*. Never could this pass in Italy. The father would kill his arrogant son; yes, kill him. [...] Each in turn told a story of insolence and defiance, themselves heroic, long-suffering, the children spitting Lucifers [...] And at the end of each story each woman recited. *Mannagia America!* – Damn America. (Puzo, 2004:11)

As many others, Lucia Santa, the matriarch in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, left her homeland because of the poverty of her family which couldn't afford to provide her with a dowry and, thus, subjected her to public shame and awful prospects:

There had come a time when her father, with stern pity, had told her, his favourite daughter, that she could not hope for bridal linen. The farm was too poor. There were debts. Life promised to be even harder. [...] In that moment she lost all respect for her father, for her home, for her country. A bride without linen was shameful [...] what man would take a woman with the stigma of hopeless poverty? (Puzo, 2004:13)

Puzo's mother decided to emigrate to America, to marry a man she barely knew (they had played together during childhood), rather than face her bleak prospects in Italy. Once underway, emigration itself began to alter

accepted arrangements. The loss of available men meant that the age of marriage and the proportion of women remaining single increased in the areas of southern Italy experiencing heavy emigration

And so one sunny Italian day Lucia Santa and two other village maidens were escorted to the town hall and then to the church by their weeping parents, aunts and sisters. The three girls went on board ship, brides by proxy<sup>1</sup>, sailing from Naples to New York, by law Americans. (Puzo, 2004:13)

She had two children with her husband and was pregnant with their third child when he got killed in a stupid work accident, leaving her vulnerable.

Frank Corbo, Lucia Santa's second husband, was thirty-five when they got married. Lucia's true love, he was a mentally unstable man, maddened by life's toughness and the responsibility of having a family. The son of a poor tenant farmer in Italy, he had often been hungry and cold, and his parents made him wear cast-off shoes which were too small, so his feet had become horribly deformed.

Octavia remembers her father, to whom she had been very fond of, so she finds it hard to accept Corbo as her stepfather. She sees him as an illiterate peasant, a contemptible immigrant who gave himself airs. One day she had seen him on the subway, pretending to read a newspaper, and she rushed to tell her mother, laughing, contemptuous.

Frank Corbo had a history of mental problems: a breakdown (following a rejection by the family of the girl he had been in love and had wanted to marry), during which he had run off and lived in the woods for a week. Found in shock, "little more than an animal", he was committed to a mental institution and then he emigrated to America. The key to his balance was loneliness, so getting married and being surrounded by so many family members proves to be too much for him. When Frank Corbo, Lucia Santa's second husband becomes insane, doctor Barbato comes to see him, and while he is consulting his patient, he is reflecting that "it was always the men who crumbled under the glories of the new land, never the women. There were many cases of Italian men who became insane and had to be committed, as if in leaving their homeland they had torn a vital root from their minds." (Puzo, 2004:77)

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<sup>1</sup> In a marriage by proxy, a person, called a "proxy", stands in for either the bride or the groom in the solemnization of a proxy marriage. Proxy marriages were popular in the founding of new lands, in the establishing of the New Worlds of the Americas, and in the settling of the American West.

There was a trauma associated with migration, explains Susan Matt, a trauma they did not shy away from expressing. Americans took homesickness seriously – as did their doctors, many of whom maintained that the only cure was to return sufferers to their homes before the condition turned fatal. (Matt, 2011:3)

Frank Corbo loses his mind, becomes aggressive with his family, is hospitalized and dies in a mental institution. Arrangements for his funeral are dictated by financial and social issues, and suggested to Lucia Santa by a neighbour:

Why bring her husband's body all the way to New York, pay an undertaker, make a big fuss, remind everyone that her husband died insane? Why not take the whole family out to the hospital and have the funeral there? Frank Corbo had no family in this country to take offense or to pay their respects. Hundreds of dollars would be saved, gossip cut off (Puzo, 2004:77)

### **Financial issues**

“Only the poor can understand the shame of poverty [...] (they) are truly vanquished: by their world, by their padrones, by fortune and by time.” Poverty is a strong reason for migration, and it is this shame of poverty that made Lucia Santa chose to marry a stranger just to leave home.

The price for a better life, with money in the bank and education for their descendants, is living in a country with a strange language and the alienation of the children who become ‘members of a different race’. Safety means money, and for Lucia Santa

Money was God. Money could make you free. Money could give you hope. Money could make you safe. [...] Who comes when money calls? Doctors, priests, dutiful sons. Money was a new homeland. [...] And money was friends, respectful relatives. [...] Not to be rich, but to have money; to have money like a wall to put your back to, and then face the world. (Puzo, 2004:64)

As Frank Corbo's illness prevents him from keeping his jobs, Lucia Santa's children have to work in order to help with the bills. For Italians, the family was an economic unit for helping to survive (see Bobocore, 2005:85). Each family member had a role to play and was expected to work and contribute to the common good of the family as a whole. Daughters and sons cleaned, cooked, took care of their younger siblings. Children were seen as an economic resource, and one was not supposed to abandon his/her family.

This is why Vincenzo Angeluzzi, only thirteen years old, has to work during the summer holiday, carrying heavy baskets of bread for the Panettiere, to help his mother, and why Lucia Santa puts an end to her son Larry's attempt to be independent and move in with Le Cinglatas, a childless bootlegging family, who made their own wine and sold it by the glass in their own home. Besides the economic implications, this is also a violation of the rule, a shame for the family, for her as its leader: "A son of hers not yet eighteen, not married, not master of his own household, he dared to leave his own roof, his mother's domain? What a disgrace to the family name. What a blow to her prestige in the neighborhood." (Puzo, 2004:50)

When Octavia gets sick, after Larry's marriage (which meant they could no longer rely on his income), Lucia Santa bears, once more, the burden of protecting her family, dreading poverty:

She felt overcome by disaster — her husband being sent away, her son marrying at an early age, the Depression with its lack of work, and now her daughter's illness. She sat there gathering up her strength, for there was no question now of individual misfortune. The entire family was in danger, its whole fabric, its life. It was no longer a matter of single defeats; now there was danger of annihilation, of sinking to the lowest depth of existence. (Puzo, 2004:111)

In spite of their limited resources, Lucia Santa is adamant in providing her family a good life, being "careless with money" in Octavia's opinion. Haunted by the spectre of her own childhood, and still managing to put aside some dollars every few weeks with her daughter's complicity, Lucia Santa still "bought the best olive oil, expensive cheese, imported prosciutto. She served meat three times a week. And many times she called a doctor for the ailing children, where other families would give home remedies and wait for the fever or cold to pass. At Easter time each child had a new suit or dress." (Puzo, 2004:64)

During Depression, when a lot of people lost their savings in the banks, one of their acquaintances, Pasquale Bianco, laments:

Do you know what I lost, does my son know what I lost? Five thousand dollars. Twenty years of rising in the dark, working in the bitter cold and this terrible American heat. Insulted by my boss, my very name changed, a name existing a thousand years in Italy, the name of Baccalona [...] from the town of Salerno, Italy. I gave it all up. (Puzo, 2004:106)

This was a hard blow for a man who went to work day after day, even when they lost their little daughter, even when the babies were born, even when his family was sick. But saving money demands the sacrifice of the

entire family, so electricity is turned on as late as possible, when it is too dark to see, meals are lighter and warmer clothes are worn inside to save coal. And Gino's friend, Joey Bianco, who gave up small pleasures such as movies, hot dogs, lemon ice, just to save the cents and put them in the bank, lost all his two hundred and thirteen dollars as well, which was a huge amount for a child.

The Panettiere, one of the neighbours, lost ten thousand dollars in the stock market and some more money in the bank, like many other people, a fact which makes Larry glad they are poor.

After Depression, when the economic situation improves, the Italian migrants feel blessed to be in America, safe from the war affecting Europe:

True, it was money earned to help people kill each other. The war in Europe made all the jobs. [...] But in what country could even the poor get rich on the world's misfortune? Natives of the south, Sicily, Naples, the Abruzzi, these Italians on Tenth Avenue did not concern themselves about Mussolini's winning the war. They had never loved their country of birth; it meant nothing to them. For centuries its government had been the most bitter enemy of their fathers and fathers' fathers before them. The rich had spat on the poor. Pimps of Rome and the north had sucked their blood. What good fortune to be safe here in America (Puzo, 2004:164)

### The second generation

The children of the first generation migrants have their own dreams of how to live their lives. Sometimes their behaviour seems unacceptable to the older generation, used to other attitudes and customs, as we have seen above (in the quotation at page 11 in the novel). "I don't want what you had in your life", Octavia tells Lucia Santa during one of their quarrels. (Puzo, 2004:23)

Larry Angeluzzi (Lorenzo for his mother) thinks he is a grown-up at seventeen. Like Larry, he gives Lucia Santa the money he earns ("he now kept some money for himself, stashed it; but after all, he was seventeen and a young man *in America, not Italy*", Puzo, 2014:34). He is popular and respected in the community because he is like a young man brought up in Italy:

His good manners, which were as natural as his pleasantness, made him always ready to help in the countless mild distresses of the poor [...] But most important of all, he took part with a real zest in all the events of communal life—marriages, funerals, christenings, death watches, Communion and Confirmations; those sacred tribal customs sneered at

by young Americans. The old women of Tenth Avenue gave him their highest praise; they said of him that he always knew which things were really important. (Puzo, 2014:34)

Money is an important issue for Larry, making him accept Mr. di Lucca's job offer as a collection agent for the bakery union, i.e. the Maffia, for a lot more money than while working for the railroad, which makes sense, considering that *The Fortunate Pilgrim* precedes and is a sort of preparation for *The Godfather*, published five years later.

### **Education**

For the illiterate first generation migrants, education is a way of attaining financial security. Comparing her previous situation to the opportunities open to her children, Lucia Santa tells her boys before the beginning of the school, in the fall:

I would give anything to have gone to school, to be able to read and write. Only the sons of the rich went to school in Italy. At your age I was chasing goats and digging vegetables and shovelling manure. I killed chickens and washed dishes and cleaned houses. School to me would have been like movie pictures. If your father could have gone to school he would have had better work... (Puzo, 2004:98)

While education is seen as a must for her boys, distrusting her daughter's high ambitions, Lucia Santa disagrees with her dream of going to night school to become a teacher, a dream seen as dangerous out of superstition: "This course was known", reasons Lucia Santa. "Life was unlucky, you followed a new path at your peril. You put yourself at the mercy of fate." (Puzo, 2004:16) In her opinion, dressmaking is a good enough job, which brings good money in the house, but Octavia's desperate wish is to avoid having the same fate of her mother, giving up her own life and dreams of a better life:

she felt doomed: she was afraid that one day she would wake on a warm summer morning as old as her mother, in a bed and home like this, her children living in squalor, unending days of laundry, cooking, dishwashing before her. (Puzo, 2004:38)

Gradually giving up her dream faced with the realities of everyday life, Octavia is still her mother's main ally and support, the one who ensures that the children get good grades at school, and plans how to save money, so her illness is a serious blow to her mother.

When Lucia Santa applies for welfare, the home relief investigator who comes to their house is a certain Mr. La Fortezza, speaking “college Italian” but making himself understood. Unlike other novels dealing with migration, *The Fortunate Pilgrim* does not explicitly deal with language issues related to migrant experience, except some words written the way an Italian would pronounce them, or this allusion to the way the young man speaks a learnt, neat language, far from the one used by the first generation migrants.

With a degree in law obtained with great sacrifices by his parents – “illiterate peasants for a thousand years”, as he says, they “pinched every penny, eating scarola, i.e. endives and pasta and beans every day of the week” in order to provide education to their son (Puzo, 2004:117) – with no job in the field, he is forced to resort to dishonest practices in order to gather some money in the hope of opening own practice. Although the son of Italians, he dislikes Italian food (he “had a weak stomach and turned up his nose” at Italian delicacies), so the grateful Lucia Santa serves him with American specialities, bought especially for him. Although he can be considered a rich man (a college graduate, owning a two-family house, going away for vacation in the summer), Mr. La Fortezza constantly complains to Lucia Santa of how little the welfare paid his investigators and has a desperate need for money which makes him deny applications for relief from those “low-class Italians” who do not bribe him.

Unlike him, the doctor who comes to see Octavia when she falls ill, Doctor Barbato, another son of migrants who struggled to grant him a good education, does not have the heart to take advantage of the poor people he is asked to treat. Although he is upset with Lucia Santa for having sent Octavia to a private hospital (which meant serious expense) while paying him poorly, he takes good care of her when she herself falls ill:

For the next two months Dr. Barbato, out of pure rage, practiced the art of healing. He visited Lucia Santa every second day, gave her injections, gave her heat treatments and chatted over old times with her for at least twenty minutes as he gave her massages. (Puzo, 2004:120)

asking, as payment, only to be invited at Octavia’s wedding, whenever this would be.

To her mother’s despair, Octavia finds a partner equally fond of reading and, worse, he is not an Italian, but a Jew. And in this case we see, once more, the double standard with which Lucia Santa judges things in life. While she wants her sons to marry good Italian girls aware of the fact that men rule the family and need to be waited on, the tyranny of the

same Italian men makes her wish a better life for her daughter and insists on a big wedding, in church.

Forced to grow up and start working to help his family, Gino ends by resenting his mother and enrolls in the Army in the war against Japan, and Lucia Santa realizes that “he hated her as she hated her father. That he would become a pilgrim and search for strange Americas in his dreams”. (Puzo, 2004:191) Family relations are complicated in the best of times, and adding to them the burden of poverty and that of immigration does not help.

The pilgrim Lucia Santa has found her fortune in America, the novel concludes, but she and her family had to suffer for it before things can get better. The end of the novel shows her moving to the house she has managed to buy after saving for so many years, surrounded by her family:

She goes to live in the house on Long Island, her grandchildren beneath her feet. Salvatore and Lena will become doctors or schoolteachers. Her daughter Octavia is a forelady in the dress shops, and her son Lorenzo is the president of a union, giving out jobs as grandly as a duke in Italy. Her son Gino is still alive while millions die. There will always be enough food and money for an old age surrounded by respectful and loving children. (Puzo, 2004:190)

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## Quilting as Collective Self-Narrative by Women

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**Abstract:** Self-narratives, particularly when not fictitious, are deceptive because their narrative pattern is usually taken for granted in the sense that the readers assume the “reality” and truth value of the narrative, and what goes with it: that the story has a “natural” narrative mode to tell. For this reason, self-narratives are seen as taken-for-granted narratives in more than one sense of the word. In narratological terms, however, irrespective of whether fictitious or real-life self narratives, they are just as much constructions as any other narrative, based on selection, combination, the creation of a plot, and they also use all kinds of tropes.

**Key words:** self-narratives, gender, identity, autobiography, truth

Self-narratives, similarly to realist fiction, tend to hide their narrative codes as if unconsciously pretending not to be fiction so that their truth value becomes more convincing. When compared to each other, nevertheless, even self-narratives reveal diverse narrative patterns, what is more, they conform to certain narrative constraints implied in the genre(s)<sup>1</sup>.

This is what is expressed in an unusually self-reflexive way in the opening lines of Virginia Woolf’s autobiographical writing, ‘A Sketch of the Past’, where the narrating ‘I’ starts pondering upon how to start her own self-narrative: “As a great memoir reader, I know many different ways. But if I begin to go through them and to analyse them and their merits and faults, the mornings – I cannot take more than two or three at most – will be gone. So without stopping to choose my way, in the sure and certain knowledge that it will find itself – or if not it will not matter – I begin: the first memory.” (Woolf1976: 72) No matter how flippant and

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<sup>1</sup> I use the phrase self-narrative as an umbrella term for autobiography, memoir, testimony, diary and letters because from the perspective of my argument no distinction is needed between them. Furthermore, the basic statements characterizing the narrative mode of self-writing can also be applied to life-writing in general, and thus not only to autobiography but also to biography.

nonchalant it looks, Woolf's conclusion, which apparently denies her original assumption that a narrative form has to be chosen, does not actually go against her original claim because even the dismissive statement at the end of the passage implies that '[her] way' has to be found, which is an admission that the text is inevitably construed in narrative terms, what is more, the narrator keeps commenting on the text-in-the-making (cf. Séllei 1997). Woolf's narrating 'I' does not take it for granted that there is one way of writing autobiography, yet, she acknowledges that there exist some ways and means of narrating one's life. In this way, self-writing can be considered as a genre: as a linguistic, literary, and, at the same time cultural space that functions ambivalently because it is both an enabling and empowering, and at the same time constraining space. Its enabling and empowering function can be observed in the fact that it provides a narrative framework based on how the genre emerged and developed historically, which, in turn, also implies its constraints as well: the limits imposed on the narrative by the very rules and traditions that create this linguistic-narrative space. This is what Leigh Gilmore calls "the technologies of autobiography – namely those legalistic, literary, social and ecclesiastical discourses of truth and identity, through which the subject of autobiography is produced" (Gilmore 1994: 42).

Due to the complexity of issues concerning truth and identity production in life-writing in general and self-writing in particular, the aspect of gender inevitably comes up because gender is a core component not only of human identity but also in all the social discourses enumerated by Gilmore. Self-writing as a genre – similarly to historiography – emerged to record the great deeds of great men, or at least to memorialise the spiritual struggles of great men. Going back to St. Augustine, self-writing functioned as confession, as spiritual self-scrutiny, as a mirror held up to examine the soul of men: only infrequently do we find women's self-writing preceding the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But as Valerie Sanders argues, women had difficulties in representing themselves even in the Victorian period because self-writing implied success, achievement, also entering the public, all of which were considered unfeminine or even indecent (Sanders 1996: 156). In addition, self-writing tended to use fundamental tropes that are gendered even if they look neutral. Our basic metaphor of life is the road to walk down on, which implies teleology, with a relatively clear aim at the end, which, however is rather recovered and thus constructed retrospectively. This linear teleological narrative, in turn, creates an overarching unity in the narrative, which from the perspective of the character, which emerges as a result of the narrative, means a self-fulfillment, the accomplishment of what is constructed as *his*

essential self or identity. This identity construction goes back at least to the period of the Enlightenment, when the *par excellence* genre related to liberal humanism, the *Bildungsroman* also emerged.

This metaphoricality of these genres, however, is not without its gendered components. Namely, the linear teleology of going down the road seems to betray an androcentric, masculine bias, and as such is unsuitable for rendering experiential patterns of femininity into a narrative as women's life patterns do not seem to conform to the mode of linearity, which has generic consequences too: the almost complete lack of women's autobiographies in the canon of autobiographies, which in this way is the canon of masculine self-narratives. This is an insight that Leigh Gilmore articulates pointedly when arguing that "the near-absence of self-representational texts from the critical histories that authorize autobiography indicates the extent to which the genre that functions as the closest textual version of the political ideology of individualism is gendered as 'male'" (Gilmore 1994: 1).

The question, then, is where to look for women's autobiographical narratives, how to recognise them, and how to interpret diverse narrative patterns that do not conform to the canonised masculine self-representational patterns. These are questions that have been asked since the beginning of feminist literary criticism a major aim of which is to explore and expose the gender implications of various genres. Self-writing came into the focus relatively late due to the fact that for a long time autobiographical genres were not read for their narrative patterns but for their truth value. The textual turn in feminist literary criticism, however, brought to the fore the question of gender and genre in the case of self-writing too. The edited volume by Estelle C. Jelinek is groundbreaking in the sense that even though later it was criticised for essentialism it makes an attempt at defining the alternative narrative patterns of women's autobiography. She points out that typical women's narratives are diffuse, mostly non-chronological and non-teleological, which reflects at the level of narrative construction the multiple-dimensionality – or in a more negative way: fragmentedness – of women's life experiences (Jelinek 1980: 17, 19).

Multiple-dimensionality and fragmentation call for a different narrative pattern and metaphoricality, all the more so as self-writing is frequently tied up with questions of creativity, which in itself has its own gendered metaphors like the Muse, as Margaret Homans famously points out in her monograph on women's poetic creativity (Homans 1980). So if creative women want to find their own form of self-representation, they have to re-think the tradition of the genre of autobiography, including its basic tropes and narrative structures, they have to appropriate, adopt to

their own purposes and, at the same time, adapt the discursive spaces that are available in generic terms so as to better accommodate femininity and female creativity in their narrative, or perhaps the other way round: to create a discursive space that is more suitable for accommodating women's life experiences.

Amongst the possible narrative patterns and metaphors of women's autobiography quilting has a prominent, though far from exclusive role. The reasons for this privileged position are numerous. First of all, quilting perfectly fits into the reinterpretation of the concept of the aesthetic from the perspective of the everyday as done by Alice Walker in her essay 'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens' in which she lays claim to the recognition of women's creativity in their daily activities in areas that are usually not acknowledged as art. In addition to femininity, she connects her reinterpreted concept of art with other issues like blackness, class and historicity: "What did it mean for a black woman to be an artist in our grandmothers' time? In our great-grandmothers' day? [...] How was the creativity of the black woman kept alive, year after year and century after century, when for most of the years black people have been in America, it was a punishable crime for a black person to read or write? And the freedom to paint, to sculpt, to expand the mind with action did not exist." (Walker 1985: 2375) Based on this insight that the generally accepted notion of art is the prerogative of the privileged, she radically breaks with the notion of the aesthetic in the sense of elite art, and among other things she wants us to recognise the art of several generations of women in creations like a garden, no matter how ephemeral – hence the title of her essay.<sup>2</sup> She mentions another form of women's art: quilting, and she gives the example of a quilt that is on display in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C., representing the crucifixion. In her analysis, this is a rare piece: "[t]hrough it follows no pattern of quilt-making, and though it is made of bits and pieces of worthless rags, it is obviously the work of a person of powerful imagination and deep spiritual feeling. Below this quilt I saw a note that says it was made by 'an anonymous Black woman in Alabama, a hundred years ago'. If we could locate this 'anonymous' black woman from Alabama, she would turn out to be one of our grandmothers – an artist who left her mark in the only materials she could afford, and in the only medium her position in society allowed her to use." (Walker 1985: 2379) Quilting, thus, provided a means by which women could find a vent for their creativity in ways that was affordable: rags, but in ways that also kept this art form invisible *as* art.

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<sup>2</sup> One can find similar examples of the art of the everyday in texts by women writers, like Mrs Ramsay's dinner in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.

Quilting as a form of creativity has further implications that are crucial from the perspective of cultural semiotics. The quilt as an object is meaningful because it has three layers, and the three layers have different function: the woven cloth top provides the most well known decorative surface, the patchwork, the middle layer of batting or wadding is the most useful part, giving warmth and protection, whereas the woven back functions as a practical basis for this construction that combines the useful and the fanciful: it turns the useful into an aesthetic object. The patchwork clothtop in itself has several meanings from the perspective of femininity and creativity, of reinterpreting the aesthetic because the design often reflects, even if in an abstract form, the life experiences of women, and the patchwork exemplifies how the apparently insignificant, the invisible gains significance in a new structure.

