VOLUME 8, NUMBER 2. NOVEMBER 2025

ISSN 2517-4266

HUMANITIES BULLETIN

SPECIAL ISSUE:
READING TO KNOW, LEARNING TO HEAR, ENGAGING IN RESPECT AND LOVE WITHIN AN INTERCULTURAL FRAME

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LONDON
ACADEMIC
PUBLISHING

HUMANITIES BULLETIN

Humanities Bulletin

Humanities Bulletin

Volume 8, Number 2
November 2025

Special Issue:
Reading to Know, Learning to Hear, Engaging in Respect and Love within an Intercultural Frame

Editors:
Prof. Dr. Carla Locatelli and Dr. Victor Alexandru Pricopi

London Academic Publishing
London, 2025

Humanities Bulletin, Volume 8, Number 2, 2025.
Editor-in-Chief: Victor Alexandru Pricopi; Executive Editor: Cristina Lucia Șutiu.
Special Issue: *Reading to Know, Learning to Hear, Engaging in Respect and Love within an Intercultural Frame*, Editors: Prof. Dr. Carla Locatelli and Dr. Victor Alexandru Pricopi

ISSN 2517-4266 (Online)

Humanities Bulletin is a peer-reviewed open-access Journal.

Frequency:
2 issues per year: May and November.
First Printing: November, 2025.

Publisher:
London Academic Publishing Ltd.
27, Old Gloucester Street
WC1N 3AX
London, United Kingdom

Contact:
e-mail: contact@lapub.co.uk; humanities_bulletin@journals.lapub.co.uk
www.lapub.co.uk
www.journals.lapub.co.uk

Company Reg. No. 10941794
Registered in England and Wales

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Reading to Know, Learning to Hear, and Engaging in Respect

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This "Introduction" is divided into three Sections: 1) "Opening Theoretical Remarks" i.e., a conceptual Preamble; 2) "A 'Narrative' of the Call for Papers" mapping the thematic ground and scope of an invitation to respond, and 3) "The 'Happy Ending' of the CFP: Respondents Write Back." Indeed, the plurality of their contributions and points of view recognizes and answers the dialogical intent of our call.

1. "Opening Theoretical Remarks"

"Accommodating alterity" is the opposite of "othering." How are these two alternatives perceived and regarded? Perceiving "alterity" is simply an awareness of the unfamiliar, of the unknown, of the foreign that frequently crosses our path. Othering, on the contrary, is not a simple perception but a devaluing attitude or practice that inscribes value in the opposition of "us and them." Being open to difference or resisting it is the result of an attitude or a choice. When values (good/bad, better/worse) are inscribed in either opening or in isolating perceptions, the inevitable cultural pre-judice that constructs cultural knowledge can become nuanced, transformed, enriched or remain crystallized, conceptually simplistic, and even aggressive. Acknowledging difference, and welcoming or resisting it are not a definite given, but the result of many factors and of several processes, involving preliminary knowledge, choice and decision. Hans-Georg Gadamer has argued that prejudice is just an inevitable constituent of culture, not to be demonized, but to be recognized. He also showed that the elaboration of pre-judice is an enriching possibility.

Making room for alterity is the result of an affective choice motivated by constructive curiosity and leading to scientific documentation and to a critical evaluation of information. Ultimately, accommodating alterity is a search for reciprocal respect. Othering, on the contrary, does not necessarily require the pursuit of information: uncritical cultural prejudice suffices. Once difference(s) are perceived, the response can be indifference, refusal, or dialogical listening and critical acceptance; in short, accommodating alterity requires an ethics of reading, a resilience of listening and an engagement in reciprocal respect.

In gathering information from descriptive texts the myth of objectivity should be questioned;

caution in the interpretation of "exotic" information should be practiced, and honesty in the transmission of information should follow. Considerate attention demands elasticity in listening and resilience in the pursuit of knowledge of cultural differences.

Culture, whose traditional definition includes beliefs, law, morality, customs, art, literature, language, etc. is fluid, and its definition is slippery. At any rate, it is legitimate to ask: is the definition of culture fashioned from an external point of view or from within? In his *The New Science* (1725, 1774), Giambattista Vico saw culture as evolving in three stages: from "barbaric" beliefs in idols, oracles and auspices, to the establishment of "hero" rule (i.e., of aristocratic superiority), to the final acknowledgment of the equality of all men. Such an evolution, culminating in the universal equality of men indicated to him a clear cultural progress. The certainty of historical progress has been challenged since, and has become more and more problematic in time. Nowadays cultural critics could ask: What does "progress" mean in the light of "globalization," when equality is not universal? Is the ideal of equality still a measure of progress?

Cultural hegemony establishes cultural value as an absolute normative parameter even when the notion of progress does not include the global meaning of equality. Theodor Adorno highlighted the limit of the term "culture" as determined from a point of view external to it, and by a need to classify for administrative and governing purposes. By now, many fields of knowledge have re-worked the global concept of "culture" to the point of suggesting that it makes sense only as an adjective qualifying a noun. Disciplines such as cultural anthropology, cultural semiotics, cultural psychology, cultural studies, cultural jurisprudence, cultural ethics etc., manifest such a conceptual shift. Basically, each discipline still points to a way of interpreting the world, and/or a way of living in it, and/or of desiring it; a discipline defines and is defined by a particular gaze; it still sets boundaries and has its rules (that is why it is called a "discipline"), but it also questions the limits of the parameters of its closed definition. Self-reflective questioning wonders what the constituting rules of a discipline leave out of its sight. Specifically, Tony Bennett has highlighted the erosion of closed definitions of culture, not only by referring to the multiplication of terms such as cultural hybridity, transculturation, cultural in-betweenness, etc., but also by emphasizing the cultural collapse of the dichotomy nature/culture. Ultimately, the paradox of humanistic globalization is its intrinsic pursuit of global evidence together with the call for the recognition of cultural plurality.

2. A Narrative of the Call for Papers (CFP)

The present issue of *Humanities Bulletin* 8.2 focuses on international Literary Culture in the broad sense of the term, considering several elements, that include: material aspects of texts (verbal and iconic), reading as material activity and as interpretation, translations and editorial disseminations.

Reception and interpretation of works of literature, including theory, is an unstoppable process; it has changed geographically and historically and is still constantly changing, highlighting varying social, economic and cultural appreciation. The intention of developing an international dialogue as inclusive as possible on a variety of topics, including Literary studies, is clearly stated by Victor Pricopi

as the reason for the very existence of *Humanities Bulletin*: "Our aim is to bring together different international scholars, in order to promote the dialogue between cultures, ideas and new academic researches." As for the specific CFP for this issue, my basic underlying question can be summarized as follows: Can evidence of multiple productions and receptions demonstrate the limits of cultural pre-judice on which cultures are built, and can it possibly enrich different cultural horizons through literary and hermeneutic dialogue? There is no final answer to this multiple question, but each essay included here confirms its relevance.

Invited contributions were addressed to scholars working on the transmission of transnational literary knowledge, and promoting cultural dialogue by focusing on social, critical, cognitive and philosophical readings of literary texts, and on the cultural protocols of such readings. The task of advancing a sincere dialogue among scholars coming from different cultures and identity positioning and willing to engage in the exchange of different points of view was at the core of my explicit invitation. Inclusiveness was on my agenda as an ethical imperative and I know it is a risk, but one I was willing to take because knowledge grows as an evolving experiment, and true dialogue is always experimental and exploratory.

The list of suggested topics was formulated as a set of straight questions, linear but not simple, because reaching the greatest variety of international scholarly communities was an important goal to better understand different cultural textualizations and their reception.

Why do we read international works? Why and how do we choose what we read in the vast plethora of international texts? What desire (pleasure, fear, curiosity, etc.) drives our reading of international works? Also: what international texts are available, and where? Obviously, a variety of factors, including marketing rules, determines publications, media transmissions, translations and circulation.

Furthermore, if literature *per se* can resists the homogeneity determined by the dominance of global media, globalization still determines hierarchies of values in the production of information. So: how informed are readers and critics of different protocols of textual formation developed in subaltern and marginal cultures? How can the visibility of hegemonic and biased readings reduce cultural blindness?

A double challenge beckons the reader and the critic in the reception and interpretation of an ample variety of literary textual formations produced in the world. On one side, the need of information is evermore imperative in a global world; on another the processing of such information needs contextualization, in order to resist the stereotyped abstractions that are often used to access and describe different cultures. For example, the ideal of informative objectivity needs to be explored in its intrinsic ambivalence: what is a "realistic portraiture?" Who defines it as realistic? Can/does global technological control accommodate dissonant guidelines of taste? Attention to aesthetic imperatives, which are usually taken as an essential component of literary works are not culturally the same, nor explicit, in sharing Literary productions seen by a dominant *doxa* as marginal works. This consideration can go as far as questioning the literary ideal of aesthetic value.

Globalization does not challenge hegemonic normativity, but Literature can do it, because it fosters cognitive and critical interrogations on homogeneity and on cultural control. Furthermore, valorization of the role of the individual or local reader can shed light on the unseen areas of marginal works. Reading establishes a unique relation between the text and the reader who can approach it with different methodologies and values. Should the search for authorial intention be totally abandoned? Should it be kept as a form of testimony? It is sometimes very important to know biographical information to contextualize texts, but biographical interpretive projections should not become the one and only key of reading. So, the polyphonic structure of works of literature should also be heard because it always speaks to the reader. Increased perception of literary polyphony is a distinctive mark of the good reader. Starting from there, a dialogic hermeneutical practice can develop. Moreover, can multiple transnational interpretations open and enrich "the pleasure of the text"? They certainly confirm that there is no possibility of enriched understanding within closed or crystallized cultures.

As I pointed out, some of my questions were unswervingly formulated in accessible terms to avoid a geographically restricted use of technical jargon. The knowledge of non-Eurocentric traditions in Europe and North-America shows how the rest of the world knows much more about the "The West" and "The North" than Eurocentric and North-American scholars do about "The South" and "The East." A hegemonic lexicon often infiltrates non-Eurocentric texts, because it is taken as a sign of scholarly excellence, at the expense of dialogical accessibility and transparency. The issue of terminology and technical jargon can turn into an issue of intellectual capacity, especially when there is no scientific curiosity about the outside world and languages.

The standardization of global hermeneutics is obviously rooted in the contemporary use of English as a "lingua franca." Its use has been open to theoretical debate, one that on one side denounces linguistic colonization, and on the other valorizes the creative possibilities of trans-cultural exchanges. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe, for example, represent these two discordant positions; the former resists the use of English in the production of African Literature; the latter sees the use of English as both an affirmative possibility and an inevitability. Gémino Abad, a Filipino poet and critic has stated that contemporary Filipino writers write <u>from</u> English but not <u>in</u> English, an interesting way of calling attention to the complexity of linguistic use and the many nuances of cultural dynamics. In this context we cannot fail to mention the alarm of indigenous linguists about the disappearance of local languages which is progressively evident in many countries because of the predominant use of English among young people.

We are obviously using English for our present exchange, but notwithstanding the ambivalence of this practice, I believe that it can be an important starting point of cultural dialogues, especially if it can convey conditions of affect which are inscribed within any text and in its reading. Volatile as they are, these conditions nurture transnational dialogue in ways that are not hegemonically decisive. How can affects be presented and highlighted in transcultural dialogues? From my inevitably European (but not Eurocentric) point of view I listed in the CFP some critics that were in fact used by the respondents

in their essays. I see this as a form of dialogue for which I thank them. For the record: among the many that I could have mentioned, I chose: Georges Poulet, Roland Barthes, Bell Hooks, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Pierre Bourdieu, Gloria Anzaldúa. They address both critical and affective ways of thinking and come from methodologically different traditions. Affective readings focus on the subject matter of a literary work; they are very important as an informational base for interpretation and a perceptive response to it. Critical readings evaluate the narrative structure of a literary work as a "making sense mechanism" and contextualize the information a text conveys. Hans Robert Jauss has argued that affective readings particularly important because they are often a pre-condition for the development of comparable "horizons of expectation". In the CFP I asked then: how do affective readings orient, enrich or simplify hermeneutical performances?

Any reading establishes a relation between the text and the reader, but how can this relation be inflected to expand the horizon of reciprocal international exchange? Should the search for authorial intention be the dominant rule of affective reading? Or, on the contrary, should the polyphonic structure of work of literature speak directly to their reader with no reference to the author?

Furthermore, how can a dialogical hermeneutics really develop? Most probably not. Such readings and the ideal of a dialogical hermeneutics confirm that there is no possibility of reciprocal understanding among closed or crystallized cultures.

Comparison among literary productions has been a discipline in itself for a very long time, but recently it has become a theory challenging its own critical tenets. Comparative Literature as criticism juxtaposes both national and international works, often challenging the notion of canon or producing counter canonical readings of classical works. Comparative Literature as theory addresses the blind spots of criticism, the silences of literary works, and the critic's own cultural amnesia, tilling the space of an encounter with otherness. A lot has been done in critical and theoretical works to implement cultural dialogues, but still more needs to be done in academic curricula, in publishing, in the media.

Financial and technological globalization promote a homogeneous way of life and of thinking; in this context, what does "cultural pluralism" mean today? As a matter of fact, cultural hegemony has been exposed within a "Western" critical tradition, and some theorists have gone as far as to express concern about the development of a technological determinism in public culture.

However, Literature resists the normalization of hegemonic imperatives by exposing systemic social contradictions, and by suggesting possible alternatives of identity, of taste, of thought, of institutional organizations. The role of the reader is assumed as particularly important not only for the acquisition of knowledge ("Reading to Know"), but also for the development of non-hegemonic skills of reception ("Learning to Hear"), and for developing dialogical hermeneutics. The stimuli of the Globalized world demand to respond quickly; to respond primarily to global expectations, not to local or marginalized ones. responding immediately means to respond to the pre-defined global feelings made understandable on the world stage. The result is the creation of a world without lasting sensations, with minds colonized by media through abstract human-machine stimuli that keep confirming pre-acknowledged feelings.

3. The "Happy-Ending" of the CFP: Respondents Write Back

After my elucidation of the conceptual presuppositions of this Issue of HB, and after the narration of how the CFP came about, some concluding remarks will focus on the "happy ending" of this story: the one brought about by the scholars who answered our call. In different ways and degrees they responded to the cognitive demands and ethical concerns set out in the CFP.

Grouping the received contributions previously selected for publication by the reviewers and by the General Editor has been both challenging and inevitable. Predictably, some themes overlap and stretch beyond the clusters I listed below, and different modes of writing may not have received adequate valorization. Therefore, this taxonomy is not meant to be interpreted rigidly but rather as an invitation to read each contribution attentively.

That said, I have formulated four basic conceptual themes: a) Ethics of Reading and Interpretation (Gerz, Li Haotian, Aronis, Jensen); b) Formal Traits of transcultural Textualities (Lau, Romano, Vasilescu); c) Protocols of "Nomadic" Identities (Allahyari and Farahbakhsh, Namgladze, Kao, Brown); d) The Body and Body Politics (Dwyer III, Vance, Krifa, Bunker).

a) Ethics of Reading and Interpretation

– Gerz valorizes attention as a basis for ethical responsiveness and, perfectly attuned with the CFP, reflects on definitions of ethics. She sees its root not on the basis of abstract concepts, but as "an art of seeing".

– Li Haotian originally defines "an ethics of agonistic care" where conflict is not avoided but a practice of repair is not abandoned. A "reparative dialogue" is seen as a positive method in addressing cultural controversies.

– Aronis explores the literal meaning of reading and hearing transcripts of texts in non-standard English, and convincingly relates their understanding to processes of discrimination and racialization.

– Jensen's interesting focus on the ethical and political dimension of story-telling allows her to discuss the blurring of trans-cultural German-Asian links, and human-animal boundaries.

b) Formal Traits of Intercultural Textualities

– Lau ingeniously highlights the fact that forms of intersemiotic translations are visible in publication of stories, not only because new readings of the same texts can change their overall meaning, but also because cover designs tell interesting stories of book reception.

– Romano resourcefully focuses on the reception of Hegel in Russia and relates the Hegelian "*absolutes Wissen*" to Dostoevsky's "*sobornost*." Her comparative approach underscores the dynamics of transcultural literary reception as creative conceptual transformation.

– Vasilescu conducts an ambitious comparative reading of French and English Emblem books from the 16th and 17th century, suggesting that the iconographic representation of animals can blur the boundary that traditionally opposed them to humans. He refers to Derrida's zoocriticism and to zoopoetics to highlight the intersemiotic relation of written text and image and the social symbolic appeal of animal personification.

c) Protocols of "Nomadic" Identities

– Allahyari and Farahbakhsh's original comparative practice works on both a textual level and a theoretical one. Allahyari's *Qorab Jendun* and Churchill's *Top Girls* are discussed through a Lacanian lens to compare their attitude towards patriarchy. Accepting, resisting, or rejecting it, in the light of women oppression, are approaches that underscore concrete or idealistic ideals of societal organization.

– Namgladze significantly highlights the political agenda behind the production of children's literature in the context of identity politics of any society, and, specifically, in the Soviet Union from 1938 to 1964. Interestingly, she mentions the fact that there are "different types of identity," and "cultural identity" is susceptible to political manipulation. Ideological drives permeate pedagogical agendas in the formation of children's literature; this fact is confirmed by the production of different editions of "the same" work, as educational purposes change.

– In Kao's perceptive and well-documented article the theme of exile works as a connecting device to illustrate how experiences of time and space inform the literary production of three Russian writers, Bunin, Nabokov and Gazdanov. Spatial dislocation to a foreign country and the irreversibility of re-location are shared themes of their works where nostalgia is paired with the persistent effort to close with the past. Progressively the authors' writing changes, signaling the incorporation of literary techniques borrowed from foreign literatures.

– Brown performs a very creative analysis of a single work, Mario Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, by relating it to Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. An interesting net of details linking the characters of the two narratives (film and philosophical essay) develops the theme of how fractured identities are formed, and how they remain suspended but resilient. In this case emigration is the context in which the possibility of moving beyond inherited cultural norms to achieve a self-defined way of being implies both a critique of assimilation and of inherited burdens of duty.

d) The Body and Body Politics

– Dwyer III suggests that fiction and media reporting are connected insofar as they produce different versions of corporeal subjectivity. The bio-politics of Deleuze and reference to Anderson's "imagined communities" are the references through which definitions of bodies are seen and related to their hegemonic interpretation.

– Vance's starting point is the indication of the recurrence of the same tropes in Medieval romances. Many of them focus on the female body and condition and relate to the loss and reclamation of kingship and power. The strength of this well documented essay lies in the contextualization of *The Lay of Havelok the Dane* maintaining that French Arthurian sources are altered inasmuch as more space is given to the theme of violence against women, excluded from the line of kingship succession and forced into marriage.

– Krifa's reading of Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* addresses the issue of violence against women in the light of their reproductive rights; specifically, forced marriage and ritualized sex dehumanizes women. Many theoretical works from a French feminist tradition are aptly mentioned

to denounce patriarchal authority. Particularly interesting is the repeated reference to "Mayday," a simple British code signal in 1923 meaning "distress," translated into a nearly perfect homophonic French "m'aidez," ("help me") and eventually became "The mayday movement" i.e., the name of an international feminist movement.

– Bunker's discussion of Mrs. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* hinges on the definition of femininity as absence of masculinity and on the notion that femininity can be a masquerade, i.e., a learned and cultural gender role. Reference to Freud and Kline, as well as to a well-documented mention of many feminist critics confirm the elusive, if not deceptive, nature of "authentic womanliness." The fact that Mrs. Ramsey is "a product of external desire" paradoxically perpetuates her absence from herself right when she is the perfect image of the archetypal woman-mother.

To conclude: this brief and necessarily not exhaustive description of the authors' contributions is meant to fuel the readers' curiosity and respond to it with the pleasure of reading, of learning, and loving it!

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Ethics of Reading and Interpretation

Reading as a Resonant Relation between Cultural Creation and Human Universality

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Abstract:

In this article, I claim that moral life begins not in decision or judgment but in attention, the disciplined, loving gaze through which reality becomes visible as moral. Drawing on Iris Murdoch's philosophy of moral vision, I argue that seeing is an ethical act: a practice of perception purified from ego and illusion. By bringing Murdoch into dialogue with Stanley Cavell and Martha Nussbaum, I trace a constellation of responsiveness that unites vision, language, and emotion. Cavell reveals the moral drama of acknowledgment within the limits of ordinary language; Nussbaum uncovers the cognitive depth of emotion as a form of moral intelligence; Murdoch grounds both in a metaphysics of vision, where perception itself transforms the self. Against the abstraction of moral theory, I recover ethics as an art of seeing, a form of attention in which truth and love converge. Finally, I turn to film as the lived enactment of this moral attention: a medium that trains the eye to dwell, to discern, and to love without possession. In reframing moral perception as a discipline of vision, the article bridges epistemology and aesthetics, suggesting that to see rightly is the highest form of understanding and that art keeps this moral labor alive.

Keywords: moral vision, attention, acknowledgment, ethics and aesthetics, film philosophy

I. Introduction Seeing Others

> "The merest schoolgirl, when she falls in love, has Shakespeare, Donne, Keats to speak her mind for her; but let a sufferer try to describe a pain in his head to a doctor and language at once runs dry."
>
> (Woolf 1930, 34)

> "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him."
>
> (Wittgenstein 1953, §223)

What does it mean to truly see another person, if such a thing is even possible? This deceptively simple question lies at the heart of both moral philosophy and lived human experience. In our everyday encounters, we often speak of "seeing someone for who they really are" or "looking past appearances." But what kind of vision is this? And what ethical stakes are carried in the way we see? One might ask whether our perception is merely the blind adherence to cultural rules, or whether we ourselves constitute the very point at which the lines of culture converge. Such questions remind

us that the act of seeing is never neutral: it is shaped by language, by tradition, and by the invisible structures of culture that both enable and constrain our vision. Yet it remains an open question whether understanding is entirely determined by these frameworks, or whether there exists a dimension of perception that transcends them a way of apprehending the world not wholly conditioned by the traces of our linguistic and cultural formation. It is precisely within this possibility of perception beyond cultural determination that its aesthetic and ethical dimensions come into view. For seeing is not merely an act of cognition or feeling, but an act of attention. A moral practice revealed in how we direct our gaze, in what we allow to appear, and in how we respond to the presence of the other. Perception thus becomes an ethical stance: in the manner of our seeing, we disclose the measure of our responsibility toward the world.

To address this neglected dimension, I turn to Iris Murdoch's concept of moral vision. According to my reading, Murdoch insists that moral life begins not in decision or deliberation, but in *how we see* the world and the people in it. In *The Sovereignty of Good*, she writes: "The self, the place where we live, is a place of illusion. Goodness relates to the attempt to see the unself, to see and to respond to the real world in the light of a virtuous consciousness." (Murdoch 1970, 91)This movement of attention, away from ego, fantasy, and self-centeredness, can be seen as central to moral life in Murdoch's philosophy. Her account of ethics suggests that the good is not chosen but perceived; not constructed but attended to.

Unlike Stanley Cavell, whose reflections often center on the conditions and limits of language, particularly the ways our ordinary speech both reveals and obscures our relation to others, and Martha Nussbaum, whose cognitive-affective model of emotion emphasizes how our feelings are shaped by evaluative judgments and moral reasoning, Iris Murdoch compels us to take seriously the idea that how we see others, visually, emotionally, morally, is the very foundation of ethical life. Where Cavell interrogates our failures of acknowledgment through language, and Nussbaum explores the moral intelligence embedded in our emotional life, Murdoch insists that ethics begins not in speaking or judging, but in the disciplined attention we pay to the reality of others. Crucially, for Murdoch, this vision is not a loose metaphor for moral concern, but a disciplined, attentive mode of perception: an exacting practice shaped by love, imagination, and the lifelong struggle against self-centeredness. Accordingly, ethics begins not with decision, but with attention.

Murdoch's account is thus particularly helpful in reframing ethical life as a question of vision; yet it also proves most fruitful when triangulated with Cavell and Nussbaum, whose respective emphases on acknowledgment and emotion illuminate complementary dimensions of this moral attention. In what follows, I will trace how Murdoch's ethics of vision contributes to a richer understanding of others as a moral and aesthetic achievement. I will then bring her into dialogue with Cavell and Nussbaum, before turning to the role of art, especially film, as a space where this form of vision can be enacted. My aim is to show that Murdoch does not simply offer us another theory of ethics, but a moral practice rooted in seeing, one that challenges us to become more attentive, more imaginative, and ultimately more loving in our orientation toward others.

II. Murdoch on Moral Vision and the Good

Murdoch's moral vision cannot be confined to a theory of virtue or psychological disposition; it is, more radically, a metaphysical reorientation. Her insistence that "to be moral is to submit to the authority of reality" signals a profound challenge to the post-Kantian moral landscape. Against both existentialist voluntarism and emotivist subjectivism, she posits that moral truth is not constructed

but *perceived* that reality itself, when seen rightly, exerts a moral demand upon us. Seeing, for Murdoch, is not a metaphor for knowing but the very mode of moral being.

To understand this, we must take seriously her claim that attention is a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality. Attention thus names an epistemic practice and an ethical posture simultaneously: a sustained discipline through which perception becomes truthful. Yet this truth is not static. Murdoch's moral realism is dynamic. It unfolds as a lifelong struggle against the falsifying powers of ego, fantasy, and self-assertion. Vision must be *purified* before it can apprehend what is truly there. Such purification does not occur in the solitude of the intellect but in the daily exercise of love. A love that is neither sentimental nor possessive, but disciplined, patient, and exacting. In this way, unselfing becomes not a negation of the self but a *transformation* of its structure. As she writes in *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, „Love is the extremely difficult realisation that something other than oneself is real "(Murdoch 1997, 215).

The self does not vanish; it becomes transparent to what transcends it. Murdoch's unselfed subject is not empty but receptive, not erased but reoriented. The moral life, then, is not a series of decisions but an ongoing reconfiguration of attention: the slow turning of the gaze from self-absorption toward the luminous fact of otherness. To see justly is already to act justly, for vision, when purified, becomes a mode of responsiveness.

This ontological depth is illuminated by her reimagining of the Good. For Murdoch, the Good is neither a moral object nor an abstract principle but the horizon of intelligibility itself. The unseen source that renders both reality and value visible. Echoing Plato, she describes the Good as "the magnetic centre towards which love naturally moves." (Murdoch 1970, 100). Yet unlike Platonic contemplation that ascends toward the ideal, Murdoch's movement is one of *descent* into the concrete, the ordinary, the particular. The Good is not an escape from the world but the ground that allows the world to appear as meaningful. To see the Good is to see the world truthfully.

Herein lies the aesthetic dimension of her ethics. For Murdoch, perception and imagination are not opposed but mutually sustaining. The imagination, disciplined by love, becomes the faculty through which we discern the moral texture of reality. Good art, she writes," reveals what we are usually too selfish and too timid to recognize, the minute and absolutely random detail of the world, and reveals it together with a sense of unity and form" (Murdoch 1970, 84). In attending to the, art trains us to see without possession, to dwell with form and difference without reducing them to the measure of the self. Art thus performs the same moral work as attention: it teaches us how to see. As she observes, "Freedom is not strictly the exercise of the will, but rather the experience of accurate vision which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions action." (Murdoch 1970, 65).

Murdoch's philosophy therefore dissolves the boundary between ethics and aesthetics. Both are practices of vision grounded in a metaphysics of the Good. To be moral is to learn how to see; to see rightly is already to love. This identification of vision, love, and moral truth constitutes her most radical contribution a claim that perception, when purified by love, becomes revelation. Seen from this vantage, Murdoch's moral realism stands as a counterpoint to the linguistic and emotional approaches that dominate much of twentieth-century moral philosophy. Where others locate morality in the structures of language or in the architecture of emotion, Murdoch anchors it in the ontology of attention. Her ethics is not founded on rules, nor on sentiment, but on the transformation of vision itself. It is precisely at this point, where vision becomes the locus of moral life, that Murdoch's thought invites dialogue with her philosophical contemporaries. Stanley Cavell, in his meditations on skepticism and acknowledgment, likewise wrestles with the moral significance

of seeing and hearing others, though his path runs through the terrain of language. If Murdoch teaches us to see, Cavell teaches us to listen; and between these two gestures, vision and voice, the space of moral relation begins to take shape.

III. A Triangulation

If Cavell's ethics of acknowledgment unfolds within the medium of language, Murdoch's thought invites us to extend that responsiveness beyond speech to the ways reality itself makes a claim upon us. Her concern is not only how we respond to others, but how we allow the world to appear truthfully in perception and imagination. Where Cavell lingers at the threshold of the sayable, Murdoch directs us to the field of vision and form: to what must be seen and imagined rightly before it can be spoken rightly. Both thinkers reveal the moral dimension of our relation to reality, yet Murdoch adds to Cavell's ethical responsiveness a metaphysical and aesthetic depth.

Still, Cavell would likely begrudge Murdoch's recourse to metaphysics, her appeal to the Good as a transcendent horizon of intelligibility. His philosophy remains wary of any return to what he might regard as "moral theory," that is, to systematic or vertical accounts of value that seem to stand above the ordinary. Cavell's perfectionism, grounded in the fragility of our everyday criteria, finds moral significance in the human struggle for mutual understanding, not in a metaphysical order of being. As he famously writes, "Acknowledgment goes beyond knowledge" (Cavell 1976, 257). The ethical task, then, is not to *know* the other as an object within a moral system, but to *recognize* and respond to the other within the limits of our shared language. From this perspective, Murdoch's invocation of the Good might appear to Cavell as an attempt to stabilize what should remain perpetually unsettled: our ordinary search for meaning and acknowledgment within the limits of expression. Where Murdoch seeks moral orientation in the reality of value, Cavell finds it in the drama of responsiveness itself—in the ongoing negotiation of what words, gestures, and lives can mean between us.

Yet this difference, far from a contradiction, discloses the complementarity of their projects. Murdoch's metaphysical realism gives substance to what Cavell leaves deliberately open; it offers a picture of the moral world in which responsiveness is not only linguistic but ontological, grounded in the structure of reality itself. Conversely, Cavell's resistance preserves the humility of the ordinary: he reminds us that moral vision, however elevated, must find its expression in acknowledgment, in the words and acts that constitute our shared life. In this sense, Cavell tempers Murdoch's vertical transcendence with his horizontal insistence on the everyday, while Murdoch deepens Cavell's ordinary language ethics with a vision of the Good that anchors our responsiveness to others in a reality that exceeds us.

In this light, their divergence becomes the site of a fruitful synthesis. Cavell teaches us that acknowledgment is the moral form of responsiveness within language; Murdoch shows that such responsiveness presupposes a purified way of seeing. If Cavell's moral conversation takes place in the space between voices, Murdoch's unfolds in the silent interval between self and world. Each thereby illuminates the other: acknowledgment as the ethical gesture, attention as its perceptual and metaphysical ground.

Turning to Martha Nussbaum, we encounter another influential account of moral experience one that, while distinct from Murdoch's metaphysics of vision, nonetheless shares her conviction that perception and value are internally intertwined. In *Upheavals of Thought*, Nussbaum contends that emotions are not irrational impulses but judgments of value: ways of discerning what matters

to us and why. Emotions, in her view, are cognitively rich and ethically significant; they register our attachments and expose our vulnerabilities. (Nussbaum 2001, 19-23).

If Cavell locates moral responsiveness in acknowledgment, and Murdoch in the purification of vision, Nussbaum finds it in the intelligibility of emotion in the affective movements through which the world discloses its significance. Her moral psychology thus extends the previous line of thought from responsiveness and perception into the realm of feeling. Like Cavell, she resists the abstraction of moral theory; like Murdoch, she insists that genuine understanding requires attention. Yet where Murdoch grounds this attention in metaphysical realism, Nussbaum articulates it as an embodied intelligence, rooted in the emotional life itself.

This orientation becomes especially vivid in *Love's Knowledge*, where Nussbaum explores the epistemic role of literature in shaping moral understanding. Literature, she argues, does not merely exemplify ethical concepts but constitutes a form of moral knowledge a mode of insight born from imaginative participation in the inner lives of others. Her reading of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* exemplifies this claim. In tracing the consciousness of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, Woolf's novel enacts how two people, long bound by love and frustration, continually "read each other's sacred inscriptions" (Nussbaum 1995, 731) through the sustained exercise of thought and imagination. The novel's aesthetic form reveals that moral understanding is not the grasp of principle but the cultivation of interpretive attention a patience of vision and feeling through which others come to matter.

In this respect, Nussbaum's account resonates with bell hooks's insistence that genuine love is not a consoling fantasy but a transformative practice. "To know love," hooks writes, "we have to invest time and commitment... dreaming that love will save us, solve all our problems, or provide a steady state of bliss or security only keeps us stuck in wishful fantasy, undermining the real power of love, which is to transform us" (hooks 2000, 114). Both Nussbaum and hooks thus converge on the insight that love whether mediated by literature or articulated through critical theory discloses its truth not in fleeting emotion but in the enduring discipline of attention capable of reshaping who we are.

At this juncture, Nussbaum's view both echoes and refracts Murdoch's. Each rejects the notion of ethical neutrality, affirming that perception, whether emotional or visual, is saturated with value. Yet Murdoch presses further: where Nussbaum elucidates the inner architecture of emotion, Murdoch insists on the moral primacy of what lies beyond it. For her, the task is not merely to interpret our feelings but to train them; not to trace the contours of the self's responsiveness, but to orient that responsiveness toward reality itself. If Nussbaum teaches us to read the heart, Murdoch teaches us to look outward to see, beyond the self's texture of emotion, the independent and inexhaustible presence of the world that commands our moral attention.

We might say that bringing Murdoch into dialogue with Cavell and Nussbaum radicalizes both without dissolving their differences. She extends Cavell's account of acknowledgment by giving it ontological weight anchoring responsiveness not merely in language but in the moral texture of reality itself. And she enriches Nussbaum's conception of emotional knowledge by placing aesthetic and imaginative attention at the heart of moral perception. Where Cavell listens and Nussbaum feels, Murdoch teaches us to see.

I take these orientations not as competing models but as complementary tensions within the moral imagination. Together, Cavell, Nussbaum, and Murdoch outline a triptych of responsiveness: Cavell attends to the grammar of acknowledgment, Nussbaum to the narrative of emotion, and

Murdoch to the spiritual discipline of vision. Viewed through this constellation, understanding is not a single faculty but a practice that unites responsiveness and perception. A sustained effort to see, interpret, and respond rightly to the world and to others. Murdoch's insistence on the Good as a transcendent moral horizon finally sharpens what is at stake in this synthesis. Against Cavell's caution toward metaphysical claims and Nussbaum's Aristotelian grounding of value in human flourishing, Murdoch reasserts a reality that exceeds us. The Good, for her, is neither an inner ideal nor a social convention but the inexhaustible measure that calls our attention outward and humbles the self. This is the radical core of her thought and its abiding relevance: that moral life begins where self-assertion yields to perception, where freedom is reimagined as the patience to see, and where love becomes the form of understanding itself.

IV. Film as Visual Practice

If, as Murdoch argues, morality begins in how we see, then aesthetic experience, especially in its most immersive and perceptually demanding forms, becomes not a luxury but a discipline: a visual practice. For Murdoch, art is never a diversion from the moral life but a central medium through which our capacity for attention is cultivated, tested, and refined. She writes: "[Arts] show us the peculiar sense in which the concept of virtue is tied on to the human condition. They show us the absolute pointlessness of virtue while exhibiting its supreme importance; the enjoyment of art is a training in the love of virtue" (Murdoch 1970, 84). In this way, Murdoch aligns aesthetic perception with moral perception: both demand that we attend to something beyond ourselves, to dwell with form, particularity, and meaning without instrumentalizing what we perceive.

In this light, film emerges as a privileged medium for moral vision. Although Murdoch wrote little about cinema, her emphasis on visual perception, imagination, and the moral significance of art opens a path for rethinking film as an ethical practice. Unlike static images or abstract argument, film unfolds in time. It offers moving images of moral life, not mere representations of ethical conflict, but immersive experiences that engage our sensory, emotional, and interpretive faculties simultaneously. Through image, sound, rhythm, and narrative, film draws us into the perceptual worlds of others. It asks of us what Murdoch calls attention: the capacity to linger, to notice, to respond without haste, to perceive gestures, silences, and the fragile patterns of care or harm that compose moral experience.

Crucially, this mode of engagement does not indulge the illusion of egocentric participation in the events depicted. Like painting and literature, though unlike theatre, film resists placing the viewer at the centre of the action. Its power lies instead in the multiplicity of perspectives it sustains. This layered perception bears directly upon Murdoch's idea of the just and loving gaze. While grounded in the act of seeing, the phrase gestures toward a more expansive, metaphysical vision, one attuned not only to appearances but to the moral reality that inheres within them.

Attention, Murdoch insists, is not a momentary act but a discipline, a practice of returning, failing, and beginning again. Film gives temporal shape to this discipline. It slows perception, holding us within moments we might otherwise overlook, revealing the ethical density of the ordinary. "Good art," she writes, "reveals what we are usually too selfish or too timid to recognize." (Murdoch 1970, 84). Through such revelation, film becomes a form of moral training: a schooling of perception that cultivates a mode of sustained, truthful attention to the irreducible reality of others.

Yet, Murdoch is wary of compassion that collapses into identification. *Unselfing* does not mean merging with the other but making space for their difference. The aim is not to become the other, but to perceive them as they are without distortion, appropriation, or haste. Film, by dwelling on faces, gestures, pauses, and ambivalences, teaches precisely this discipline of moral regard. It trains us to see difference without subsuming it, to remain responsive without possession.

Murdoch's conception of the Good as a transcendent moral horizon clarifies why this aesthetic experience matters. We do not turn to art for distraction or catharsis, but to see more clearly. The work of art, especially the moving image, becomes a site of spiritual exercise: a practice through which vision is purified. We learn, again, to perceive what is difficult to see the ambiguous, the vulnerable, the painfully real. In this process we approach what Murdoch calls "just and loving attention": not an innate gift, but an achieved moral vision.

In this sense, film exemplifies the intersection of ethics and aesthetics that runs through Murdoch's thought. It shows that moral life is not only a matter of will or feeling, but of form and perception of how we attend to what is before us. If philosophy begins, as Cavell reminds us, in acknowledgment, and if emotional understanding, as Nussbaum shows, discloses what we value, then film may be where these capacities meet in practice: in the training of the eye and imagination toward truth. Murdoch's moral realism thus reorients contemporary ethics by reminding us that the work of seeing rightly is never finished, and that art, at its best, keeps this task alive.

V. Conclusion

What, then, does it mean to truly see another person? If Murdoch is right, to see is not to possess or define, but to attend, to let the other appear in their irreducible reality. This act of vision is not given but achieved: it demands a discipline of attention that purifies perception from the distortions of ego and fantasy. To see justly is to acknowledge the moral weight of our vision to recognize that in the way we look, we already respond. Seeing thus becomes an ethical practice, not because it judges, but because it loves: it strives to perceive without appropriation, to dwell with difference without fear. The ethical stakes of this seeing lie precisely here. How we see others discloses who we are and what we take reality to be. A distorted gaze perpetuates illusion and moral blindness; a just and loving one reorients us toward truth. Murdoch's philosophy reminds us that the good is not a principle we impose upon the world, but a light by which the world becomes visible. It calls us to a mode of vision in which the self yields to what is before it.

And yet, if all seeing is shaped by language and culture, can such vision ever truly transcend its conditions? Cavell and Nussbaum help us see that this transcendence is not an escape from the human but a transformation within it. For Cavell, our words disclose the fragile space of acknowledgment; for Nussbaum, our emotions reveal what we value and fear. Murdoch's contribution is to show that both language and emotion are rooted in perception itself that attention is the ground on which acknowledgment and feeling unfold. The point is not to look beyond culture, but to see through it: to discern, within its forms, the moral reality that calls us to responsibility. In this sense, art, and especially film, becomes a living laboratory for this moral vision. It trains our sight to linger, to notice, to attend without haste. Through its rhythms of seeing and being seen, film teaches us that perception is never neutral, that to witness is already to take part in the moral fabric of the world. The question of whether we can truly see another person therefore remains open, but it is no longer abstract. We see truly not when we master or explain, but when we attend, when we let ourselves be changed by what we see.

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An Ethical Rupture: Brodsky's Legacy and the Politics of Reading in a Time of Crisis

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Abstract:

In an era of sharpening polarization, critics need methods beyond "defense" versus "condemnation" when confronting works that fuse aesthetic power with ethical harm. Focusing on the Anglophone reception of Joseph Brodsky after the full-scale outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine war (2022), this article theorizes An Ethic of Agonistic Care. Synthesizing Chantal Mouffe's agonistic politics and bell hooks's ethics of love, the framework treats conflict as inescapable yet channels it toward reparative dialogue and responsibility. It is operationalized as a five-step protocol for ethical reading: positional examination, emotional diagnosis, agonistic engagement, reparative re-reading, and critical re-contextualization. Close readings of Brodsky (poetry, essays) and comparative cases from post-socialist and contemporary geopolitical literatures demonstrate the approach's transferability and limits, showing how it avoids both facile decanonization and aesthetic exceptionalism. The article argues that An Ethic of Agonistic Care supplies a rigorous, practicable method for addressing controversial cultural legacies and re-anchors "respect" and "love" as scholarly virtues in post–Cold War cross-cultural understanding, offering a pedagogical pathway for critical civic education.

Keywords: Joseph Brodsky, ethical reading, agonistic care, cross-cultural critique, canonical reassessment, post-Soviet literature, civic education

1. Introduction

When history re-examines the hidden dimensions of literary classics, what ethical responsibilities do readers and critics face? The 2022 Russia-Ukraine war brought this dilemma into sharp focus through the case of Joseph Brodsky (1940-1996), the 1987 Nobel Prize laureate and Russian-born American poet. His "foolish anti-Ukrainian poem" (*Yoteykayte* 2022) "On Ukrainian Independence,"[1] written after Ukraine declared independence in December 1991, was reactivated and went viral following the war's outbreak. This poem rapidly became the center of a polarized interpretive conflict in the English-speaking world's public sphere. On one hand, as perceived by observers in the English-speaking world through reports and commentary, some Russian nationalists appropriated it as a cultural manifesto supporting action against Ukraine (*Klishin* 2022); on the other hand, the harsh

condemnation from numerous Ukrainian intellectuals, along with Western critics' identification of its Russian chauvinism, constituted a more mainstream narrative in the English-speaking world (Khersonsky et al. 2022; *Margolis* 2022; Bates 2022). The complexity of this controversy stems from the internal contradictions of Brodsky's identity: he was both a faithful adherent to Russian cultural empire and a victim of the Soviet political empire.

Faced with a complex legacy like Brodsky's, neither complete boycotting nor simple separation of "art" from "artist" proves adequate. The former abandons intellectual responsibility; the latter ignores the intrinsic connection between his aesthetic beliefs and ethical blind spots. This paper proposes "An Ethic of Agonistic Care"—a more resilient and responsible critical methodology.

This framework synthesizes Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial critique, Chantal Mouffe's political theory, and bell hooks' (2004) "love ethics," achieving a dialectical unity of "struggle" and "care": maintaining care within conflict, persisting in struggle within care. Traditional care ethics appears powerless when confronting structural value conflicts, while purely agonistic theory lacks reparative goals. This methodology provides an ethical framework for handling complex cultural legacies that can neither be fully embraced nor easily discarded.

To make this theory operationally viable, the paper refines it into a "five-step protocol for ethical reading," which unfolds sequentially: Chapter Two traces the historical trajectory of the Brodsky controversy from its 2014 dormancy to its 2022 explosion; Chapter Three constructs the theoretical framework and demonstrates the model's effectiveness through a case study of "Watermark"; Chapter Four applies the model to other post-socialist writers and contemporary geopolitical conflicts, demonstrating its broader applicability.

It is particularly important to note that this study limits its analytical scope to the English-speaking world, which both remains faithful to the core phenomenon and serves as a crucial methodological strategy. The interpretive "rupture" we examine—its eruption and fermentation—occurred primarily within English academic circles and public discourse. Therefore, this focus not only ensures analytical precision but also treats the English-speaking world's "reception" itself as an analytical object, examining how a controversy originating in Eastern Europe was translated, reconstructed, and transformed by the centers of global knowledge production, thereby revealing the hidden power dynamics in contemporary cross-cultural dialogue.

2. The Return of The Repressed: Poetry, War, and The Interpretive Rupture of 2022

The reception history of Brodsky's "On Ukrainian Independence" underwent a significant rupture: from its archival dormancy within professional circles in 2014 to its viral dissemination and discursive transformation catalyzed by the 2022 war. This controversy did not lead to simple "boycott" but triggered multiple responses ranging from mainstream media's strategic silence to academic interpretive contests, ultimately achieving "critical re-contextualization"—Brodsky's legacy was reshaped as a case study for exploring the complex relationships between empire, dissidence, and nationalism.

2.1 Dormancy: A Dormant Archive (2014-2022)

Western serious attention to Brodsky's "On Ukrainian Independence" began after the 2014 Crimean crisis (Schlund 2023, 166), but this phase was characterized not by open debate storms but rather by a quiet "archival confirmation" and dormancy of evidence within professional domains. Discussions were highly concentrated in academic networks such as conferences of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) and specialized journals like *Scripta Historica*, while mainstream news media and major poetry magazines were notably absent. Key participants during this period, such as Olga Bertelsen (2015) and other Slavic studies scholars, focused their analyses primarily on "imperial consciousness," maintaining a critical but analytically rigorous tone.

The poem's potential controversy was already known to the author himself and his estate managers. Brodsky had confessed before a 1994 reading that "I'm taking a risk by doing this."[2] As early as 2011, his literary estate executor Ann Kjellberg had developed a preemptive defense strategy in response to Keith Gessen's article published in *The New Yorker* on May 23,[3] emphasizing that the poem came from "unauthorized sources" and should not be viewed as the author's "definitive position," placing it within the specific historical context of Ukraine's 1992 attempt to control former Soviet nuclear arsenals (Gessen 2011).

In April 2015, Boris Vladimirsky posted on Facebook video evidence of Brodsky reciting this poem at the Palo Alto Jewish Community Center on October 30, 1992,[4] finally resolving questions about authorial authenticity and completing the text's "archival confirmation." However, the video's emergence did not immediately trigger widespread public or academic debate in the English-speaking world; discussions remained largely confined to Slavic studies professional circles, Russian émigré communities, and Ukrainian intellectual circles.

This "contained" state of discourse resulted from multiple structural factors. First, under the prevailing political context, Western observers generally viewed the Crimean crisis as a regional conflict, lacking widespread recognition of it as an existential threat to the entire European order. Therefore, a deceased poet's problematic poem lacked sufficient news value to shake the dominant narrative of Brodsky as a dissident hero. Second, Brodsky's canonical status as Nobel laureate and anti-Soviet icon created enormous interpretive inertia; revising this grand narrative required more powerful political momentum. Finally, despite video evidence, there was no catalyzing event capable of rapidly placing it on the agenda. Thus, this poem and its evidence resembled an archive awaiting crisis, dormant in the public sphere until a more dramatic historical moment could awaken it.

2.2 Textual Fuel: The Poem's Rhetorical Strategies and Ideological Tensions

If the 2014 discussions were dormant, the full outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war on February 24, 2022, provided unprecedented political urgency for this dormant archive, ultimately igniting an interpretive explosion. The core fuel of this explosion was the enormous interpretive tension and historical complexity possessed by "On Ukrainian Independence" itself. The poem opens with a condescending ironic stance, examining Ukrainian independence within the coordinate system of Russian imperial rise:

Dear Charles the Twelfth, the Battle of Poltava,
thank God, was lost.
.....like one with a uvular 'r' would say,
"Time will show who's Kuzma's mother," ruins
with a Little Russian twang, posthumously pleased bones.[5]

Here Brodsky juxtaposes the 1709 Battle of Poltava, Lenin's accent ("one with a uvular 'r'"), and Khrushchev's famous saying ("Kuzma's mother"), reconstructing memory of the "Holodomor" through a paradoxical image—"posthumously pleased bones with a Little Russian twang." He then extends Chernobyl's trauma from Ukraine to Belarus through an "incorrect" flag reference: "isotope-corroded / green—blooming flag," which better matches Belarus's then red-over-green flag design. This complex textual strategy—invoking imperial history while deeply critiquing the entire Soviet period's governance failures, mixed with contempt for Ukrainian national identity (such as using the derogatory term "khokhol")—made it a perfect battlefield for fierce interpretive contestation in 2022's context, readable both as imperialist arrogance and as shared reflection on Soviet tyranny.

2.3 Eruption and Contestation: 2022's Discursive Rupture and Counter-forces

After the war's outbreak, figures like historian and policy analyst Kamil Galeev, who commanded massive influence on Twitter (X), served as crucial nodes translating complex Eastern European emotions for English audiences, rediscovering and amplifying this poem's significance. They quickly positioned it as an important cultural specimen for analyzing "Russian imperial mentality," with their analyses spreading rapidly across social media.[6] This immediate, politically reactive discussion drove enormous attention traffic, migrating discourse platforms from academic circles to specialized websites like *Marginal Revolution and Politarena*, ultimately spreading to academic platforms like *Review of Democracy*.

Additionally, the discourse's core underwent radical transformation: from 2014's "literary criticism" to 2022's "moral condemnation" and systematic postcolonial analysis; analytical keywords escalated from "imperial consciousness" to "imperialism," "colonialism," and "chauvinism" (Omolesky 2022; Thompson 2022; Desnitsky 2023; Mitchell-Fox 2024).

However, this social media-driven eruption inevitably triggered responses from establishment forces, forming a complex "interpretive contest." The most notable phenomenon was the "strategic silence" of top cultural media outlets like The New York Times and The New Yorker.[7] Furthermore, the Joseph Brodsky Memorial Fellowship Fund quickly issued a statement condemning the invasion in February 2022, updating it again on March 11 to announce aid for Ukrainian writers and artists, while remaining silent about the controversial poem itself[8] —a sophisticated form of "legacy laundering."

Simultaneously, more intellectually challenging "counter-forces" emerged—attempts to complicate Brodsky's position through reinterpretation. A prominent example comes from scholar Marat Grinberg's 2024 analysis. Grinberg argued that Brodsky's core problem lay in placing aesthetics above nationalism and politics, with his position stemming from profound "cultural conservatism

and elitism" rather than simple political imperialism (Grinberg 2024, 189-194). This interpretive strategy rejected simple moral condemnation, representing intellectual efforts within English academia to preserve canonical complexity.

2.4 Effects and Reshaping: Toward "Critical Re-contextualization"

The ultimate effect of discursive contestation was not a simple "decanonization" conclusion but rather an ongoing, more profound and lasting "critical re-contextualization." Compelling evidence for this ongoing "critical re-contextualization" comes from a continuously evolving undergraduate summer course at Hunter College, City University of New York—"*Tamizdat: Contraband Literature From The USSR And Eastern Europe*." The course's design and its evolution from 2024 to 2025 clearly demonstrates how academia systematically reconstructs the legacy of controversial figures like Brodsky within teaching practice.

Its 2024 syllabus already deliberately deconstructed traditional canonization models through careful course design. It positioned Brodsky alongside Poland's Miłosz and Lithuania's Venclova as a "trio,"—not coincidentally, but to extract him from singular Russian national poet identity and place him within a broader, multinational dialogue about empire and dissidence. Simultaneously, the course situated "tamizdat" (underground publications) within a grand historical continuum extending from 19th-century Russian Empire to contemporary Putin's rule, constructing a cross-temporal, cross-cultural analytical framework by introducing Western writers like Orwell as reference points.

This pedagogical strategy became more explicit and radical in the version planned for 2025 in Riga, Latvia. The course description not only upgraded its focus to "the colonial history of the Baltic states and their literary relationship with Russia," completely placing it under postcolonial criticism's purview,[9] but its teaching content directly echoed current geopolitical realities—the course explicitly connected historical "tamizdat" phenomena with "'tamizdat' publishing institutions like Meduza and Babel after 2014."

This series of incontrovertible evidence demonstrates that Brodsky's "stains" did not lead to his abandonment by academia. On the contrary, these "stains" themselves enabled him to acquire deeper interpretive value in new cross-cultural studies and contemporary political analysis contexts. He is no longer merely a literary icon but has been transformed into an indispensable, tension-filled key textual resource for understanding the complex relationships of "empire, dissidence, exile, and censorship" across two centuries from Tsarist Russia to Putin's era.

Meanwhile, the publishing world's impact from this controversy remains inconclusive, constituting a gap in available data. In the future, how any new authoritative collected edition's introduction handles this controversy will undoubtedly serve as an important barometer for measuring the evolution of his canonical status. In summary, Brodsky's legacy has not perished; it is being controversially rewritten. This debate surrounding a single poem ultimately demonstrates how cultural classics are continuously renegotiated, utilized, and endowed with new meaning in a rapidly changing world.

3. The Reader's Burden: Forging an Ethics of Reading in The Wake of Rupture

The interpretive "rupture" revealed in Chapter Two not only reshaped Joseph Brodsky's literary legacy but also profoundly destabilized the relationship between readers and his texts, marking the end of stable interpretive subjectivity. Readers—especially those who once viewed him as a hero of resistance—face a profound ethical and emotional dilemma. This torn contract, sense of betrayal, and irreconcilable dissonance together constitute "the reader's burden." Faced with this now-tainted literary legacy, what should we do? This chapter aims to answer this question, exploring a path toward more responsible ethical reading that moves beyond simple praise or condemnation.

3.1 Ruptured Contracts: The Reader's Emotional and Ethical Predicament

The ethical and emotional predicament triggered by Brodsky's legacy is not an abstract product of theoretical speculation but a widespread, painful, and concretely observable cultural phenomenon in the English-speaking world. From personal blog confessions to serious academic journal reflections to practical challenges in teaching practice, this predicament manifests in various forms throughout the English-speaking world's literary public sphere.

This pervasive sense of disillusionment first erupted in unfiltered form in digital public squares. In Reddit's literary discussion forum "r/AskLiteraryStudies," one reader admitted that after 2022, he found Brodsky's works particularly "difficult to approach these days are Nabokov and Brodsky, both with rather vicious anti-Ukrainian sentiments."[10] This seemingly bland expression—"difficult to approach"—actually precisely captures a dual emotional and intellectual barrier: the chasm between former reverence for a resistance hero and current moral repugnance toward his imperialist sentiments has become insurmountable. Another reader compared this shock to "rediscovering Ezra Pound's cantos in praise of Mussolini",[11] a comparison marking the reader's forced repositioning within their own literary map, moving a former hero to a new location adjacent to figures like Pound—combining genius with evil through fascist sympathies.

However, when this personal-level emotional upheaval enters public discourse, it acquires a more complex and disturbing political dimension. Critics discovered they must bear not only personal moral disillusionment but also confront a real-time cultural and political reality: Brodsky's literary legacy was being systematically "weaponized," becoming a core tool in the Russian state discourse machine's cultural legitimization of its military actions in Ukraine ("have been weaponized and are used to legitimize the illegal actions of the Russian government in Ukraine") (Noubel 2022).

The most symbolic case comes from the careful orchestration by Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of Russian state broadcasting company RT and state media group "Russia Today" (Rossiya Segodnya). She chose February 24, 2023—the politically sensitive first anniversary of the invasion—to post both graphic and recitation video versions of the poem on Twitter and Russian social media platform VK under the title "Joseph Brodsky 'On the Independence of Ukraine,'"[12] directly embedding this literary text into that day's official propaganda discourse production chain.

For Brodsky readers in the English-speaking world, this appropriation constituted a dual

cultural shock: they had to endure not only the personal pain of discovering their author's ethical stains but also witness their once-cherished literary work being transformed in real-time into a cultural justification tool for actual political violence. As many observers sharply revealed, this event exposed a structural truth long obscured by Western liberal narratives: "Ukrainians have long noted that Russian liberalism ends at the Ukrainian border" (Tsurkan 2022)—that Russian intellectuals' anti-authoritarian positions often coexist with their imperialist cultural unconscious, forming a profound historical paradox.

Faced with this public-level ethical crisis, academia found itself in an unprecedented state of professional conflict. The dual identity of intellectuals—as individual citizens with moral positions and as professional scholars bearing objective analytical responsibilities—created irreconcilable internal tension. Andrey Desnitsky, in a 2023 reflective article, captured this professional and ethical torn state with painful honesty: as a conscientious modern person, he could not avoid the moral judgment that this poem appears "completely unacceptable" in the current historical context; however, as a research scholar bearing academic responsibility, his professional training demanded that he move beyond simple value judgments to "analyze and explain" the text's complex historical causes and cultural logic (Desnitsky 2023, 609).

This dual burden of scholars reveals a significant epistemological predicament facing contemporary humanities: when academic objectivity requirements fundamentally conflict with ethical position commitments, what principles should intellectuals follow to balance these legitimate demands? The institutional consequences of this predicament have profoundly affected all aspects of academic production. In publishing, a work hailed as "most significant book devoted to him in the last 25 years" had to explicitly acknowledge in its 2024 introduction the fundamental impact of 2022 geopolitical events on Brodsky studies paradigms: "changes have... been especially evident since the events of February 2022... several discussions of Brodsky's poem on Ukrainian independence" (Andrew et al. 2024, 1). In teaching, the pressure for reassessment is more direct and urgent. Andrea Kokobobo (2022) representatively proposed that under current historical circumstances, Russian literature pedagogy should "interrogate Russia's imperial mission in how we present Russian culture to students" and must systematically reintroduce voices long "erased" by Russian-centric narratives—particularly Ukrainian, Belarusian, and other post-Soviet countries' cultural perspectives—into the core of classroom discussion. This call for pedagogical paradigm reform marks "the reader's burden" transforming from purely personal emotional experience and moral distress into collective intellectual responsibility that the entire Slavic studies discipline must bear.

These widespread personal accounts, public discussions, and academic reflections point toward a deep psychological and ethical phenomenon that can be systematically theorized. This phenomenon's starting point stems from an "ethical pact" being retroactively torn (Small 2020). This contract was built on Brodsky's identity as a victim of the Soviet empire, with readers universally presupposing an anti-totalitarian ethical position when approaching his texts. However, the imperialist ideology exposed by "On Ukrainian Independence" fundamentally violated this contract, leading to

its retroactive destruction by historical information. At the psychological level, this contract's tearing triggers a traumatic "Parasocial Breakup" (PSB), inducing real grief reactions including loneliness, sadness, disappointment, and anger (Cohen 2004). This intense emotional response manifests in the reading experience as profound affective dissonance—the simultaneous existence of pure aesthetic pleasure from Brodsky's poetic language and moral disgust toward his ethical defects. This creates an irreconcilable tension that forces the reader into complex "cognitive coping strategies" to manage the conflict between aesthetic appreciation and ethical judgment (Korsmeyer 2011, 8).

3.2 Theoretical Tensions and Two Temptations: Between "Struggle" and "Care"

The ethical and emotional burden readers bear due to Brodsky's legacy is not an isolated individual case but a collective cultural experience. This experience forces critics to turn to theoretical dimensions, seeking analytical frameworks sufficient to respond to complexity. However, in integrating theoretical resources, we must confront internal tensions. Chantal Mouffe (2013) and bell hooks (2004) respectively represent two seemingly opposed orientations: the former emphasizes conflict's insolubility, viewing "struggle" as democracy's normal state; the latter centers on "love ethics," combining critique with repair, justice with care, striving to achieve healing in interpersonal and group relations. The two differ ontologically and teleologically: Mouffe insists "irresolvable conflict" is politics' background color, while hooks advocates "transformative care" can provide liberating direction.

This difference is not an obstacle but the starting point of theoretical synthesis. Without the "struggle" dimension, care would degenerate into hollow moral rhetoric, even becoming unconscious reproduction of power structures; without the "care" dimension, struggle might slide toward nihilism, degenerating into endless hostility. Precisely in this dialectical mutual constraint, "An Ethic of Agonistic Care" establishes its foundation: conflict is inevitable, but conflict must lead toward care and responsibility; critique is indispensable, but critique must aim at liberation and growth.

However, when facing Brodsky's legacy, readers and academia often choose two seemingly simple paths: one is complete boycott, canceling author and work, expelling texts from the canonical temple. This "boycott impulse" can bring immediate moral satisfaction, but it evades responsibility for dialogue with complex history. The other is complete separation, dividing Brodsky's artistic achievements from his ethical positions, continuing the "author is dead" critical tradition. But in Brodsky's case, imperialist ideology is not external impurity but a component of his poetics itself: he suffered from Soviet authoritarianism while remaining blind to his obsession with Russian linguistic empire. Boycott and separation therefore cannot adequately handle Brodsky's complexity. Thus, we must open a "third way," a reading practice that simultaneously encompasses struggle and care.

3.3 Forging the Third Way: Ethical Reading as Dialogue and Self-Examination

The so-called "third way" is forged in this study into a "five-step protocol for ethical reading." It is not an external technical checklist but a critical framework generated from the dialectics of

"Agonistic care." Reading here is understood as an active, responsible practice that must both reveal contradictions and seek possibilities for understanding and repair within contradiction.

First is positional examination. Any cross-cultural interpretation is never "transparent": interpreters' historical positions, disciplinary training, and ideological backgrounds unconsciously shape reading directions. Postcolonial critique (Spivak 1988) continuously reminds us to reflect on "complicitous agency": do imaginations of "exile poet"/"dissident" carry Cold War context residues? Does aesthetic faith in "Russian poetics" naturally occupy value heights? Without this reflexive starting point, subsequent ethical judgments easily circulate within old orders.

Second is emotional diagnosis. Reader response theory (Iser 1978) demonstrates that meaning generates in text-reader interaction; the disillusionment, shame, anger, and loss presented in 3.1 are not "inappropriate interference" but components of "textual effects." Naming and analyzing such intense feelings both avoids "retaliatory reading" shortcuts and prevents "defensive advocacy" self-anesthesia, transforming traumatic experience into critical cognitive resources. In other words, diagnosis doesn't cool down but converts thermal energy into power that can drive argumentation.

Third is agonistic engagement. At this stage, criticism manifests and organizes conflict through oppositional close reading: bringing textual imperial aesthetics, other-deprecation, and historical erasure back to the scene, breaking texts' monologic nature through evidence juxtaposition and polyphonic reading. This is the practical level of Mouffe's "channeling passion toward democratic design": conflict is not to be smoothed over but institutionalized as argumentative tension, allowing different positions to "appear as adversaries rather than enemies." Regarding Brodsky, rereading controversial texts like "On Ukrainian Independence" requires letting Ukrainian/Eastern European readers' and scholars' voices enter the same interpretive space; regarding his essay "Watermark," aesthetic worship of "Venetian beauty" must be juxtaposed with "ethical costs of imperial nostalgia." Engagement's essence lies not in "defeating" the author but in allowing obscured histories and discourses to regain voice.