The skill of quilt making was passed on in oral form from one generation of women to another, and as such can be seen as women's tradition, perhaps even secret tradition.<sup>3</sup> The quilt – and what is inscribed into it by the patchwork design was frequently passed on as women's legacy in the family: a precious and valuable object in itself and for itself, all the more so as quilt making was often done collectively by a quilting bee, a community of women working on a piece, created from the rags, the apparently useless pieces, the leftover of the everyday. In this sense patchwork and quilting is seen by Elaine Showalter as a metaphor for paradigmatic female art, a bedcover turned into a means of women's storytelling and creativity. Not coincidentally, Showalter turns the metaphor around and claims that women's texts can be seen as "verbal bedcovers", providing protection, safety and women's storytelling alike (Showalter 1986). What I also find significant is the rhizomatic, non-hierarchical feature of the patchwork quilt: in contrast to the unique crucifixion quilt on display in the Smithsonian, the typical patchwork quilt does not have a clear centre, quite the contrary its structure is rhizomatic, allowing connections between any points in the framework, also in the Deleuzian way, by allowing multiple entries and multiple exits for interpretation, resisting any notion of the obvious centre.<sup>4</sup>

In all its complexity, thus, the patchwork quilt, including its multi-layered structure, the implications of its materials and the patchwork

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<sup>3</sup> A recent study has revealed other kinds of secret codes hidden in quilts: those of escape. Black slaves created quilts into which codes were woven that helped their escape using the underground railroad (cf. Tobin and Dobard 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Seen from this perspective, perhaps, paradoxically, the very non-rhizomatic quality of the quilt in the Smithsonian can be seen as a reason why this is the quilt on display: its structure and theme conform quite well to the notions of elite art that prefers hierarchical structures that distinguish the centre and the periphery.

design, and the process of quilt making, can be seen as a metaphor not only of women's texts as "verbal bedcovers" as defined by Showalter (see above), but more specifically as the metaphor for – or paradigm of – women's self-narrative, what is more, women's collective self-narrative. I will demonstrate that this pattern of self-narrative works both in literary texts and in visual texts by analysing a short story by Angela Carter: 'The Quilt Maker' and a film directed by Jocelyn Moorehouse, *How to Make an American Quilt*. Both texts very consciously, self-reflexively utilise this feminist (re-)interpretation of the quilt not only as textile, but also as text which enacts, reveals and reflect on its own materiality as text, as texture.

This feminist self-consciousness is not surprising at all in the case of Angela Carter (1940-1992), who in spite of her death more than a quarter of a century ago is still our contemporary due to the unceasing postmodern feminist appeal of her text that manifest a stubborn insubordination and resistance to patriarchal discourses. An erudite writer, who can hardly resist making references to notions in contemporary literary theory, Carter writes imaginative and entertaining novels and short stories that keep re-interpreting major cultural texts like fairy tales, myths, Shakespeare. It comes as no surprise, then, to see that her short story 'The Quilt Maker' too makes an extensive and conscious use of the metaphor of the quilt and quilting at multiple levels – perfectly tuned to the structure of the quilt.

'The Quilt Maker' is a fictitious, first-person self-narrative whose narrator-protagonist is forty years old at the time of telling her story of past, present and future. Her age functions as an occasion both to look back and to look forward, into her past and into old age and death. She is a woman who has abandoned her husband due to a quarrel about whether it was right of her to have chosen a small peach over a big one, a quarrel that manifests basic differences in value between her and her husband. She chooses the smaller peach, and insists on her choice saying someone else may need it more than her, whereas her husband considers her a fool for not picking the bigger peach (Carter 1996: 445). This conflict about self-worth can be understood in various ways. One of them can be based on insights proposed in Carol Gilligan's fundamental work in ethics. She defines two modes of ethics: one is the ethic of justice, the other one is the ethic of care (Gilligan 1982: 174). In her argument, the ethic of justice is based upon the concept that one has the right to do something, an idea originating in the formal logic of the Enlightenment idea of equality and mutuality, whereas the ethic of care is much more rooted in notions of empathy and responsibility in the context of human relations (Gilligan 1982: 99). In addition, using Nancy Chodorow's theory of the gendered

aspects of the psychosocial development (Chodorow 1978), Gilligan argues that the ethic of justice is typical of masculinity, whereas the ethic of care is the mode of ethical decision making typical of femininity. Chodorow argues that the asymmetrical development is due to the difference in the resolution of the Oedipal crisis in the case of male and female children:

From the retention of pre-oedipal attachments to their mother, growing girls come to define and experience themselves as continuous with others; their experience of self contains more flexible or permeable ego boundaries. Boys come to define themselves as more separate and distinct, with a greater sense of rigid ego boundaries and differentiation. The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate. (Chodorow 1978: 169)

Seen in this light, the husband's claim, what is more, his scolding of the narrator-protagonist for choosing the smaller peach can be seen as a classical case of the masculine ethic of judgement, whereas the narrator-protagonist's choice as a classical case of the feminine ethic of care.

Paradoxically, however, the ethics of care, which can be seen as a humane and humanistic ethic of high value, can also be interpreted as the manifestation of women's undervaluation of themselves inasmuch as it implies that someone else is more important, which is how the narrator of 'The Quilt Maker' looks upon herself, even if with a tongue-in-cheek cultural self-reflexivity implying that there is a systemic undervaluation of women and women's deeds (and needs?) in culture. Characteristically, she makes this comment in relation to patchwork, thus creating a link between two *leitmotifs* of the text: the little peach and quilting: "patchwork, a neglected household art neglected, obviously, because my sex excelled in it – well, there you are; that's the way it's been, isn't it?" (Carter 1996: 444). At the metalevel, the short story can be read as the re-evaluation of patchwork and quilting both as a working method and as a result. The text is enframed by the narrator's self-reflexive remarks on quilting, and positions it within the framework of gender, class and region: it is characterised as "a brilliant abstraction that any ordinary housewife used to be able to put together [...] without making a song and dance about it. [...] in patchwork, an infinitely flexible yet harmonious overall design is kept in the head and worked out in whatever material happens to turn up in the ragbag: party frocks, sackcloth, peices of wedding gress, of shroud, of bandage, dress shirts etc." (Carter 1996: 444) Thrift, which is a key element in patchwork, however, is not only related to "the thrifty housewife" (Carter 1996: 444), but also to the "Protestant

north working-class tradition” (Carter 1996: 445), a combination of the modes of the subaltern which serves for the narrator as an *ars poetic* and claims to be “pleased with the metaphor’s overtones of thrift and hard work. Patchwork. Good.” (Carter 1996: 445), that is: a model also for her way of writing.

Significantly, when at the end of the short story she returns to patchwork as a structure of her own verbal text – or textile – she further re-evaluates it as “this product of thrift and *imagination*” (Carter 1996: 457 – emphasis added), implicitly laying claim to a feature attributed to high art, particularly since the age of Romanticism with its cult of the artistic: imagination, and in this way re-locating Ga patchwork and quilting in the realm of art, and as such re-conceptualising the notion of art as well in general, quite like Alice Walker does in her essay ‘In Search of our Mothers’ Gardens’, and she also applies this re-shaped notion to her own text(ile) in the closing paragraph of the text, which enumerates the leitmotifs of her own texts, and as such is another self-reflexive metacomment on her own method:

Shake it out and look at it again, the flowers, fruit and bright stain of henna, the Russain dolls, the wrinkling chifon of the flesh, the old songs, the cat, the woman of eighty; the woman of forty with dyed hair and most of her own teeth, who is *ma sembleble, me soeur*<sup>5</sup>. Who now recedes into the deceptive privacy of a genre picture, a needlewoman, a quilt maker, a middleaged woman sewing patchwork in a city garden, turning her face vigorously against the rocks and trees of the patient wilderness waiting round us. (Carter 1996: 457)

The narrator as a needlewoman creates a verbal quilt indeed, using the rag materials of not only what one could expect: the everyday at hand, but also allusions to various levels of culture, thus utilising the layeredness of the quilt. The cultural references range from Keats’ ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ and the Coleridgean demon lover famously re-appearing in Elizabeth Bowen’s WWII story, ‘The Demon Lover’ through Puccini’s opera *Madame Butterfly* to Rita Hayworth and Marilyn Monroe and the film *Sadie Thompson*. The allusions re-contextualise these cultural phenomena, most significantly Puccini’s plot:

[...] while I was earning a Sadie Thompstonesque living as a barmaid in the Orient, I found myself, on a fire weekend, riding through a flowering grove on the other sde of the world with a young man who said: ‘Me Butterfly, you Pinkerton.’ And, though I denied it hotly at the time, so it

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<sup>5</sup>Meaning: my likeness, my sister.

proved, except, when I went away, it was for good. I never returned with an American friend, grant me sufficient good taste. (Carter 1996: 446-447)

The text reverses the gendered logic of Orientalism even if not the racial logic of Orientalism, and the closing sentence of the quotation betrays a level of ironic self-reflexivity even in that respect. The narrator keeps referring to cultural love plots like the irresistible demon lover resurfacing from the past and carrying her to her doom, but she rejects the idea, and resists the culturally irresistible (Carter 1996: 454) or to 'The still unravished bride' by Keats is identified with the cherry tree (Carter 1996: 453), which in itself opens up the metaphor in multiple directions (like the cherry tree in the garden, the Japanese experience and the culture of cherry trees, and the recurring element of the blossoms) in the text. Her assemblage of references – often unexpected materials – from various layers of culture creates a bricolage-like textual patchwork, a non-linear narrative that rejects overall coherence, and uses, instead, a rhizomatic method in which all the thematic and *leitmotif* 'clusters' have the same significance, and in which there are an almost infinite number of meaningful connections between the clusters.

One of the thematic centres – or clusters – is the relationship between the narrator and Letty, the eighty-year old woman who passes away in the end. The short story can be interpreted as the confluence of the two lives into each other because the narrator telescopes their life stories into each other. Significantly, the narrator is half as old as Letty, and contemplates upon her own life in the following way: "Forty. The significance, the real significance, of the age of forty is that you are, along the allotted span, nearer to death than to birth. Along the lifeline I am now past, the halfway mark." (Carter 1996: 446) At another point, she creates an explicit connection between themselves saying "[b]ut I am further away from the child I was, the child who stole the peaches, than I am from Letty" (Carter 1996: 449). She also plays a mathematical game, and by using numbers that correlate to their ages and also the image of an aged female, the "babushka", she implicates themselves in each other's stories: "Think of a number. Ten. Double it. Twenty. Add ten again. Thirty. Add again. Forty. Double that. Eighty. If you reverse this image, you obtain something like those Russian wooden dolls, in which one babushka contains a middling babushka who contains a small babushka who contains a small babushka who contains a tiny babushka and so on, ad infinitum." (Carter 1996: 449) Apart from the numbers, they are also connected by some *leitmotifs* like the cherry tree, which is not only a symbol for the narrator in Japan, but there is also a blossoming cherry tree

which is “the principal monument of Letty’s wild garden” (Carter 1996: 447). The cerry tree, associated with the wild garden, fits into a chain of metaphors that connect the two women, like their hennaed red hair that has the suggestive power of “the privileged irrationality of redheads” (Carter 1996: 450). Wildness, wilderness, in turn, is also a key element in the narrator’s final summary of herself, in which she uses a pun to connect a masculine literary trope of wildness with that of quilting:

As you can tell from the colourful scraps of oriental brocade and Turkish homespun I have sewn into this bedcover, I then (call me Ishmael) wandered about for a while and sowed (or sewed) a wild oat or two into this domestic article, this product of thrift and imagination, with which I hope to cover myself in my old age to keep my brittle bones warm. (How cold it is in Letty’s basement.) (Carter 1996: 457)

By wittily combining the transgressing aspects of the masculine narrative of sowing a wild oat with that of sewing a patchwork quilt, a feminine domestic piece, the text relocates the potential of transgression and reinterprets it in terms of gender, and re-writes fundamental narratives of culture.

One aspect of this re-writing is how the narrator textualises the concept and narrative tropes of autobiography. Instead of presenting an autonomous individual, the textual (bed)cover is sewn from the rags of two intertwined life stories: that of the narrator and that of Letty, and in this way turns them into each other’s alter egos, and implicates their lives in each other’s: as the narrator claims, Letty is “[a]n octogenarian redhead, [her] big babushka who contains my forty, my thirty, my twenty, my ten years within her fragile basket of bones” (Carter 1996: 456), creating in this way a narrative that, on the one hand, is a fictitious autobiography, yet, on the other hand, resist and re-writes some basic elements of classical masculine autobiography like the teleological narrative centred around the autonomous individual. It is replaced by a collective narrative of a woman of forty and a woman of eighty, refuting the concept of the independence of the (masculine) subject, displaying the inevitable implicatedness of life stories in each other, and celebrating the aesthetics of the fragmentary and the domestic while, at the same time, explicitly re-interpreting them in the framework of the transgressive.

Carter’s textual patchwork bedcover has its visual non-identical twin in cinematic culture: Jocelyn Moorehouse’s film *How to Make an American Quilt*, coincidentally – or perhaps not – released in 1995, almost the same year when Carter’s story was published (and is based on a 1991 novel by Whitney Otto). This very coincidence can be seen as an

instance typical of the 1990s from the perspective of feminist theories and practices of representation: by this time, theories like Elaine Showalter's ideas of feminine writing as patchwork, while relying on already existing practices of representation, also seem to have inspired consciously feminist, self-reflexive postmodern literary and visual representations that in themselves are multiply layered quite like a quilt. This is the case of Jocelyn Morehouse's cinematic quilt that utilises all the elements of the literal practice and theoretical implications of quilt making.

At the plot level, the film is about Finn (Winona Ryder), who is in a multiple crisis situation: she is struggling with her MA thesis on women's tribal rituals at Berkeley, while she also has a relationship crisis with her boyfriend, who – symbolically – is in the middle of restructuring their home, and their point of contention is whether in the long run Finn will need a room of her own or not. To escape from her relationship crisis and also to finish her thesis, Finn goes to her grandmother for the summer, where she gets deeply involved in the life and work of a quilting bee consisting of women whose lives have been interlinked for decades: her grandmother, Hyacinth and her sister Gladys, their one-time family servant, Anna (Maya Angelou) and her daughter, Marianna. The quilting bee is complete with three friends: Sophia, Em and Constance, each with their own life traumas and intricate – mostly emotional patterns – of connectedness to each other. Whereas the quilting bee seem, at first sight, be working in perfect harmony, and in that way providing the perfect backdrop for Finn to finish her thesis, there are jarring tensions within the group of women, and there is also dramatic irony in between the quilting bee and Finn's work that is resolved by the end of the film. Namely, the film viewers can clearly see at the beginning of the film that while Finn is listening to taped music and rituals of women in African tribes, the quilting bee behind her are just as well enacting a women's ritual not only of creativity but also a process of trauma work and its resolution at the moment when the quilt is ready, which, significantly, coincides with Finn finishing her thesis and solving her relationship crisis.

In this way, I argue that while Finn's thesis topic can be seen as an obvious mode of helping herself through her life crises (it is not by chance that this is not her first thesis topic idea, but she abandoned the previous ones), while she works in her thesis, and the members of the quilting bee work on their quilt (which ultimately turns out to be Finn's wedding quilt), they all get involved with each other at the emotional level: three generations of women resolving their own life traumas as a result of disentangling their conflicts with themselves, with each other, and with their former partners – and in some cases all the three are related to each other. Their intra- and intergenerational conflicts are woven into

the quilt as literal fragments which in themselves are aestheticised representations of their past traumas, but are also – following the basic rules of quilting – in multiple connections with the other parts of the patchwork quilt, and thus tensions must be resolved in themselves and with the others. The images worked into the quilt, however, although represent the conflicts as resolved, they also bear the marks of trauma, and it is by carrying *this* ambiguity of marks of trauma and trauma resolution that the quilt functions as a collective wedding (bed)cover for Finn, implicating her in generations of women's history, and at the same time also teaching her the lessons – as a protective cover – of the preceding generations of women.

The tensions within the quilting be have various sources: in two cases deception and (assumed) cheating on the other with her husband, in one case a clear generational conflict between mother and daughter related to sexuality and women's (reproductive) bodies, there is also a marked social and racial tension, at least in their joint past, and in one case one can recognise a trauma related to women's possibilities and the betrayal of dreams by the husband. Out of these conflicts rooted in the past the one between Hyacinth and Gladys is represented in a way that its visuality provides a mirror for the patchwork quilt. On visiting her dying husband, she collapses emotionally, and ends up sleeping with the emotionally supportive husband of her own sister, Glady. Learning about their affair, Glady starts breaking china, vases, porcelain figures in the house, and as a means of reconstituting herself, she creates a creepy mural in the laundry room that keeps spreading through the decades, and turns into an uncanny presence in the household. The mural is a ghostly reminder of one-time wholeness, and a mosaic- or rather patchwork-like reconstruction, which is also self-reconstruction and self-healing that manifests, at the same time, the very wounds and breaks, breaches and betrayals that it is supposed to heal. The mural, in this sense, is a parallel to the quilt-in-the-making inasmuch as it uses apparently useless fragments, bits and pieces, fall-off materials that have their own symbolic significance, and are at the same time re-worked into a new design, a new structure created of these fragments. A partial resolution of trauma in the film is when Glady starts dismantling the mural, indicating her reconciliation with her sister and with her own past alike. As a result of reconciliation, the self-representations of the two sisters in the wedding quilt are two sets of flowers which follow convex and concave curves of more or less the same angles, in harmonising colours, displaying similarity and difference, sameness and opposedness in a dialogue and dependence on each other.

Problematic familial relationships are not reduced to the conflict between the sisters Hy and Glady, but are also tangible between Anna, the

black American mother and Marianna, her daughter. Anna's story, in addition, is implicated in the story of black-white racial relationships of the past: she became pregnant with Marianna as a result of her affair with a young white man, the son of her employer as a maid, thus reenacting age-old gender and racial relationships. When her pregnancy became evident, she left her employment, equipped only with her only family heirloom: a story quilt that tells the story of her family in the period of the reconstruction. Whereas she fell victim to her own phantasies about romantic love, when she is accommodated as a young unmarried pregnant black woman by the family of Hy and Gladys's (who are teenage girls at the time), she clearly rejects the tradition of sweeping and irresistible romantic love when one of the girls offers her to read *Wuthering Heights*, but she declines it, saying she has sewing: actually, patchwork, to do for her unborn child. In this way, she writes herself out of the tradition of the white Western tradition of love stories, and replaces it with her motherly love for her daughter. This love of hers, however, is traumatised as her own daughter, Marianna obviously rebels against Anna's – by this time – powerful notions of self-discipline in terms of sexuality and her body. In contrast to Anna's tales of warning young women of committing the same error she did that she also directs at Finn, to whom she is almost a surrogate mother or grandmother, Marianna, her own daughter flaunts her body and sexual appeal power. Marianna's space is Paris, the iconic city of sexual power and seduction: she sews her own story into the quilt in the form of a heart that contains icons of Paris like the Eiffel tower, and in the end she can gain some appreciative recognition from her mother who praises her patch in the structure of the quilt.

Anna, the mother, is played by May Angelou in the film. Apart from being a powerful and convincing presence as the leader of the quilting bee, her acting in a film that can be interpreted as a metatext of women's autobiographical self-representation is particularly meaningful because her own autobiography is structured similarly to how patchwork functions in the film. The first volume of her autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), recounts her own life in a fragmented way, a mode of representation that is partly due to her own trauma of partly born into a white supremacist environment as a black child, partly of having been raped by her own mother's partner. Her presence in the text, thus, points beyond herself as an actor acting out the role of the quilt bee leader: this role of her also alludes to her own autobiographical text of a similar nature both structurally and thematically. There is, however, a touch of irony in her co-ordinating the work of quilt making: the one who used to be the subaltern both racially and socially, the one who was perhaps most traumatised (when taking her in, the original idea was that

her daughter will be taken away from her so that her life can be “easier”, an idea she rejects), she is the one who takes control of the working process of the quilting bee, a work that points well beyond itself as simply making a quilt: this is working through life traumas, this is self-healing and healing the others alike.

Anna is fully aware of how much the quilt she has inherited tells her family narrative, her geneological narrative, and how much she becomes part of this inherited narrative. As she explains, “As Marianna grew, I told her the story of the quilt. And I realised that I became part of the story. It was not the love of a husband I meant to find but the love of a daughter.” This claim is her reconciliation with herself, so it is not surprising that she is the centre of the quilting bee, and it is her who identifies troubles in the patchwork pattern, troubles that tell of tensions, and as such destroy the harmony of the whole pattern. This is the case of Constance’s creation she calls Chickie’s garden of yellow flowers exclusively that does not match the colour pattern of the quilt. On the surface, this case is about colour harmony and the story of a beloved dog who has been buried in the rose garden, but the disharmony is actually rooted in the conflict between Constance and Em – another story of jealousy and deception. After Constance’s husband passed away, she was approached by Em’s rather promiscuous painter husband, the very type of the romantic and transgressive artist, and although there is not much proof of an affair between them, this community seems to be on Em’s side and not to have forgiven to Constance. After a dramatic crisis about the structure of the quilt, reconciliation comes from Constance’s part, who abandons her all-yellow rose garden, and tunes her colours scheme into that of the whole quilt by introducing a red rose too. Em, in turn realises that in spite of his life long infidelity, her husband kept painting pictures of her, no matter who his actual model was, which is yet another mosaic in recreating some wholeness after a life of trauma.

The last participant in the quilting bee is Sophia, who is unique as she does not have a conflict with any other member of the quilting bee, yet she is the most morose one of all of them. When in the swimming pool, she keeps scolding the young girls as they break the rules and jump into the water even though it is prohibited. As it turns out, she has a very good reason to do so: this is how she can cope with her own life trauma that is also related to diving. Her scolding the girls, his, can be understood as her own psychological denial and repression of her desires of her youth. As a young woman, she was an excellent diver, and loved diving in a sublime landscape, in a daring way, resisting contemporary femininity. She was like a mermaid: belonging to the sublime landscape, in control of it. Not coincidentally, this is where she takes her lover on

their first date, showing herself in her natural element. This is the Sophia her lover falls in love with, but in spite of the fact that he promises her to take her with himself on his professional journeys as a geographer so that she can go to similarly sublime spaces, it never happens: her life is utterly consumed by repeated child bearing and the domestic chores, and she is not only left behind when her husband goes on trips, but is even abandoned by the husband. Before he leaves, he builds a mock replacement of the sublime landscape in their garden: a pathetic garden pool that Sophia does not even want to see as it represents her unfulfilled dreams distorted into a dwarfed space. In return for her disappointment, she takes revenge on any girl who wants more than what has become her fate: she explains to her own first-born daughter that she cannot go on studying as they can only afford one of their children to go to university, and it is the son's due, and this is the reason why she wants to keep diving girls in the swimming pool within the framework of the rules, and not allow them to do prohibited – transgressive – things like diving. The final image of the film, however, is presented by Sophia, who after finishing the quilt goes out to the pool again, and leaps once again from the springing board into the depth of the swimming pool while we hear the voiceover of the narrator: “But you have to be brave about it”.

The quilt and quilt making, thus, can be seen as trauma work and healing in the case of all the characters, including Finn, who finishes her MA thesis at the same time as the quilt is ready. Before this culmination and conclusion, however, there comes a moment of dispersion and re-collection in the case of her thesis too: a repetition of how the quilt is made, collectively reassembled from useless-looking fragments. As it happens, just before she is ready, a storm comes and throws away all the typed up (not word-processed) pages of her thesis in the neighbourhood, and it can only be re-collected with the help of all the members of the quilting bee, and in some cases this is also the moment of forgiveness and reconciliation: Em enters her husband's space and realises that he kept painting her all his life, while wanting to save a page of the thesis for Finn, this is the first time that Sophia enters the garden pool built for her by the husband. In addition, by this time even Finn's mother is present, and re-thinks her hippie ideas and divorce from her husband, and she also helps in collecting the pages – the in themselves useless fragments – of Finn's thesis. In this way, not only the quilt itself, but also the thesis is partly the production of the quilting bee, a collective women's autobiography inasmuch as both the quilt and the thesis function in the same way: they include directly and indirectly women's life experiences, women's wisdom and their rituals that have the power of connection: a kind of female bonding that admits diversity and

friction, conflicts and reconciliation, traumas and healing at the same time.