However, struggle is not the endpoint. The fourth step is reparative re-reading, introducing care's dimension after critique. Struggle without repair falls into nihilism; repair without struggle degenerates into whitewashing. hooks' care ethics emphasizes "promoting growth through truth": repair doesn't cancel critique but creates conditions for continued reading without withdrawing revelatory results—acknowledging textual contradictions, acknowledging harm caused to others, acknowledging readers' trauma, while rebuilding understanding chains between responsibility and compassion. For Brodsky's texts, this means acknowledging imperial perspective's damage while discerning how poetic intensity becomes established and can be reunderstood under new historical knowledge conditions.

Finally comes critical re-contextualization. Rereading's goal is not returning to "original state" but establishing "annotated positions" for controversial texts within canonical genealogies and public memory: neither hastily decanonizing nor using aesthetic heights to obscure moral deficits; but at institutional levels—through introductions, annotations, parallel texts, and course design in

textbooks, translations, and collections—making "complexity" visible, learnable, and discussable public resources. Here, individual ethical experience transforms into public humanistic practice, reading acts acquire "institutional warmth."

3.4 Practice Case: Re-reading "Watermark" with Ethical Eyes

To demonstrate our theoretical model's effectiveness, we apply it to rereading Brodsky's core essay "Watermark."

The first step acknowledges and analyzes the text's aesthetic seductive power. Readers are undoubtedly captivated by "Watermark's" linguistic magic. Brodsky, with his signature meditative, aphoristic style, depicts Venice as a poetic labyrinth of water, reflections, light, and decay. He compares a boat's slow progress through night to "a coherent thought through the subconscious" (Brodsky 1992, 12), palaces to "enormous carved chests of dark palazzi filled with unfathomable treasures" (Brodsky 1992, 12). This language constructs powerful aesthetic attraction, "seducing" readers into a purely aesthetic world.

However, ethical reading requires our second step—employing an oppositional reading approach, revealing its imperial gaze and ethical blind spots. Brodsky defines Venice as "the greatest masterpiece our species produced," with standards that are aesthetic, not democratic (Brodsky 1992, 116). He nostalgically recalls Venice Republic's maritime glorious history, lamenting "no longer have doges," believing modern Venice's 50,000 residents are "guided not by the grandeur of some particular vision but by their immediate, often nearsighted concerns" (Brodsky 1992, 112).

This unconditional embrace of imperial aesthetics sharply contrasts with his attitude toward non-Western civilizations. For example, he once argued that Spanish colonizers introducing smallpox and firearms remained a "better choice" compared to Aztec civilization practicing human sacrifice (Ранчин 2024, 289). This explicit civilizational hierarchy reveals his Venice contemplation as not pure aesthetic experience but value judgment deeply embedded in specific cultural hegemonic narratives. He explicitly declares "Aesthetics' main tool, the eye, is absolutely autonomous... Aesthetic sense is the twin of one's instinct for self-preservation and is more reliable than ethics" (Brodsky 1992, 109). This aesthetic-supremacist position provides excuse for appreciating imperial spectacle while evading its moral costs.

The third step deploys the "Baldwin model" (generative) internal critique. We discover "Watermark's" text already contains self-subversive elements. Brodsky's obsession with "decay" inadvertently reveals imperial beauty's fragility and historicity. He notices palaces where "Every surface craves dust, for dust is the flesh of time" (Brodsky 1992, 56). His fixation on "reflection" ultimately leads to acknowledging this narcissistic hollowness: "A reflection cannot possibly care for a reflection... unburdening it of its depths" (Brodsky 1992, 22). These internal textual contradictions prove it has unconsciously criticized its surface imperial nostalgia.

The fourth step is ultimate ethical critique using "the son's spear against the son's shield." We confront Brodsky's core creed from his 1987 Nobel Prize lecture—"aesthetics is the mother of

ethics" (Brodsky 1987)—with his practice. We can sharply ask: if aesthetics is ethics' source, why didn't his deep immersion in Venetian imperial beauty "birth" an ethic enabling him to recognize Russian imperialism's ugliness? If "political evil is always a bad stylist" (Brodsky 1987), doesn't the existence of that stylistically poor, hate-filled "On Ukrainian Independence" precisely prove that when embracing ugly politics, he himself violated his most cherished aesthetic principles?

Finally, we reach the fifth step—proposing a responsible "critical care" position. Ethical reading of "Watermark" doesn't aim to negate its intoxicating artistic achievement. On the contrary, it requires us to simultaneously embrace its aesthetic heights and ethical failures, recognizing that precisely this irreconcilable contradiction constitutes Brodsky's most enduring and debate-worthy legacy as writer and thinker.

3.5 From Emotional Trauma to Critical Reconstruction: The Rewards of Ethical Reading

Although "An Ethic of Agonistic Care" requires readers to bear burdens and face discomfort, this doesn't mean the entire process only yields negative emotional experiences. On the contrary, this "difficult reading" can produce more profound, lasting positive emotional rewards, thus addressing the special issue's call for attention to "pleasure" and "curiosity."

First is intellectual satisfaction from confronting complexity. Avoiding contradictions might provide temporary peace, but courageously entering texts' "gray zones" and seeking logic within internal contradictions brings unique cognitive achievement. When readers successfully employ "generative" critique, discovering texts have unconsciously subverted their surface arguments, this discovery's pleasure far exceeds simple worship or condemnation.

Second is ethical comfort from rebuilding more honest "love" through critique. Through "righteous reading," readers establish ethical solidarity with voices marginalized by texts. Furthermore, through "critical care," readers and authors establish new, more mature relationships—no longer based on blind worship but on honest acknowledgment of their complete complex humanity. This more resilient, authentic "love" is itself profound emotional comfort.

Finally is dialogue's pleasure. Viewing texts as equal "adversaries" rather than sacred idols transforms reading from passive acceptance into vibrant intellectual wrestling. In this interaction, readers are no longer merely meaning consumers but meaning co-creators. This interactive pleasure of equal intellectual engagement with great minds is the highest-order reading pleasure "An Ethic of Agonistic Care" can provide.

It must be clarified that our proposed model doesn't aim to replace aesthetics with ethics but to reveal their inseparable internal connection. In a politicized world, insisting on so-called "pure" literary autonomy is itself a political gesture, and our methodology precisely demands more honest, self-reflective aesthetic practice. Through the "Watermark" case analysis, we proved this method's effectiveness and revealed how "the reader's burden" is not only burden but responsibility and opportunity.

4. Beyond Brodsky: Ethical Reading as Cross-Cultural Dialogue Practice

The previous chapters, through deep analysis of the Joseph Brodsky case, revealed a profound interpretive "rupture" and forged a critical practice aimed at serious intellectual engagement with complex cultural legacies—"An Ethic of Agonistic Care." This chapter aims to expand this model from a solution targeting a specific author into a universal methodology applicable to handling complex cross-cultural texts. We will argue that this five-step operational protocol encompassing "positional examination," "emotional diagnosis," "agonistic engagement," "reparative re-reading," and "critical re-contextualization" is not only an effective analytical tool but also a systematic exploration of more responsible cross-cultural dialogue practice.

4.1 Historical Echoes: Handling the Complex Legacies of Post-Socialist Writers

To test the universality of "An Ethic of Agonistic Care," we first apply it to handling other "Second World" writers—that is, writers from the former socialist bloc (Poland, Czech Republic, Lithuania, etc.)—who share similar paradoxes of victimhood and complicity with Brodsky. The logic of selecting these cases lies in their sharing a similar historical context with Brodsky while each presenting different dimensions of ethical complexity, thus testing our model's adaptability when handling different types of historical controversies.

Milan Kundera was once hailed as a literary giant resisting totalitarianism, yet this former strong Nobel Prize candidate continuously faced questioning from feminist critics. Joan Smith, in her influential 1989 critique, directly pointed to systematic "hostility" toward female characters in Kundera's works, arguing that women in his writing were either objects of sexual fantasy or "heavy" symbols threatening male freedom (Smith 1989, 85-102). Meanwhile, the 2008 exposure of a Czech intelligence archive alleging that Kundera had informed authorities about a Western spy in 1950 further complicated his moral image with this "informant" scandal (Novák 2008).

Facing such a complex case combining resistance hero aura with serious ethical accusations, our ethical reading practice must first examine the positional issues in Western readers' reception of Kundera. As Maria Nemcová analyzed, Kundera's canonization process in the West was largely built on his shaping as a cultural symbol of "the free world against communist tyranny" (Nemcová 1998, 414-436). This politicized reception context might cause Western readers to develop "selective oversight" toward gender political blind spots in his works, because acknowledging these problems would threaten his perfect image as an anti-communist hero. When feminists criticized misogynistic tendencies in Kundera's works, many admirers experienced strong cognitive dissonance, with this emotional conflict's deep roots lying in readers often idolizing authors, expecting a political victim to be progressive on all ethical issues.

However, through agonistic engagement's critical practice, we should seriously consider criticisms raised by critics like Smith. In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, female characters are indeed often reduced to carriers of male existentialist anxieties—Tereza represents "heaviness," Sabina represents "lightness," functioning more as personifications of philosophical concepts than complete subjects.

But as John O'Brien pointed out in his post-structuralist analysis, this surface "misogynistic" narrative strategy might serve more complex textual purposes (O'Brien 1995, 3-18). Through reparative re-reading, we discover self-critical dimensions exist within Kundera's narrative strategies. In *Life Is Elsewhere*, poet Jaromil's romantic passion ultimately leads to political informing and moral corruption—this narrative structure itself constitutes profound irony toward male-centric romantic imagination. More importantly, Kundera's continuous critique of "kitsch" actually points toward all ideological constructions that simplify reality's complexity, including male chauvinism.

Czesław Miłosz presents another type of ethical complexity. As a "political thinker who disliked politics," Miłosz spent his life making painful choices between homeland and world, faith and betrayal, national sentiment and universal values (Haven 2017, 45). Western readers' reception of Miłosz was often simplified into romanticized imagination of "Eastern European dissident intellectuals." As Tony Judt observed, Cold War-era Western intellectual circles tended to view writers from communist countries as "martyred saints," this projection ignoring internal contradictions and historical complexity in their thought (Judt 1992, 112-134).

When readers discovered that Miłosz had worked for the Polish People's Republic's cultural departments in the 1950s, they might feel "betrayed." This emotional response reflects unrealistic expectations Western readers held toward Eastern European intellectuals. We must confront contradictions that indeed exist in Miłosz's thought. In *The Captive Mind*, his critique of communism sometimes slides toward suspicion of the entire modernity project, displaying conservative tendencies (Miłosz 1953). However, precisely these contradictions constitute Miłosz's thought's unique value. His refusal to provide simple answers itself constitutes profound resistance to totalitarian thinking modes. In *Native Realm*, through reminiscences of childhood Lithuania, he displays complex historical consciousness that neither indulges in nostalgia nor blindly embraces modernity (Miłosz 1984).

Through critical re-contextualization of these two writers, we neither need to defend their limitations nor completely negate their literary achievements. Instead, we can place their works in a more honest historical context: as intellectuals forming thought under totalitarian oppression, they indeed displayed limitations of their era and class, but these limitations themselves constitute important materials for understanding 20th-century Eastern European intellectuals' complex predicament.

4.2 Contemporary Battlefields: Literature Crossing Contemporary Political Divides

Turning from historical cases to ongoing contemporary conflicts, our model faces new challenges when handling "contentious" issues, requiring greater emphasis on its public intervention dimension. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as one of contemporary geopolitics' most complex disputes, presents equally profound ethical challenges in its literary manifestations. Traditional "empathy" and "dialogue" models based on liberal humanism face questioning from postcolonial critics for potentially obscuring profound power inequalities. A simple "listen to both sides" symmetrical model might unconsciously constitute what Gayatri Spivak called "epistemological violence" (Spivak 1988, 280-285).

Taking Israeli writer Amos Oz's *A Tale of Love and Darkness* and Palestinian writer Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* as examples, these two works represent typical narrative strategies from both sides of the conflict. Oz, through personal memoir form, describes Israel's nation-building process as a complex procedure filled with humanitarian ideals but also accompanied by moral costs (Oz 2004). Abulhawa, through a Palestinian family's tragedy, directly accuses Israeli state violence of systematic trauma inflicted on the Palestinian people (Abulhawa 2010).

When Western readers encounter these texts, they must first reflect on media narrative presets they carry. As Edward Said revealed in *Covering Islam*, Western media reporting on Middle Eastern conflicts often contains directive framing (Said 1981, 3-28). For most Western readers, Israel is preset as a "democratic country," while Palestine is often associated with "terrorism." When readers simultaneously read Oz's humanitarian appeals and Abulhawa's victim accusations, they might experience intense moral discomfort. This discomfort's root lies in conflicts between emotional responses triggered by two narratives and moral predicament readers encounter when trying to find "balance" between them.

The "agonistic respect" advocated by our model, borrowing from Chantal Mouffe's thought, doesn't presuppose reconciliation but requires readers to conduct serious, contextualized intellectual engagement with both narratives under the premise of acknowledging conflict's irreconcilability, while remaining vigilant about power differentials (Mouffe 2013, 6-8). Regarding Oz, we can question how his humanitarian rhetoric might obscure structural colonial relationships; regarding Abulhawa, we can analyze how her victim narrative reconstructs Palestinian subjectivity. Through more detailed textual analysis, we discover self-critical dimensions exist within both narratives. When describing early Zionist pioneers, Oz actually also exposes their Orientalist prejudices and colonial mentality (Oz 2004, 156-178). When showing Palestinian resistance, Abulhawa also avoids reducing them to pure victims, instead emphasizing their agency and creativity.

Turning to contemporary Chinese literature's reception in the West, taking Liu Cixin's *Three-Body trilogy* as an example, this work's enormous success in the West both marks Chinese science fiction literature's international breakthrough and triggers intense debate about its political implications and cultural representations. When Western readers receive this work, they often fall into two interpretive traps: either Edward Said's criticized "Orientalism," reducing the work to political allegory for understanding "mysterious China"; or a "depoliticized" naive reading that ignores profound Chinese historical and political realities behind the work (Said 1978, 1-28).

Our positional examination requires Western readers first to reflect on their cultural positions and reading expectations. *Reading Three-Body* often carries Western complex emotions toward China's rise: both awe for its technological progress and unease about its political system. As Zhang Longxi analyzed, contemporary Western reception of Chinese culture still deeply influenced by 19th-century "Yellow Peril" theory and "Oriental despotism" stereotypes (Zhang 1992, 1-15). Western readers' discomfort with certain value concepts in Three-Body requires honest diagnosis and analysis. For example, sympathizing with Ye Wenjie's trauma during the "Cultural Revolution"

but feeling confused about her later logic of choosing "Three-Body civilization invasion"—this emotional response hides specific historical imagination and political presets.

When analyzing *Three-Body's "Dark Forest Law,"* we must both critically examine social Darwinist tendencies in Liu Cixin's writing and seriously consider his warning about human civilization's fragility. Through reparative re-reading, we might discover *Three-Body internally* contains complex questioning of its surface positions. In the third volume *Death's End*, the failure of Cheng Xin as a "Madonna" figure superficially seems to negate humanitarian values, but careful reading reveals Liu Cixin actually explores ethical tensions between "goodwill" and "responsibility" rather than simply embracing cold realism (Liu 2016, 400-450).

4.3 Ethical Reading as Reparative Critique: The Universal Significance of Methodology

Through analysis of the above cases, we have proven "An Ethic of Agonistic Care" as a cross-cultural dialogue practice's effectiveness and universal significance. From Kundera's gender political blind spots to Miłosz's historical contradictions, from Israeli-Palestinian conflict's narrative politics to Chinese literature's Orientalist traps, our five-step operational protocol demonstrates powerful capability in handling complex cultural legacies and contemporary controversies.

Ultimately, this paper's constructed "An Ethic of Agonistic Care" is not only a literary critical method but also a systematic exploration of deeper, more responsible cross-cultural dialogue ethics. This exploration's core lies in viewing critique itself as a reparative rather than purely deconstructive action. As we demonstrated in analyzing "Watermark," the most powerful "critical care" is "using the son's spear against the son's shield"—employing authors' own highest standards to measure their ethical failures.

This "An Ethic of Agonistic Care" ultimately advocates a civic education practice aimed at addressing contemporary challenges. In a "post-truth" era troubled by information fragmentation and political polarization, this "difficult reading" insisting on intellectual wrestling with the most difficult texts is precisely core training for cultivating "democratic citizens" capable of responsible thinking in plural, conflicted societies (Nussbaum 2010, 95-112). Through critical reading, we can truly know the full complexity of an author or cultural tradition; by activating agonistic dialogue within and beyond texts, we can listen to suppressed voices; finally, by confronting rather than evading contradictions, we can participate in deeper, more honest respect and love.

5. Conclusion

The interpretive rupture exposed by the Joseph Brodsky legacy crisis is far from an isolated literary event but a symptom forcing us to confront a fundamental question: in a world of increasingly intensified value conflicts, what ethics should critical inquiry itself follow? In response to this challenge, this paper constructs "An Ethic of Agonistic Care." This framework provides a substantive answer that combines theoretical depth with operational value. We examined the profound paradox between "victim" and "imperial thinker" in the Brodsky case. We analyzed complex legacies of writers from the former socialist bloc like Kundera and Miłosz. We applied our approach to highly polarized contemporary issues, including Israeli-Palestinian conflict literature and Chinese science fiction. These applications

demonstrate the explanatory force and broader applicability of the "five-step protocol for ethical reading" as cross-cultural dialogue practice.

This theoretical construction's core contribution lies in its critique and reconstruction of traditional humanistic values. It critiques liberal dialogue models that seek false consensus, revealing their limitations when facing structural power inequalities. It also transcends purely deconstructive poststructuralist critique by refusing to suspend all value judgments in relativistic void. The "agonistic respect" we advocate acknowledges opponents' legitimacy and engages in principled debate rather than forcing harmony; the "critical care" we practice refuses to idolize authors, dedicating itself to discovering complexity and enduring value in their legacies through relentless critique.

More importantly, this reading practice seeking care within conflict while maintaining struggle within care constitutes core educational strategy for addressing "post-truth" era challenges. In an era of information fragmentation and political polarization, this "difficult reading" provides essential mental discipline. It trains citizens to resist propaganda and engage in responsible thinking by wrestling intellectually with challenging texts. It is not only methodological innovation in literary criticism but also a core path for cultivating critical citizens in democratic societies.

Here, it is necessary to reaffirm this study's focus on the English-speaking world as a strategically significant academic choice. This focused approach provided necessary analytical depth. It enabled us to trace how an Eastern European literary controversy was absorbed, negotiated, and given new meaning in global academic discourse. This process reveals that the English world's "reception" is far from passive mirroring but an active meaning-production process filled with internal tensions, reflecting its own distinctive post-Cold War anxieties, imperial memories, and theoretical traditions. Therefore, this study's contribution precisely lies in its deep analysis of this crucial cross-cultural mediation process. Future studies of this controversy in Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, or other linguistic contexts will be crucial. However, this study provides an indispensable foundation by revealing the complex field of power and discourse that any "local" controversy must navigate when becoming "global."

Ultimately, through this reading practice seeking care within struggle, we participate not only in reunderstanding literary classics but also in imagining and constructing more honest, more resilient democratic life itself. This is precisely the path opened by "An Ethic of Agonistic Care"—leading toward deeper humanistic understanding and more responsible public engagement, a path that neither avoids conflict nor abandons repair.

Endnotes:

1. There is debate over whether the composition date was 1991, 1992, or 1994, but according to Balashov (2013), Brodsky recited "On Ukrainian Independence" in Stockholm, Sweden on August 25, 1992. In 2015, video evidence appeared on Facebook of Brodsky reciting the poem on October 30, 1992. Therefore, the composition date can be confirmed as between December 1991 and August 1992.
2. Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grFRNnPePJw&t=1s.
3. The article has been deleted; the link https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/05/23/the-gift-7 is no longer functional.

4. Facebook video: https://www.facebook.com/boris.vladimirsky/videos/10152890184162545.
5. The text initially published in Kiev's *Stalitsa* (Capital) No. 13 in 1996, transcribed from the 1992 Palo Alto Jewish Center recitation recording, but contained numerous errors. On May 17, 2008, Gorbanevskaya published the corrected version on Livejournal blog platform. The English translation is based on Kamil Galeev's April 19, 2022 version with modifications.
6. Galeev, Kamil. 2022. Twitter thread on Joseph Brodsky's "On the Independence of Ukraine." Twitter, April 19, 2022. https://x.com/kamilkazani/status/1516162437455654913.
7. In 2011 alone, *The New Yorker* published 4 articles reviewing Brodsky; from 2014 to present, there have been none.
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Acknowledgements

This study was funded by the Chongqing Social Science Planning Project "Research on Ukrainian Historical Memory in Russian Literature" (2023PY72) and the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities special fund project "Research on the Stylistic Evolution of Brodsky's Poetry" (SWU2109509).

Reading in order to Hear: Accented Transcriptions and Compulsory Racialization in Reading "Ain't I a Woman?"

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Abstract:

This essay explores the complexities and challenges of reading, hearing, and comprehending transcripts that feature "nonstandard" speech, particularly through the use of descriptive markers that convey the speaker's accent. While scholars have critiqued biases in transcriptions, there has been relatively little focus on how readers engage with these texts. I focus on Sojourner Truth's speech, "Ain't I a Woman?", delivered in 1851, which has become one of the most notable public addresses in U.S. history. Interestingly, its most recognized transcript showcases Truth's English as influenced by her Dutch accent and Southern dialect. In theorizing the reader's experience prompted by this transcript—especially for individuals who themselves speak "nonstandard" English—I investigate the entrenched mechanisms of racialization and Othering that emerge as readers navigate unfamiliar vocabulary and contextual framing. I argue that the text encourages readers to actively engage with racializing practices that reflect colonial, white, middle-upper-class societal values, discriminating against those who do not adhere to a "standard" mode of speech. Yet, through self-reflection, readers gain insights into oppressive power structures. I conclude by urging scholars and activists to refrain from proposing "fixes" to the text and instead to follow the examined reading experience, meta-framing the speech to foster critical readings.

Keywords: Transcription; accent; reading; language standardization; Sojourner Truth; racialization; orality; the written word; Othering; glottophobia

Introduction

Transcriptions and the practice of documenting individuals' speeches are deeply rooted in the Western tradition, which emphasizes the importance of written texts for preservation and accuracy. Archives, anthologies, scholarly articles, and various documents have long been regarded as vital instruments for safeguarding historical events as well as artistic and public expressions. Even oral and auditory voices are frequently captured through the written word, typically viewed through a white or Western lens that reflects specific auditory expectations and values. Within this framework, transcribers—whether they are journalists, police officers, lawyers, archivists, researchers, teachers,

or writers—have assumed the responsibility of "capturing" significant voices for future reference. They meticulously take notes, edit them, and ultimately present their findings on paper, aiming to create a final, unaltered representation of direct speech.

In such a culture steeped in reading (those documents), it is essential to consider how to approach a written voice marked as diverging from the sound, style, and manner of "standard" voices in society. How can/should one navigate the need to accurately write, read, circulate, archive, and rely on written texts that convey voices that do not conform to, or benefit from, such practices? In this essay, I examine the biases inherent in transcribing voices that are often dismissed as illegitimate by the dominant group, as well as the readings and interpretations these biases can elicit. By this, I do not necessarily treat transcribed voices as "narrow" texts, but as ones that also transmit traditional, elite cultural values (Bourdieu 1985/1993; Reeser & Spalding 2002).

I specifically focus on the critical and unique case of Sojourner Truth's renowned 1851 speech, commonly known as "Ain't I a Woman?" This address is widely regarded as one of the most significant in U.S. history. Transcribed with inherited biases concerning her manner of speaking, it serves as a unique and insightful case study for our discussion. The speech showcases Truth's use of "nonstandard English," reflecting a Southern dialect, despite her residence in the Northern United States. It also highlights her Dutch accent, which is believed to have originated from her early years as a child enslaved by a Dutch owner. As a prominent Black speaker, a formerly enslaved woman who sought freedom, as well as an abolitionist, feminist, and religious leader, Truth was celebrated in the 19th century for her powerful oratory. However, in her quest for social justice across various fronts and in recounting her own life story, she had to depend on white allies to amplify her voice, since enslaved individuals in the United States were prohibited from learning to read and write and did not have easy access to media and public platforms.

Extensive scholarly research has been conducted on Truth and the often biased, inaccurate depictions of her within the broader public discourse (Aronis, Shrikant & Arthur 2025; Campbell 1986, 2005; Haraway 2013; Irvin Painter 1994, 1996; Klimek, Painter, & Greenlee 2024; Mandziuk 2014; Phillips-Anderson 2012; Poirot 2014). Additionally, numerous scholars have explored transcription biases that racialize and marginalize specific voices in society (e.g., Bucholtz 2000, 2007; Green et al. 1997; Macaulay 1991; Linell 1982; Rickford & King 2016; Roberts 1997). However, there has been comparatively little investigation into the reading experience of these transcripts and portrayals, the realizations they provoke in readers, and the negotiation process they foster between readers and the marginalized voices conveyed, as well as the other voices present within the text.

In the following, I explore how contemporary readers engage with texts that represent "nonstandard" English.[1] I begin by reflecting on my personal experience of first encountering Sojourner Truth's speech in a textbook in 2018, particularly as an immigrant navigating my own relationship with "nonstandard" English or "accent." I then examine and theorize various aspects of the reading relationship between audiences and the transcribed speech of Truth. Drawing on scholarly research that explores this speech, as well as studies in rhetoric, transcription, racial bias, accents, and dialects, I investigate how this speech is read and understood, especially by readers who carry their own "accents" or "dialects."

Drawing on the works of Pierre Bourdieu, Roland Barthes, bell hooks, Philippe Blanchet, and others, I position reading as a cultural practice that engages with the values and ideologies of a particular society. This approach grants attention to the reader's own understanding of elite texts and their voices. It also encourages an exploration of the differences experienced between readers' voices, sounds, speech, culture, and worldviews as they "meet" with those of authors of the read texts and other voices and media platforms used.

I examine the operational dynamics of reading marked language transcripts (such as the need to perform or read aloud to enhance auditory comprehension) and how socio-political power structures and processes of racialization manifest through the readers themselves. In particular, for speakers of "nonstandard" English, the reading experience could foster the actual practice of racism, mocking those who do not sound like the expected dominant upper-middle class, and favoring nativism. However, the multi-level reading can also promote self-reflection and empathy towards both Truth and one's own identities, communities, and struggles, as well as a nuanced awareness of the racist, xenophobic, and oppressive practices and structures that have shaped both the past and the present.

I contend that the experiences of speakers and readers of "nonstandard" English offer a crucial perspective on how to approach, present, and contextualize such texts. This approach enables us to acknowledge the power structures and biases present in society, particularly concerning written texts and transcriptions, rather than obscuring them. Building on the work of Aronis, Shrikant, and Arthur (2025), which examined the white racialization of Truth's speech through biased transcription practices, I aim to explore further what they defined as the intersectional boundaries of identity, experience, and the ethics of transcription.

In this essay, my focus is on how we *read* and *engage* with the voices of Black women and other non-white or non-dominant groups in a contemporary society that marks such voices. I encourage scholars and activists to refrain from offering "fixes" to the text; instead, to invite readers to engage with the experience of compulsive racialization that the text elicits and to assist them in comprehending the complexities inherent in the pursuit of justice. Thus, I advocate for a meta-framing of the speech that promotes critical reading about the emergence and perpetuation of marked language transcripts and their connection to broader oppressive societal structures.

The Emerging Transcript of "Ain't I a Woman?" and Markers of Accent

In the nineteenth-century United States, public addresses among the white middle and upper classes typically consisted of prepared written speeches rather than spontaneous or heartfelt remarks. This trend predominantly involved literate individuals considered influential, as they were often invited to events in advance, allowing them the time to prepare their comments. However, within white abolitionist and feminist circles of the time, there was also a significant effort to help freed enslaved people articulate their life stories for publication, thereby bringing their voices into the public arena (Nayar 2016; Painter 1994, 1996).

The historical transcript of the speech known as "Ain't I a Woman?" must be viewed within the

power dynamics that privilege the written word by white individuals over the spoken word of Black individuals. Transcription often reinforces the racism and marginalization present in society today (Aronis, Shrikant, & Arthur 2025; Bucholtz 2000; Duranti 2006). In the nineteenth century, Black individuals, frequently denied access to reading and writing, faced significant disadvantages in engaging with a public sphere defined by the values of the white middle and upper classes (Nayar 2016).

In 1851, Sojourner Truth delivered an impromptu speech at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. This address has since become one of the most significant in U.S. history, primarily due to its transcription by two audience members: Marius Robinson, a white male journalist and editor, and Dana Gage, a white female poet and the conference organizer. Gage was instrumental in granting Truth the opportunity to take the stage despite lacking prior invitation or preparation. Furthermore, the enthusiastic response from the audience, along with the subsequent publication of the transcripts in newspapers and anthologies, played a vital role in cementing the speech's enduring legacy.

An examination of the transcripts by Gage and Robinson reveals that both made modifications and choices concerning Truth's wording, dialect, and tone (Aronis, Shrikant, & Arthur 2025; Walker 2021) (Figure 1). Each transcriber also provided insights into Truth's performance and the audience's response. Gage's version, which gained higher popularity and continues to be circulated today under the title "Ain't I a Woman?", refined Truth's original spoken words in a poetic form to align with the feminist and abolitionist movements of the era, seemingly tailored to meet the expectations of white audiences. Additionally, Gage's transcript reflected Truth's perceived Dutch accent and elements of a Southern dialect.

	Frances Dana Gage – *National Anti-Slavery Standard* – 1863
1	"Well, chillen, what dar's so much racket dar must be som'ting out o'kilter. I tink dat, 'twixt de
2	n—s of de South and de women at de Norf, all a-talking 'bout rights, de white men will be in a
3	fix pretty soon. But what's all this here talking 'bout? Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to
4	be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to have de best place eberywhar. Nobody
5	eber helps me into carriages, or ober mud-puddles, or gives me any best place,"; and, raising
6	herself to her full height, and her voice to a pitch like rolling thunder, she asked, "And ar'n't I a
7	woman? Look at me. Look at my arm," and she bared her right arm to the shoulder, showing its
8	tremendous muscular power. "I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man
9	could head me—and ar'n't I a woman? I could work as much as eat as much as a man (when I
10	could get it) and bear de lash as well—and ar'n't I a woman? I have borne thirteen chillen, and
11	seen 'em mos' all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus
12	heard—and ar'n't I a woman? Den dey talks 'bout dis ting in de head. What dis dey call it?"
13	"Intellect," whispered some one near. "Dat's it, honey. What's dat got to do with woman's rights
14	or n—s' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yourn holds a quart, wouldn't ye be mean
15	not to let me have my little half-measure full?" and she pointed her significant finger and set a
16	keen glance at the minister who had made the argument. The cheering was long and loud. "Den
17	dat little man in black dar, he say woman can't have as much rights as man 'cause Christ
18	wa'n't a woman. *Whar did your Christ come from?*"
19	Rolling thunder could not have stilled that crowd, as did those deep, wonderful tones, as she
20	stood there with outstretched arms and eyes of fire. Raising her voice still louder, she
21	repeated,—
22	"Whar did your Christ come from? From God and a woman. Man had not'ing to do with
23	him." Oh, what a rebuke she gave the little man. Turning again to another objector, she took up
24	the defense of Mother Eve. I cannot follow her through it all. It was pointed and witty and
25	solemn, eliciting at almost every sentence deafening applause, and she ended by asserting: "that
26	if de fust woman God ever made was strong enought to turn de world upside down all her one
27	lone, all dese togeder," and she glanced her eye over us, "ought to be able to turn it back, and git
28	it right side up again, and now dey is asking to, de men better let 'em." (long and continued
29	cheering). "Bleeged to ye for hearin' on me, and now ole Sojourner ha'n't got nothin' more to
30	say."

Figure 1. "Ain't I a Woman?", Gage's first published version (1863), as appeared in Aronis, Shrikant, and Arthur (2025). See the original piece featured here: Sojourner Truth's Most Famous Speech (Walker 2021).

Sojourner Truth's distinct dialect and accent underscore a practice of Othering, setting her apart from her peers. Unlike her contemporaries, Truth's words were often published in a biased manner (see Aronis, Shrikant, & Arthur 2025). Nell Irvin Painter has argued that these representations distort the complexities of Truth's perspectives on race, gender, and equality (1994, 1996, forthcoming; Klimek, Painter, & Greenlee 2024). Additionally, scholars have examined the racist transcription of her speech, context, and appearance, providing varied interpretations of her work (Campbell 1986, 2005; Foner & Branham 1998; Haraway 2013; Mandziuk 2014; Phillips-Anderson 2012; Poirot 2014).

For over 170 years, the transcript of this influential speech, historically known as "Ar'n't," "A'n't," or "Aren't I a woman?" has been read by a diverse audience, including students, scholars, activists, performers, and everyday readers. However, it has faced considerable criticism for its perceived bias against Truth and Black voices, prompting multiple revisions by various scholars and international writers. These alterations have resulted in changes to its wording and accent, with some instances involving the complete removal of the accent (e.g., Campbell 2005; Gage 1863, 1881, Linthwaite 1987/1990, Poirot 2014, Walker 2021, Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz 2017 2019).

In the context of this essay, it is essential to recognize that Truth herself felt exploited due to her illiteracy, as others transcribed her speeches using "incorrect" English, exaggerated expressions, and Southern dialect (Pullon Fitch 1993). An article from the Kalamazoo Telegraph (1879), which Truth preserved in her scrapbook, noted that,

> Sojourner also prides herself on a fairly correct English, which is in all senses a foreign tongue to her, she having spent her early years among people speaking "Low Dutch." People who report her often exaggerate her expressions, putting into her mouth the most marked [S]outhern dialect, which Sojourner feels is rather taking unfair advantage of her (1879, p. 1 in Pullon Fitch 1993).

Aronis, Shrikant, and Arthur (2025) illustrate how transcribers infused their own perspectives into the transcription process, shaping the speech to reflect their interpretations of Black spoken language, as well as their biases and intentions in addressing specific audiences. By manipulating Truth's original speech, persona, and context, transcribers associated with her various forms of English, including accented, dialectal, and "standard" variations, also envisioning Truth as employing a "slave dialect." These practices position the transcribers as gatekeepers, not only allowing Truth to enter the public sphere—whether at conferences or through newspapers and books—but also determining the conditions under which her words would be presented, including whether to seek her approval.

The Politics of Transcription: Linguistic Representation of Voices that Differ from "Ours"

Transcription is a technological and communicative practice that transforms ephemeral spoken events into a permanent, visual format through writing, preserved today in both printed and digital media. This process entails deconstructing vocal sounds into letters and various graphical elements, capturing essential spoken content for future reference. Transcribers carefully listen to the speaker and document their words, as well as the surrounding context, and often edit for accuracy. Those who

transcribe in real-time without recordings face challenges in capturing every word and conveying the speaker's environment, ambiance, and body language, as noted by Robinson (1851) and Gage (1863, 1881).

Nonetheless, driven by the desire to capture, remember, analyze, utilize, and evaluate speech long after it has taken place, transcriptions have been widely utilized since the advent and popularization of writing materials. They serve a diverse array of professionals, including journalists, historians, anthropologists, social activists, detectives, law enforcement officials, legal courts, medical practitioners, linguists, and various other scholars. Transcripts preserve the essence of spoken communication and reflect a deep admiration for both spoken and written language.

While numerous scholars have identified tools that enhance transcription and improve the resulting transcripts, the practice of transcription itself is seldom critically examined. However, several researchers have highlighted various biases and issues related to representation and accuracy in this field. Mary Bucholtz (2007) argued that we should view transcription not merely as a tool for studying and preserving language, but as a sociocultural practice that represents discourse and encompasses sociopolitical dimensions. While transcripts strive to capture the essence of a speaker's direct speech, they are ultimately produced and documented by another individual—the transcriber—who operates within the sphere of indirect speech. This often results in the transcriber being perceived as a transparent entity (Macaulay 1991; Linell 1982), yet, excluding the speaker from the opportunity to verify the transcriber's interpretations. Consequently, this process can diminish the speakers' agency, reducing them to objects controlled by others (Bucholtz 2000).

Numerous scholars have emphasized the political dimensions of transcriptions, which often either reflect or contest the ideologies surrounding minoritized populations (Bucholtz 2000; Green et al. 1997; Rickford & King 2016; Roberts 1997). Importantly, transcribers carry their own biases and interests into the transcription process, shaping how the final transcript is created and its subsequent functions. Additionally, white transcribers often evaluate non-white speech by comparing it to their own dialect, viewing their speech as the "standard." This leads to the characterization of non-white or minoritized dialects as exotic, which then justifies the use of specialized spelling and phonetic representations to highlight deviations from "standard" language (Bucholtz 2000; Preston 1982; Roberts 1997).[2] These biases contribute to the reinforcement and normalization of whiteness, illuminating how race and racism function.

Transcriptions and transcripts carry important analytical and political implications, as highlighted by Bucholtz (2000). She emphasizes that transcription is intertwined with power relations, involving interpretive decisions about what to include or exclude and how to format the text. She illustrates how transcription can manifest stylistic choices that may perpetuate stereotypes or distort the original discourse. Ultimately, the identity and biases of the transcriber play a significant role in the creation and use of transcripts.

Transcribing the voices of marginalized communities, particularly those whose tone, dialect, style, or accent differ from that of the transcriber or the dominant group, presents unique challenges.

In his article, "Coz It Izny Spelt When They Say It: Displaying Dialect in Writing," Ronald K. S. Macaulay (1991) discusses how some writers intentionally use "nonstandard" forms of English in their fictional works for various purposes. On the other hand, others employ "nonstandard" segmental features to capture the "natural discourse" they encounter. As Cole (1986, cited in Macaulay) points out, this situation creates what is termed "code noise." These are words that are not always clearly articulated and require readers to develop skills for interpreting the "noise."

The social construct of "standard" and "nonstandard" language is never neutral, but rather political, and reveals power structures (Walsh 2021; Blanchet 2016; Weirich 2022; Tracy & Robles 2013). The "Standard" dialect, defined by society as free of "accent" and considered "correct" and "superior," is predominantly spoken by elites and represents the expected form of proficient communication (Tracy & Robles 2013). Individuals learn which types of language to aspire to or avoid, while "accents" often signal a lower social status, leading to stereotypes of incompetence. Consequently, verbal expression has become a key aspect of identity, marking who belongs to the dominant group and who does not.

Rosa and Flores (2017) assert that language and race have been "co-naturalized" to support colonial projects (p. 622). Traditionally, the languages of white/European colonizers have been deemed prestigious and official, while the languages spoken by colonized populations—particularly those of Black and Indigenous communities in the U.S.—have been perceived as simplistic and uneducated. In present-day interactions, institutional policies and the broader public sphere often regard "standard" English as the prestigious mode of communication, thereby devaluing other languages and dialects (Alim et al. 2016; Fought 2006; Lippi-Green 2012). Black vernacular, in particular, has faced criticism as being "dangerous" and/or "uneducated" (Rickford & King 2016). The use of nonstandard orthography, which includes dialect or colloquial spellings, can evoke negative stereotypes about speakers and reflect the transcriber's own dialect as the unmarked norm, resulting in "inequitable transcription practices for different dialects" (Bucholtz 2000) and render it exotic or alien.

In fact, all transcripts are inadequate and promote certain interpretations, favoring specific speakers, and are tailored to a particular purpose and audience (Macaulay 1991). Yet, readers must rely on the transcribers' ear and judgment, as well as their creative choices. What does this reveal about the intended readers and audience? What kind of (critical) reading is anticipated from individuals engaging with the "Ain't I a Woman?" transcript? In Truth's case, these actions, roles, and privileges were shaped, for instance, by white middle- and upper-class individuals both at the time of her speech and in later readings and interpretations.

Reading Truth's Speech Today

Several years ago, after completing my PhD in another country and spending time in the United States, I received an invitation to teach a course at a local university in Colorado. The course focused on Gender and Communication and was my first experience in the American academic

environment. As an international scholar who did not grow up in an English-speaking setting, I spoke (and continue to speak) with a noticeable "accent." However, I was not particularly concerned about this, as I had learned that my speech did not impede others' understanding, and my colleagues welcomed me warmly at that time.

While preparing to teach a unit on the feminist waves in the United States, I came across something striking in the course textbook. First wave of the women's movement, which was mentioned as spanned from the mid-19th century to the 1920s and emerged from the abolition movement, primarily focused in the textbook on the histories of several (white) feminist figures and their efforts to secure voting rights for (white) women. However, on one page, distinctively set apart in a gray-framed box, was a brief section titled "Exploring Gendered Lives: A'n't I a Woman?" (see Figure 2). This segment included an introduction to a speech with which I was previously unfamiliar, along with an excerpt of the speech as it had been re-edited for an 1882 anthology on women's rights.

As I attempted to read the excerpt of the speech, I found the wording quite strange; I struggled to grasp their meaning. There excerpt included words in English that I either did not recognize or recognized but slowly noticed were marked with an "accent" (I wondered to myself, "Is this actually reflecting my *own* accent?"). The numerous errors and typos made comprehension challenging. I found myself rereading the short passage, attempting to decipher the "noise" created by the marked "accent." Eventually, I identified the Southern dialect, and as I read aloud, I began to "hear" the words for the first time.

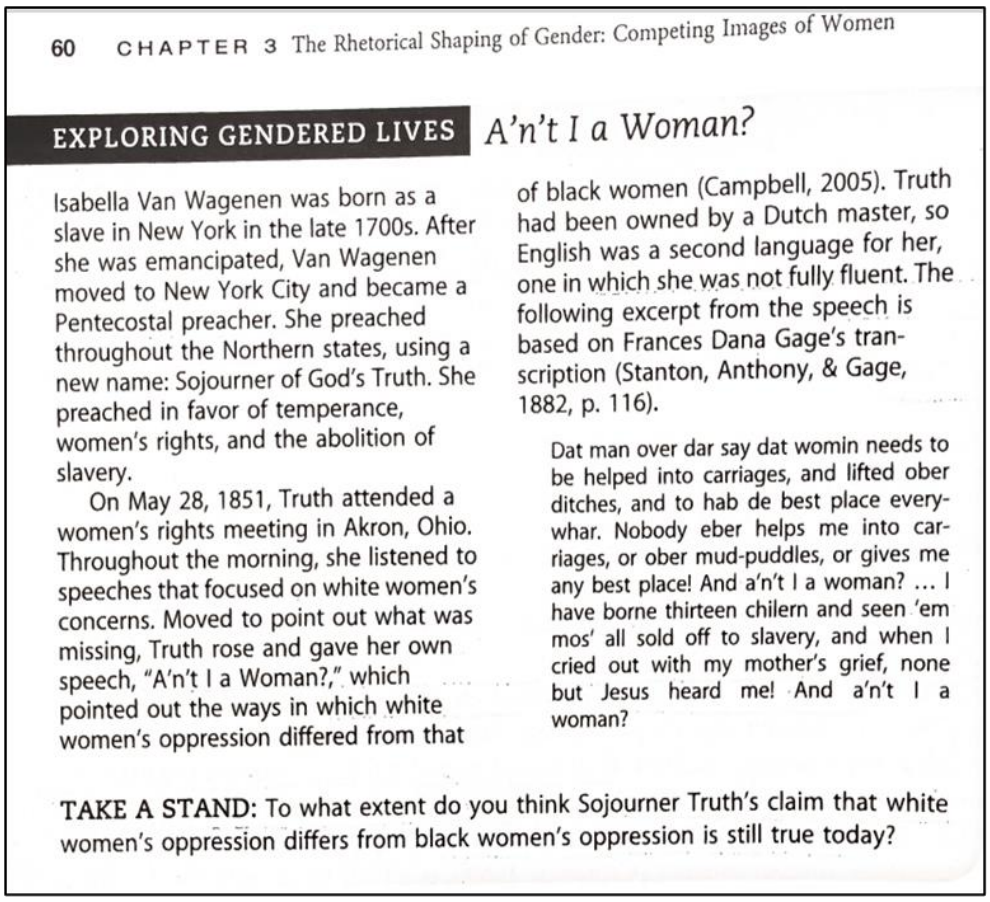
Upon rereading the context preceding the excerpt, I discovered that the authors provided an explanation of the speech that includes details about Sojourner Truth. However, many of them seem to focus on less significant or biased perspectives regarding her. Initially, I noted that the contextual text begins by reminding readers of her original name, which she later changed and preferred not to use. The text emphasized that she chose the name "Sojourner of God's Truth," yet it failed to mention that the name she commonly used in her later life was simply "Sojourner Truth." I found myself questioning the relevance of the details about her name as an introduction to the text.

In this contextualized introduction, the authors of the textbook characterized Truth as having been born a "slave," suggesting that this status fundamentally defines her rather than emphasizing the brutality of enslavement itself. It is noted that she was emancipated, but in reality, she freed herself by escaping from her owner. The introduction also recounts her participation in a meeting (not a convention) where she stood up to speak. However, this portrayal is misleading, as the original transcripts specify that Truth asked for permission to address the audience. According to Gage's account, during the convention, some women expressed resistance and hesitancy about featuring Truth, likely due to concerns that the message of abolition might overshadow feminist issues.

Furthermore, the authors of the textbook have framed the speech as specifically addressing white women at the convention, which was somewhat misleading. Truth viewed her struggle as an act of solidarity with white women rather than in opposition to them. In her address, she primarily directed her remarks to the white men and clergy present, articulating the reasons why all women should be granted

rights. As a Black woman, a former enslaved person, and someone with a profound faith and connection to God, she challenged the validity of the arguments men used to deny women the right to vote.

While the speech received significant acclaim from the audience at the time, this contextual nuance is overlooked in the textbook's introduction. Additionally, the transcript itself inaccurately portrays Truth with a Southern dialect, despite her Northern roots, as well as various intrinsic biases and inconsistencies that have been identified in the transcript over the years. For example, it erroneously states that Truth had thirteen children, when in fact she had five, one of whom was sold into slavery, and she regained that child through legal means.



60 CHAPTER 3 The Rhetorical Shaping of Gender: Competing Images of Women

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES *A'n't I a Woman?*

Isabella Van Wagenen was born as a slave in New York in the late 1700s. After she was emancipated, Van Wagenen moved to New York City and became a Pentecostal preacher. She preached throughout the Northern states, using a new name: Sojourner of God's Truth. She preached in favor of temperance, women's rights, and the abolition of slavery.

On May 28, 1851, Truth attended a women's rights meeting in Akron, Ohio. Throughout the morning, she listened to speeches that focused on white women's concerns. Moved to point out what was missing, Truth rose and gave her own speech, "A'n't I a Woman?," which pointed out the ways in which white women's oppression differed from that of black women (Campbell, 2005). Truth had been owned by a Dutch master, so English was a second language for her, one in which she was not fully fluent. The following excerpt from the speech is based on Frances Dana Gage's transcription (Stanton, Anthony, & Gage, 1882, p. 116).

> Dat man over dar say dat womin needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to hab de best place everywhar. Nobody eber helps me into carriages, or ober mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And a'n't I a woman? … I have borne thirteen chilern and seen 'em mos' all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And a'n't I a woman?

TAKE A STAND: To what extent do you think Sojourner Truth's claim that white women's oppression differs from black women's oppression is still true today?

Figure 2: introducing Sojourner Truth's speech within the textbook, "Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture (12th edition)" (Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz 2017).

To clarify the challenging nature of the text, the authors seemed to emphasize that "Truth had been owned by a Dutch master, making English a second language for her—one in which she was not fully fluent." I wondered at the time whether these words provided the appropriate context for the excerpted transcript of her speech. Is there a deeper reason behind Gage's characterization of her manner of speaking as "strange"? I later discovered that Robinson, the other transcriber, did not mention the Southern dialect or the Dutch accent. Does it matter that the context of the speech (and the broader textbook) is presented in "polished," "standard" English?

I have often contemplated the palpable sense of celebratory relief that arises when Black

American women performers and activists deliver the speech on platforms like YouTube—articulating it for audiences rather than merely reading it aloud (see, for instance, Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman" Performed by Kerry Washington, and Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman": Nkechi at TEDxFiDiWomen, among many others.) While there are numerous avenues to explore this exposition of Truth and her speech, as included in Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz (2017) it is important to note that this example is merely one of many instances where the speech has been presented and contextualized, inviting audiences to engage with a particular reading and reflection.

Theorizing the Reading Experience with "Noise" of "Accent" Markers

In the essay "Death of the Author" (1967), Roland Barthes shifts the classical focus from the author as the authoritative figure of the text—who defines its meaning and limits—to the reader. He argues that texts should be liberated by *readers*, who bring their own reading and experiences as they navigate the intricate web of the text, its cultural contexts, and its fabric of quotations. Barthes asserts that it is the reader, not the writer, who holds the unity of the text in the present moment; the author is always absent, positioned in the past of the text, and the "unity of a text is not in its origin, but it is in its destination." Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu emphasizes the importance of treating readers as beings whose corporeal presence within a reading context significantly influences the act of reading (Reeser & Spalding 2002).

In the following, I examine the experience of reading, including the corporeality of one's own vocal voice alongside various modes of reading. I conceptualize the reader as a site where the text performs and coalesces (Barthes ibid). By focusing on the *reading* of "Ain't I a Woman?" and examining its language, multiple authors, citations, corresponding voices, and embedded texts and framings, I seek to shift the emphasis from the authors to the practices and experiences of reading. Drawing on Bourdieu's framework of reading (e.g., Bourdieu & Chartier 1993), I theorize the diverse interpretations that a text invites and the plurality of meanings that emerge. By highlighting the different ways and levels of reading as outlined by Bourdieu, I not only illuminate the reality of readers but also provide an analytical tool that enhances our understanding of reading as a cultural practice.

In this exploration, I analyze the marked-speech transcript alongside its textual context, raising questions about what the text offers its readers. Bourdieu (1993) encourages a reevaluation of the reading practice, emphasizing the importance of not only decoding the actual words but also examining how readers interpret the cultural practices present in the text. This leads us to consider the intended social purpose behind the creation and publication of a particular work, prompting a reassessment of its aims and desired readings. Was it crafted to be engaged in the manner we approach the text today, or was it perhaps designed for didactic purposes, instructing readers on appropriate behavior and actions? Nonetheless, reading experiences offer a different perspective and negotiation with the original text and its author.

I explore the reading experience of "Ain't I a Woman?" focusing on its distinctive speech patterns and the meanings they convey. I focus on what insights the transcript provides to readers,

particularly in our contemporary context, as they engage with its language and cultural practices. I employ the concept of affordances as a framework for this examination, which positions the relationship between the transcript and the reader. As discussed by Don Norman (2013), an affordance emerges from the interaction between the properties of an object (in this case, the transcript) and the capabilities of the agent (the reader), determining how the object or transcript can be utilized.[3] Hence, I pose the question: What does the interaction between a reader and a marked transcript afford? Since affordances are jointly determined by both the qualities of the object and the abilities of the interacting agent, it is crucial to consider how these elements influence one another. I begin with self-reflection on my reading experience of the speech in the textbook and develop it into a broader theoretical framework.

1. Efforts to Hear the Written Word, and Revelation of Power Dynamics

You find yourself stumbling upon a word that you do not recognize. Is it a new addition missing from your vocabulary, one might wonder? Then you encounter another, and yet another? Words like "dat," "dar," "womin," "eber," "hab," or "chilern." The reader is encouraged to pronounce these unfamiliar words, first without understanding their meaning, and then to recognize their distinct pronunciation, which, in essence, highlights common words articulated in an unusual, marked style. For example, realizing that the words above are actually "that," "there," "women," "ever," "have," and "children." Perhaps the reader will find themselves re-reading the text once more, now making a concerted effort to pronounce these newly unrecognized words as they are written.

As I engage with the text, I find myself pondering: Am I inadvertently mocking Sojourner Truth and her unique speaking style as I articulate these words? By imitating her delivery in front of the audience and considering how this speech has been presented in various written formats, I also question my own role. And then, I wonder, am I perhaps being mocked myself by the transcriber and the textbook authors? Some of the "accented" words resonate with my own way of speaking, leading me to a deeper self-reflection.

Utilizing Bourdieu's framework, I am interested in how a reader interprets the cultural practices embedded within the text and the intended social purpose of the transcript. What motivations guided Gage's work as a transcriber, and how do Wood and Fixmer-Oraiz (2017) contribute to this narrative—or potentially offer an alternative perspective—as the textbook authors? Furthermore, how does the "graphic symbolism" of writing underscore the significance of the message being conveyed, urging readers to "pay attention" and manipulating their interpretation (Bourdieu 1985/1993)? Does this enhance the reader's understanding of the text's objectives?

The text reveals multiple voices to the reader upon delving into different levels of the text. The reader becomes aware of the power structure that the text reveals. The multiplicity and diversity of voices and languages within a single text, which Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) argues about, appear clearly in "Ain't I a Woman?" and the exposition of the textbook to it. These voices, as Bakhtin asserts, shed light on how texts carry meanings, values, and authorial intentions within these included voices. The act of writing reflects the speaker or author's positionality, even through their choice of dialect.

Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia and the interconnectedness of discourses points to the linguistic repertoire of various forms of expression within texts.

In this context, the speech within the textbook reveals (at least) (1) Gage as a speaker/convention organizer addressing the responses of the audience during the talk, as well as Gage as the transcriber who brings Truth's voice to the written text; (2) Truth as the main speaker who responds to the discriminatory discourse prevalent among men at the time, while also engaging with the perspectives of the white women in the audience of the movement. Truth's address relates to the discourse of the clergy and the broader semantic field of Christianity. (3) The text was re-edited and included in a particular anthology by multiple authors (Stanton, Anthony, and Gage) in 1881/1882, and it continued to be utilized by (4) many others. This ultimately led (5) Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz (2017) to incorporate it into their textbook on gender and communication, creating a new text that draws on the work of various scholars. (6) Also, the audiences that are mentioned as responding to Truth, and the potential ones that the transcript/text should address, could be echoed voices as well.

This composition of authoritative voices and discourses, drawing from historical contexts such as 1851, 1881, and 2017, reveals to the reader the power structures within society. The transmission of Truth's words and occurrence are not merely facilitated through white platforms, white writers, and white gatekeepers; they are further affirmed by the preferences of white audiences and the potential interest of white readers in these narratives. This dynamic reveals to the reader the racist structure inherent in the voices of "elites," who often speak on behalf of Black, non-white, less privileged, and "nonstandard" speakers.

Influential thinkers such as bell hooks (2015), Linda Martín Alcoff (1991/1996), Jacqueline Jones Royster (1996/2009), Nellie Y. McKay (2005), and Long et al. (2005) highlight these issues of speaking for others. hooks (2015) argues that this practice extends to white women, who frequently silence and censor the voices and activism of Black women, thereby acting as gatekeepers to their participation. This tendency is reflected in the historical roles of white women as suffragists and activists, who often perceive themselves as saviors needing to mediate communication between racial communities, all while perpetuating racism, classism, and educational elitism.

The examination of Truth's transcription across various platforms, particularly in the textbook discussed, highlights the power dynamics that allowed her voice from the mid-19th century to be integrated into a 21st-century academic context, especially within the somewhat elitist field of communication studies. This integration occurs alongside a tendency to dismiss and marginalize her contributions and legacy. On one hand, we witness a formerly enslaved woman of color, who was not allowed and unable to read or write, gaining access to a university classroom she would never have been able to enter during her lifetime. On the other hand, her "strange" or "funny" manner of speaking is pointed out, even in a textbook published in 2017, which often seeks to address discourses outside of the choices Truth intended.

Anna-Christine Weirich (2022) highlights the need for marginalized communities' voices to

earn *access*, among them those who speak with "accents," "dialects," or other "nonstandard" forms of communication. Given their often marginalized status, they usually face challenges in being recognized as legitimate speakers. The access that Truth earned, including her place in these academic texts, is revealed as needing to endure a myriad of discriminatory practices, political challenges, and degradation. As hooks (2015) articulates specifically about Black women, their voices are typically acknowledged only when they conform to the standards set by whiteness (see also Martin Alcoff 2008). Was the framing of the speech and the manner of its language a matter of conformity to American whiteness?

2. Reading and Racializing Truth, Others, and Self

Focusing excessively on the form of speech, labeling it as incorrect and Othered, not only challenges the audience to perceive Truth—albeit through various discourses, authorities, and power structures—but also acts as a meta-linguistic speech act (Austin 2006; Searle 1969/2012). This dual function highlights a deviation from traditional American public rhetorical deliveries, which may also reflect one's personal language. The speech transcript performs a face-threatening speech act (Brown & Levinson 1987; Tracy & Robles 2013), where Truth, rather than being celebrated for her significant address, is portrayed as deviating from an established norm. This critique contrasts sharply with the literary treatment of most other public (white) speakers in U.S. history, and even particularly within the feminist movements.

This practice fosters a potential atmosphere of "teasing," "mocking," and even "bullying," as explained by Tracy & Robles (2013, 83-84). The use of marked language suggests (even if unconsciously) that Truth does not belong in U.S. society, despite being born in and having served the country. The marked language seems to aim to unveil—much like teasing and mocking often do (Tracy & Robles 2013)—a particular "truth" about Truth as well as the identities and backgrounds of other transcribers and scholars. One might wonder if this occurs due to the authority of the transcriber—a 19th century white, educated, upper-middle-class woman, and the convention organizer—while the textbook authors (Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz 2017) also exert a sense of authority over how historical reality should be perceived and how movements, individuals, and situations should be understood, all framed through the lens of "standard" English.

The "Ain't I a Woman?" speech and its framing and introduction remind us of what Philippe Blanchet (2016) coins as "Glottophobia," describing linguistic or speech discrimination based on the way individuals speak.[4] Situating this concept within broader frameworks for examining oppression and discrimination in society, Blanchet highlights how people may be denied rights or opportunities due to their accent or the language they speak or use. This phenomenon reaffirms the political standardization of the dominant society's language. Such standardization seeks to distance language from everyday speech and maintain educational and linguistic authoritative power among elites. As a result, certain hegemonic speech norms are reconstructed and accepted by society as natural and unquestionable, particularly as they are reinforced through education and the media. In such an environment, individuals are encouraged to police others into conforming to a "standardized" version of the so-called "desired" language.

The reading of the speech and the emphasis on Truth's accent and way of talking resituate for the reader the "standard" expected English, then and now, and how English should perform within a specific grammar, sound, and manner. Realizing, as explained Weirich (2022), that linguistic and non-linguistic privileges and ideologies significantly shape the conditions under which individuals are heard. Furthermore, as Blanchet (2016) asserts, denying someone the right to express themselves in their own way equates to denying their humanity. Through the reading, one might wonder–did Truth still carry and was perceived through her humanity? Could she truly be heard?

Drawing on the work of Dell Hymes (1996) and the insights of Weirich (2022), one could argue that a fundamental requirement for a voice to exist truly is the act of being listened to, as speakers are always subject to the perceptions of their listeners (or readers). Thus, analyzing instances of voice must take into account the audience, the interlocutor, and the ideologies, values, and attitudes that shape the interaction. The readings of the text reflect multiple levels (Bourdieu, Barthes), not only uncovering different voices (Bakhtin 1981), but also suggesting that readers who themselves possess a "nonstandard" manner of communication or who are immersed in such an environment may be better equipped to hear Truth beyond the marked language, and beyond the "carriers" or gatekeepers of her voice (Aronis, Shrikant, & Arthur 2025).

In many respects, the readings extend beyond merely learning and hearing Truth and other past or absent voices within the text. For readers who communicate in what may be considered "nonstandard" English, this marked language often reflects their own identities, serving as a representation of their speech and the cultural production of language. The nuances of this marked language reveal for them a hidden voice of criticism and insult, underscoring the recognition that they—along with possible those they hold dear—express themselves in a manner akin to the way Truth is articulated through these markings. Indirectly, they are taught to evaluate their own speech and pronunciation, objectify them, and mark them.

Hence, it is not only the realization of oppressive power dynamics that Truth suffers from, but also over the reader, highlighting the divergence and the ongoing necessity to interpret what are deemed "disordered" utterances. When expressed publicly, Truth becomes subject to scrutiny and racialization (see also Aronis, Shrikant, and Arthur 2025). For the individual reader, this serves as a more personal and private indication that their own "accent," "dialect," or mode of speaking is viewed as out of place and unfit, reinforcing the idea that they are different and should be deemed as unusual, marked in some way. Therefore, in this process of reading, it is not only Truth who is being racialized, as argued by several scholars who studied the speech, but it is also the "nonstandard" reader.

The "nonstandard" reading—often unrecognized, overlooked, or even eradicated—emerges from the interaction between lay or popular audiences and "high-brow" or "elite" literature (Bourdieu, p. 670). Bourdieu asserts that the reinforcement of desired and expected high culture "leaves people sadly deprived between two cultures." He explains that individuals are caught between an original, ordinary culture that has been suppressed and a learned ("high") culture that is acquired just sufficiently to render them unable to discuss even mundane topics like the weather,

knowing precisely what to avoid saying, yet finding themselves with little to express. This effect of the educational system is rarely acknowledged.

The recognized omission of "nonstandard" or "nonelite" cultures, discourses, and readings—an omission that an attentive reader might identify—can serve as a crucial avenue for fostering an understanding of racism and marginalization in society. It underscores the importance of routinely questioning the authority of authors, transcribers, and contributors whose works populate our anthologies, newspapers, and textbooks.

3. Reading as a Pathway to Empathy toward Truth, Self, and Revelation of Racism

The reading experience, characterized by frequently stumbling over words and the necessity to vocalize them for full comprehension, reveals to both general and scholarly readers the practices of Othering and the exclusion of specific modes of expression. Readers engage in the racialization of Truth through the perspectives of the dominant culture, reflecting the biases inherent in white eyes, ears, and agency. If readers have not already developed some level of linguistic insecurity and self-awareness regarding their own speech, this awareness may emerge through their reading of the transcript. Additionally, they might adopt (new) criteria for judging others, thus contributing to a cultural or national glottophobia.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2014) describe the United States as fundamentally structured by a racial formation—a system composed of racial meanings, stereotypes, and ideologies. This formation operates through interpretive codes that shape our interactions in everyday life, serving both as an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics and as a mechanism for reorganizing and redistributing resources along specific racial lines. In that regard, the speech transcript of "Ain't I a Woman?', its included symbolic practices along with the process of becoming, and its broader context, invite readers to recognize the historical racial formation that Truth and Black women of her time experienced, and are still so deeply embedded in U.S. culture.

These codes and meanings, integral to the social order, significantly shape individuals' perceptions of race and dictate appropriate behaviors toward others (Omi & Winant 2014). Although Gage, along with other writers, editors, activists, and scholars, likely approached Truth's voice and speech with intentions of social justice, they nonetheless operated within the established and hegemonic racial frameworks of their culture. Contemporary readers can observe that similar practices continue in the present-day contextualization and utilization of the transcript. Consequently, the original, edited, modified, and circulated transcript illustrates how racial meanings arise through processes of marking, categorization, cultural representation, and the establishment of social hierarchies.

Reading "Ain't I a Woman?"—whether in the past or today—fosters an awareness of a hegemonic epistemology that defines "correct" or "superior" English, instilling a sense of "desired" pride in the language of England as the historical colonial power, particularly in contrast to the (possibly inferior) Dutch colonists and, even more so, in relation to non-dominant and non-privileged cultures, societies, and other countries of origin. Through this reading experience, one gains a lens to examine the racism of the past that has evolved into present circumstances.

Furthermore, this case may illustrate to readers that nativism—the commonly unchallenged belief in the superiority of native-born citizens, along with the fear of foreign cultures that often justifies expansive political and racial agendas—was, in fact, too elite and too white for Truth to be acknowledged within the diverse population born in the United States. The way Truth was treated throughout her life highlights that she, born in the US, was native to the country, yet represented the colonial power and brutality that enslaved her, resulting in her being regarded as less than human. Even the oppressive framework of nativism did not extend to her. She was not afforded the same rhetorical recognition as her white peers who were also born in the US. Additionally, even after the advancement of women's rights in the US, it would take much longer for Black women to gain their rights.

The issue of marking the speech of a native-born individual delves even deeper than that of an immigrant, highlighting essential societal distinctions. As Omi and Winant (2014) argue, racial beliefs and myths are so deeply embedded in our culture and thought processes that they are perceived as part of the U.S. social order—an unquestioned 'common sense.' Drawing on Kent A. Ono's (2012) insights regarding borders and fences, this transcript can be interpreted as a representation of a "restrictive entry"—both "figuratively and conceptually 'in words' and 'on bodies'"—since borders are constantly shifting and are solidified through application and practice. Ono describes the "bodily border" as one that the marked voice conveys, which is inherently linked to Truth's or others' racialized identities and persists wherever the body travels or is represented. Such bordering practices serve to distinguish between those who are included in society and those who are excluded, functioning as mechanisms for control, elimination, or ejection, and thereby determining one's (un)worthiness as a living being.

Additionally, in Sara Ahmed's (2000) words, the "stranger" is identified as "the body out of place" and viewed as the source of danger. Such individuals are subjected to what Ahmed terms a "visual economy," which encompasses "ways of seeing the difference between familiar and strange others as they are (re)presented to the subject, [...] differentiating between others based on how they 'appear'" (p. 25). In this context, it involves not only "ways of seeing" but also "ways of making seeing." A transcript, as a written account, presents a challenge: the speaker's physical presence is absent, yet it must convey the occurrence of a speech event for future reference. This dynamic allows for a certain 'hiding' of the typically racialized, marked body within society. The way Truth's words are transcribed, along with the "boxing" of her speech outside the narrative of the first wave as illustrated in the examined textbook, serves to re-establish the markings associated with her body and voice, actively distancing her through the imposition of both material and symbolic signs. This teaches readers about the entrenched "system" of racial meanings, stereotypes, and ideology in the United States (Omi & Winant 2014).

It is this plurality of readings and meanings, different from the inscribed meaning by the official authors (Bourdieu, 1985/1993), that offers ways to reveal the embedded racial formation and to develop a personal, mundane resistance. Readers, particularly those with "nonstandard" accents, dialects, or styles, may be driven through their own concerns, pain, and sensitivity, to the opportunity to cultivate a deeper connection and empathy toward Truth, as well as toward others in society and themselves. The feelings of confusion, offense, or discomfort that may be provoked by this realization

may serve as a subtle means of resisting established structures of domination, both in language and beyond. Additionally, this may inspire new ways of thinking or intentions to challenge the coercive forces of standardization and foster identities that stand against such a system (Walsh 2021).

The Power of Reflecting and Critique: A Suggested Solution

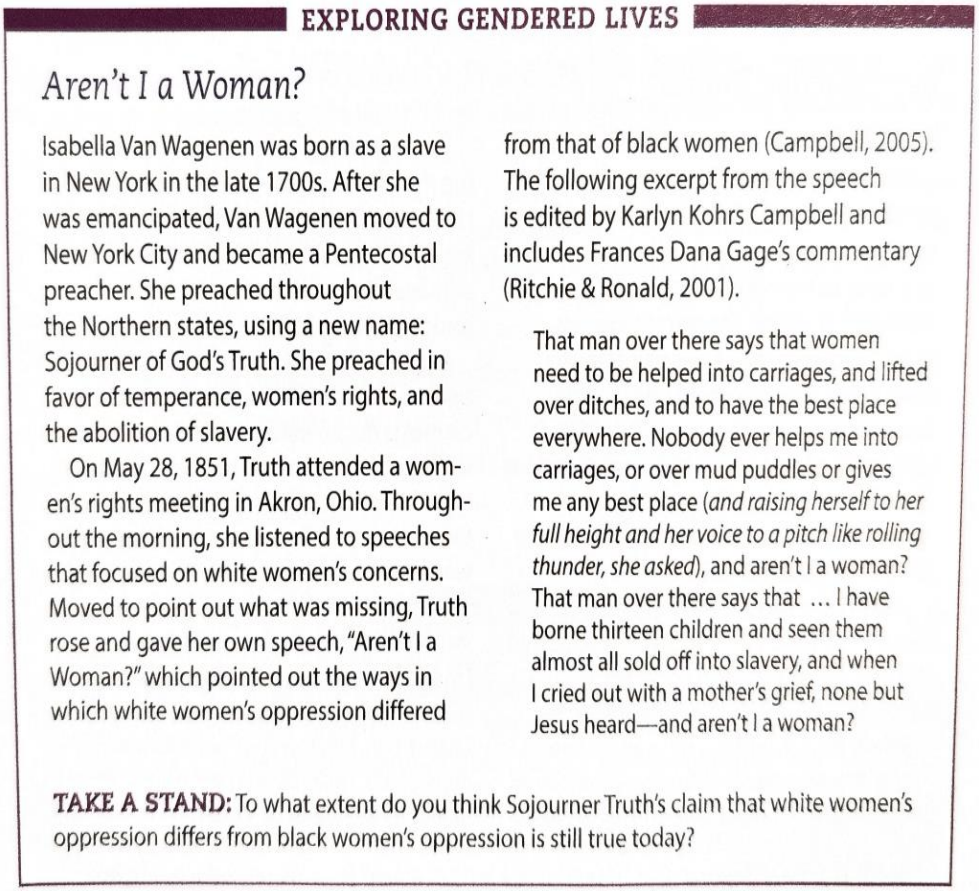
This essay presents a theoretical exploration and critique of the experience of reading dialectal and accented transcripts, highlighting the "invitation" to engage with practices of racialization while yet earning a recognition of racial formation in society. I propose using this unique reading experience as a means to reframe the renowned speech in its written format. In her study of the politics of transcription, Bucholtz (2000) argues that transcripts and the processes of creating, using, and presenting them should never be regarded as neutral. Instead, she advocates for developing new practices grounded in accountability and responsibility. She emphasizes that transcribers must remain conscious of their role and the impact of the transcript on representing speakers, making their choices transparent and discussing the limitations that arise. She asserts that standardization sidesteps accountability.

Over the years, numerous scholars and activists have "playfully" edited and altered Gage's original versions of the speech, including in the 2019 edition of the referenced textbook (Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz 2019) (see Figure 3). Although these efforts aimed to honor Truth better, they have inadvertently kept reinforcing existing racial power structures. Standardizing language or omitting its original markers does not address the core issue that the transcript deals with. Such revisions have missed the opportunity to offer readers a more direct invitation to reflect on and critique racial systems in the U.S.

In this context, I propose that rather than attempting to "fix" the language once again, we should leverage the unique opportunity we have as authors and presenters of texts to add critical commentary on how racist practices have influenced the Gage period, the feminist movement of that time, and other interests later on, to mark Truth's words as differing from her peers (Weirich 2022). I encourage us to frame the speech as an invitation to "tour" the heteroglossia of authoritative and marginalized voices, various white platforms, and practices of glottophobia. This approach can provide essential insights into the voices of Black women and others in the U.S., as well as the oppressive and challenging journeys they have faced—if they have even been granted a "journey" at all.[5]

Rather than treating transcribers and additional authors as transparent (Macaulay 1991; Linell 1982) and treating the transcribed speakers as stripped of agency—rendered as objects controlled by others (Bucholtz 2000)—it would be highly beneficial to critique the underlying issues we encounter. I propose that we include a critical commentary on the actual power structures that influenced this transcription and how they were represented. This approach would invite readers and learners to grasp the linguistic ideologies that silence, demean, and marginalize non-privileged speakers. More specifically, instead of solely focusing on Truth and her speech (as illustrated, for instance, in Figure 3), it would be advantageous for readers to be prompted to unpack the racialized and alienating "noise" within the text. This reflection should engage them with various racializing practices and

other biases in transcription, encouraging them to negotiate their own methods of reading, speaking, and understanding.



EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES

Aren't I a Woman?

Isabella Van Wagenen was born as a slave in New York in the late 1700s. After she was emancipated, Van Wagenen moved to New York City and became a Pentecostal preacher. She preached throughout the Northern states, using a new name: Sojourner of God's Truth. She preached in favor of temperance, women's rights, and the abolition of slavery.

On May 28, 1851, Truth attended a women's rights meeting in Akron, Ohio. Throughout the morning, she listened to speeches that focused on white women's concerns. Moved to point out what was missing, Truth rose and gave her own speech, "Aren't I a Woman?" which pointed out the ways in which white women's oppression differed from that of black women (Campbell, 2005). The following excerpt from the speech is edited by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and includes Frances Dana Gage's commentary (Ritchie & Ronald, 2001).

> That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles or gives me any best place (*and raising herself to her full height and her voice to a pitch like rolling thunder, she asked*), and aren't I a woman? That man over there says that … I have borne thirteen children and seen them almost all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard—and aren't I a woman?

TAKE A STAND: To what extent do you think Sojourner Truth's claim that white women's oppression differs from black women's oppression is still true today?

Figure 3: A revised introduction of Sojourner Truth's speech within the textbook, "Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture (13th edition)" (Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz 2019)

In "The Problem of Speaking for Others," Linda Martin Alcoff (2008) critically examines the intricate ethical and epistemological challenges that arise when individuals speak on behalf of others, particularly when there are differences in privilege and social location. Alcoff advocates for a thorough self-examination and analysis of the tangible, discursive and material effects of such speech to assess its political and ethical legitimacy. She argues that completely withdrawing from the practice compromises political efficacy. Therefore, it is essential to engage with the various lenses, tools, and practices involved rather than avoid them. This approach not only acknowledges often overlooked limitations but also resists the perpetuation of historical and oppressive contemporary practices.

Bourdieu (1985/1993, 665) asserts that reading is shaped by the conditions under which one has been cultivated as a reader. Recognizing these conditions may be the only opportunity to mitigate their effects. This understanding provides an epistemological purpose for any reflection on reading. In line with the perspectives of scholars such as Blanchet (2016), Weirich (2022), Walsh (2021), and Bucholtz (2000, 2007), I urge educators and advocates to help readers identify harmful linguistic ideologies embedded in the reading process and to foster a reflexive and critical attitude toward them.

It is essential to challenge traditional hierarchies and expectations, redefining what constitutes a "legitimate" variety, as suggested by Walsh (2021). Readers should be invited not only to engage with texts but also to reflect on how they read and negotiate specific texts, identify interconnections, and reflect on their place within societal structures and ideologies.

Permit readers to experience frustration. Allow them to recognize the complexities of racial formation and the profound distances that are insurmountable. This encompasses not only the temporal distance from past events but also the challenge of understanding the historical context in which those events occurred. It reflects the moral distance associated with taking the right actions—or failing to do so—for Truth, as well as the current impossibility of doing what is right in the present moment. Moreover, it encourages a slow realization of the difficulties inherent in bridging cultural, national, and interpersonal divides, which often involve language barriers and differences in pronunciation. It underscores the impossibility of undoing the legacies of colonialism, slavery, social disadvantages, and systemic inequalities.

Readers may gain a deeper understanding of the historical Black woman who escaped slavery and endured profound abuse as both an enslaved child and adult. They might make a deeper meaning of how she faced multiple displacements among various owners and had to learn and adapt to different languages and cultural norms of dominant societies in order to navigate and influence her surroundings. Despite being unable to read or write, she found the courage to speak profoundly before an often hostile audience. However, she was aware that she had to rely on white transcribers, platforms, and audiences to convey her words, a process that inevitably distorted her messages.

Endnotes:

1. I employ the term "nonstandard" (in reference to English or language) within quotation marks to underscore the social construct surrounding what is deemed "standard." Likewise, I use quotation marks for "accent" and "dialect" to highlight the socially constructed nature of speech and communication styles. Typically, "standard" corresponds to what is accepted, desired, and considered appropriate, whereas "nonstandard," "accent," and "dialect" are often perceived as incorrect forms of expression that deviate from what is regarded as "normal." This classification can suggest a certain notion of "disorder," prompting the need to label and differentiate such speech. For further exploration of these concepts, one can refer to the works of Blanchet (2016), Bucholtz (2000), Macaulay (1991), Walsh (2021), and Weirich (2022), which provide critical insights into the treatment, introduction, and framing of such texts, allowing us to recognize the power structures and biases present in society.
2. For instance, Jones et al. (2019) show how court reporters often lack an understanding of African American English, resulting in inaccuracies in their transcriptions that can alter the intended meanings of testimonies (see also Rickford & King 2016).
3. Norman (2013) uses the concept of affordance as the relationship between a physical object, tool, or technology, and an agent—be it a person, animal, or even a machine. In this regard, I treat transcription and its use of symbols to mark language as the "object" that affords specific relationships and functions.
4. Blanchet refers specifically to the French society, but glottophobia as a term and practice aligns with the US society as well. The author thanks Louise Sampagnay, Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle for the introduction to the term.

5. See Aronis, Shrikant, and Arthur (2025) about "speech journeys."

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Acknowledgements

This essay represents a new development stemming from a larger project undertaken by the author in collaboration with Natasha Shrikant and Tori Omega Arthur, focusing on the evolution of white transcriptions of the "Ain't I a Woman?" speech. For reference, see Aronis, Shrikant, and Arthur (2025). The author wishes to express gratitude and acknowledge Natasha Shrikant for her contribution to the section concerning the politics of transcription.

Challenging Familiar Boundaries and Blurred Lines in Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*

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Abstract:

Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* engages multiple fields—including Asian German studies, animal studies, postcolonial theory, and the public humanities—through the story of an unnamed polar bear writing her autobiography. The novel blurs the boundary between humans and animals, using ambiguous language and narrative perspective to examine questions of identity, agency, and the rights of both humans and nonhumans. Tawada's polar bear, as narrator and author, challenges traditional hierarchies and compels readers to reconsider what it means to give voice and recognition to the marginalized.

At the same time, the novel aligns with postcolonial and public humanities concerns by decentering dominant narratives. By foregrounding a perspective historically excluded from both literature and society, Tawada's work enacts a form of narrative justice, inviting readers to engage with experiences of displacement, otherness, and historical silencing. Reading the novel through these intersecting lenses illuminates how literature can serve as a tool for empathy, ethical reflection, and social critique.

Ultimately, *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* demonstrates the value of attending to underrepresented voices in both fiction and reality. By exploring the ethical and political dimensions of storytelling, Tawada's work reminds us of the transformative potential of literature to foster understanding across boundaries of species, culture, and historical experience.

Keywords: Asian German Studies, Animal Studies, Public Humanities, Postcolonialism, Censorship

In the last decade the field of Asian German studies has been considered a relatively recently established field of studies. In the past fifteen years, there has been an economic boom in East and South Asia. Because of this, scholars are interested in connecting Asia to the rest of the world. In 2009, the German Studies Association added ten panels of Asian German studies at the annual conference which have remained in place. These panels have researched and presented various topics relating to Asia and Germany: the relationship between the German language and East Asia as well as many Asian German encounters from the eighteenth century to the present day that are literary, cultural, and political. These panels have also surveyed important eras such as colonial, imperialist, and Nazi periods (Zhang 106).

This field aims to answer various questions such as, "What is Asian German studies?", "Aren't the 'German' and 'Asian' parts so different in size, history, and internal diversity that a comparison can only be out of balance?", and "How can research connections made between Asian and German language, literature, and culture field insights that can be useful for related fields?". The field of Asian German studies also allows scholars to research other fields such as area studies and postcolonial studies. Area studies connects social sciences and the humanities to understand various parts of the world such as Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Many areas are involved with area studies such as political science, economics, linguistics, and cultural studies. Furthermore, this allows for other questions to be asked that relate to other parts of the world such as: "What is the relationship of Asian German studies to Asian American studies Turkish German studies, Arab-German studies, Afro-German studies, multicultural German studies, or global German studies?" (Zhang 107).

Asian German studies offer a unique perspective by showing connections around the world such as with canonical and non-canonical writers, and thinkers, as well as transcultural connections with German-speaking countries and Asia. Asian German studies works alongside area studies and postcolonial studies and exemplifies the impact of Asian cultures and languages on Germany, German-speaking countries, and other parts of the world. Asian German studies, for now, is labeled as a broad umbrella term for the many diverse topics and cultures such as South Asian and East Asian German studies. These can be narrowed down even further such as to Vietnamese German studies and Muslim German Studies. Moreover, these different cultures can then be researched in terms of cinema, global, linguistic, and historical studies—the possibilities are endless (Zhang 108).

The canonical Asian German studies author, Yoko Tawada, was born March 23rd, 1960, in Nakano, Tokyo in Japan, and currently lives in Berlin, Germany. A common theme in her work is the relationship between words and reality. Moreover, she explores the possibility that different languages may aid in assimilation into different cultures. Her work also challenges the connection between national language and nationalism. Tawada's work usually involve themes of traveling across geographical and cultural boundaries as well as abstract boundaries such as reality and dreams, which often draw on her own experiences. She has won many awards such as the Akutagawa Prize, Tanizaki Prize, Noma Literary Prize, Izumi Kyoka Prize for Literature, Gunzo Prize for New Writers, Goethe Medal, Kleist Prize, and a National Book Award.

In the early stages of her career, she wrote in Japanese and used a translator to produce her works in German, but later began to generate manuscripts in both English and German. Scholars have adopted her use of the term exophony to describe the way she writes in a non-native language. In her work, *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*, she utilizes elements of magical realism, such as with animal anthropomorphism, to challenge the blurred line between animals and humans (Yoko Tawada).

Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* demonstrates the blurred line between animals and humans through language as well as by comparing human rights with animal rights. Moreover, the public humanities, according to Brooks and Scarry, are also depicted in the novel as well as in the public sphere. Furthermore, Tawada's text aligns with postcolonialism as it decenters the dominant, in this

case human, voices. Overall, this paper aims to show how ideas of Asian German studies, animal studies, public humanities, and postcolonialism manifest in Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* and in the *real* world.

In the introduction of her work *Animal*, Erica Fudge writes that "animals present a challenge to humans" because they are similar and different than us with the way they "form bonds, communicate with each other...manage monogamy" (Fudge 7). Fudge writes that the line between humans and animals is often blurred and confused with the way "we live with animals, we recognize them, we even name some of them, but at the same time we use them as if they were inanimate, as if they were objects" (Fudge 8). An example of this blurred line is most common in the idea of a pet. According to Fudge, a pet occupies the space between the animal and human because "they live with us, but are not us; they have names like us, but cannot call us by our names" (Fudge 28) which evokes a fear about boundaries because they are "neither fully animal, and therefore properly outside of the bed, nor fully human, and therefore properly inside...which produces fears about the status of both pet and owner" (Fudge 29).

This idea of the blurred line between animals and humans manifests in different ways throughout various cultural works such as seen with the idea of a pet, but also with forms of communication and rights. Furthermore, Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* depicts this idea central to animal studies, this blurred line and familiar boundary, through ambiguous language used to describe humans and animals as well as by blurring the line between human rights and animal rights.

The first section of *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* follows an unnamed polar bear who is writing her autobiography. Written from her perspective, this section follows her journey in Germany and Russia as she goes through the writing and publishing process. Without knowing the title of the novel, it would be quite ambiguous to know whether the protagonist was a bear or not. Her story begins by her earliest memories of life, learning to walk, "Every stumble moved me forward, but could you call that walking?" and drinking her mother's milk, "My tongue could still remember the taste of my mother's milk" (Tawada 3). Although many people cannot recall their first steps or drinking their mother's milk, these two distinct moments in development are ambiguous as they could apply to any mammal, in this case, humans, or bears. This ambiguous language continues as the main character describes herself: "I had a bear's thirst" and "my bearish weight" (Tawada 4). The way she is describing herself in comparison to a bear could represent that she is a bear or that she is commenting on her weight saying that she is heavy, like bears are, or that she has a large thirst like a bear does.

Using idioms and adjectives relating to bears makes it quite ambiguous whether the main character is a bear or human. There are many phrases that blur the line between human and animal such as "I am so hungry I could eat a horse," "You lucky duck", and "A little birdie told me". These phrases show our relationship to animals and the way we use them when we communicate. Of course, these phrases are not meant to be taken literally yet we all, for the most part, understand their connotation. The narrator also reflects about her time being bullied in school where her peers would call her "snout face" (Tawada 7). Again, this language of comparison between animals and humans

continues to cause ambiguity whether the narrator is a bear or is a human or if she is just describing herself in comparison to animals.

The line is continually blurred as we learn that she travels to conferences where "the topic of today's discussion was The Significance of Bicycles in the National Economy" (Tawada 5). Not only does she attend conferences, but she also comments on and critiques them, "It's a circus. Every conference is a circus". She also shares her political opinions and critiques of the West, "Rejecting automobiles and worshipping bicycles: this is a sentimental, decadent cult already familiar to us from Western countries" (Tawada 7). Not only are animals unable to attend conferences, but we also know that they do not share their political views. The narrator's statement about Western countries shows that she must be well-read on the news and or travels to various countries. Regardless, she attends conferences and holds conversations about her own political views about other countries—something that a human would do.

As the beginning of her section progresses, we learn about "a man they called 'Sea Lion'" who was the editor of a literary journal, who also ends up publishing her autobiography. It is unclear, again, whether this man is a sea lion or just looks like one, "Sea Lion looked more like a seal than a sea lion, but his nickname was Sea Lion." Other describing his physical appearance, Sea Lion's species remains unclear for the remainder of the novel.

Moreover, not only does language used to describe the narrator and her friends blur the line between human and animal, but it is also blurred with sex, desire, and love. After we learn about Sea Lion, we also learn that he "claimed to be hopelessly in love with me" and "After he'd visited me backstage who knows how many times, he confessed his desire to share my pillow." Because it is still unclear whether the narrator and Sea Lion are just two humans falling for each other, or two animals, or one of each, this confused the line between humans and animals as humans would, usually and hopefully, not engage in bestiality. On this note, the narrator notes that Sea Lion "already knew that nature had made our bodies incompatible" (Tawada 17). Although the narrator makes it clear that they are incompatible, it remains unclear as to how. Is she a bear? A human? Is he a sea lion? Is he a human? Nonetheless, as Fudge mentions, this blurred line between humans and animals causes a fear of boundaries, as instilled in the readers when we learn that, potentially, a human may want to be involved, sexually and romantically, with an animal.

Not only is the line between human and animal blurred with the use of language and descriptions, but also with the idea of human and animal rights. While the protagonist is writing her autobiography, she comments that "at the time there was a protest movement in West Germany against the exploitation of circus animals. The movement's spokespersons argued that taming wild animals for the circus violated human rights." This protest movement bases its argument that circuses violate human rights, which shows the harm being done to animals. At the time there were Western journals written that critiqued Socialist abuse of animals, claiming that "wild animals would never take an interest in the stage if human beings did not compel them by force." Going off Fudge's idea of how humans use animals, these journals reflect how humans are the root cause of this abuse

and that we would never force a human onto a stage, and questions why humans would do the same to an animal. Moreover, because of this abuse of the use of animals, the narrator says that these Western journalists, "discovered my autobiography as something that might be used as proof of the Socialist abuse of animals" (Tawada 34).

Although her autobiography may be proof of this abuse in circuses, especially considering how she writes about her lived experiences as being forced into the circus and ultimately decides to leave to work a desk job that will allow her time to write her autobiography, I argue that these Western journalists embody Fudge's idea of animal use just as the circus trainers do. Although I believe that many circuses do use and abuse animals, these journalists are doing the same to the narrator by seeing her autobiography only as a way to justify and support their own argument. Moreover, rather than reading and appreciating her work for what it is, they only see it for its use value against their opponent, thus using her and her work for their own motive, just as the trainers reduced animals down to their use value when forcing them to work for the circus.

As this movement continues, our narrator comments how she realizes how intertwined her fate and animal rights are with human rights, "I began to realize that my fate and the fate of human rights were inextricably entwined." Despite her understanding of this blurring between rights, she also critiques the idea of human rights, "the concept of human rights had been invented by people who were thinking only of human beings." Again, Fudge's idea of how animals are used manifests as the narrator thinks about and critiques human rights with the way humans only care about themselves and their rights. Moreover, without the idea of animal rights there would be no human rights, there would just be rights, "if human beings want to possess human rights, they have to give animals animal rights" (Tawada 55).

Without creating a binary and drawing a stark line between human and animal, there would be no categories and differences between rights. She even begins to critique the way humans categorize animals for the sake of animal rights, "it averred that large mammals enjoyed more rights than smaller animals, like mice, for example, and attributed the discrepancy to the tastes of certain groups of people, who valued larger things more than smaller ones. She uses this theory about caring about larger animals more than smaller ones to attempt to justify and understand why the journalists want to use her autobiography and give her rights, "apart from this theory, I couldn't think of any other reason why people kept chasing after me to give me human rights" (Tawada 54).

Overall, this line between humans and animals is blurred but becomes clearer only when humans need to use animals for their own benefit by making a difference between themselves. The narrator again blurs this line as she encounters translation rights issues as well as the movement against circuses and claims that "I am living proof of human rights violations, and I am not even human" (Tawada 59). Again, the line is blurred only when politicians and translators need to have evidence for their arguments but once they do not need to use an animal, the line becomes dark and clear that animal are not us.

The public humanities manifests throughout this first section to show the importance of

putting yourself in someone else's shoes and decentering the dominant voice. While talking to an old friend, Ivan, he gives our unnamed narrator advice to start an archive of her experiences, "You ought to keep a journal if you're interested in stockpiling your experiences" and that she must have the courage to do so: "You must have the courage to write, like the author of this diary!" (Tawada 13). After considering the advice of Ivan and deciding to write an autobiography the bear's thoughts are that her "desire to go on writing my autobiography was by that point already three times the size of my fear of having my existence destroyed" (Tawada 16). Despite her fears, she takes Ivan's advice and begins to write her autobiography, which later Sea Lion publishes.

While walking around West Germany she realizes that people want to read her autobiography and view her as a celebrity, "I've read your work! I find what you write so fascinating. I'm so looking forward to the next installment. What a stroke of luck, getting to chat with the author in person" and soon she realized "a hedge of people had sprouted all around me" (Tawada 23). After the first installment of her work is published, Sea Lion gives her advice that she cannot let her story go unfinished, "What a shame it would be if a life story as gripping as yours remained incomplete" (Tawada 26-27). Sea Lion's advice aligns with Scarry's idea where when we read, we are "entering imaginately into the lives of other people, including those without social power: women, servants, and children" (Scarry 43). In this case, by people reading the bear's autobiography, they are entering into her life, or stepping into her shoes, to learn from and about her previously repressed story as a female bear being abused while working in the circus.

As she continues talking to Sea Lion, she argues that the title of her work, "Thunderous Applause for My Tears," is unfair and was written on a whim because she is "incapable of tears." Sea Lion argues back with her and says, "You hear the word 'tears,' and right away you assume it's *your* tears that are meant. But the world doesn't revolve around you. It's not you who should be shedding tears, it's the reader" (Tawada 27). According to Brooks, by reading fiction we gain empathy which allows us to put ourselves into the shoes of others and understand their lived experiences and unique perspective. By Sea Lion telling the bear that she automatically assumes everything revolves around her when it does not, and that she needs to consider her audience. Furthermore, not only do the readers gain the empathy and perspective from an underrepresented bear, but the author also gains empathy and learns to consider the perspective and feelings of her audience.

Although I agree that it is important to read literature to put yourself in someone else's shoes and learn from their perspective and experiences, Sea Lion demonstrates how, for authors, this can lead to censorship in their own work, especially something as personal as an autobiography. While writing her autobiography, she includes political thoughts and opinions relating to her situation, especially as she lives in West Berlin. The Sea Lion warns her about this, "It would be better if you skipped the political criticism—your philosophy is boring. What your readers want to know is how you mastered the high art of stagecraft without losing your wilderness, and what that felt like. Your experiences are important, not your thoughts" (Tawada 31). Moreover, I believe this harmful censorship can begin to hinder the ability to experience someone's authentic experience because if they are forced

by their audiences' wants and their publishers demand to change their narrative and thoughts, in addition to the issues around translation, "Sea Lion had sold Eisberg the translation rights without informing me", (Tawada 33) this deprives the audience of an authentic, holistic perspective of the author. Although many writers may let what their audience wants to read influence and censor their writing, this did not stop the bear from writing her authentic life experiences and views, "I would simply go on writing, even if Sea Lion didn't want to print what I had written. Perhaps I would even find a better publisher" (Tawada 35). Now she does not fear whether people will buy her autobiography, rather she is more concerned with publishing her unique and authentic story, rather than being consumed by greed like Sea Lion is.

As we have seen, one way to reason with why she is writing and publishing her autobiography is because, like Brooks and Scarry write, is to give a voice to an underrepresented minority and by doing so, her readers will be able to put themselves into her shoes and, hopefully, begin to understand her perspective and experiences. In other words, audiences who read literature or absorb cultural works that represent the voices of previously repressed communities learn a sense of empathy, which allows them the ability to see through this new lens. Seeing through this new lens allows for people to use these skills that they learned from reading someone else's story when they are in the *real* world. Moreover, they will be able to be empathetic towards people that are different from themselves and be able to listen and understand that their lived experiences and diverse perspectives are valuable, just like their own.

A second way that this choice to write and publish could be justified is, as the unnamed polar bear touches on, the greed of Sea Lion. As she notes, he appears to be more concerned with what her readers will purchase and digest, rather than her *actual* perspective, thoughts, and criticisms. She hints at this being solely about Sea Lion's greed with the way he "encourages" her to get back to work, "Instead of crying, you should be meeting your deadline" and "Are you done reciting your lines? Then go home! I've got work to do!" (Tawada 27). Not only does he encourage her to constantly focus on work and attempts to censor her thoughts and critiques, but he also sells the translation rights to her work, without telling or asking her, and does not give her any of the profit. Rather, he is found hiding foreign currency and being secretive with what he does with the money he earns from her work. When she tries to confront him and settle this matter, he again tells her to get back to working, "If you have enough time to manage your translation rights, you ought to be able to write more installments!" (Tawada 33).

In addition to these two, completely plausible reasons, we can turn to ideas of postcolonialism and race studies to think of another. Postcolonialism focuses on oppressed people and their perspective by allowing silenced subaltern voices a chance to speak. By allowing subaltern and repressed voices a chance to speak this allows a variety of voices and cultures a chance to share their perspective and traditions, rather than only the dominant voice having their perspectives being show cased and valued. Postcolonialism allows a space where subaltern people are allowed to speak for themselves and in their own voices, rather than being spoken for or silenced.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a postcolonialism theorist, wrote an influential articled "Can the

Subaltern Speak?" where she raised questions for postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and race, minority, or *subaltern* studies. Her work references examples of subalterns such as women, Indians (South Asian Indians), and Indian women (Parker 368). Moreover, her work also references the Hindu practice of widow burning, "sati." In short, this practice is where some Hindus consider a widow to be a good wife if she wants to be burned. The British empire, as Parker says, saw themselves not only as conquerors but also as good liberal conquerors. Since they considered themselves good liberal conquerors, they allowed Indians to follow their own practices. When the British empire encountered the practice of the "sati" they were conflicted because they did not want to interfere with the Indian practices, but they also felt like widow burning was horrific and must be stopped. Their solution was that widows could be burned only if they agreed. Going off the idea of whether the subaltern, or repressed people, can speak, this article regarding the sati raises questions when a widow does say she wants to be burned. For example,

> Who is speaking? Is she choosing for herself, or is that impossible, because she has been interpellated into a misogynist set of expectations for feminine behavior? Is she speaking for herself, or has she been so absorbed into patriarchal culture that she speaks for the patriarchy, or even if she believes that she speaks for herself? Can we even tell whether it is one or other, and, if so, how can we tell? Can people who oppose or support sati speak for the sati better than she speaks for herself? (Parker 369).

Overall, postcolonialism allows a space where repressed and oppressed voices, perspectives, and cultures have a space to speak and represent themselves. Despite this, as Spivak's article shows, there are many contradictions and questions raised about whether a subaltern, or repressed perspective, can speak for themselves or if it will always be the system that interpellated them and continues to speak for them.

The first section of *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* demonstrates this idea of the subaltern gaining their voice and perspective and sharing it with the world. We learn that in the beginning of this section that the unnamed polar bear was originally a circus performer but decided that she did not enjoy this oppressive lifestyle and decided to pursue a career that would allow her free time to pursue her dream—writing and publishing her autobiography. From the beginning she is portrayed and viewed as subaltern because of her oppressive and repressive past in the circus. Moreover, we even learn how, because of her former upbringing with the circus, she forgot her childhood before she started working and found that to be oppressive, "I was remembering my childhood—even though honestly I'd forgotten all about it for years—and now I find it oppressive" (Tawada 13).

Despite writing her autobiography and sharing her perspective, she continues to be viewed as subaltern as we learn how Sea Lion continues to attempt to repress and censor her thoughts and perspectives. The way the Sea Lion continues to attempt to suppress her authentic perspective relates to the questions raised in Spivak's journal. Even if she is writing her own autobiography and sharing her perspective and life, is she really speaking for herself? Is society speaking for her? How can we tell whether it is her, society, or Sea Lion speaking for her?

Regardless of the answers to these questions, the first section of the novel shows how important

it is to her to have the autonomy over what she writes, how it is published, and how it is translated. As she continues to advocate for herself and her authentic, unique perspective she becomes more confident when handling Sea Lion's remarks and continues to publish without him. Moreover, as she shares her voice, she gains a fan base who view her as a celebrity and want her to continue writing and publishing her story. Overall, this shows how important and life-changing it is when all perspectives are shared and valued. Not only it is important for these voices to be shared with the world to serve as a way for the dominant voice to be silenced and educated, but it is equally important for the repressed person and their self-worth. Moreover, they are able to finally be viewed as just as valuable and important as others and are, hopefully, able to speak for themselves, rather than be spoken for. Decentering the dominant voice manifests in Tawada's work as the polar bear writes her work and realizes the importance of doing so and how much of an impact she is making not only on her audience, but for herself.

In conclusion, Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear* shows the importance of intersectionality and giving a voice to those previously repressed. The idea of blurred lines between humans and animals, in addition to the other ideas of animal studies throughout the work, shows how important intersectionality is. If this work was not written from the perspective of a polar bear, this could raise questions of how the overall message would be perceived and interpreted and if the meaning would be changed. For example, if by the end of the novel we learned that this was written by a person of color, questions could then be raised about the meaning of this and the reason. Would this be saying that the experiences of animals and of people of color are similar? Are they silenced, used, and valued in similar ways?

By situating the readers in the perspective of a polar bear, we can learn from the perspective of an animal, or a subaltern perspective we previously may not have learned from or considered. The blurred line between humans and animals allows the readers to understand an important perspective on the argument of human and animal rights. Moreover, reading this from the perspective of an animal brings light to the importance and other perspective of how humans only use and consider animals when it benefits them, whereas if this were written from a different perspective, this would allow the readers to understand a different perspective that is also applicable to life beyond the reading the novel.

Tawada's work also shows the importance of giving a voice to previously repressed people as we have seen with the polar bear and how much of an impact this makes on her readers and herself. As we saw with Brooks and Scarry, by allowing minorities to share their perspectives and stories and by reading their work, we are able to gain empathy by being able to read through and understand a perspective different than our own. As the polar bear reads literature from other minority perspectives, such as Kafka's "A Report to an Academy," again relating to animal studies, she notes the impact this work had on her, "If I'd read the ape's report earlier, I'd have written my autobiography in a completely different way" (Tawada 51). Not only through her own writing and publishing journey do we see this importance and possibility of gaining an understanding through a different perspective, but also with her own journey of reading from the perspective of a repressed

minority. Because she read Kafka's work, she realized that if she read it sooner that it would have changed the way she wrote her own autobiography because of the impact it had on her and the way it caused her to have an understanding through a different perspective and way of life.

Although it is important to decenter the dominant voice and allow others the chance to share their lifestyle, perspectives, and culture it is also important to note that their literature and works are not valuable because they are a minority. As the polar bear's friend, Friedrich, reminds her, "What I mean is that this literature is valuable as literature, not because it was written from a minority perspective" (Tawada 50). Although it is important to allow minorities a voice and to share their perspective, it is just as important to not reduce their work down to their identity as a minority individual. Moreover, it is important to remember that they are more than the oppression and silenced they have endured and have more to share than just those aspects of their identity and perspective. Remembering this shows that being a member of a marginalized community, although sometimes traumatic, is something to be proud of. There are many beautiful aspects of minority communities, languages, and experiences that are worth sharing not because they are negative and can teach dominant voices a lesson, but because they are special and meaningful on their own, not just what they can do for others.

This idea of decentering the dominant voice while also not reducing minorities down to this one part of their identity is important and relevant today beyond fiction. As postcolonialism ideas emerge and are brought to the surface today, it is important to give voices to minorities while also making sure that the dominant voices are not over-stepping and attempting to speak for them. These ideas were especially prevalent during the events of George Floyd's murder in the United States and with the emerging Black Lives Matter movement where many white people were listening to black people's perspectives and stories, while using their privilege to help their perspectives be heard, while trying to not overshadow the importance of letting them speak for themselves and their own stories and lived experiences.

Overall, this first section intersects with ideas from Asian German studies, animal studies, public humanities, and postcolonialism. Through all of these intersections of various theories and ideas, we are reminded the importance of empathy. By listening to one another and each other's lived experiences and perspectives on life and other experiences, we can begin to understand our various, diverse walks of life, culture, and traditions. By doing so, the dominant, white voice can also allow underrepresented, repressed, minority voices the chance to be equally seen, heard, and understood. As a final intersection with the public humanities, the polar bear notes how important reading from another perspective was for her,

> While I was copying out these passages from the book, I entered the story being told as its protagonist. I wanted to adopt what was being told as my own life story and live it myself down to the last punctuation mark. I read every sentence aloud and copied it down, but at some point, I stopped looking at the pages—a voice from inside the book was whispering the story to me. I listened and wrote (Tawada 71).

Again, by reading from the lens of a minority protagonist, the polar bear listened to the voice who was telling their story, and by listening to this voice, she realized how she wanted to continue listening and learning from this perspective to understand it. Just as she wanted to listen and understand a new perspective, her readers wanted to do the same with her work. Telling her how much her work meant to them and how they cannot wait for the next installment of her autobiography shows her own impact on her readers and that through her work, they are able to understand a new perspective on life. Moreover, just as Fudge shows us in *Animal*, by reading through the perspective of animals and attempting to consider our relationship to them, how we use and abuse them, and the way the line between humans and animals is blurred, we can understand and consider their own experiences and perspectives when making choices including them.

The intersections in Tawada's work remind us that we are all connected and intersecting each day, humans, and animals alike. By showing each other empathy by giving a voice to those who were silenced, we are then able to ensure everyone has a seat at the table and feels included, seen, and heard. Including various identities without making anyone feel like their minority identity, experiences, or perspectives are the only thing that makes them valuable and important enough to be heard ensures that they are not being heard for the wrong reasons or silenced for sharing the authentic aspects of themselves.

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Formal Traits of Intercultural Textualities

Intersemiotic Literacy: Reading *Heart of Darkness* from Serialized Fiction to Contemporary Book Publication

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Abstract:

"*The Heart of Darkness*" was first published in 1899 as a serialized fiction in *Blackwood's Magazine*. The publication of *Heart of Darkness* in book form and under this present title appeared three years later in the volume *Youth, a Narrative, and Two Other Stories*. To understand how reading as a supposedly passive and personal experience evolves, the phenomenal success of this masterpiece written by the Polish-British writer Joseph Conrad (1867-1924) and its collaborations with different modes of publication would be investigated. This article outlines the publication story of this novella since the time of Conrad till the very present day. To enable an in-depth understanding on how the plot of the narrative interacts with various book cover designs, discussions would be made on whether the visual domain can also portray the juxtaposition of horrors in the exotic milieu with the dark side of humanity. In *Re-Covered Rose* (2011), the award-winning scholar and literary translator Marco Sonzogni (1971-) examines how book cover design is a form of intersemiotic translation. Being inspired by this stance, it is the aim of this article to dissect whether the contemporary book designs of *Heart of Darkness* enrich the interpretation of this novella and respond to its contemporary criticisms. The cover designs of *Heart of Darkness* from Penguin Classics will serve as a case study in understanding how a publisher addresses the rise of new critiques. In addition, 30 book cover designs of *Heart of Darkness* published since the new millennium will be studied to exemplify the relationships between a literary classic, its book covers and intersemiotic literacy.

Keywords: *Heart of Darkness*; book cover designs; publication history; intersemiotic literacy; contemporary critique

Introduction

As the Polish sailor Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski (1867-1924) retired from his maritime career and transitioned to life ashore, he settled in Britain and became the Anglophone writer Joseph Conrad. His nautical experience enabled voyages to far-reaching places and inspired him in the portrayal of exotic landscapes and diverse demographic communities. One of his most notable works, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), is both an embodiment and reflection of his life on boat against

the backdrop of imperialist expedition. The reprinting and reproduction of this novella verify its profound and enduring significance as a canonical work.

This article travels through the publication history of this legendary masterpiece from the time of Conrad till the very present day. This action serves to understand how the phenomenal success of this literary canon collaborates with its different modes of publication. Specifically, the verbal narration made by the protagonist of the novel, Charlie Marlow, about his Congo adventure would be used to demonstrate how textual content juxtaposes with the visual domain of book cover design. In *Re-Covered Rose* (2011), scholar and translator Marco Sonzogni (1971-) explains his research on how book cover design is a form of intersemiotic translation. In his elaboration on the new paradigm of translation across genres and media, he mentions that "When a reader picks up a book, another translation has already occurred: the text has been visualized into a cover" (Sonzogni 2011, 153). This explanation affirms Roman Jakobson's definition on intersemiotic translation as "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems" (Jakobson 1959, 233), which naturally means good covers should convey the content of the materials.

With the aid of Sonzogni's suggestion, this article evaluates whether the book covers of *Heart of Darkness* in contemporary publication enrich the interpretation of this novella and respond to its contemporary criticisms. In Sonzogni's words, we are going to "judge a cover by its book" (Sonzogni 2011, 4). To achieve this, the cover designs of *Heart of Darkness* from Penguin Books will serve as a case study in understanding how a renowned publisher fosters literary excellence by addressing to new critiques of an acclaimed novella. In addition, a total of 30 book cover designs of *Heart of Darkness* published since the new millennium from various publishers will be studied to investigate the intersemiotic relationships between the content of a literary text with book covers of different designs.

The Initial Publication of *Heart of Darkness*

Similar to the experience of many authors during his time, Conrad released his works as serialized fictions in magazines. This common practice commercialized and popularized fictions as authors had the flexibility of changing their work according to readers' perception towards the previous serials. Catherine Delafield points out that "While the story unfolded there was always the possibility of alternative endings and readings as well as influence over the serials from review or reader feedback" (Delafield 2015, 11). This pattern of publication also provided hints regarding an author's fame during Conrad's time. For instance, *Scribner's Monthly* magazine, an illustrated American literary periodical published from 1870 to 1881, had made the following remark in November 1878:

> Formerly, the best writers of fiction never appeared in the magazine ... Now it is the second or third rate novelist who cannot get publication in a magazine, and is obliged to publish in a volume, and it is in the magazine that the best novelists always appear first. (qtd. in Lund 1993, 52)

In the journey of accumulating fame and audience, Conrad published "The Heart of Darkness" as

a three-part serial in 1899 in *Blackwood's Magazine* (February, March, April 1899). It was one of the writings to celebrate the 1000th edition of the magazine. Although serialized fiction gives writers greater flexibility, it was never Conrad's intention to please his readers. This can be seen by comparing the subject matter of *Heart of Darkness* and the target reader of its first publication. British academic Robert Hampson comments that "the narrative strategies of both Conrad and Marlow work to subvert many of the assumptions accepted by their audience" (*HOD* xxxiii). In describing the true horrors of imperialism behind the mission of brightening the dark corners of the world, Conrad's work must have shocked the subscribers of *Blackwood's Magazine* who are "an audience still secure in the conviction that they were members of an invincible imperial power and a superior race" (*HOD* xxxii). Brian W. Shaffer, expert of twentieth century British literature, describes *Blackwood's Magazine* as "a journal with a largely conservative, middle-class, and professional make readership" (Shaffer 2006, 315). The discrepancy between Conrad's ironic portrayal of Anglo-European civilization and his readers' perception towards the benevolent contribution of imperialism may help us to comprehend why Mara Kalnins, former reader in modern British literature at the University of Cambridge, notes that "Conrad's major novels did not sell, and he lived in relative poverty until the commercial success of *Chance* (1914)" (*Chance* i).

The publication of *Heart of Darkness* in book form and under the present title appeared three years later in 1902. This was a revised version published by the same Scottish publishing firm, Blackwood and Sons. Victorian specialist Philip V. Allingham observes that "there are few substantive differences between the serial and final texts" (Allingham 2013). The volume was entitled *Youth, a Narrative, and Two Other Stories*. It is apparent that *Youth* served as the selling point of the book as it was regarded by Conrad himself as a "very well received" piece of work in its *Maga* publication (*HOD* 10).[1] On the contrary, *Heart of Darkness* was referred to by Conrad as "a rotten thing" (Stape 2007, 113). Charlie Marlow as a recurring fictional character in Conrad's works makes his debut appearance in *Youth*. After *Heart of Darkness*, he subsequently appeared as the narrator of *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Chance* (1914). Undeniably, *Heart of Darkness* turns out to be the most remarkable piece of work in its first book volume. The following analysis focuses on the publication of *Heart of Darkness* as a separate book.

As shown from the identical book covers of *Youth* and *Lord Jim* published by Blackwood and Sons (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2), the elegant and serious Victorian cloth bindings fully demonstrate how literature is traditionally regarded as a polite activity among intellectuals. The absence of pictorial content from the book in this book cover design disables its reader from acquiring any hints regarding the plot of the narrative. Sonzogni notices the linkage between the transformation of cover design and marketing strategy:

> By the 1920s it had become a common practice for publishers to provide illustrated dust jackets. Their function had changed from protective instrument to a tool for promotion. Covers now play an important part in the marketing process (Sonzogni 2011, 17).

To explore how the publishing industry evolves in meeting market conditions and customer needs, a case study is conducted to showcase the book covers of *Heart of Darkness* published by Penguin Books.

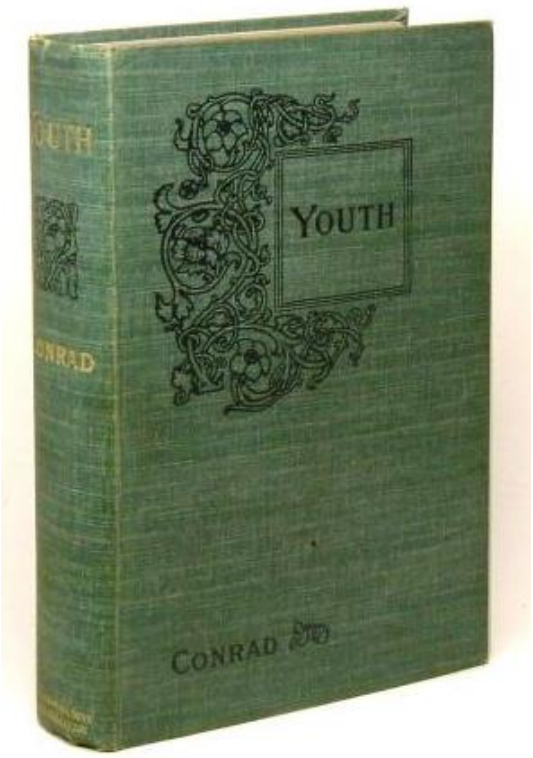

Fig. 1. *Youth* published by Blackwood and Sons in 1902.

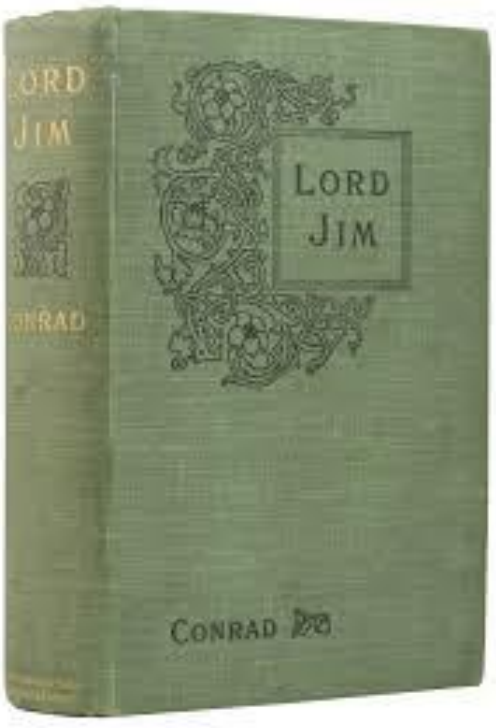

Fig. 2. *Lord Jim* published by Blackwood and Sons in 1900.

The Book Covers of Penguin Books

Founded in 1935, Penguin Books has been a household name for generations. Its reputation is not merely built upon the publishing of good quality books, but also its efforts in making books affordable and accessible for readers worldwide. As a leading English-language publishing company, Penguin Books gains supports from teachers and students of literary studies through popularising reading culture. The inclusion of annotated notes and references in literature titles enhances the comprehension of challenging historical background and cultural contexts and thereby promotes reader engagement. This case study of appraising the book covers of *Heart of Darkness* published by Penguin Books serves to testify Sonzogni's opinion that book cover "offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back" (Sonzogni 2011, 15).

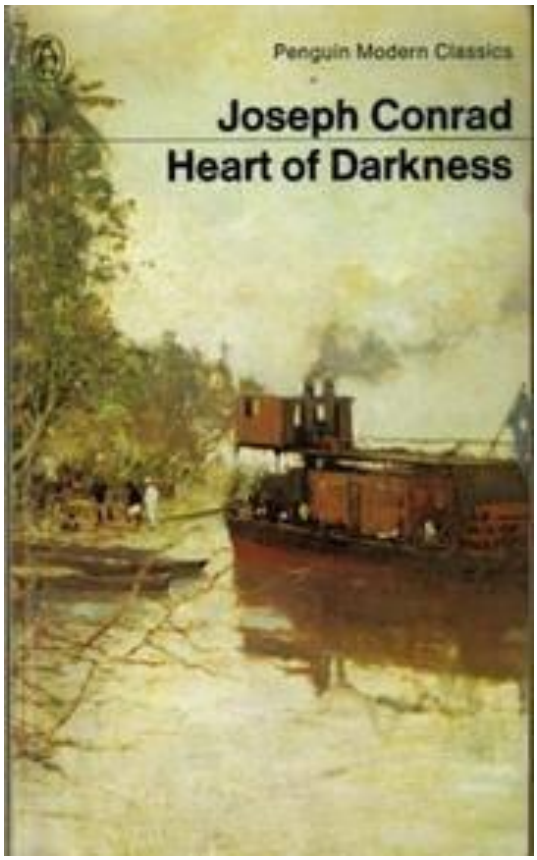

Fig. 3. Penguin Modern Classics in 1976.

Penguin Books published *Heart of Darkness* through three different publication lines. The same book cover was adopted in each of these publications. They include Penguin Modern Classics in 1976 which was also the earliest Penguin edition of *Heart of Darkness* (Fig. 3). The second Penguin's *Heart of Darkness* was published in the Penguin English Library (PEL) series in 1983. Created in 1963, this series published 150 titles of literary classics. Its pioneering role in cultivating literary appreciation can be seen in its efforts of providing both historical and critical introduction, and adding notes to the texts. In 1986, the PEL series merged with Penguin Classics. *Heart of Darkness* was reissued in the Penguin Classics line in 1984 and 1989 respectively. The PEL series was resumed in 2012. An evaluation of its new version of *Heart of Darkness* will be included in the later part of

the discussion. The first volume of Penguin Classics was published in 1946. Traditionally, it focused on translated classics. For example, its first book was the translated version of Homer's *Odyssey* by E.V. Rieu. The illustration of a Congo steamer was chosen as the book cover of Penguin's *Heart of Darkness*. It reminds the reader of the Belgian riverboat *Roi des Belges* that took Conrad to Congo in 1890. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow tells his audience that "Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world" (*HOD* 59). This Penguin's steamer takes the reader to what Conrad refers to as "an impenetrable forest" (*HOD* 59).

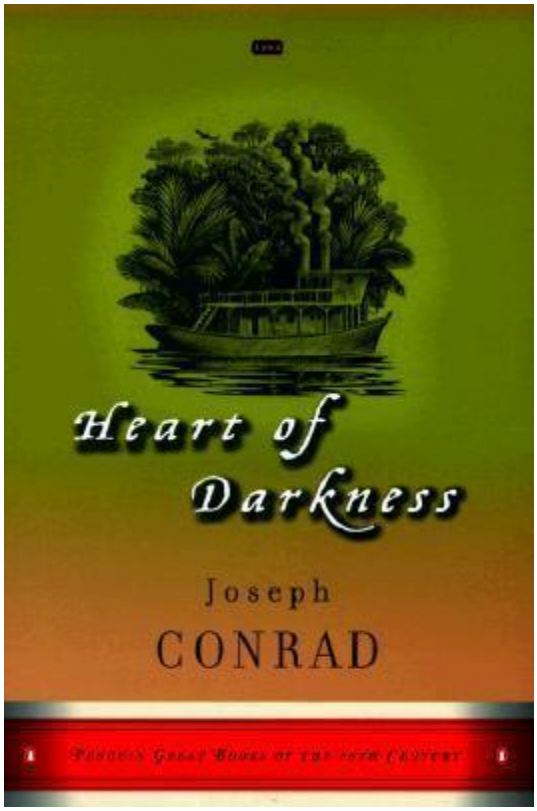

Fig.4. Penguin Great Books of the 20th Century in 1999.

Four Penguin covers of *Heart of Darkness* produced in the 1990s share the similarity in visualizing Marlow's depiction of dense vegetation in Congo. As Marlow "penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness" (*HOD* 62), he describes the environment through "Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high ... It made you feel very small, very lost" (*HOD* 61). All the titles under the UK version of Penguin Popular Classics share the same lime green cover with no images, which accidentally matches with the color of spring vegetation. This line of Penguin Popular Classics is the lower priced edition of the company. The titles were sold at the price of two pounds sterling in 2010. At the end of the millennium, Penguin released the Penguin Great Books of the 20th Century series. The book cover of *Heart of Darkness* issued in this series in 1999 integrates the color of vegetation with the aforementioned design that features an old colonial steamboat (Fig. 4). For the new reader, this book design insinuates the novella's depiction of Africa as the site of imperialist exploration. As for those who revisit the novella, this book design as a reminiscence of the earlier version plays the role of recalling and consolidating the previous reading experience.

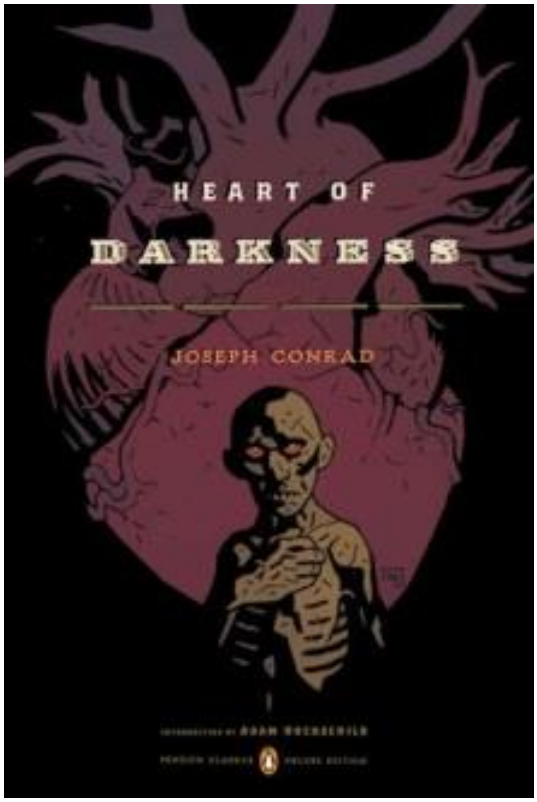

Fig. 5. Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition version in 2012.

Before Marlow sets off for Congo, he has to undergo a medical examination. This medical examination is more than a physical body check. The old doctor asks Marlow, "Ever any madness in your family?" (*HOD* 27). As Marlow gets closer to the Central Station, he recalls how this old doctor has commented that "It would be interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals, on the spot" (*HOD* 40). That the journey to Congo is a psychological journey can be seen from four other Penguin covers of *Heart of Darkness*. They were the Modern Classics version in 2007, Penguin Classics version in 2007, Penguin Popular Classics version in 2011 and Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition version in 2012 (Fig. 5). Three out of these four covers from the 21st century make clear that the darkest place on earth lies within the human mind. As shown from these covers, the gloomy feelings lead us to two important contemporary criticisms of the novel. The first one is Chinua Achebe's critique on Conrad's "white racism against Africa" (Achebe 2001, 1789). In Achebe's view, Conrad's limited knowledge towards Africa and its people, together with the continual success of *Heart of Darkness*, permanently degrades the vast African continent as an object without humanity. This post-colonial remark made by Achebe in 1977 remains influential. John G. Peters is for the point of view that "Achebe forever forced Conrad scholars to consider Conrad's stance on issues of race and imperialism" (Peters 2006, 127). The second contemporary criticism is the patriarchal representation of women as shown from Marlow's perception towards the Intended. Marlow's description of her as a faithful woman "without suspicion, without a thought for herself" but with "a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering" (*HOD* 117, 119) makes her a victim of Victorian ideals of womanhood at the expense of her own individual character.

The book covers of two Penguin editions of *Heart of Darkness* published in 2012 address the two contemporary criticisms aforesaid. The choice of colorful covers drives away the sense of impending doom. Specifically, the book cover of the now resumed Penguin British Library version features several African masks that highlight Africa as the subject matter of the novel and the value of native culture. Furthermore, the book cover of the Penguin Essentials version demonstrates the richness of Africa via illustrations such as its people, wildlife and nature. Africa is far more than a place of bountiful vegetation, as we have discussed regarding the book covers of the 90s. Other than plants, the inclusion of some other rich African resources such as ivory (as presented by the elephant and the ivory necklace) and manpower (as presented by the natives) visualizes King Leopold's desire in Congo. The display of indigenous weapons on the cover shows how Africa is not a feeble territory awaiting western representation or foreign exploitation.

Most importantly, these two cover designs encourage female readership. This could be seen from the diverse choice of bright and feminine colors, such as turquoise and violet. On the cover of the Penguin Essentials version, the male figure is adorned with various accessories and ornaments, forming a stark contrast with conventional associations of men and masculinity. Marlow mentions at the beginning of his narration that travelers to Africa "were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force – nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others" (*HOD* 20). Therefore, the feminization of a male figure on the book cover could be interpreted as Anglo-European cowardly conquest in Africa.

An Analysis of 30 *Heart of Darkness* Book Covers

Having seen how book covers visualise Marlow's verbal narration and provide pictorial response to some of the contemporary criticisms of the book, this part of the analysis exemplifies how the imaginative space of reading a book could be limited by book cover designs. To demonstrate this, a small-scale research on 30 book covers of *Heart of Darkness* published since the new millennium has been carried out. In selecting representative covers from a wide range of covers that are available, two basic requirements are followed. The first one is that the title of the book must only contain *Heart of Darkness*. For instance, all Oxford World's Classics editions are excluded as they are under the title of *Heart of Darkness and Other Tales*. The second requirement is that the books are not published by self-publishing companies. Hence, books published by CreateSpace are excluded. This is a self-publishing company owned by Amazon. As shown from Amazon.com, at least twenty different versions of *Heart of Darkness* under very different book covers can be found. This significant number, together with the non-traditional aspect of the company, means that a separate research may be necessary in exploring the publishing trend of this mode of publication.

The referent of *Heart of Darkness* plays a defining role in categorizing the 30 selected book covers. In analysing *Heart of Darkness* as a fictional discourse with Conrad's autobiographical experience in Congo, Christopher L. Miller discovers the trick of this book's referent:

> The referent of *Heart of Darkness* is so commonly understood to be Africa, and specifically the Congo Free State at the time of King Leopold II's reign of terror and profit at the end of the nineteenth century, that it may come as a surprise to learn that "Africa" is never specifically named as its referent. (Miller 1985, 172)

The name Africa only appears in the novella as a representation of Marlow's childhood fantasy. Marlow's boyhood indulgence in exploration through passive map reading foreshadows his future employment as skipper of a river steamboat. He begins to narrate his debut voyage by describing the continent as a blank place in the past:

> True, by this time it was not a blank place any more. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a black space of delightful mystery – a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness. (*HOD* 22)

Out of 30 covers studied, 21 of them are associated with Africa. That constitutes 70% of the total number (Fig. 6). These African covers center around the themes of landscape, ivory, culture, natives and also the map of Africa that fascinates young Marlow (Fig. 7). There are two covers that belong to the category of "Mixed". For example, the Arcturus Publishing cover has adopted a Congo Rainforest image as the background. The foreground shows a tribal necklace and a broken ivory. This cover design thus echoes with Marlow's realization that Anglo-European imperialism exploits indigenous resources.