This is what the quilt symbolises in its layeredness, which the film exploits visually. Quilt making is not only a part of Finn's feminist self-conscious present, but also that of her past, so quilt making can be seen as collective past, and also as a collective past woven into the present structure. It also provides a perspective and a vision: Finn remembers looking at quilt making from under the table, and seeing the shadows of women's hands transpiring through the material of the quilt while working on the design. The narrative of the film can also be considered as a patchwork narrative, made up of fragments and bits and pieces, apparently useless parts of women's lives which, however, are turned into a meaningful whole. By re-telling their stories to each other and sublimating them into an abstract and aestheticised patchwork design, they create a collective self-narrative of memories that re-writes self-narratives of femininity both thematically and structurally. By incribing themselves into a collective tradition they re-imagine self-narratives in a way that individual subjectivity – the classical subject of self-narratives – is replaced by intersubjectivity. This new form of textuality, in turn, inserts the subject into layers of the history of the everyday (in contrast with the history of great deeds of great men), and thus re-evaluates the aesthetics of the everyday too. The textile and the texture are turned into a decipherable text, which, in turn, gains materiality in the form of the wedding quilt for Finn, which by the end means protection, awareness, consciousness, collective memory and knowledge of women's rich culture, a cover she can wrap herself in, but at the same time a tradition she has to be brave about whatever expects her on the way to her reconciliation with her boyfriend. The final image of Sophia diving again, however, suggests that dreams can be not only recollected but also re-claimed and re-lived, and it functions as a reminder that women's space is not necessary only "where love resides" (which is the topic of the wedding quilt): it can be expanded and broadened, even in a transgressive way, defying the rules and laying claim to untrodden paths as well.

Carter's short story 'The Quilt Maker' and Jocelyn Moorehouse's *How to Make an American Quilt*, thus, play with the genre of women's collective self-writing by utilising the fragments of the everyday, and while aesthesising these fragments they reinterpret the aesthetic from the perspective of gender politics, and create a space of intersubjectivity, implicating various generations of women in each other's life. These texts create narratives that can accommodate women's traumas and wisdom deriving from trauma, and in this way they provide a textual-political code which has a function in the text rhetorically and thematically alike.

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## Investigating the Gender Dimension of the City of Oradea

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**Abstract;** “Urban space is a social institution that defines and models human interactions, delineating each of us as individual and as citizen, as man and woman, as young or as aged, minority and majority.” (Laura Grunberg<sup>1</sup>) The present paper sets out to study - through gender lens – the mechanism through which urban space – namely my home town Oradea – talks about its citizens, the past it inherited and the future it is building.

**Key Words:** *urban space, citizen, gender, discrimination, identity.*

The city in which we lead our everyday existence, where we live, where we form relationships is more than a mere collection of streets, buildings, monuments, institutions, parks etc. It is a mirror that reflects that existent dominant ideologies, that conveys different messages because social space ceases to be indistinguishable from mental and physical space.

The public space is the space of gender relations in their most genuine state,<sup>2</sup> it is a space where the interaction between men and women is a symbolic interaction between two representatives of their gender, a space where experiences are generic and interpretations may be easily generalised.

The city in which we live is no doubt gendered; the messages sent by the space around us are gendered. On a symbolic level, urban space communicates gender messages<sup>3</sup> about who is visible, who is invisible, who is included and who is excluded, about acceptable gender roles and gender behaviour, as well as gender stereotypes.

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<sup>1</sup>Grunberg, Laura. *(Non) Sexist Cities – Mapping a New Area Research for Gender Studies in Romania*, in *Analyze – Journal of Gender and Feminist Studies*. New Series. Issues No3/2014. p2.

<sup>2</sup>Pasti, V. 2003. *Ultima inegalitate. Relatiile de gen in Romania*. Editura Polirom p.61

<sup>3</sup>Bailey, A and Hentschell, R. 2010. *Masculinity and the Metropolis of Vice*. Early Modern Cultural Studies Series. Palgrave, Macmillan. p.2

We have grown so accustomed to the space around us, that we ended up taking it for granted and what's more, we have stopped questioning the 'inaudible' messages it sends. That is why I set out to write this paper with the aim of questioning and analysing – through gender lens – the mechanisms through which urban space – namely my home town Oradea – talks about its citizens, the past it inherited and the future it is building.

Oradea has changed a lot during the last years, being ranked as the safest city in Romania, based on a survey based on the opinions of 92 000 Romanians who evaluated the cities and districts they live in. In another survey, Oradea has been voted the most beautiful city in Romania, with 13033 votes out of 57 725 votes.



Fig. 1<sup>4</sup>

But the question that arises is the following: *Does Oradea, a city of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 'bordering Western civilization' pay attention to issues like equality, political correctness, the emancipation of women etc. or is it a sexist, patriarchal, misogynist city?*

According to the 2011 census, in Oradea the female population represented 51.5% of the population. Therefore, the question that lies at the 'foundation' of this paper is the following: *Do women in the city of Oradea find themselves in the collective memory of the city or are they almost invisible? Do they identify themselves with the city they live in?*

So I decided to take a walk through my home town with my gender lens on and have a look at:

- the organization of the city, its architecture and visual identity
- the historical and cultural narratives promoted by the city,
- the visibility/invisibility of women in the urban public space,
- the power negotiation between men and women,
- the gendered messages in contemporary outdoor publicity/ advertising, graffiti, stencils etc.
- any signs of sexism identifiable in the public space etc.

Toponymy is the science that deals with the study of geographical names – including the names of streets, boulevards, parks etc. These

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<sup>4</sup><https://infooradea.ro/> - accessed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2017

names are never chosen randomly – they are meant to honour someone, to reflect the values cherished by a society, its models and heroes. All of the important boulevards and streets in Oradea bear the names of important male figures of the Romanian history and culture (e.g. General Magheru Boulevard, Decebal boulevard, Mihai Eminescu street etc.) Taking a look at a listing of the streets of Oradea I realized that out of approximately one thousand streets, only three bore the names of women personalities: Ecaterina Teodoroiu (a front-line soldier in the WW1, considered to be a Romanian heroine), Ecaterina Varga (a fighter for Romanians' rights) and Ana Ipatescu (a heroine of the 1848 revolution).

Out of 33 parks listed on the map, not even one has the name of a female personality: Mihai Viteazul Park, I.C. Bratianu Park, Cantemir Park, Petofi Park, Balcescu Park etc. The monuments in the centre of the city all celebrate poets, heroes, historians etc.- all male, with the exception of Queen Mary. Out of 47 schools – 26 bear the names of important male figures, and only 3 the names of female personalities while the rest are neutral: Lorantfi Zsuzsanna – a Hungarian Princess married to Gyorgy Rakoczi, Maria Oltea – the mother of Stephen the Great, Lucretia Suci Rudow – a Romanian poet, born in Oradea.

This is a clear proof that women have no chance of finding themselves in the collective memory of the city, of identifying themselves with the city. One might argue that streets and districts and schools were named quite a while ago, when feminists have not yet won so many battles, but as reality changes, so should the space around us.

The Town Hall of every city is symbolic for its power of decision, so it goes without saying that its structure will undoubtedly reflect the social relationship of power existent in that city, the negotiation of power between men and women. Oradea's mayor is male, the two vice-mayors are male, the city manager is male. The City Council is formed of 25 members, out of which 20 are male and a secretary who, contrary to all expectations, is male.

When it comes to the higher education system in Oradea – i.e. the University of Oradea, the situation seems more balanced – one rector (male) and 5 vice-rectors (3 male and 2 female).

One of the most efficient means of conveying gendered messages in today's society is represented by the media. Of all the aspects encompassed by the media, I chose to focus on the issue of advertising, since it represents a phenomenon that is present in our everyday life and hence cannot be ignored. Although advertising is meant to persuade consumers to buy products, it does more than sell products: it sells

“values and concepts. It presents images of sexuality, popularity, success and normalcy. They tell us who we are and who we should be.”<sup>5</sup>



Fig. 2<sup>6</sup>

Large national companies make use of gender innuendos and stereotypical gender roles to advertise and sell their products. The ad for a stationary company (see Fig. 2) makes use of the gendered stereotype that secretaries should be female, young, good looking, blonde if possible, wearing a pair of black-rimmed glasses.



Fig. 3<sup>7</sup>

Dedeman, a Romanian DIY company, makes use of gender innuendos in their street advertising. The ad would sound like this: *That moment when he/she moves in with you and he/she likes only bubble baths.* In Romanian grammar a sentence does not have to contain a subject, since it can be inferred, therefore the ad relies heavily on the

gendered assumption that it is women who like bubble baths and hence there is no doubt as to who moved in with whom.

While making use of gender stereotypes and gender innuendos – all referring to women – national advertising appears quite reserved when it comes to the use of female bodies as marketable commodities.

<sup>5</sup>Romaine, S.1999 *Communicating Gender*, Mahwah NJ Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. p. 27

<sup>6</sup>National street advertising for a stationary company OVM (March 2017)

<sup>7</sup>National street advertising Dedeman (March 2017)

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Unfortunately, this is not the case when it comes to small local businesses in Oradea, who chose to attract their clients by making gratuitous use of female bodies. Whether they are selling tools, fixing cars or advertising a new business, they are convinced that sex sells, and that the use of almost naked women will ensure their success. They seem to overlook the fact that the visual imagery provided by the media can have a powerful impact on our attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours, since it can contribute meanings and associations entirely apart and of much greater significance.



Fig. 4<sup>8</sup>

All these aspects represent a most immediate testimony to a patriarchal system, the legacy of a bygone communist era, because, as Vladimir Pasti<sup>9</sup> pointed out ‘of a patriarchal communist system, Romania abolished only communism.’

However, things are not as bleak as they look. Slowly but steadily, there are signs that things are beginning to change. And here are just a

<sup>8</sup>Local advertising February 2017

<sup>9</sup>Pasti, V. 2003. *Ultima inegalitate. Relatiile de gen in Romania*. Editura Polirom, p. 47

few: skirt-bike Oradea is a community for women who embrace their feminine side and let it run loose on the streets of their cities, on the two wheels of their bicycles; Toastmasters organized in March a speech event dedicated to women ‘Speeches with the scent of a woman’, encouraging women to become real leaders, having as special guests women who succeeded in a world of men; Bucharest Pride 2016 (the organizers of the Diversity March held in Bucharest in 2016) and Feminism Romania shared on their blogs and Facebook pages the story of a lesbian mother from Oradea, mother of two, accepted by the society and social institutions in her hometown.

Any city is the embodiment of the hopes, dreams, attitudes of its citizens. The world changes at a fast pace, hence the need for cities to re-invent themselves in order to reflect the new reality and the necessity to raise people’s awareness to the importance of the way in which cities treat their inhabitants, be them male or female and the messages that stem from it.

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**LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATION  
STUDIES**



# Quantitative Methods for the Analysis of Characters in Drama

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**Abstract;** A considerable amount of interest has been expressed in recent years with regard to the potential of the application of corpus linguistics techniques to the analysis of literary texts. The field of studies that has emerged, Corpus Stylistics, is very much in an embryonic stage. This paper outlines some main features and key studies and then proceeds to describe, illustrate and discuss some quantitative methods for the analysis of characters in drama texts. First of all, the fundamental point of character identification within the text is dealt with. Subsequently, a number of methods are examined: average turn length; type/token ratio; and dispersion. Finally, the possibility of utilising Social Network Analysis tools for the analysis of character interaction is discussed. The texts used for the illustration of the methods are Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

**Key words:** Corpus stylistics, Average turn length, Type-token ratio, Dispersion, Social Network Analysis

## Introduction

A growing body of work has emerged in recent years featuring the application of corpus linguistics techniques to the study of literary texts. This field of study, halfway between the rigorously objective, quantitative methods of the former and the more humanistic approach of the latter, has been termed “corpus stylistics”.

On several occasions, authors writing on corpus stylistics have noted that work in the field is still very much exploratory. Amador-Moreno (2010:533) observes that the “use of computers for the systematic analysis of fictional dialogue is still in its infancy”, while Culpeper (2009:32) calls it a “fledgling field”. As a result, a whole series of fundamental questions are very much open to discussion. To name a few of these:

Are there differences between genres in terms of how much they can benefit from the application of corpus stylistics techniques?

What are the most effective tools in the corpus linguist's repertory for the analysis of literary texts? Can these be used “out-of-the-box”, or must modifications be made to cater for the rather special nature of creative writing?

What relationship should the field have with the two fields from which it gains its name? Should it be more the domain of the corpus linguist, or of the stylistician, or of both?

With regards to its relationship with more traditional literary analysis, an essential point to clarify is that of the intent behind this approach to such texts. The animating principle is that of providing extra tools to bolster the centuries-old tradition of literary analysis, as corpus-based “methods help us to focus on salient features on the textual surface, but corpus methods alone cannot access the relevance of these features for the process of reading a text and creating a textual world in the reader's mind” (Mahlberg, 2012:77). Corpus stylistics aims to provide “new resources that can usefully complement analysts' intuitions, and therefore strengthen and refine the conclusions drawn from the intensive analysis of individual texts.” (Semino, 2004:428). Furthermore, Semino and Short (2004:7) declare their aim to straddle the two disciplines, presumably inviting other scholars to do likewise:

The fact that we are currently involved in corpus-based work, and the quantification that it entails, does not mean that we have stopped doing the qualitative textual analysis that is at the heart of the field of stylistic analysis.[...] We will continue to use our intuition in arriving at theories, interpretations of texts and so on, and we will not give up our interest in investigating informant reactions to texts in order to compare them with stylistic analyses or stylistic theories — or indeed any other kind of work we, or other stylisticians, typically engage in.

A considerable amount of the work carried out in the field of corpus stylistics so far has had to do with the analysis of fiction. The work carried out by Michaela Mahlberg and colleagues has been pioneering and has dealt with an array of aspects of the works of Charles Dickens. Corpus-based techniques and tools have been used to identify the most frequent and most relevant clusters (Mahlberg, 2007), to quantify and analyse suspended quotations (Mahlberg and Smith, 2012), which are frequently seen to contain character descriptions, and “to uncover patterns across a text that can make claims for the generation of subtle textural effects in a reader's mind” (Stockwell and Mahlberg, 2015).

Amador-Moreno (2010) compares the representation of speech in fiction with spoken corpora. In her analysis of the Irish novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nightdress*, she finds that *like*, used as a discourse marker, is even more frequent than in a corpus of comparable real-world speech, the Limerick Corpus of Irish English. She then proceeds to examine instances in both corpora, concluding that “the functional behaviour of the discourse marker *like* in the fictional and non-fictional contexts in Irish English is very similar” (Amador-Moreno, 2010:539).

Other authors have turned their attention to the application of corpus techniques to the study of the language of drama, and in particular the different features of individual characters, or groups of characters. For example, McIntyre & Walker (2010) describe a study of two different types of literary text: poetry (William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*) and drama. Analysis of the latter regards 200,000 tokens from the scripts of Hollywood blockbusters. Amongst the research questions is the following: "Is there a difference in the amount of male and female speech in the action blockbuster?" In order to address this query, mark-up was added to the film-scripts providing each character with a unique identifier and a gender tag. The authors were able to demonstrate that "male characters have a greater screen presence than female characters and are dominant in that sense" (McIntyre & Walker, 2010:524). A particularly influential study is that by Culpeper (2009), who extracted the lines of the six most important characters in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: Romeo, Juliet, Capulet, Nurse, Mercutio and Friar Laurence. The sum of each of the characters' lines is then treated as a mini-corpus that can be compared with the lines of the other five characters taken as a whole. Part of the procedure involved annotation for part-of-speech and semantic domain, using CLAWS and WMATRIX, respectively, both of which were developed at Lancaster University. Three types of comparison were availed of: keyword analysis, key part-of-speech analysis, and key semantic domain analysis with the hypothesis that "the text for each character is highly likely to constitute a different, and sometimes radically different, kind of style" (Culpeper, 2009:31).

The current work aims to make a contribution to such studies of the language of drama from two perspectives. The first is to explicitly describe methodologies for the (semi-)automatic extraction of characters' speech in drama texts. Corpus linguistics techniques are effective with large quantities of data, and the necessity to manual tag characters' turns clearly limits the quantities of data that can be processed. The second aspect that will be covered concerns the description of a number of quantitative techniques that can be applied to character speech, and a discussion of the contribution each may make to our interpretation of the text.

### **The works and versions analysed**

The plays which have been chosen for analysis are William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*. The reasons for these choices are similar to those motivating a similar choice by Culpeper (2009: 31): "Shakespeare's plays have the advantage that they are relatively well known throughout the world, and thus many readers will be able to relate at least to some degree to the characters, particularly the

major ones, discussed." In a later work (Culpeper, 2014) the same author makes reference to the scarcity of stage directions in Shakespeare's plays, making the character's lines to all intents and purposes the sole basis from which we may derive character impressions. For the purposes of the current study, in which character's turns are quantified, the lack of stage directions is also an advantage, as such material may be difficult to identify automatically and hence end up being attributed to a character, rather than being discarded. The fact that these plays are familiar to a great number of people also suits that purposes of this paper, which aims to make some methodological points, more than contribute to the interpretation of the works themselves. Finally, *Romeo and Juliet* has already been subjected to corpus-based analysis, both by Scott and Tribble (2006) and, as noted above, Culpeper (2009). It therefore appears appropriate to include it, so as to highlight the insight that is gained if all the corpus stylistics techniques at our disposal are trained on the same text.

<b>Play</b>	<b>URL</b>	<b>Prepared by</b>
Hamlet	<a href="https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1524/pg1524.txt">https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1524/pg1524.txt</a>	Dianne Bean
Romeo and Juliet	<a href="https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1112/pg1112.txt">https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1112/pg1112.txt</a>	World Library Inc.
Merchant of Venice	<a href="https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2243/pg2243.txt">https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2243/pg2243.txt</a>	David Reed

Table 1. Details of texts downloaded from Project Gutenberg.

The texts of the works chosen were downloaded from the Project Gutenberg site (the details of which are shown in Table 1) and saved as plain text files. There is some controversy as to whether texts from this source should be used. Mahlberg (2007:224) warns that Project Gutenberg does not follow consistent standards for the production of digital copies of literary texts. Presumably this is due to the fact that they are mainly prepared by volunteers. On the other hand, Lindquist, (2009:22), while conceding that the quality of the texts from this source may not correspond 100% to their printed equivalents, concludes that "for most linguistic purposes it is quite sufficient". For the purposes of the current work, which is largely quantitative in nature, the quality of the texts is deemed adequate.

### **Identifying Characters**

The first step in the process of automatically separating the text into the lines spoken by each character is that of identifying how the characters are referred to within the text. While this may initially appear to be a

simple matter, in actual fact, it may become more complex in its realisation, for at least two reasons:

1) many plays begin with a *Dramatis Personae* listing all the characters in the play. However, these generally contain the full names of the characters, whereas throughout the text these names are often abbreviated. So, in the *Hamlet* text, for example, Hamlet and Horatio, become Ham. and Hor.

2) assuming that the use of such abbreviations is consistent may prove ill-advised, as examination of Scene I, Act I of *The Merchant of Venice*, shows that Antonio's lines are marked: Anthonio. [sic] Anth. [sic] Ant. and An.

As a result, it may be preferable to analyze the text automatically in an attempt to isolate all strings attributing lines to characters. The texts in question all adopt a similar policy for indicating characters: the character's name is usually abbreviated and followed by a full stop. We can hence analyze the texts line by line applying the following condition: if the new line contains a full stop within the first, say, 10 characters, the string up to and including the full stop is appended to a list. At the end of the process the list is then collapsed i.e. a wordlist is formed, indicating item and frequency. The results for this procedure as applied to *The Merchant of Venice*, can be seen in Table 2.

String	Freq.	String	Freq.	String	Freq.	String	Freq.	String	Freq.
Por.	111	Bas.	17	Mes.	5	Cornets.	1	My L[ord].	1
Bass.	56	Loren.	16	Portia.	5	Exit Iew.	1	Nerris.	1
Shy.	48	Sol.	16	Duke.	4	Exit Le.	1	Port.	1
Gra.	46	Clo.	13	Duk.	3	Exit.	1	Sala.	1
Ant.	33	Du.	11	Laun.	3	FINIS.	1	Salar.	1
Ner.	32	Enter.	11	Nerrissa.	3	Flo.	1	Salino.	1
Iew.	31	Clow.	8	Sola.	3	Grat.	1	Ser.	1
Lor.	30	Mor.	8	Leon.	2	Grati.	1	adue.	1
Sal.	29	Tub.	8	All.	1	Iess.	1	downe.	1
Exeunt.	21	An.	7	Antho.	1	Iessica.	1	himselfe.	1
Gob.	19	Iessi.	6	Anthonio.	1	Lau.	1	in that.	1
Ies.	18	Anth.	5	Balth.	1	Lorens.	1	my sted.	1
Lan.	18	Ar.	5	Clown.	1	Musicke.	1	runne.	1

Table 2. Results of automatic processing of texts for character identification as applied to *The Merchant of Venice*.

The results contain a number of false positives e.g. *adue*, *downe*, *himselfe* etc. These usually have a frequency of just 1 and can immediately be

discarded. As mentioned above, the naming policy used is not always consistent. This becomes even more clear when the list is ordered alphabetically (not shown). As a result, a single identifier must be chosen for each character, and variants in the text must be replaced. A more problematic case is that of two characters who are identified in the text with two completely different names: Shy. (Shylock) a.k.a. Iew. and Gob. a.k.a. Lan. Lau. and Laun. (Launcelot Gobbo). Such cases underline how important it is to be familiar with the literary text under examination; in typical corpus studies, to the contrary, the researcher is not expected to have any knowledge whatsoever of the actual content of the texts composing the corpus.

*The Merchant of Venice* text was chosen deliberately as an illustration, as the rather arbitrary naming choices highlight some of the dangers of relying on etexts. In any case, it is always advisable to compare results with the *Dramatis Personae* of the text in hand, or even that of other editions of the same work, if need be. These are, however, minor problems, that can easily be resolved. A more intricate case is that where the character names are not followed by a symbol such as a full stop or colon. Character names at the start of the line are often printed in bold, a distinction which is lost when the text is converted into plain text. In such cases it may be necessary to form a wordlist of the first words of all new lines. When ordered by frequency, main characters will appear at the top of the list, secondary characters may, however, come after high frequency items such as *the*, *this*, *do* etc. Such wordlists would have to be created not only for single words (i.e. single names), but also the first two words of each line, so as to identify characters with combinations of name+surname, title+surname, and so forth.

### **Character's turns and tokens**

Once each character has been provided with a unique identifier, we may then proceed to divide the text into the lines spoken by each character. When a character's identifier is found at the start of a new line, all the following tokens are attributed to this character until a new character identifier is found. The results can be saved to separate text files for further analysis. The next step in the procedure is that of counting the number of tokens in each file. Such data can then be plotted against the number of turns each character has in the play, in order to see if there are differences in how each character uses the floor. Figure 1 shows such a graph for *The Merchant of Venice*.