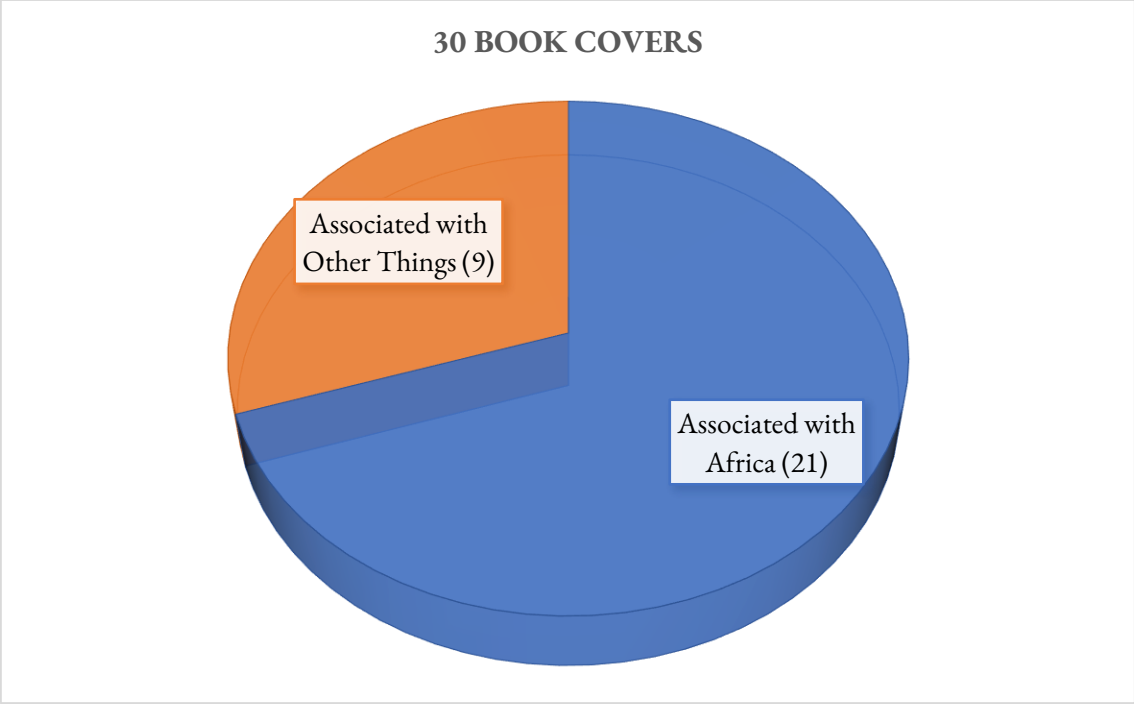

Fig. 6. Book covers that are associated with Africa.

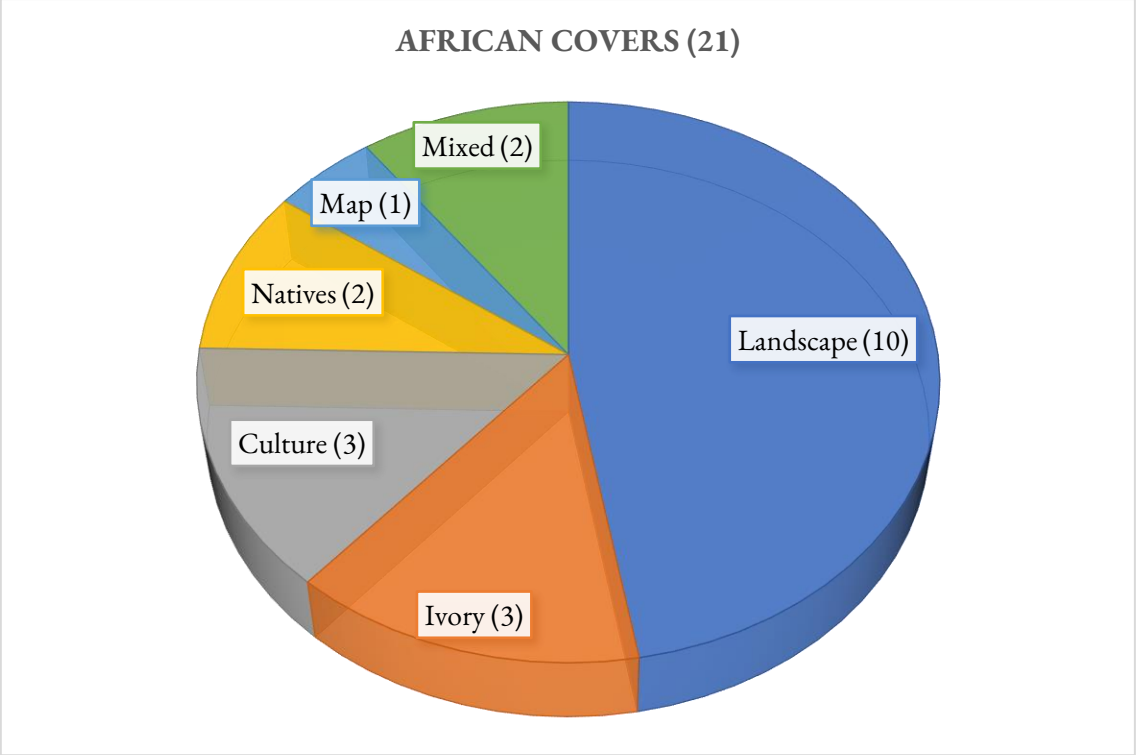

Fig. 7. Categorization of the African covers.

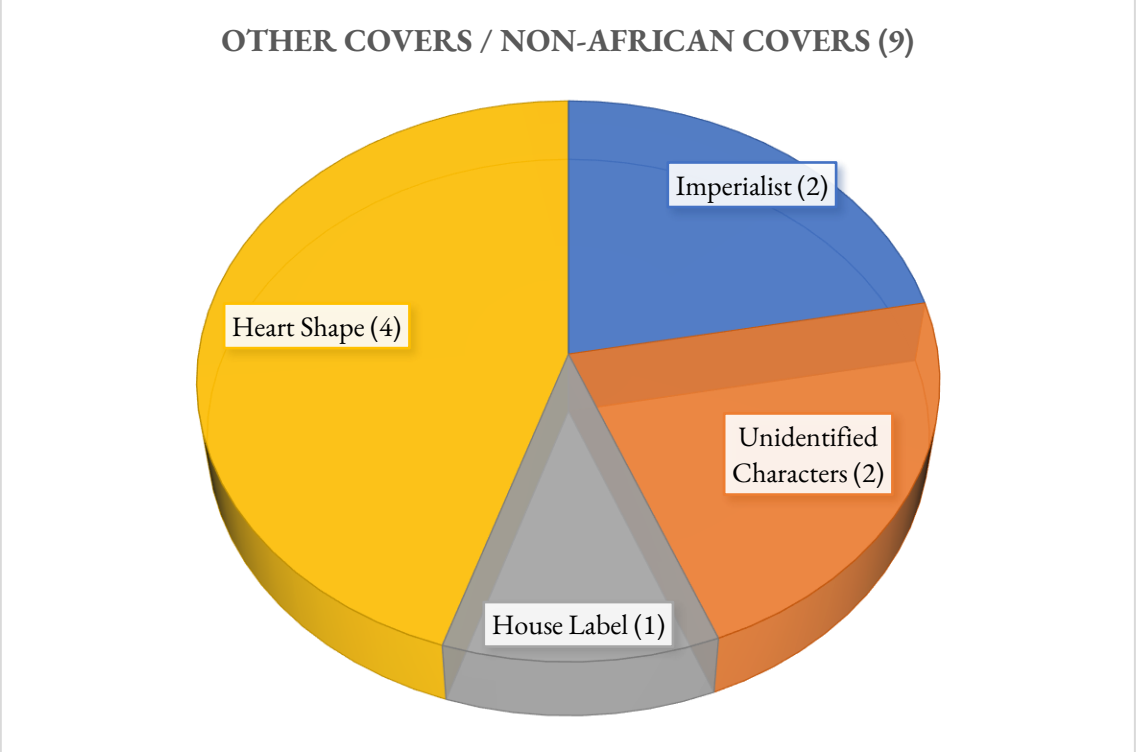

Fig. 8. Categorization of the non-African covers.

The remaining 9 non-African covers can further be classified into 4 categories (Fig. 8). The first one is "Imperialist". There are two covers under this category: a steamer and a letter. We have previously

mentioned the Belgian steamer cover used by Penguin Classics in 1976. As shown from Ancient Wisdom's edition in 2012, the iconic legacy of the Belgian steamer remains. Another imperialist cover design features a letter. The phrase "Her Excellency" could be an association of Queen Victoria's policy of colonial expansion. Book covers under the second category are monopolized by Penguin's editions. I refer this category as "Unidentified Characters". It gives us little space on associating these men with Marlow, Kurtz or a native African. As for the third category of "House Design", it contains the Penguin Popular Classics edition in 2011. This classic cover design is more significant to the publisher than to the book itself.

The fourth category is a rather representative one and that is the "Heart Shape". It counts for 45% of the non-African covers. This category of cover design is more than a simple echo of the book title. It is related to the final scene of the novella which connects all the major notions raised from the Congo journey such as the frustration towards western civilization, indigenous exploitation, fading humanity and moral degradation. While the exotic climate and the fear of unknown danger in Congo make the place being associated with the heart of darkness, Marlow eventually realizes how her rich ivory content corrupts Kurtz's conscience:

> I've seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire; but, by all the stars! These were strong, lusty, red-eyed devils, that swayed and drove men – men, I tell you. (*HOD* 34)

Soon after Marlow has fulfilled his patriarchal commitment to the Intended, he concludes his Congo experience in the following way:

> The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky – seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness. (*HOD* 124)

Ending the novella with Marlow's painful conclusion confirms Ian Watt's suggestion that Conrad "gives us a sense of a much wider commitment to the main ethical, social and literary techniques, both of the world at large and of the general reader" (Watt 2000, 6).

Conclusion

Although the significant number of covers available for this research is a cheerful remark on the continual success of *Heart of Darkness*, the pictorial content of contemporary covers has also limited the imagination of new readers of the novella. Sonzogni concludes this point by saying that "On one hand, the text can generate unlimited visual interpretations; on the other, the limited space of the cover restricts the choice" (Sonzogni 2011, 22).

The major limitation of this mini research is that whether the books are based on Conrad's manuscript, typescript or proofs has not been taken into consideration. This is related to the fact that Conrad revised his works from time to time for different editions. That explains for Mara

Kalnins' remark that "the absence of authoritative text" made the publication of Conrad's works in our time a challenging task (*Chance* vii).

Endnotes:

1. See Author's Note of *Youth, a Narrative, and Two Other Stories* published in 1917.

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Das absolute Wissen and the Dostoevskian *Sobornost'*. Reception and intercultural transformation between Hegel and Dostoevsky

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Abstract:

This paper explores the intercultural encounter between Hegel's concept of *absolutes Wissen* (absolute knowledge) and Dostoevsky's reworking of the Orthodox notion of *sobornost'*. In nineteenth-century Russia, Hegelian philosophy represented both a powerful intellectual catalyst and a contested cultural paradigm, provoking divergent responses among Westernizers, revolutionaries, and Slavophiles. While Herzen, Belinsky, and Bakunin used Hegelian dialectics to justify progress or revolution, the Slavophiles opposed it but nonetheless engaged with it as a counter-model for reaffirming Orthodox tradition and communal life. Dostoevsky, situated within this philosophical and cultural milieu, absorbed and transformed Hegelian categories into his literary and existential vision. By confronting Hegel's idea of absolute knowledge with the Orthodox concept of *sobornost'*, Dostoevsky reshapes the dialectic into a narrative of freedom, tragedy, and communal responsibility. The analysis highlights how *sobornost'* emerges in *The Brothers Karamazov* not as an abstract utopia, but as a lived, fragile, and open-ended possibility grounded in love, forgiveness, and education. This comparative framework shows how philosophy and literature converge in addressing the tension between individual and community, universality and particularity, reason and faith. Ultimately, the dialogue between Hegel and Dostoevsky illustrates how intercultural reception generates creative reinterpretations that transcend national and disciplinary boundaries.

Keywords: Dostoevsky · Hegel · Intercultural Reception · Absolute Knowledge · Sobornost'

Introduction: Hegel in Russia

> Aside from Karl Marx, no modern philosopher had a broader impact in Russia than G. W. F. Hegel (Berdyaev, 1978)[1].

In nineteenth-century Russia, German philosophy exerted a decisive influence, becoming one of the main points of reference for the intellectuals of that time[2] (Jakowenko, 1934; Koyré, 1950; Planty-Bonjour, 1974; Berdyaev, 1978; Frede, 2013). Among the main philosophical systems, Hegel's one was probably the most controversial and divisive. Celebrated by the Westerners as the

expression of the European spirit and a tool for interpreting universal history, it was at the same time criticised by Slavophiles as the paradigm of a rationalism extraneous to Russian religious and community experience. Unlike other European contexts, in Russia Hegel's system became a true cultural battleground, capable of arousing revolutionary enthusiasm and defensive reactions, heterodox interpretations and creative reworkings[3]. Its reception was never passive. It represented a cultural laboratory in which Russia sought to define its identity in relation to the West. Writers, critics and revolutionaries read Hegel in profoundly different ways. Herzen and Belinsky found in him the key to understanding the historical necessity of progress, while Bakunin interpreted dialectics as a justification for revolution. On the other side, Slavophiles, while opposing the Hegelian system, could not ignore it, often using it as a counter-model to reaffirm the value of Orthodox tradition and Russian community life. Hegel's philosophy thus became the terrain on which nineteenth-century Russian culture based its fundamental questions: *what is the relationship between the individual and the community? What meaning should be attributed to freedom and history? What place should faith have in modernity?*

In this scenario, Hegelian philosophy was never perceived as an extraneous doctrine[4], but as a *prism* through which reading the tensions within Russia itself, like the conflicts between the individual and community, freedom and authority, universalism and national identity. Herzen, Bakunin, Belinsky – and even the Slavophile thinkers – engaged in dialogue with Hegel, recognising in his dialectic a decisive test for the definition of Russia's destiny. This debate intertwined fruitfully with literature, which in Russia was never simply aesthetic production, but always a vehicle for philosophical thought and social reflection[5].

Encountering a text is never a neutral experience. It involves a dialogue between what the text proposes and what the reader projects onto it, consciously or unconsciously. In an intercultural context, this dynamic is amplified, since reading a foreign work involves not only encountering a different language and tradition but also the weight of emotions that shape our reception in many forms, such as curiosity, mistrust, fascination and fear.

Nineteenth-century Russia offers an emblematic example of this dynamic. The arrival and spread of Hegelian philosophy did not produce uniform adherence, but a multiplicity of responses that reflected ideological, historical and spiritual tensions. As we previously stated, Herzen and Belinsky saw in it a confirmation of the historical necessity of progress, Bakunin transformed dialectics into revolutionary language, while the Slavophiles, although opposed to the Hegelian system, used it as a counter-model, reinforcing through comparison the value of Orthodox tradition and *sobornost'*.

Dostoevsky is part of this picture. Although not strictly a philosopher, he is rightly considered one of Russia's greatest intellectuals. Influenced by an environment marked by idealistic philosophy (although he never fully adhered to it), he assimilated and reproposed Hegelian categories through his own *Erwartungsrichtung*[6] (Jauss, 1982, 103). His narrative, filled with metaphysical and ethical questions, reworks many of the issues raised by Hegelian philosophy, but transforms them into a tragic and existential key. This study aims to fit into the context of intercultural reflection, highlighting a

paradigmatic moment in European intellectual history, i.e. the encounter between Hegelian philosophy and 19th-century Russian literary sensibility. This encounter represents not only a phenomenon of philosophical reception, but also an example of dialogue between different cultures, in which conceptual categories born in Germany are translated and reinterpreted within a different historical, literary and linguistic horizon. The analysis of the Hegelian concept of *absolutes Wissen* in tension with Dostoevsky's *sobornost'* allows us to question not only the roots of Russian culture, but also how literature becomes a privileged tool for intercultural understanding, capable of relating *universal* and *particular*, *individual* and *community*, *Europe* and *Russia*.

Christian heritage and tragic of the *Absolute Wissen*

In this paper we will focus on analysing the dialectic of *Absolutes Wissen* – the culmination of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* – which comes into tension with the concept of *sobornost'*, a cornerstone of the Orthodox tradition, which Dostoevsky rethinks as a narrative and anthropological principle. The concept of *das Absolutes Wissen* in Hegelian philosophy represents the culmination and resolution of the dialectical process of the Spirit. However, this concept is the subject of intense debate both among Hegel's critics and scholars (Cortella, 2020). It would seem to suggest an idea of total and definitive knowledge that appears problematic when compared with the contemporary awareness of human finitude and the fallibility of knowledge. From a modern perspective, all forms of knowledge are considered situated and limited, subject to revision and historical development. The idea of *Wissen* that proclaims itself *absolute* may therefore seem to contradict this conception, a sort of *philosophical omniscience*. "The world, nature and history have 'disappeared' or, in Hegel's words, been 'digested' by knowledge"[7] (Cortella, 2020).

However, through a more careful reading of Hegelian thought, *absolute Wissen* cannot be identified as perfect and definitive knowledge, but rather as the point at which consciousness reaches full awareness of its own historicity and dialectic. It does not eliminate the *procedural* nature of knowledge but embraces it in its entirety. It recognises that every moment of knowing finds its meaning only within a broader and more organic structure. In this process, the Christian religion plays a crucial role. Within it, the *spirit* presents itself in a form that anticipates, even though still in the mode of representation, the philosophical truth of the *absolute*. Indeed, it is in Christianity that the spirit first takes on the character of concrete universality to achieve a form of reconciliation and full realisation of the spirit, overcoming the abstractness of Kantian morality and the fragmentation of modern subjectivity. Hegel recognises in Christian doctrine a dialectical structure that makes it the highest religious moment. Within it, the divine is not conceived as an unreachable transcendence, but is incarnated in history, taking on the traits of human individuality. The incarnation of the *Logos* in Christ represents the first step in the movement by which the spirit unfolds itself in the world, accepting its own finitude and then overcoming it through death and resurrection. The *Cross* marks the point at which the singularity of the individual is annihilated. However, this annihilation does not lead to nothingness, but rather to the resurgence of a new reality in which the individual is

transfigured into the universality of the spirit. The death of Christ is therefore not a mere conclusion, but the act through which the divine becomes universal, no longer confined to a particular individual but diffused in the community that forms around his memory. From this perspective, resurrection is not simply the return to life of the individual, but rather the process by which empirical individuality gives way to a higher reality, in which the truth is manifested no longer in his particularity, but in the communion of the spirit.

The community of believers, which is formed after Christ's death, is the representation of what Hegel means by *spirit*: an entity that cannot be reduced to the sum of individual consciousness, but which exists in their mutual interaction and recognition. In its theological structure, Christianity prefigures the Hegelian idea that the individual is not a closed unity but finds its truth only in relation to others. However, although Christianity contains this essential insight, it remains bound to the form of *representation* and does not reach full conceptual awareness of the *truth* of the spirit.

> Insofar as spirit in religion represents itself to itself, it is indeed consciousness, and the actuality enclosed within religion is the shape and the clothing of its representation (Hegel, 2018, 269).

As narrated in Christian tradition, the event of redemption represents a story that is accepted by faith, not grasping its underlying rational structure. The task of philosophy is therefore to translate into concepts what religion expresses symbolically, bringing to completion the process that faith has only anticipated (Cortella, 2020, 116). In this sense, *absolute knowledge* is the full realisation of the truth implicit in religion. It is the moment when the spirit no longer recognises itself in the figure of a God external to itself, but knows itself to be God, an absolute reality that knows and determines itself through its own historical development. We can then understand how for Hegel the Christian religion is not simply a stage of the past to overcome, but a necessary phase in the journey of the spirit. Without the experience of the Christian community, humanity would not have been able to acquire the awareness of its own universality that constitutes the prerequisite for *absolute knowledge*. The transition from religion to philosophy is therefore not a rejection of the former, but its fulfilment. *Absolute Wissen* is nothing more than the conceptual revelation of what Christianity has always proclaimed in mythical and narrative form. In this way, Hegel can affirm that the *absolute spirit* is the ultimate truth of humanity, the awareness that our individuality is always already intertwined with the universal, and that our freedom is never an isolated fact but the result of a historical and relational process in which we recognise ourselves as part of a larger whole. To the Russian philosopher Leont'ev's question about what the brotherhood of peoples, universal peace and universal harmony have to do with the teaching of the Gospel, we could answer that Christianity, far from being a simple vehicle of universal harmony and pacification among peoples, carries a principle of *crisis*, division and existential drama (Givone, 2007, 13). Following Givone's interpretation, The Gospel message cannot be reduced to an idea of linear progress towards a peaceful and indistinct unity, but implies a radical confrontation with negativity, evil and human freedom, elements that generate conflict and tension rather than easy reconciliation.

Dostoevskian reception of *Absolute Wissen*: the *Sobornost'* case

Dostoevsky's vision is aware of this tragic dimension of Christianity. The Gospel truth does not translate into a historically realised utopia of universal brotherhood, but rather into the necessity of an individual choice between faith and nihilism. Authentic Christianity, for Dostoevsky as for Givone, is no guarantee of a harmonious earthly order. It places man at an existential crossroads, where freedom becomes the fundamental value and, at the same time, the most difficult challenge. Christianity, rather than dissolving into a humanistic and universalist ideal, retains its paradoxical and tragic essence, requiring an inner transformation that cannot be reduced to a simple political or social project.

This dimension has been analysed and identified within Dostoevsky's poetics (and specifically within his last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*) by the critic Terrence Tilley in his book *The Karamazov Case, Dostoevsky's argument for his vision*. He highlights a theoretical core within the Orthodox concept of *sobornost'*. The term derives from the Slavophile interpretation of *katholikos* in the Nicene Creed, translated into Old Slavonic as *sobornyi*, which indicates a spiritually united community. Theologian Kallistos Ware describes *sobornost'* in terms of organic unity: "it means togetherness, integral unity, the organic gathering of the 'many' into 'one'... a free, mystical-ontological union of those who, though they differ in personal qualities and individual being, are nevertheless one in the Spirit of Love" (Tilley, 2023, 119).

On the other hand, Dostoevsky offers a less idealised and more realistic view, setting *sobornost'* in a complex and diverse town rather than in a patriarchal and idyllic Russian village. Although we know that for Vladimir Soloviev *sobornost'* had a more eschatological meaning (i.e., the communion between the divine and the human extended not only to religion but also to society and politics and radically transforming them) we cannot say the same for Dostoevsky, who does not take a clear position in the Orthodox theological debate on this concept. Although it is present in *The Brothers Karamazov*, although this concept is present, it is not made clear whether it is only an idea to be realised within the church or a principle to be applied to society. However, following Tilley's analysis, we can argue that: "the novel's approach offers a fundamentally anthropological argument: 'What does it mean to be fully human?'" (Tilley, 2023, 121).

The novel is not a theological treatise. Indeed, it does not present a dogmatic definition of *sobornost'*. However, through its narrative, it shows that the concept of *community* is essential for the formation of the individual. The true realisation of *sobornost'* is not confined to the monastery but must take place in society. Father Zosima sends Alyosha out into the world so that he can realise the Christian community not in monastic isolation, but in everyday life, among ordinary people. Alyosha and the group of young people who gather around him represent an early example of this emerging *community*.

Dostoevsky neither supports nor directly criticises Russian *primitive socialism*. However, his novel clearly shows that political and legal structures cannot create a true human community. The trial of Dmitri Karamazov demonstrates that the Russian judicial system of that time was incapable

of supporting true community justice. It is described as *procedural, not substantial*, and therefore cannot create a genuine community, but only enforce the law in a mechanical way. "Political-legal structures are merely procedural, not substantial, and thus are unable to support a substantial vision of community. To think otherwise is to conflate substantial justice with procedural fairness" (Tilley, 2023, 121). Dostoevsky claims that the real problem is not only the injustice of the legal system, but its inability to form an ethical community based on substantial justice. This is because the change that a society can guarantee at most –even the best society in the world– would remain only superficial and formal. According to Dostoevsky, goodness, the ideal to strive for, is not defined as a noun, but as something that contains within itself the dialectical process of real knowledge and the overcoming of evil. This form of processualism is not possible within the legal world, which, for political reasons, must stop at the external definition of goodness. This ideal is rather configured with what Hegel describes in the *Preface* to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*: "In my view, which must be justified only by the presentation of the system itself, everything depends on conceiving and expressing the true not as substance, but just as much as subject" (Hegel, 2018, 10).

Hegelian forgiveness, therefore, takes the form of Dostoevskian one, capable of forgiving even the negative and reconciling reality through the concrete experience of evil. The city that constitutes the background of the novel is a metaphor for Russian society and, by extent, the whole world. It can evolve into a *sobornost'* community or fragment into an individualistic and destructive society. The outcome is not determined and remains open, as Dostoevsky does not provide a definitive answer about its fate. The conclusion of the novel suggests that the choice between the two types of society depends on individual actions and choices.

In Fyodor Dostoevsky's works, *sobornost'* emerges as a central force that contrasts with Western individualism and rationalism, promoting spiritual union and solidarity among humans. It represents a dynamic unity that does not deny diversity but transcends it in a higher synthesis, *a process like Hegelian dialectics*. Both the concepts of *sobornost'* and reconciliation aim to overcome the separation and isolation of the individual. Both concepts affirm that true knowledge and realisation cannot occur in a purely subjective dimension, but only through a process of higher synthesis that embraces the totality. Just as *sobornost'* rejects solipsistic individualism and promotes harmonious communion, Hegelian dialectics shows that isolated subjectivity is destined for ontological incompleteness. *Sobornost'* does not deny differences, but integrates them into an organic synthesis, like Hegelian *Aufhebung*[8], which overcomes antithesis without denying it.

The novel is not just a story, but a narrative argument in favour of *sobornost'* as the true model of human community. It is not a perfect utopia, but a possible and concrete reality that would manifest itself in a society characterised by the principle of *sobornost'*, in acts of love and sharing. Indeed, Dostoevsky does not impose a dogmatic view but invites the reader to reflect and choose whether to live according to *sobornost'* or isolate themselves in individualism. The opposition between this and the rejection of community is also the choice that every reader must face: whether to remain in Ivan's isolation or to embrace love and responsibility like Alyosha. Despite the similarities with Hegelian

dialectics, Dostoevsky's vision cannot be fully traced back to a strictly Hegelian system. This emerges above all in the resolution of the individual crisis. In Dostoevsky's case, it is not entrusted to the rationality of the concept, but to the individual choice between faith and nihilism.

The dimension of social mediation, carried out by civil society, is not considered by Dostoevsky, probably because of the specific historical moment in which he lived. In fact, as we have previously pointed out, the novelist's lack of trust in political structures is clearly visible in the errors committed by the judicial system. It would therefore seem that the decisive moment passes rather through belinskian *law of love* (Kliger, 2014, 192). The individual freedom (and not of the spirit of the people) is the essential value for achieving evolution and overcoming the divisions of reality. However, we must not forget two fundamental components in assessing the overall picture of this perspective. Firstly, we must not underestimate the importance given in the last chapter to the role of education of the young Russian generation. Secondly, we must not forget that *The Brothers Karamazov* is only the first part of an incomplete project.

Concluding Remarks: the genesis of an idea

Every thought, the moment it is expressed, ceases to belong exclusively to the person who formulated it and becomes potentially common heritage. Its vitality lies precisely in this openness, in the possibility of making itself available to other sensibilities, other horizons of meaning. When such a thought reaches not only another individual from the same culture, but also somebody with different paradigms, the encounter proves even more fruitful. We are no longer dealing with just two individuals, but two different worlds.

The Russian reception of Hegel and Dostoevsky's reworking of idealistic dialectics offer important evidence of this. It is not simply appropriation, but creative transformation that connects philosophy and literature, rationalism and mysticism, Europe and Russia. Continuing research in this direction, i.e. cultivating a hermeneutic dialogue that transcends both geographical and space-time boundaries, means accepting that a single seed can bear different fruits, differences that do not impoverish but enrich our view, multiply perspectives and allow us to understand more deeply the complexity of the problems we face. In this context, reading reveals itself to be both a critical practice and an intercultural act, an exercise in knowledge and listening those feeds on plurality to restore a more complex vision of the world.

Hegel's reflection on *Absolute Wissen* and Dostoevsky's reworking of *sobornost'* show how philosophy and literature can converge in a reading experience that transcends national and disciplinary boundaries. In Dostoevsky, *community* is not an abstract concept, but an affective and narrative reality, embodied in the relationships between characters and open to the ethical responsibility of the reader himself. Indeed, reading *The Brothers Karamazov* from this perspective means not only understanding the dialogue between Hegel and the Orthodox tradition, but also practising listening and openness towards others, which today seems more urgent than ever in a global context marked by conflict, misunderstanding and cultural tensions. In this sense, reading becomes an intercultural act. A way of knowing, of learning to listen and of engaging in a relationship based on respect and love.

Endnotes:

1. Nikolai Berdyaev argued that Hegel's importance to Russia was comparable to Plato's importance to patristics and Aristotle's importance to scholasticism.
2. For these thinkers, Germany represented *the promised land, Jerusalem of modern mankind* (Gronicka, 1968, 169).
3. "When I started life Hegelianism was the basis of everything: it was in the air, found expression in magazine and newspaper articles, in novels and essays, in art, in histories, in sermons, and in conversation. A man unacquainted with Hegel had no right to speak: he who wished to know the truth studied Hegel. Everything rested on him; and suddenly forty years have gone by and there is nothing left of him, he is not even mentioned – as though he had never existed" (Tolstoy, 1935, 114).
4. Although in the early 1930s unfamiliarity with Hegelian philosophy led to the revival of certain Hegelian formulas in a more nebulous version, watered down by the most original features, which were transformed into less compromising ideas.
5. Especially if we consider that philosophy emerged as a discipline in Russia much later than in the West (Koyré, 1929, 1950, 1976; Planty-Bonjour, 1974; Ignatov, 1996; Florovskij, 2009; Epstein, 2019).
6. *Erwartungsrichtung*, borrowed from Hans Robert Jauss's reception theory, refers to the *horizon of expectation* that shapes how a text is received and reinterpreted within a specific cultural context. Applied to Dostoevsky's engagement with Hegel, it highlights that his appropriation of Hegelian categories was never passive but mediated by his own cultural, religious, and existential concerns. Dostoevsky's *Erwartungsrichtung* thus transformed philosophical concepts into narrative and ethical problems, reframing Hegel's dialectics in terms of Orthodox spirituality, human freedom, and the tragic dimension of community life.
7. *Author translation.*
8. In Hegel, *Aufhebung* designates the dialectical process that simultaneously negates, preserves, and elevates a given determination. Rather than simple abolition, it integrates contradictions into a higher synthesis. This dynamic reveals why oppositions, such as individual and community, are not dissolved but transformed into richer, more comprehensive unities.

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Moralising Animals in the Renaissance: A Study of French and English Emblem Books from the 16th and 17th centuries

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Abstract:

The aim of this research project is to explore and conduct a comparative study of emblem books from the 16th and 17th centuries during the French and English Renaissance, through an analysis of the symbolism and moralising function of the artistic representation of animals, namely *A Choice of Emblems* by Geffrey Whitney and *Fables* by Jean de la Fontaine. The study seeks to identify the ways in which the pictorial and graphic depiction of animals functioned as a medium of cultural and social transmission in both cultural contexts, by expressing and conveying messages of moral and philosophical nature. The objectives of this study are: the identification and in-depth analysis of the moral and didactic function of animal symbolism in emblem books of the English and French Renaissance, a comparative study of the artistic expression of animal symbolism in emblem books from the two cultural contexts and a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which animal allegories in emblem books influenced the moral ideologies of the wider contemporary audience. The methodology used in this paper is: qualitative analysis, consisting of both textual analysis (of the accompanying texts in emblem books) and iconographic analysis (a visual study of emblematic images), comparative study, involving thematic evaluation through the comparison of emblematic approaches in French and English cultural contexts, archival research, including the consultation of archives for the in-depth analysis of emblem texts and books in their original form and an interdisciplinary approach, integrating multiple research fields such as literary criticism, art history, and iconography.

Keywords: Emblem, moralising animal, Geffrey Whitney, Jean de la Fontaine, fable

Introduction: theoretical and critical delimitations

During the Renaissance, the literary genres flourished in both the English and the French spaces, and one of these emerging genres was the emblem book. An emblem book has a rather clear definition: it is a piece of literature that is made up of a motto, or an *inscriptio*, usually in Latin that conveys the message of the emblem, the image, or *pictura*, which is a symbolical and visual representation of the literary piece; and the proper text, or *subscriptio*, which is either a poem or a short prose that tells the story described in the *pictura*. The two authors that constitute the case study of this paper are Geffrey Whitney and Jean de la Fontaine, because, through their literary contributions, both of them became

referential for the genre, individualising it and adapting it to their cultural and historical space. Although the general characteristics are mostly respected by authors of emblems, there are some specific differences between how la Fontaine and Whitney create their artistic tableau and juggle with the form of the emblem, but these ideas will be analysed further in this paper.

An emblem seems straight-forward, even modest, at a first glance, due to its unpretentious and repetitive nature. In order to grasp the complexity of the emblem, one must not look at the simplicity of language or at the apparently ordinary verse, but at the way in which this literary genre conveys reality through simplicity and how the two authors manage to reflect their society through this combination of image and text. There are many theorists that wrote on the significance on the emblem and its purposes in terms of style, message and topics. Historically, the emblem became a well-debated subject, because it brought about an accessible and witty mode of relating to contemporaneity. Henry Green argues that:

> Emblems in fact were, and are, a species of hieroglyphics, in which the figures or pictures, besides denoting the natural objects to which they bear resemblances, were employed to express properties of the mind, virtues and abstract ideas, and all the operations of the soul. (1866, x)

There is no doubt that the directness of the emblem is a hieroglyphic representation, because it consists of a written narrative transposed into images, and the entire string of stories in both Whitney's and la Fontaine's works can be interpreted as strings of pictures accompanied by texts. However, unlike the Ancient Egyptian variant of this form of art, the emblem is a unit where both components are mandatory, thus complementary. A *subscriptio* and a *pictura* cannot operate without one another, because they work as a bi-sensorial couple: the former appeals to the cognitive function, and the latter appeals to the visual function. Both are, in this case necessary to completely immerse the reader into the writer's imaginary. Literary critic Karl Enenkel supports this exact idea, arguing that: "the innovative transmitive potential that was offered by the bi-mediality of the new genre: knowledge could be transmitted not only by texts, but through images as well." (2018, p. xiv) The *bi-mediality* he mentions suggests literature becomes more accessible and stimulating through the visual aspect of the emblem. The element of knowledge, which is abstract, is made practical, almost tangible, and this evolution in terms of the genre's popularization represented a major factor that contributed to its comprehensiveness by the uneducated public.

In addition to this, the Early Modern public was not an educated one, and for the illiterate it was more comfortable to look at the picture while somebody else read the written passage. This aspect meant a wider-spread of the message conveyed by the emblem. For both Whitney and la Fontaine, the feature of the readers' receptiveness was the main focus of writing such works and to make the readers aware of their moral and political present. Along these lines, another emblem critic, Peter Daly, argues in his study entitled *The Emblem in Early Modern Europe: Contributions to the Theory of the Emblem* that: "Recognition of meaning depends in such cases on an understanding of the thing portrayed." (2014, 50) The *pictura* is essential, because, in the case of the emblem, it is both

a symbolic and an educational tool, used to echo both the intention of the author and the illustrator and also to determine the readers to question their society and micro-universe through allegory.

The most important aspect about emblems in terms of the 'thing portrayed' is that these allegorical pieces of literature use animals as characters. The authors chose this device because it creates distance from the immediate dimension of the message conveyed, thus allowing the readers to make connections based on a specific code in order to decrypt sense, usually political, which leads to zoocriticism as an emerging literary theoretical trend as a new mode of interpretation.

What is zoocriticism in the context of emblems?

By zoocriticism we understand the way in which animal representations in literature are interpreted in the context of the resistance to anthropocentrism and its reinforcement while investigating how the symbolic use of personified animals in fiction enters in a dialogic with society, as a response to human nature, and blurrs the boundaries between the human and wild identity. One of the main contemporary critics that supported zoocriticism is Jacques Derrida, who argues in his work entitled *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008) that zoocriticism refers to a literature that is personal and which becomes an experience that transcends the limitations of humanity while paradoxically re-defining them: "Passing across borders or the ends of man I come or surrender to the animal, to the animal in itself, to the animal in me and the animal at unease with itself." (3) Through deconstruction, Jacques Derrida is referring to the traditionalist side of western philosophy which subordinates animals to humans, making them innately inferior. Derrida argues that this inferiority comes from the fact that they lack reason and language, that being the reason they should not be denied those aspects on literature and art. Tapping into personal experience, Derrida condemns the singular term "the animal" for obliterating the immense diversity of the nonhuman and shows how those writers and philosophers from Aristotle to Heidegger have historically deployed it to subscribe to human exceptionalism. Regarding the 'animot', he foregrounds what he identifies as the violence inherent in our language of animals and calls for a new ethical code that recognises animal alterity and agency.

In terms of the emblem and how it intertwines with the concept of zoocriticism is the fact that the critical perception of the animal representation in the genre is given by the symbolic depiction of the animal itself, the *pictura*, in the context of the *subscriptio* and how these two create and emanate meaning. The *pictura* functions as a visual dictionary, and, for the literary critic, the important aspect is how the image exudes inherently human traits portrayed through the means of animals by assimilating the characteristics of the former to the behaviour of the latter. The iconographic study only enlarges this criticism and adds to its value due to the possibility of envisioning the narrative. The reader is no longer restricted to the understanding of the written text because there is the *pictura* that showcases instances, if not the entirety, of the *subscriptio*. In regards to this Daniel Russel writes that:

> Such painted animals could presumably serve this function all the better because of the strength of the iconographical traditions that governed their depiction. After an encounter with one of these bestiary animals, the reader will be edified each time he sees it portrayed, perhaps in a tapestry, or a stained-glass

> window, because the picture will function iconically to bring the symbolized qualities back to the mind of the viewer each time he sees it. (1995, 28)

This democratization of literature through the emblem is based on the icon, on the animal that becomes an exponent to of a social or economic class. The device of personification allows the allegory to become not only monumental, but to be popularized to a degree where even nowadays the readers are consciously aware of the attributes allotted to certain animals. There are even idioms with animal content such as: "crazy like a fox"[1], which means 'very cunning or shrewd'; "a dog's life"[2], which means 'an unhappy existence full of problems or unfair treatment'; and "the lion's den"[3], which means 'a demanding, intimidating, or unpleasant place or situation'. This can also be an aspect concerning linguistic zoocriticism that developed from the overly generalized perception of certain animals by these genres.

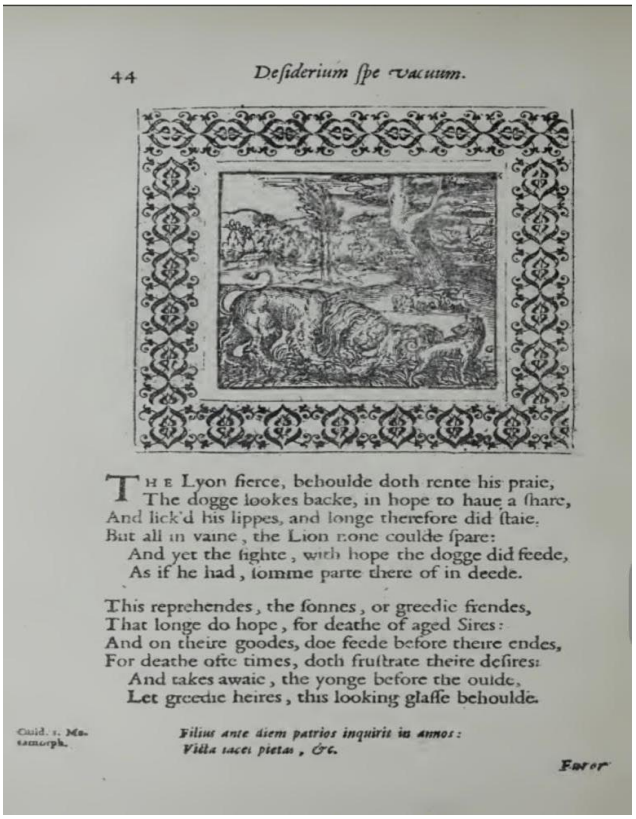
Zoocriticism is also concerned with. Kári Driscoll and Eva Hoffmann develop this theory and add a subsidiary concept, called *zoopoetics*. Zoopoetics refers to how different animals influenced the writing style of the story or poem analysed and how they appear and affect written works. It explores how authors attempt to comprehend animals and transpose themselves into the animal's skin. Rather than just writing about animals, zoopoetics investigates how animals might influence the way we write—how they alter our language, thoughts, and creativity. The zoopoetic investigation of how animals may have their own unique voice becomes itself a demonstration of authorial ingenuity and it translates into another mode of accessing knowledge about the world. Zoopoetics allows for an understanding of animals as more than just symbols or instruments for human storytelling, but as complex literary beings that share in the multitude of perspectives and feelings towards society and reality itself. In Driscoll and Hoffmann's critical piece, entitled *What is Zoopoetics?* (2005), the two argue that: "zoopoetic texts are not [...] texts about animals. Rather, they are texts that are, in one way or another, predicated upon an engagement with animals and animality (human and nonhuman)." (2005, 4) The two critics suggest that animality is just another natural facet of humanity, and, to extrapolate in the context of the emblem, it can be interpreted as a modality in which both Whitney and la Fontaine appeal to these ages before it has been theorised.

Geoffrey Whitney and the moralising English emblem

Geffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes* (1585-86), originally published in Leiden in the Netherlands, is a representative collection for the emblem genre because it contains over 200 emblems that mirror and critique the Elizabethan society. What makes Whitney's emblems iconic is the fact that he himself illustrated his own *picturas* and thus they can be interpreted as original authorial intentions. Thematically, his work focuses on the didactic and moralising feature of literature, because he shaped his narratives in the form of an educational directory addressed to the readers. For Whitney "reading emblems is a religious exercise, and emblematic modes of thought can shape our spiritual disposition and illuminate our understanding of things holy (Tamara 2007, 60-61)" which suggests that Whitney considered reading symbols as more than a mere artistic emancipation

or show of talent, but more of an effort towards a spiritual contemplation of the world around him through the eyes of animals. The emblems were designed to offer the readers a conscious guidance in terms of the values that Whitney considered essential for a true Christian lifestyle. This viewpoint echoes the Renaissance concept that pictures and words together may stir both the head and the emotions. The aesthetic edge of his emblems flourishes by how they become instruments for knowledge and a manner of making the reader become more sympathetic and observant to the world around him, allowing for a critical reading of both the collection and the world. Whitney's use of animals, ancient stories, and biblical connections attempted to lead readers to spiritual truths, which frequently pointed beyond worldly concerns to everlasting ones. Furthermore, the interpretation of *picturas* in relation to the *subscriptios* becomes not only an act of religion and virtue, but a mirror of the readers themselves and their own receptiveness to their surroundings.

Ranging from politics to social ideology, Whitney reflects the Elizabethans for what they are using, in some cases, animals as substitutes to humans. From the three emblems that this paper proposes to a case study, the most frequently used symbol is that of the lion, which is suggestive for Whitney's patriotic sentiment, as the lion is the animal symbol of the English. The personification of the lion is important in the context of the historical background of Whitney's emblems because it suggests the general superiority and gluttony of the upper class, often mistaking this avarice for a survival imperialist instinct: "Monarchists liked to imagine the lion as dignified to the point of blandness, and they excused the predatory nature of the beast [...] it would kill only as much as it needed to eat." (Sax 2013, 176) For the British, the lion does not murder for pleasure, but for survival, and monarchy sympathisers excused this symbol in the context of expansion for expansion's sake, for dominance.


44 *Deſiderium ſpe vacuum.*

THE Lyon fierce, behoulde doth rente his praie,
The dogge lookes backe, in hope to haue a ſhare,
And lick'd his lippes, and longe therefore did ſtaie.
But all in vaine, the Lion none coulde ſpare:
And yet the fighte, with hope the dogge did feede,
As if he had, ſomme parte there of in deede.

This reprehendes, the ſonnes, or greedie fiendes,
That longe do hope, for deathe of aged Sires:
And on theire goodes, doe feede before theire endes,
For deathe ofte times, doth fruſtrate theire deſires:
And takes awaie, the yonge before the oulde,
Let greedie heires, this looking glaſſe behoulde.

Ouid. 1. Me. tamorph. *Filius ante diem patrios inquirit in annos:*
Vitla iacet pietas, &c.

Fauor

Fig. 1. Illustration by Geffrey Whitney in *A Choice of Emblemes, And Other Devises.* Cca. 1585-86.

In the emblem above (Fig.1) entitled "Desiderium spe vacuum"[4], the focus is the lion devouring its prey while a dog awaits patiently and hungrily remnants of the lion's meal. Whitney chooses to showcase the topic of greed and how it unravels in the case of inheritance. This emblem focuses on the different types of greed between the young Elizabethan generation, who craves fast and easy wealth from their parents "in hope to haue a ſhare"[5] (Whitney 44, line 2); and the old generation, who is, too, greedy towards their own fortune. This emblem can be read as a fable where the lion is the wealthy father and the dog is the aspiring son, where the son who "lick'd his lippes"[6] (Whitney 44, line 3) waiting for the death or demise of the father in order to access the family's inheritance.

This emblem can be interpreted as a warning towards the inheritor who starves for his father's money, Whitney's intention to uncover the father's boasting of fortune before an immature mind of his child that does not know any better. The old generation lavishes in luxury and excess, an excess that he "none coulde ſpare"[7] (Whitney 44 line 4). According to Boria Sax, the dog:

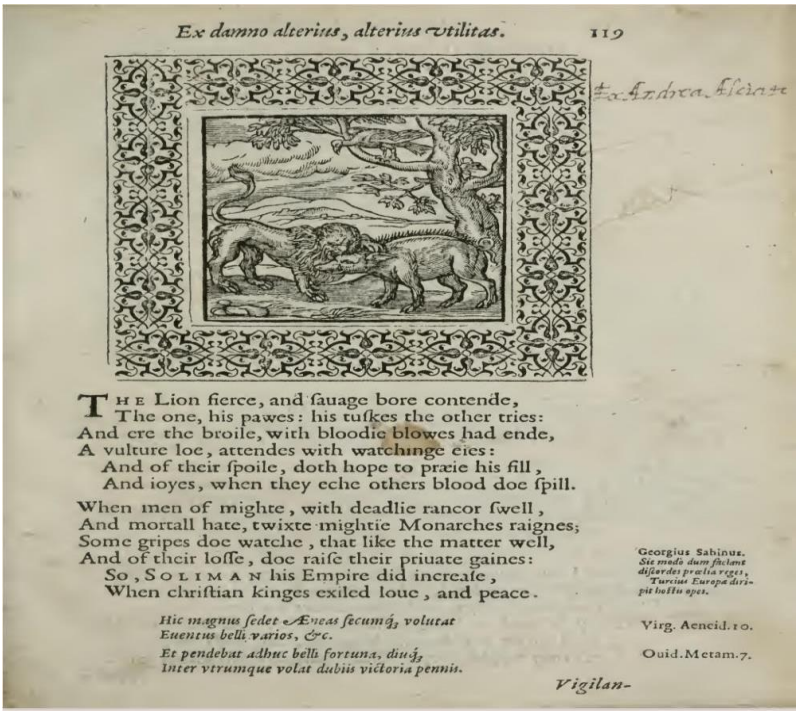
> shares the life of human society more intimately than any other animal. This, of itself, can make people feel uneasy. [...] dogs are also associated with night and with death. [...] It is small wonder that a vast range of cultures on every continent has regarded dogs as guides to the world after death. Many cultures view the howling of dogs as an omen of death. (2013, 86)

The young generation is represented by the dog because they have to be viewed as ordinary, as if nothing is attached to their name, money-wise, only their proximity to its source. They have to be humble and wait for the natural order of life to take its course, because otherwise he warns that the most humbling consequence in cases of extreme greed is for the father to bury the son, and not vice-versa, as shown in the verses: "For deathe ofte times, doth fruſtrate theire deſires;/ And takes awaie, the yonge before the oulde" (Whitney 44, 10-11)[8]. The dog, being the omen of death, is symbolic in this emblem because the son bases his wealth off of the death of his father, while also being in danger of dying themselves beforehand, because their moral stance is degraded and will not be ignored by God.

In the following emblem, displayed below (Fig. 2), entitled "Ex damno alterius, alterius utilitas"[9], Whitney illustrates a boar and a lion fighting, while being watched by a vulture. From the Latin motto of the emblem, the topic of the emblem is partially laid out because the reader can deduce that it is an ethical piece as the motto is a proverb. The lion here is again a representative of English international power and dominance, but the conclusion of the emblem does not make it the winner. Whitney, contradictory to his other emblems, portrays the lion as one of the losing ends of the story, because it is a 'when two are fighting, the third wins' situation, which is surprising seeing as a patriot is painting the symbol of his nation in such a disadvantageous image, but this aspect will be detailed later in this section. While keeping the lion as one of the moralising animals in his collection, he also adds the boar and the vulture, which are both representative for the meaning of the emblem. In literature, the boar is suggestive for the ordinary, earthly man, but is also considered by critics as a complex animalistic symbol, because it is the sort of animal that is adaptable to a multitude of habitats and conditions. Contrastively to the pig, which is more domestic, the boar can

be regarded as a wilder counterpart, which does not abide to the homely and stable environment of the farm. A larger and more violent species of porcupine and closely related to the pig, it is considered by Boria Sax a paradoxical animal because she describes it:

> as being very close to the earth they represent the joys and limitations of the flesh. The pig is holy, yet perfectly at home in Hell. The pig is gentle, yet harbors such wildness that even devils are terrified. The pig is revered, hated, loved, feared, admired, exploited, laughed at, and regarded as a friend. (2013, 193-194)


Ex damno alterius, alterius vtilitas. 119

THE Lion fierce, and ſauage bore contende,
The one, his pawes: his tuſkes the other tries:
And ere the broile, with bloodie blowes had ende,
A vulture loe, attendes with watchinge eies:
And of their ſpoile, doth hope to præie his fill,
And ioyes, when they eche others blood doe ſpill.

When men of mighte, with deadlie rancor ſwell,
And mortall hate, twixte mightie Monarches raignes;
Some gripes doe watche, that like the matter well,
And of their loſſe, doe raiſe their priuate gaines:
So, SOLIMAN his Empire did increaſe,
When chriſtian kinges exiled loue, and peace.

Georgius Sabinus.
Sic modo dum ſtolant diſcordes prælia reges,
Turcius Europa diripit hoſtis opes.

Hic magnus ſedet Æneas ſecumq́, volutat
Euentus belli varios, &c.
Virg. Aeneid. 10.

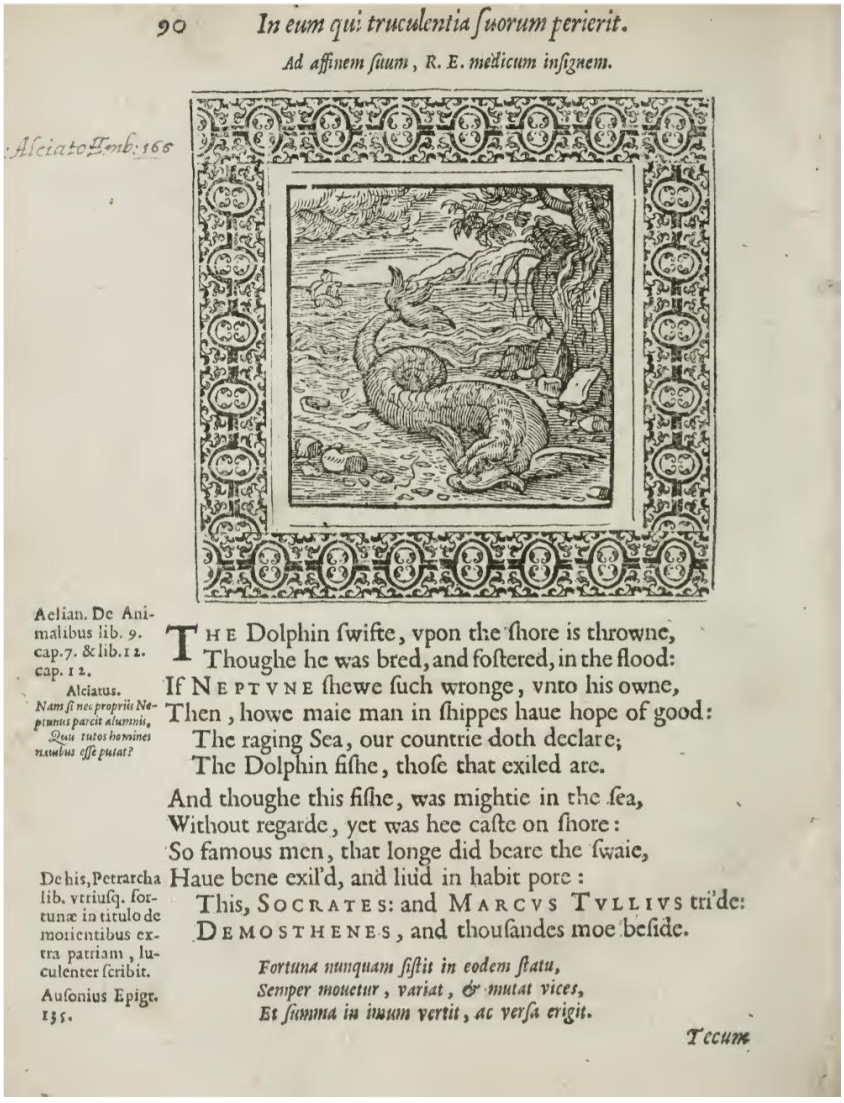
Et pendebat adhuc belli fortuna, diuq́,
Inter vtrumque volat dubiis victoria pennis.
Ouid. Metam. 7.

Vigilan-

Fig. 2. Illustration by Geffrey Whitney in *A Choice of Emblemes, and Other Devises.* Cca. 1585-86.

In the case of this emblem, the confrontation between the lion and the boar can be interpreted as a political fight. This scene plays an essential role in the political context of Early Modern Europe, because it is the period when the Ottoman Empire was expanding while the monarchies of Europe were at war with each other constantly, and this aspect is exploited by Whitney at the end of the *subscriptio*: "So, Soliman his Empire did increaſe,/ When chriſtian kings exiled loue, and peace."[10] (Whitney 119, lines 11-12). The vulture "attendes with watching eies"[11] (Whitney 119, line 4) and is an exponent of the malicious 'third beneficiary'. In literature, the vultures symbolically "are associated with death and share a reputation as birds of prophecy." (Sax 2013, 72), which means that the battle between the lion and the boar would ultimately end with both of them dead or gravely injured, as the vulture is a predator and usually situates itself at such a place in order to devour the aftermath of the battle. The lines: "And ioyes, when they eche others blood doe ſpill."[12] (Whitney 119, line 6) perfectly demonstrate that the vulture is the personification of the underground villain that searches to profit off the conflict between the lion and the boar in order to rise to the advantageous position. The lion is the symbol of England and the boar might be the symbol for a continental power, as the porcupine is a sign of the earth. This emblem might be interpreted as Whitney's warning about a possible future

war or conflict with Spain, which took place eventually, and the vulture can be historically associated with Mary Queen of Scots, as she was negotiating an alliance with Spain against Queen Elizabeth I.


90 *In eum qui truculentia ſuorum perierit.*

Ad affinem ſuum, R. E. medicum inſignem.

Alciato Emb: 166

Aelian. De Animalibus lib. 9. cap. 7. & lib. 12. cap. 12.

Alciatus.
Nam ſi nec propriis Neptunus parcit alumnis,
Quis tutos homines navibus eſſe putat?

THE Dolphin ſwifte, vpon the ſhore is throwne,
Thoughe he was bred, and foſtered, in the flood:
If NEPTVNE ſhewe ſuch wronge, vnto his owne,
Then, howe maie man in ſhippes haue hope of good:
The raging Sea, our countrie doth declare;
The Dolphin fiſhe, thoſe that exiled are.
And thoughe this fiſhe, was mightie in the ſea,
Without regarde, yet was hee caſte on ſhore:
So famous men, that longe did beare the ſwaie,
Haue bene exil'd, and liuid in habit pore:
This, SOCRATES: and MARCVS TVLLIVS tri'de:
DEMOSTHENES, and thouſandes moe beſide.

Fortuna nunquam ſiſtit in eodem ſtatu,
Semper mouetur, variat, & mutat vices,
Et ſumma in imum vertit, ac verſa erigit.

Tecum

De his, Petrarcha lib. vtriuſq. fortunæ in titulo de morientibus extra patriam, luculenter ſcribit.

Auſonius Epigr. 135.

Fig.3. Illustration by Geffrey Whitney in *A Choice Of Emblemes, And Other Devises.* Cca. 1585-86.

In the last emblem above (Fig. 3), entitled "In eum qui truculentia suorum perierit"[13], Whitney portrays a dying dolphin exiled on the shore. The motto suggests that the emblem describes futility, the topic being isolation from one's own kind, sentiment reflected by the *pictura*, which displays a dolphin curled up on a beach, in complete solitude. In literature, dolphins represent the evolved maritime mammals that are usually portrayed as saviours of human life, but they also are symbols for unrequited or long lost love. According to Boria Sax, dolphins are majestic creatures whose appeal stands usually in their ever-joyous and playful appearance and behaviour. They:

> are confined to water, but they follow ships at sea, often leaping into the air. There are many stories, some probably true, of dolphins rescuing people from drowning. People have long viewed the upturned mouth of the dolphin as fixed in a perpetual smile. [...] the attraction dolphins appear to feel for human beings as a longing for a tragically departed love. (2013, 219-221)

Dolphins live in water, but in this emblem, the dolphin is found on the shore, on the verge between life and death, as an outcast. The element of water is interesting because the sea or the ocean have been identified over the course of literary history with the artistic creation. The solitary dolphin might be Whitney's critique of the way in which society had treated its brilliant minds and artists, rejecting them and casting them away instead of venerating them for their genius. The treachery of human nature is poetically described in the lines: "And thoughe this fiſhe, was mightie in the ſea,/ Without regarde, yet was hee caſte on ſhore"[14] (Whitney 90, lines 7-8) because Whitney raises awareness about the easiness with which the people that display exceptional qualities are thrown at the mercy of God 'without regarde' and without compassion, regardless of the benefits they brought to the world around them. Whitney points in the direction of the political injustice of being exiled from one's homeland despite one's qualities, which means that brilliance or ingenuity do not guarantee recognition and appreciation in the face of ignorance, offering as examples figures such as Socrates and Cicero.

Geffrey Whitney's emblems consecrated a genre that developed into the following centuries and spread over many European cultures, and, although the format of the emblem changed and were often replaced by writers with the conventions of the fable, such as Jean de la Fontaine, the moralising aspect of this literary genre remained the same.

Jean de la Fontaine and the moralising French Emblem

Jean de la Fontaine cannot be considered a traditional emblem writer, because he changes the conventions that Whitney uses in his literary creation, but this change comes with the reason to adapt the form of the genre to a French readership that is more interested in the straightforwardness of narrative. The ulterior editions of The Fables of La Fontaine keep the three components of the conventional emblem, but the changes reflect the need for directness and the tendency of avoiding metaphoric language or the use of Latin, especially as the first noticeable change is the motto, that transforms in a simple title that usually expresses the main characters of the fable, such as "The Wolf turned Shepherd". The element of moral and ethical message is kept and even developed in the case of animal portrayal and allegory, because la Fontaine's *Fables* contains almost exclusively animal characters, humans being only referenced or episodic characters. Regarding the accessibility of the genre, Jean de la Fontaine takes the emblem and makes is even easier to understand, both from the point of view of language and from the choice of not using Latin, because the use of Latin meant that the reader should have been classically educated, which was not realistic for the French illiterate population.

Zoocritically, the animals of la Fontaine are more complex, because the stories are longer and the author has the possibility to create a multi-faceted image and critique of different typologies and to create more archetypes based on the French society. The topics discussed by la Fontaine in his fables convey the same messages as Whitney's emblems, for instance the clashes between social classes, political corruption, personal and individual lack of morals and ethics and the constant questioning of

philosophical values of his contemporary society. These themes are acted out visually by animals that function as moral guides for readers which caution them and determine them to critically analyse the world they live in. These devices are the evidence which proves that the idea behind the emblem as a genre is continued, but changed in order to fit the aesthetic necessity of the age in terms of style and method of delivery. In the spirit of keeping the moralizing aspect of the emblem at the same standard, La Fontaine "sets out to show man to himself, to mark his place in society, by means of those animals who are made to share the subtle complexities of human being" (McGowan 1966, 267) This complex nature of the animal characters constitutes the moralising effect of the fables, because it allows the readers the same distance from the story that makes them involved in the narrative act which paradoxically brings them closer to its intended outcome. The reader is immersed in the fictional universe without the issue being pointed at or directly addressed, fact which makes this genre appealing and highly didactic.

In the fable below, entitled "The Wolf turned Shepherd" (Fig. 4), a wolf tries to pose as a shepherd by stealing a shepherd's clothes in order to presumably trick a flock of sheep that is sleeping, but is in the end caught in the act because he cannot imitate a human voice and growls. La Fontaine warns against the cunningness of people that pretend to be something they are not usually with malicious intent in order to scam or exploit other members of their community.

Fig. 4. Illustration by Gustave Doré in *The Fables of La Fontaine*, 1886.

He uses the symbol of the wolf in order to showcase these negative human characteristics because, according to critics, the wolf: "has been closely associated with martial qualities [...] condemned for rapaciousness and cruelty, yet it has also been praised for fierceness." (Sax 2013, 267) This animal

is wild, which is suggestive of why it was la Fontaine's choice for this fable, because he wanted to demonstrate the contrast between the innocent biblical sheep and the satanic image of the predator that is capable of anything in order to catch its prey. The praise of the wolf's fierce nature comes from its capacity to be self-sufficient and to survive alone, which in literature translates to the topic of solitude. However, this loneliness is not typical of the Early Modern typical sentiment that focuses on creation or the religious meditative state that can only be reached in solitude, but it is a disease that transforms animals into beasts, transcending the artistic connotations of this state of mind. In the lines: "To carry out his schemes he set,/ He would have liked to write upon his hat,/ "I'm Guillot, Shepherd of these sheep!"" (la Fontaine 35, lines 8-10) the image of the wolf becomes an exponent of the deceiver who shows a tendency to be untruthful and, in relation to the ethical dimension of the fable, to the extreme measures that an impostor might take in order to ensure his own benefit, in this case even adopting a fake name or identity. In the last two lines of the fable: "The Wolf like Wolf must always act;/ That is a very certain fact." (la Fontaine 35, lines 30-31), the author labels the character of the wolf as unchangeable and irrecoverable, because he suggests that there is no cure to deceit, and he instructs the readers to be aware of people with such 'values'.

Fig. 5. Illustration by Gustave Doré in *The Fables of La Fontaine*, 1886.