## Quantitative Methods for the Analysis of Characters in Drama

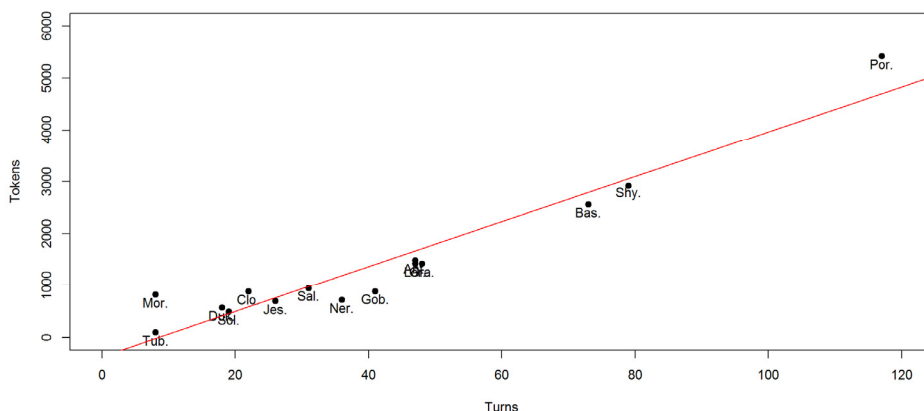


Figure 1. Scatterplot of character turns v. character tokens for *The Merchant of Venice*.

What is most striking is the fact that Antonio, the character referred to in the title of the play, does very little talking at all, being demoted to the level of secondary character alongside his friends Graziano and Lorenzo. The main character of the play is quite clearly Portia, followed at a certain distance by Shylock and Bassanio. A second point is that, the regression line through the data shows that very few characters are at any distance from it. Perhaps only one, the Prince of Morocco (Mor), who, with his 8 turns, in which he manages to say 815 tokens, has by far the highest mean turn length (102 tokens, the second highest being Portia with 46 tokens). This confirms the impression of the Prince as being a rather verbose, pompous character.

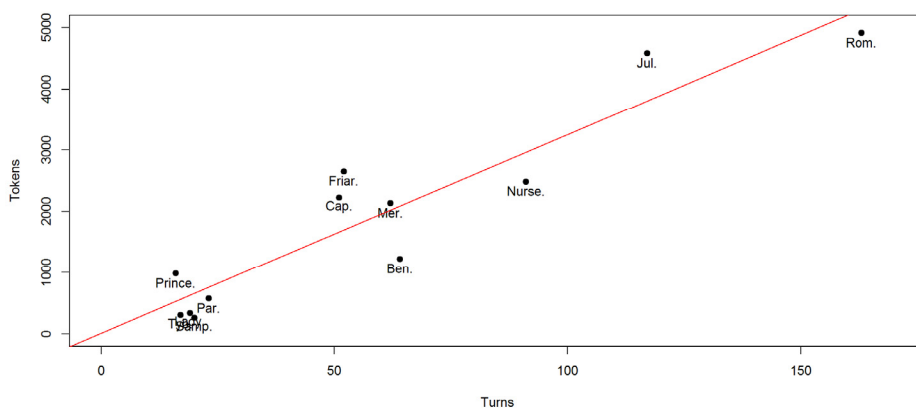


Figure 2. Scatterplot of character turns v. character tokens for *Romeo and Juliet*.

The data for *Romeo and Juliet* (see Fig. 2) show a rather different situation, as there are far greater differences in average turn length. Some

characters, such as the Prince, Lord Capulet and the Friar, are given rather long, speech-like turns, in keeping with their prestigious standing in society. Others, such as Sampson, the servant in the Capulet household, have very short turns. Likewise, Benvolio, while having a similar number of turns to Mercutio, holds the floor for roughly half the time (counted in tokens).

Perhaps the most interesting point concerns the differences between the two main characters. While Romeo has a greater number of turns than Juliet, his beloved utters almost the same number of tokens. This confirms the impression of Romeo as being a public figure, with a greater number of contacts, who speaks in a more conversational style. Juliet, on the other hand, converses mostly just with her Nurse, in a more private context. She clearly confides with and relies on her Nurse, nevertheless, her superiority in rank remains, therefore she has the right to longer turns. The importance of the Nurse is another point to be underlined. She is the character with the highest number of turns after the star-crossed lovers themselves. Similarly the total number of tokens is also very high: she comes fourth, just behind the Friar. Therefore, while considerably lower in rank than most of the other characters, the Nurse is no mere underling, cfr. for example, Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice*.

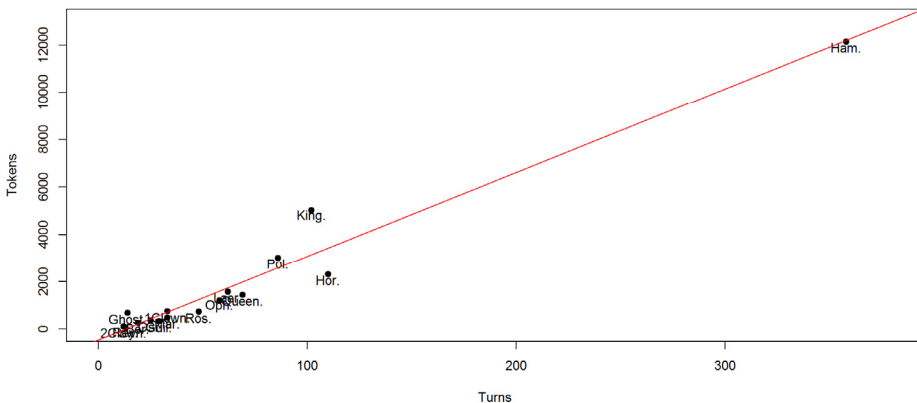


Figure 3. Scatterplot of character turns v. character tokens for *Hamlet*.

Figure 3 displays the results for *Hamlet*. The most conspicuous feature comes as no surprise: Hamlet's lines far outstrip those of all the other characters in the play. A less predictable finding is the difference in the turns of the supporting characters. The King, Polonius and Horatio are each given more or less the same number of turns (about 100), however, the total number of tokens differs considerably. Furthermore, the

ranking in terms of tokens precisely mirrors the social ranking of the characters. Horatio has no other title than "friend of Hamlet", Polonius is chief counsellor to the king, and Claudius, being the king, is the highest ranking character in the world of the play. Claudius's mean turn length (49.28) is more than double that of the mean of all the other main characters (22.52). It is curious to note that the character with the next highest mean turn length (48.29) is no other than the Ghost of the Old King, who apparently has not lost his imposing demeanour even in death.

### Type/Token ratios

Another standard corpus linguistics technique that could be brought to bear on the language of drama is that of the type/token ratio (TTR), which is a measurement of lexical density. This is calculated simply by dividing the total number of tokens by the number of types and then multiplying by one hundred. However, since the TTR is sensitive to text size (larger texts tend to have lower TTRs), the variant called Standardised Type Token Ratio (STTR) must be used. This method entails dividing the sample text into segments of a certain size (usually 1000 tokens), calculating the TTR for each segment and finding the mean of the resulting TTRs. Wordsmith tools 6 was used for this operation.

The results of procedure as applied to the three plays in question are, however, of limited interest. First of all, in order to calculate a STTR a sample of at least 1000 tokens is needed; this clearly reduces the number of characters that can be analysed. For example, there were 7, 6 and 8 characters that met this requirement in *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet*, respectively. Secondly, the results do not display great differences: the STTRs in *Hamlet* varied from 41.6 (Ophelia) to 44.9 (Laertes), whereas those of *The Merchant of Venice* ranged from 40.2 (Shylock) to 46.25 (Bassanio). The only case in which the use of STTRs seems to reveal a point of interest is in *Romeo and Juliet*, where the Nurse is the character with the lowest STTR of all three plays. In keeping with a character of humble birth, with little or no education. However, the measurement fails to show a clear difference between Romeo (44.0) and Mercutio (45.3), who is elsewhere noted for his "highly rhetorical style" (Culpeper, 2009:39). What is more, the STTR of the Friar (45.9) is actually higher.

In short, the evidence from the analysis of these plays suggests that use of Type/Token ratios may be of limited use for identifying differences in the textual features of drama characters.

## Lexical dispersion

Another corpus linguistics technique that may provide insight concerning drama characters is that of lexical dispersion. A feature that is encountered at regular intervals across a text is considered to be more typical than one with a similar number of occurrences that are all concentrated within a brief stretch. An outstanding illustration of this is provided by Stefanowitsch and Gries (2003): when searching for imperative forms of verbs, FOLD was found to be one of the most frequent. The occurrences of this verb were, however, found to be clustered within a single short text concerning origami. There are two ways of dealing with dispersion: one involves 'eyeballing' dispersion plots; the second, which is perhaps a more objective procedure, involves statistical tests which combine frequency and dispersion, to give a single numerical value. Gries (2008) reviews a number of such tests, concluding that Average Reduced Frequency (ARF) (Savický & Hlaváčová, 2002) is the most effective.

The same technique could be applied to character turns within a drama text to elicit information about the dispersion of the character's presence throughout the text. In practical terms, this would help differentiate between characters whose turns are all concentrated within a single scene and those who appear in a number of different scenes with a limited number of turns in each. The potential of this technique will be explored by making reference to *Hamlet*.

	Character	N. turns	ARF		Character	N. turns	ARF
1	Ham.	358	167.58	9	1Clown.	33	2.49
2	Hor.	111	34.87	10	Mar.	35	6.49
3	King.	108	43.38	11	Guil.	33	8.69
4	Pol.	86	25.6	12	Osr.	25	2.77
5	Queen.	74	24.88	13	Ber.	21	1.94
6	Laer.	62	13.56	14	Ghost.	14	2.65
7	Oph.	58	12.98	15	Rey.	13	1.24
8	Ros.	51	12.92	16	2Clown.	12	1.15

Table 3. Number of turns and Average Reduced Frequency for the most important characters in *Hamlet*.

As can be seen in Table 3, the order of the AVF values generally mirrors that of the number of turns. There are two notable exceptions: Horatio, while having a slightly higher number of turns than the King (111 as opposed to 108), has a considerably lower ARF (Horatio: 34.87; King: 43.38). The dispersion plot in Fig. 4 explains this: Horatio is present mainly at the start and the end of the play, while the King is present in a more or less regular fashion throughout the work.

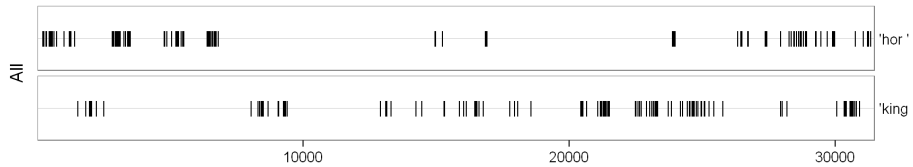


Figure 4. Dispersion plot for Horatio (hor) and the King (king) in *Hamlet*.

An even more noticeable case is that of the First Clown (a.k.a. The (First) Gravedigger), who has a similar number of turns to Marcellus and Guildenstern: 33, 35 and 33, respectively. The ARF values are, however, strikingly different: 2.49, 6.49 and 8.69, respectively. Again reference to a dispersion plot (Fig. 5) illustrates the difference: in Act V scene I, the First Clown has quite a long conversation, first with another gravedigger and then with Hamlet, but appears nowhere else in the play. Marcellus appears only at the start of the play, but is present throughout Act I, whereas Guildenstern's presence ranges from Act II scene II to Act IV scene II. The First Clown, in fact, has little to do with the plot as such, but rather has the function of providing comic relief before the gruesome end to the tragedy. Guildenstern, on the other hand, is a considerably more important character, who represents the treachery and falsehood of the court and contributes to the development of the main plot.

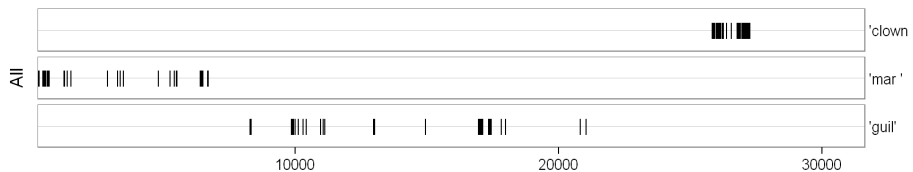


Figure 5. Dispersion plot for the First Clown, a.k.a. Gravedigger (clown), Marcellus (mar) and Guildenstern (guil) in *Hamlet*.

To sum up, on the basis of the analysis of characters in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the use of a dispersion measurement such as Average Reduced Frequency may be of use in distinguishing between characters who appear in a concentrated fashion and those with a less intense, but more regular presence throughout a play.

### Social Network Analysis

A great deal of attention has been paid in recent years to the ways in which people behave and interact in offline and ever more frequently in online environments. This has given rise to a whole new methodology

called Social Network Analysis (SNA). One of the earliest studies of this type can be found in Moreno (1960: 35), in which 26 schoolgirls were asked to express who their first and second choices for dining partner were. As can be imagined some girls were more popular than others and were cited more times than the average of two, others, conversely were seen to be not very sought after. Some groups of two or more girls expressed a mutual preference, suggesting that in the real world these would constitute highly connected components through which information such as gossip would travel more quickly than in other parts of the network. Modern information technology makes it easy to create networks with thousands of components, and subjects that have been studied range from Facebook friend networks, to connections between bloggers, to links between Wikipedia pages (Easley & Kleinberg, 2010).

The fact that such a methodology could be applied to the study of the interactions of characters in literary works has not gone unnoticed, and one textbook example of a social network is based on Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (Knuth, 1993; Hansen et al, 2010) in which characters are judged to be connected if they appear within the same chapter. Plotting and elaborating such data reveals a great deal about the novel: as can be imagined, Valjean, the main character in the novel, co-occurs with almost all the other characters. The elaboration of the data can also reveal highly connected groupings such as that revolving around Marius, and another dominated by the Thénardiens.

Drama texts can also be examined using SNA tools, as texts of this genre can be analysed automatically far more easily than those of novels, for three reasons:

- drama texts are largely composed of direct speech, each instance of which is attributed to a given character, the name of which generally remains the same throughout the play. Speech attribution is also usually marked formally (by a following colon, full stop, or tab character). On the other hand, the variation of characters' names is extremely common in narrative texts, where first names, family names, and combinations of these are freely interchanged. Nicknames and pseudonyms are also commonplace (e.g. Esther Summerson becomes "Dame Durden" in *Bleak House*; the main character in *David Copperfield* is referred to with an array of names including "Davy", "Daisy", "Doody", "Trot" and "Trotwood Copperfield"; in *Les Misérables* Valjean, in an attempt to flee the indefatigable Javert, takes on a number of false identities).
- associated with the first point is the fact that the appearance of a character's name in a narrative text does not necessarily mean

that the character is “physically” present in a particular scene. It may be the case that the character is merely being discussed by other characters.

- Since drama texts are written to be enacted on the stage, scene changes tend to be announced formally within the text itself. In narrative texts, to the contrary, the setting may alternate frequently, even within the same chapter, therefore co-occurrence within the same chapter, as used by Knuth (1993), does not necessarily imply that the characters are related in some way within the plot.

In order to apply SNA to the three Shakespeare plays under examination in this paper, a list was formed of all the character speech attributions. In light of point 3 above, *Act* and *Scene* were also included as dummy characters to be discarded at a later stage. Thereafter a matrix of all the characters was formed, and each time two characters had an adjacent turn, the respectively cell in the matrix was augmented by one. This methodology is believed to be a refinement of procedures adopted in previous attempts to analyse drama works by way of SNA tools. Stiller et al (2003) analyse ten Shakespeare plays, including *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, in an attempt to determine how much “cliques and groups portrayed in the plays correspond closely to those which have been observed in spontaneous human interaction” (Stiller et al 2003:397). The criteria adopted is that of “tabulating the speaking characters present on the stage at each time slice through the play” (op. cit., 399). Moretti (2011) highlights the shortcomings of this approach, as characters who are on the stage together, but do not speak to each other, may be nevertheless linked. However, Moretti's procedure fails to quantify the contact between characters, as he explicitly states that he “just couldn't find a non-clumsy way to visualize weight” (op. Cit., 3).

The resulting matrix was then elaborated in a format suitable for importation into the Gephi program for network visualisation (character names were saved to a nodes file; the number of adjacent turns for each pair of characters was saved to an undirected edges file). For the purposes of this study, analysis was limited to that of the ten characters with the highest number of turns.

Once imported into the Gephi program, the data was elaborated in the following way:

- node size was set as total number of turns
- edge size was set as the number of adjacent turns
- the nodes were arranged using the 'Force Atlas 2' algorithm, in which nodes connected with relatively heavy edges are attracted and those with relatively light edges are repulsed.

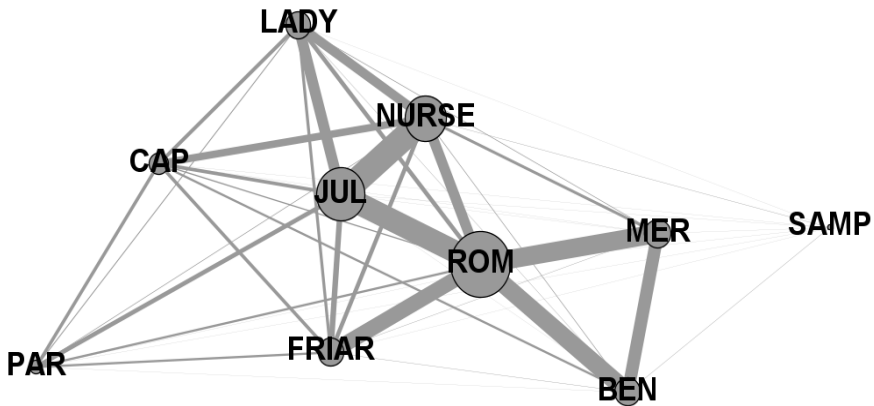


Fig. 6. Graph of adjacent turns for the ten characters in *Romeo and Juliet* with the highest number of turns.

The resulting graph for *Romeo and Juliet* can be seen in figure 6. At a glance one can see that the two main characters have very different interaction patterns. Romeo has a substantial number of adjacent turns with five other characters, while Juliet interacts only with two characters, Romeo and the Nurse. The bond between Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio is suggested by their strong degree of interconnectedness.

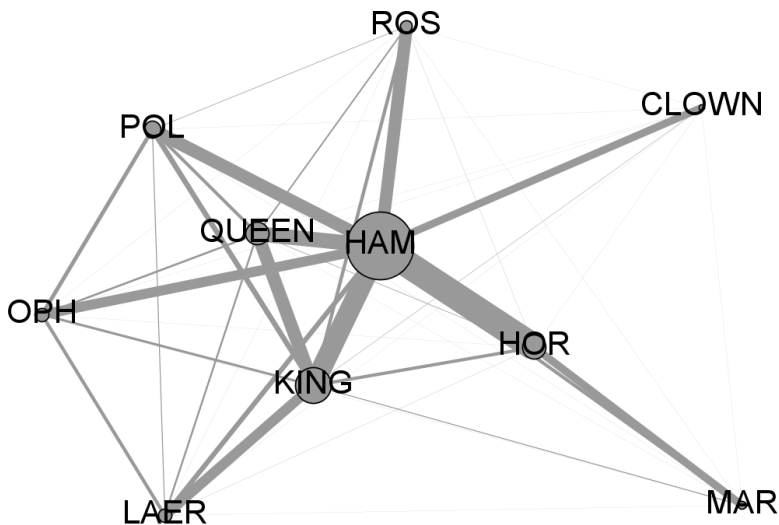


Fig. 7. Graph of adjacent turns for the ten characters in *Hamlet* with the highest number of turns

The graph of adjacent turns for *Romeo and Juliet* is suggestive of a high degree of interconnectedness between the characters. It can be compared with that for *Hamlet* (Fig. 7), with which it contrasts strongly.

In this case it emerges that the play is far more focussed on a single character, the prince of Denmark, and almost all of the heavier edges link him with another character. The only exception is, perhaps, the edge linking the King and the Queen. Apart from that, all the characters appear to be of relevance only with respect to their relationship with the Prince. For example, the edge linking Polonius to Hamlet is heavier than that to the King, the Queen, and to his son and daughter, Laertes and Ophelia. The role of Horatio as Hamlet's sidekick is particularly evident, as he has only fleeting contact with other characters.

A final example will be provided: that of *the Merchant of Venice* (Fig 8). In this case a far greater degree of interrelatedness can be observed between the characters. While a single main character, Portia, can be perceived, her presence is far less dominant in the play than Hamlet's. To the contrary the graph displays a series of triangular relationships, the most important of which is that between Portia, Shylock and Bassanio. Others include that between Antonio, Shylock and Bassanio, and between Portia, Nerissa and Gratiano. The weight of the edge between Lorenzo and Jessica, in comparison to those with all the other characters in the play, is suggestive of an exclusive relationship. In fact, we know the characters have a secret affair, resulting in an elopement which enrages Jessica's father, Shylock. On the whole, the graphical rendering of the turns points towards a work with a number of sub-communities of characters, which in turn suggests that there are a number of sub-plots of similar or equal importance.

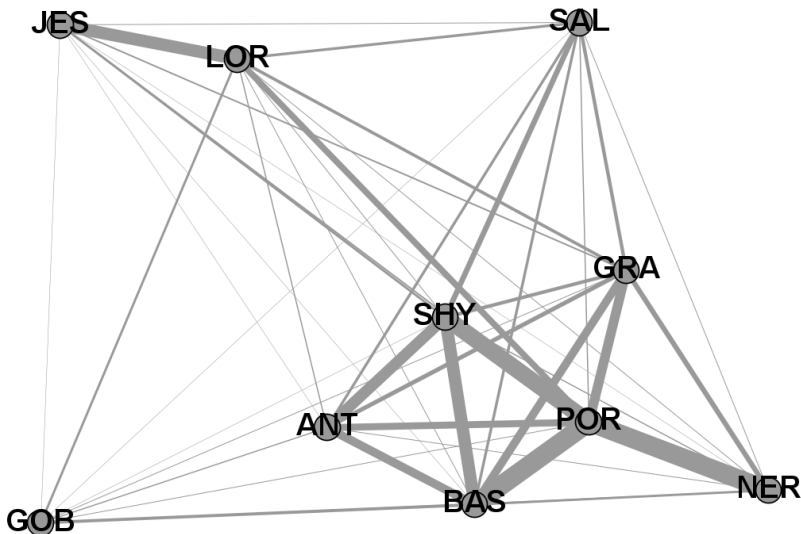


Fig. 8. Graph of adjacent turns for the ten characters in *The Merchant of Venice* with the highest number of turns

A methodological point must be made before concluding this section. It is to be borne in mind that, for the purposes of this study, the graphs were elaborated on data concerning the number of adjacent turns shared by each pair of characters. The length of these turns is not factored into the data. Therefore the graphs show simply “who is talking to whom”, not only do they give no indication of what is being said, information as to how much is being said is also absent. Nevertheless, the latter information can be obtained using the methods outlined in preceding sections of this paper, and the various approaches can be used in a complementary fashion.

### Conclusions

This paper has presented a number of techniques that can be availed of to provide quantitative information to assist the classification and interpretation of characters in works of drama. Rather than attempt to provide new insight into the works discussed, the aim has been that of using the well-known works to illustrate the usefulness, and when necessary, the caveats, of the methods. Some of the methods that have been outlined, such as the number of turns, average turn length, and SNA may be of use both in the analysis of a single work and the comparison of a number of works, by the same or different authors. For example, SNA methods yield objective representations displaying whether a work is dominated by a single character, or whether there are a number of somewhat isolated groups of highly connected characters, indicative of multiple plots. The analysis of a number of works by the same author may reveal whether he or she has preferences as to the typology adopted. Other methods, such as the use of Average Reduced Frequency to measure the dispersion of characters' lines, are more useful for the analysis of a single work.