In the fable above (Fig. 5), entitled "The Fox and the Grapes", la Fontaine recycles a narrative that originates from Æsop and in which a hungry fox, unable to reach the grapes from a tall vine on an orchard wall, angrily comes to the conclusion that they are sour without even tasting them. This story has been used since the Middle Ages as a moralising anecdote that is used to teach people not to dismiss something as undesirable just because it is out of reach. Over the course of history, literary critics and readers shared different opinions about this behaviour: "In medieval versions the fox is called wise, while in modern ones he is mocked as foolish. For a trickster, even a frustrated one, wisdom and foolishness are often very close indeed." (Sax 2013, 178) The fox is usually associated with the figure of the trickster, of the individual who cunningly achieves their goals and always finds

a means to an end using unorthodox methods. In this case, however, the fox is not cunning, but it is simply foolish enough to make itself believe that if something is hardly attainable, it means it is not worthy of the effort. The lines: "The Fox did wisely to accept his lot;/ 'Twas better than complaining, was it not?" (la Fontaine 130, lines 9-10) suggest that the fox accepts the 'defeat' in not being able to reach the height and get the grapes, and it moves on without resentment or disappointment, which is indeed wise. Nevertheless, this wisdom is based on another sort of trick, which is interior, because the fox here is not cunning and does not try to trick somebody o something else. The fox tries to trick itself into believing that the grapes being sour mean they were not worth the energy of trying to obtain them. This fable's moral lesson is that cognitive dissonance as shielding mechanism against disappointment is not constructive, and judgement of something hard to obtain cannot be given unless there is a solid evidence or a direct experience associated with it.

Fig. 6. Illustration by Gustave Doré in *The Fables of La Fontaine*, 1886.

In the story above (Fig. 6), entitled "The Serpent and the File", a serpent slithers into a watchmaker's shop and tries to bite a dagger, but he ultimately fails and the dagger mocks him for this attempt. La Fontaine uses the snake in order to create an exponent for the entire readership, as in literature, the snake is believed to signify Androgyny, "a primeval androgynous state" (Sax 2013, 227), the complete form before the separation of the sexes into male and female. This device suggests that la Fontaine addresses every critic, regardless of gender, on their failed attempts to subjugate real and valuable works. The snake, like in the Bible, is the corruptor of minds that fuels negative attitudes towards innovation, art and modernity and which determines an established hatred towards the act of clear judgement that should be objective and unmediated. "As people turned more to patriarchal deities, there was a massive revolt against the cult of the snake. This is why serpents are so often destructive in mythologies from very early urban civilizations." (Sax 2013, 228) The snake in this fable does not manage to be destructive because the file resists its bite, act which can be interpreted as the writer or the artist standing against unjust criticism. The picture of the snake is suggestive

because it displays it coiling the file and trying to suppress it from every angle, but the metal object, unbinding, cannot be bitten and hurt and proclaims its stance of resistance. In this fable, la Fontaine gives authority and power to an instrument, which is art itself portrayed through an ordinary object, and through this he strengthens the metaphor of the creator's tool. The watchmaker can be associated with God, whose inspiration is noticed through art made by the artist using instruments, critiquing the way in which the 'bad mouths' try to find means to demolish the act of creation from the tool that makes it possible.

Jean de la Fontaine does not abide to the conventions of the emblem and allows for a tangible democratization of the genre, adapting the moralizing message and the form of the emblem to the fable, which is more accessible through its language and simplicity of form.

Conclusions

The moralising role of the animal in the emblem, whether it is a classically constructed emblem of Whitney's *Choice of Emblems* or a more democratic fable from la Fontaine's *Fables*, is to showcase the ethical and societal issues of the time. Through the ingenuity of both authors, the genre remains timeless due to their capacity to understand human psychology and to translate it into the form of an animalistic character, personified as to fit the aesthetic of the age and the potential understanding of the readers. The moral and ethical judgments that the readers have to take from these literary pieces represent a concrete guide for the comprehension of society, human nature and the relationship between these through the portrayal of the personified animals in them. Through the illustrations and the *picturas*, the written texts become available to a visual interpretation, which is important for a Renaissance reader that is illiterate and does not have access to education, but still needs to be instructed in the ways of the world. The fictional distance between the animal and the human seems great, but the talent of the authors and their genuine understanding of human nature allows them to blur the lines between these two identities and to consecrate the figure of the animal world into the larger tableau of society in an educational manner.

Endnotes:

1. "fox" *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, ed. Judith Siefring, 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 116.
2. "dog" *ibid*.
3. "lion" *ibid*.
4. trans. 'desire empty of hope.'
5. trans. 'in hope to have a share.'
6. trans. 'licked his lips.'
7. trans. 'none could share.'
8. trans. 'For death often times must frustrate their desires/ And takes away, the young before the old.'
9. trans. 'One's loss is another's gain.'
10. trans. 'So, Soliman his empire did increase,/ When Christian kings exiled love, and peace.'
11. trans. 'attends with watching eyes.'
12. trans. 'And enjoys when they each other's blood do spill.'

13. trans. "Against one who perished by the cruelty of his own."
14. trans. 'And though this fish, was mighty in the sea/ Without regard, yet was he cast on shore.'

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Protocols of "Nomadic" Identities

A Comparative Reading of Positionings within Patriarchy in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* and Amirhossein Allahyari's *Qorab Jendun*: A Lacanian Approach

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Abstract:

Informed by the Lacanian conceptualization of the Name-of-the-Father, this research investigates Amirhossein Allahyari's *Qorab Jendun* (2022) and Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982). This study dialogically investigates the two authors' orientation toward and within patriarchy. It also explores the impact of resisting/accepting the patriarchal system and its consequences, and offers insight into the reverberation of (m)Other's presence in the process of subjectification. The central questions of this research are: How are the two works situated in the continuum of patriarchy according to Lacan's Name-of-the-Father? How is patriarchy negotiated with or subverted in accordance with Lacan's psychoanalytical conceptualization of the Symbolic and neurosis? And what are the two authors' orientations toward patriarchy? This analysis draws upon thematic textual analysis and Lacanian psychoanalysis to confront Eastern and Western patriarchal systems and ideologies in terms of Symbolic, unconscious, subject, Imaginary, and the Name-of-the-Father. The analysis contextualizes Allahyari's elegiac writing and Churchill's prescriptive text in light of the time-space features of their lives and their attitude toward the socio-political milieu of their countries, all of which array the two works as consequential or oppositional within the patriarchy. This study demonstrates the unfeasibility of Churchill's idealistic Symbolic solution and the necessity of having both patriarchy-oriented and matriarchy-oriented stances for a balanced psyche and a healthy society.

Keywords: Amirhossein Allahyari; Caryl Churchill; Jacques Lacan; Name-of-the-Father; Patriarchy; Qorab Jendun

1. Introduction

The UK's leading socialist feminist playwright, Caryl Churchill's works are heavily informed by modern ideas about women's rights and politics on feminism and sexuality, which, in turn, renders her works controversial. According to *The Guardian* (2015), her *Top Girls* (1982), which is an account of women's oppression in a patriarchal society, is among the "[g]reatest plays of all time" (Billington). It was in theatres for more than twenty years and was regarded as "[t]he best British play ever by a woman dramatist" by *The Guardian* (1983), and "one of the finest postwar British plays" in 2002. After her widely noticed play, *Cloud Nine* (1979), she moved away from conventional realism toward an anti-oppressive feminist centrality that is best exemplified by her *Top Girls*. Her take on patriarchy and women's oppression marks *Top Girls* as the crossroad between history and the contemporary.

Middle-East, the birthplace of some of the male-dominated religions of the world, has always been regarded as a patriarchal region. Amirhossein Allahyari was born in Tehran in 1983. His childhood coincided with the Iran-Iraq War. His *Nights of Rocket Attacks* (2022) is an anti-war free verse in collaboration with an Iraqi artist named Bassem Rassam. Folklore and fancy are among his interests. His *Parikhani* (2015), a sonnet cycle that includes 300 sonnets, derives its name, as is also the case with *Qorab Jendun*[1] (2022), from folklore that has roots in the belief system of the traditional southerners of Iran. *Qorab Jendun* glorifies seemingly benign patriarchy in a prototypical tale that is old enough to be considered history and recent enough to feel contemporary. Through creating a sense of timelessness, Allahyari incorporates the classical and mythical backgrounds of his country, Iran, into his oeuvre, and his views on patriarchy are no less than controversial.

Since these two authors hold different perspectives toward patriarchy in their plays – either complementary or contradictory – this study aims to comparatively investigate these two plays by drawing upon Lacan's conceptualization of the signifying system that helps the formation and progression of the subject within the so-called patriarchal realm.

Caryl Churchill's body of literature has received many positive and negative critical responses worldwide. Many of them have drawn on the issue of patriarchy. Among them, some drew upon Lacanian psychoanalytical illustration of subjectification, which by no means have been exhaustive.

Zozaya Ariztia María Pilar is among those literary scholars infatuated with Churchill. In her doctoral dissertation, *Gender, Politics, Subjectivity: Reading Caryl Churchill*, she employs a psychosemiotic approach to analyze Churchill's plays. Her analysis is informed by the Lacanian mirror stage, Symbolic, and Imaginary, which she employs interconnectedly with post-Lacanian theories – such as Post-structuralism and French Feminist Theory – to investigate Churchill's women in light of their revolt against patriarchal oppression. She argues that *Top Girls* establishes "a parallelism between politics and feminism, and [shows] that a feminism that follows the socio-political and economic structures created by patriarchy does nothing but perpetuate the very same systems of oppression" (300). Pilar fails to notice that, from a Lacanian perspective, accepting the Name-of-the-Father is inevitable. And the women's ability to redefine themselves in a patriarchal system, from a Lacanian perspective, is

the only possible option. She never discusses this matter, but in accordance with her approach, if the patriarchal system's features are totally ignored, then the only viable option would be aggression, which results in a catastrophe.

The English studies scholar, Danelle Rowe's dissertation, titled "*Power and Oppression: A Study of Materialism and Gender in Selected Drama of Caryl Churchill,*" selectively employs Lacanian psychoanalysis to analyze Churchill's plays. She argues that by dissecting traditional relations of power in Western culture, Churchill "explores women's oppression by grappling with issues such as the male gaze, the objectification of women, the masquerade of femininity, and women as objects of exchange within a masculine economy" (142). She believes that Churchill's *Top Girls* has no answers to the oppression of women in a patriarchal system, but it serves as an incentive to raise awareness.

Thanks to his being still alive and new to the world of literature (canon-wise), Amirhossein Allahyari's body of literature has only once been psychoanalytically inspected: In his "Will He Die by Being Killed? 'That Is the Question'," Allahyari and Farahbakhsh employ the Lacanian conceptualisation of "desire" to comparatively analyse Allahyari's *Qorab Jendun* and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. He pinpoints "their differentiation in Hamlet's fantasised and superficial Catharsis through mourning and facing death; against Khan Zadeh's firm belief in an afterlife where his (m)Other awaits him." (15).

Amirhossein Allahyari's usage of folklore and Churchill's selection of women from the past feel worlds apart and indeed the texts under study are from authors with totally different backgrounds and cultures; however, their ideological diversity can be interactively interpreted and consequently placed in a meaningful continuum that will provide a propitious platform for a comparative study. Despite the stark difference in the authors' geographical location, nationality, culture, and perspectival orientation, a fruitfully interactive psychoanalytic reading of them based on a concept as archetypical as patriarchy would prove the universality of comparative and world literature as well as interdisciplinary studies.

2. Theoretical Framework

One can trace the origins of psychoanalysis to Sigmund Freud and the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Every wave of analysts that came after Freud continually tried to update or redefine, and solve the contradictions he left behind. Among them, was Jacques Lacan (1901-85), whom some scholars regard as a central figure in the psychoanalysis canon. His *Écrits* (1966) is the collection of his published articles and annual seminars in Paris. Through his language-like structured conception of the unconscious and the relationship between Symbolic order and the subject, Lacan achieved new horizons in exploring the unconscious desires in the text, and opened new areas of debate in women and gender studies.

Lacan understands the human subject in three registers or orders: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. For Lacan, the formation of the subject is in no sense an outcome but a process that happens in these three registers and the unconscious realm, all of which emerge at the same point within Lacanian theory. He believes that the subject is formed through an endless process of

subjectification that starts at the Imaginary, which, according to Lacan, "will mark with its rigid structure the infant's entire mental development" (*Écrits* 7). Homer argues that the individual subject or the 'self' only makes sense in accordance with another subject which is an 'other.' In other words, the existence of the self is bound to the existence of an-Other (23). Bruce Fink's masterpiece, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, gives a brilliant account of Lacan's conceptualization of subject formation, "Lacan … finds the concept of subjectivity indispensable and explores what it means to be a subject, how one comes to be a subject, the conditions responsible for the failure to become a subject (leading to psychosis), and the tools at the analyst's disposal to induce a precipitation of subjectivity" (11).

Adopting a qualitative approach, this study draws upon Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical postulation of the Name-of-the-Father to comparatively investigate the confrontations with patriarchy, its effects, and outcomes in Churchill's *Top Girls* and Allahyari's *Qorab Jendun*. It uses as its material various kinds of books, articles, e-books, and library or internet sources. As for "patriarchy," in her *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Adrienne Rich defines patriarchy as "a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men – by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male" (57). In her *Patriarchy*, Pavla Miller connects the concept of patriarchy to early modern Europe's biblical conceptualization of the father and Jean Bodin's call for fatherly rulers. She elaborates that "Like God, the king was the head of the body and the shepherd of the flock…And because the rule of women was against divine, natural, and human law, no woman should ever become a monarch" (24). In this respect, the meaning that the term 'patriarchy' takes in a socialist-feminist context is taken by this study and is an informing influence in the analysis of the plays; in other words, it is employed as an evaluative tool for its relevance to the subject matter at hand. To see how patriarchal structures contribute to characters' subjectification in light of the Lacanian conceptualization of an-Other, this research endeavors to unmask the unconscious-fueled resistance/aggression against the patriarchal system and its ramifications on the subject as well as the system itself. The study at hand also examines the outcomes of resisting/accepting the patriarchal system – and the possibility of the existence of benign patriarchy as well as the equivalent matriarchy – in light of Lacanian understanding of Symbolic manipulation or neurosis.

3. Discussion

Informed by the Lacanian conceptualization of the Name-of-the-Father, this section comparatively investigates Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* and Amirhossein Allahyari's *Qorab Jendun*.

3.1 Patriarchy: Negotiation vs Subversion

In their article, "The Tragedy of Love: A Study of Love and Death in Jacques Lacan's Thought," Ghaffary and Alizadeh note:

> In patriarchal and phallocentric societies, language is not a neutral system, free from gender-based biases.

> In fact, such a society revolves around masculine values and denounces feminine features as negative and even evil. In other words, from a Lacanian perspective, language is the embodiment of paternal authority, a system which is under the aegis of what Lacan terms *nom-du-père*, or the Name of the Father. (33)

Lacan identifies patriarchy with the Name-of-the-Father. According to Lacan, the Name-of-the-Father is a Symbolic function that breaks the Imaginary unity between the child and the (m)other. The child assumes s/he does not possess what the (m)other really desires, which is the phallus and is in the possession of the father (Homer 55). In other words, the desire of the (m)other is substituted with the Name-of-the-Father. This act of substitution initiates the process of signification and marks the child's entrance to the Symbolic order as a subject of lack. Lacan describes the process of symbolization as phallic and governed by the paternal metaphor and the imposition of paternal law which centralizes the Name-of-the-Father as the organizing signifier of the unconscious (*On the Names-of-the-Father* 28).

For instance in *Top Girls*, Griselda, the obedient wife from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, allows her husband to kill their child only to prove that she loves him, "JOAN. He killed his children / to see if you loved him enough? NIJO. Was it easier the second time or harder? GRISELDA. It was always easy because I always knew I would do what he said" (*Churchill's Plays* 99). Another instance is Nijo's memory of the Full Moon Ceremony: "I was eighteen. They make a special rice gruel and stir it with their sticks, and then they beat their women across the loins so they'll have sons and not daughters. So the Emperor beat us all / very hard as usual" (102). Lacan argued that if the transition to the Symbolic order gets interrupted/distorted, the subject would lose its sanity and enter a state of psychosis or neuroticism (*On the Names-of-the-Father* 12-40). The point of departure between *Top Girls* and *Qorab Jendun* is that Churchill's characters forgave those who wronged them, accepted the Symbolic order, and then tried to redefine or manipulate it. In this regard, one can argue that they have completed their transition.

In *Qorab Jendun*, however, there is a vivid conflict with the conceptualization of the Khan as the Patriarch or Name-of-the-Father. "Since the mother and the child are not conceptualised as two separate beings, their relationship is hardly possible. As a result, for Lacan, the child's maturation means self-defence" (Wierzchowska 6). Khan Zadeh rivals the father who, in his eyes, had access to the (m)Other and was or held the object of her 'desire.' As a result, he tries to substitute himself with what he assumes is the object of desire of a supernatural (m)other. In the last scene of the play, though "*Khan Zadeh is hanged from a black woven rope of women's hair*," it is "*in front of his father's chair*" (*Qorab Jendun* 61), which implies that no matter how hard he tried to escape/counter the Name-of-the-Father, he was still bound to his void. Khan Zadeh moves against the Lacanian transition; for instance, in the scene in which Khan Zadeh sits beside the apple trees waiting for sour oranges to grow on them:

> KHAN *whispering*. What do you want from the trees?! KHAN ZADEH. Sour oranges! KHAN. It would be a miracle to see some decent apples on them, let alone sour oranges! KHAN ZADEH. Maybe they'll bear sour oranges! KHAN. They won't ... They will never! KHAN ZADEH. What if they did?

> KHAN. Even if they do … what's it to you? KHAN ZADEH. Sour oranges are the fruits of the Djinn! KHAN. *Snorts* Says Who? KHAN ZADEH. Mah Baji! KHAN. She was an old hag! Screw her and her bloodline! Son! Grow up! There are no Djinn! No fairies! These are stories of old bum women! KHAN ZADEH. It's in the books too! KHAN. Which they wrote! (36-37)

Khan Zadeh's fixation on the supernatural contradicts his complete transition to the Symbolic order; his expectation from the apple trees to yield sour oranges implies that the lack could not be completely established in his unconscious; his liminal status with strong semiotic predilections could easily undermine the functionality of the Symbolic order. In other words, his transition to the Symbolic order is recurrently plagued by his bounce-backs to the Imaginary, which results in a delusional connection with his (m)other, "[t]his phantasmatic fixation on irretrievable ideals produces a state of permanent melancholia," that leads to his psychosis (Wierzchowska 6). Interestingly, Marlene does not have the binding patriarchal sympathy of the Khan for the subjects below herself; she "hate[s] the working class" and believes "it doesn't exist anymore, it means lazy and stupid" (*Churchill Plays* 164). In his *The Theatre of Caryl Churchill*, Darren Gobert argues that Marlene distinguishes herself from the masses by exploiting women and standing on her backs, "she uses not only her sister, who provides unpaid childrearing, but also the typists, clerks, and secretaries whose own typically female and non-unionized labor she sells to corporate clients" (6); however, unlike Khan Zadeh, she does not defy patriarchy head-on; she successfully takes up the traits that the patriarchy ascribes to men and harvests the achievements and trophies as the new woman; she reclaims her daughter and assumes the parental role that the patriarchy prescribes to women. In this regard, throughout and after the transition, no part in Marlene's psyche has interfered with the establishment of the lack, or filling the void with symbolic reality. She has just played it differently by her positioning toward gender signification to realize her desire within the framework of Patriarchy.

According to Lacan, desire is intertwined with lack. It is always the desire for something that is not yet in possession and thus involves a constant act of seeking the missing object. The rupture between the subject and the Other opens a gap between the child and the (m)other's desire which initiates its movement, and the emergence of *objet a*. The *objet a*, thus, becomes the void, the gap, and whatever that is temporarily filling the gap in the Symbolic reality (Homer 87-88). In accordance with the subject's futile attempt to articulate desire, Lacan mentions: "That which is thus given to the Other to fill, and which is strictly that which it does not have, since it, too, lacks being, is what is called love, but it is also hate and ignorance" (*Écrits* 263). In other words, *objet a* escapes symbolization and moves beyond representation. Lacan believed that the subject's "impossible" relation to the *objet a* is defined by "fantasy." In this regard, the subject employs fantasy to maintain an illusion of unity with the Other (Homer 83).

Unlike Marlene, who kept herself within the boundaries of patriarchy and, hence, sanity, *Qorab Jendun*'s Khan Zadeh breaks free from the Symbolic order and the Name-of-the-Father and goes back to Semiosis, all of which, ends disastrously in psychosis and destruction. The real problem is that he is now equipped with the Symbolic realm's desire, void, *Objet a*, as well as fantasy whose

functionalities are not defined in Semiosis. Khan Zadeh desires his absent mother and is constantly seeking her through symbolization. In a balanced psyche, this leads to desiring life, though incomplete but still alluring enough; however, in Khan Zadeh's psyche, since those functionalities are inversed, this has led to obsession over death. His infatuation with the supernatural and fairy tales as well as his insistence on the apple trees bearing sour oranges, shows his dislocation and fantasy in a lifelong illusion of unity with the (m)Other. In contrast to Marlene, who even though abandons her child, she desires a series of *Objet a* manifestations in the Symbolic order, whose possibility of realization is permitted by the Symbolic codes of patriarchy.

If we assume that the return to the mother is a return to the Semiotic, then in *Top Girls*, Churchill prescribes a return hybridized by having an established and appropriated status in the Symbolic realm. In this sense, Marlene's effort to take Angie back can be translated as a fight to take back what she assumed was robbed from her while she was absent and away hunting down 'phallic' symbols, "I know a managing director who's got two children, she breastfeeds in the board room, she pays a hundred pounds a week on domestic help alone and she can afford that because she's an extremely high-powered lady earning a great deal of money" (*Churchill Play's* 158). Another instance of her fight happens in a heated argument with Joyce, her sister, "MARLENE. You wanted it you said you were glad, I remember the day, you said I'm glad you never got rid of it, I'll look after it, you said that down by the river. So what are you saying, sunshine, you don't want her ... Because I'll take her, / wake her up and pack now" (159). She hated being Angie's "Aunty Marlene" and wanted to be her (m)Other. At first, Marlene wanted to unconsciously play it by default and become the mother that the Name-of-the-Father outlines; However, Churchill wants to imply that this cannot be granted to a modern and socially powerful woman. Close to the end, Marlene realizes that in order to stay away from the sense of loss, and to stay close to her biological daughter, as well as to stay sane, she has to take up what is available within the framework of patriarchy, which is joining a duo of motherhood along with her sister and even playing the father-figure in this binary, though biologically a woman.

Unlike Marlene, who is a charted rebel and progresses to realize her desire by observing the Symbolic codes, Khan Zadeh is an impractical anarchist who wants to break free and have a full-blown return to what he thinks he has lost. In other words, he desires to live in Semiosis, although, subjectivity-wise and temporally speaking, he is supposed to be in the Symbolic realm. The discrepancy is pushing him further and further on the verge of psychosis: he is obsessed with different narratives about his mother being a Djinn, and he identifies himself as a Djinn-spawn, "Khan baba it's me, the Djinn-spawn" (*Qorab Jendun* 47). He questions/blames his father for the absence/death of the mother (37-38).

Khan Zadeh's sense of belonging to the Djinn is manifest in things that he is attracted to, such as apple trees bearing sour oranges; beastial ravaging of the animal bodies, "bring me their guts to eat" (42); his passionate tracking of hoof prints, "Look! ... It's my mother's footprint" (52); and his assumption of the Djinn's lodging which was the wet underground below the pond, which he gets from Mah Baji's narrative, "The Djinn looked him in the eyes and said ... 'If you ever wished to see

me, come to the pond in the middle of the garden. Open the hatch and you'll see a 19-step ladder" (13). His strange and encryptive language falls within the lines of the Lacanian idea of "displacement," which "can always occur under certain conditions." Building on animals' "instinctual cycles," Lacan notes that those "displacements" can take place "within a specific behavioral cycle" (*On the Names-of-the-Father* 11). He then connects the elements of displaced instinctual behaviors displayed in animals with symbolic behavior (12). For Lacan, the Imaginary happens when there is a rupture in the dialogical relationship which then is employed by neurotic behaviors to profit from the "instinctual economy" (13). The same displacement, which is the mainspring of sexually related behaviors, can be observed in images that have fascinated and are voiced by Khan Zadeh. The technique seems to be right, but because Khan Zadeh's psyche has incorporated it to temporally regress – from the Symbolic paradigm, in which regression is impossible – he ends up neurotic. This is comparable to the course that Marlene's psyche has taken: it has not denied the progressive nature of this paradigm and does not want something that is considered an impossibility; she just heartily wants to be forgiven and be beside her daughter. She is also realistically ready to pay the price of her choices by being degraded to the "aunt" status.

3.2 Neurosis vs Sanity

For Lacan, the Symbolic that is involved in psychoanalytic exchange is defined in accordance with "symbols organized in language and which thus function on the basis of the link between the signifier and the signified, which is equivalent to the very structure of language" (16). There are, however, signifiers that are chosen thoroughly independent of their signification. Lacan exemplifies this notion with "passwords" and "words of endearment." In both, "language is particularly devoid of signification" (19). In this regard, what distinguishes symbols from signs is the interhuman function of symbols. Lacan connects this notion to neuroticism:

> In the end, the notion we have of the neurotic is that gagged speech lives in his very symptoms, speech in which a certain number, let us say, of transgressions with respect to a certain order are expressed, which, by themselves, loudly fustigate the cruel world in which they have been inscribed. Failing to realize the order of symbols in a living fashion, the subject realizes disorganized images for which these transgressions are substitutes. This is what will initially get in the way of any true symbolic relationship. (21)

In the same line, as *Top Girls* proceeds to its last scenes, the only way for the reconciliation of the sisters is through undermining all the facts and history behind them by resorting to drinking; in the same vein, Marlene's favorite nickname for Angie is "pet," which is the same nickname that Joyce has been using. On top of all these, her final acceptance of her label as "Aunty Marlene" implies her successful (albeit disorganized) realization of her 'desire' as part of the maternal theme and not as the (m)Other. This is in contrast with Khan Zadeh's state of being which uses one-on-one and non-arbitrary signification. As Khan Zadeh grows up, his Semiotically-charged statements escalate: "Khan Baba! It's me Djinn-Spawn! What happened Khan Baba? … why didn't you die!? … Let me tell you a story," his

incoherent language shows a pressured psyche, mostly formed by what "Mah Baji used to say ..." throughout the critical developmental stages of Khan Zadeh's subjectification (*Qorab Jendun* 47).

Mah Baji functions as a 'mirror' for Khan Zadeh who, as a child, lies on her lap and listens to her stories. Khan Zadeh sees himself both in the eyes of Mah Baji and in her narrative. As Lacan notes, the mirror stage is not exclusive just to the semiosis and sometimes recurs in the symbolic realm too (Homer 24-29). In other words, Mah Baji could see herself, with the help of Khan Zadeh's eyes as a mirror, as a sort of (m)other. The bond is so strong that Khan Zadeh still neurotically feels her presence up until the end of the play (*Qorab Jendun* 52).

In this regard, Khan Zadeh's seeing himself in the mirror of Mah Baji who, "*might have seen some strange things and keeps a closed book of them and her memories*" (*Qorab Jendun* 14), leads to his regressive desiring and neurosis and destruction. This is comparable to Marlene, who tries to see herself in the mirror of her sister Joyce, who aggressively bombards her subjectivity as a mother, "JOYCE. It's not my fault you don't know what she's like. You never come and see her ... [you] went away, not me. I'm right here where I was" (*Churchill Plays* 147-148), Joyce indeed leaves a fragmented remnant out of it; Paradoxically, this comes to help, and apparently Churchill is implying that it is the natural consequence that the modern superwoman should live with. In the end, Marlene owns her label of "Aunty[/Anti] Marlene" and goes against her own grain (as Nijo had done when she became a wandering nun), submits to the Name-of-the-Father (as the subservient and obsequious Griselda had done), and conforms to the roles prescribed to her (as Joan did to become the Pope), but contrary to them, Marlene dynamically shuffles between exploiting and accepting the available positionings in the Symbolic and patriarchal realms. Because of this, Churchill seemingly implies that Marlene is the legacy-bearer and a better version of those women before her.

Marlene is in a much better situation compared to Khan Zadeh, whose development of desire is manipulated and deformed by Mah Baji; her desires are realistic and feasible, and though she has performed badly as a mother, there is still a chance for her to get back to her daughter. As a modern woman, she takes up the route to financial independence and social status; a path to self-esteemed individuality of being a Top Girl as opposed to being a self-effaced conventional mother.

In *Top Girls*, Marlene describes her idealization of the future woman, "First woman prime minister ... You must admit. Certainly gets my vote ...I believe in the individual. Look at me" (*Churchill Plays* 163). She implicitly explains why she rearranged her life to focus on her career; she is actually justifying and championing her upward mobility within the social ladder: "I hate the working class ... it means lazy and stupid. I don't like the way they talk ... and I will not be pulled down to their level" (164). Churchill seemingly implies that the modern woman should prioritize self-esteem by aspiring to have worldly gains and securing a sociopolitical status; It is only after the realization of the former two that Churchill brings about family and familial concerns. To bring them down, in the hierarchy of values, is the price that the modern woman has to pay, even if it entails shouldering some guilt.

Lacan argues that "any analyzable relationship – that is, any relationship that is Symbolically

interpretable – is always inscribed in a three-term relationship" (*On the Names-of-the-Father* 27). This mediator sustains the subject and the object at a certain distance. The reason behind people's preference for guilt over anxiety, according to Lacan, is rooted in the same notion. He argues that "between the imaginary relation and the symbolic relation lies the entire distance attributable to guilt" (28). He notes that since anxiety is linked to loss, "an image of mastery by means of which the subject's desire and fulfillment can be symbolically realized. At this moment, another register manifests itself which is either that of the law or that of guilt, depending on the register in which it is experienced" (29). What Lacan means is that if you function in the Imaginary realm, everything produces anxiety; In the Symbolic, which is bereft of anxiety, there are two registers: either you rethink your choices which produce "guilt," or – best case scenario – "law." Although the presence of the guilt-law dichotomy is inevitable, the predominance of the law is conducive to a peaceful and solid psyche.

In *Top Girls*, at first, Marlene revolves around the guilt-law dichotomy and, in some sense, adjusts the law with the patriarchal codes to progressively mobilize and stabilize her whole self within the patriarchy. As we get close to the end of the play, she strips herself of the dichotomy and unconsciously succumbs to the Imaginary to reunite with her daughter. In contrast, Khan, as a subjectivity who is established in the symbolic realm, has a strong orientation toward the law. Under his rule, there is prosperity and peace, and he reconciles the conflicts of the villagers to maintain this order (*Qorab Jendun* 18). As we proceed in the play, thanks to Khan Zadeh's Imaginary-driven poundings, Khan's guilt gets bolder and bolder, which leads to his deterioration and demise in the face of Khan Zadeh's dark Imaginary force.

Khan Zadeh's desire toward the Djinn is due to "anxiety," which according to Lacan, "is an affect of the subject" and "is not without an object … *Objet a* is what fell away from the subject when anxious. It is the same object that I depicted as the cause of desire" (*On the Names-of-the-Father* 57-58). In other words, Khan Zadeh's void incites desire. He tries to satisfy the void and is finally reunited with his object of desire, but, as we know, this is an impossibility, and this reunion results in his death: "*Khan Zadeh hanged himself in front of his father's chair from the ceiling of the balcony. He is slowly moving from side to side with an open mouth and bulging eyes. The black rope resembles the hair of the Djinn*" (*Qorab Jendun* 61). Also, Lacan argues that desire "is the most intense thing the subject attains at the level of consciousness [which] confirms once again desire's dependence on the Other's desire" (*On the Names-of-the-Father* 59); Marlene wanted to be an object of desire both as a successful businesswoman and a mother. The former, she accomplishes by exploiting the patriarchal codes, "[she] stands not on women's shoulders but on their backs" (Gobert 6), but in order to achieve the latter, she has to be humbled to accept the compromised form of the conventional mother. In other words, Marlene desires her daughter, Angie desires to be desired by her (m)other, and Khan Zadeh desires to prove that he is part Djinn. Desire, as well as all those stages, should necessarily happen within a timed framework.

Temporality is very paradigmatic for the analysis of the Imaginary and Symbolic. Lacan argues that one must only analyze the Imaginary and the Symbolic in light of temporality, the "temporal

constitution of human action is inseparable from that of the relationship between the symbolic and the imaginary" (*On the Names-of-the-Father* 30). Even in the Imaginary, as long as the presence is concrete, the absence would be justifiable; to put it simply, the child is not bothered by the mother's absence because s/he clings to something that is associated with the mother. In the Symbolic, on the other hand, temporality has a strong presence, and the absences are metaphorically answered by the symbols. Lacan notes that "the symbol of the object is precisely the object that is here" (31), which, often, from a Freudian "fixation," is more desirable than the original. In other words, the Symbolic state is metaphoric as opposed to the Semiotic state, which is metonymic. The reason behind the vociferous articulation of water, trees, dirt, soil, wetness, fruits, and the whole folkloric background is because Khan Zadeh is mentally living in the Semiotic state, though, temporally speaking, he is supposed to be in the Symbolic one; Churchill, however, shows women thriving in different areas, such as being a businesswoman, or having socio-political status, both of which are replete with code-based lawful success and very small amount of "guilt," all of which are conducive to living in a very healthy Symbolic state.

For Lacan, the Other's voice is an essential object. He emphasizes the importance of analyzing the formation of the superego in accordance with *objet a*, "[e]very analyst is required to give it its due and to follow up on its varied incarnations, both in the field of psychosis and ... in the formation of the superego" (*On the Names-of-the-Father* 71). In other words, for Lacan, the superego is a 'law-driven' force that invites the subject to preserve the totality of the symbolic state. In her businesswoman persona, Marlene can easily be framed in this definition of a 'law-abiding' and superegoic subjectivity. Lacan believes the sequencing that *objet a* demands and brings about is responsible for the formation of the superego, which we can also observe in Marlene; her excessive desire for success in the business world has redefined her standards, one of which is a person with etiquette, who "spent a lot" (*Churchill's Plays* 153), so all her mental and actual signifiers symbolized that desire and repositioned her accordingly; that being said, after Angie's visit, Marlene is tempted to reclaim her motherhood, which is denying the consequences of temporality. Interestingly, in order to make a comeback she employs a metaphoric gesture of giving presents, which belongs to the Symbolic realm, but since it is fueled by her anxiety of either being there or not as Angie's mother, the act of gifting is 'guilt-driven,' intense, and lopsided: "MARLENE. Just a few little things ... birthdays and Christmas seems to slip by. So I think I owe Angie a few presents" (145). This internal conflict or dynamic is absent in Khan Zadeh, and "fantasy" in him is literally a reality; he Semiotically identifies with his supernatural (m)Other, framed into Mah Baji's discourse. In his atemporal state, he lays hold of his childhood memory of Mah Baji and denies her absence/death:

> KHAN ZADEH. Have you ever laid your head on her lap?! RAQIB. No, Khan! KHAN ZADEH. You should! It's so soft ... she tells the best stories! but don't tell her! ... she's old ... she'll get sad. RAQIB. Tell her what? KHAN ZADEH. Last night I dreamt of her ... she was sitting by the pond. I went and laid my head on her lap. It was as hard as wood ... she stroked my hair and her hands were just as hard ... like thorns! ... from the desert! ... I wanted to get up, but she didn't let me ... I pushed

> and broke her leg! … her bone came out … it was sharp! … It cut me, right here! *He reveals a nasty wound just around his shoulder*. (*Qorab Jendun* 52)

Khan Zadeh's semi-acceptance of Mah Baji's demise is paving the way for his transition. Since Khan Zadeh is mostly in the Semiotic world, he can now easily discard the entity that he associated with the mother, and in his mind reunite with the (m)Other.

3.3 Allahyari vs Churchill: Psycho-historical Contextualization

Under the cover of the abovementioned plays, a variety of strains can be observed which will put these two works in either a continuum or conflict. Historically speaking, *Qorab Jendun* can be situated, more or less, within the time period or the aftermath of the White Revolution, or so-called "The Shah and People Revolution", which was a catch-phrase for a series of radical reforms, including land reform, to modernize the nation (*Iran: A Modern History* 584-585). It led, among other things, to the "redistribution of wealth to Iran's working class" (590). The end result, according to William Branigin's article, titled "Farmers Dislike Shah's Land Reform," was not very promising:

> Mismanagement and corruption resulted in waste of many funds designated for agricultural development. Even though reforms turned many peasants into landowners, it imposed on them taxes and other costs … that they were not burdened with when they worked for landowners, while also eliminating services such as health and education that were provided for them by landlords under the traditional system. An influx of agricultural imports from the US also reduced the farmers' market share. (*Washington Post*)

According to Homer, any totalitarian or authoritarian system requires the active support and participation of the masses to continually exist. One might wonder why any population would participate in perpetuating an oppressive system. The answer to this question becomes evident through the Name-of-the-Father and what Lacan calls the "superegoic imperative to enjoy" (Homer 62). The leader/father figure, representing the authority, implicitly summons the subject to identify with it. At the same time, the subject identifies with that cruel manifestation/assumption of what Freud, in his *Totem and Taboo*, calls "the father of the primal horde" (208). Here, Lacan argues that if there is no access to enjoyment and pleasure, the subject assumes that someone has usurped its position and robbed him/her of that enjoyment. This class conflict and strong desire for upward mobilization can also be observed in Churchill's play which can be framed, according to "BBC - History: British History Timeline," into the Thacherite period, whose namesake, "promise that the Conservatives would cut income tax, reduce public expenditure, make it easier for people to buy their own homes and curb the power of the unions" (BBC). In contrast to Allahyari's elegiac tone for a bygone era enclosed by irreconcilable conflict against the patriarch and patriarchy, Churchill presents a challenging future that can be worked out if women of different mentalities and generations be humble enough to unite in the absence of or against patriarchy.

At the family-structure level, these two works can be seen as the proponents of patriarchy and

matriarchy. On one side, *Qorab Jendun* celebrates order, discipline, and productivity under the aegis of patriarchy and the patriarch (Khan). The subversion of the patriarch, naturally enough for the author, would lead to death, chaos, and darkness. Churchill, on the other hand, is endorsing/prescribing the bold participation of women to gain higher status in society. In an interview, Churchill remarks:

> What I was intending to do was make it first look as though it was celebrating the achievements of women, and then ask what kind of achievement is that? The idea was that it would start out looking like a feminist play and turn into a socialist one, as well. (qtd. in Betsko and Koenig 62)

The consequences and ramifications of this decision for the family structure can be atoned for by tapping into the Semiotic state. Interestingly, according to Allahyari, the presence of the same Semiotic state in the Symbolic realm in *Qorab Jednun* disintegrates not only the structure of the family but the whole society.

Speaking of the family structure, motherhood and womanity are at the center of both works. In *Qorab Jendun*, the mother figure, along with all the women, is socially, as well as identity-wise, almost completely static. This is in contrast with *Top Girls,* which promotes the dynamic lifestyle of most of its female characters that can socially mobilize them to the upper stratum and give them the capability to redefine themselves in society and reposition themselves toward motherhood.

If we put Marlene in the continuum of all the female apparitions before her – her vindictive actions after her symbolically taking the torch from all those suffered and tortured women before her, her shame and embarrassment as a mother, and her final absolution and acceptance – embody a long journey of maturation that she takes to unite with her daughter. What happens in *Qorab Jendun* is the polar opposite of this; the implicit summoning of Khan Zadeh by the Djinn, who are in the same league as his mother, is eery and one-dimensional, contributes to the downfall of the whole family, not to speak of the whole social structure of that place.

Because of the deep ambiguity in *Qorab Jendun*, it is really hard to say if the Djinn are just a figment of Khan Zadeh's imagination or a reality. There is a strong sense of ambivalence in the author's positioning toward the whole incident. The fact that Allahyari has an elegiac tone can also be undermined by enough – or lack of enough – evidence to claim that it is just an impersonal report of the situation of the country at that time. In this respect, the whole play adopts a descriptive approach with perhaps implicitly stating this: Long years of women's subjugation have made the female spirit of this land speechless and angry, which, in turn, has turned into a collectivity of monsters bereft of dialogic capability and with only one goal in mind: Destruction; The rift is so deep between patriarchy and its female subjects that there is no chance for negotiation or even reconciliation. In this sense, it can be claimed that *Qorab Jendun* can be placed in a continuum along with *Top Girls*. We can take Churchill's apparitions as the so-called descendants of Allahyari's Djinn; they are now more playful and dialogical, and even more prepared to tackle with – and at times exploit – the patriarchal system. In fact, Churchill's heroine in this play, and her other mouthpieces in other plays, echo "a socialist and feminist critique of the injustices and inequalities produced by

late twentieth-century [W]estern capitalism and patriarchy" (Aston 18). The very family structure that was disintegrated because of the patriarch's overarching power and the feminine aggression in Allahyari, is now resuscitated and revived in Churchill's play by empowering women in the social realm and redefining the concept of motherhood within the family.

The idea of family is indeed bold in Allahyari and Churchill, but their idea of a good or functional family is expressed differently in each. Apart from the abovementioned analysis, the best form of family, for Allahyari, is a benign (though despotic) patriarch, and after his demise, the whole structure crumbles into pieces. This may have some relation to Allahyari as an individual who has seen the degeneration of the alternative family structures, after replacing the classic patriarch-centered one, and its long-lasting consequences during his life, which is concurrent with the drastic change in the large socio-political scene of the country, thanks to the White Revolution that happened nearly two decades before him. The ramifications of implementing this program and the domino-like changes that it brought were so compelling and ingrained that they gave Allahyari the impression that it was irreversible, and that going back to the previous status quo could only happen in a nostalgic fantasy.

On the other hand, Churchill lived through the Second World War and the economic resilience programs of her government. She has also been caught among the feminist waves of the time, all of which had the promise of seizing the power from the belligerent patriarchy and bestowing it upon a sort of matriarchal system. Her play does not have any important male characters, and most of its dynamics are formed by or around females. The narrative has gone so far in this respect that even the family, which we see in the end, is all-female. This over-emphasis on excluding the males – and patriarchy in general – does not seem to be practical, at least in the present world, and females would not apparently have a splendid lifestyle if they were obliged with all the responsibilities of the patriarch; these are the words of one of the aspiring women, who lived in the 1990s several years after the staging of *Top Girls* with its clear-cut prescription for women to attain glory outdoors and love indoors:

> I particularly remember the car advertisements from the early 1990s because I had just had my own first child, and could not (in spite of myself) resist the fantasy of the executive-looking-mother-in-suit, strapping a placid, smiling baby into car seat. My own stressful reality was of early morning drives (6 a.m. starts) to child-minders (the most affordable form of child care) with a not always smiling baby, and on to work, with the minimal amount of attention to my own personal appearance. The glamorous image bore little relation to a stressful reality. (Aston 25)

Unlike the fantasy-like and nostalgic vibe of the bygone glorious patriarchal era that Allahyari's work sends, Churchill chooses to empower women of the present generation which would, in turn, pave the way for the upcoming female generation. Just like manifestos which aim at raising the consciousness of the subjects to transform their socio-political life, Churchill's work endeavors to give a blueprint of what it will be like to be at the "top;" however, as I have tried to demonstrate,

since the psychological system and interpersonal relations are based on a series of fixities, even if the gender layout changes from male to female, the "desire" to get a hold on "phallus" is just the same (Homer 98-106). Functionally speaking, the end result is still a patriarchy in Lacan's terminology, though outside this framework it may be labeled otherwise.

Indeed, if we frame Allahyari's work as a whole into the Lacanian "fantasy" (Evans 60-62), we could take it as one of those flash-like Semiotic interventions in the Symbolic life of the author as an adult whose unconscious has accepted the transition, which gives the work a Semiotic overtone that is usually identified with the feminine realm (*Écrits* 1-7). This is in line with the haphazard temporality of the narrative as well as its unknown time period, the illogical moves of Khan Zadeh and the bold non-verbal, though Real-spawned, presence of the Djinn, and the blurred line between reality and imagination are features of the Semiotic realm, all of which are ascribed to the Semiotic realm.

Paradoxically, for a radical female author, Churchill's work as a whole can be taken as a Symbolic venture in the footsteps of the patriarch. The structure of the play is replete with features of the Symbolic realm: the strongly verbal, modest, and polite presence of the apparitions, and their nonchalant symbiosis with alive humans as well as their engagement in a comprehensible (for humans) dialogue, clear time-specifications of the play, neatly sequenced scenes, and, last but not least, totally describable and explainable past of each character.

This brings us back to the Lacanian conceptualization of "sexual difference" (Evans 181-183). For better or worse, Lacan identified power with the patriarch and "phallus," but he did not believe that it must exclusively be embodied in males or masculine mentality (Homer 98-103). The phallic pendulum can swing toward females if they "desire" it more than males (103); however, it seems that Churchill is endorsing a bifurcated lifestyle, in which the new woman is a patriarch in socio-political interactions and networks and semi-absent in the family structure; back in the new household that is created because of the new woman's active participation in the social sphere, she has to reactivate the Semiosis, in which though there is not any clear phallegocentric explanation or answers for actions and emotions, they are just there vehemently and progressively. Maybe that is why the question of motherhood does not need to be solved, and Angie's fear is not taken care of. That being said, it is not clear yet if they will be better patriarchs than males, or if they are more capable of handling its power along with its corollaries and consequences, or if it is viable to turn the flash-like presence of Semiosis in adulthood into full presence within the family as a mature psyche and a balanced subjectivity. Maybe that is why at the end of Churchill's play, the adult sisters are either numb or reserved about what is to come, and Angie, as the representative of the generation to come, is frightened (*Churchill Plays* 166).

4. Conclusion

In contrast to Allahyari's elegiac tone for a bygone era enclosed by irreconcilable conflict against the patriarch and patriarchy, Churchill presents a challenging future that can be worked out if women of different mentalities and generations be humble enough to unite in the absence of or against patriarchy. At the family-structure level, these two works can be seen as the proponents of patriarchy

and matriarchy. On one side, *Qorab Jendun* celebrates order, discipline, and productivity under the aegis of patriarchy and the patriarch (Khan), the subversion of whom would lead to death, chaos, and darkness. Churchill, on the other hand, is endorsing/prescribing the bold participation of women to gain higher status – business and political wise – in society. The consequences and ramifications of this decision for the family structure might be eliminated by retapping into and repositioning towards the Semiotic state.

Allahyari and Churchill's plays can be juxtaposed in a continuum too. In this respect, Allahyari's play adopts a descriptive approach with an implication: Long years of women's subjugation have made the female spirit of this land speechless and angry, which, in turn, has turned into a collectivity of monsters bereft of dialogic capability and with only one goal in mind: Destruction. The rift is so deep between patriarchy and its female subjects that there is no chance for negotiation or even reconciliation. *Qorab Jendun* can be placed in a continuum along with *Top Girls*. In this line, we can take Churchill's apparitions as the so-called descendants of Allahyari's Djinn; they are now more playful and dialogical, and even more prepared to tackle with – and at times exploit – the patriarchal system. The very family structure that was disintegrated because of the patriarch's overarching power and the feminine aggression in Allahyari, is now resuscitated and revived in Churchill's play by empowering women in the social realm and redefining the concept of motherhood within the family. The best form of family, for Allahyari, seems to be a benign (though despotic) patriarch, and after his demise, the whole structure crumbles into pieces. Unlike the fantasy-like and nostalgic vibe of the bygone glorious patriarchal era that Allahyari's work sends, Churchill chooses to empower women of the present generation against patriarchy or even in the mold of alternative forms of the patriarchy itself, which, would in turn, pave the way for the upcoming female generations.

Endnotes

1. The author has undertaken all *Qorab Jendun* translations.

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Constructing Identity through Children's Literature (The Soviet Union 1938–1964)

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Abstract:

Children's literature, as a specialised text corpus, was established throughout the existence of the Soviet Union. This literature, besides its "function" as a fictional narrative, had another purpose as well – to construct the new Soviet person. Forming and shaping the new type of person was the main intention of identity politics of the Soviet Union. The study analyzes Soviet Russian and Soviet Georgian children's literature, composed during 1938–1964 time period. The importance of the study is defined by the essence of identity politics – forming and shaping identity is a crucial part of any society. Therefore, studying already existing approaches and mediums (children's literature, in this case) for shaping identity carries great importance. The analysis of the process of forming identity is crucial for understanding specifics of the history of the Soviet period, peculiarities of development of the Soviet culture, the role of literature in forming identity; also, the analysis is essential for defining the impact of local specifics.

Keywords: literature; children's literature; ideology; identity; the New Soviet person

Introduction

There are different types of identities: ethnic, national, cultural etc. Cultural identity often becomes a target for political manipulations as political elites tend to impact, and try to reshape cultural identity. Forming and shaping a new type of person was a main intention of identity politics of Soviet Union. Soviet ideology was aimed to form new type of person, who would identify with the Soviet Union, instead of certain nation. This would create the new Soviet community - new "imagined community". B. Anderson used this term to define the concept of nation. The nation is imagined, because no member, even of the smallest nation will meet other fellow members of the nation, yet in the mind of each member lives the image of their communion (Anderson 2006, 6). The Soviet people were meant to form similar "imagined community". Thus, it was necessary to develop a sense of belonging to a community. The goal of the Soviet identity politics was to create the Soviet identity.

Even though the Soviet Union was supposed to be supra-national in its essence, it was composed of different societies, that already had fully formed and shaped ethnic and cultural

identities. Anthony D. Smith defines markers of national identity: an historic territory (homeland), common myths and historical memories, a common, mass public culture, common legal rights and duties, and a common economy for all members. According to Smith, national identity can be combined with the other types of identity, like ethnic, class or religious identities. Furthermore, nationalism, as an ideology can be also combined with other ideologies, such as liberalism, fascism and communism (Smith 1991,14). Therefore, for constructing the Soviet person's identity, it was crucial to "cover" these already existing identities. This implied constructing new shared territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, etc.

The most important group for such manipulations were children, which is caused by the fact, that the process of forming identity is focused on next generation. Therefore, new mediums/methods of impact were needed for this specific group. One of such mediums was children's literature. The literature was representing the Soviet life, the Soviet citizens and the Soviet values; Obviously, it was writer's talent and skills, that determined quality and intensity of this description. For example, the whole story of "Timur and his squad" (A. Gaidar) is focused on war situation, pioneers and the Soviet values, while "Chuk and Gek" from the same author represents the Soviet reality insofar as the boys live in the Soviet Union. Certain values and situations are emphasized only few times.

Astrid Erll analyzes effects of literature in connection to collective memory. According to Erll, literary work, with its narrative structure, defines: understanding of meaning of events and their sequence, perception of the relation between past, present and future. Literature shapes memory through its forms, structure and mainly, contents: by representing historical events (wars, revolutions, etc.), historical figures, myths and imagined memories, literature can have an impact on a reader. This way, it can define and shape the perception, knowledge and everyday communication, thus lead to political action, or make an indication for further representation (Erll 2011,155).

To make an impact on collective memory, literature should be perceived as a medium of memory. It should be read by the majority of the society. It could be done by adding the literary text into school or university curricula, by using literary quotes in everyday speech, by canonization or by state-sponsored publications (Erll 2011, 155).

Shared collective memory (by society or its particular groups) is one of the significant markers of identity. Therefore, Erll's idea also suggests the impact of literature on forming identity.

The importance of literature and children's fiction, as a method of impact upon the masses, soon becomes the subject of interest after the revolution. In 1918 newspaper "Pravda" publishes an article "Forgotten weapon" by L. Kormchi (real name L. Piragis). The article was highlighting the significance of children's fiction in educational purposes, as well as outlining the necessity of the new Soviet children's literature, representing Bolshevik ideas (Gaprindashvili et. al. 2010, 117)

A. Ghviniashvili in her work "Studies from history of Georgian Children's Literature" mentions, that after establishing the Soviet state, the Soviet teachers and scientists increased their studies and scrutiny of Russian children's fiction/literature, with special "care" of the party and the government. They maintained the course given by Maxim Gorky (Ghviniashvili 1972, 9). Meanwhile, "Children's

publishing book house" in Moscow was working on theories concerning children's fiction; at the same time, it was creating history of the Soviet children's fiction (Ghviniashvili 1972, 10). On the one hand, it was essential to review already existing fiction for children, and present it to children in ideologically proper way; on the other, it was crucial to compose the new Soviet literature/fiction for children. Thus, the main topics for the Soviet children's fiction were already defined and clear in 1930s.

S. Marshak discussed the significance of composing the Soviet literature/fiction for children in his articles "About legacy and succession in children's literature" (1933) and "Children answer to Gorky" (1934). In the first article, Marshak asks – if there is a book, that shows a real, changing, fighting and transforming world to children, and not the fake one (as it was before) (Marshak 1990, 325). According to Marshak, it is important to carefully examine children's fiction that existed before revolution, to make clear what can be maintained as a literary tradition, and what should be feared, as a reactionary remains. It must be divided into useful literature, that would enrich child's imagination and sugary didactical belletristic, that is soaked in ideas of morality and well-being of bourgeoisie (Marshak 1990, 330).

Marshak presents M. Gorky's letter to pioneers in the article "Children answer to Gorky" (1934). Gorky states, that he received more than two thousand letters, answering his questions: what kind of books pioneers read and what kind of books they want to read. Writer informs pioneers, that their demands will be declared on the congress of writers. Meanwhile, his friend S. Marshak will revise some part of the material (letters) and publish it (Marshak 1990, 357-358). Gorky's letter is followed by the pioneers' letters and their wishes.

As it turns out, pioneers are interested in: everything about a pioneer; the past and especially the revolution, war thematic and soldiers, politics and socialistic work. We must mention, that the same issues, as the methods of impact, were underlined in almost every analyzed source during the research. This makes obvious, that process of forming and shaping the Soviet identity was carefully controlled and conducted, and it was not determined by author's outlooks about life and ideology.

Regarding Georgian literature, D. Rayfield notes, that closed and the party-controlled union of the Soviet writers, as an assembly of writers, was established in Georgia in 1932. According to Rayfield, this event put an end to inspiration and individuality for over twenty years. Literature turned into propaganda (Rayfield 2000, 212). It is important to mention, that Georgian literature lacked in quantity of the Soviet children's fiction. However, translations from other languages (especially Russian) were actively practiced.

When discussing process of forming identity in Georgian literary space, it is essential to focus on a notion of the communistic "new person", suggested by A. Bakradze. Based on a study and analysis of the Soviet Georgian fiction/literature (for adults), Bakradze presents characteristics of the communistic "new person": first, the communistic "new person' is a collectives' journeyman, who is ready to kill and rob in interests of the collective (Bakradze 1990, 167); second, the "new person" must be voluntary police officer (militsiya), member of KGB[1] and he must arrest members of his own family (Bakradze 1990, 171); third, the "new person" must love only proletariat, simple love

towards fellow human being must be regarded as a weakness (Bakradze 1990, 173); fourth, the "new person" doesn't care about nationality (Bakradze 1990, 177). Also, there are differences based on social class – woman, who is a member of aristocracy, bourgeoisie, or kulak[2] (Bakradze focusses on women, however our study represented such characteristic for both, men and women) ruins and destroys a Bolshevik, a labourer/worker and a peasant (Bakradze 1990,175).

Characteristics of the "new person" stated by A. Bakradze, are also represented in children's fiction. They are called markers throughout the paper[3]. Because of specifics of the research material (literary works/children's fiction) markers are not expressed separately and independently, on contrary, they are mostly intertwined, interconnected or related. In this situation, when issue shows connection to several markers, it is linked to the marker that is more underlined in the plot, during narration of the story; the other marker is represented in correlation with the first marker.

Throughout the research, we analyzed the following Soviet books for children:

1) Lazar Lagin "The Old Genie Hottabych" (1938)[4];
2)Arkady Gaidar "Chuk and Gek" (1939);
3) Arkady Gaidar "Timur and his squad" (1940);
4) Valentina Oseeva "Vasyok Trubachev and his Comrades" (1947-1951);
5) Anatoly Rybakov "The Dirk" (1948);
6) Nino Nakashidze "The Diary of a Pupil", "Korean Heroes" and "On the Moranbong hill" (1954);
8) Anastasia Perfilieva "The sword of D'artagnan" (1955);
9) Anatoly Rybakov "The Bronze Bird" (1955-1956);
10) Edisher Kifiani "Ten-sheet Notebooks" (1956);
11) Lado Mrelashvili, "The Boys from Ikalto" (1957);
12) Otia Ioseliani, "The Adventure of Kakha" (1960);
13) Alexander Chkaidze "When Childhood Ends" (1962);
14) Yuri Tomin "Borka, I and the Invisible" (1963);
15) Pavel Kataev "Five Robinsons" (1963);
16) Yuri Tomin "A magician walked through the city" ("Wizard walked through the city") (1963).

The research covers the time period from 1938–1964**,** or from the start of the Second World War until the end of Nikita Khrushchev era. The selected time period is based on the following facts: 1. The start of the Second World War is a significant juncture in the process of forming the Soviet identity: the core of the Soviet identity was formed and shaped during the Second World War and the late Stalinism. Later, the Soviet person's identity would be based on this core. 2. The rule and policies of N. Khrushchev (often referred as "*ottepel*") continued the process of forming the identity, though made some changes in it. After Khrushchev's *ottepel*, there comes a new era of Leonid Brezhnev, with its "developed socialism" or "stagnation". This era has new specifics and peculiarities, so it is not covered in the research.

The research analyzes Russian and Georgian children's literature, written between 1938 and 1964, in the context of center-periphery. The similar markers are underlined, as well as differences in comprehension of markers are highlighted (the perception of markers of identity in the Soviet Russian and the Soviet Georgian narratives/stories).

The criteria for selection the narrative/story was its popularity; how renowned the book was during the mentioned period of time, how big was its influence on mass culture for children (for example, several stories, analyzed in the research, also are adapted for the screen, as children's films. A. Gaidar's story "Timur and his squad" even influenced the whole new movement – Timurite movement (Timurovtsy). Timurite movement was so popular, that it was competing with pioneer organization). However, it is important to note that the selected Georgian narratives/stories are not as renowned as Russian stories (Russian stories were translated and published throughout the Soviet republics), therefore they don't have the same amount of impact. In this case, Georgian stories are selected for their, or their author's significance in Georgian literature.

The aim of the study was to represent the process of forming and shaping the identity of the Soviet person by analyzing the Soviet Georgian and the Soviet Russian fiction literature for children.

The study uses qualitative content analysis, which allows to make systematic analysis of the narrative regarding certain topic, theme, and marker. Qualitative content analysis consists of different methods of analyses. In our study we used two of them:

1. Discourse analysis: this method allows to analyze how is a social reality depicted and represented in the narrative.

2. Comparative analysis: this method is used to analyze the same marker in different narratives, also it lets us compare and analyze Georgian and Russian sources.

The research uses structuralistic approach as a theoretical framework. Structural analysis of a narrative allows to define its integral components (fragments concerning the plot) and determine structural elements, which are meaningful for the research (the ideological fragments).

The results of the study might be interesting for specialists of identity studies, as well as for representatives of the other fields: culture researchers, historians, education sphere. The study can help researchers of culture analyze the importance of early socialization stage in the process of forming identity, the influence of the state on literature and creative field, generally, under the totalitarian regime, peculiarities of forming and development of the Soviet culture; historians – to study the Soviet era as a whole, and the Soviet Georgian history exclusively. And the representatives of education field might be interested in analysis of success and failure of the Soviet education system in utilizing fiction narratives (children's literature); also, the usage of these texts for forming identity, in connection with other resources, during educational process.

Impact Topics and Markers

The Pioneer

Since the study analyzes children's fiction, a *pioneer* is a natural and inseparable part of the

stories. The stories not only tell adventures and everyday lives of pioneers, they also provide examples of specific traits and behaviours, which are essential for a *pioneer*. Thus, a reader (a child) gets full set of markers, compulsory for a *pioneer*. By this indirect way, the markers for a certain position (the *pioneer*) linger in a reader's/child's mind and form child's identity. These traits and behaviours correlate with the "rules of a Young Pioneer". The rules were revised throughout the existence of the Soviet Union. Obviously, it was impossible to construct the image of the *pioneer* while ignoring these rules. In some cases, situation, depicted in a story may be representing a certain rule.

The formation of the *pioneer's* image shows the process of constructing the model for a reader (a child), whose traits and markers are exemplary and valuable in certain culture and society. This process corresponds to one of the concepts of cultural difference by G. Hofstede: the hero. The analysis of the fragments and quotes shows that the process is aimed on constructing the model of the *pioneer*, and not culture hero in general. Obviously, for forming the pioneer's image only by the values given in "rules of a Young Pioneer" were not enough, the process required providing more markers.

The process of forming the *pioneer's* image develops most actively from 1940s until the mid-1950s. Not only there are specific traits represented (such as obedience to superior, the importance of being the pioneer, community/collectivism, cooperation, social work, thinking in ideological and political terms) but there is also shaped the pioneer's negative, improper image (as an example of how pioneer mustn't behave - showing individuality, aloofness, being pampered by parents, being related to bourgeoisie or aristocracy,). After mid 1950s the intensity in the process of formation of the image decreases.

Furthermore, we must underline the differences between forming the pioneer's image in the Soviet Georgian and the Soviet Russian stories. In the Soviet Georgian stories friendships and relationships in general, are more accentuated, than ideology, while in the Soviet Russian stories ideology dictates the rules of friendship. What is considered as being a telltale in Georgian stories, has ideological meaning in Russian stories – pioneer must always say truth, thus revealing your friend's wrongdoing isn't betrayal; quite contrary – it is a chance for a wrongdoer to become a better pioneer and a friend. Also, in Georgian stories characters are referred as children and friendships are formed between children (being a pioneer is not highlighted), while in Russian they are *pioneers*, and only after that "rank" they are children. Also, there are different attitudes towards girls and towards boys, that affect the process of forming the pioneer's image. In Russian, they are *pioneers* and they must act as equals (even though there are childish boy/girl stereotypes, the idea of being *the pioneer* is cultivated); while in Georgian there is a distinct difference in attitudes towards girls and towards boys, that emphasize stereotypical gender roles, despite ideological impact.

Komsomolets

After the pioneer, Komsomolets is an important image to be formed by the Soviet identity shaping process. This is a rank, that *the pioneer* aspires to achieve. As in the pioneer's case, the image of the komsomolets also includes certain traits and responsibilities. However, unlike the pioneer's image, which

served as an exemplary model only for pioneers, the komsomolets combines the following features:

1. The Komsomolets (as a rank);
2. Pioneer leader;
3. Warrior/partisan.

In this chapter only two features - The komsomolets and the pioneer leader are discussed, regarding the fact that these two are often intertwined. The third feature– warrior/partisan represents the characteristics of a culture hero; thus, it is analyzed in another chapter.

The image of the exemplary komsomolets is given quite thoroughly in the Soviet Russian stories: the importance of the rank is underlined; the obligations as a pioneer leader are highlighted; outlooks about politics and battle are clearly defined; also, relations between the Komsomolets-Pioneer leader - pioneer are emphasized.

In contrast to the Soviet Russian children's stories, in the Soviet Georgian stories there is no such well-developed exemplary image of komsomolets. There are representations of komsomolets as the Pioneer leader and his improper behavior. Significant difference between the Soviet Russian and the Soviet Georgian stories is attitude of the elders towards komsomoletss: in the Soviet Georgian stories komsomoletss are still regarded as children, while in Russian stories they are war heroes. However, at the start of 1960s even in the Soviet Russian stories there are representations of improper, non-exemplary Komsomolets and Pioneer leader. This fact depicts the process of transformations in the image of Komsomolets.

Meeting (Collective)

"Meeting" revealed itself as an important part of the Soviet person's identity forming process. During the scenes of a *meeting* in the stories, the significance of collective or collective opinions are shown; thus, it is examined as an independent marker. Based on the fact, that meetings were part of pioneers' and komsomolets' lives, almost every story describes a scene of a *meeting*. Therefore, insets, depicting meetings, were effective method for affecting reader and the process of identity forming. The features of pioneers and pioneer leaders are thoroughly portrayed throughout the scenes of pioneers *meeting*.

The importance of meeting (collective and collective opinion) in the process of identity formation varies in the stories of different time periods. Until mid-1950s the importance of collective and collective opinion is essential. The traits, responsibilities and requirements are given so clearly and meticulously during the meetings, that they already form certain images (e.g. The komsomolets). Also, the differences between the Soviet Russian and the Soviet Georgian stories must be considered. In the Soviet Russian stories ideology regulates and balances the relations inside the collective ("Vasyok Trubachov and his comrades", "The Bronzes Bird"), but in the Soviet Georgian stories friendship and age gap have the same power and influence, as ideology. In the Soviet Georgian stories, meetings have less importance in general, compared to the Soviet Russian stories. However, throughout analyzed the Soviet Russian children's

fiction, different attitude is represented in "Borka, I and the invisible" (Y. Tomin). In this case, established attitude towards meetings and collective opinion is not shared, but changed into opposite point of view.

"Us" and "Them" groups

During the process of forming identity, it is crucial to define, who is considered as a member of the group "Us", and who belongs outside of the group - member of the group "Them". The "us" group might be extended from two people to certain community. "Imagined communities" - a concept by B. Anderson, refers to the groups, that are too big for its members to know every other fellow member of the group, however, the image of their communion lives in the mind of each member (Anderson 2006, 6). In other words, in the mind of each member lives certain "us" group, that differentiates itself from "them". The process of identification of the group "them", affects the process of self-identification of the group "us".

It is essential to clarify the distinction between the group "them" and the enemy image: "them" denotes outsiders—strangers or the unknown—who are not necessarily enemies. However, every enemy is, by definition, an "other." The group "them" needs to go through certain process, to become an enemy (Vuorinen 2012, 2).

The groups "us" and "they" are clearly defined in the analyzed children's fiction, which is important marker of identity. In this chapter groups "us/ them" represent two definitions: 1) Us (the Soviet people)/them; 2) small groups of "them" existing inside the big group "us" (the Soviet people). The second definition is depicted mainly in the Soviet Georgian stories. "Them" as an enemy, is covered in the chapter "Enemy image".

It is important to show the processes inside the group "us". These processes were essential for forming the Soviet identity, because they involved distinction by ideology and nationality. The representation of self-identification process in the Soviet Georgian stories is especially noteworthy, because it underlines the development of self-identification process of the Georgians towards the Soviet Union, as for "imagined community", defining its own identity inside the bigger "imagined community".

The group "them" is mainly determined by ideology. Because of one's ideological outlooks, a member of "us" might become a member of "them"; as well as a member of "them", might turn into a member of "us" (at least partially), because of certain ideological reason.

Enemy image

Forming the enemy image is an essential aspect in the process of forming identity. M. Vuorinen in the book "Enemy Images in War Propaganda" (2012) analyzes the process of forming enemy. According to M. Vuorinen, enemy image, in its essence, is an image of threat. It represents the approaching danger towards self (group "us"), and motivates self ("us") to stay vigilant, to plan defense (or even engage into pre-emptive attack). The main difference between enemy image and "other/them" lies in their actions: enemy is perceived as a carrier of a real threat, while "other/them" is considered unthreatening (Vuorinen 2012, 3).

It is essential to define where is the *enemy* situated, in order to form the enemy image. Generally, self ("us") locates itself in the mental center, while different enemies are placed around the definite centre: the outer circle is occupied by military enemies of the state/nation and are called *enemies from outside*; This outer zone contains both neighbouring states and distant ones (beyond direct contact). Next circle is occupied by *intimate enemies*: who live inside the same society, but outside the defining self (in other words, they are not the members of the group "us"), particular class or ideologically different group. *Intimate enemy* is easier to notice, thus easier to deal with. The most menacing enemy is the *enemy within*: an invisible danger hiding inside the group "us"; this makes it difficult to notice and therefore, especially threatening (Vuorinen 2012, 3)

Stories, analyzed in the study represent well developed enemy image. There are clearly defined *enemies form outside* and *intimate enemies. Enemies from outside* include: the fascists and the United States of America; also, there are mentioned Entente, the Winter War (the Soviet Union-Finland) and Japanese. *Intimate enemy* is defined by class and ideology: Mensheviks, kulaks, aristocracy. There are also personified images of the enemy in the stories: Wandendalles/Khapugin ("The old genie Hottabych" L. Lagin), Erofeev ("The Bronze Bird" A. Rybakov). Also, there is a depiction of *enemy within*: Serov ("The Bronze Bird" A. Rybakov).

The enemy image started to transform in the early 1960s. From absolute enemy, the U.S.A. turns into "other/them", becomes subject of curiosity, rather than threat ("When childhood ends" Al. Chkhaidze). Transformations in enemy image includes the fascists: In "Borka, I and the invisible" (Y. Tomin) there is no negative context and tales of extreme heroism while discussing fascists; they are used as a comparison, a measurement for some threat.

A Culture hero. Sacralization of war

War, is a theme covered in most of the analyzed children's stories. It is strongly connected to a culture hero: the development of the culture hero is represented through the war. Furthermore, there is often shown connection between development of the culture hero and glorifying/sacralization of war.

Despite the fact, that the sacralization of *war* usually refers to the Great Patriotic War, however, for the same reason (glorifying/sacralization of war) civil war or different battles can be narrated (if the story describes the period before the Second World War).

According the G. Hofstede, heroes are people, dead or alive, real or imaginary, who have the characteristics that are highly valued in certain culture, therefore, they serve as role models for behavior (Hofstede 2011,16). The culture hero is not always a common soldier (referred as Red Army man), it might be a colonel or a general, because they are the best representations of the culture hero's basis. Positive image is created by certain phrases, as well as an entire plot.

The changes concerning the culture hero and war image are clearly depicted in the children's stories. Sacralization of war and transformation of soldier into the culture hero - processes that took place in 1940s, are represented in stories, such: "Chuk and Gek", "Timur and his squad", "Vasyok

Trubachev and his comrades". Obedience was suggested as an important trait/marker for the culture during this period. At the end of 1950s and early 1960s there are explicit modifications: sacralization of war softens and the culture hero is being reshaped.

Labour

Labour as a significant marker is represented in several analyzed children's stories. It is not surprising, that labour was considered as an element of the Soviet person's identity and a marker of the culture hero. However, the intensity of its depiction is worthy of notice. The first story in our study, that mentions *labour* is the "Old genie Hottabych" (1938). After this, *labour* does not appear with the same intensity for a while; mainly, the warrior image is being developed. From the mid-1950's children's stories continue to represent the significance of *labour*.

Therefore, it can be concluded, that *labour*, as a marker is not revealed in the analyzed stories with the same intensity: in some cases, there are only suggestions or remarks; on the other hand, there is an attempt to create a culture hero based on this marker. The story of Al. Chkhaidze "When childhood ends" represents the transformations in the notion of culture hero; culture hero was formed and depicted by warrior/soldier, although, after the modification, the image of a labourer became the essential part of it. Images of the warrior/soldier and the labourer started coexisting as the Soviet culture hero.

The past

The past is one of the main markers of the identity. Collective memory is created and defined by the beliefs about the past, including what is remembered and how is remembered. It was crucial to create common image of the past shared by the Soviet people to form the Soviet identity. Therefore, it was important to form and develop certain attitude towards some historical events.

Regarding the fact, that the process of reconstructing the image of the past in the Soviet Union was based on ideological reasons, the past in the stories is divided into two periods: 1. Before the revolution, 2. After the revolution.

The period before the revolution covers and depicts the hardships of life, class discrimination and hatred. However, in some cases, depending on the plot or character, past might be depicted as unacceptable or odd, but not plainly negative. It must be noticed, that this kind of depiction/marker is not represented in every story.

The period after the revolution, obviously, describes the revolution and following changes in positive context.

The past, together with other markers, determines the formation of the Soviet identity. The past forms the "other/them" group, which often develops into enemy; The negative image of the life before the revolution is created; historical continuity is achieved by the connection with the events from pre-Soviet history, that represent victories and heroisms. It is distinctly defined, what should be remembered and how should it be remembered.

The description of Sovietization of Georgia bears great significance for the study. It depicts the Soviet government as a liberator, whereas the Georgian government and army as traitors. ("The diary of a pupil" N.Nakashidze)

Conclusion

The research has shown, that from the markers of national identity, defined by A. D. Smith (an historic territory (homeland), common myths and historical memories, a common, mass public culture, common legal rights and duties, and a common economy for all members) (Smith 1991,14) special attention was given to the first two markers for forming the Soviet identity.

Naturally, to form the Soviet identity, it was essential to link the identity with certain, defined territory – the Soviet Union, as homeland. The connection between development of *homeland* and defining "us" (self) was represented in the analyzed stories. For instance, A. Gaidar's story "Chuk and Gek" ends with the scene, which depicts clear definition of the group "us" and the homeland.

The connection between communion of people ("us") and the Soviet state is underlined in L.Lagin's "The old genie Hottabych". Also, by adding the Azerbaijanian and the Georgian characters, the members of the group "us" are emphasized. Furthermore, the hierarchy of the Soviet republics is shown, and the function of Georgia – place for visiting at leisure time.

The connection between the group "us" and marker *homeland* was also depicted in the Georgian story: in "Boys form Ikalto" by L. Mrelashvili (1957). The Georgian language is mentioned twice, as a marker of identity. However, the first mention only shapes the group "us", but the second mention defines Georgia as a homeland, using the Georgian language as a marker. At that time, according to Soviet ideology, children — especially pioneers — had to be raised as Soviet citizens and perceive the Soviet Union as their homeland. Instead, the story depicts a process of self-identification with Georgia rather than with the Soviet Union. The Georgian language is emphasized as the mother tongue.

From Georgian children's fiction, the Soviet Union, as a homeland is represented most intensely in "The diary of a pupil" (1954) by N. Nakashidze. The idea is repeated several times as well as the phrase "Socialistic homeland": Aliko, the main character emphasizes that he is a patriot of the socialistic homeland. This is the reason of his desire to join the battle on the front line. Aliko's father also says, that he is a patriot of the socialistic homeland (Nakashidze 1957,121). It is mentioned in Voroshilov's letter: the Soviet socialistic homeland and the patriot pupils (Nakashidze 1957, 178). Aliko's uncle, Elizbari also emphasizes the notion of the Socialistic homeland, when he tells the story of a battle (Nakashidze 1957,147).

Forming of the *homeland*, as a marker of identity, proceeds together with the other markers, or it is represented through them. For instance, quite often while defining the group "us", the homeland is also implied, but the word, homeland is not mentioned explicitly. In this case, the idea is clear from the context. Also, there are important differences between Georgian and Russian stories: in Russian stories, the Soviet Union and Russia are interchangeable concepts. This is the reason, why the concept of *homeland*, is not always highlighted; or the meaning of concept of homeland – the Soviet Union and Russia are mentioned

in the same story simultaneously. For example, in the "The old genie Hottabych" by L. Lagin, there is a phrase – the Soviet Socialistic country, meanwhile, they are referring to Russia: when Wandendalles voices his desires, he says that he wants to have Russia (not the Soviet Union) in his possession.

The same happens, when friend of Volka, Zhenia accidently finds himself in India and tells the Indian, that he is Russian. This phrase emphasizes the fact, that Russians were the main nation of the Soviet Union and the self-identification of the Russians differed from the self-identification of the citizens, who were the members of other Soviet republics. This is the reason, why the concept of homeland has no consistent definition in Georgian stories.

The second important marker of identity is common myths and historical memories. For forming this marker were used different approaches: making an impact directly on the *past*, or using other markers and through them make an indirect impact. The process of developing the pioneer's/ komsomolets' image is a good example. During this process, fragments, concerning the past are often used. The results of the research can be grouped around two events: 1. The revolution and civil war 2. The period before the revolution.

The revolution and civil war create and maintain the notion of common past, shared by the people of the Soviet Union. Obviously, there are differences between the Soviet Georgian and the Soviet Russian stories, caused by historical context (The revolution and civil war in Russian, and sovietization of Georgia in Georgian stories). However, establishing of the Soviet Union defines the common image of the past.

The past, as a marker, is not only connected with the enemy image or the group "they/them", these markers determine each other. This approach is clearly shown in depiction of the period before the revolution.

Also, by using the *past*, impact is made on glorifying the revolution and the Soviet state: depiction of a negative topic is given in contrast with the change caused by the revolution. With this approach, at the same time, the impact is made on a reader, the negative image of the period before the revolution and positive image of the period after the revolution are formed and defined.

After the markers, analyzed above, the most important marker in the process of forming the Soviet identity, is the war image. The war image is clearly represented in children's fiction, both in the Soviet Russian and the Soviet Georgian stories. The process of forming war image is in close connection with the culture hero, enemy image, and the determiner of identity – obedience.

The great patriotic war has a significant importance in the process of forming and developing the Soviet person's identity. A war is understood as an event with sacral meaning, therefore, the death in the war is perceived as a magnificent and glorious. If the revolution and the civil war depicted the battles of revolutionists and Bolsheviks precisely, the Great Patriotic war touched the lives of the Soviet citizens. Both the victory and death are connected with the Soviet people. The fact is clearly defined by the active role of the Komsomolets in the war. The war became the integral part of the komsomolets' image.

The perception of the Great Patriotic War faced some changes during 1947-1963 years. At

first, it was glorified and sacralized; then it became the event of the past with significant meaning, but is not always sacral any more. Despite these changes, for the period mentioned above, the war was already an essential and integral part of the Soviet person's identity.

For studying the process of forming the Soviet person's identity, it was important to define and examine the culture hero. Culture hero, according to G. Hofstede, heroes are people, dead or alive, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture, therefore they serve as models for behavior (Hofstede 2011, 16).

Regarding the importance of the war, a military man has a significant role. If pioneer and komsomolets were forming the exemplary images, aimed towards certain age group, the military person forms the culture hero, which covers and includes every age group. Following traits: obedience, vigilance and being ready to discover an enemy proceed directly from the culture hero (military man).

There are some transformations in the culture hero at the end of 1950s and at the start of the 1960s. The sacral image of culture hero – military man, soldier, war hero – became detached from the present generation; It has become harder to aspire. From this period develops new image of culture hero: labourer, which forms the new, working model of culture hero. This image starts to co-exist with culture hero's established image.

For forming identity, it is important to define, whose interests are main in the certain culture and society – interests of an individual or society. According to this, societies are divided in individualistic and collectivistic societies. Collectivistic society means that interest of the group prevails over interests of an individual. The study of the Soviet children's fiction clearly represented the attempt of forming collective and collectivistic society. It is important to note, that in given context the word *collective* refers to the group "us" and confronts "them/they", which might be not only a group, but an individual as well. In the stories, collectivism is most clearly represented during the description of meetings (pioneers, komsomolets). Until mid-1950s the importance of *collective* and *collective opinion* is essential, however, at the end of the 1950s and the start of the 1960s situation changes. The significance of the *collective* during the meetings decreases and it is not displayed as clearly as it was before.

The groups "us" (self) and "they/them" are distinctly represented in the stories, however, it is often depicted in connection with other markers. It is essential to define the group "us", which also means defining and opposing "they/them". In the analyzed stories, "they/them" doesn't always mean an enemy, "they" might be understood as a friend.

In the analyzed Soviet children's fiction, groups "us/ them" represent two definitions: 1) Us (the Soviet people)/them; 2) small groups of "them" existing inside the big group "us" (the Soviet people). The processes inside the group "us" were also clearly shown. These processes had great importance for forming the Soviet person's identity, because they pointed out criteria of dividing: by ideological reasons (intelligentsia, scouts, etc.), or by nationality.

The group "they/them" mostly is defined and determined by ideological reasons. The most obvious representation of the "other" is enemy image. Second representation is, when member of

"us" can turn into the member of "them", because of ideological reasons. Furthermore, because of certain ideological reason, the member of "other/them" can become a member of "us" (at least partially. For instance, when political views form signs of membership of the group "us", some transitional stage between "them" and "us").

As it was already noted, the most obvious representation of "they/them" is enemy image. Enemy image was one of the most significant markers of the Soviet person's identity. The Soviet person always had an enemy, with or without certain definition and name. Thus, enemy image was constructed in two ways: forming the enemy image on the basis of ideology, state, nationality, individual) and forming general enemy image (without name). The first case has more representations in the analyzed children's fiction. Also, there are depictions of enemies from outside and intimate enemies (the concept of M.Vuorinen) (Vuorinen 2012, 3).

Enemies from outside clearly depicted the fascists and the U.S.A., Entente, white Finns (the winter war) and Japanese. Intimate enemies are defined by class and ideological characteristics: Mensheviks, kulaks, aristocracy. There are given personified enemy images, one of them is the image of an enemy within.

For the forming and development of enemy image, it was essential to show some of its traits, such as: ruthlessness, cowardness, low intellectual abilities. At the same time, positive traits of the Soviet people are underlined (pioneers, komsomolets, warriors). As it was in the case of culture hero, enemy image changes at the end of 1950s. Attitudes towards the fascists and the United States of America undergo through some transformations.

The process of forming the Soviet person's identity included providing pioneer's and komsomolets' exemplary images. Through those images, reader was receiving a combination of traits, responsibilities and behaviours, that should form the Soviet person's identity; create its basis – the core. Therefore, the markers examined above, are also connected and represented in the cases of pioneer/komsomolets images. This way, the markers are not understood as concepts detached from everyday life; their meaning becomes obvious for people, especially for the children and teenagers, who are the same age as pioneers and komsomoletss. Thus, markers such as individualism and collectivism, the groups "us" and "they/them", obedience, constant vigilance and readiness to find an enemy, become the integral part of pioneer's/komsomolets' cognition, judgment, behaviour, dealing with problems or happiness and victory. Therefore, they linger and stay in readers minds in these characteristics.

The differences between the Soviet Russian and the Soviet Georgian cultures are most often represented through the pioneer/komsomolets images. The research has shown, that there are significant differences between the Soviet Russian and the Soviet Georgian children's fiction, in general. Despite the ideological impact, both cultures transformed the mentioned impact according to the values of their own cultures. Each culture interpreted and represented the markers, intended to form the Soviet person's identity and aimed on next generation (children), based on its own values. The differences were revealed: in relationships inside the group "*collective*", in the way of forming the groups "us" and "they/them", in the attitude towards labour; there is obvious difference

in attitude towards the pioneer leader; there is striking difference between friendship/relationships between boys and girls. The topic of relationships between man and woman, boy and girl are shown with more intensity in Georgian stories, than in Russian. In Russian stories the emphasis of such relationships is ideology, while in Georgian children's fiction they are more complex.

The intensity of ideological impact changes: starting in 1938, it becomes especially intense after the Great Patriotic War and maintains as such until mid-1950s. Then the intensity decreases a little bit. At the end of the 1950s and at the start of the 1960s some transformations are obvious.

In conclusion, we can say that markers that already existed, have been transformed and modified by ideology to form and shape identity of the new Soviet person. Also, there are distinct differences in methods of impact on markers between the Soviet Georgian and the Soviet Russian children's literature, which are caused by the differences between these two cultures. The study has shown, that the markers, acknowledged as basis of the Soviet identity, were interpreted differently by each culture. Despite the fact, that both cultures were impacted by the same ideology, it couldn't unify the core values of each culture. These differences were represented through markers and images depicted in the Soviet period's Georgian and Russian children's fiction.

Endnotes:

1. Committee for State Security.
2. Term, which was used to describe a wealthy peasant.
3. It must be noted, that features, given by Bakradze are broad, while marker is more defined and specific. Therefore, one feature may cover several markers, for example: love of collective could be understood in terms of individualism/collectivism, us/them, and enemy image. In such case the analyzed fragment is linked to the marker, which represents more ideological intensity than others.
4. Apart from the fact that narratives were composed to represent the ideology, they often were edited. There are three different editions of "The Old Genie Hottabych": the original text, written in 1938, was published as a book in 1940; first revised edition in 1951, and second revised edition in 1955. It is not certain, who revised the narrative – the author himself or a member of soviet censorship. The research does not study this topic.

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Grief in Russian Émigrés' Exilic Short Fiction: Bunin, Nabokov and Gazdanov

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Abstract:

This essay focuses on the short fiction of three Russian émigré writers—Ivan Alekseyevich Bunin (1870-1953), Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977) and Gaito Gazdanov (1903-1971)—with the purpose of tracing not only their lives, but also a psychological/inner experience of exile evident within their writing techniques as related to time and space. Bunin, an exponent of the older generation of the first wave of Russian émigré writers, expressed profound emotions of nostalgia in his exilic short fiction by employing the techniques of "double exposure" and "diachronic topography," harkening back to pre-revolutionary landscapes. Nabokov, a representative of the younger generation of Russian first-wave émigré writers as well as an all-encompassing writer of the second wave of Russian emigration, underpinned by his obsession with his childhood memories of butterflies as symbols of love and beauty, intertwined cosmic synchronization with stories of a protagonist in exile. Gazdanov, another representative of the younger generation of Russian first-wave emigration, had his protagonists disengage from the horror of the past, yet replicated feelings of suffering within their inner world and contemporary circumstances. Though Nabokov and Gazdanov, as younger voices from the first generation of Russian emigration, delved into a new world of literature and absorbed more writing techniques from literary movements of contemporary Europe, they continued to explore themes of grief and suffering in exile, much like the older generation of Russian first-wave émigré writers did.

Keywords: Bunin, Nabokov, Gazdanov, exile, grief, Russian first-wave émigré writers

Introduction

As David Bethea and Siggy Frank duly note in "Exile and Russian Literature," the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia[1] produced a large scale of exilic literature. One type pertains to Russian émigré writers who were forced to leave their native country, while the other refers to writers who stayed in their homeland but were silenced by the Soviet government. The Russian émigré writers, establishing their settlements abroad, arrived within the first wave of Russian emigration. The older generation

in this period—including Bunin, Khodasevich, and N. A. Teffi—upheld the traditions of Russian literature, regarding themselves as "the keepers of an authentic Russian tradition and culture" (Bethea and Frank 2011, 199); their self-awareness of being authentic Russian writers paralleled the mission of those Russian writers who stayed in Russia and devoted themselves to preserving Russian literary tradition. The younger writers within the first wave of Russian emigration such as Berberova, Nabokov and Gazdonov steered a course between Russian tradition and new schools of thought present in both art and literature (200). Though the overview by Bethea and Frank provides valuable insights, I believe Russian émigré writers in this period, whether their works were traditional or steered toward a new literary path, unanimously evoked profound philosophical questions about our existence.

The literary world of émigré writers typically demonstrates a profound sense of grief and loss. Some writers, having recognized the impossibility of returning to their homelands, are preoccupied by their longing for a return to their homelands, while others remain emotionally disengaged from the past. The two emotions—nostalgia and detachment—are present within exilic fiction, along with complicated writing techniques related to time and space. As such, this essay focuses on the exilic short fiction of the three pre-eminent figures of the first wave of Russian émigré writers—Ivan Alekseyevich Bunin (1870-1953), an exponent of the older generation of the first wave of Russian émigré writers; Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977), a representative of the younger generation of the first wave of Russian émigré writers as well as an all-encompassing writer of the second wave of Russian emigration; and Gaito Gazdanov (1903-1971), another representative of the younger generation of the first wave of Russian émigré writers—with the purpose of tracing not only their lives, but also a psychological/inner experience of exile in their writing techniques related to time and space.

Ivan Alekseyevich Bunin: spiritual resurrection through delineating prerevolutionary landscapes

Ivan Alekseyevich Bunin (1870-1953) began to establish his status as a reputed Russian realist in his early life: he was a loyal reader following the tradition of Russian literature, as well as a poet, short story writer, novelist, and essayist. Bunin's first short story "Derevensky Eskiz"/"Деревенский эскиз" ['Country Sketch'] was published in 1891, and his first short story collection На край света и другие рассказы [*To the Edge of the World and Other Stories*] was published in 1897. In 1894, Bunin met Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, whom he admired as "a demigod" (Tolstoy and Chekhov influenced Bunin most). Before his life of emigration in Europe, he had already published a great number of poems, essays, short stories, and novels. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 pushed Bunin to "rise to literary prominence" "in the midst of wracking, violent change in Russia" (Hettlinger 2007, xiii). He fled with Vera Nikolaevna Muromtseva to Kiev, Odessa, and Constantinople (xiii). He continued writing, with the theme of nostalgia permeating much of his work.[2]

After the 1917 Revolution, Bunin lived his life as an émigré. His literary works written during this long period can be seen as a sea change from a voice advocating an anti-Bolshevik regime (during 1920s and 1930s) to a soul seeking spiritual tranquility. In 1920, Bunin and Vera traveled to France and settled in Paris and villas "in or near Grasse in the Alpes Maritimes" (Heywood 2007). He encouraged himself with a specific mission that he believed would overcome the difficulty that confronted the émigrés. On 16 February 1924, Bunin delivered the speech "Missiia russkoi emigratsii" ('The Mission of the Russian Emigration') in Paris: "We are émigrés—the word 'émigrer' suits us better than anything else. In our overwhelming majority we are not exiles, but precisely émigrés, that is to say people who have voluntarily left their homeland" (translated and quoted in Davidson 2021, 78).

Pamela Davidson perceives that Bunin "frames the mission of the Russian diaspora in the context of the prophetic tradition, saturating his speech with biblical images" (2021, 79) in order to "assume the authoritative voice of the biblical prophet" (79) and "rebut the messianic readings of the Russian Revolution" (79). In 1933 Bunin became the first Russian writer awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, the highest honor for the Russian émigré writers who supported the idea of the collapse of Bolshevism.

Bunin did not leave France as World War II began in Europe. He stayed in Grasse, though his friends arranged 'Nansen passports' for him and his family to escape as it appeared evident that Nazi Germany was going to occupy France (Heywood 2007). As the world was ravaged by starvation, anxiety, and poverty, Bunin continued writing a number of stories that were eventually published in New York in 1943 as the collection *Tyomnyie alleyi*/Тёмные аллеи [*Dark Avenues* or *Dark Alleys*] (Heywood 2007).

Bunin's attitude toward the Bolshevik regime started to change in 1940s. As France gained its liberation from the control of the Nazis, the Russian émigré community confronted a split among its members. Bunin was tortured by fear of losing his literary status and resented the rise of fascism. His withdrawal from the émigré association in the fall of 1947 resulted in his breaking off of friendships with his old émigré friends, including a fifty-year-old friendship with Boris Zaitsev, as the latter believed Bunin supported the Soviet sympathizers (Bethea 1984, 15). Perhaps Bunin's motivation was, as he said in his letter to Zaitsev, to look for a tranquil place alien to all 'союзов' ('associations') and 'политиканств' ('political intrigues') (Bunin 1980, 173), as he had perceived the collapse of the émigré association. Though "a vehemently anti-Soviet Russian exile" (Shrayer 1998, 341) of the 1920s and 1930s, Bunin changed his attitude toward Soviet Russia in the 1940s. However, Bunin did not return to Russia, nor did he become a Russian communist. Unable to return home, Bunin desperately created his lost Russia in his literary world, delineating the pre-revolutionary landscapes

and projecting his wish of homecoming onto the familiar "images," "the driving force behind most of his narratives" (Hettlinger 2007, xviii). On the other hand, as an author, Bunin sought a world of peace and tranquility. As James B. Woodward notes in *Ivan Bunin*, Bunin is "distinguished from his contemporaries by his apparent immunity to both the literary and the political pressures of his time and by the persistence with which he steered his completely solitary course of development" (1980, ix).

Bunin's turn toward a solitary world with spiritual tranquility is reflected in *Dark Avenues*—a collection of short stories. *Dark Avenues*, wherein Bunin deals with the themes of exile and the evanescence of life and love, exemplifies Bunin's profound affection for pre-revolutionary landscapes. There are two exile situations in the stories of *Dark Avenues*: the first is the situation of being forced to leave one's home or country, and the second is one's affection being repressed by superior pressures. Bunin's protagonists are involved in dark, clandestine, erotic liaisons: "intense joy and fulfillment" (Hettlinger 2007, xviii) liberate them from the exterior circumstances, but love is evanescent. For those in exile, evanescence of pleasure ends in "the ultimate separation or death" (Slobin 2013, 85). Bunin constructed lost places in fiction so as to evoke memories and "preserve moments of happiness against the relentless, forward march of time" (Hettlinger 2007, xviii). This construction is an engagement in a "'reflective nostalgia,' in Boym's words, 'a strategy of survival, a way of making sense of the impossibility of homecoming'" (qtd. in Brintlinger 2014, 38).[3] In addition, to extend the present time and space to the erased ones, Bunin applies the device of Khodasevich's "double exposure" (Slobin 2013, 74) to *Dark Avenues*—superimposing the past upon the present so as to enhance the tensions of diachronic topography.

Bunin's "Kholodnaya osen"/"Холодная осень" ['Cold Fall' or 'A Cold Autumn'], written in 1944, published in the newspaper "Poslednie novosti"/"Последние новости" ['Latest News'] in 1945, and collected in the second edition of *Dark Avenues* in 1946, concerns the heroine's (also the narrator's) peaceful life in a country estate with her parents, the loss of her fiancé, and her thirty years of exile in Europe. In "Time, History, and Fairy Tale in Ivan Bunin's 'A Cold Autumn,'" Boris Briker investigates the story in terms of personal time, historical time, and fairy-tale time. Personal time refers to the heroine's stable life with her parents and fiancé on the country estate. She is circumscribed in a safe domestic terrain, "limited to movements from room to room, from interior to porch, or from interior to garden" (1998, 128). Historical time—the history of the Russian Civil War and World Wars I and II—"conflicts with" personal time as it "imposes its order upon personal time" (132). In the story, historical time starts to interrupt the heroine's personal time, forcing her to postpone her wedding. Furthermore, it deprives the heroine of her love and happiness when her fiancé is killed in the war, and after his death, the heroine "submits herself completely to the maelstrom

of history" (134) in the life of exile. Though she survives the wars, her inner world is crushed in the life of exile. Finally, the fairy-tale time reverses the situation: "when the heroine recalls her past, personal time again dominates history" (134). It is the fairy-tale time that renders her "freedom from historical time" (134). At the end of the story, the heroine, in the "circular structure of imaginary travel" (135), undergoes an imaginary trip back to the past: a peaceful domestic space where she was living with her parents and engaged to her fiancé. Though in the life of exile the heroine survives the wars, the thirty years of exile is nothing more than a series of suffering episodes as she is forced to get accustomed to a new environment—the same situation in which the protagonists in Bunin's "V Parizhe"/"В Париже" ['In Paris'] struggle, just as in Slobin's remark that the life of an exile is "a conscious gesture of 'accommodation' to foreign culture" (86). The personal life of the heroine in "Kholodnaya osen" ['A Cold Autumn'] is once engulfed by the historical time, yet it is resurrected as the heroine in her reminiscence is convinced that her happiness will never be erased from her memories.

Bunin's "Tchisty ponedelnik"/"Чистый Понедельник" ['Pure Monday' or 'Cleansing Monday'], written in 1944 and collected in *Dark Avenues*, concerns a young healthy wealthy couple who always have pleasant time—going to the theaters, enjoying dinner and lunch in restaurants and taverns, and at the request of the heroine, visiting the local cemeteries and monasteries, until the heroine decides to become a nun devoting herself to religious work in Marfo-Mariinskaya Abbey. As the title indicates, the heroine has been religious and spiritual in her inner world, though before becoming a nun she does not completely renounce earthly pleasures; as the narrator notices, her religiosity is repressed in her "enigmatic, languid" (Bunin 2007, 351) temperance. 'Cleansing Monday' demonstrates the obvious contrast between the silent, reclusive monasteries and cemeteries and the flashy theaters and taverns. Readers can sense the contrast between the old and the new in the city of Moscow. Brintlinger in "Fiction as Mapmaking: Moscow Ivan Bunin's Russian Memory Palace" notices that Bunin deliberately selected Moscow as an ideal city map to relocate the famous buildings that had been destroyed by the Soviet government. Through the couple's visits to the city (around the year of 1914) which mix the past with the present—"the silent, exotic east and shallow, materialistic west" (Brintlinger 2014, 49)—Bunin moved in time and space to "create a diachronic topographical map of Russian culture" (37). To evoke the spiritual element of the past, Bunin built "a geography of absence to restore those buildings" (60) that were destroyed "and to superimpose the complex cultural history of Russia upon the cityscape" (60). His mapping of the lost buildings in 'Cleansing Monday' was not merely an expression of nostalgia for him or his émigré compatriots, but it was also a way of staving off "Russia's imminent demise" (38). The heroine's final decision to renounce all earthly desires and devote herself to religious life results from her determination to

resurrect the spirit of the Old Church Slavonic. Bunin's idea of resurrection refers to spiritual resurrection, which has been ignored in the modernized age of the world—or worse, the age of exile. In the endless circle of changes, with evanescent love and life, only through the inner mind, which holds ideas of simplicity and selflessness, can one's mind remain at peace. Though the cathedrals and monasteries were bombed, the images and their spiritual significance are preserved in memories. Moreover, Bunin's sense of resurrection is associated with Buddhist ideas of renunciation of earthly attachments and withdrawal to nirvana (Connolly 1981, 15-16). Just as the Muscovites who sought the resurrection of the old religious spirit as is shown in the Three-Handed Mother of God (Brintlinger 2014, 56), Bunin's émigré readers sensed homecoming in his mapping of the lost buildings that evoke spiritual enlightenment.

Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov: "cosmic synchronization" or a unified state of cosmos

Nabokov's oeuvre consists of sixty-five stories, most of which were written in Russian and published after Nabokov had already left his tranquil life of childhood and youth in Saint Petersburg and at the country estate of Vyra. His first story "Nezhit" ['The Wood-Sprite'] (1921)—concerning a wood-sprite's recounting of his own exile from Russia—was composed in Russian when he was an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge. His last story "Lance" (1952) was written in English and published in *The New Yorker* when he was teaching at Cornell (Meyer 2006, 119). Nabokov's life of exile began as his family sought shelter in Western Europe (after the withdrawal of the German Army in November 1918 and the victory of the Red Army of Soviet Russia in early 1919) [4], and he never went back to Russia, though he finally settled in Switzerland. In 1922, Nabokov completed his studies at Cambridge and moved to Berlin, in the hope of escaping the disasters accompanying the Russian Revolution that affected a great number of aristocratic families. Nabokov settled in Berlin as a Russian émigré writer within the émigré community, but the increasing anti-Semitic environment in that city at the time of the rise of the Nazi Party stoked the fear of totalitarianism within the émigré poet-writer. In 1937, Nabokov moved to Paris. In 1940, Nabokov fled with his family again as Nazi Germany invaded France. In the United States, he settled in Manhattan, joined the staff of Wellesley College in 1941, and worked as an entomologist at the American Museum of Natural History; he was also a lepidopterist at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology. In 1948, he began to teach Russian and European literature at Cornell University. His lifelong interest in butterflies inspired him to write numerous stories in Berlin and the novel *Lolita* (1955) in America. Upon returning to Europe, he continued his childhood predilection for butterfly collection, seeking the footprints of the heavenly creature in the Alps, Corsica, and Sicily, until he passed away in Montreux on the 2nd of July 1977.

Nabokov's overseas drifting life provides him with a wealth of literary themes, but the real cornerstone of his literature comes from his childhood and adolescence in Russia, centering on his obsession with butterflies.[5] His literary works published during his life of emigration can be classified into two types: one exposes feelings of grief, fear of espionage, and a sense of loss, while the other serves as a remedy for those sufferings. His story "Signs and Symbols"[6] (1948), featuring a protagonist diagnosed with "referential mania" who imagines "that everything happening around him is a veiled reference to his personality and existence" (Nabokov 1996, 599), explores the suffering and distortion experienced by people in exile. The idea of "referential mania" in the story is inspired by Nabokov's synesthesia (Martin)—the mind's automatic association of things that seem unrelated to each other. The protagonist imagines that all things in his surroundings that previously seemed unrelated to him are actually interconnected with his existence; the viewer of objects is the nucleus of all objects: "Clouds in the staring sky transmit to one another, by means of slow signs, incredibly detailed information regarding him" (Nabokov 1996, 599). Many of Nabokov's protagonists—expatriates or maniacs in general—are referential mania patients, and their madness "where everything refers to self is a danger that Nabokov's art persistently alerts us to" (Meyer 2006, 134).

To alleviate suffering, Nabokov experiments with cosmic synchronization. In "Nabokov's Cosmic Synchronization and 'Something Else,'" J. B. Sisson notes that "cosmic synchronization" that Nabokov's protagonists experience "corresponds roughly to the secular and spontaneous ecstasy of universal oneness" (1994, 155). Nabokov's cosmic synchronization is a state of expanded consciousness that transcends time and space into a unified cosmos, wherein death is not ending, but a part of the cosmos. For Nabokov's protagonists, the mind can seek the experience of cosmic synchronization in trivial or "unpoetic" events, or even in something seemingly meaningless; through this experience, the mind "not only sees everything in the universe but expands physically through all space and time" (158). Further, Sisson classifies Nabokov's cosmic synchronization into three types. The first is the application of "the catalogue of remote activity" to "form the unlimited 'transparent organism' of cosmic synchronization" (159). Jungle imagery provides an ideal exploratory locale for seeking out "an exit from 'the prison of time'" (161). Nabokov's "Pil'gram" ['The Aurelian'] (1931), "Sovershenstvo" ['Perfection'] (1932), and *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941), his first English-language novel, exemplify the first type. The second type evoking cosmic synchronization is the device of juxtaposing contrasting (conflicting) "alternative realities" (164). It depends on the vision of "a dual identity, of superimposed time settings" (165) on a simple or trivial object to find "some hint of a 'nameless bliss'" through the effect of "multiplicity and simultaneity of cosmic synchronization" (165). "Terra Incognita" ['Terra incognita'] (1931), *Pale Fire* (1962), and "Restoration" (1952) are representative

of the second type. The last type, Sisson mentions, denotes "transformations performed by a conjuror" (167). Under this conjuror's performance of illusion, objects undergo metamorphoses or transformations, and though they are "mysteriously conjoined" with other objects in the process of combination, they still "remain discrete" (167). "An Evening of Russian Poetry" (1945) and *Solus Rex* (1942) serve as typical examples of the third type. Through subjective consciousness for seeking higher consciousness (universal oneness) in combinations or patterns of objects, usually among trivial events, as mentioned in *Speak Memory*, Nabokov and his protagonists center "the process of cosmic synchronization permanently in the specific objects of mundane love, in the perceived world" (171):

> Whenever I start thinking of my love for a person, I am in the habit of immediately drawing radii from my love—from my heart, from the tender nucleus of a personal matter—to monstrously remote points of the universe [...] I have to have all space and all time participate in my emotion, in my mortal love, so that the edge of its mortality is taken off, thus helping me to fight the utter degradation [...]. (Nabokov 1989, 296-297)

As Sisson points out, Nabokov's process of cosmic synchronization for love corresponds to Nabokov's chess problem theory which assumes the transfer of an existing world into the secular world (1994, 176). For Nabokov, this existent world represents memories of his childhood in pre-Revolutionary Russia—a tranquil time and space with butterflies that he repeatedly visits through the structure of cosmic synchronicity in his literary world.

Nabokov's cosmic synchronization, associated with a feeling of timelessness and freedom, can be compared to Khodasevich's "double exposure," as both emphasize blurred boundaries. Greta N. Slobin in "Double Exposure in Exile Writing: Khodasevich, Teffi, Bunin, Nabokov" notes the device of Khodasevich's "double exposure" indispensable in Russian émigré writing.

> The brilliant device of "double exposure" would become indispensable in contemporary prose, where it was used to situate the exile in history, revealing hidden relations between memory of the past and the actual present. This device prompted recollections of Russian cities of the exiles' past as experienced in the European metropolitan centers, enabling writers to reflect on the inherent tensions of the diasporic condition, with its dual consciousness of place and time. (Slobin 2013, 74)

Nabokov himself applies "double exposure" as well. In the short stories that Nabokov wrote during 1920s and 1930s, Berlin is "automatically transposed into the 'distant' Petersburg or Moscow" (Slobin 87). Yet this superimposition of the past cityscape on the present modern city does not provide a "restorative nostalgia" (90)—a yearning for a return to Russia. Instead, it offers a new

enclave that replaces the Russian enclaves "clung to" by Nabokov's compatriots (86). Like Bunin, Nabokov had a clear realization of the impossibility of returning to the physical space of his childhood Russia (pre-revolutionary Russia); yet he stood in sharp contrast to those émigré community writers who resisted living the real life in European cities (86). To simulate the past time and space, Nabokov created "an evolving typology of memory" (89) in the present space and time; one of his characters in *Дар* [*The Gift*] "developed a new yearning for Russia that was less physical than before" (Nabokov 1963, 215). In other words, Nabokov's fictional world seeks an expansion to a *new space* that alleviates the sense of "alienation" that "stems not from Paris or Berlin, but from the internalized memory of the beloved native city, which has no counterpart in its irrevocable transformation in historical reality" (Slobin 2013, 91).

Indeed, critics have observed Nabokov's creation of fictional space and time. In "Mapping Narrative Space in Nabokov's Short Fiction," Maxim D. Shrayer discusses Nabokov's simulation of real space through the construction of "three-dimensional space on an atomistic scale" (1997, 625) in a short story, and his use of mystic codes in "an entire narrative" that "serves as a guide to its own space" (625). Shrayer notes that Nabokov employs the mapping device of the cartographer to create the effect of the three-dimensional space in the short stories—"Rozhdestvo"/"Рождество" ['Christmas'] (1925), "Pis'mo v Rossiiu"/"Письмо в Россию" ['A Letter that Never Reached Russia'] (1925), and "Obida"/"Обида" ['A Bad Day'] (1931). Nabokov opts for objects in nature in order to enhance the perspective of "a vertical movement or a downward/upward direction" (626). Space in real life through the effect of three-dimensionality can be superimposed on the fictional space, thus making the narrative space in the short story seem more real.

Nabokov's creation of a unified cosmos is evident in three texts—'A Guide to Berlin,' 'The Return of Chorb,' and 'Perfection.' In "Putevoditel' po Berlinu"/"Путеводитель по Берлину" ['A Guide to Berlin'] (1925), there are two sets of virtual space and time: one involves a world of darkness, whereas the other recreates a world interpreting the world as good. Shrayer indicates a hellish world: the clandestine code that Nabokov employs in 'A Guide to Berlin' is the parodic Dantesque code from *The Divine Comedy* (636). While the chapter "The Pipes" describing "open infernal bowels of the earth and boys crawling through these bowels" (631) and the chapter "Work" containing "parodic allusions to the torments" (631) allude to Dante's Hell, the chapter "Eden" situated in a famous zoo in Berlin parodies Paradise with "a strong dose of irony" (631). With the allusion mentioned above, the city of Berlin is viewed as a banality, hellish scene or burlesque Paradise. However, the narrator/guide in 'A Guide to Berlin,' as Shrayer believes, perceives an alternative space through the effect of the "mirrors of time" (635): as the narrator in the pub looks at the pub through

a boy's eyes, what he sees is not only the interior space of the pub, but also the future memories of the boy. This associative mapping of the surroundings in the memories of the boy during the chapter "The Pub" might lead to the guide's or the boy's construction of time and space of cosmic synchronization, helping them find relief from a hellish atmosphere and transfer to a blissful unified state.

Nabokov's story "Vozvrashchenie Chorba"/"Возвращение Чорба" ['The Return of Chorb'] (written in Russian under Nabokov's pen name Vladimir Sirin in Berlin in 1925) concerns a young Russian émigré's travel "in reverse through all the spots" (Nabokov 1996, 148) that he and his newly-wed wife visited during their honeymoon. Chorb's wife has died from electric shock by touching a live wire on an electric pole. At the end of the travel in reverse, Chorb hires a prostitute to stand in for his deceased wife. This story centers on two themes: artistic creation through cosmic synchronization and the collapse of a poetic world within a real world.

In the description of his past life with his wife, wherein imagination coexists with reality, Chorb removes ugliness of reality so as to immortalize her image. Chorb's travel in reverse corresponds to his experience of cosmic synchronization for perpetuating this mundane love: "He thought that if he managed to gather all the little things they had noticed together—if he re-created thus the near past—her image would grow immortal and replace her forever" (Nabokov 1996, 149). Every object that he revisits is endowed with its "dual identity" of "superimposed time settings" (Sisson 1994, 165) as it reminds him of the images or activities of the deceased.

Chorb's reminiscence reinterprets death and loss as something poetic. His narrative is teeming with the prefiguration of her death. The vision of the scenery of "the profile of a cliff" and its surroundings during the Switzerland trip is "a kind of fatidic prefiguration" (Nabokov 1996, 148). As he walks with his bride along the boulevard, he senses "somewhat violety smell of the dead leaves strewing the sidewalk" (150). Furthermore, as she attempts to catch the wrapping-paper-like leaves with a spade, a workman contemplates her "as light as a dead leaf, dancing about with that little spade in her raised hand" (151). On the day of their wedding, the parents of the bride prepare the bed on which runs "a Gothic inscription" "WE ARE TOGETHER UNTO THE TOMB" (150). Those images and events that involve the fatidic prefiguration of death are deliberately juxtaposed in the narrative structure through the process of cosmic synchronization. Chorb's purpose is to immortalize death not as a fading away, but as part of a unified world.

However, Nabokov exposes cruelty: the impossibility of perpetuating artistic creation in a real world. Indeed, the name of the protagonist implies a struggle for hope in exile.[7] In 'The Return of Chorb,' the narrator's mission is a reprieve from grief through artistic creation. His simulation of the image of his wife is compared to the mythology of Orpheus's journey through the Underworld: both

stories end in the disappearance of the images of their wives. Chorb wakes up from his dream only to "discover the terrifying discrepancy between his wife's perfect image fresh in his memory" and "a blemished live simulacrum" of a prostitute (188). This ending reveals Nabokov's grief over the collapse of artistic creation; perfect images created through cosmic synchronization vanish in the real world, for they exist only in dreams or imagination.

Nabokov's protagonists' experience of cosmic synchronization enables them to encapsulate those events and images significant to them into their private space—dreams or consciousness. Nabokov's "Sovershenstvo" ['Perfection'] (1932), originally written in Russian, published in *Poslednie Novosti* [*Latest News*] in 1932, and later translated into English as one of the collected stories in 1974's *Tyrants Destroyed and Other Stories*, tells a story about a Russian émigré who drowns and dies as he rushes into the water to rescue his pupil. The death of the protagonist in 'Perfection' at the end of the story implies a perfect state of the protagonist's private world. The last moment of the story, as Robert Grossmith mentions, is the perfect moment wherein "Ivanov attains that perfection for which he has striven throughout his life, that ideal of direct contact with the world" (1993, 78). As he is dying, Ivanov feels his heart "straining unbearably" (Nabokov 1996, 346) and hears the perfect sound of the piano—"a rapid something" that "passed through him, a flash of fingers rippling over piano keys" (346)—though he hears only an indistinct part of it every time he feels heart pains. Despite Ivanov being a lonely and impoverished émigré living in a world where people in general ignore or do not appreciate his power of imagination, he still imagines the world to be a lovely and beautiful place: "he had a passionate desire to experience everything, to attain and touch everything, to let the dappled voices, the bird calls, filter through his being and to enter for a moment into a passerby's soul" (340). Though his pupil shows disinterest or no epiphanic response to his teachings, he still perceives a perfect mind in the child. His capability of seeing beauty in dull or vulgar people and objects is not a phenomenon of self-deception; instead, it is because of "Ivanov's mental state" that "resembles what Nabokov named 'cosmic synchronization'"—the capability of merging "memories, premonitions of future recollection, and sense perceptions" (Balestrini 2002, 348). In his geography teaching, all of the maps that Ivanov shows to David are perfect, as each of them contains two lines. One is the line of the landscape of the ancient world in history. The other is an imaginary world revealed through the device of Khodasevich's "double exposure" (Slobin 2013, 75) that can be encapsulated into the center of Ivanov's "private life" (Shrayer 1997, 637) as "various images of happiness" that Ivanov stores up (Nabokov 1996, 340). A great number of maps "are stored inside his memory" (Shrayer 1997, 637), and this depository of the knowledge of the maps in his memory enables him to travel "via memory routes" (638) to any place in his mental map that is

significant to his private life in his recollected map. Another map that enters his consciousness is Ivanov's heart pain. Ivanov feels heart pain as he sees those landscapes (e.g., a boat on a seascape) or touches the water at the beach; heart pain is a fatidic prefiguration of his approaching death at the seaside. Ivanov's heart pain makes "a spatial transition" "from the map of an aching heart to a recollected map" (639) in his consciousness; "the actual seascape" "yields the map of his heart pain in Ivanov's consciousness and later connects it to a similar map of a seaside resort that rests in Ivanov's memory" (639). At the last moment, Ivanov drowns with his heart contracted, a situation that connects Ivanov's being with the private map that rests within his own memory, and thus makes him hear a perfect piano sound in a state of perfect consciousness.

If Chorb in 'The Return of Chorb' immortalizes the images of his deceased wife in his memory, Ivanov in 'Perfection' perpetuates his own image in the future memory of his pupil. In addition, David here can be compared to the boy in the chapter "The Pub" of 'A Guide to Berlin': just as the tour guide sees the future memory of the boy in the pub via the effect of mirror image (Johnson 1979, 353-361), so Ivanov sees and fulfills his image in the future memory of David. The story 'Perfection' begins with a proleptic view: "Ivanov foresaw he would often appear in David's dreams, thirty or forty years hence: human dreams do not easily forget old grudges" (Nabokov, 1996, 338). His heart pain that recuperates is a fatidic prefiguration that abuts "a transcendent realm" (Alexandrov 1994, 41).[8] 'Perfection' ends with the fulfillment of Ivanov's prefiguration.

Bunin and Nabokov

Nabokov's literary creativity shows the connection between Russian literary tradition and European modernism. His early poems and short stories exhibit some features of Ivan Bunin, whom the young writer admired as his mentor. It was through Nabokov's father that Bunin began to know Nabokov (Shrayer 1998, 343). Nabokov began writing to Bunin in 1921; in the first letter along with a number of poems sent to Bunin on March 18, 1921, Nabokov expressed "the pathos of admiration and gratitude" (343). Through letter correspondence and reviews of works, Nabokov constructed a friendship with Bunin in the 1920s and early 1930s, although they did not actually meet until the early 1930s. Bunin was interested in Nabokov's works and gave the young Russian émigré encouragement. Regarding Bunin as his mentor, Nabokov pursued "in short fiction the tradition which Čechov had established" and "Bunin enriched and perfected in the 1910s-1920s" (354). Yet Nabokov also had "innovations" "both in structure and in metaphysical thematics" (354). Bunin appreciated Nabokov's novel *Mašen'ka*/*Машенька* [*Mary*] (1926) most as it reflects "the most Buninesque" attributes (351). Nabokov's "Obida"/"Обида" ['A Bad Day'] (1931) is also less

Nabokovian as it "shows connections with a series of Bunin's stories, mostly dating back to the 1890s-1900s" (355). Nabokov's 'Christmas' (1925) is also one of the finest short stories "from the 1920s-early 1930s" that "reveal[s] a continuous dialogue with Bunin" (358). Nabokov's "Rozhdestvo"/"Рождество" ['Christmas'] (1925) and Bunin's "Snezhny Byk"/"Снежный бык" ['Snow Bull'] (1911) "focus on fatherly love" (359), yet Nabokov's 'Christmas' offers his protagonist "a different means of dealing with his pain" (359) through "an otherworldly metaphor" (359) that cannot be found in Bunin's 'Snow Bull.' Nabokov's "Pil'gram" ['The Aurelian'] (1931) resembles Bunin's "Gospodin iz San Frantsisco"/"Господин из Сан-Франциско" ['The Gentleman from San Francisco'] (1915) and follows "Bunin's favorite narrative recipe of placing the death of the main character at the closure" (363), but Bunin uses death to emphasize the end of violence or tragedy while Nabokov's use of death as narrative closure in 'The Aurelian' and 'Perfection' reverberates with the experience of "entering the otherworld" (364).

The year 1933 marks the beginning of the decline of the Bunin-Nabokov friendship. Several reasons explain this decline. One results from Bunin's feeling stressed as a Nobel laureate (Shrayer 1998, 365-367). The other reason is Nabokov's "covert modernism." Until the early 1930s, Bunin had been tolerant of Nabokov's "covert modernism," yet in the late 1930s Bunin became irritated by Nabokov's modernism. While Nabokov negotiated "Russian classical tradition with modernist trends, both Russian and European" (376), Bunin thoroughly resented the modernist ethos, though he might have been unaware of his "covert modernism" (384-386). For Bunin, Nabokov was a "greenhorn who pulled out a pistol and killed all the older writers with one shot" (reported by Lev Ljubimov, qtd. in Shrayer 1998, 373). In 1943, Bunin published *Dark Avenues*, a collection of short stories in which he polemicized with modernism and defended Russian literary tradition while making a dialogue with Nabokov's short stories as an argument against modernism (Shrayer 1998, 374-388). This eventual rift in their relationship reveals that Bunin misunderstood Nabokov. Throughout his life, Nabokov kept alive the Russian literary tradition, integrating a characteristically Russian sense of exile or homelessness into different forms of aesthetics.[9]

Gaito Gazdanov: exilic irony and apocalyptic disappearance

Born into a middle-class Russified family of Ossetian origin in St. Petersburg in 1903, Gaito Gazdanov (1903-1971) had a different childhood from the noble family lifestyles of Bunin and Nabokov. Though he was not an aristocrat affected by the Soviet Communist Revolution, he still participated in the army of the Whites in the Russian Civil War.[10] As the Whites lost and evacuated, Gazdanov started his life of exile by traveling from Crimea to Turkey and Bulgaria, and finally settling

in France in 1923. During his homeless life of exile, he was a writer, regularly publishing in émigré journals. "Leaving him enough free time to continue to be a writer" (Dienes 1996, 24), he worked as a nighttime taxi driver for almost twenty-five years, until 1953, when he accepted a position with Radio Liberty in Munich, where he worked until his death in 1971.

Gazdanov was classified as part of the younger generation of the first wave of Russian émigré writers, yet he did not acquire as much fame as Nabokov. Laszlo Dienes in "Gaito Gazdanov: Russian Émigré Literature at Harvard" analyzes the reasons. Unlike Nabokov, who switched to English, Gazdanov insisted on "creat[ing] in the language that was 'in one's blood'" (Dienes 1996, 23), resulting in his works being inaccessible to Western European readers. Another reason is that Russian émigré works were "banned" (26) or "unmentionable" (26) in the Soviet Union until the era of Gorbachev's *glasnost* Russia during the years of 1988-1990 (29). Gazdanov's literary works started to appear in Russia after 1988, yet he still did not acquire fame due to inappropriate publications in minor journals (29) and the collapse of the publishing industry (31). In the post-Soviet era, Gazdanov's works were rediscovered in notable journals such as *Druzhba Narodov* ['Friendship of Peoples'] and *Drugie berega* ['Other Shores'] (31). Bryan Karetnyk, editor and translator of *The Beggar and Other Stories*, identified the 1930s and 1960s as the golden age of Gazdanov's short-story writing.

Gazdanov, as a younger generation of Russian first-wave émigré writers, holds the synthesis of various cultural features. Nikolay Nikolaev and Svetlana Dulova in "Novels by Gaito Gazdanov and Mental Changes in Literary Consciousness of Russian First-Wave Émigré Writers of the 20th Century" investigate Gazdanov's existentialism and modernism: his writing technique shares affinities with existentialist writers such as Albert Camus and James Joyce (2019, 167). Gazdanov's sense of exile is not caused by historical changes, but by his inner sense of existence itself.[11] Though Gazdanov embraces a mood different from the prevailing mood in "the older generation of Russian first-wave émigré writers," which is "longing for the past" (166), his philosophical exploration of death and fate keeps alive the distinctive tone of Russian literary tradition.

In his fictitious space, Gazdanov creates the effect of exilic irony that emphasizes the horror of existence. Gazdonov's narrator initially holds an attitude of disengagement, ignoring changes within the external world. Later, an alter ego of the narrator observes an irony in the internal experiences of the narrator: his narrator sneers at the destinies of himself or others (a taxi driver, an upper-class passenger, or anyone from low social milieu) as he juxtaposes life with existential exile and perceives the city/cityscape as an inner space that will eventually exile the self.

The movement in the city, for Gazdanov's narrator, is movement in a fragmented condition, and its terminal is apocalyptic disappearance—death. Yulia Pushkarevskaya Naughton in "'Diaphanous

Irony:' Ironic Masquerade and Breakdown in Vladimir Nabokov's *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* and Gaito Gazdanov's *Night Roads*" perceives Gazdanov's *Nochnye dorogi*/*Ночные дороги* [*Night Roads*] (1952) as a best illustration for the writer's mobile metaphysical space. The narrator in *Night Roads* recreates his home through imagined spaces while driving through the city of Paris; his purpose is to achieve "the sense of presence in the world" (Naughton 2014a, 482) through "change and movement" (482)—his *objet petit a* in Lacanian terms (481)—that "constitutes both the narrator's internal life and his metaphysical relationship with the world" (482). In the constant motion of driving a taxi, the narrator believes he has created his "internal journey" (481) that serves as a replacement for the exilic (external) movement, or "an antidote" (479) for "his absent home" (479), avoiding "surrender[ing] to immobility" (482) that signals "spiritual death" (482). However, Gazdanov's narrative, an autobiographical text that reflects the experience of the émigré writer's twenty-five years of driving taxis, eventually lapses into melancholy (479) and returns to the exilic condition and "the post-ironic landscape" (487), which is "bleak and unrelenting" (487). The city is no longer connected with a world that can offset the past horror, but "functions as a metaphor for the fragmentation and dislocation of subjectivity" (Naughton 2014b, 247), mirroring "the narrator's own subjectivity" (247) in an exilic condition, as the narrator has "no physical or cognitive control over time/space" (251).

The dichotomy of the past and the present disappears as an ironic gesture intervenes. This is also seen in Gazdanov's stories. In his story "Sčast'e" ['Happiness'] (1932), collected in *The Beggar and Other Stories*, the protagonist, Henri Dorin, optimistically sees the world as a synthesis of happiness until he perceives reality when he loses his sight. In contrast to his son, André, who holds a pessimistic attitude toward life, Henri believes he has a happy life, as he is now a wealthy businessman owning several factories and has a nice family with an intelligent son and a beautiful second wife, even though at a young age he experienced war and the loss of his first wife. He always encourages his son to look on the bright side of life (Gazdanov 2018, 72). However, Henri's feeling of happiness is tempered by disillusionment; as he reacts to the "dismal" exterior world with an optimistic attitude, he is ignorant of (or chooses to ignore) the betrayal of his second wife and forgets his sadness over the loss of his first wife and his fear during wartime life. His idealized world faces its challenges as he becomes blind. His sense of hearing others' presence/motion in the house becomes so sharp that he starts to notice things that he did not perceive before. His house is now no longer a home of happiness but is "saturated with alarming and sorrowful things" (94). Blindness forces him to focus on his internal experiences, which in turn makes him recognize reality. Similar to *Night Roads*, a world of happiness in 'Happiness' lapses into melancholy in an ironic shift. Another story in *The Beggar and Other Stories*, "Niščij" ['The Beggar'] (1962), relates how a capitalist, tired of his

pampered existence, adopts a life of poverty on the streets of Paris, simply for freedom and the renunciation of all tedious obligations. Gustave Verdier longs for freedom through disengagement from the past, yet the past still permeates his memories.

Conclusion

Bunin, Nabokov, and Gazdanov stand out as fine examples of émigré writers as they astutely perceive the horrible condition of exile. Bunin's literary works during his thirty-three years of emigration life in France continue the sense of evanescence and incorporate this sense into the motif of exile. Grief for historical change is conspicuous in Bunin's exile characters. In the work of Nabokov, the recurring theme of "referential mania" and the plot of thugs persecuting the artist-victims reflect Nabokov's recollection of the death of his father and the sense of phobia in his life of emigration. In Gazdanov's stories, the memory of the past haunts people as a nightmarish presence, though they strive to emotionally disengage themselves from that past.

In the world of fiction, the three Russian émigré writers seek exits from the horrible world of exilic space. Bunin's protagonists liberate themselves from the exterior world by plunging into their memories of the past, resisting the forward march of historical time. Some of his protagonists locate the images of cathedrals and monasteries in their memories and renounce their earthly attachments as they recognize that love and life are evanescent. Nabokov's protagonists, capable of cosmic synchronization, perceive the universal oneness in trivial or dull events. Memory and imagination bring his protagonists back to an existent world that is not alien to them: a world that corresponds to Nabokov's childhood in pre-Revolutionary Russia, a tranquil time and space with butterflies. Gazdonov's sense of exile is a sort of "existential thriller" (Pinkham 2014) that befalls not only the émigrés, but everyone. To avoid feelings of suffering, his characters disengage from the exilic/external/changeable world.

However, their characters cannot transcend the horror of reality. Bunin's nostalgia for the past—a yearning for beauty and love in a lost world—is often intertwined with death, which eventually leads to a sense of profound loss and disillusionment. Though their idea of cosmic synchronization reinterprets death as a part of a unified, idealized world, Nabokov's characters still possess a sense of loss and disillusionment. Gazdanov's protagonists, who disengage themselves from the exterior changeable world, nevertheless withdraw inwardly into their inner space where they cannot be protectively cocooned from any emotions of melancholy, for their past lives still encroach on their inner worlds/memories.