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## On Relative Words and Relative Clauses

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**Abstract;** Starting from well-known definitions and classifications, the present paper tries to highlight the relevance of two main notions, i.e. relative clauses and their subordinators/connectors, the so called relative words-pronouns, adjectives and adverbs. The paper focuses mainly on structures, positions, confusions and differences.

**Key words:** relative clauses, subordinators, position, structure

*Relative clauses* are a kind of subordinate clauses attached to nouns within a noun phrase. Since they add information to a noun, they may also be called *adjective clauses*. The role of adjective clauses is to *modify* (describe, identify, make specific) the noun phrases that they follow.

A relative clause is usually introduced by relative pronouns which may occur either as subjects (*who, which, that*), or as direct objects (*whom, which, that*), or in prepositional phrases (*to whom, with which, by which*, etc). Sometimes, the relative clause is introduced by relative adjectives (*what, which* and the possessive relative adjective *whose*), or by relative adverbs (*when, why, where* and *how*), which are considered, by some grammarians, as relative pronouns as well. These words are called *relative* because in a sentence, they *relate* to a noun that has already been mentioned.

The structure of a relative clause is relatively simple: in order to obtain a relative clause we start from a clause that ends with a noun, then we take a sentence, make the necessary changes to turn it into a subordinate clause, and attach this clause to the noun of the first clause. That noun has to be shared by both sentences involved in the structure.

e.g. *You met **my cousin**.*

***My cousin** is a well-known doctor.*

The two sentences share the noun (phrase) *my cousin*. In order to make a relative clause, the second sentence has to suffer a change, i.e. to

have the noun *my cousin* replaced by an appropriate relative word: a pronoun (*who, whom, that, which, whose*), an adjective (*that, which*) or an adverb (*when, where, how*), chosen on the basis of a combination of syntax and meaning. In this case, a relative pronoun is required to be used, the relative pronoun *who*, to be more specific, since it is used to refer to a person (*my cousin*)

e.g. *You met my cousin [who is a well-known doctor].*

The relative pronoun is characterized by two distinctive features: it functions as a subordinating conjunction and it has a syntactic function in the subordinate clause. In the previous example, the relative pronoun *who* is a connecting word, but it is also the subject of the relative clause in the new sentence:

e.g. *You met my cousin.*

*My cousin is a well-known doctor.*

*You met my cousin [who is a well-known doctor].*

In the first simple sentence the subject is *you*, the predicate is *met*, the direct object is *my cousin*. In the second simple sentence, *my cousin* is the subject, the predicate is *is a well-known doctor*. In the new complex sentence, the words in the main clause preserve their initial function, while in the subordinate relative clause, the relative pronoun, i.e. the connecting word *who* becomes the subject.

Things are different in the following case, in which the internal structure of a relative clause becomes more complex:

e.g. *You met my cousin.*

*I appreciate my cousin for being a well-known doctor.*

*You met my cousin [whom I appreciate for being a well-known doctor].*

In the first two sentences *my cousin* functions as a direct object, and in the new formed complex sentence the relative pronoun *whom* is a connecting word and it is also a direct object in the subordinate relative clause. In this situation, the relative clause was formed differently: the relative pronoun *whom* did not only replace the direct object *my cousin*, but it was also moved to the front of the relative clause.

or: e.g. *I met a boy.*

*Nobody knows anything about the boy.*

*I met a boy [about whom nobody knows anything]. / I met a boy [whom nobody knows anything about]*

In this case, in which a prepositional phrase is involved in the structure of a relative clause, the question that occurs refers to the position of the preposition, i.e. before the relative pronoun (formal speech) or at the end of the sentence (informal speech).

A very special situation refers to the relative clauses introduced by the possessive *whose*, which is always combined with a noun or noun phrase.

E.g.: *The boy is **my cousin**.*

***My cousin** has a black jacket.*

*The boy [**whose** jacket is black] is my cousin.* (the relative clause modifies the subject of the sentence: *the boy*.)

As a consequence of the possibilities, already mentioned above, besides the well-known classification of relative clauses into: restrictive/defining, non-restrictive/non-defining and sentential, the subordinate relative clauses also fall into other major types:

- Relative clauses in which the relative pronoun is the subject of the clause;
- Relative clauses in which the relative pronoun has other functions than the subject of the clause (object or complement).

We can also discuss about relative clauses introduced by relative adverbs like *when*, *where*, a.s.o, adding information about time, place, manner.

e.g. *The house was beautiful.*

*I was born in this house.*

*The house [where I was born was beautiful].*

or *The day was memorable.*

*I graduated that day.*

*The day [when I graduated was memorable].*

In these examples, the relative adverbs may be replaced by the relative pronoun *which*, preceded by a preposition.

e.g. *The house [where I was born was beautiful].* becomes

*The house [in which I was born was beautiful].*

*The day [when I graduated was memorable].* becomes

*The day [on which I graduated was memorable].*

Being added to a noun, relative clauses can occur in the middle or at the end of sentences:

## On Relative Words and Relative Clauses

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Eg. *The boy [whom you met yesterday] is my cousin.* (the relative clause is placed in the middle of the sentence)

*I know the boy [whom you met yesterday].* (the relative clause is placed at the end of the sentence)

The correct position of a relative clause in a sentence is of utmost importance.

e.g. \* *The boy has a blue car [whom you met].*(incorrect)

*The boy [whom you met] has a blue car.*(correct)

Or \* *The blue car is my cousin's [that is parked in front of the house].*(incorrect)

*The blue car [that is parked in front of the house] is my cousin's.*(correct)

Sometimes, an incorrect word order may lead to confusions.

e.g. \* *My cousin is the boy [who has blue eyes and black hair] [who is sitting next to John].* (incorrect, confusing)

\* *My cousin is the boy [who is sitting next to John] [who has blue eyes and black hair].* (may be correct, but confusing)

*My cousin is the blue-eyed and black-haired boy, [who is sitting next to John].* (correct, clear)

When a relative pronoun is the subject of the relative clause, its presence is always required as a subordinating word. If its function is other than that of a subject, the relative pronoun may be omitted in many cases.

e.g. *You met my cousin [who is a well-known doctor].*(*who*-is the subject and has to be present)

*You met my cousin [whom I appreciate for being a well-known doctor].*(*whom*-although not a subject, but a direct object, is still required)

*The boy [whom you met yesterday] is my cousin.*(*whom*-is not necessarily required, and therefore it may be omitted: *The boy [you met yesterday] is my cousin.*)

*I know the boy [whom you met yesterday].* (*whom*-is not necessarily required, and therefore it may be omitted: *I know the boy [you met yesterday].*)

*I met a boy [about whom nobody knows anything].*(*whom*-although not a subject, but a prepositional object, is still required together with the preposition)

*I met a boy [whom nobody knows anything about] .(whom-is not necessarily required, and therefore it may be omitted, but the preposition is preserved: I met a boy [nobody knows anything about].*

Sometimes, the relative pronoun is omitted together with the auxiliary verb *to be*:

e.g. *The boy who is reading the morning newspaper is my cousin.*  
becomes:

*The boy (~~who is~~) reading the morning newspaper is my cousin.*

or *The boy who has been praised for his results is my cousin.*  
becomes:

*The boy (~~who has been~~) praised for his results is my cousin.*

The relative pronoun may also be omitted along with the verb *to have*, when it means *to own*, *to possess*, being replaced by a preposition (usually *with*).

e.g. *The boy [who has a black jacket is my cousin].* becomes:

*The boy [~~who has~~] with a black jacket is my cousin].*

It is not recommended to use a relative pronoun and a subject pronoun in the relative clause:

e.g. \**You met my cousin [who he is a well-known doctor].*(incorrect)

*You met my cousin [who is a well-known doctor].* (correct)

Or *The blue car [that it is parked in front of the house] is my cousin's.* (incorrect)

*The blue car [that is parked in front of the house] is my cousin's.*  
(correct)

A relative clause may be easily confused with an appositive clause, since both describe/determine a noun from the main clause. The difference between them is obvious if we take into consideration several aspects:

- A relative clause is a derived structure from two primary sentences which share the same noun; that noun becomes the head-word for the new relative clause;
- it includes in its internal structure the same noun that it determines, the relative pronoun meaning the same thing as the noun determined by the subordinate relative clause

e.g. *You met my cousin.* (primary sentence)

*My cousin is a well-known doctor.* (primary sentence)

*You met my cousin [who is a well-known doctor].* (derived sentence in which *who* means *my cousin*)

- The relative pronoun has a double value in the relative clause: that of a connector/a subordinator and that of a part of sentence: subject, object, complement;
- An appositive clause, such as:

E.g. *John doesn't believe the fact [that we move to London]*

is not a derived structure from two primary sentences:

*John doesn't believe the fact.*

*We move to London.*

but a combination of the two, by means of the subordinator *that*, which is not a relative pronoun, and therefore it functions only as a connector, without being a part of sentence;

- The two primary sentences do not share the same noun;
- The appositive clause does not include the noun that it determines; the subordinator *that* does not mean *fact*, while *fact* means *we move to London*
- On the other hand, an appositive clause may be preceded by appositive words, such as: *i.e.*, *a.k.a.*, *in other words*, *namely*, *that is to say*, *a.s.o.*

We can conclude saying that relative/adjective clauses are a special type of subordinate clauses in English, which, although uncomplicated at first sight, raise difficulties in understanding and use.

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## Culture-Bound Issues in Translating Sitcoms

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**Abstract;** This paper focuses on the link between language and culture as rendered in subtitling American TV-sitcoms throughout the timeframe 1989-2016. It also tries to illustrate how to recognize and deal with the cultural mantra of translation and what qualities are demanded in a cultural mediator. In a broader sense, it can be linked to beliefs, manners, values, customs, attitudes, behaviours, expectations, perceptions, fashion and basically anything that individuals living in a given community experience.

**Key words:** subtitling, culture, sitcoms, translation, process

When it comes to recognising such patterns that connect to culture, things may get blurry as “items” easily recognised on the surface, may shadow hidden significances. Just like puzzle pieces that need to be put together to see the image, there needs to be a bigger picture in order to understand one’s cultural heritage.

The main ideas of general theoretical background on the cultural approach which will be supported by examples found in three American TV-broadcasted comedies, each one representative for their timeframe: Seinfeld (1989-1998), F.R.I.E.N.D.S. (1994-2004), The Big Bang Theory (2007-present). The analysis and comparison of their local flavour and the portrayal of the sitcom’s adaptation through time due to the changes in audience taste comes next.

As translation is a complex and challenging process, I believe it is of an utmost importance to avoid cultural clash or foster mutual understanding. As both language and culture are connected, when it comes to translating, there are a few factors to be looked upon. It is vital to mention that in the case of a cultural rendition we are translating ideas, not just words.

Equally important, some cultures and societies remain dominant compared to others, therefore power is a limit to the translation of cultures. As a result of this imbalance, identity of a nation and stereotypes

are terms with much importance when having to render them to different audiences.

Things to consider from the very beginning: target language, target audience, the level of education, age range, time frame and other factors depending on the situation. In this respect, the translator is given the power to decide on the importance of certain cultural aspects and to what extent it is necessary or desirable to translate them. Thus, the chosen cultural mediator must match a certain level of linguistic competence while being both bilingual and bi-cultural.

Language and culture are intertwined to the extent that they link the past, present and future together. Their legacy and their dynamic evolution in the now, fast-paced, globalised world, illustrate the beauty and the challenge of this multicultural puzzle.

We often think we understand a text from a quite different culture, simply because it is written in a language we understand. Sometimes we think we understand more than we actually do, because we gloss over the differences, the areas of significant misunderstanding; and sometimes we think we understand less than we actually do, because ancient cultural hostilities and suspicions (between men and women, adults and children, upper and lower classes, straights and gays, majority and minority members, first-world and third-world speakers of the "same" language) make us exaggerate the differences between us.

- Maybe cultural boundaries cannot be crossed;
- Maybe we are all locked into our groups, our own skins;
- Maybe you have to be a man to understand men, and a woman to understand women;
- Maybe all first-world "understanding" of the third world, male "understanding" of women, majority "understanding" of minorities is the mere projection of hegemonic power, a late form of colonialism.

Still, we go on trying to understand, to bridge the gaps between individuals and groups and we do it specifically by immersing ourselves in cultural otherness, in the way other people talk and act. The translation of cultural specifics, in particular, constitutes one of the most challenging areas of intercultural transfer, to the extent that cultural references are traditionally regarded in the literature as being 'untranslatable'. The strategy chosen depends not only on the translator's deliberate attitudes but on such matters as the clients' view, the general level of education in the country. At the same time, there are also individuals with different backgrounds who interact with other people in specific situations. The size of a country seems to

influence the society's view of translators. The larger the country, the less obvious the need to input from abroad and the less obvious the importance of translation and translators. Conversely, there is more awareness of the need for communication with foreign cultures in small nations.

Furthermore, translators cannot avoid being bound to their own cultures, as this provides the basis for all comparison of cultural differences. But they should be aware and try to avoid projecting their work, their own culture's view of the source culture. "*They should convey an image of the source culture to the target recipients that corresponds to the image the source culture would claim for itself.*"<sup>1</sup>

### **FORM (Old Focus) vs. MESSAGE (New Focus)**

Each language has its own genius. Each language possesses certain distinctive characteristics which give it a special character, e.g., word-building capacities, unique patterns of phrase order, techniques for linking clauses into sentences, markers of discourse, and special discourse types of poetry, proverbs and songs. The issue to be tackled is the dilemma if one should preserve the message with the risk of changing the form.

Since words cover areas of meaning and are not mere points of meaning, and since in different languages the semantic areas of corresponding words are not identical, it is inevitable that the choice of the right word in the receptor language to translate a word in the source-language text depends more on the context than upon a fixed system of verbal consistency.

If all languages differ in form (and this is the essence of their being different languages), then quite naturally the forms must be altered if one is to preserve the content. The extent to which the forms must be changed in order to preserve the meaning will depend on the linguistic and cultural distance between languages.

It goes without saying that translating must aim primarily at "reproducing the message". To do anything else is essentially wrong for a translator to do.

The older attitude in translating was focused on the form of the message, and translators took particular delight in being able to reproduce stylistic specialities, e.g., rhythms, rhymes, plays on words, chiasmus, parallelism and unusual grammatical structures.

The new focus, however, has shifted from the form of the message to the response of the receptor. Even the old question: „Is this a correct translation?“ must be answered in terms of another question, namely: „For whom?“

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<sup>1</sup>Bassnett, Susan.(2002). *Translation Studies*, London, Routledge, p.158

Context must be understood very broadly and should include:

- Polysemiotic context (images, sounds, nonverbal signs, camera shots, etc.);
- Technical constraints at that particular moment in the film (e.g. close-up shot causing difficulty in the case of dubbing, long and fast-paced lines of dialogue for subtitling, etc.);
- The genre of the film;
- The target audience;
- General cultural context (the extent in which cultural references are shared between source and target culture) and so on depending on the circumstances.

With this in mind, as previously discussed, translators are given the final decision. It is their choice to choose what the most relevant method of rendering the content having in mind certain contextual factors.

### **CONSTRAINTS and LIMITATIONS in subtitling**

Subtitling is not an easy work and is performed under considerable constraints. For this reason, effective subtitling requires recognition of these constraints and understanding of the limitations, as viewers simultaneously have to read one or two lines of text at the bottom of the screen in the allotted time, which is generally shorter than for the original dialogue.

[...] a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people has to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist in the end of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. By this definition, we should note that culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behaviour, or emotions. It is rather an organisation of these things. Culture is the total life way of people, the social legacy the individual acquires from his group.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, when it comes to translating humour in subtitling, the subtitler needs to use the limited space and time in an optimal way, in order to virtually retain the meaning effect in the subtitle translation. But the constraints themselves clearly cannot predict whether the meaning effect tends to be preserved or lost in subtitles.

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<sup>2</sup>Duranti, Alessandro. (1997). *Linguistic Anthropology*, Cambridge University Press, p.27.

## THE TRANSLATOR as a CULTURAL MEDIATOR

A cultural rendition asks for a much more widespread knowledge than the text actually provides.

### A good translator will:

- Bring creative energy and imagination to the work, without losing the author's style, message or unique flavour.
- Think carefully about substitutions or changes.
- Take careful consideration of humour, puns, jokes and literary allusions, names of places and characters, as well as cultural references and ideology.
- Correctly translate idiomatic expressions, which lend colour and flavour.
- Consider and represent the author's culture, without turning it into a cultural treatise.
- Carefully recreate the nuances of the original language.

Where do we cross the line to define the points where one culture stops and another begins?

Texts move in space (are carried, mailed, faxed, e-mailed) or in time (are physically preserved for later generations, who may use the language in which they were written in significantly different ways). Cultural difference is largely a function of the distance they move, the distance from the place or time in which they are written to the place or time in which they are read...<sup>3</sup>

“Every text is unique and, at the same time, it is the translation of another text. No text is entirely original because language itself, in its essence, is already a translation: firstly, of the nonverbal world and secondly, since every sign and every phrase is the translation of another sign and another phrase. However, this argument can be turned around without losing any of its validity: all texts are original because every translation is distinctive. Every translation, up to a certain point, is an invention and as such it constitutes a unique text.”<sup>4</sup>

## HUMOUR (word-play, puns and jokes)

Something funny in one language can fall flat in another, without lengthy explanations that certainly will transform at one point the humor involved. On another note, when dealing with humor, one must be aware

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<sup>3</sup>Douglas, Robinson. (2003). *Becoming a Translator: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Translation*, Routledge, London, p.189.

<sup>4</sup>Bassnett, Susan.(2002). *Translation Studies*, Routledge, London, p.46.

of the effect intended and also have in mind consideration of its possible unsuccessful reproduction.

As this presentation deals with cultural peculiarities of comedy sitcom language, one of the most common and challenging puzzles to decipher is, in this case, the play-on-words.

Wordplay is the general name for the various textual phenomena in which structural features of the language(s) used are exploited in order to bring about a communicatively significant confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings.

The cultural side of language will become even more obvious with such items. It is already a fact that most humor-related issues will be untranslatable when translating from the source language into the target language. Some of these items simply do not travel well. They are often too culture-bound to function outside the language of origin.

In this situation, a contextual approach is advisable as it has more chances of translatability. Thus, translating cultural-bound items is probably the most challenging and rewarding aspect, at least from a translator's point of view. To render such items, one must challenge himself/herself to 'think outside the box'.

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SEINFELD, (s.8, ep.13) - "The Comeback"

After being insulted by a co-worker for feasting on shrimp during a meeting, George spends days formulating a comeback.

Co-worker: "Hey George, the ocean called... they're running out of shrimp!"

George: "The jerk store called... they're running out of you!"

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F.R.I.E.N.D.S., (s.7, ep.8) - "The One Where Chandler Doesn't Like Dogs"

Joey: "All right, Rach. The big question is, "does he like you?" All right? Because if he doesn't like you, this is all a moo point."

Rachel: "Huh. A moo point?"

Joey: "Yeah, it's like a cow's opinion. It just doesn't matter. It's moo."

**IDIOMS – COLLOCATIONS - EXPRESSIONS**

*“Idioms constitute another area that is difficult to handle. They present virtually no problem to native speakers and enormous barriers for foreign-language users.”<sup>5</sup>*

*“The translation of idioms takes us a stage further in considering the question of meaning and translation, for idioms, like puns, is culture-bound.”<sup>6</sup>*

To render idioms, there is the demand of familiarity that a translator must take into account. However, when we analyze these demands further, it becomes obvious that they cannot be met for a number of reasons:

- none of us knows all the social cultures and subcultures of our country
- we all speak our idiolects, subsumed to our sociolects, and perhaps even dialects.

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### **SEINFELD (s8.ep.14) – “The Van Buren Boys“**

the evil-eye = a type of look given just before one blows out their birthday candles.

Kramer: “Hey, FDR wants me to drop dead...Yeah, Franklin Delano Romanowski. I go to his birthday party, and just before he blew out his candles, he gives me this look”.

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stink eye = a dirty look given by the street gang named the Van Buren boys to Kramer while dining at a local pizza shop named Lorenzo’s.

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Crook eye = a dirty look achieved by a squinting eye motion combined with a crook of the head to one side; often given to a person giving you the stink eye.

Kramer: “so there I am at Lorenzo’s – loading my slice at the fixing’s bar...and what-not...and I see this guy over at the pizza boxes giving me the stink-eye. So I give him the crook eye back”

### **NEW/ LOAN WORDS**

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<sup>5</sup>Dollerup, Cay. (2006). *Basics of Translation Studies*, EdituraInstitutul European Iasi, p.35.

<sup>6</sup>Bassnett, Susan. (2002). *Translation Studies*, Routledge, London, p.32

Loanwords as well as new words created within a given culture constitute one of the most obvious means for language change and this affects the way recipients see translational products.

Long debates have been held over when to paraphrase when to use the nearest local equivalent, when to coin a new word by translating literally, and when to transcribe.

Martin Riker says: *“Ros Schwartz usually prefers to leave these in the text and to provide the reader with a glossary, which can serve the purpose of explaining more obscure geographical and cultural references, without interrupting the flow of the text with lengthy descriptions and explanations. A map can also prove invaluable for readers. Eliminating traces of foreignness completely can iron out the quirks and flatten the text, and this is a potential problem that calls for vigilance.”*<sup>7</sup>

The translator is then the key-bridge, and will have to find the proper way to deliver the feel, considering the sender, the recipients, the setting, and other issues depending on the case.

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Seinfeld probably added more catch phrases to the English language than any other show in TV history. Brilliant writing that found humour in WORDS (such a concept) as well as SITUATION.

In (s.5, ep.12) - “The Stall” Jerry addresses one of Elaine's many boyfriends as follows: “He’s a male bimbo. He’s a Mimbo”

+

Not every term stood the test of time, but when Joey and Phoebe went on a road trip together to rebuild their friendship after a breakup in (s.6, ep.1) - “The One After Vegas”, “frienaissance“ was born.

Thus, friend + renaissance = a renewal of friendship.

## **RHYME – MUSICALITY - RHYTHM**

The demands of finding equivalent vocabulary that is as rich with allusions and meaning, along with recreating rhythm and rhyme can pose an insurmountable problem. It is, however, often necessary for a translator to do the work him or herself because there is no English

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<sup>7</sup>Gill,Paul.(2009). *Translation in practice*, Dalkey Archive Press , First Edition, p.51.

equivalent available. Some things simply do not translate, and are best dropped, while some must be altered to make their meaning and relevance to the text clear.

In these cases, a translator must be given some sort of a license to make appropriate changes—dropping the original rhyme structure, for example, or altering the rhythm.

The lack of symmetry in languages makes it impossible to render such notions in exactly the same fashion in target languages.

**F.R.I.E.N.D.S., (s.1, ep..13) – “The One With The Boobies”**

Rachel: “Chandler Bing? It's time to see your thing.”

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**F.R.I.E.N.D.S., (s.4. ep.7) – “The One Where Chandler Crosses The Line”**

Chandler: “It’s time to settle down. Make a choice. Pick a lane.”

Joey: “Who’s Elaine?”

### **TERMINOLOGY**

One of the most important aspects of the translator's job is the management of terminology: being exposed to it, evaluating its correctness or appropriateness in specific contexts, storing and retrieving it.

When analyzing the meanings of terms that form the lexical structure in a field of knowledge, terminographers may be interested in various types of relationships. Any or all of these relationships may be pertinent in a given domain, and understanding them is fundamental to concept analysis and the construction of domain knowledge structures.