Endnotes:

1. The "Red Terror" of the Bolshevik regime during the civil war that followed the February and October Revolutions of 1917 pushed a great number of Russian citizens to its adjacent territories, bringing about a macabre scene of exilic space during the age of human relocation. The number of migrants may have ranged from 800,000 to 2,000,000, comprising people from all classes of society (Karetnyk 2017, xiv).
2. Bunin's sense of nostalgia was influenced not only by his sense of exile after the Russian Revolution, but also by his youth, when he witnessed the decline and eventual collapse of the Bunin clan. Bunin was born into a family of gentry in Voronezh province, but he did not experience the prosperity of the Bunins. In his day, the Russian landed gentry in general was facing its downfall due to the policy of "the emancipation of the serfs in 1861" and "the growing industrialization of Russia" (Colin 1955, 158). Economic instability confronted the Bunin family: Bunin's father continued to squander his life until he reached utter ruin.
3. Bunin's "mnemonic project" (41) in *Dark Avenues* recalls Nabokov's "The Visit to the Museum" (1939), but how it differs from Nabokov's space is that Bunin's country estates/cities are based on real places or a place in Bunin's memories that carries with it a specific spiritual significance to which the protagonists long to attach themselves. Unlike Nabokov who connects *this world* to *the otherworld* of cosmic synchronization, Bunin searches for what has existed in *this world* and through memory constructs what has erased, seeking relief from suffering loss.
4. Nabokov was forced into exile due to the establishment of the Bolshevik regime in Russia and later the Nazis in Germany. His father was killed in Berlin on 28 March 1922 while protecting his friend Pavel Milyukov, a liberal politician and publisher, from assassination. The death of his father became a nightmare in Nabokov's life. Later, he escaped the Nazis as he feared his Jewish wife Véra Slonim and their son would be persecuted.
5. For further reading, see Brian Boyd's *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years*.
6. The story "Signs and Symbols" was written in English and first published under the title "Symbols and Signs" in *The New Yorker* on May 15, 1948. When republished, it was reverted to its original title "Signs and Symbols" in *Nabokov's Dozen* (1958). Since childhood, Nabokov was trilingual—Russian, French, and English. Most of the literary works he created in Europe were written in Russian. In America, he primarily wrote in English, and some of his early works were translated into English.
7. His name implies associations with the Devil/Satan roaming in darkness, the angel Cherub/Cherubim guarding the gate of Eden (the guardian of knowledge), and the Jewish exiles from Babylon. In "Decoding Vladimir Nabokov's 'The Return of Chorb,'" Shrayer decodes the name of Chorb in Russian and English (Shrayer 1997, 181). "Чорб" is linked with "чёрт," "the Devil/Satan" (181). In addition, as Чорб sounds similar to the English "cherub," it is possible that it "refers to an angel of a high order found in the earliest books of the Old Testament" (184), and the angels here are cherub and cherubim, who "symbolize God's highest potencies, sovereignty, and goodness" (184), and were "created prior to the Garden of Eden and served as a model used by God in the creation of man" (184). The return of Chorb parallels "the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylonian captivity" (185), since

Cherub carries "a keen sense of uprootedness" (185), referring "either to the leader of the group of Jews who returned to Israel" (185), "or to an unknown place in Babylon where these people came from" (185).

8. Vladimir E. Alexandrov notes that "[Nabokov] is remarkably successful in demonstrating how both he and his characters are trapped in fatidic webs that abut a transcendent realm" (1994, 41).
9. For further reading, see Brian Boyd's "Nabokov's Transition from Russian to English: Repudiation or Evolution?"
10. In contrast to Bunin and Nabokov, Gazdanov left his country not because of anti-Soviet sentiment. He joined the White Army, not due to anti-Bolshevism, but simply out of curiosity (Pinkham 2014). The war led him to a life of exile as he became one of more than 150,000 refugees. (Pinkham 2014).
11. Gazdanov declared that Russian émigré literature did not exist (Bethea and Frank 2011, 201; Pinkham 2014).

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"America, America, Blasphemous Dream": Nietzsche's Metamorphoses and the Immigrant's Existential Crisis in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*

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Abstract:

Mario Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim* traces the existential and cultural dissonance that shapes the Angeluzzi-Corbo family's struggle to reconcile inherited Italian values with the demands of American individualism. Drawing on Friedrich Nietzsche's "Three Metamorphoses" from *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, this analysis frames Lucia Santa as the "great dragon," a figure who enforces ancestral authority and preserves inherited values. Her children occupy various stages of Nietzsche's spiritual transformation: Sal and Lena adopt the Camel's burdens of duty, Gino and Vinnie charge forward as defiant Lions, and Larry and Octavia reach toward the creative autonomy of the Child. Yet none of the children actualize the Overman's radical self-creation. Cultural inheritance and the tension between ethnic loyalty and American individualism obstruct their progression. Rather than fulfilling Nietzsche's teleology, the narrative exposes its limitations. Puzo reframes metamorphosis not as transcendence, but as a cycle of interruption. Through this reconfiguration, the novel foregrounds the fractured subjectivity of second-generation immigrants, who must construct identity amid conflicting imperatives without ever fully reconciling them.

Keywords: metamorphosis, assimilation, existentialism, bicultural identity, Nietzsche, great dragon

Mario Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim* dramatizes the generational conflict within an Italian-American immigrant family, emphasizing the psychological and cultural strain of assimilation. Lucia Santa, the formidable matriarch of the Angeluzzi-Corbo family, fiercely upholds traditional Italian values such as loyalty, sacrifice, and communal duty, insisting that her American-born children honor these ideals. Yet, as the promises and pressures of American life pull them away from this inherited ethos, her children begin to resist. Their rejection of these roles initiates a crisis of identity that is not only cultural but also existential in nature. As Thomas J. Ferraro notes, Puzo's depiction of Italian-American life explores the "dynamics of reproduction, evolution, and invention" (500)—a process that mirrors Friedrich Nietzsche's model of spiritual evolution in *Thus Spake Zarathustra.* Nietzsche envisions this evolution culminating in the emergence of the Overman, a figure who transcends inherited norms to create self-defined values. In his parable of the "Three Metamorphoses," the spirit evolves

from the burden-bearing Camel to the defiant Lion and, finally, to the creative Child. Each figure in the younger generation of the Angeluzzi-Corbo family reflects one of these stages, yet none completes the existential journey to selfhood in its entirety. Their failure to do so stems from the cultural weight which they carry as second-generation immigrants, inheriting a rigid framework of Italian values from Lucia and other community elders. As they attempt to assimilate into American society, the Angeluzzi-Corbo children engage in a proto-existential struggle to reject these inherited values and construct independent identities. While their trajectory echoes Nietzsche's model of spiritual metamorphosis, Puzo's novel complicates this framework by demonstrating how familial duty and entrenched cultural norms continue to obstruct the possibility of genuine self-definition: none of the novel's youth reaches the status of the Overman.

Nietzsche's parable of the "Three Metamorphoses," which appears early in his proto-existential treatise *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, tracks a spirit's journey from burdened submission to rebellious defiance and, ultimately, to the creation of personal ideals and freedoms.[1] The first stage, the Camel, symbolizes a spirit that bears the weight of external demands and societal values. Of this stage, Nietzsche writes, "What is hard? Thus asks the load-bearing spirit; thus it kneels down like a camel and wants to carry a heavy load" (18). This submission, however, sets the stage for a profound evolution. Alone in a desert, the Camel becomes the Lion, which "freedom it wants to take as its prey, and to be master of its own desert" (18). The Lion rejects the constraints of inherited values and societal expectations, confronting the "great dragon"—a symbol of sociocultural dogma—whose skin is inscribed with the command, "Thou shalt" (18). In this act, the Lion refuses to passively accept external authority, but this defiance alone does not create new values; it simply dismantles previous constraints. Furthermore, a spirit that continues the journey to selfhood must evolve beyond the Lion and progress to the Child—a symbol of both renewal and boundless creativity. Nietzsche describes the Child as "a game, a self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yea-saying" (19). The Child creates the opportunity for self-realization, but it does not fully actualize it. It is the Overman who fully seizes this potential, living according to self-created values. As Nietzsche emphasizes, the Overman is the ultimate aim of this journey: "I teach you the Overman. Man is something that shall be overcome" (7). Thus, the Overman stands as the ideal, fully self-created individual who transcends inherited values and defines existence on its own terms.

In *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, Lucia Santa embodies Nietzsche's metaphor of the "great dragon," a formidable force of inherited tradition and cultural authority that her children must confront while forging their own identities in America. In a new, American world, which the narrator describes as "a sadder wilderness, where the language was strange" (7), Lucia clings to these traditions as a safeguard against the alienation and uncertainty of assimilation. Her devotion to tradition stems from a fear of losing the cultural bonds which she believes sustain her family, making her reluctant to let go of the past. This fear manifests in her treatment of her children. For example, during a tense kitchen argument, when Octavia expresses her ambition to attend night school and become a teacher, Lucia dismisses her dream and presses her to pursue a more traditionally feminine line of work: "you, such

a beautiful dressmaker, you earn good money" (12). Lucia's response highlights her belief that traditional roles provide stability, while untested paths lead to instability. Furthermore, when Octavia later rejects the notion of marrying a "guinea," Lucia retorts with sharp sarcasm: "ah, this is how a daughter speaks to her mother in America? Brava. You would make a fine schoolteacher" (23-24). This remark reasserts the matriarch's control, framing Octavia's independence as disloyalty to family and culture. In Nietzsche's philosophy, the "great dragon" symbolizes the overwhelming societal forces that suppress individual freedom, and Lucia embodies this force, imposing a rigid framework of cultural values on her children. Through her actions, she perpetuates the cultural dogma that stifles their attempts at self-definition. Lucia's treatment of Octavia underscores the tension between the preservation of cultural identity and the individual's right to pursue personal freedom, a tension that defines the novel's portrayal of an existential push and pull.

What is more, Lucia's strict enforcement of these norms extends to her son Gino during Vincenzo's wake. In the Mulberry Street funeral parlor, she accuses Gino of neglecting familial duty, stating, "you never went to see your father in his coffin" and "you never had time to comfort your own flesh and blood" (248). This public rebuke affirms Lucia's role as a guardian of Italian tradition, insisting that familial obligations outweigh individual desires, which she views as threats to the collective strength which is essential for immigrant survival. These lines also illustrate Lucia's function as the enforcer of a collective identity, where Gino's personal pursuits—such as spending time with friends or grieving in solitude—constitute betrayals that undermine the family's unity, a core tenet of her cultural heritage. As Evan Brier notes, Lucia's authoritarian control reflects the power dynamics of a world in which she must navigate survival alone, following the collapse or death of her male partners (Brier 290). Furthermore, Lucia's self-perception as the family's guiding force, as Anthony J. Tamburri notes, positions her as "the bearer of light, possessing that requisite vision that will allow her to bring her family forward toward a better way of life" (45). This vision, Tamburri suggests, drives Lucia to maintain strict control. Her husbands' failures—Anthony's death in a work accident and Frank's mental collapse—leave her to lead alone, reinforcing her dragon-like authority. Thus, Lucia stabilizes the family but hinders her children's efforts to craft new identities, personifying the Nietzschean "dragon" they must challenge.

Furthermore, other older-generation Italian immigrants—such as Zia Louche and the gossiping women of Tenth Avenue—reinforce cultural dogma by championing the Italian virtues of duty and family cohesion that Lucia Santa strives to instill in her children, thereby strengthening her role as the novel's Nietzschean "dragon." For example, during a debate over an old Italian scandal, the narrator notes, "it amused Octavia to see her mother defer to Zia Louche and the old crone valiantly do battle for her mother, each of them treating the other like a duchess" (14). As a figure even older than Lucia, Zia Louche embodies an even deeper, more entrenched connection to Italian tradition than Lucia herself. Lucia's deference to Zia Louche signals not merely respect, but also an affirmation of the very cultural order that the matriarch seeks to impose on her own children, reinforcing her authority as a formidable enforcer of that order. The collective mindset of the neighborhood women further

clarifies cultural stakes when the narrator observes, "the women talked of their children as they would of strangers. It was a favorite topic, the corruption of the innocent by the new land" (6). These lines reveal the older generation's fear that America corrupts the Italian identity of their children, a fear that Robert A. Orsi explains in historical context, noting that "many of the immigrants were haunted by the fear that their entire social order would collapse in the new world; their fears led them to suspect that the very air and water of the United States were weakening the domus" (107).[2] This fear justifies Lucia's intense devotion to preserving her family's cultural values. What is more, such fear turns to condemnation when the women discuss a young girl from the neighborhood: "what type of daughter was she who did not cut short her honeymoon on news of her godmother's illness, the summons issued by her own mother? A real whore" (6). The gossiping women's outrage at the young woman's failure to uphold familial obligation embodies the same relentless, moral absolutism that defines Lucia's role as a Nietzschean "dragon," unyielding in her commitment to preserving the cultural order. In this way, the women's shared judgments not only reflect but also bolster Lucia's uncompromising drive to enforce tradition, reinforcing her as a formidable enforcer of the values that sustain her family.

Where Lucia Santa and the older generation of Italian immigrants to which she belongs represent a Nietzschean "dragon," enforcing rigid Italian cultural ideals, the matriarch's youngest children, Sal and Lena, embody Nietzsche's Camel stage, bearing the burdens of her expectations through obedience, passivity, and consistent physical proximity to their mother. For example, Lena shares a bed with Lucia, and both she and Sal are the most homebound children, especially early in the novel, staying inside the home and remaining closest to their mother. While the outside world represents the pervasive influence of American culture, Sal and Lena stay sheltered within the home, absorbing Lucia's traditional identity with little exposure to external shifts. Moreover, after Sal and Gino narrowly escape injury by jumping over a bonfire, Lucia responds by beating Gino with a tackeril. Terrified, the boys run inside to hide under the bed. When they emerge, Sal asks, "Is Mamma still mad?" (136). Sal's concern for Lucia's mood contrasts with Gino's silence, highlighting Sal's constant awareness of his mother's emotional state and his desire to maintain peace. This sensitivity to Lucia's emotions further illustrates Sal's role as the obedient Camel, constantly striving to fulfill his mother's expectations. The same obedience surfaces during a Sunday feast celebrating Larry's child's First Communion, when "Sal and Lena cleared the table and started washing the mountain of dishes" (265). Here, the pair takes on responsibilities without complaint, demonstrating a quiet acceptance of their roles within the family structure. This sense of passivity deepens during an emotionally charged scene as the family prepares to leave its Tenth Avenue home for the final time. While Lucia breaks down in grief over leaving the familiar space, Octavia, focused on the logistics of the move, urges her to hurry. Lena steps in with, "leave her alone," and Sal adds, "we'll bring her down, you go ahead" (273). Sal and Lena shield their mother from Octavia's impatience, further underscoring their passive yet load-bearing role. Through these actions—serving, protecting, and remaining close—Sal and Lena exemplify Nietzsche's Camel, quietly upholding Lucia's values and

expectations while remaining tightly bound to the familial and cultural identity which the mother works to preserve.

As a figure of rebellion in the novel, Gino Corbo embodies Nietzsche's Lion stage—rejecting Lucia Santa's cultural ideals to forge his own path through American individualism and defiance of familial constraint. Nietzsche's Lion represents the spirit's revolt against the "Thou Shalt" of external authority, confronting the "dragon" of imposed values with the courage to create freedom. Gino enacts this Lion-like rebellion through both physical and ideological defiance, challenging not only Lucia Santa's authority but also the norms of the Italian immigrant community. In a childhood scene on Tenth Avenue, Gino resists the dragon, like Zia Louche when she tries to restrain him during a game. The narrator describes the incident, noting that "the boy spat at Zia Louche, the fake spit of Italian women that shows contempt in a quarrel. It got him free, and he was so quick that his mother hit his face only a glancing blow as he sped away" (17). This gesture of mock contempt, followed by Gino's rapid escape, symbolizes his rejection of communal control; it privileges personal autonomy over deference. Similarly, Gino's decision to enlist in the Army against Lucia Santa's wishes further affirms his rebellion, marking a deliberate break from his mother's authority and a step toward asserting his independence (266). This act not only severs him from the tenement and familial oversight but also represents his attempt to identify as American, choosing to fight in the American army and asserting national allegiance in direct opposition to his inherited Italian identity. His enlistment aligns with the ideology of Fred L. Gardaphé, an Italian American literary historian who argues that becoming "American" often requires second-generation Italian immigrants "to defy our parents, our grandparents, and anyone or anything else that reminded us of our non-American ancestry" (16). Yet Gino's attempt at ethnic transformation falters, as American society would likely continue to view him through a lens of ethnic difference. As Matteo Pretelli observes, "after Pearl Harbor, together with Japanese Americans and German Americans, many ethnic Italians saw their private liberties restrained, while those few that were considered national security threats were interned for the duration of the war" (8). Therefore, although Gino enlists with the hope of achieving a new identity, his rebellion remains incomplete; he breaks from inherited ideals but cannot fully transcend them, as the American society he seeks to join would still cast him as an immigrant "other." He remains, then, in Nietzsche's Lion stage: defiant, but not yet free to create new values of his own.

Gino's rebellion also manifests through ideological defiance, as he rejects Lucia Santa's values of sacrifice and communal duty, embracing a vision of personal freedom that aligns with Nietzsche's Lion. His refusal to accept the labor-driven immigrant life becomes evident in his hatred of the railroad job; in fact, such hatred becomes a feeling so intense that "sometimes his body actually chilled, his hair bristled, and his blood turned so sour in his mouth that he could not help walking away from the light to the darkened windows to stare down at those imprisoned streets sentineled by yellow lamp posts" (264). This moment, as Gino reflects on his work, reveals his contempt for the toil Lucia Santa considers virtuous; instead, he views it as entrapment. His pursuit of self-interest over

familial obligation culminates in Lucia Santa's realization that within her son, "a terrible hatred rose, and she thought, most of all he wanted his own pleasure. He had wanted to live like a rich man's son" (274). This reflection, as Lucia Santa confronts Gino's departure, underscores the boy's ideological commitment to personal pleasure, defying her ethos of collective sacrifice. In her analysis of *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, June Dwyer discusses Gino's transformation, noting that Lucia Santa realizes he "would never come home after the war. That he would become a pilgrim and search for strange Americas in his dreams" (Puzo 274; qtd. in Dwyer 62). Dwyer both notes and emphasizes Gino's search for personal freedom and his rejection of the traditional immigrant experience, reflecting his desire to embrace a new American identity (62). This "pilgrimage" captures Gino's rejection of his familial roots and aligns with Nietzsche's Lion-like revolt against inherited authority, marking Gino's defiance as both a literal and ideological rebellion against his past.

Nietzsche's Lion stage also manifests in Vinnie, whose defiance of Lucia's rigid Italian values emerges through his deliberate isolation—a fierce rejection of the matriarch's ideals of familial unity and the sanctity of work. For example, early in the novel, Vinnie distances himself physically and emotionally, positioning himself "high over Tenth Avenue," where he "brooded on his window sill, the long line of rooms behind him dark and empty, the door from the hall to the kitchen securely locked." (18). From this perch, he detaches from both the vibrant street below and the family he isolates himself from as if "he was self-exiled" (18). His solitude asserts autonomy, dismantling Lucia's vision of unity. What is more, Vinnie's resentment toward Octavia further reveals his estrangement. The narrator notes this hatred, stating that Vinnie "hated her [Octavia], too. She had betrayed him. She had not protested their mother's sending him to work" (19-20). This hatred stems from his forced labor, where "he would carry heavy baskets of bread in the hot sun while other boys swam in the river, played stickball and 'Johnny Ride the Pony,' and hitched onto the backs of trolley cars to see the city" (18). The task embodies Lucia's fervent belief in work as a cornerstone of honor, a value she upholds when she gloats over "the bank books on Friday nights" (263). Vinnie's disdain for Octavia's complicity in his forced labor, as well as his rejection of the toil itself, further exposes his rebellion against the family's labor-centric ethos, severing ties to Lucia's sacred obligations. Yet, while rejecting these values, Vinnie does not replace them with new ideals. Instead, he isolates himself, his silence and anger filling the void left by his cultural abandonment. Through his physical withdrawal and emotional rejection, he channels the Nietzschean Lion's destructive roar, dismantling Lucia's world but failing to build a new one; he remains with only an empty, autonomous void.

Vinnie's suicide completes his Lion-like defiance because suicide is a deliberate act that not only goes against but also annihilates Lucia Santa's values of familial duty and survival, embodying Nietzsche's Lion stage through an ultimate rejection of inherited norms. In the aftermath of Vinnie's suicide, Larry confronts the engineer who witnesses the act—Lefty Fay—who insists, "Larry, I swear to Christ that's the way it seemed to me," claiming that Vinnie deliberately walked into a train engine. Larry responds with a chilling threat: "I'll crucify you," trying to erase the truth of Vinnie's choice and suppress the rebellion it represents against Lucia's world (244). The moment marks a key turning

point in Vinnie's struggle against his mother's unyielding control. Cognitive theories of suicide, as David Lester explains, emphasize that suicidal individuals often suffer "tunnel vision (cognitive constriction) and rigidity in thinking" (154), a condition that grips Vinnie as he narrows his vision to a single escape from the crushing demands of loyalty and labor. Caught in a matrix of oppressive familial expectations, he believes only two paths are available to him: submission or obliteration. Unable to embrace the conformity required by Lucia's system, he chooses death, believing that it is the only way to assert the autonomy he could never achieve within the strict boundaries of his family's values. In this act, he roars against the "Thou Shalt" of Lucia's world, fulfilling the Lion's role as destroyer of inherited authority. What is more, at Vinnie's funeral, Gino observes his brother's body lying on "white satin," with his "bones, his brows, his high, thin nose swelled like hills around his closed, hollowed eyes"—a grotesque transformation that marks Vinnie's "awareness of defeat" (251). Vinnie's suicide represents the Lion's destructive fury, obliterating the world he inherited. Yet, his death does not create anything new; his rebellion, powerful in its rejection, falls short of the Child's creative freedom. Rather than transcending the confines of his past by creating new values, Vinnie becomes trapped in a nihilistic void. His act of destruction leaves him in a tragic stasis, negating the world he could no longer bear, but failing to replace it with something transformative. His death reflects not the birth of new ideals, but the failure to overcome the limitations of his inherited world—a stark contrast to the Child's potential to create a future based on his own freedom.

In contrast, Larry's arc aligns him with the Nietzschean Child stage, as he shapes an identity rooted in American opportunity, transcending Lucia Santa's cultural ideals through leadership and self-reinvention. His transformation begins before the narrative even starts; on the novel's opening page, the narrator describes Larry riding on a horse "as straight and arrogantly as any western cowboy. His spurs were white, heavy sneakers, his sombrero a peaked cap studded with union buttons. His blue dungarees were fastened at the ankle with shiny, plated bicycle clips" (1). This image is not merely the depiction of a fashion choice; it symbolizes Larry's early embrace of the Nietzschean "sacred Yes," signaling a rejection of his Italian roots in favor of the mythos of the American cowboy. However, this persona is more aspirational than fully realized; it is an early stage in Larry's attempt to embody the mythic American ideals of autonomy and power. Later in the novel, Larry becomes "the president of a union, giving out jobs as grandly as a duke in Italy" (273). This moment signals Larry's rise to a position of authority within the American system, but it also reveals the persistence of his Italian heritage. Despite his newfound power, his actions—bestowing jobs with the grandiosity of an Italian duke—illustrate that he cannot fully sever his ties to his cultural past. Larry's ascent from an immigrant "dummy boy" to institutional leader reflects the Nietzschean Child's destruction of inherited values to make space for the new. Yet old-world sensibilities continue to shape this new identity. By embracing union work and the mobility it brings, Larry transforms labor from servitude to empowerment, reshaping his understanding of success and work. While he redefines labor as a means of empowerment, his exercise of authority still draws on the symbolic weight of his Italian roots, suggesting that his transformation remains incomplete. In his efforts to reinvent himself, Larry

reaches a pivotal moment where his American success remains intertwined with the legacy of his heritage. He may embody a new persona, but it continues to reflect the values of his upbringing. Larry's journey embodies the Nietzschean Child who, after rejecting the old, creates new values—but this process is not a clean break from the past. It is a continuous evolution, in which the old world lingers even as Larry strives to redefine himself in the new.

Embodying the imaginative spirit of Nietzsche's Child stage, Octavia, similar to Larry, forges her own identity, distancing herself from her mother's expectations through education and assertive self-direction. For example, early in the novel, Lucia Santa urges her daughter to become a dressmaker—a stable, familiar trade rooted in domestic tradition—but Octavia longs to attend night school with the goal of becoming a teacher (12). Her longing reflects more than ambition; it directly opposes the future her mother envisions for her. As Tamburri notes, "Octavia finds herself living in a not dissimilar interstitial space between old world and new, and in so doing, she must balance the presumed duties of a daughter with her own desires to break out of those traditional roles" (49). In Nietzschean terms, Octavia adopts the Lion's role by rejecting Lucia's values and asserting her own will. She envisions a future of intellectual purpose and personal growth rather than the familial duty her mother imposes. This outlook directly challenges Lucia, who clings to tradition out of fear and a desire to maintain control. However, rather than becoming trapped in a state of Lion-like defiance, Octavia shifts into the Child's role by creating new values through reinvention. While she ultimately does not attend night school, she refuses to relinquish her desire for teaching. Instead, she redirects that aspiration, becoming "a sewing teacher for the Melody Corporation, an organization promoting the sale of sewing machines. Octavia gave the free lessons that went with each purchase" (80). In this way, she pursues her goal of teaching through a creative reinvention of herself and her path, reaffirming her autonomy and rejecting the passive submission her mother expects. This shift from defiance to reinvention mirrors the Child's creative power in Nietzsche's framework, as Octavia transforms the world around her, asserting her individuality and vision for the future.

Octavia's actions continue to embody the imaginative freedom of Nietzsche's Child stage as she actively constructs a self-defined identity that breaks from her mother's traditional ideals. Through both her physical appearance and her rejection of conventional roles, she asserts a will to self-creation which transcends mere rebellion, transforming her values through imaginative reinvention. In a deliberate act of defiance, she dresses distinctly from the Italian women of the tenement, with the narrator noting that she "wanted to be everything these women were not! She wore a powder-blue suit and white gloves, as her high school teacher had done" (11). This aesthetic choice marks more than a personal preference; it signals a symbolic break from Lucia Santa's expectations of femininity and reflects Octavia's desire to inhabit a role grounded in intellectual purpose. As Rose De Angelis observes, "refusing to feed the male's sexual fantasies and his idea of woman as sex object, Octavia wears man-tailored suits and metaphorically crossdresses to 'redress' injustices" (39). Octavia's resistance, then, not only challenges the objectifying male gaze but also undermines Lucia's internalized version of femininity—one based on principles such as submission, decorum, and domestic beauty.

What is more, the daughter's rejection of marriage and motherhood further distances her from the values her mother upholds. For example, the narrator observes a conversation between the pair, noting that "Octavia smiled to make her words less cruel. She said, 'I just meant I don't want to get married or have children if I do. I don't want to give up my whole life just for that,'" prompting Lucia's lament, "'Ah, poor child of mine'" (24). The pity in Lucia's response reveals her unwavering belief in traditional female fulfillment, a belief that Octavia quietly dismantles. In place of this inherited vision, Octavia imagines a life shaped by her own aspirations. This act exemplifies the Child's role in Nietzsche's metamorphoses: to forget the past, generate new values, and say "yes" to a future of one's own making. Her choices reflect not just resistance but creative authorship, highlighting her continued pursuit of an identity grounded in self-determined meaning rather than filial duty.

The Fortunate Pilgrim conveys the existential and cultural struggles of the Angeluzzi-Corbo family in a way that echoes Nietzsche's "Three Metamorphoses," mapping an immigrant journey from obedience, to rebellion, to attempted reinvention. Lucia Santa enforces inherited Italian values as the Nietzschean "dragon," Sal and Lena absorb those burdens like obedient Camels, Gino and Vinnie rebel with Lion-like defiance, and Larry and Octavia reach toward the imaginative spirit of the Child. However, none of the children truly completes the journey to selfhood. Each of the children begins a metamorphosis, but none creates or lives by fully self-made values—the mark of Nietzsche's Overman. During a moment of shared lamentation between the older women of Twelfth Avenue concerning Lucia's misfortunes, one woman interjects and captures this failure in striking, ironic detail:

> True, true, and yet she has a grown daughter, a forelady—intelligent, married to a softer man. She has masculine children who would do credit to any mother. Lorenzo, married, giver of grandchildren, making his fortune in the bakery union; Gino, now a good dutiful boy, a head of the family that made you think of Italy with his hard work on the railroad and never in trouble with the police. Salvatore, who won medals in school and would surely be a professor. Lena, an Italian daughter of the old school, a worker in the home, ever obedient, ever dutiful. Look how they all respected Lucia Santa. The two married ones still gave money; Gino brought his pay envelope home unopened. (259)

Though the speaker offers admiration, the passage reveals how each child settles into a spiritual plateau. Larry, who once seemed to invent a new self through his rise in the union, earns praise not for autonomy but for fulfilling familiar roles such as marriage, income, and the provision of children. Similarly, Octavia's transformation ends in a conventional marriage, not in the intellectual independence she once pursued. Gino, who once defied tradition by enlisting in the Army and rejecting labor, becomes "dutiful," returning to the very values he once rejected. The Camels, Sal and Lena, never escape their initial obedience. These lives may appear stable, but inherited expectations define them. The passage reveals a deep irony: the children's "success" only reinforces Lucia's cultural vision, rather than dismantling it. What looks like becoming is, in fact, returning.

This failure stems not only from cultural pressure but also from internal contradiction. Even

the most imaginative characters—Larry and Octavia—struggle to reconcile their American aspirations with inherited duty. They live in a tension between two selves, caught between what Andrew Wong describes as "independent and interdependent modes" of identity (251). For bicultural individuals, this cognitive dissonance—the "uncomfortable feeling" that arises when one becomes "aware of some inconsistency among various attitudes, beliefs, and items of knowledge" (246)—is not a fleeting discomfort but a chronic state. In the world of *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, that switch between selves never resolves. The children remain suspended between the code of ethics they inherit and the freedom they desire. In this sense, the novel offers not the triumph of becoming, but the exhaustion of trying. The Angeluzzi-Corbo children begin to evolve, but their growth stalls under the weight of cultural memory and psychological strain. They stand just short of Nietzsche's Overman, with the contradiction of being both Italian and American, and both obedient and autonomous, ultimately haunting them.[3] *The Fortunate Pilgrim* dramatizes the immigrant condition as a tragic loop, a loop where the dream of reinvention gives way to a return, and where no act of self-creation fully escapes the gravity of heritage.

Endnotes:

1. *Thus Spake Zarathustra* adopts a narrative form, but scholars generally agree that Nietzsche conveys his philosophy through Zarathustra's voice, therefore marking the text as a treatise rather than a piece of fiction. For example, Thomas Brobjer declares, "Nietzsche's Zarathustra is Nietzsche! Or better, Nietzsche's Zarathustra is the sublimated Nietzsche!" (30), presenting Zarathustra as Nietzsche's idealized philosophical persona. Richard Gravil similarly asserts that Zarathustra acts as "an imaginary prophet, who is, of course, the mouthpiece for his [Nietzsche's] own beliefs" (21).
2. Although much of Orsi's work focuses exclusively on first generation Italian immigrants who settled in Harlem, the sentiment of this quotation applies broadly to Italian immigrants who settled throughout each of New York's several boroughs.
3. Dennis Barone, focusing on Italian-American Protestantism, makes a similar observation, noting, "from a multiplicity of texts, a message and a pattern may emerge: Italian American Protestantism as a negotiation between adopting the demands of Americanization and maintaining a cherished italianita" (137).This dynamic mirrors the Angeluzzi-Corbo children's struggle to reconcile Lucia Santa's traditional values with their American aspirations, reflecting their incomplete Nietzschean metamorphoses.

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The Body and Body Politics

Habeas Corpus:
How Paul Lynch's *Prophet Song* exposes that corporal existence is dependent upon a hegemonic social construct

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Abstract:

Habeas Corpus directly translates to showing of a body and is commonly accepted as a right to a trial; this article explores the subjective nature of what recognises a body worthy of trial within a social construct and how hegemonic influence can present or hide a body at will. The article uses the philosophical lens of Deleuze and Guattari, as their binary metaphor of "root versus rhizome" helps to define corporal subjectivity. The article is based on Paul Lynch's novel *Prophet Song* as a way of explaining the philosophy, as the dystopian novel provides examples of the shifting definitions of bodies at the will of the state. Furthermore, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence* are compared on a cartesian grid to explain the way a body can shift between definition or ambiguity dependent on the way it is presented to the public. The conclusion is that corporeal definition is contingent on the hegemonic interpretation of what defines a body within a social construct.

Keywords: Paul Lynch, Deleuze and Guattari, Rhizome, Slow Violence, Imagined Communities,

"Cogito, ergo sum"
René Descartes

"It is up to the state to decide what it believes or
does not believe according to its needs"
Paul Lynch

Habeas Corpus as a standard for justice, first assumes that a recognised body in question is allowed to be presented publicly at a trial within the social construct of the hegemonic state. Habeas corpus is assumed as a foundational moral law that gives constituents a right to be seen as a subject within the law. The latin phrase meaning "that you have the body" is interpreted as one's right to be allowed a trial before being removed from the construct, and is ultimately a subjective interpretation dependent on the hegemonic construct's need of self-preservation and is not a universal right. A social construct possesses the ability to change one's perception of what qualifies a body between various

states of definitive subjectivity and generic ether depending on the way that body is presented in media and the narrative attached to it. Long before the courtroom is entered, the language attached to a body can help or hinder one's right to a trial. Ultimately "habeas corpus", interpreted as "the right to a trial" is a construct's way of displaying a subject within a court appearance in order to classify it and support the schematic construct itself, but recognition or indifference of a subject's rights happens before the trial itself, as the body needs to be acknowledged as a participating subject before it is even allowed access to the judicial procedures, laws, and regulations the construct has put in place. Therefore, the right of "habeas corpus" is a more malleable term that extends beyond the court room itself into less defined borders dependent upon a hegemonic construct and the presentation of a body in media. Literary texts are the tool to this fluidity as they can expose a body with clear definition to a sympathetic public, or obscure a constituent behind hyperbolic rhetoric or bureaucratic mundanity. One can draw from a plethora of examples where human bodies within a construct were denied the perceived human right of habeas corpus through creative linguistic justifications and a surrounding media story. To expose the way that a defined body, or subject, within a social construct can behave as a floating signifier destabilised within a hegemonic construct, this paper uses the theoretical lens of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari as a base to support its claim; as their extended binary metaphor of root versus rhizome helps to clarify the way a mind can shift seemingly static nouns into obscure clouds and confusion. The paper then clarifies their metaphor by adding a contemporary argument positioning Benedict Anderson's idea of "imagined communities" with Rob Nixon's idea of "slow violence" alongside one another to help explain the subjective nature of bodies in question. Finally, Paul Lynch's 2023 novel *Prophet Song* provides examples of the way literature acts as a catalyst to define a body within a social construct, or return it to its non-definitive ether, as the novel provides examples of both happening simultaneously for the reader. Ultimately a physical body within a social construct behaves like a floating signifier, or agreed essence detached from existence, and literary grounding enables attachment and recognition (habeas corpus) before the body in question is allowed to be publicly recognised in a court. Paul Lynch's novel *Prophet Song* reveals that the human right of habeas corpus is ultimately a subjective interpretation dependent on hegemonic control allowing the body to exist within a social construct, and furthermore, the novel exposes a hegemonic construct's ability to metamorphose its constituents into various classifications dependent on convenience and self-preservation.

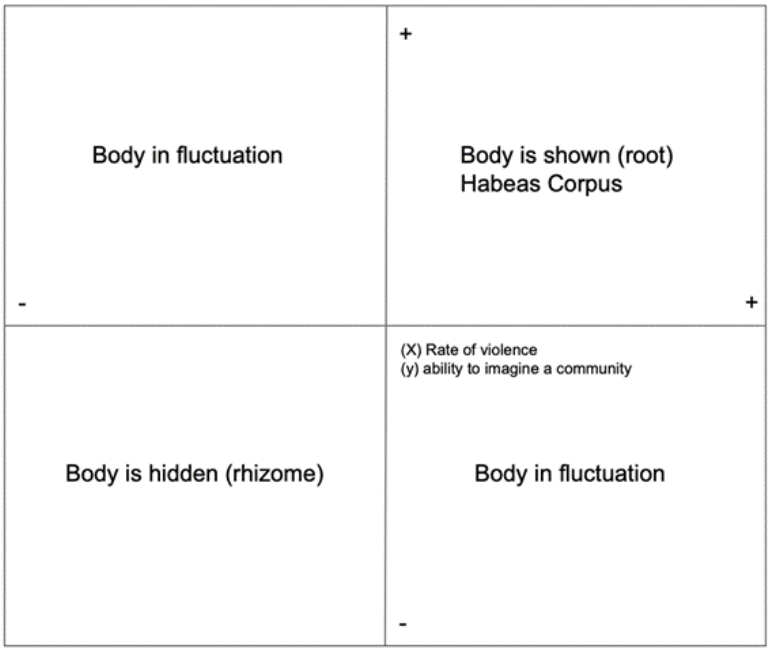
This is my body, this is my blood

To first claim that an existing body can behave as a floating signifier detached from corporality, one can turn to the theoretical lens of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and their extended metaphor of root versus rhizome. Deleuze and Guattari wrote *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) with the intention to destabilise perceived-rational thought and help the reader question definitive boundaries they have long believed as dogma within their social construct. The theorists wrote these two seminal books with an intentional lack of clarity so that the reader practices

projecting a definition on a text instead of a text classifying its reader. At times, this attempt at creative free-thinking can read like the two authors throwing a box of mixed metaphors down an academic staircase to a basement publisher, but the intention was commendable. Therefore, this paper does something that the two theorists would most likely resist, as it attempts to organise their thoughts and claims as a base on a cartesian grid (explained later). Within many of the overlapping metaphors, there is one constant in their writing; nothing is rationally static and all thought is constantly evolving and taking on new shapes dependent on perspective. It is a post-structuralist claim building off Nietzsche's existentialism and Derrida's linguistic interpretations in response to Lacan and Freudian psychoanalysis, but ultimately helps illustrate that bodies one can see in front of us can be interpreted in varying degrees of existence depending on the essence attached to the proper noun. To make a claim that a body does not exist when the physical form is before you is a paradox similar to "fake news" or "alternative facts"; however, whether or not this body exists to the extent that it is recognised as subject within a hegemonic social construct worthy of judicial empathy and allowed to defend itself at a trial is subject for debate. Many urban citizens could recognise a suspended disbelief or personal justification in their morning commute as they travel past constituents in need and outside the recognition of justice. A simple scroll through a TikTok feed will take the modern viewer past a stimulating menagerie of creative human rights abuses to bodies without trials or recognition regardless of UN regulations. Although these bodies physically exist, they behave like floating signifiers within a construct detached from essence requiring literary grounding to trigger our sympathetic engagement. Although the viewer may see the body, the body is not recognised and justice is not defended before a court. Deleuze and Guattari (D&G) loosely define the difference between essence and existence utilising the metaphor of a root versus a rhizome in their introductory chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*; a root being a hegemonic-defined object and a rhizome being more of an ambiguous cloud open to creative interpretation beyond accepted norms. D&G make the claim that these perceived-definitive boundaries are psychologically instilled and merit the possibility of reversibility. D&G state, "A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicals (...) Rhizome connects any point to any other point (...) The rhizome is an antigenealogy. It is a short-term memory or anti-memory," (D&G 1458). Taking this as a metaphor, the rhizome would be an object beyond confirmed definition but still within the cloud of existence. Being detached from definition it is also detached from the sympathy or morality of a hegemonic construct as one cannot define the "thing" in any ontological sense but can describe the cloud surrounding it. The opposite of a rhizome is a root, being something that is static within clearly defined borders, similar to a proper noun that is agreed upon. D&G state that this definitive rationality is dependent upon a larger hegemonic order as, "History is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus," thus the classification of "roots" is a product of some kind of hegemonic social control (D&G 1460). For example, a homeless man could remain a generic rhizomatic body often ignored as an individual until an event, like a police conflict, has the public focus on him; at this point media could root him as an individual with rights by stating his name and

his story or, conversely, make him into a rhizome by grouping him with a cloud of language associated with him; immigrant, alcoholic, homeless, etc, permitting dismissal. However, one should not walk away from this theory thinking that the social order is static, as the ultimate claim here is that nothing remains defined in one category for long and everything is shifting depending on perspective. Objects and bodies, like symbols, are constantly fluctuating in and out of definition. For a contemporary example one could look at the definitions of gender and the way that it would shift depending on which corner of the planet one looks at defined genders or which historical context one finds oneself within; the classifications behave as roots or rhizomes depending on the conversation and the convenience of the hegemonic power structure in control. Defining these roles is something that a hegemonic order attempts to do through the law, but one should not delude oneself into thinking that this law has permanence or is grounded in some kind of universal morality. One can see this alchemy of bodily classifications in action during a trial, as the ceremony of the trial does nothing more than deliver labels to objects within the social construct; branding constituents into binary classifications such as "innocent vs. guilty" or "prosecution vs. defence" in order to draw temporary borders on floating signifiers. Seldom would a trial end with the sentencing of "the accused was a bit of both depending on the way you look at it" or the plaintiff "could see where the defendant was coming from" which is probably a more rational sentencing but would not support a confidence in the social order. If one was to follow the thought of D&G then everything would be in a state of fluctuation and metaphoric rhizomes or roots are only cloudy or definitive depending on the moment when they are ontologically studied. Surely the standard of deviance has changed in the last 50 years and what defines good and bad fluctuates with time, so then do bodies within a social construct. Then one can deduce that the purpose of a trial is more about the state performing itself into existence and limiting a constituent's thinking into binary classifications set by a hegemonic construct justifying its monopolisation of violence under the guise of ethical-judicial permanence as all classifications could be argued into different categories depending on linguistic interpretation and deconstruction. D&G illustrate the ability to shift even the most seemingly concrete nouns from ambiguous (rhizome) to defined (root) by perceptual influence and thus one can see the state's ability to define a body within its hegemonic control as existent and worthy of a trial or a floating signifier within an anonymous mass.

Setting D&G's claim that bodies are not static and can fluctuate between ambiguous (rhizome) and concrete (root), we can turn to Benedict Anderson and Rob Nixon to provide insight into how this metamorphosis is done using literature. The formation of a body recognised by the hegemonic construct as worthy of display at a trial can be organised using a scale where the two authors' central ideas of "Imagined Communities" and "Slow Violence" are on a cartesian grid with D&G's metaphor as background. The x,y axis have a gradient scale of "rate of violence" and "imagined community" to illustrate the fluid nature of a body in question and how literature can aid the formation/ deformation of a body across this field.



First, for a body to be recognised by a hegemonic construct, habeas corpus, it helps if it is attached to a community one can imagine and attach sympathy to. For example, atrocities of school shootings in suburban communities are much more likely to merit public sympathy in Western media compared to yet another civil war in a forgotten Central African nation due to the fact that the former social construct is easily imagined by the viewer. Despite the disproportionate number of victims, one tragedy will form names and personalities (roots) whereas the other will be left in a generic cloud often labeled "tribal warfare" (rhizome). In 1983 Benedict Anderson explained this recognition of cultures when he made the claim, "People don't precede their cultures but are formed through culture," (Anderson 112). It is a basic existential claim stating that the existence of nations do not precede the essence imagined by their constituents who need to continually remind and perform this community into existence. One can then see national parades, anthems, and sporting events not as just jovial celebrations, but performances of hegemonic self-preservation in an attempt to convince the collective public imagination of their social construct's existence. If the performance is convincing enough, then the community can be imagined and sympathised with, but if the performance is absent then the community remains ambiguous. However, these positions should not be placed in binary opposition to one another, but placed on a gradient in order to remind the viewer that this is not a static definition, as reporting and literature can influence one's ability to imagine a community. In Martha C. Nussbaum's essay "Cultivating Humanity" she agrees with this concept when she states, "A major part of the social role of the literary artist (...) was to promote our sympathetic understanding of all outcast or oppressed people, by giving their strivings voice," and in giving voice we begin to imagine the community (Nussbaum 2315). Nussbaum goes on, "To allow inside one's mind people who seem alien and frightening is to show a capacity for openness and responsiveness that goes against the grain of many cultural stereotypes of self-sufficiency (...) to disturb us," and it is this disturbance that moves the position of a body in question along the gradient axis (Nussbaum 2316). However, this perspective also means that a group of people remains beyond the

responsibility of law unless the performance of their community is convincing outside the hegemonic perspective, much to the Palestinian's frustration, and can be discredited by literature's dismissive ability to hide bodies behind objective labels. Anderson explains, "What matters is not the falsity\genuineness of a community but the style in which the nation is imagined," meaning that despite the honest intentions of a body to exist and be seen, it is up to the hegemonic order to accept the performance before this body is delivered justice (Anderson 111). If a hegemonic construct refuses to report or imagine a group of people into existence, then the bodies within the community are not fully formed and thus outside the right of habeas corpus. Literature and reporting can help a reader imagine a community and thus show the bodies within, but one should remember that the converse is also true as reporting also permits the dismissal of a community or ambiguous grouping of bodies behind labeled masses.

Despite the ability to imagine a community one can still find examples of casually turning constituents into collateral damage; to explain this indifference, one can use Rob Nixon's idea of "Slow Violence". Nixon presents the idea of slow violence as, "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all," and thus a violence that renders the defendants involved as not shown for judicial recourse due to the length of time they were violated (Nixon 2). For Nixon, the rate at which violence occurs correlates to the litigious reaction from the hegemonic construct in retributive justice. He explains, "different kinds of disaster possess unequal heft. Falling bodies, burning towers, exploding heads, avalanches, volcanoes, and tsunamis have a visceral, eye-catching and page-turning power that tales of slow violence, unfolding over years, decades, even centuries, cannot match," and thus if violence is too slow the sympathetic response will be more apt to be met with apathetic indifference or kafkaesque bureaucracy (Nixon 3). Connecting this to the larger claim, slow violence appeals to the metaphoric rhizome, where it is diffuse and hard to define and by contrast fast violence is noticed, defined, and begs for a response. Certainly the public bludgeoning of children would more easily define victim and perpetrator than the slow poisoning of children through cancer rates by dumping toxic tech products into their drinking water; one shows the bodies (roots) where the latter remains diffuse (rhizome). Optimistically, literature has the ability to speed up the perception of violence, as toxic cancer rates may take years to develop after said river is polluted, but a well written report may make the reader perceive this as breaking news that demands immediate attention. The rate at which violence happens does not necessarily correlate to the rate at which the mind perceives it thanks to its literary reporting. As Nixon explains, "In a world permeated by insidious, yet unseen or imperceptible violence, imaginative writing can help make the unapparent appear, making it accessible and tangible by humanising drawn-out threats inaccessible to the immediate senses. Writing can challenge perceptual habits that downplay the damage slow violence inflicts," (Nixon 15). Therefore, media and reporting have the ability to push an audience to recognition, or seeing the bodies. However, what Nixon neglects to point out is that, by contrast, media and literature can also slow the perception of violence by sedating the public with assurances

that the immediate danger "falling bodies and exploding heads" are on-going, chronic, and inevitable thus lulling the population to indifference. Even though one might be able to imagine a community and see the images of victims on a screen, the reporting of the story influences the rate at which violence is perceived; therefore, breaking news on rising ocean levels might be met with the same reaction as, yet another, missile landing in a public market in the Middle East. The rate at which violence is perceived correlates to an audience's ability to see the bodies as worthy of habeas corpus.

Pulling these theoretical concepts together in conclusion, D&G claim that all bodies are in fluctuation on a perceptual binary plane of defined or diffuse and use the metaphor of roots versus rhizomes to help explain; Nixon and Anderson expose ways that literature can influence an audience's perception of these bodies dependent on one's ability to imagine the community and perceive the rate of violence. All of this together supports the claim that despite habeas corpus being a universal human right, the literature and reporting influences the hegemonic power structure's ability to define or hide constituent's bodies from the public. Therefore, literature and media have the ability to affect the fluidity of a body between quadrants if the state allows the freedom of the press by exposing awareness of a plight or increasing the rate at which the violence is perceived. Then the larger question comes to light of, who controls the publication and reception of literature and media reporting? Although one might put this monopoly of violence within the sovereignty of the state, this would discredit the independent publishers or casual conversations amongst the public; after all, only the most dictatorial of regimes have that kind of control over the publishing and censorship of media. Therefore, one must think more broadly of a hegemonic social construct, which is, of course, connected to state judicial institutions, as possessing the ability to define bodies before the public perception. Conclusively, habeas corpus is not a universal right, as the hegemonic social construct possesses ultimate sovereignty for its constituents as it controls whether or not a body exists to begin with.

Prophet Song

After establishing this theoretical claim, that bodies are non-definitive and recognition within a court and judicial trial first depends on one defining a body within a social construct, one can turn to *Prophet Song* to give examples of literature's ability to move bodies across quadrants. Lynch gives examples of a state's ability to affect the rate at which violence is perceived and hide individuals in diffuse groups rather than imagining the community. Lynch exposes that it is a hegemonic power that possesses the ability to allow a body to exist and merit justice within the perception of the public. *Prophet Song,* at face value, is a dystopian novel where a draconian state confines and tortures its constituents in creative ways for the reader's cringing, only to be met with an unsatisfying ending absent of resolution. The book behaves like an open wound that demands attention but is frustratingly neglected. However, the narrative excels far beyond a mass-market fiction and has reached critical literary acclaim as the book speeds recognisable background violence in our lives, reflecting contemporary political states, while placing the plot within a community the first world

can imagine; thus the novel forces a reader to confront their indifference to related stories they have scrolled past and attach some unfortunate atrocities slightly closer to home. Ireland, being a community most can imagine in developed nations, is the appropriate setting for witnessing the slow devolution from free-democracy into draconian torture-state delivered in less than 250 pages; current readers may relate to residing around page 180 when they look at the media that currently surrounds them and thus are fated to read into the future of a potentiality. Much like other contemporary author's positing their novels as frustratingly impenetrable, Lynch rejects traditional grammar and punctuation, thus making this less of a subconscious holiday beach read and more of a self-induced lobotomy demanding focus throughout. However, this intentional choice forces the reader to maintain focus, and not skim through the power of a state social construct in its ability to disregard the bodies of its constituents. Specifically, the novel exposes the ability of a hegemonic community to make its constituents appear and disappear at will without judicial repercussion. Although a work of fiction, one is haunted by connections easily made to various institutions that litter a contemporary timeline. The novel exposes that habeas corpus is not a universal right, but subjective on the hegemonic state's tolerance of a body to exist within a community and willingness to expose it to the public.

Although the novel depicts a totalitarian regime where the public within is ultimately victimised, the book starts by presenting the state as an imagined community dependent on the population's ability to agree it into existence. Lynch is presenting the reader with the law and dogma of a state that is existential and fluid, thus showing that morality is not rooted but open to interpretation. Lynch shows that law does not exist beyond a social construct and the essence imagined above reality, thus all justice is subjective. Lynch presents the triviality of this existential political-state at the beginning of the novel in two places, first through the protagonist's (Eilish) dream and secondly through the comments of her senile father. Early on in the novel Eilish is visited in a dream by a government official. This man is brave enough to explicitly remove the veil of essence covering the existence beneath stating, "The rule of law. That is what I said. You speak about this word rights as though you understand the word rights, show me what rights were born with man, show me what tablet they are written on, where nature has decreed it is so (....) you believe in rights that do not exist, the rights you speak of cannot be verified, they are a fiction decreed by the state, it is up to the state to decide what it believes or does not believe according to its needs, surely you understand this," and thus Lynch positions law and justice upon a subjective shell of a social construct, not innate dogma with deontological roots (Lynch 60). Relating this to the idea of habeas corpus exposes that there is no natural right in existence to a trial or an exhibition of the body accused, but this is merely a privilege delivered when the social construct wills it. The frustration in the novel is that the reader is presented with the construct's triviality while following the protagonist through their inability to exit. There is only one character who begins to detach from this hegemonic power and that is Eilish's father, whose battle with dementia actually seems to empower him out of the hegemonic ties. While reading the newspaper, something her father calls "the big lie", her father looks up and makes the claim,

"tradition is nothing more than what everyone can agree on – the scientists, the teachers, the institutions, if you change ownership of the institutions then you can change ownership of the facts, you can alter the structure of belief, what is agreed upon, that is what they are doing, Eilish, it is really quite simple, the NAP is trying to change what you and I call reality, they want to muddy it like water, if you say one thing is another thing and you say it enough times, then it must be so, and if you keep saying it over and over people accept it as true – this is an old idea, of course, it really is nothing new, but you're watching it happen in your own time and not in a book," (Lynch 26). Lynch puts this second realisation early on in the novel to expose that there is no moral grounding beneath the laws or justice imposed by the state, but it is a shell of media that is wrapped around a lacuna of morality; thus what we perceive as a universal human right is nothing more than media attention. This revelation of baseless morality from a dementia victim is quickly dismissed as ramblings, but as Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari also point out similar sentiments of the father in their book *Anti-Oedipus,* "Man and nature are not like two opposite terms confronting each other (...) rather, they are one and the same essential reality, the producer-product," and "Madness need not be all breakdown. It may also be breakthrough," essentially defending her father saying the same thing; that the social construct of law and justice is held up by hegemony and it takes a bit of madness to see through the essence veiling the absence of existence (Anti-Oedipus 8, 131). The ideas are nothing new, as Foucault, Nietzsche, and Kirkegård all build off one another to show that the construct is positioned on a subjective base, but it does contradict some Enlightenment thinkers who believe that there is a universal truth at the bottom of the law we are directed towards. Lynch presenting the draconian state as hegemonic essence at the start of the novel frustrates the reader into seeing that everything is rhizomatic and nothing is rooted, thus all bodies are open to existential interpretation dependent on the hegemonic social construct's ability to construct them or hide them through the use of media. As bodies begin to disappear or appear throughout the remainder of the novel the reader begins to understand the way that even the most corporal of beings become rhizomatic at the will of the hegemonic construct.

Imagination

Lynch shows the hegemonic construct's ability to shift constituent's bodies between defined classifications through the depiction of the father and the son in the novel, as both perceptually metamorphose between metaphoric roots and rhizomes throughout the course of the novel. Eilish's husband, despite his minor appearance in the novel, haunts the plot through his absence after his trade union affiliation and open-demonstration clashed with the ideals of the state and led to his corporal disappearance. Eilish summarises her husband's transient state when speaking with the official who came to her door stating, "My husband was arrested by the GNSB, she says, he was denied access to a solicitor and remains in detention without recourse to the courts, he is a trade unionist for the TUI and was just doing his job, we haven't heard from him since he was taken, we were supposed to be going to Canada for our family holidays next week, it has been very difficult for

the children," (Lynch 102). Eilish attempts to classify and define her husband as a body by using the various labels he was attached to within the construct. This is an attempt to draw lines around her husband with language and classify him within a definition and function so that the authorities can imagine him within the community as either a father, worker, union leader, or citizen. However, he is denied a trial as it is not in the state's interest to show the body as a solid form but instead keep him ambiguous within a rhizomatic cloud. What Eilish attempts to do throughout the start of the novel is independently initiate habeas corpus to her fellow constituents in the hegemonic construct and define her husband's body by continually attempting to get people to imagine him as a working part of the community. Unfortunately the power structures make it clear with their response to Eilish describing the law and who is corporeal enough to qualify as a body within it, "I'm afraid you are not alone, he says, but this is how things are now, and if I can speak between ourselves, it makes a right mockery of our oath," this oath being the rights, like habeas corpus, many of us assume as universal but are now revealed as subjective dependent on hegemonic agreement (Lynch 102). The fate of the father exposes a construct's ability to shift an individual from corporeal root to ambiguous rhizome in a group in spite of an illusion of a universality in human rights.

Where Eilish's husband transitions from defined body to an ambiguous ether, her son does the opposite as the construct benefits from antagonising him into an enemy. After summarising the disappearance of her husband and attempting to form him into a body for the authorities, Eilish hesitates to name her son, Mark, for the opposite reason. Naming her son would move his body from the rhizomatic child to an adult body utilised in the mechanical functioning of a social construct as either forcing him into military service or antagonising him into an enemy. When Eilish refuses to define her son, the authority responds, "as regards your son, what my colleague here says is correct, it would be the case that if you were to come and make a sworn statement, the department would be informed and we can wash our hands of the matter, the file would remain closed until such a time as your son decides to re-enter the state, and sure who knows how things will turn out," thus attempting to pressure her to define him within the established construct (Lynch 102). The body of her son is hidden under the veil of youth, but the novel reflects a reality where all bodies are shown and utilised by a construct when we begin to imagine them into functional roles. As the novel progresses, Eilish repeatedly refuses to contain the body of her son within a definition until the state takes it upon itself, publishing in the national paper stating, "page seven, there is nothing to read but a full-page advertisement from the state, the harp emblem at the top of the page, it is a public notice, a list of hundreds of names and addresses in small print of the people who absconded from military service. (...) she scans the list and reads her son's name and address. She thinks of the sworn statement she made to the gardaí, she reads her son's name again and sees in the black print the dark night to come, seeing how they have damned her son and how easy it was after all," (Lynch 104). This is a direct example of media influencing the imagination of a community and committing habeas corpus by showing the body of her son in print, with a label that defines the role of traitor within the construct. This is an example of a trial, judgment, and verdict completed outside of the courtroom

residing solely within the media, thus proving that habeas corpus extends far beyond the Grecian columns and a jury of your peers and is an ongoing constant presence. The novel shows the transition of a father from a solid body into a generic imagination juxtaposed with a son, whose body is shown and displayed in the media. Therefore, Lynch uses the novel to show that habeas corpus is not a universal right bequeathed to all individuals, but a subjective privilege granted from the social construct when it is convenient.

Prophet Song illustrates the way bodies shift into various states of definition depending on the social construct at the hegemonic-helm and this revelation is carried by the reader beyond the book as well. Labels affixed upon once rhizomatic individuals allow for a collective imagination of the community and various roles within so that people can perform their hegemonic construct into existence. The application of this conceptual social status shift was proven beyond fiction in the psychological experiment by Stanley Milgrim entitled "Obedience to Authority: an Experimental View". In the, now famous, experiment, labels were affixed to random participants within a performed social construct which ultimately led to average participants willingly torturing one another with a socially constructed deontological moral focus thinking they were fulfilling their hegemonic role. Participants were given the defined labels of "teachers" and "students" and were told that the experiment would study punishment's connection with learning. Teachers were instructed to give an electric shock to students for wrong answers and the students, actors with pre-taped sounds of painful agony, responded accordingly when shocks were administered. The psychological test was all a ruse, but gave disturbing results. The simulation moved average people from rhizomes to roots by affixing labels and giving them a function so that they could imagine themselves within a useful community with a socially constructed moral purpose. Although the whole thing was a setup, the participants, average males from the suburban Connecticut area now dressed in their neat "teacher" label, believed they were shocking a student with increasing voltage past a point of danger in order to fulfil an arbitrary definition that had recently been affixed to them by a social construct. The experiment behaves much like a trial affixing labels of plaintiff and defendant and going through performative roles to build a social construct into existence. Ultimately, the experiment wound up concluding, "people obey either out of fear or out of desire to appear cooperative -- even when acting against their own better judgment and desires," to the point where 65% percent of participants went to the point of thinking they were willingly killing the student despite having their role constructed as "teacher" only a short time before (Milgrim). Milgrim showed that anyone defined by a social construct will go to dastardly ends in order to fulfil their role to uphold the preservation of the imagined community, thus revealing a participant's corporeal malleability. However, one should not blame the participants in the experiment for their deeds, but begin to look at the social construct surrounding the individual and its will to preserve its monopoly of violence. This experiment correlates to what Lynch shows in his novel, as the subjects within the narrative lose their personal sovereignty when affixed with a label and become objects operating in a construct and their bodies are either recognised or disregarded dependent on the preservation of the construct at the helm. Much like arbitrary labels

of IRA or Unionist, bodies are ambiguous until they are defined and classified under labels like, traitor, terrorist, Catholic, Protestant, but before judgment is rendered one must realise that all of the labels reside within, and are delivered by, the larger hegemonic social construct. When a body is presented it is at the will of the construct, which then affixes a label to the body to classify its constituents, and the constituents will dutifully fulfil their role in preserving the overall hegemonic construct by punishing one another accordingly.

Violence

The rate at which violence is perceived correlates to the empathetic recognition of a body within a community; as stated in the introduction, the faster the violence the more likely a community will respond to the plight of the victim. This is a claim that might seem drastic at first, but for the sake of the argument one should attempt to have some plasticity around the floating signifier of "violence" and see it more as a constant white noise in a community that helps define perceptual moral borders through threat. One should acknowledge that there is a constant threat of violence that is tolerated within a community and helps keep the hegemonic order functioning. Certainly people will not go to *Lord of the Flies* when the police aren't looking, but having accountability certainly keeps some subconscious actions repressed. This elasticity of the definition is not a new concept as philosopher Slavoj Zizek carried the idea of an extended definition of violence across a book carrying the title *Violence* (2007) and Michel Foucault comments extensively about how violence relates to control in society in *Discipline and Punish, the birth of the prison* (1977). One could even recall Max Weber and his, misquoted, monopoly of violence being tantamount to the hegemonic power's sovereignty at the helm of governance (Weber). Regardless, it would be difficult to argue that a violent threat does not correlate to an element of judicial control and thus relates to the definition of bodies in habeas corpus.

Philosophers have organised the classifications of violent control on a society into different categories and here we can examine the way that perceptual time could affect these categories; Lynch presents versions of violence happening in his novel and relates them to how they help define their constituents within a social construct. Michel Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish, the birth of the prison* (1977) waxes nostalgic for a punishment society over a discipline society as it was clear where the boundaries were and almost less sinister when public flogging and beheadings were an acknowledged spectacle (Foucault). Many would agree that an evolution towards a more vague omnipresent society of discipline has occurred where the threat of being watched and white noise of violence has replaced the public spectacle, yet still it holds a similar power authority despite the lack of a clear physical enclosure. Giles Deleuze takes this evolution of violent threat a step further in his "Postscript on Societies of Control" explaining that there is an exclusion to information that is similar to a "violent neglect" of its constituents as they are removed from access to the construct. Deleuze explains, "Foucault located the disciplinary societies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; they reach their height at the outset of the twentieth. They initiate the organisation of vast spaces of

enclosure," and applying this to habeas corpus we can see that these enclosures are not only physical spaces, but linguistic enclosure defining a body within a label so that it can be seen to the constituents of an construct (Deleuze, Postscript 1). Deleuze makes the false claim that, "societies of control, which are in the process of replacing disciplinary societies," (Deleuze, Postscript 4). This lays out the three states; punishment, discipline, and control as evolutionary steps of oppression acting upon a body within a social construct. The first being clear and physical and the latter being ambiguous and more hegemonic/psychological. Although these ideas separate physical enclosure, public violence, and some conspiratorial code that is neglecting its constituents through exclusion, the reality is that all of these societies are existing in front of us simultaneously and have never been neatly separated; this is what Lynch exposes in his novel. As anyone currently in solitary confinement after their daily waterboarding in Guantanamo Bay will probably tell you, there is a judicial code that they don't have access to and their punishment remains physical and very much enclosed. There is no such thing as separating evolving states of violent punitive society as we are living in all of them simultaneously depending on perspective, but one should see that the rate of violence is more correlative to what helps define borders. The truth is that the hegemonic social construct can move a body through various states of control depending on its convenience by using language to either hide the body in an ether of bureaucracy or show the body within the confines of a linguistic label through clear public punishment within a media spectacle.