This wide range of applications and products is all the more important given the current technological and political developments in Europe. The last few decades have been characterized by the exponential spread and implementation of the concept of "globalization".

It’s time to pick up dictionaries.

In our cases, we will have a look upon two characters. In **F.R.I.E.N.D.S.** we are dealing with the character of Ross Geller, a paleontologist, with a PhD from Columbia University, while on the other side, in **TBBT** we have Sheldon Cooper and his genius friends who constantly use nerdy, scientific language in their daily life.

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In **F.R.I.E.N.D.S.’ (s.9, ep.23) - "The One In Barbados"** they all follow Ross to a palaeontologist convention to hear his speech. There, palaeontologist and College professor “Dr Ross Geller” meets a fan to everyone’s surprise.

\*while signing an autograph\* Ross: "Dear Sarah, I dig you Dr Ross Geller".

## STEREOTYPES

These linguistic treasure troves are loaded with cultural inferences. Stereotypes are often influenced by social expectations and so far they have been successfully globalised.

A dominated culture will invariably translate far more of a hegemonic culture than the latter will of the former. Even within the West/North - Europe and the United States in particular - there is a striking imbalance.

America, for example, is in Western eyes the New Found Land where dreams come true and American Literature tends to confirm those stereotypes.

SEINFELD is regarded by many as the funniest TV show in history, being built around the day-to-day life of a New York comedian and his friends, Seinfeld managed to spear every sacred cow in sight.

Four terrific actors with incredible chemistry among them harpooned through nine seasons issues like sex, religion, politics, age, political correctness, race, relationships, homosexuality, everything that's there for anyone to debate. The show introduced viewers to everything; although its nickname is "the Show About Nothing."

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The dumb blonde was mocked in F.R.I.E.N.D.S. (s.6, ep.1) – "The One After Vegas"

Phoebe: "What's the big deal, y'know? It's not like it's a real marriage."

Chandler: "What?!"

Phoebe: "Yeah, if you get married in Vegas, you're only married in Vegas."

Monica: "What are you talking about? If you get married in Vegas you're married everywhere."

Phoebe: \*shocked\* "Really?!"

Monica: "Yeah!"

Phoebe: "Oh my God!...Eh! Well..."

## ALLUSIONS

The functions of allusions can be broadly divided into three categories: a) creating humor, b) delineating characters, and c) carrying themes. The

first of these categories, humor, tends to function on a more local level than the other two, which are essentially cumulative.

As allusions are culture-bound, the degree to which they are intelligible across cultural and language barriers varies to a great extent.

The sources of allusions, such as history, literature, cinema, and television, to name the most important ones, are only relatively rarely familiar beyond their cultures of origin since popular culture seems to travel more widely than high culture.

American television serials and films may be an exception to this phenomenon, but they will serve to emphasize the fact that cultural products seem to be crossing borders in one direction only.

To illustrate the extent to which allusions are transcultural, it may perhaps assume that nearly everybody who has received a Western education will have some idea of who Hamlet is and what his dilemma is, and will react in some way to the words "To be or not to be." However, this is very much the limit of universal allusions even among people who assumedly share the same cultural heritage.

Yet, it cannot be emphasised strongly enough that there are great differences between individuals and subgroups within each community.

On the other hand, translating allusive texts is complicated for two reasons:

- First, it is probable that the readers of the translation cannot make much of a number of allusions, even if the source is given because the connotations of those allusions are not activated in the reading process.
- Second, readers of translations are not a homogeneous group, and some of them will probably spot and enjoy allusions if they are given a chance to do so, but will resent being looked down on in the form of additional explanations.

In (s.9, ep.3) – “The Serenity Now”, there was this play on the Yiddish word shiksa, meaning “detested thing.” Jewish men fall victim to the siren song of the non-Jewish woman (aka. the shiksa). Well, “Seinfeld” named it “shiksappeal.”

George tells Elaine she is attractive to the Lippman men because of her "shiksa-appeal. The result gets the two Lippman men to want to renounce Judaism in order to be with her.

George to Elaine: “You've got shiksappeal. Jewish men love the idea of meeting a woman that's not like their mother.”

## UNTRANSLATABLE

*“Languages are not culturally neutral and they do contain cultural vestiges. There are specific American culture features, which are perfectly understandable to Americans, but not to Europeans. The deliberate rendition of cultural features is at a slightly higher level, also, one where we may refer to the “free” vs “literal” dichotomy, in that the free strategy will allow for an explanatory expansion and the literal will be a bare transliteration or possible footnote.”<sup>8</sup>*

There are times when it may be impossible to find a term that is the exact equivalent in another language. Without that context it is just an isolated item; in context, it is part of a whole interlocking network of meaningful things.

So there are numerous hitches in the process, untranslatable words and phrases being one of them.

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Bamboozled is a game show which Joey auditions to be the host of in (s.8, ep.20) – “The One With The Baby Shower”. As no further mention of Bamboozled is made in future episodes, we can safely assume that Joey's audition was unsuccessful, or that the show was cancelled, but the game is still fascinating.

Joey: “You’ve been BAMBOOZLED!”

As slang is a marker of group identity, it is an in-group language variety which mostly serves as a glue to keep insiders together, and as a barrier to keep outsiders out. Informality is another property of slang, as it is commonly viewed as a colloquial level of speech, often used to lower or to shift laterally, the register of discourse. A third characteristic would be that the most important issue with slang is timeliness—will the approximate slang chosen by the translator remain relatively current?

*“With some translations, you can almost identify the year, if not the month, in which it must have been translated, especially when it comes to teenage slang.”<sup>9</sup>*

A fourth property is subject restriction. At times along is described as the special, even specialised, vocabulary of some profession, occupation or activity in society. This makes slang peculiar to a set of

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<sup>8</sup>Dollerup, Cay. (2006). *Basics of Translation Studies*, EdituraInstitutul European Iasi, p.110.

<sup>9</sup> Gill, Paul. (2009). *Translation in practice: a symposium*, Dalkey Archive Press, First Edition, p.47.

people who are identified by their specific terminology or by technical terms they use with in-group members. Obscenity and vulgarity are equally related to slang and so are unconventionality, localism, secrecy, and privacy.

In the end, we would expect most languages to have slang forms and we would expect to be able to substitute them for one another. However, the type of slang, the density of use and the purpose of use may not be the same from one culture to the next.

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In terms of slang, SEINFELD is the most representative show out of the three, as it stands the test of time.

Let us remember some of Kramer's famous crazy lines portraying awe throughout the series.

(s.7, ep.9) – “The Sponge“

Without Seinfeld, women wouldn't rank men based on their "sponge-worthiness", meaning “one who is good in bed”.

In 1995, pharmaceutical company Wyeth ceased production of the Today Sponge, and later that year Elaine bemoans the loss in the episode "The Sponge." In it, she stocks up on the contraceptive and interviews men to see if they are sponge worthy.

Elaine as well as Susan, George's current girlfriend, uses the sponge One night, George visits Elaine for a few.

George: (to Elaine): “Thanks again for last night!”

Elaine: “Hey, I didn't even use one.”

Jerry: “I thought you said it was imminent.”

Elaine: “Yeah, it was, but then I just couldn't decide if he was really sponge-worthy.”

Jerry: “Sponge-worthy?”

Elaine: “Yeah, Jerry, I have to conserve these sponges.”

## CONCLUSION

Language and culture are intertwined to the extent that they link the past, present and future together. Their legacy and their dynamic evolution in the now, fast-paced, globalised world, illustrate the beauty and the challenge of this multicultural puzzle.

Inter-cultural communication and development could not be possible without translation. Thus, the importance of language-culture bond stands in English as a keybridging language providing privilege and help in exploring differences and embracing multiple ways of thinking.

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## Reading with a Soundtrack - The Augmented E-Book

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**Abstract:** A modern, innovative type of e-book which tends to fundamentally alter reading comprehension is the *augmented e-book* - a digital textbook accompanied by sound, timelines, video shows, maps, digitalized manuscripts or links which may be accessed by readers to enhance their reading experience. In this paper I will present some types of *augmented* or *enhanced* e-books released by digital publishing platforms and provide some applied techniques of reading *augmented* literary texts. Moreover, I will provide a sample teaching plan teachers might find useful in introducing literary texts to the “digital natives”, as the new generation is called nowadays.

**Key words:** augmented e-book, enhanced e-book, digital natives, soundtrack

In his article entitled “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants”, Mark Prensky, a Harvard scholar discusses the modern generation gap concerning the acquisition of knowledge. (Prensky 2001, “*Digital Natives*”). Today, most students absorb information almost exclusively in a digital, hyperconnected atmosphere; therefore, reading and teaching literary texts by using technology is a must in contemporary educational environment. In this respect, important projects began to develop in the 90s.

Thus, one of the earliest projects focusing on teaching literature with technology support was the *Digital Variant* project developed by some scholars at the University of Edinburgh in 1996. This project grew out of the development of a research archive, and this has no doubt helped its application to teaching literature in an innovative and challenging way. Working with writers such as Antonio Millán, Roberto Vacca, and Francesca Sanvitale, the Project’s website made available a number of drafts of each author’s work, with the variants in the text highlighted and linked by hypertext, as well as sound recordings of interviews with the authors. (see their website at <https://www.ed.ac.uk/literatures-languages-cultures/delc/italian/digital-variants>)

This project showed the students that the tutor perceived IT research skills to be as important and relevant to their studies as the more

traditional research skills which they were also taught. Another project on teaching literature with the help of technology was the *Virtual Seminars for Teaching Literature* project developed by Oxford University in 1999 (online at <http://projects.oucs.ox.ac.uk/jtap/tutorials/index.html>). The project is a collection of online tutorials for teaching the poetry of World War I. It combines high-quality teaching materials with explanations on issues of using technology in teaching, by giving concrete examples of ways in which technology can enhance teaching methods.

Nevertheless, the use of technology in teaching should not be an end in itself but a necessary, modern and innovative tool. S.D. Lee, an expert in technology and teaching methodology synthesises this in the following: ‘Technology should not be used to replace teachers or teaching; technology should only be used where a noticeable gain to the teaching quality is evident; it should only be applied in appropriate stages.’ (Lee 1999, “*Digitising*”).

Sarah Porter, a researcher from Oxford University outlined the advantages of the use of technology in humanities as far as teacher-student interaction is concerned as follows: “Technology can give students a greater degree of control over the delivery of their learning: by using technology, students can access information, learning spaces, and other resources at times which suit their lifestyle and their other commitments. (...) Technology can enable the student to feel that they have control of their own learning. Students can communicate and discuss ideas together, even when they are not physically together. (...) New teaching methods will often provide a student with added interest in the course, and impetus to develop their own learning (Porter1999, “*Introduction: Technology in Teaching*”).

One of the latest developments in humanities is the digitalization of texts/manuscript or the turning of all published books into e-books. Of these, the *augmented* e-book is a breakthrough which adds a new dimension to reading. As regards reading and teaching literature, e-books are common vocabulary nowadays. They appeared on the digital market in the late 1990s when companies such as Atavist or Random House launched the hypertext e-book- with little success-but their number surged in the first decade of the 21st century once Amazon launched Kindle –the first interactive e-book in the world. Also, Kindle was the first e-reading device that could connect wirelessly. It was the success of the Kindle that has triggered a boom in the e–book industry. In 2010 Apple launched the iPad tablet, later followed by other companies in the field (Samsung, HP etc), devices which added a new dimension to the reading experience. Tablets and smartphones are now able through their various “apps” to present literary works in *augmented or enhanced* formats.

An *augmented* or *enhanced* e-book is a digital textbook that is accompanied by audio clips, timelines, maps or links which may be accessed by readers to enhance their reading experience. According to a recent study conducted at New York University by professor *Liel Leibovitz*, there are many positive reactions to the soundtrack's transformative qualities, defining the enhanced reading experience as "more cinematic and linear." (Leibovitz 2011, "*Reading With Sound*")

There are different online platforms which make enhanced reading and learning experience possible. *Youtube*, *Bing* or *Touchpress* are well known online platforms which make multimedia reading experience available. A less known platform is *Booktrack*, which offers a unique reading experience where the reading process is accompanied by soundtracks. Here, readers may use headphones and can immerse completely in the story world while all the external noise is cut off. It is the place where technology merges with art. Soundtracks are synchronized for e-texts, thus boosting the reader's imagination and engagement in the reading experience. The layout is similar to a standard e-book. Here, music, sound and special effects may be added to the reading experience. These can be adjusted to the reading speed of the reader. The audio experience is optional and the reader is able to adjust the sound effects to their own preference.

Here is an example of approaching an enhanced text by e-reading a well-known poem using one of the above-mentioned platforms. After typing in the browser search box the address [www.booktrack.com](http://www.booktrack.com), we type in the search box the title *The Love Song of A. Prufrock*, by T.S. Eliot. After double-clicking on the icon that appears on the screen, the text of the poem is displayed. The listening device or headphones must be turned on. The reading speed can be adjusted digitally by increasing or decreasing the number of digits by pressing a button. As the reader begins reading the poem, one can hear a soft piano tune which accompanies the poem. The mood of the poet and the atmosphere gradually changes while the reading process advances. The immersion of the reader is almost complete. The reader might observe, while re-reading and listening to the soundtrack accompanying the poem, the difference between the disjointed images outlined by the poet in the poem as the rhythm of the tune is altered. Chords are followed by syncopation alternatively while the tempo increases and decreases in accordance with the content of the poem. The mood of the reader is being lead by the sound which triggers a unique interpretation of the poem's mood. Alternatively, one might listen to/watch Eliot's audio recording at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onESyDOMKKA>.

On other platforms such as *Touchpress*, we may experience a multimedia reading experience by exploring, for instance, Shakespeare 's sonnets in different ways: through film performances, by reading facsimiles

and through listening to music while reading them. Similarly, we may use the now classic Youtube channel to watch, read and listen to the multimedia sample teaching of the poem *Refugee Blues* by W.H Auden uploaded by the IGCSE English at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mq0ZZkeuXjI>. Last but not least, online dictionaries accompanied by audio recording of pronunciation both in British and American English such as Merriam Webster Thesaurus, Oxford Reference Dictionary are also helpful and handy in looking up terms of discussion.

A well balanced way of teaching, reading and teaching literary texts is by combining classic approaches with technology-supported activities. Here is a 90 - minute sample seminar/teaching plan a teacher/tutor might devise to introduce literary texts to “digital natives”.

### ***E- reading Ulysses – J. Joyce - Sample Teaching Plan***

**Terms of Discussion:** *modernism, stream of consciousness, interior monologue, interfigural character, fragmentation, kaleidoscopic style, imagery*

#### **A Pre-reading activity (5-10 min)**

Check up the terms of discussion online at [www.oxfordreference.com](http://www.oxfordreference.com) or [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com).

#### **B Reading activity/ Enhanced e-reading activity(20-30 min)**

1. Read a short summary of Homer’s *Odyssey*, online at <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/short-summary-of-the-odyssey.html> and a summary of *Ulysses* at <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/ulysses/summary.html>.

2. Discuss the connections between Homer’s classic epic and Joyce’s masterpiece. What characters from *Odyssey* correspond to the ones in *Ulysses*?

3. Log on to <http://www.ubu.com/sound/joyce.html>. Read while listening to the last part of the novel which includes the soundtrack of the film *Ulysses* (1967) directed by Joseph Strick.(Part 4).

4. Open [www.booktrack.com](http://www.booktrack.com). Search for *Ulysses augmented* book and play the chapter on Molly Bloom’s reverie( Joyce 2016 : 215-217.) Try to divide the text into three parts. Observe the different tunes that accompany Molly’s interior monologue:

- the marriage proposal
- childhood memories from Gibraltar
- the merging of two different memories

#### **C. Analysis (30 min)**

1. The lack of punctuation reflects the way in which thoughts and ideas merge into each other. Punctuate the text starting from “the day I got him...” to “...and those handsome Moors”. (Joyce 216)

2. Reread/Relisten to the enhanced text. Identify sensorial images in Molly's interior monologue (visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and synaesthetic). Which of these images are exotic and which are erotic? How does the sound render Molly's reverie?

3. The passage, which is an epitome of the stream of consciousness technique, has a rhythmic cadence emphasized by some repetitions. What words and phrases are repeated?

4. Focus on the intensity of the interior monologue. Is it descending or ascending? Explain. How does the music influence the perception of this intensity?

5. In order to represent the flow of thoughts, Joyce disregards syntax and logical connection and lets the reader restructure the text. Find examples of break of syntax and free association of ideas in the text you have read.

#### **D. Home Assignments (10-15 min)**

1. Prepare a multimedia/Prize/PowerPoint presentation based on one chapter from *Ulysses* regarding the narrative style entitled *Linguistic experimentation in Joyce's fiction*.

2. Using the online platform [www.booktrack.com](http://www.booktrack.com), create your own soundtrack for Molly Bloom's reverie. Click on *Create booktrack*. Select and upload the text. Find the adequate or preferred sound, ambient and music in the database and insert them along the text. Adjust the speed reading using the cursor. Start the activity in class and continue at home.

As you may have observed, the sample above combines classic activities and technology –aided tasks and is meant to better appeal to the “digital natives” or the Net Generation . Beside this, different variations are possible such as immersion in hypertextual activities, multimedia activities or social media interactions.

Instead of concluding this brief introduction to the augmented or enhanced e-reading experience, I will end with a reflection on modern education issued by the above-mentioned scholar, Mark Prensky: “the biggest problem facing education today is that our Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language.(...) So if Digital Immigrant educators *really* want to reach Digital Natives – i.e. all their students – they will have to change”(Prensky 2001, “Digital Natives”)

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## From Conceptual to Thematic Meaning

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**Abstract:** This paper highlights some of the approaches that aimed at defining and classifying the controversial linguistic notion of meaning. The seven types of meaning suggested by Leech constitute a resourceful starting point for many language researchers in their endeavour to provide a comprehensive profile of meaning. In order to understand the complex issue of meaning, both linguistic and extralinguistic factors have to be taken into consideration.

**Key words:** meaning, context, competence, linguistic, extralinguistic

The issue of meaning has been widely discussed and analyzed from diverse perspectives, such as linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, cognitive theory, artificial intelligence and semiotics. At the language level, meaning may be analyzed lexically and grammatically, semantically and pragmatically, taking into account the *word*, *sentence* and *utterance* structures, as well as all their occurrences and combinatory possibilities. The lexical meaning is the meaning of the “content” words (basically nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs), while the grammatical one is the meaning of the “function” words. Characterized by flexibility and a bias towards creating multiple combinations, the content words have meanings of their own, while the function words are closed forms “dependent on the content words to which they are related.” (Ježek, 2016: 15) If we remove all the function words, i.e. *to*, *a*, *of*, *the*, *in*, from the following sentence: *She wants to drink a cup of tea in the evening.*, the remaining content words: *she*, *wants*, *cup*, *tea*, *evening* may carry a meaning and can be partially comprehensible although the relations between the constituent elements has become “opaque”(see Jezek, 2016: 14).

The common semantic and pragmatic approaches to the issue of meaning are the contextual ones, their generally accepted assumption being that “the semantic properties of a lexical item are fully reflected in appropriate aspects of the relations it contracts with actual and potential contexts.” (Cruse, 1987: 1) Many of the theories favour the extralinguistic contexts, while some consider that the linguistic context is sufficient to

define meaning at least for the following reasons: the “purely linguistic context” acts as a mediator for the relation between the lexical items and the extralinguistic contexts, having the capacity to mirror “any aspect of an extralinguistic context” and being “more easily controlled and manipulated”. (see Cruse, 1987: 1)

Among the first studies to consider meaning in close relation to extralinguistic contexts, such as literary criticism, philosophy, psychology, science, that of Ogden and Richards proposes twenty-two definitions which reflect the flexibility of the term depending on the context in which it is used. Thus, meaning is seen as

“an intrinsic property, a unique unanalysable relation to other things, the other words annexed to a word in the dictionary, the connotation of a word, an essence, an activity projected into an object, an event intended, a volition, the place of anything in a system, the practical consequences of a thing in our future experience, the theoretical consequences involved in or implied by a statement, emotion aroused by anything, that which is actually related to a sign by a chosen relation, the mnemonic effects of a stimulus – association required, some other occurrence to which the mnemonic effects of any occurrence are appropriate, that which a sign is interpreted as being of, what anything suggests, that to which the user of a symbol actually refers/ought to be referring/believes himself to be referring, that to which the interpreter of a symbol refers/believes himself to be referring/believes the user to be referring.” (see Ogden, Richards, 1923:186-187)

Ogden and Richards’ study focuses mainly on the issues of misunderstanding and misinterpretation that occur from the ‘wrong’ belief that signs and what they represent are indissolubly related: the act of communication will be improved when the relation between words and things are seen as derivative, imputed, non-causal, resulting from their association in the mind of the message sender (speaker) and the message receiver (listener). (Ogden, Richards, 1923:11) The ampleness of their list of definitions proves that, in order to understand meaning appropriately, one should consider, besides the linguistic level, the nonlinguistic one that refers to other fields. This is what many of the subsequent theories on meaning did when establishing the appropriate criteria for analyzing this complex issue. One of them is the theory of Leonard Bloomfield that regarded meaning closely related to scientific knowledge, stating that a linguistic unit can be defined only when we refer to other science:

We can define the meaning of a speech-form accurately when this meaning has to do with some matter of which we possess scientific knowledge. We can define the names of minerals, for example, in terms

of chemistry and mineralogy [...] and we can define the names of plants and animals by means of the technical terms of botany and zoology, but we have not precise way of defining words like *love* or *hate*, which concern situations that have not been accurately classified – and these latter are in the great majority. (Bloomfield, 1973/1933:139)

Bloomfield's definition has been considered to exaggerate the role that the scientific knowledge has in defining the meaning as it overlooks the inner layer of the language. Yet, Bloomfield stressed the importance of the coordination relation between the sender and the receiver of a message, the meaning of a linguistic form being defined "as the situation in which the speaker utters it and the response which it calls forth in the hearer" (Bloomfield, 1973/1933: 139). Thus, the meaning of a word can be defined not only in accordance with the speaker's competence but also with that of the receiver. It means that, for a proper understanding of the meaning of a linguistic form, the speaker and the hearer should share the same or almost the same level of knowledge. It is what Leech (Leech, 1985: 8) underlies when he defines and classifies the meaning, to him the "speaker's semantic competence" being essential for studying the meaning *within* the language, not *outside* it. Leech 'decomposed' meaning into seven types: *conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative and thematic*, all of them being analyzed based "on the distinction between 'knowledge of language' and 'knowledge of the real world'". For all the seven types of meaning, Leech suggests an alternative term that embraces them in a wide sense: the *communicative value*. (Leech, 1985: 8, 23)

The typology of meaning has been widely discussed by other theoreticians of language, restructured under different terminology and completed with particular interpretations. For instance, Lyons concentrates the interpretation of meaning around three functions of the language: "the descriptive, the social and the expressive", which, in their turn, are correlated with "three different kinds of semantic information encodable in language-utterances", and used the term 'interpersonal' to comprise both 'expressive' and 'social'. (Lyons, 1996: 50, 55)

The *conceptual* meaning, also named *descriptive, denotative, referential, cognitive, propositional, ideational, designative* is essential in the linguistic communication. One of the basic principles which form the ground for the conceptual meaning is the principle of contrastive 'features', besides the principle of structure (see Leech, 1985: 91):

e.g. the meaning of the nouns *man*, *woman* and *girl* can be illustrated by the following features:

man: +HUMAN +ADULT +MALE

woman: +HUMAN +ADULT –MALE

girl: +HUMAN –ADULT +FEMALE

*Man* and *woman* are distinguished by the opposition +MALE/ –MALE, while *girl* is distinct from *woman* by the opposed features: –ADULT/+ADULT, and from *man* by the contrastive elements: -ADULT/+ADULT and +FEMALE/-FEMALE.

The principle of structure allows larger linguistic units being built up and organized out of smaller linguistic units. For instance, the sentence *The girl is a student.* may be decomposed into small constituents: {(The) (girl)} {[is]} [(a) (student)]}. The sentence comprises:

Subject + Predicate

Subject: Determiner (*the*) + Noun (*girl*)

Predicate: Verb + Complement

Verb: *is*

Complement: Determiner (*a*) + Noun (*student*)

For Cruse (Cruse, 2000: 46-47), the equivalent of the conceptual type of meaning is the *descriptive* meaning which determines, in a sentence, the true or false characters of any proposition, helps “the hearer in identifying the intended referent(s)”, and it is *objective*, fully *conceptualized*, offering a categorization meant to sort “aspects of experience”.

e.g. A: “What’s the matter?”

B: “Somebody turned the bloody lights off!” (examples taken from Cruse, 2000: 47)

The use of *bloody* does not affect the true or false nature of the sentence, the sentence is true or false in the same conditions. But in contexts where *Somebody turned the lights off* is true and *Somebody turned the lights on* is false, *off* represents a constituent element of the descriptive meaning. *Bloody* does not help in distinguishing and classifying the types of *light*, it is non-descriptive and has an expressive value.

The descriptive meaning includes a range of dimensions of variations: *quality*, *intensity*, *specificity*, *vagueness*, *basicness* and *viewpoint* (Cruse, 2000: 48-54). The *quality* dimension distinguishes between notions such as *blue* and *yellow*, *peach* and *apricot*, *stand* and *sit*, *high* and *low*. Examples of pure differences in terms of quality reveals the fact that the two notions find themselves at the same level of intensity and specificity:

e.g. She doesn’t *sit*, she *stands*.

The bag is not *blue*, it’s *yellow*.

The levels of *intensity* may vary in the same semantic quality area: *small – tiny – pocket-size – smallish*, or may go beyond the quality space: *storm – tempest, mist – fog*. *Specificity* is best revealed by cases where the more specific term is included within the more general one. There is a type-specificity where one term –the less general one - is the subtype of the more general one: *dwelling: house* (*house* is more specific than *dwelling*), *tree: fir tree* (*fir tree* is more specific than *tree*), *print: fingerprint* (*fingerprint* is more specific than *print*). The part-specificity makes the distinction between the constituent elements of the more general term: *hand: finger* (*finger* is more specific than *hand*), *house: room*.

The dimension of *vagueness* includes two subdimensions: *ill-definedness* and *laxness*. Ill-definedness is “revealed by terms which designate a region on a gradable scale such as *middle-aged*. Age varies continuously: *middle-aged* occupies a region on this scale.”, while laxness is typical of individual words that may be used “loosely”(Cruse, 2000: 51). For example, the word *square* may be used loosely in contexts such as: *All the chairs were in a square array.*, where it does not necessarily imply exactness as when it is used in mathematics.

In Cruse’s interpretation, *basicness* is viewed in terms of: (a) concrete words “whose meanings are fixed by their relations with observable properties of the environment.”; (b) independence and dependence, the dependent meanings generating other meanings, e.g. *amplitude* presupposes the notion of *dimension*, which, in turn, presupposes the notion of *size*; (c) basic level category which is related to the category of usual, everyday reference: *spoon*, for example, is the ordinary, basic level term, while *teaspoon*, *coffee spoon*, *soup spoon* are more complex. (see Cruse, 2000: 52,137)

The *viewpoint* principle regards the way in which something is described depending on the speaker’s position.

- e.g. (a) The cat is on the chair.
- (b) The cat is there.

If, in a given context, the statement (a) has the same meaning for anyone, in the same context and referring to the same subject, the meaning of the statement (b) depends on the speaker’s position regarding the subject of discussion.

The other types of meaning: *connotative, social, affective, reflected and collocative* were included by Leech in the category of associative meaning. The *connotative* meaning is “the communicative value an expression has by virtue of what it *refers to*, over and above its purely conceptual content.” (Leech, 1985: 12) Connotations are characterized by

instability as they vary according to the linguistic and cultural experience of people and may imply psychological, cultural, visual, auditive factors. For instance, the word *child* may have different connotations in different contexts: parents add a positive emotional value to the word, while, for others, the word conveys negative characteristics when referring to an adult: immaturity, misbehaviour, lack of responsibility. The list of connotations is 'open-ended', as "connotative is open-ended in the same way as our knowledge and beliefs about the universe are open-ended: any characteristic of the referent identified subjectively or objectively, may contribute to the connotative meaning of the expression which denotes it." (Leech, 1985: 13)

The *social* meaning represents what "a piece of language conveys about the social circumstances of its use" (Leech, 1985: 14). It provides information regarding the speakers' vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, their social and educational background, as well as the stylistic registers they use. The choice of expressions with social meaning, such as greetings, forms of address or requests tells us about the cultural background of the speakers. For example, in a formal context, 'bye-bye' is not the appropriate greeting when someone leaves, the more elevated one, 'good-bye', always being the better option. The social meaning can include the *illocutionary force* which provides multiple interpretation of the utterance: as an assertion, a request, an apology, a warning, a threat etc. Thus, a sentence like *I haven't got water.* may be considered an assertion but, in the 'social reality' (at a restaurant, for instance), it may receive the form of a request: *Will you bring me some water, please?* (see Leech, 1985: 15). This aspect of the social meaning is related to the *affective* meaning. Also called *expressive* or *emotive*, the *affective meaning* is rendered by the help of denotative and connotative meanings, by diminutives and words carrying either positive or negative feelings, disclosing the speakers' feelings and attitude, or by tone of voice and intonation. A seemingly polite request may turn into an instance of irony or sarcasm when the speaker's tone is used accordingly:

e.g. *Excuse my interference, but I wonder if you are so kind as to turn off the radio.*

On the contrary, a mild tone may change an apparently impolite request into a more affable one:

*Will you be quiet!*

The *collocative* meaning implies "the associations a word acquires on account of the meanings of words which tend to occur in its environment"

(Leech, 1985: 17). The combination of a word with certain words depends mainly on its denotation. For instance, the noun *hold*, with the meaning of “act/way of holding sth.”, collocates with the adjectives *firm*, *tight*, with the verbs *catch*, *get*, *grab*, *grasp*, *have*, *keep*, *lose*, *seize*, *take*, *tighten*, *relax*, *release* and with the preposition *on*; having the meaning of “influence/control over sb”, it combines with the adjectives *firm*, *fragile*, *increasing*, *powerful*, *strong*, *tenuous*, *tight*, *weak*, with the verbs *break*, *consolidate*, *have*, *lose*, *strengthen*, *tighten*, *weaken*, and with the preposition *on*. (Crowther, Dignen, Lea, 2003: 377) By collocating with different words, a word will generate different meanings:

e.g. a *light* suitcase, a *light* diet, a *light* reading

The *reflected* meaning is conveyed by the association with another meaning of the word used by the speaker, it is “the meaning which arises in cases of multiple conceptual meaning, when one sense of a word forms part of our response to another sense.” (Leech, 1985: 16)

The reflected meaning is the case of polysemantic words and it is successfully illustrated in wordplays, puns and taboo words, sometimes generating confusion and ambiguity.

e.g. (a) His speech has been so *sound*!

(b) The critic started to leave in the middle of the second act of the play. “Don’t go”, said the manager, “I promise there’s a terrific *kick* in the next act.” “Fine”, was the retort, “give it to the author.” (Nikolenko, 2007:141)

In example (a), the word *sound* creates ambiguity. Although *sound* may be used here with the meaning of ‘having no logical flaw, based on valid reasoning’, it may lead to that of ‘meaningless noise’. In both cases, the tone used by the speaker is important, it may express admiration or surprise, or, on the contrary, it may be sarcastic or ironic. In example (b), the context is more explicit than that in example (a). The manager uses the word *kick* with its informal connotative meaning of ‘a sudden, striking surprise, a twist’, while the critic intentionally associates the word with its denotative meaning of ‘a vigorous blow with the foot’.

The context is essential in rendering the appropriate meaning of a polysemantic word. If we take a word in isolation, we may think of any possible meanings it possesses or of its associations with other words. For instance, the word *yellow* probably makes anyone think, first of all, of the colour, its other meanings being rendered in appropriate contexts:

- e.g. He was too *yellow* to defend his point of view. (*coward*)  
The *yellow* press amplified the scandal between the two artists. (*scandal*)  
She gave them a *yellow* look when she saw their impressive collection of stamps. She had always wanted to have one, too. (*envious*)

The *thematic* meaning, the last of the seven types of meaning identified by Leech, expresses what is “communicated by the way in which a speaker or writer organizes the message, in terms of ordering, focus and emphasis.” (Leech, 1985: 19) The message may be organized in different ways, all of them having “different communicative values in that they suggest different contexts”. (Leech, 1985: 19) Therefore, a sentence may be rearranged according to what we need to accentuate

- e.g. Al broke the window last night.  
It was Al who broke the window last night. (the emphasis is on the doer of the action)  
It was the window that/which Al broke. (the stress is on the object of the action)  
It was last night when Al broke the window. (the adverb of time is emphasized here)  
or it may be passivized:  
John handed in the paper. (active)  
The paper was handed in by John. (passive)

In the active sentence, the implicit question is “What did John hand in?”, the stress being on the object, while in the passive sentence the implicit question is “Who handed in the paper?”, the stress laying on the doer of the action.

The categorization of meaning into distinct types represents a useful linguistic tool for further semantic and pragmatic researches. Decoding all the facets of meaning is a challenging enterprise that has to consider the flexibility of the notion and its multi-layered uses in language.

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## From Conceptual to Thematic Meaning

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## Escher's Hands in Translating *Orbitor (Blinding)* by Mircea Cartarescu

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**Abstract;** Sean Cotter's translation of Mircea Cărtărescu's first part of the trilogy—*Orbitor. Aripa stângă*—, published in 2013, Archipelago books, as "Blinding. The Left Wing" is a work of art which follows every breath of the original and recreates in English the same waves of language and the same explosions. Not the alternation of styles is difficult, but the preservation of the original energy and sadness, of connecting scientific words with nostalgia. What makes *Orbitor* so astonishing is the author's ability to frame and touch nostalgia in ways it has not been touched before, to transfigure it into words. The paper analyses some examples from Sean Cotter's translation techniques with a special focus on the theme of the double, also relevant for the condition author-translator.

**Keywords:** translation, memory, *the doppelganger*, transposition, nostalgia, style, translation studies, postmodernism

In Mircea Cărtărescu's trilogy, *Orbitor* (translated as *Blinding*), memory carves and creates dozens of tiny labyrinths on each page, myriads in each volume, integrating all of them, in the unraveling of writing, into one giant labyrinth they form together.

Sean Cotter's translation of the first book so far manages to preserve the original ambiguity and sadness. Sometimes Cartarescu employs words that cannot be translated other than in a literal translation.

But nostalgia is one of the key-concepts of Cărtărescu's universe. Therefore his rhythm cannot appear dry and colorless like in a scientific text. However, the writer does not attempt to mimic a scientific text. He has the capacity to see a miracle constituted in our body, like the fact that hell and paradise are only centimeters apart from each other, hidden in our mind, in the gray and white matter of human brain. This is an example from *Orbitor* where the literal translation is predominant: "Memory is in the middle of the mind, under the brain, pia mater and neocortex, where it spills over the sensory and motor zones, the homunculus with its swollen tongue and orangutan paws." (*Blinding*)

What matters in the translation of *Orbitor* is the uppermost level signalled by Peter Newmark, namely the level of naturalness, which comes after the cohesion level (Newmark, 1988, p.24). The least succulent scientific words are employed by the writer as a proof of man as a longing being or as a being full of desires. Nostalgia is the secret regenerative of this world, its genuineness, the capacity to feel pain is refreshing. What makes *Orbitor* so astonishing is the author's ability to frame and touch nostalgia in ways it has not been touched before, to transfigure it into words. With its "cinnamon pheromones" („emanând din toate feromonii de scorțișoară ai nostalgiei"- *Orbitor. Corpul*: 100), nostalgia is an empire delicately woven around the body and around all our perception. At the same time, it is also mind's desire for something unattainable, something beyond knowledge. Biology, medicine, physics, chemistry, theosophy, astronomy, genetics are an attempt to examine human knowledge, but Cărtărescu's style cannot remain at the level of clarifications.

Sean Cotter has the merit of having given not just any translation, but the "counterbook" of the original. Now the book is open to people from all over the world who may react to other things in the book than Romanian readers. It is as if *Orbitor* truly achieves its visionary nature by turning into *Blinding* and by being actually read by readers from other parts of the world, brought up with different books in mind, within different systems of education and sometimes with no connections whatsoever with childhood and adolescence under communist regimes. The butterfly can rise and fly.

Mircea Cărtărescu does not take the usual path in fiction of recreating a story. Neither does he take the path of diarism. He employs memory to summon imagination and to integrate his personal mythology which in turn opens infinities of worlds provoking the expansion of what self could mean and the expansion of the most enigmatic word in the world, "namely «I»". He takes the path of recreating, through *Orbitor*, his whole existence.

The self is creating the myths of the maternal and paternal ancestors while every discovery about mother and father cushions the self. In *Orbitor*, the self is included with its genealogies, with the invention of maternal and paternal genealogies, starting from real elements. In *Solenoid* (2015), at the level of frozen universe of *Solenoid*, the book after *Orbitor*, compensatory myths will mean denial. Just like in the great books of mankind, in *Solenoid* the mind of the author steps into the "dominion" of death, guided by fears, inner quests and absolute revolts and desires, revelations, abjection and awareness of forbidden chambers, desolation and mind's capacity to conceive the unconceivable.

In *Orbitor*, the forbidden chamber is more about embracing the inner demons and about embracing the twin in the mirror, who sometimes gets projected as the embodiment of a universe of torture.

*Solenoid* gives the feeling that the limits of human pain are the limits of universe. The universe does stretch as long as it must to take the pain of other people and project it into a substance of the mind, in an attempt to shed light on the existence of self-generated inflictions. The mind is looking for exits. The very source of life seems to have been banished from this world. The result is the fact that people walk and talk to each other spectrally, without real connection.

In his newest book, *Solenoid*, instead of Cărtărescu's expansion we find contraction. The writer explores the limits between human and sub-human, and his apocalypse is nothing more than a self-apocalypse affecting a post-modern 21<sup>st</sup> century cosmology.

Coming back to *Orbitor*, the 1996-book in a shape of a butterfly, (*The Left Wing; the Body; the Right Wing*) intersects our memory is not made of mere recollections and it does not mean mere instances. There are infinite worlds in what memory captures and in what is selected by memory. The writer has the ambition of carving them all and of grasping them almost in totality. The guiding line for the creations of memory the intensity of his emotions. This intensity gets transferred to the reader through all of his/her senses.

According to Peter Newmark, there are four levels that could be combined in TL (target-language text). Naturalness should be aimed (Newmark, p.29), since rather than dealing with 'readership', a translator deals with individual readers. The four levels, pertaining to the process of translating, are: the textual level, the referential level, the cohesive level, the level of naturalness (Newmark, 1988:23-36).

For *Orbitor*, naturalness means preserving the ambiguity of the original language. It is the only possible way not to crush the energy of the source text and to allow the words carrying a certain charge to reach their potential.

The English translation (Archipelago books, 2013) of the first book of the trilogy appeared seventeen years after the original was published at Humanitas, Bucharest.

The hands of Escher melt into the text, as the writer say, passing "from real to virtual and back to the real". This metaphor originating in an ekphrasis can be adopted to illustrate the relationship between the author, Mircea Cărtărescu, and his translator, Sean Cotter.

Locked into a manuscript, which is not the same thing as a book (as Herman warns the reader, Herman being a voice from *Orbitor*, a projection of auto-referentiality), memory shapes the manuscript, it

pushes it to different forms and to undertake different metamorphoses. It matters not what can be found beyond memory, but what can be found above it. In this way, memory is linked with immortality.

Where our memories will go after death, where will they be stored, the author asks himself.

The corpus of texts analyzed in this paper is made of chosen paragraphs from Cărtărescu's *Orbitor (Blinding)* in Sean Cotter's translation. I have selected the fragments illustrating the theme of memory in connection with the theme of the double.

The main character of *Orbitor* is the manuscript of *Orbitor*. Only in this way Mircea can be contemporaneous with all his selves and can be in all microcosmoses simultaneously.

În centrul creierului, înfășurată în sistemul limbic, în fornix și hipocamp, corpi mamilari și amigdală, memoria se bălăcește în apele striate ale talamusului și hipotalamusului, își modelează acolo sculpturile neuronale, înmoaie marmura minții cu lichide fluorescente. Creează rețele ușoare ca pînza de păianjen, sucite în ele însele ca benzile lui Möbius, învălătucite ca petalele într-un trandafir incolor. Curge din real în virtual și iarăși în real, de parcă mâinile lui Escher s-ar desena una pe alta de miliarde de ori pe secundă.” (Cărtărescu. *Orbitor. Aripa stângă*: 74)

In Sean Cotter's translation: "In the center of the brain, formed in the limbic system, in the fornix and hippocampus, the mammillary bodies and the amygdalae, memory soaks in the striated waters of the thalamus and hypothalamus, it shapes neuronal sculptures, and it wets the marble of the mind with florescent liquids. It creates nets as flimsy as spider webs, turned on themselves like Möbius bands, and rippled like the petals of a colorless rose. It runs from the real to the virtual and back to the real, as though Escher's hands were drawing each other a billion times a second." (Cărtărescu. *Blinding. The Left Wing*: Part 1, chapter 7, paragraph 13).

The translation techniques involved by Sean Cotter are: modulation, preservations of the key words in the same place instead of transpositions. Transpositions appear only when they are imposed by different syntactic rules of the source language irrespectively of the target language. Otherwise the translator does not use transposition, which has a great effect in the style.

It preserves the ambiguity of the original and the force in the phrase. By placing the group "memory soaks in...." in exactly the same position as in the original, the translator constructs the same wave pinpointing to the capacity of memory. Cartarescu seems interested not

only in the exploration of memory, but also in finding out what is above memory. This way memory is linked to an important question: the storage of memory after death, how our memories contribute to meeting face to face our creator?!

Alcătuit din substanță spirituală, cristal gazos circulând prin vene de diamant și artere de jad, prin capilare de perlă și canalicule de porfir, prin interstiții de peruzea și canale limfatice de opal îngerul nostru(...)" (*Aripa stângă*:73).

In translation: "It's assembled from spiritual material, gaseous crystal circulating in diamond veins and jade arteries, pearl capillaries and marble canals, turquoise interstices and opal lymph nodes " (*The Left Wing*: Part I, chapter 7, para. 11).

The fragment about the imprint of the angel inside us, trapped in our body, is an inorganic one, made of precious stones raises the question of finding a pattern outside mirror to fix our double, our twin. The translator is challenged to render a perfect cohesion level and to keep the fluidity of style. The angel is made of inorganic matter, he is a being where precious stones are pointing to the inside of the being made transparent. It is symbolism that confers unity and fluidity to this sapphire angel pointing to a transfused interiority.

The translator has achieved the cohesion by having an in-depth vision of all the stones and inorganic substances present and of their role, therefore the translator was very keen on translating a contexts referring to the role and shape of precious stones and the role of combining them so as to explore not a scientific universe, but a symbolic one.

C. „Memoria țese un om, acolo-n adâncul chakrei cu trei petale, în ochiul din frunte. Oricât ar fi de hidos (căci timpul este infernul și o creatură de timp este un diavol din infern, sau poate un etern osîndit), el este geamănul nostru, și o dorință ciudată ne împinge unul spre altul, unul în brațele altuia. (...)Cu fiecare clipă care trece, el se desprinde mai mult de mine, (...)Iese din mine ca insecta, încă umedă și moale, din coaja străvezie a fostei ei carcase. Memoria mea este metamorfoza vieții mele, insecta adultă a cărei larvă e viața mea. Și fără o plonjare curajoasă în abisul de lapte care o-nconjoară și o ascunde în pupa minții, nu voi ști niciodată dacă am fost, dacă sunt o călugăriță vorace, un păianjen visător pe picioroange nesfârșite sau un fluture de o frumusețe suprafirească.

Îmi amintesc, adică inventez. Transmut năuceala clipelor în aur ereu și unsuros. Și, cumva, străveziu, tot mai străveziu pe măsură ce fântâna din creier mi se adîncește (iar eu, un schelet aplecat peste ghizdurile ei, îmi

contemplu largii ochi visători reflectați în apa de aur). Acel hialin unde se-nțînesc, ca trei flori heraldice pe un scut, visul, memoria și emoțiile, este domeniul meu, lumea mea, Lumea. Acolo-n cilindrul acela scînteietor care-mi coboară în creier.” (Cărtărescu, *Orbitor. Aripa stîngă*: 76).

”Memory weaves us, there in the depths of the three-petaled chakra, the forehead’s eye. However hideous (because time is an inferno and a creature of time is a devil from the inferno, or maybe a creature foreverdamned), it is our twin, and a strange desire pushes one toward the other, one into the arms of the other.(...) Every moment that passes, my memory separates from me a little more, it becomes more daring and independent, its shadow and power grow, and it rises over me, spreading its claws and bat wings. (...)It crawls out of me like an insect, still wet and soft, from the transparent shell of its former carcass. My memory is the metamorphosis of my life. If I do not plunge bravely into the milky abyss that surrounds and hides my memory in the pupa of my mind, I will never know if I have been, if I am a voracious praying mantis, a spider dreaming upon an endless pair of stilts, or a butterfly of supernatural beauty.

I remember, that is, I invent. I transmute the ghosts of moments into weighty, oily gold. And, somehow, it is also transparent, ever more transparent the deeper the fountain of my mind becomes (and I, a skeleton leaning over its walls, contemplate the wide, dreaming eyes reflected in the golden water). That hyaline cartilage, there on the shield where the three heraldic flowers meet – dream, memory, and emotion – that is my domain, my world, the World. There in that sparkling cylinder that descends through my mind. ” (Cărtărescu. *Blinding. The Left Wing*, part I, chapter 7, para. 14-15).

Here the writer explores the capacity of memory for pushing us in front of our double, in an act of narcissism, by showing how memory creates and stores a copy of an important little self trapped inside us, maybe a shadow in the terms of C. G. Jung. At the same time, we are not only carriers of memory, but we, human beings, are the result of memory. Memory appears now as a fountain of life. But secretly love and nostalgia interfere in this universe, transposing everything and moving it a step further. Nostalgia is the warranty that memory and love are forever united.

The translator must corroborate terms from different domains, follow the metaphors of the original and re-create them, giving them the same power and the same stability in the target language. The theme of the double appears here both as the movemevent of self through life’s

rites of passages, but also as a continuous confrontation with hidden demonic impulses we may have, especially when we feel like life is serene and untroubled. One of the incarceration of the self can be ‘spider dreaming on an endless pair of stilts’ or a ”voracious praying mantis”. All these images are resurrected through a plunge into the ”milky abyss that surrounds and hides my memory in the pupa of my mind”. Sean Cotter’s translation knows how to prolog poetically certain words by using modulation and how to alternate the presence of possessives and determinants as compared to the source language.

D.”« Sîntem aici ca să ne naștem mama. Ca să îl naștem pe cel ce ne va naște. E drept că nouă ni `se interzice Ieșirea și că nu ne vom naște în alte lumi. (...)Noi ne vom mîntui prin el, inventîndu-l, zămislindu-l pe el, care va crește în aparență în lumea noastră, dar cu adevărat într-o lume uriaș mai înaltă, căci el, nălțîndu-se din planul nostru ca o creastă de val, în a treia, de neimaginat, dimensiune, se va curba spre noi ca să ne vadă, să ne descrie, să ne creeze silabă cu silabă și rînd cu rînd, cum ațîrnăm pe statuia de perlă a corpului său. Ce vom vedea din el vor fi doar secțiuni, căci el e perpendicular pe lumea noastră, cum se apleacă adînc asupra ei. (...)»”. *Orbitor. Aripa stîngă*: 388

“ ‘We are here to give birth to our mother. To give birth to the One who will give us birth. It’s true, the Exit is barred and we will not give birth to ourselves in other worlds. (...) We will save ourselves through him, inventing him, conceiving him, and he will seem to grow within our world, but in fact, he will grow within an enormous world, one much higher, because he, rising from our plane like the crest of a wave, into the third, unimaginable dimension, will curve toward us to see us, describe us, create us, syllable by syllable and turn by turn, the way we hang from the pearl statue of his body. We will see him only in sections, because he is **perpendicular** to our world, bowed deeply above it.’ ”  
(*Blinding. The Left Wing*, Part III, chapter 25, para.20)

This is one of the most obscure passages in *Orbitor*, as it speaks about creation and about finding the existence, finding the portal to access another world. By referring to creation, it also refers to dream in the maternal womb as a way to access the unknown wisdom of the universe. The passage speaks about the courage to confront the creator and to raise questions, to imagine the fourth dimensional existence of the Creator and not to live at the level of existence content with what is visible. It also refers to the miracle of life manifested in mothers and to the fact that this type of creation is not possible through the mind, but one should not give up his capacity to create new worlds, even if they are not reality, but inner worlds.

The true challenge for the translator here is the preservation of the rhythm and the gravity of the tone, of the repeated story.

E. „Spațiul e paradisul, timpul este infernul. Și cât de ciudat este că, la fel ca în emblema bipolarității, în miezul umbrei este lumină și în lumină stă sămînța umbrei. Căci altminteri ce este memoria, fîntîna asta otrăvită din miezul minții, din paradis? Cu ghizdurile ei de marmură strunjită, cu apa ei clătînătoare, verde ca fierea, și cu dragonul cu aripi de liliac care-i stă de strajă? Și ce e dragostea, apa limpede și răcoroasă din adîncul iadului sexual, perla cenușie din scoica de foc și de urlete sfișietoare? Memoria, timpul regatului fără timp. Dragostea, spațiul domeniului fără spațiu. Semințele opuse și totuși atît de asemănătoare ale existenței noastre, unite peste marea simetrie, și anulînd-o, într-un singur mare sentiment: nostalgia.”  
”Space is Paradise and time is Inferno. How strange it is that, like the emblem of bipolarity, in the center of a shadow is light, and that light creates shadows. After all, what else is memory, this poisoned fountain at the center of the mind, this center of paradise? Well-shaft walls of tooled marble shaking water green as bile, and its bat-winged dragon standing guard? And what is love? A limpid, cool water from the depths of sexual hell, an ashen pearl in an oyster of fire and rending screams? Memory, the time of the timeless kingdom.

Love, the space of the spaceless domain. The seeds of our existence, opposed yet so alike, unite across the great symmetry, and annul it through a single great feeling: nostalgia.”

Time means also the intervention of sexuality in our lives. The symmetry is the long sought after conciliation with the whole (without obtaining the totality). It makes our existence bearable. Symmetry is our consolation prize. The symmetry is the search for unity in the realms of the unreal while the double is provoked as a reencounter with the chimera.

Symmetry is what brings the fear of separation. Symmetry anchors the being in such a powerful illusion that is impossible to find a way out of it. Better than symmetry is simultaneity, that is linked with a divine tempo, with another existential rhythm.

F. „ (...)Cu toții avem memoria trecutului, dar cîți dintre noi ne putem aminti viitorul? Și totuși stăm între trecut și viitor ca un corp vermiform de fluture între cele două aripi ale sale. Pe una o putem folosi la zbor, căci ne-am trimis filamentele nervoase pînă către marginile ei; cealaltă ne este necunoscută, de parcă ne-ar lipsi ochiul din partea dinspre ea. Dar cum putem zbura cu o singură aripă? profeți, iluminați, eretici ai simetriei prefigurează ce am putea deveni și ce va trebui să devenim. Dar ceea ce ei văd, *per speculum in aenigmate* vom vedea cu toții limpede, cel puțin atît de limpede cum vedem trecutul..”

” (...)We all have memories of the past, but none of us can remember the future. And yet, we exist between the past and future like the vermiform body of a butterfly, in between its two wings. We use one wing to fly, because we have sent our nerve filaments out to its edges, and the other is unknown, as if we were missing an eye on that side. But how can we fly with one wing? Prophets, illuminati, and heretics of symmetry foresaw what we could and must become. But what they see *per speculum in aenigmate* we will all see clearly, at least as clearly as we can see the past. Then, even our torturous nostalgia will be whole. ”

A two-winged butterfly would understand its ”filaments” for the future. Victor, the mirror-twin of Mircea, the one bound to him in a Narcissus-like story of love and abhorrence, is the embodiment of symmetry at its highest. Memory and love ” will be one” in a state of divine transgression, which means the state of perfect simultaneity. Symmetry is the preservation of halves, simultaneity is androgyny. For Cărtărescu, eternity is simultaneity. In Cărtărescu’s giant maze which is *Blinding*, simultaneity is the opposite of symmetry. Dream, generated by nostalgia as its compensatory universe, achieves the de-synchronisation with the habit of the reason, namely of putting in order the past, the present and the future. The translator makes use of poetic fluidity for this crucial passage of the book, without sacrificing the clarity in the target language.

G. „Iar apoi, așa cum în a opta lună fătul se-ntoarce cu capul în jos în uter, dublul nostru de chakras și plexuri și raze a făcut și el tumba care ne face atât de paradoxali. Atît de fascinanți. Și poate că el e chiar fetusul care s-a răsucit presimțind nașterea. Căci toți sîntem femei, sîntem utere ce se vor sfișia și vor putrezi, ca să iasă, în altă lume, sub ceruri noi, ei, cristalinii, translucizi asemenea crustaceilor(...). (Cărtărescu, *Orbitor. Aripa stîngă*:74).

”But then, **the doppelgänger** of our chakras and plexuses and rays flipped over, the way that in the eighth month a child turns its head down in the uterus – the reversal that makes us so paradoxical, and so fascinating. Maybe the fetus turns itself over precisely because it senses the onset of birth. We are all women, we are uteruses, and we will tear ourselves apart and we will rot, so that in another world, under a new heaven, crystalline beings can emerge, translucent as crustaceans (...).”(Cărtărescu. *Blinding. The Left Wing*: Part 1, chapter 7, paragraph 12).

Sean Cotter preferred the word *the doppelgänger* instead of the word ”the double”, which is a very good choice, because the noun resulting from a numeral, double, loses its edge to convey a striking reality. Narcissus-type of love is, at the same time, an illusion and a rejection of memory. In

*Orbitor*, it is expressed through the apparition of Victor, the twin "brother" of Mircea, as a climax moment of the third book. It is only through him, through Victor, that mirror may become Mircea's manuscript, the giant labyrinth made of tiny labyrinths. We know all about Mircea's memories, yet we know nothing about Victor's memory. Just like Narcissus gazing at himself, Victor is a man without memories. Here the theme of the double is connected with the theme of creation. Escher's hands are an attempt to achieve simultaneity. This is the rhythm of masculine, cerebral creation, when it is inventing the world other than in its dream (*R.E.M.*) moments, with the speed of the thought. The rhythm of feminine creation is a foetal rhythm, more similar to the infra-time of butterfly pupation.

*Blinding* is a fabulous book feeding itself with the nostalgia of visited by actually inexistent places, totally recreated by the imagination of the writer. After all, it is through literature that we get a chance to reconfigure our dream landscapes, where our most interior worlds lie hidden. They make up the only reality which is truly ours. An interesting connection present in Cărtărescu's trilogy is that between exoticism and oblivion. The exotic spaces cannot be easily forgotten since they had never been real; they are inventions of the author in a dream-like trance. In Mircea Cărtărescu's *Blinding*, the speed of imagination parallels the speed of the biological processes of the body. The body is Mircea's connection to reality. But, with the speed of Escher's hands passing from real to virtual, everything happens in between worlds, not in reality. Memory can be associated with the anamorphic mirror of some landscapes painted by others, which the writer recognizes as his own. exotic lands as seen in huge anamorphic mirrors. Resembling the dream-like abstruse landscapes or buildings of Monsú Desiderio and of Piranesi, they trigger Mircea's sensation of déjà-vu. Seeing their paintings and etchings, Mircea recognizes the very rooms and palaces that have been forming into his mind. He places certain scenes from *Orbitor* into a picture made by Monsú Desiderio.

The butterfly is the central symbol of the book and it is ingrained in the overall structure: the left wing of the butterfly, the body, the right wing.

In Cărtărescu's trilogy, in the subterranean, sepulchral world of monstrous deeds created by our unexorcised fears, Monsieur Monsú makes a collection of unusual butterflies, actually a monstrous insectary with human iliac bones (butterfly-shaped) painted in different colours. The speed of passing from virtual into real is an attempt to simultaneity. Auto-fiction has become a trend within Romanian literature, emergent with the 80's generation, but anticipated by some post-war tendencies.

Auto-fiction may rely on memory's avidity to invent, but if memory eludes its complicated relationship to Time itself, it falls into manageable descriptions. The force of Cărtărescu's description lies in involving Time in all matrixes created by the Text.

Escher's hands drawing each other, sliding from real to virtual "a billion times a second" incessantly cross a passage as they create it. The passage is from the world of life to the world of the Book.

Labyrinth becomes the matrix, at all levels of the book, in which man confronts the revelation of immortality. But, at the same time, Memory must transcend its own matrix. Dream becomes the only possibility to connect all levels.

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## **CELTA Teaching Methods - a Doable Approach in Romanian Universities?**

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**Abstract;** This paper aims to tackle a rather interesting topic among teachers of English everywhere. Which is the best method to teach English in such a fast moving world, where our students sometimes tend to be more knowledgeable in the latest vocabulary developments? Which approach should a teacher have in order to maintain the students’ interest or in order to make them want to learn? This article is based on my personal experience and on my own desire to further my career and to refresh my teaching methods or even more than that, bring my teaching methods up to date. Language is communication, it is a two-way street where one does not talk at the students but helps them learn/acquire knowledge in a communicative approach. This is what CELTA taught me to do.

**Key words:** CELTA, communication, teaching methods, lesson plan, lesson framework

### **Professional Background**

Being a teacher of English at a Romanian university for the last 13 years gave me the possibility to work with a lot of students every semester, but more important than that gave me the chance and the challenge to experience students with various levels of English. It happened several times to have, in the same group of studies, students with different levels of English (from absolute beginners to independent users) with whom the common language of communication, namely Romanian, was almost missing, as they were also at the beginning with their Romanian. These situations made me do some research as to what methods are there in order to meet the nowadays expectations of an English language learner. Hence, I decided I needed a refresher course, as what I learned during the *Pedagogical Module* was now not enough.

### ***Finding The Right Choice***

Following extensive online search and after reading numerous forums I reached the conclusion that I had found the right course for me: CELTA. The letters stand for *Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. The course's aims fitted my needs: "The course enables candidates to: acquire essential subject knowledge and familiarity with the principles of effective teaching, acquire a range of practical skills for teaching English to adult learners, demonstrate their ability to apply their learning in a real teaching context." (Cambridge Syllabus and Assessment Guidelines 2015: p.2) This course is run by Cambridge University through its approved centres based on specifications given by Cambridge Assessment English. I decided to follow the course at *International House Language School and Teacher Training Institute* in Budapest, Hungary.

I was ready to meet new people, to "update" my professional development and to successfully complete an international recognised course. I thought that it was very important to learn/re-learn how to be aware of what I was doing as a teacher and why. I expected this course to teach me specific principles underlying my teaching approach and more important show me the alternatives available. As it is known, classrooms are complex places, where different solutions may work on different occasions with different students. I was looking for the right method to progress on the idea of student-centredness. A CELTA trainer is responsible for no more than 6 trainees and it is stated that the individual attention and the personal feedback are helpful in the development of the trainee.

### ***CELTA Designing and Staging Lessons***

CELTA trainees need to understand the principles of planning a balanced lesson and they need to apply these principles in order to structure a plan for their lesson (grammar, reading, listening, speaking, writing, etc.). I hereby present a Teaching Route Map (Lesson Plan) and everything that involves preparing a 45-minute lesson, according to CELTA Training.

Lesson Focus: Listening  
Level: Upper-Intermediate  
Length: 45 minutes  
No of students: 18

#### **Main and Subsidiary Aims:**

To develop students' skills of listening for gist and specific information in the context of an interview on *Guide Dogs*. The sub aim is to make the students speak about different topics related to helping animals.

**Personal Aim(s):**

I plan to watch TTT, to watch my timing for the first stages, watch echoing of S answers, use the WB less (do not write whole sentences for the P-T)

**Materials I plan to use: (remember © – or indicate that material is self-made)**

The materials I plan to use are ©from the book *Straightforward, Upper Intermediate, Second Edition*, pag 22, written by Philip Kerr & Ceri Jones, Macmillan – these materials have been photocopied, cut, glued and put together on paper carton

I plan to use pictures from the internet in the *Lead-in* Part and the *Follow up* part ([www.lifewithdogs.tv](http://www.lifewithdogs.tv))

**Language Analysis – for the Pre-teach Vocabulary (from 9:20 to 9:25)**

Word/phrase Meaning	Convey the meaning	CCQs	Form and Pronunciation Appropriacy	Problems encountered by the SS and solutions to their problems
On a lead 1. To be first; be ahead. 2. To go first as a guide. 3. To act as commander-director, or guide.	I will give them a sentence and show them the picture with a blind man and a dog on a lead	Is the man in front? (No) Is the dog in front/leading? (Yes) Who is the guide? (Dog)	<i>Form</i> To walk on a lead  <i>Pronunciation</i> To walk on a lead	<i>Form:</i> Ss might use a different preposition instead of on. Check. <i>Pronunciation:</i> Ss might pronounce lead as (led). Highlight on board silent, model and drill.
To hit it off straightaway - get well with someone from the very beginning of the relationship	I will tell them a story: I remember when I went to school in the first grade, I was very scared but the moment I saw the blond girl in the other corner of the room we hit it off straightaway! We started smiling and laughing. We are friends until today.	Was I scared of the other girl? Did I like her? Did we become friends?	<i>Form</i> To hit it off straightaway  <i>Pronunciation</i> To hit it off straightaway  <i>Appropriacy</i> The expression is more informal. Used more in spoken than written language.	<i>Form:</i> Ss might write off with only one <i>f</i> and might question about the spelling of straightaway, written separately or as a word. I will tell them either way is possible.  <i>Pronunciation:</i> They might have difficulties and questions about hit and it put together as they might think it is hit(ed) as a V2, which does not exist.

I will write the words on the board as Ss are doing the Gist task. Then, I will I get the answers, use CCQs to check, and then elicit relevant issues of form and stress and add them as needed. I will elicit which words are more or less formal once I have covered MFPA

Overhanging branches	I will elicit, mime and bring a picture. In the spring when everything is green, I go in the park and while walking under the trees I protect my head from these...	What do I protect my head from? (branches) How are these branches? (overhanging)	<i>Form</i> Overhanging branches  <i>Pronunciation</i> Overhanging branches	<i>Form</i> Ss might not know to write it as a one word.
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### Procedure of the whole Lesson

Time And Interactions	Stage and Aim	Procedure	Anticipated Problems
9.00-9.08  T-S SS OC	Lead-in – To get students interested in the topic and prepare them for the listening	I will first tell a personal story about my best friend’s grandmother who bought a dog. The dog and the grandmother had a nice connection from the beginning. All the neighbours knew about the dog and liked the dog. One day the grandmother was very sick and she fell on the kitchen floor. The dog ran outside in the garden and started barking so much that a neighbour came and found the grandmother in the kitchen. This is a true story with a happy ending because the grandmother was taken to hospital and she was fine.  After this I will ask them if they know similar stories, either true or from movies they have seen, where pets helped their humans in one way or another. After this I will make this activity student centered and work in pairs.I will monitor in the meantime.After they worked in pairs for 2 minutes I will have a brief OCFB naming two/three students to give us their answer.	They might not know the word bark from my story. In this situation I would mime the word.

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9.08-9.15 T-S SS OC	Orientation – to help students tune into what they are going to listen to	I will start by saying that <i>We are going to listen to ...</i> - bring a picture with a blind man with a dog and chest it. <i>Does anyone know what happens in the picture?</i> After they give the answer, I will put them in pairs and ask them to describe how the dog helps the man in the picture and why. I will CQ: <i>Are you going to talk about pets in general helping their humans?</i> I will monitor in the meantime. After 2 minutes I will stop them and because, as I was monitoring I heard interesting explanations, I will have a short OCFB naming 1/2 people to tell us how they would describe the picture.	I do not anticipate any major problems, as the picture is clear except for some people who might not know the word blind, in which case, as I would be monitoring I would give them this word.
9.15-9.20 T-S SS OC	Gist – to give the students a reason to listen to a specific topic interview at a general level in order to focus on their listening in depth afterwards, then listen to check predictions	I plan to put them into pairs and ask them to think of some topics that they would discuss with a trainer of guide dogs. I will give them 2 minutes top. I will ICQ: <i>Will you plan to discuss with a swimming trainer?</i> I monitor. I have a short feedback to check the answers. I name people.	Students do not speak too much as they cannot think of any ideas. I will give them a hint as I will be monitoring.
9.20-9.25 T-S S-T	Pre-Teach Vocab – to enable students to have sufficient vocab to do the detailed task, and to prevent students blocking on key vocab central to the topic	I chose three words to pre-teach as I consider these words are relevant to solve the task they will have at this stage: on a lead, hit it off straightaway and overhanging branch.	The word straightaway might bring in some problems for some, but I will give them the synonym immediately.
9.25-9.38 T-S SS SS-T	Detailed task – to give students a reason to read more intensively	I chest the Questions they have to answer and give them the instructions. I give them the handout. I tell them they have to work individually and write short answers next to the question. I monitor. We listen to the recording (5 min). I plan to ask them if they managed to answer all the questions. Seek consensus. After this I plan to listen again to the recording. I sit down. I tell	Some might find it difficult to answer all the questions even after the second listening as they have to write longer answers to some questions. Hopefully their partner will help them and they will complete all their answers.

		them to work in pairs and check their answer. I monitor. After a while I ask for feedback. I name students to give the answer for each question.	
9.38-9.45 SSS	Follow-up – to exploit the topic for a speaking activity	I plan to split them into 3 teams and give each team a different picture with a hero dog. In each team they should come up with a strategy of how to convince the other teams to vote their dog as the dog of the year/the best dog. I will give them 2 minutes. After this I will mix the teams and each of them should support their dog in the new teams and convince them their dog is the most heroic one. In the end they should choose a dog.	They could need some extra words for the debate, which I plan to micro give, if asked.

Visual Aids used (larger prints):



[www.123rf.com](http://www.123rf.com)[www.guidedogs.com](http://www.guidedogs.com)

**Acronyms used:**

T – Teacher

S – Students working on their own

S-S – Students working in pairs

SSS – Students working in group

CCQ – Concept Checking Question

CQ – Concept Question

OCFB – Open Class Feedback

ICQ – Instructions Checking Questions

OC – Open Class

MFPA – Meaning, Form, Pronunciation, Appropriacy

Preparing thoroughly for a 45-minute class took more than 2 hours. Each stage of the *Teaching Route Map* must have an aim, a reason why a teacher is doing/teaching that in the class. It must help the students move forward on their journey to their final destination, namely perfecting their level of English. Hence, deep consideration should be given to each stage in particular.

All my previous teaching experience sometimes obstructed my CELTA way of thinking. To make matters more difficult for me, there was a colleague (a native speaker) who had never taught in his life, but was very willing to travel the world and become an international English Teacher. All the specific details, the dos and don'ts were rapidly assimilated by my colleague, he was just as a sponge – absorbing everything, whereas those of us who had previous teaching knowledge, encountered difficulties, as our *hard drive* was already full with the traditional methods of teaching. The experienced teachers began to have personal aims such as: to sit down more, to make sure all the Ss are included, to stop talking so much – it is not a speech, to give clearer instructions, to check instructions, to monitor more, to correct more during drilling, to stop talking or parroting and to micro-teach when necessary. All the trainees were advised to refer to the *Lesson Plan* during the lesson, as it was not considered cheating. In the end, a successful *Lesson Plan* should be the answer to these three questions:

1. WHAT is the T teaching?
2. WHY is the T teaching that?
3. HOW is the T going to achieve that?

### ***How Doable is this Method/Way of Teaching in Romanian Universities?***

Before trying on my students some of the methods learned during the CELTA Course I had to consider the “learning style in terms of different kinds of intelligence. Some intelligences that have been proposed are:

- verbal: the ability to use language in creative ways
- logical/mathematical: the ability for rational analytic thinking
- visual: the ability to form mental models and use mental imagery
- kinesthetic: the ability to express oneself through body movement
- musical: musical and rhythmic ability
- interpersonal: the ability to understand other people's feelings and wishes
- intrapersonal: the ability to understand oneself

According to this view, the best learning opportunities are those that match the learner's most developed intelligence. Thus, learners with a strong logical/mathematical intelligence would benefit from problem-solving activities such as ones involving sorting sentences into different categories and then working out rules.” (Thornbury and Watkins, p. 9-10)

At first the students (year two Applied Modern Languages and year three International Relations and European Studies) were very reluctant to the new methods used. They noticed right away that I was doing something different. After the first lesson they asked me if they did something wrong because I asked them so many “awkward” (*they thought*) questions during the lesson and because I used a lot the method of peer check. This method was received with a lot of hesitance especially by the students from Applied Modern Languages during our *Translation Seminar*. They did not understand why they had to show their own translation to their colleague, what if s/he criticizes his/her efforts, what is they “steal” their version. They were afraid to have their work assessed by their peers and not by their teacher. Everyone reacted in a strange way to ICQs (example: Do I want you to translate the whole passage?) and CCQs (example: Does this translation have legal terminology?).

However, I persevered with this method and at the end of the semester, all the students were asked if they had different feelings about the method used. Their answers surprised me: “*we laugh more now during your classes*”, “*we get along better with our colleagues*” “*there isn’t only one student who gets all the credit*”, “*time flies so fast during the seminar*”, “*we feel freer because we can move our chairs and desks around*”, “*I am not embarrassed anymore if my colleague sees my misspelling*”, “*I am not left behind anymore*”, “*I get to have all the translation written in my notebook*”. I can happily say that one hundred percent of the students who took part in my short experiment (42 students) had a positive feedback after one semester when I used some of the CELTA methods. This makes me feel as if I have accomplished my goal: refreshing my teaching methods, getting closer to the needs of the modern English language learner and enabling students to understand more and have the desire to learn more English.

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