Lynch accounts for this changing of the body from clearly defined corporeal constituent to bureaucratic ether in *Prophet Song* through the slow violence of neglect that enables the dismissal of habeas corpus. For example, throughout the novel Eilish is continually trying to get her passport renewed so that she could leave the country but is constantly met with another form or never-ending cue that keeps her from being recognised as a physical citizen despite being corporeally present within the community. This would defend Deleuze's claim that there is a code that she does not have access to that is keeping her body hidden and thus violently neglected, slowly, by the hegemonic construct as this eventually leads to her being dismissed from more physical sustenance. For example, when Eilish walks into the deli market she is ignored by a long-time friend and when she calls this to his attention stating, "Don't leave me standing here now, Paddy, I haven't got all day," she is met with a powerless invisibility as Lynch describes, "From the cold room she hears the sound of a heavy box being dragged and dropped to the ground. An ample woman steps breathless into the shop and stands with bulging hands watching Paddy Pidgeon as he steps through the strip with a flourish of his arm. He slides his gaze past Eilish to meet the other woman with a smile. Mags, he says, I'm just about to close up, quickly now, what can I get you?" (Lynch 130). The ignoring of Eilish symbolically shows that although her body may be physically present, the right of habeas corpus is not granted due to the hegemonic construct's prejudice and refusal of allowing her body to be seen. It is a trial before the trial. Although this is not an immediate violent act perpetrated by a shop owner, it is a slow starvation that will likely go unpunished; therefore the slow rate of violence inflicted on Eilish keeps her corporeal body hidden from judicial response. Eventually Lynch shows her devolution into

obscure anonymity at the end of the novel when he describes Eilish as, "she is no longer a person but a thing, this is what she thinks, a thing climbing into the truck with a child in her arms," and this transformation from subject to object places her on a raft with a cacophony of nameless objects set to sea in international waters where it would be hard to argue against the violent neglect despite the slow arrival at the conclusion (Lynch 236). Therefore, Lynch exposes habeas corpus not as universal right to all citizens, but dependent on societal recognition and easily lulled into submission through negligent reporting extending the perceptive rate of the violence inflicted on the victim.

As the reader is forced to witness the slow violence of erasing Eilish, the reader juxtaposes this with the fast violent end of her son at the disciplinary hands of the state which shocks the reader into wanting justice. Eilish's young son is detained, tortured, and eventually killed near the conclusion of the novel, something that happens as a surprise after he enters the hospital for care. When Eilish attempts to find her son she is sent to the morgue where the officer in charge explains, "down here, there are no names, just numbers I'm afraid, we do not have names for them when they come in, if your son is here he will be here as a number, you will need to make the identification yourself," (Lynch 217). The officer performs the objectification of a body beyond habeas corpus into an undefined enemy and thus is able to treat her son not as a human with rights but as a means to an end. As Eilish goes through the catalog of human remains she continually states, "this is not my son, this is not my son, this is not my son, this is not my son, and she looks to the keeper who is looking at the time on his wrist and she unzips another body bag saying, this is not my son before she has even taken read of the face, this is not my son, this is not my son, this is not my son, this is not my son," Lynch uses the repetition to shock the reader into witnessing undefined bodies stacking up beyond recognition (Lynch 218). Although a work of fiction, like many parts of the novel, they recall images we see in our daily news feed of victims who are "not our sons" but belong to someone. Eventually Eilish finds her child and the evidence of, "skin before her clouded with bruising, the missing and broken teeth (...) the nails torn from his hands and feet, seeing the bore of a drill through the front of his knee, the cigarette burns along the torso," (Lynch 218). The guard then adds some cruel irony stating, "just so you know, Mrs Stack, it says here your son died of heart failure," as surely everyone will eventually die of heart failure, but the drill bit through a minor's kneecap remains unaccounted for. It is after this witnessing that Eilish takes action to leave the country, and it is at this point that the reader is shocked as well. Despite the violence happening faster than neglect, the objectification keeps the body unaccounted for; regardless, the evidence of torture to a minor on the reader is certainly more provocative than being ignored at a deli. Lynch's novel illustrates that the rate at which violence is perceived provokes a different reaction to the reader, where one was left frustrated at the slow bureaucracy with Eilish, one is shocked and demanding justice for her son despite both being tortured and suffocated by an indifferent hegemonic construct.

Conclusion

Paul Lynch's novel *Prophet Song* is a work of fiction, but it reflects a recognisable narrative

from our newsfeeds and is placed in a community we can imagine within various perceptual rates of violence. Lynch illustrates the ability of a hegemonic construct to transform bodies between various definitions of existence, thus allowing its self-preservation while simultaneously exposing a void of unalienable human rights beneath. Habeas corpus is acknowledged as a human right to a trial; this article, along with *Prophet Song* exposes that this trial and recognition of a body happens long before a subject enters a courtroom. Deleuze and Guattari help to define the fluidity of a body between subject and object through the metaphor of rhizomes and roots and one sees examples of subjects in the novel, from a mother's perspective, being transformed and numbered as tortured objects or recognised constituents. Of course, all bodies exist on earth in physical form but for them to be shown and accounted for within the justice of the law is something else and judgement happens long before a trial; for this the imagined community, or hegemonic construct, needs to be clearly defined and excepted or the violence needs to be quick enough for outside observers to register an emotional response. Although one would like to think that their community is grounded on universal moral rights for all citizens, Lynch reminds us that this is easily dismissed. Habeas corpus is not a right given to all, but dependent on hegemonic agreement, as Lynch displays by attaching our protagonists to the nameless people who are trapped in an endless state of bureaucratic purgatory. Lynch chooses to conclude the novel with the protagonists fleeing Ireland as refugees on rafts, as this is a path current nameless bodies are participating in at the time of publication and one can connect schematic images to it and thus begin to empathise with the bodies many have scrolled past. Therefore, *Prophet Song* is promoting habeas corpus to these victims in that it forces the reader to see the bodies with new recognition. Novels have the ability to speed the rate of perceived violence while simultaneously allowing the reader to imagine a community they have not connected with and in so doing novels can be the catalyst of justice. Of course, corporeal bodies exist within an ontological perspective, it is the media that helps position these bodies within a hegemonic framework deemed worthy of justice and a trial. Although Lynch has written a fictional account, one only need to do a quick internet search of a name like "Ghalib Kurdi" and "Alan Kurdi" to relate non-fiction examples of the fluctuating nature of habeas corpus and the essentiality of media reporting.

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Lost in Translation: Medieval Romance, the Porous Female Body, Kingship, and Vassalage in *Havelok the Dane*

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Abstract:

Medieval romances feature many of the same tropes: reclamation of lost or forsworn titles, martial prowess, bravery squandered, damsels in desperate need of distress or saving. *Havelok the Dane* participates in these conventions but is a dramatic outlier in the way the author utilizes the female body as trope, narrative plot device, and ultimately as a signifier for kingship itself. The original version, Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, emphasizes Havelok's supernatural and superhuman power, his kingship ordained by God, his birthmark, and his heirs. The English poet changes the source in his translation, dramatically strengthening the plotline around the visceral, physical threats to women. Instead, the increased threat of rape, the fecundity of female bodies, and the "porous" nature of females in the *Lay* foreground and become the story; the potential and real violence toward the women of the text create the foil to contemporary Arthurian romances.

Keywords: medieval romance, rape, sexualized violence, *Havelok the Dane*, Chretien de Troyes, kingship, vassalage

The Arthurian Context for *Havelok the Dane*

From dispossessed prince to fisherman's son to king of Denmark and England, the journey of the hero in *Havelok* corresponds to the well-known trope of reclamation that other medieval romances of the period exemplify: the angst-filled themes of loss of power, lands, and birthright (Ashton 2010; Gaunt and Kay 2008). Numerous other narratives reflect and reinforce these tropes: *King Horn* battles Saracens for his father's ancestral lands; *Erec and Enide* warns that dallying in the marriage bed too long dulls the war-like spirit and prevents the reclamation of one's birthright; *Cliges* narrates the story of a young hero who gains fame by defeating the Duke of Saxony in single combat for possession of Fenice, whom he eventually steals from his uncle Alis.

The interstices of medieval and Arthurian romances explore the themes of reclamation and masculinity, placing at their heart the role of women, especially in the context of sexual violence and the lack of consent, all important topics in the understanding and interpretation of these romances

(Samuelson 2022). *Havelok the Dane* inherits the same Arthurian preoccupations with rule in the middle ages—or at least power for a marginally successful knight—that required martial prowess to operate as a signifier of power and legitimate rule, ordained through the wooing of suitable maiden in courtship (Knapp 2017; Gaunt 2000). Not only were women secondary in this equation, but they became what Eve Sedgewick called "the object of mimetic desire" in her landmark essay "Between Men" (Yeager 1985). The travails and suffering "between men," however, culminate with their reward and return to normalcy in the form of a wedding that solidifies personal, cultural, and economic worth.

Yet significant scholarship has now investigated how the canon of Arthurian and medieval romance relies on what Kathryn Gravdal has called "The poetics of rape," as "sexual violence is built into the very premise of Arthurian romance," especially in the context of Chretien de Troyes' Arthurian romance cycle (Gravdal 1991b, 43; 2011, 42). The consistent tropes of the threat of sexual violence even within courtly contexts were not only part of the genre (Sarah 2010); in some sense, they *were the genre* as Franco-Flemish marginalia from the thirteenth century seem to illustrate (Shartrand 2020). Albrecht Classen has even noticed how King Arthur himself undergoes a changing destiny in the verse narratives, as his mythic persona becomes overshadowed and underappreciated (Classen 2024). This might be due to the role of Arthurian knights who carry all the action of the romances, move throughout the realm in their escapades, and rely on the threat of violence to women; they solidify the theme of sexual violence as part of the medieval romance genre.

The Interpretative Lenses of *Havelok the Dane*

The Lay of Havelok the Dane employs many medieval romance tropes, especially those of Arthurian origin, but it differs significantly from the contemporary romances of the period by emphasizing to a much larger degree the social obligations of kingship and the connection to the role that the female body plays.

The peculiarity of the poem, especially in terms of the narrative structure and the tropes employed, has piqued the interest of many scholars, which has inspired multiple lenses to view the piece. Donna Crawford has noticed how Havelok's body is particularly vulnerable to harm as the gruesome wounds and remarkable recovery illustrates (Crawford 2002b). Henk Aertsen has argued that though medieval romances narrate the adventures of a hero followed by a love scene in which the two are married, Havelok stands out due to its lack of courtly tone, absence of a noble hero, and the lack of love (Veldhoen and Aertsen 1988, 1995). Havelok is less courtly and far more of a violent adventure novel of the period. Ken Eckert argues that the inconsistencies in the poem ultimately contribute to the "halo effect" that Havelok casts about so that his martial prowess ties into an overall positive outcome for all his subjects (Eckert 2015). For many critics, *Havelok the Dane* connects to contemporary articulations of kingship. John Halverson, for instance, maintains that Havelok represents a peasant fantasy of kingship common to the time, a class-conscious poem composed for "middle class" wish fulfillment with its tales of thralls, the lowest of social ranks, made knights and barons (Halverson 1971).

Indeed, Havelok, unlike so many of his peasant brethren, is not featured as a villain or rough brigand as Paul Freedman has noticed of so many other romance texts (Freedman 1999). Sheila Ishkanian takes a different approach by defining "the nature of kingship in the person of its eponymous hero" as well as the limitations of power through contractual notions (Ishkanian 1974, 294). Still others locate Havelok in the tradition of nationalism as Dominique Battles found convincing evidence that Havelok offers a glimpse of distinct Englishness (Dominique 2012). There is certainly truth to these interpretations of kingship in the poem as well as the importance of kingship as a central theme.

The French sources highlight these themes of kingship and pre-nationalism, but the unknown Middle English poet alters his French sources in significant ways: he accentuates the violence and the threat of violence to women; he enlarges the queen's role as heir to England and birth-mother to a new generation of nobility; he emphasizes the body politic in intimate connection to the female body and the proliferation of power. Earlier versions of the poem, either in oral or written form, do not stress in such great detail the female characters. These changes were not made by mere chance or a throw of the dice, for the *Havelok* poet had access and—almost certainly—utilized the French sources of the poem in the composition process. (Kleinman 2003; Bradbury 1993).

Violence and Kingship

Building on these critics' thorough studies, we see how the poem directly connects to the portrayal of bodies and the body politic. Hearkening back to John of Salisbury's well-known treatise, the *Policraticus*, the poet connects the kingdom, the king, and the actual country into one being (John of Salisbury and Markland 1979). The introduction begins with the dying of two kings, symbols of two countries soon to be stricken by the death of their sovereigns. Athelwold, caught up in the spiritual realm, begins to forsake the physical by whipping his body till it bleeds, taking mass, and facilitating the inheritance of his daughter Goldeboru. Likewise, the near-death Birkabeyn, the King of Denmark, sends advisors to facilitate an interim government until Havelok can assume power. The text presents two ideals of kingship, two attempted ceremonies of swearing homage on the *Bible* to foster children (with Godard and Godrich), two countries thrown into disruption by mirrored usurpers to the respective thrones.

The themes of kingship and power cannot be ignored, especially as it begins with a botched transfer of power with the physical, bodily representation of submission to the greater power of the sovereign, punctuated by kneeling below the king and placing their hands between those of their ailing sovereigns. Liam Purdon, though, noticed the failure of the swearing-in ceremony because of its curtailment: Godrich and Godard only swear homage, which is only one component of three in the full rite of vassalage (Purdon 1993).[1]

To be truly legal Godard and Godrich would have to swear homage, declare fealty, and then receive their fiefs from the new rulers. The poet stresses that Godard and Godrich only declare homage to their lords, promising to raise these children to inheritance age; neither Godard nor Godrich swear oaths directly to the heirs themselves, a critical loophole within the feudal contract through which

the industrious usurpers can squeeze (Treharne and Sanders 1973).[2] This would be akin to the President of the United States failing to take the oath of office as prescribed.

The important role of fealty ("manred") to the poem surfaces again when Godard breaks his oath and takes control of the realm for himself (Treharne and Sanders 1973). The poet sets the stage for the importance of inheritance and genealogy from the outset with the two kings' concerns for their children and continues to be pivotal to the remainder of the poem, especially when reconceived in the frame narrative when Havelok and Goldeboru successfully procreate to produce fifteen offspring.

Godard fully participates in the neglectful and vengeful regent trope, his wards nearly on the brink of starvation. This is where the poem digresses to issues of the female body and its use for formulating the potential actions of the characters. Godard the regent has systematically used the pathos of the two starving sisters to convince Havelok to abdicate the throne, forcing Havelok into action ultimately through the murder of the two girls. The scene is laden with pathos as the children,

> For us hungreth swith sore
> We ne have to hete–ne we ne have
> Her-inne neyther knith ne knave
> That yeveth us drinken ne no mete (Shepherd 1995, 15)

At this point Godard grabs the two young girls and violence ensues:

> Of bothen he karf on two here throtes,
> And sithen hem al to grotes.
> Ther was sorwe, wo-so it sawe,
> Hwan the children bi the wawe
> Leyen and sprauleden in the blod" (Shepherd 1995, 16).

A stark reminder to the Herod of the mystery plays, the pathos-laden scene centers on the bodies of two small girls, not on any boys. This is a pre-figuration of scenes throughout the poem in which violence or the threat of violence to girls and women forces direct political action by Havelok.

Havelok does not respond with sword in hand. Instead, he asks for "manrede" or vassalage from Godard. The portrayal of this scene would have been very stark, especially considering the connection of the body politic with the body of the king. The would-be king would have received in his bloody hands the hands of Havelok, forced to deny his patrimony:

> Al Denemark I wile you yeve
> To that forward thu late me live...
> Sweren I wole that Birkabein
> *Nevere yete me ne gat*!" (Shepherd 1995, 16)

Purdon argues that Godard rethinks his desire to murder Havelok precisely because the oath of vassalage would be legally appealing (Purdon 1993). By claiming a legitimate rite of vassalage from Havelok, Godard legally forces the other earls into submission.

He ponders this prospect briefly even as the girls' blood drips on the floor. Interestingly, Godard refuses to kill Havelok with his own hands perhaps because those same hands just received Havelok's oath of vassalage in the form of placing the boy's hands between his own in an act of submission: by enfolding the vassal's hands, the liege lord vows to protect the vassal just as the vassal vows to serve. Vassalage is legally binding and Havelok's quick thinking forces Godard to rethink his own plans (Henk Aertsen 1988; Hanning 1967).[3]

The French and English Sources

The female body functions as a narrative strategy the poet uses to progress from scene to scene, beginning with the slaying of the sisters, moving onto the queen's body as part of contemporary articulations of rape, inheritance and marriage that focus on the sexuality of her body and on her role as the fount of an entirely new generation—bypassing the focus of mimetic desire that is seen in other poems of the period. Kathryn Gravdal correctly identified themes of rape and potential sexual violence toward women as tropes in Arthurian romance (Gravdal 2011); *Havelok the Dane*, however, takes these tropes and turns them into narrative projection, as the bodies of women appear to motivate nearly every significant action at every stage of the poem.

The particular focus on violence towards women can be seen in the purposeful changes made from French sources to English poem. Neither French source, Gaimar's *L'Estoire des Engleis* nor the *Lai d' Havelok*, mention two young sisters at all, let alone portray such a gruesome death for them. In fact, Havelok's childhood (called Cuaran in *L'Estoire* and the *Lai*) remains entirely underdeveloped in the French sources (H. Aertsen and Veldhoen 1995; Smithers 1988).[4] No pathetic scene of starving girls exists in these two works. Instead, Cuaran, which means scullion in Breton, begins life as a servant in Gaimar's poem, excising his childhood altogether along with his two sisters (Smithers 1988). The *Lai* portrays the two-year-old Havelok fleeing with his mother the queen, brought to Grimsby by *baron* Grim. In the French sources Grim has three unnamed sons but no daughters. Why would the Middle English poet introduce the two sisters and portray such violence against them when they don't appear in his sources? Why develop Havelok's childhood so fully?

The girls' deaths may show the depth of Godard's depravity, but they also function in multiple ways in the poem. They mirror the two marriages of Grim's daughters orchestrated by Havelok at the end of the poem as women throughout the poem function to secure his rights. Havelok loses two sisters but regains substitutes when he attaches himself to the household of Grim. The poet uses their child deaths in the structure of the poem to show the boyish weak Havelok forced to offer *manred* in the sight of his dead sisters, which is later juxtaposed to the fully functional king Havelok who rightfully distributes fiefs, wealth, and women to those who deserve it in the sight of the drawn and quartered body of Godrich.

By killing the females, Godard insures that Havelok's line won't continue from that source. It

allows for Havelok's triumphant return, from fisherman's son to king, without the problem of two sisters sharing the resources of the realm. This sort of practice—the elision of females from the line of succession—was not uncommon during the period (Waugh 1988)[5]. Excising the girls from the poem provides for a more tragic life and a more dramatic confrontation with Godard, but a more financially secure alternative. This also leads logically to his offer of *manred* in which he promises to deny his patrimony in his last sentence: "Sweren I wole that Bircabeyn/ Nevere yete me ne gat!" (Shepherd 1995, 16).

When Havelok swears *manred*, he offers to bring no force or spears against Godard, to flee Denmark, but most importantly, to deny his father and his inheritance. The violent death of his sisters forces him to renounce his patrimony, but it also leaves the reader with the feeling that their deaths, although terrible, remain only secondary to the affront of forcing Havelok to deny his father and his feudal rights. No deaths of girls equals no *manred* and no poem.

These lost sisters continue the discussion of genealogy the poet began. Godrich imprisons, but does not torture, Goldeboru precisely because he wishes to enthrone his own son: "Ich have a sone, a ful fayr knave:/ He shal Engelond al have;/ He shal ben King; he shal ben sire,/ So brouke I evere mi blake swire" (Shepherd 1995, 11; H. Aertsen and Veldhoen 1995, 11). Curious that Goldeboru remains unmolested, but a raped queen, as the end of the poem tells, can be no queen at all.

The death of the young girls inaugurates the narrative transition to Havelok's tenure with Grim—and to some extent a further investigation into the body politic of Havelok's own body. By divine signs Grim notices Havelok's royalty and decides not to drown him. This, according to Donna Crawford, focuses on the divine of Havelok's body as it "becomes a site for playing out the contest for dominance within the body politic" (Crawford 2002a, 5). There is certainly some truth to this. Echoing Ernst Kantorowicz's formulation of the multiplicities of the political body and the physical body, Crawford argues that Havelok's bodily affirmation is part of this theme (Kantorowicz 1957).[6]

This dual portrayal of Havelok is undoubtedly true for this section of the poem whereby he must prove himself to be a likely candidate for the assumption of the throne. One proof is the proper use of vassalage. After the miraculous signs of his body, Grim immediately offers Havelok his service in a "true" scene of vassalage directly juxtaposed to that which was performed by the two usurpers. Grim and his family—already loyal barons in the French versions—prove loyal servants for the rest of the poem and are ennobled at the end when Havelok performs the third and final stage of vassalage with the distribution of titles. This performance of vassalage, of course, is directly juxtaposed to the breaking of oaths by Godard, Grimsby's serfdom, and the general barbaric nature of Grim that is possibly tied to folk tale (Mills 1967, 220-230).

The Journey of Reclamation

Havelok's journey continues toward reclaiming his lost crown in Grim's fishing hut, built on the shores of England after he fled Denmark. In the French version, Grim constructs his house out of the remains of his boat which was attacked by pirates along the way, but the English version begins to highlight Havelok's noble origins through the use of the upwardly mobile peasant who finds, due

to famine, that he must seek work in Lincoln to continue his path of reclamation (Levine 1992).[7] This is a man of distinct values, who consumes almost four times as much food as anyone else, echoing the rate of consumption of noble to peasant during the period, who wishes to "swive" for his food as any true noble ought to fulfill his bond as lord. Like the Knight in *Piers Plowman* who first offers to till the field but is persuaded by Piers that he should protect the land and its inhabitants, Havelok sets out to do what he can from a low position in the hierarchy. Even though Havelok cannot "protect" Grim as the Knight does in *Piers Plowman,* he attempts to participate in the feudal order in much the same way by working for his share of the market, which happens to be four times as much as anyone else, within the three estates model: those who work, those who pray, those who fight.

In Lincoln, despite working for a cook, Havelok upholds the feudal bond of servant and master as he refuses payment for his efforts, asking only food for his belly: "'Goddot!' quoth he, 'leve sire,/ Bidde ich you non other hire/ But yebeth me inow to ete;/ Fir and water I wile you fete,/ The fir blowe an ful wel maken'" (Shepherd 1995, 27; H. Aertsen and Veldhoen 1995, 27). Echoing the status quo feudal system in which the peasant labors for the lord for no other payment other than protection and food, Havelok shows his friendliness and worthiness (Ishkanian 1974).[8]

The early part of the poem features this journey of reclamation, and Havelok remains poor and prospect-less. In fact, this journey to Lincoln is the one real point of volition in the poem Havelok has not motivated by female characters. David Staines has noticed that Havelok remains an entirely passive character in the French versions, but undergoes a change into an active prince in the English poem, a transformation that may tie into the nascent manuals on the education of princes (Staines 1976).[9] But the female characters all but disappear from the narrative when the knave works as a cook's assistant and honors the feudal bond of servant and master. All this soon changes, however.

The Female Body as Narrative Apparatus

The English *Havelok* differs markedly from the French sources and offers a female body that operates as central narrative apparatus; like Arthurian romance, she propels the plot in significant ways. The English Havelok is forced into the stone throwing contest, is forced to marry Goldeboru, and is forced by threat of her rape to leave for Grimsby. She continues to occupy the plot when Godrich gives Goldeboru to the "strongest" man, which forces Havelok into an upward arc to regain his kingship. At the same time, Godrich uses Goldeboru, who was well beyond the marriageable age of twelve, to rid himself of an unwanted heir by pawning her to a knave.

Their marriage is symbolic for the breakdown of social relations in the poem and participates in contemporary discussions of misalliance. While Havelok has performed at all levels of the feudal hierarchy and has followed the code of conduct for each level, Godrich breaks his code by compelling both Havelok and Goldeboru into the sham marriage. In an ironic pre-figuration of the king's power Havelok is to justly yield, Godrich distributes the "goods" of his land to whomever he wishes, a traditional right bestowed upon the king. Similar to the final act of vassalage mentioned earlier (Purdon 1993), the distribution of fiefs for Godrich represents an ironic performance as legitimate ruler, and Goldeboru

turns into the chattel to reaffirm the feudal relationship. Like the country at large which Godrich holds by martial force, he also forces Havelok and Goldeboru to marry against their wills (Gravdal 1991a).[10]

Close Reading the Threat of Rape in the English Havelok

Once the two are espoused by the Archbishop of York in ironically the same way the real king and queen would be married, Havelok finds himself taskless. The French texts diverge from the English *Havelok* here in interesting ways. In all three versions a dream sequence occurs after consummation, but the Middle English version differs dramatically in content and form from its French predecessors.

The first French version by Gaimar entails a narrative where Cuaran (Havelok) pays Argentille (Goldeboru) little attention in bed, briefly consummates the marriage, and Argentille dreams of a bear hunt, a boar killing the bear, some foxes, and a Cuaran, who climbs a tree when the ocean threatened to engulf him and two lions submitted themselves to Cuaran. Argentille wakes, sees the light shining from Cuaran's mouth, and he interprets her dream as anticipation for the preparations for King Godrich's feast that would take place on the following day.

The second French version with The *Lai d'Havelok* echoes Gaimar's rendition in many ways. In the *Lai*, Argentille has a similar dream of forest animals fighting, fleeing and submitting; Cuaran interprets the dream as a preparation for the feast. However, Argentille then consults a hermit about the dream who informs her that Cuaran is of noble birth and would be king. The hermit advises her to journey to Cuaran's kin in Grimsby to learn the real truth. These two versions reflect a more traditional, "courtly" content of medieval romances; the stock hermit finds his way into the *Lai*, whereas Gaimar shows concerns over appearance, class and poverty. The French versions rely heavily on dream sequences to propel the story.

The Middle English *Havelok* changes the scene significantly as the poet postpones the dream sequence until they return to Grimsby and his kin, and introduces the threat of Goldeboru's rape; in fact, rape figures *predominately* in the next section of the poem because unlike the *Lai* in which a hermit explains the necessary steps the couple should take or *L'Estoire* in which Goldeboru can't stand poverty, they leave Lincoln solely because Havelok fears for Goldeboru's safety:

> That fel Havelok ful wel on thoughth–
> *Men sholde don his leman shame,*
> *Or elles bringen in wicke blame,*
> That were him levere to ben ded.
> Forthi he token another red,
> That thei sholden thenne fle
> Til Grim, and til hise sones thre (Shepherd 1995, 34) (italics mine).

Havelok would rather die than see his new bride brought into disrepute, and this theme recurs again and again.

Almost non-existent in the other versions, the Middle English *Havelok* transposes the threat

of rape into an important narrative transition, and from this point onward in the poem, Havelok can prove his martial prowess and kingly attributes in connection to and defense of Goldeboru. The French versions of the poem, which focus on the peasant/noble interaction of class, fail to enter into Goldeboru's decision to leave because the poem seems to honor Havelok for "swiving" for his food, following his lords' commands to gather wood and throw stones. The Middle English poet here changes his sources to widen the scope of the threat of rape to include the *motivation* for leaving Lincoln entirely.

Where both French texts include the dream sequence after consummation of the marriage while the two are still at Lincoln, the Middle English poem includes the dream only after the couple has fled to Grimsby because of potential "wicke blame". The exact order of events in the Middle English poem elucidate and support the role rape serves in the text.

First, at Grimsby the poet reiterates the themes of vassalage when Grim's sons swear homage to Havelok and offer all that they own, including themselves, to his service:

> Thou mithe us bothe selle and yeve,
> Thou mayt us bothe yeve and selle,
> With that thou wilt here dwelle (Shepherd 1995, 35).

Like Grim, the sons echo his original vow;[11] but Grim promises to keep Havelok till he can "ride" and implies a strong hope for freedom:

> Thoru other man,
> loverd, than thoru the Sal I never freman be;
> Thou shalt me, loverd, fre maken,
> For I shal yemen the and waken—
> Thoru the wile I fredom have! (Shepherd 1995, 20).

The sons, however, offer up complete submission, including all their ample possessions, in an unequivocal rite of vassalage. This represents the first unambiguous rite of vassalage in which the sons offer everything without condition.[12]

Second, while in bed, Goldeboru worries that she has been married to a thrall, connecting to the class theme prevalent in the text. She sees the light issuing from Havelok's mouth, notices the noble cross on his shoulder, and finally overhears a voice of an angel. In this annunciation scene the angel tells her:

> Goldeborw, lat thi sorwe be!
> For Havelok, that haveth spuset the,
> He is kinges sone and kinges eyr–
> That bi-kenneth that croiz so fayr...
> Thanne she havede herd the stevene
> Of the angel uth of hevene,

She was so fele sithes blithe
That she ne mithe hire joie mythe,
But Havelok sone anon she kiste (Shepherd 1995, 36).

No annunciation exists in either source text and arguably exists here as merely another proof of Havelok's royal identity.[1] But we should not forget the original purpose of the annunciation to Mary which was to inform her of the lineage of her child.

The annunciation foreshadows Goldeboru's purpose as birthmother to fifteen children, who all become kings and queens, and, indeed, she kisses Havelok forthwith on their marriage bed. The angel's message takes the place of the hermit's message in the *Lai*, emphasizing the procreative ability of Goldeboru. Gaimar's version has no message at all. The Middle English poet elevates the discussion of Goldeboru from mere queen-in-waiting to a Mary figure who will help cement peace in both Denmark and England through her progeny.

After the annunciation, Goldeboru kisses Havelok and he awakes braying and expounds his wondrous dream. Unlike the French sources, Goldeboru no longer has the allegorical beast fable dream, but instead Havelok dreams that he grows into a giant—a literal representation of *The King's Two Bodies*—that captures both Denmark and England within his hands (Kantorowicz 1957):

Me thouthe I was in Denemark set,
But on on the moste hil
That evere yete kam I til.
It was so hey that I wel mouthe
Al the werd se, als me thouthe.
Als I sat upon that lowe
I bigan Denemark for-to awe,
The borwes and the castles stronge;
And mine armes weres so longe
That I fadmede al at ones
Denemark with mine longe bones. (Shepherd 1995, 36)

According to Kantorowicz, the Middle Ages had "a distinction between *corpus uerum*—the tangible body of an individual person [king or prelate]—and *corpus fictim*, the corporate collective which was intangible and existed only as a fiction of jurisprudence" (Kantorowicz 1957, 209). Here, the mystical body of the king, the representation of the indissoluble king, joins with the corporeal body when Havelok literally becomes both concepts and both bodies in one. The transformation only occurs after he has cemented his claim to the land with the consummation with Goldeboru.

Power, vassalage, and kingship in the English Havelok depend on Goldeboru as narrative propulsion because he gains status 1) right after Goldeboru accepts him as her true husband and kisses

him, giving the moment thematic importance, and 2) in Havelok's second dream he gathers up England to give to Goldeboru as a (dowry) present. Havelok's nobility receives its' validation from God (in the form of divine signs and his dream) but is legitimized by his marriage and his metaphorical dowry. As the couple consummate their marriage, Havelok also consummates his marriage to the realm in the form of his dreams. The body politic blends with the queenly body.

The Vulnerable Female Body

The threatened rape of Goldeboru followed by the eventual consummation of the marriage echoes the canonistic metaphor of kingly marriage to the *polis* common during the period. This metaphor, according to Ernst Kantorowicz, was transferred to secular institutions and was quite common in the thirteenth century as evinced by Cynus of Pistoai:

> And the comparison between the corporeal matrimony and the intellectual one is good: for just as the husband is called the defender of his wife... so is the emperor the defender of that Respublika (Kantorowicz 1957, 212-213).

Additionally, the consummation of the marriage, dream, and departure to Denmark occur roughly mid-way through the poem starting at lines 1200-1450.

Vulnerable females and potential rape was certainly not an uncommon motivation for Medieval romances in general, so it is not that *Havelok* operates as a total outlier from the genre (Meister 1991). In Arthurian romances, for instance, Gravdal notes five potential uses of sexual violence as narrative devices: a chivalric test or combat, an ethical test, a social marker (true nobility not being prone to rape), a test of a kingdom's strength, or as an aesthetic test (Gravdal 1991a, 44). A tour through Chretien de Troyes or later Malory depicts knights-errants who seek threats to overcome and display their prowess.

The English *Havelok* is the hyper violent and sexualized version of the genre, however, as it corresponds to four out of Gravdal's five narrative devices: rape becomes a lite motif as evinced by Goldeboru's beauty; the defense against potential rape to show Havelok's mettle; a marker of lower vs. upper classes; a test for the survival of the Kingdom of Denmark. The rape motif in *Havelok* transforms into full-fledged plot focus as the following thousand lines abound with fear for Goldeboru's safety.

Just as the dream sequence concludes with the couple's consummation, the poet reintroduces the threat of rape as if coitus begets coitus. The threat to Goldeboru pervades this entire section, even when the threat doesn't seem warranted at all, and seems to function entirely as a narrative strategy to propel action (McIntosh 1976).[13]

Unlike the French sources, the Middle English poem emphasizes the potential rape of Goldeboru for hundreds of lines. For instance, when Havelok first arrives at Ubbe's to ask permission to sell his "wares", he immediately fears for his wife's safety as Ubbe responds:

> 'That thou lovest al-so thi lif–
> And have thou of hire no drede;

Shal hire no man shame bede.
Bi the fey that I owe to the
Ther-of shal I meself borw be'
Havelok herde that he bad;
And, thow, was he ful sore drad
With him to ete, for his wif–
For him wore levere that his lif
Him wore reft than she in blame
Felle or lauthe ani shame (Shepherd 1995, 41).

The first encounter with Ubbe illustrates a fear for Goldeboru, but the English poet exhibits a monocular focus on the theme (McIntosh 1976).

A few lines later Havelok again reiterates his fears for his wife:

Havelok ne durste, thei he were adrad,
Nouth with-sitten that Ubbe bad;
His wif he dide with him lede.
Unto the heye curt he yede;
Roberd hire ledde (that was red–
That havede tholed for hire the ded
Or ani havede her misseyd
Or hand with ivele onne leyd (Shepherd 1995, 42).

Again, after pondering this problem of rape Ubbe sends the two with Bernard and an honor guard of sixty men because he reasons to himself:

Yf I late hem go
Thus–one foure, withuten mo–
So mote Ich brouke finger or to,
For this wimman bes mikel wo;
For hire shal men hire loverd slo.
He tok sone knithes ten,
And wel sixti other men
Wit gode bowes and with gleives,
And sende him unto the greyves (Shepherd 1995, 43).

Ubbe's attempts to allay Havelok's fears (as a good host) are well-founded concerns born out with the attempted gang rape of Goldeboru by the "sixty and ten" young ruffians.

All sources for the text include some form of threat of sexual violence. In Gaimar's version, Cuaran defends his wife against six young tuffs who are inspired by Argentille's beauty enough to carry her off.

The *Lai* also employs a section in which Argentille is carried off by six squires who lust after her body. Havelok, though, hyper focuses on the prurient and makes this into a central feature of the plot.

Rape and Medieval Law

In this, both French versions correspond to the exact nature of medieval rape law. Medieval ideas of rape or *raptus* included not only theft of maidenhead or forced intercourse, but it often meant the forcible abduction of the woman to another location so that forced intercourse could occur (Saunders 2001; Brown 2009; Carter 1985; Gravdal 1991a).[14] Raptus could be sexual in nature, but it could also intimate the theft of another man's property as the woman's body was his to give away to whomever he wished (Saunders 2001).

Interestingly, the Middle English poem increased the number of ruffians from six to sixty and ten and only alludes to the possibility of *raptus* as abduction (i.e. abduction of property). The English version dwells on the prurient, salacious details of violation. Modeled on Lot in Sodom and Gomorra, men come to Bernard Brun's house looking for sexual satisfaction, only to be denied. Havelok steps up to the hall door with a huge pole, blocking the metaphorical entrance to the inner recesses. This passage, rich with sexual symbolism, allows Havelok to progress to his next stage of kingship on the nearly violated body of his wife (Carter 1985).[15]

The French versions of Havelok emphasize different elements other than the potential rape of Goldeboru. In Gaimar's account, Ubbe (Sigar) remembers the name Cuaran from years back and watched through the night to see if his suspicion was true of the miraculous flame issuing from Havelok's mouth. The following day, after summoning all the barons, Sigar makes Cuaran pass the final test of blowing the mythical horn that only the true king could sound. This Cuaran successfully sounds the horn and all the barons swear homage.

No rape involved there.

The *Lai* shows how Grim's son-in-law Kelloc, who was a merchant, fitted Cuaran and Argentille with proper clothes and told them to accompany Sigar Estalre, who would take them in because of Argentille's beauty. Again, six men attack Argentille, Cuaran defends her and they flee to the church. Like Gaimar, Cuaran is forced to sound a horn to show his patrimony.

The threat of violence to a woman to motivate a man to martial prowess is not new theme in medieval romance (Davenport 2004). In Chretien's *Erec and Enid*, Erec even returns from the dead when he hears that the count wishes to take his wife by force. Yet the sheer amount of energy spent by the poet, Ubbe, Havelok and Bernard seems overzealous just to protect the wife of a visiting merchant. But when viewed as a national issue, the potential rape of Goldeboru becomes a symbol for the breakdown in the feudal economy.

From the beginning of the poem, Athelwold is describes as the ideal king who protected both land and its inhabitants. And the poem emphasizes Athewold's good kingship by alluding in the first part of the poem to his punishment of those who would harm widows or maidens:

> And wo dide widuen wrong,
> Were he nevre knicth so strong
> That he ne made him sone kesten
> And in feteres ful faste festen.
> And wo-so dide maydne shame
> Of hire bodi, or brouth in blame
> (Bute it were bi hire wille),
> He made him sone of limes spille (Shepherd 1995, 5).

This passage echoes and even *improves upon* the legal formulation of rape present in the courts of law in the mid-thirteenth century as posited by famed legal theorist Henry de Bracton (Scott 1992).[16]

Marshall Carter summarizes Bracton's views: "Rather than punish the rapist of every woman with death or dismemberment, Bracton believed that the rapist of a virgin should be punished more severely than the rapist of a non-virgin. For the rapist of a virgin, Bracton still believed that loss of life or member or blinding was the appropriate punishment because '...to defile a virgin and to lie with one defiled are different deeds'" (Carter 1985, 38). Athelwold, unlike legal theorist Bracton, also protects widows under the same rape laws, which were notorious for not protecting widows at all. Athelwold's punishment for rapists ("He made him sone of limes spille") echoes the traditional punishment of castration for perpetrators of rape.

The Middle English poet certainly understood the laws involving rape or raptus, and he emphasizes the threat to Goldeboru to juxtapose the ideal kingship and purveyor of law as embodied in Athelwold to the breakdown in law and order within Denmark. National power requires an Ubbe figure to protect one lone woman, echoing in visceral form the protection that the idealized King Athelwold used to offer. Indeed, Goldeboru's raptus becomes a site at which Havelok, as the next ideal king, can step in and rectify right.

Sexual Violence is Narrative

The Middle English *Havelok* over-emphasizes the danger to Goldeboru; she becomes a lodestone for all potential rapists who perhaps could have controlled themselves, but who can't resist. Like Gravdal's assertion that beauty often motivates incidents of rape in Medieval romances, especially in the Arthurian cycles, Goldeboru's beauty here ushers in an entire section devoted to her defense. Ubbe summons up seventy armed men to defend this "merchant" Havelok and his wife, which seems rather draining on a noble's resources.

Of course, potential rape equates to martial deeds, and Havelok's deeds are retold with three versions of the same battle: a first account of the battle proper from a third person perspective; Bernard's account to Ubbe; Ubbe's redaction and summary of the brave actions: "That of tho sixti men and on/ Ne wente ther awey lives non" (Shepherd 1995, 48). Even when Bernard offers another theory for the attack, namely robbery, Ubbe brings the discussion back to the theme of rape with his assurance that:

A rof shal hile us bothe o nith,
That none of mine, clerk ne knith,
Ne sholen thi wif no shame bede—
No more than min, so God me rede (Shepherd 1995, 52).

Clearly, the threat of forced coitus creates the battle to begin with and allows Ubbe to think of knighting Havelok for his bravery.

The Middle English poet takes every opportunity to bring the story (and the narrative tension) back to the threat to Goldeboru's porous body, which becomes the central organizing principle for the entire text. For instance, after the attack on his holding, Ubbe knights Havelok, participates in the rite of vassalage by the barons in Denmark, and vows support for Havelok against Godard and Godrich (Purdon 1993). But at the moment of greatest resolution in Havelok's restoration, the poet emphasizes Goldeboru's porous body (and alludes to all the threats to it):

Than the Englishe men that sawe–
That thei wisten, heye and lawe,
That Goldeboru, that was so fayr,
Was of Engeland rith eyr,
And that the King hire havede wedded,
And haveden ben samen bedded–
He comen alle to crie merci,
Unto the King, at one cri (Shepherd 1995, 68) (italics mine)

Havelok's kingship is intimately connected to Goldeboru's body—the nobles of England willingly reward Havelok after they have seen that he married Goldeboru and that he "haveden bens amen bedded".

After Havelok orders Godrich to the stake (all the barons of the land advised him in this communal decision), he denies Godrich's sons of their patrimony. Havelok completes the feudal obligation as newly elected king by receiving homage, fealty and finally distributing fiefs. At this point, he gives his "sisters" (Grim's daughters) in marriage ("Hire (that was ful swete in bedde)" (Shepherd 1995, 73) to one noble and the cook who fostered him earlier, emphasizing her sexual promise while completing the circle of dispossession to possession of his realm, ennobling the peasants who assisted in his reclamation of the throne. Justice is served on the backs of women.

The poem concludes with a forty day feast and an intense focus on the number of children produced, a cornucopia of abundance both in terms of symbolic feast but also for the regal duty of procuring offspring (Krueger 2000; Liuzza 1994).[17] The earl that married Grim's daughter, Gunnild, has some success in fostering progeny ("And gaten mani children samen,/ And liveden ay in blisse and game," but is no match for Havelok's success as a father and king:

He geten children hem bitwene
Sones and douthres rith fivetene,
Hwar-of the sones were kinges alle–
SO wolde God it sholde bifalle–
And the douhtres alle quenes;
Him stondes wel that god child strenes (Shepherd 1995, 73).

Havelok and Goldeboru have fifteen sons and daughters, which nearly mirrors the fourteen children that Edward I had between 1261 and 1284, the exact time span for the composition of the poem and a singular parallel to his reign. This also echoes the tremendous importance placed on the trope of transition and the procuring of heirs (Baswell and Krueger 2000; Staines 1976).

The English version of *Havelok* takes the courtly themes of Arthurian medieval romance and lays them bare, stripping them down to their sexualized origins with the intense narrative focus on the female body and the threats to it. From Havelok's pathos-inducing, murdered sisters, to Goldeboru's continuous threat of rape, to the comments on her beauty, to her porous body legitimized through marriage and to her eventually fecundity, to the ritual giving away of Grim's daughters, the poem engages in contemporary grievances of wardship, marriage, property and rape law, feudalism, and marriage.

It focuses on the often vulnerable and fecund bodies of women to legitimize power and restore social order. *Havelok the Dane* surpasses the Arthurian romances of the period in its use of the female body as narrative apparatus that engages with medieval understandings of rape and raptus. Through the salacious use of titillating sexual violence, the poet calls attention to the central role women play in the romance tradition, especially as objects of desire. In *Havelok*, the women not only propel narrative; they are, in some sense, the narrative. This reading of the poem invites a reexamination of the Arthurian romance tradition and its connection to courtly power through the lens of commodification of the female body not only as motivating factors for action but as central to the quest for masculinity, kingship, and the restoration of social order (Tether et al. 2017).

Endnotes:

1. Purdon argues that the poet uses the traditional three step process of vassalage (homage, fealty, and fief) to further complicate the presentation of kingship within the text. Purdon investigates how both Godard and Godrich are made to fulfill only one part of vassalage, homage, whereas the poet portrays Havelok as garnering all traditional rights of the king once he is crowned.
2. There was a certain amount of anxiety in the thirteenth-century surrounding wardships and inheritance. See *Documents of the Baronial Movement of Reform and Rebellion 1258-1267*, which contains references to repeated complaints by the barons over wardships falling into the king's hands: "In the same way, concerning Wardships and escheats of the nobles falling into the lord king's hand, the goods of which the keepers of these properties completely dilapidate, selling plantations, destroying parks and fishponds, permitting houses, park fences, ditches and other things which could and should be kept in order by small repairs, to go to utter rack and ruin; even marrying such noble persons to obscure and unknown persons, they [the keepers] often disparage them against the terms of the charter" (Treharne & Sanders, 1973, p. 271).

3. Aertsen ties the symbolism of this passage to Havelok's denying his identity and into the wheel of fortune motif, this being the lowest part of the wheel for Havelok (p. 44). See also Hanning, Robert W. "*Havelok the Dane*: Structure, Symbols, Meaning." *Studies in Philology* LXIV:4 (1967): 586-605. Hanning states that "The loss of a social identity implicit in Havelok's surrender of sovereignty determines and prefigures his subsequent, explicit loss of personal identity in leaving Denmark to grow up as a fisherman's son in England" (p. 592).
4. Smithers summarizes both Gaimar and the *Lai* in his edition of *Havelok*. *L'Estoire* begins with the story of Argentille and then turns to Cuaran who is already established in Edelsi's service. Edelsi here is Argentille's (Goldeboru) regent who forces the misalliance. The *Lai* briefly alludes to Cuaran's childhood flight and then focuses on the travel to Lincoln with Grim's two sons.
5. Many sources for primogeniture exist, but Waugh explains how "sisters and younger brothers, theoretically left out of the inheritance under primogeniture, in fact, often received a pre-mortem share of the inheritance in the form of gifts from the holder of the estate....This fission intensified whenever women inherited because, from the late twelfth century onward, estates were divided equally among female heirs (1988, p. 16).
6. Kantorowicz asserts that such symbols became overdetermined, as is the case with Havelok's multiple symbols that recur.
7. Levine argues that if Havelok was written "for an audience for whom power was both a possibility and a habit, for whom John of Salisbury's ideas had some appeal, and for whom violence was not confined to the world of stylized art but was a fact of everyday historical reality, Havelok lays the responsibility for horror where it belonged in the thirteenth century, with the aristocrats" (p. 104). Levine represents the poem as a critique of aristocrats, but not by peasants.
8. Ishkanian has commented on Havelok as employee: "In short, Havelok is presented as an ideal worker. Yet we must acknowledge that he is an ideal worker only from the point of view of an employer. He is extremely competitive with other workers, works for nothing, gladly works to the point of exhaustion, and never complains but always smiles. None of this behavior could be considered either realistic or admirable by an audience of ordinary workers, though it would suit the taste of their urban employers or manorial supervisors" (p. 297).
9. Staines writes of the fisherman's daughter Kelloc in Gaimar: "When Kelloc does disclose the truth [of Havelok's parentage which he did not know], she advises him to return to Denmark: in addition, she prepares his provisions and arranges all the details for the journey. As he assumes the course of destiny his royal parentage demands of him, Havelok remains an almost wholly passive individual" (p. 604).
10. Gravdal explores the theme of misalliance in French romances during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. Gravdal sees misalliance as a continuation of the struggle between affluent peasant and impoverished lord. Misalliance, or disparagement as it was actually termed in the thirteenth-century, seems to have been a problem, at least nuisance enough to define the term and make a law concerning it. Also see Scott Waugh's "The Lordship of England". "The first time that disparagement was explicitly defined, in the Statue of Merton (1236), it was taken to mean marriage to a villein or burgess. The sanctions of the statute were directed at mesne lords; it did not deal with the king's rights. For greater tenants-in-chief, such a marriage was unthinkable, and no example has been found. At their level of society, the issue of compatible status remained paramount throughout the thirteenth century" (Waugh 81).
11. Grim's speech reads: "Loverd, have merci/ Of me, and Leve that is me bi!/ Loverd, we aren bothe thine–/ Thine cherles, thine hine./ Lowerd, we sholen the wel fede/ Til that thu cone riden on stede,/ Til that thu cone ful wel bere/ Helm on heved, sheld and spere;/ He ne shal never wite, sikerlike–/ Godard–that fule swike!/ Thoru other man, loverd, than thoru the/ Sal I nevere freman be; Thous shalt me, loverd, fre maken,/ For I shal yemen the and waken–Thoru the wile I fredom have!'" (Shepherd, 1995, p. 27).
12. Delany Ishkanian comments on Grim's chattel that the only way for Havelok to free Grim is through contractual negotiations, i.e. the law of a year and a day. "This privilege," according to Sheila Ishkanian,

"included in many borough charters, provided that any person who lived peacefully in the borough in his own house for the stipulated period, would automatically become free. What Grim seems to anticipate, then is that his path to freedom lies through the borough privileges which were the essence of the alliance between king and bourgeoisie" (Ishkanian, 1974, p. 296). Grim may anticipate freedom, but Ishkanian does not respond to Grim's sons' unmitigated pledge to Havelok.

13. McIntosh also discusses the significant differences among the various versions of the poem.
14. Kathryn Gravdal concludes that raptus occurred in the medieval sense when these four stipulations had been met: "there has been unlawful coitus; the woman has been abducted from the house of her father; the rape was accomplished by violence; and a marriage agreement has not been negotiated previously between the victim and the ravisher. Gratian's new specification that the victim was protected only when abducted from the house of her father underscored the patriarchal nature of this medieval law: it was concerned primarily with the protection of the father's rights, not those of his daughter" (pp. 8-9). John Carter concludes that "In the 145 cases investigated for this study, only one, from the Hertfordshire Eyre of 1287, suggests that coitus had to be completed by orgasm before the illegal sexual act was declared rape by the Eyre justices and the jury" (p. 37). Carter finds differing definitions by thirteenth and fourteenth century legal theorists arguing whether penetration, coitus, or abduction all must occur for the rape to be prosecuted.
15. In Gaimar's account Cuaran takes up a battle ax to defend Argentille's honor, killed three and wounded the others. They then flee to a local church where Cuaran then begins throwing stones down on Ubbe's (Sigar's) men. The reference here to a battle ax, which explains why the town seal of Lincoln should show Havelok with a battle ax and stones one side, varies from the peasant weapon which Havelok employs in the ME version. The presence of the stones in the ME poem may also be explained with reference to his throwing stones in Gaimar.
16. Scott claims that "the poet channels the power of the spoken word to effective, purposeful uses in the spheres of the law and court. Language or speech in Havelok is represented consistently as performance... Spoken language becomes a powerful tool of delegation, debate, and judgment, a means to mediate between correct and incorrect behavior, and a force more pervasive and valuable than heroic prowess or brute strength" (p. 141). Scott finds a variety of sociolects within the poem's oral discourse.
17. For discussions on food symbology, see Robert Hanning, who finds that the six separate occasions for feasts have symbolic value and chart the progress of Havelok in his reclamation of the throne: "Each feast is more important than the one before, though all come at crucial moments in the story, and signal important stages in Havelok's development" (p. 594). Likewise, Liuzza focuses on the realism of the story and sees food, including the descriptions of all the fish, as contributing to bourgeois realism (Liuzza, 1994).

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Patriarchal and Governmental Violent Discourse: A Suppression of Women's Reproductive Rights in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

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Abstract:

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* unfolds a violent dystopian narrative that targets women in general and more precisely a category of fertile women who are assigned by the tyrannical Gilead government to bear children for elite sterile couples. Offred, the protagonist, recounts her life in Gilead, a theocratic and totalitarian state, forced to undergo a ritualized sex with a governmental commander, while her hands are tightly gripped by Selena, in order to bear a child for the commander and his wife. The physical and psychological trauma inflicted upon Offred, the Handmaid, as well as her friends, are transmitted through the nonlinear and introspective style of narration and stand as proofs of the suppression of women's reproductive rights and female subjectivity as a whole. Offred's physical and psychological freedom, as a human being, are usurped due to political and religious strict pretexts. The Governmental perpetual violent discourse against Offred will be studied as a case in point of futuristic patriarchal assault towards women, unless fairer legal and social laws will be established across the globe to protect women's reproductive rights and status within society. Though the novel is dystopian, it still bears a cautionary orientation for feminist trends and groups to move from theories to more practical actions towards ensuring women's rights and gender equality.

Keywords: Discourse of Violence- Dystopian narrative -Female Subjectivity- Patriarchal authority- Political tyranny - Women's rights.

Introduction

In Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, the patriarchal violent discourse is conveyed through the political and religious rhetoric. These narratives intertwine to restrict female freedom and reappropriate women's reproductive rights. The governmental control of the female body is imposed through the patriarchal and religious violent oppressive laws and rules. Deprived of rights, handmaids are reduced to sexual passivity, compared with the agent commanders who control the events and cripple the female body by confining women to a limited and controlled reproductive sphere. Through a discourse of political and religious violence, patriarchy in Gilead works to stigmatize females as sexual bodies without rational minds. This dualism between the body and the mind has

always entailed the superiority of the rational male over the irrational female who has been treated as a body without a mind. The patriarchal rational discourse, though violent is equated to law and sacred religion. Political and religious discourses create a tyranny that curtails women's fundamental freedoms. With the rise of the feminist consciousness, various feminist writers such as Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter, and Marina Warner have started to voice the female body by re- appropriating their own narrative, whereby deconstructing the patriarchal violent discourse. Voicing the female body presupposes the deconstruction of the patriarchal order and the revision of the phallocentric literary discourses that have been dedicated to enhance the dehumanizing female image as irrational body. In this context French feminists such as Luce Irigaray and Hélene Cixous advocate women's need to acquire their own "feminine Writing" that is distinct from the patriarchal one, and in which women are free to write their own bodies as a counter male discourse.

> When woman writes- self-consciously from her muted position as a woman and not as a [...] man- about female desire, female sexuality, female sensuous experience generally, her performance has the effect of giving voice to pure corporeality, of turning a product of the dominant meaning-system into a producer of meanings. (Cixous 1976, 875)

In this case, women become active members by engaging in self-narrating their own experiences within the patriarchal setting mainly following their ultimate liberation. It is no longer a dominating patriarchal narration since it is dominated by women. Female writers or orators engage in narrating and telling their personal life stories, as well as other women's freely in the absence of patriarchal and governmental censorship. The Narration, in this context, serves as a female liberating way, similarly to writing. In "The Laugh of The Medusa," Cixous maintains that "Women must write through their bodies, [...] they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve- discourse" (34). The relationship between writing, narrating and the female body bears emancipatory level and empowers women to recuperate their lost bodies and to voice their silenced minds. Likewise, Irigaray appeals for "contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids, with a fully elaborated code in hand" (5). As such, the female discourse stands as a unique and different speech from its male counterpart. Women must write and speak their own stories through their bodies and even about their exploited bodies that have been violated by male violence and justified by the political and religious discourses. In *The Handmaid's tale*, The Gilead language "reflects male interests and words have a male-bias" (Talbot 2010, 43). The symbolic jargon imposed by the government works to limit women's linguistic skills to a set of vocabulary words enhancing patriarchal obedience. Violence, in this article, is an inherent characteristic of the Gilead governmental discourse, taking into consideration its hidden misogynist purposes. Using Michael Foucault's concept of "the docile body", the analysis will concentrate on the female sexual passivity vis a vis the patriarchal oppressive rhetoric. "A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved" (Foucault 1995, 180). The handmaids' bodies are to

be studied as "docile" ones and used as "Political puppets" (180). In *The handmaids's Tale* "the [female] body had become the object of such imperious and pressing investments; in every society, the body was in the grip of very strict powers, which imposed on its constraints, prohibitions, or obligations" (180). In this context, as a first section, the under hands paper will deal with the violent patriarchal, political and religious discourses in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. The second part will study the female counter discourse, embodied through the rise of the anti-political feminist movement labelled as "Mayday movement". The final section will analyse Offred's dominance of narration through her recording of the events in a cassette, which is considered as an insurrectionary act and a female counter discourse.

1. The Violence of Patriarchal, Political and Religious Discourses

The patriarchal, governmental and religious structures in Gilead "use language as a means of exercising control" (Murkett 2021, 1) over the handmaids, typically over Offred, as a case in point, to be studied in this paper. The appropriation of the handmaid's body for national service faces female resistance through the act of narrating and writing the female body. Offred, the handmaid who is the narrator also, resists her sexual exploitation through dominating the narrative and the act of narration. She writes her own life story and voices her female body seeking its reappropriation. Offred, as a female character, stands as a case in point for the posthumous genetic engineering[1] in which females are playing the roles of machines, denying thus their minds and rationality. She is destined to play the role of a surrogate mother for the commander's child. Due to a decrease in birth rate, the government justified by religious discourse, forbids abortion and controls women's reproductive rights. The handmaids' bodies are treated as national property, exploited like machines. To do so, the system of language is controlled and limited to the point of erasing women's history and previous language acquisition. As such, "language is a vital prerequisite for the achievement of power, both public and private" (Gulick 1). The handmaids "docile bodies" are being tamed by the spell of religious and political language which work to solidify the embedded patriarchal discourse. This latter discourse is a violent one, and aims to limit the female reproductive freedom under the tight religious and governmental control. Even the handmaids 'names are changed on purpose to erase the female identity. This governmental decision is meant to wipe out the female selfhood while keeping the objectified body. These secret political measures are transmitted to the reader through Offred's memorial reminiscences and inner monologues. Nonetheless, women in Gilead still remember their glorious and liberated past identities before the rise of the religious government known as "the sons of Jacobs" (Atwood 2017, 65). The handmaids are not allowed to voice their souvenirs or talk about their past life publicly, since it is considered as a political crime against "the sons of Jacob" (65). Literally, the latter label refers to a group of patriarchal members who found the totalitarian political regime of Gilead. Studying it from a religious perspective, "the sons of Jacobs" (65) metaphorically denotes a religious biblical connotation to the patriarchal figure who has twelve sons, the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. Similarly, we find the highly ranked commanders and officials in Gilead, the

representatives of the sons of Jacobs, who tighten their grip over the handmaids by sexually exploiting them.

Hence, we understand the deeply ingrained patriarchal orientation within the Gilead government and the huge role played by religious discourse to back up the political government. For the Gilead government, language is a double-edged weapon since it is open to interpretation and analysis which stir and strengthen the mental skills, whereby it represents a real hazard. By controlling language, the government, on behalf of the patriarchal order, exercises control over women and classifies them into fertile, infertile women and even unwomen. The fertile females are handmaids who are forced by law to have sexual intercourse with their commanders, seeking to bear children for the national service, whereas the infertile ones are exiled or sent to brothels like "jezebel" (90). Binarism[2] is at the heart of the patriarchal discourse and even dissects females into fertile and infertile ones. Binarism is deployed to set boundaries for the handmaids' freedoms by spotlighting the forbidden linguistic items. What's more, the government's division of women into uneven categories reinforces the debasement of the handmaids and the usurpation of their human rights. Women are impelled to use specific jargon delineated by the religious and political laws to maintain the patriarchal reign. Throughout the narrative, Offred, the handmaid surrenders to her commander's sexual exploitation, though her restless mind refuses the newly imposed prison and the usurpation of her liberation, since it is still dominated by her childhood memories, with her maternal image as the dominant one. Amongst few other handmaids, Offred resists language restriction and shuns its psychological impact. The suffocating linguistic control extends to forbidding reading, writing, listening and even playing games such as scrabble. These activities are considered as rebellious acts leading to fatal punishment. When the commander invites Offred to play scrabble, she feels powerful and autonomous, though always sceptical about her commander's kind demeanour towards her.

The power of language profoundly affects the female characters' psychological states. The handmaids greet each other using biblical catchphrases such as "blessed be the fruit" (Atwood 2017, 5) and "may the lord open" (5). These greetings aim to reinforce the female submission under the pretext of religious sacredness. They are tools of control that convey the extent to which the state considers fertility as women's weakest point. "The fruit" is symbolically used to connote children since the handmaids are expected to bear children for the ruling classes. Similarly to the expression "Blessed be the fruit", the second expression "May the Lord open" bears deep significance in relation to Gilead's atrocious patriarchal society. Thus, relegating women to an inferior subordinate position compared with the sexually oppressive commanders. The use of religious references is very ironic, taking into consideration the governmental misuse of religion. The sacred discourse is put in the governmental service and serves the commanders sexual exploitation of women. As such, the handmaids are forced to abide by the laws in order to escape being punished. Most of their vocabulary words are derived from religious discourse, seeking to justify the handmaids 'sexual docility. Language becomes automatic ritual, meant to be internalized and used by the handmaids. As Aunt Lydia avers: "This may not seem ordinary to you now, but after a time it will. It will become ordinary" (63). At this point, the role habit plays in helping the handmaids internalize the governmental language is

conspicuously highlighted by the writer. Hence, the language imposed by the Gilead government is meant to be accepted and absorbed without being questioned or interpreted. Within this tyrannical and suffocating atmosphere, Offred keeps repeating her "former name 'to remind [herself] of what [she]once could do, how others saw [her]" (92). Her original name symbolizes her lost history and sense of womanhood. Memory, in this vein, plays a crucial role in resisting the patriarchal/political tyranny. Offred clings to her memory as a defence mechanism to resist Gilead's linguistic restriction. Hence, despite the tight external governmental dominance, her inner internal monologue is still struggling to come to the surface. Remembering her name empowers her to resist the imposed external verbal language. As such, she compares her inner linguistic attempts to "the power of a dog bone: passive, but still there" (58). Though acknowledging her weak female position, Offred attempts to resist by all available psychological means. Even though, there are only some clinging memories which she cherishes deep inside her inner world, still they succeed to help her to attach herself to her roots. As Linda Thomas avers: "Language can be said to provide a framework for our thoughts, and it becomes very difficult to think outside of that framework" (1994, 507). Thus, Offred's memories serve as tools of resistance of a whole patriarchal, political and religious system, established purposefully to limit women's freedom and appropriate their reproductive rights.

The indoctrination of the limited linguistic system is the government's prior goal to rigidify its laws, as a general rule, and objectify women in particular. Most handmaids end by internalizing the Gilead linguistic codes and prohibitions to the point of self-accusation, as it is the case with Janine's rape. Confessing her sexual victimization, Jennine is accused by her fellow handmaids. The latter put the blame on her, instead of supporting her case. What's remarkable is the way the government succeeds to tighten its control over the aunts and handmaids who strictly blame Janine for being raped by chanting "her fault, her fault, her fault, she did, she did, she did" (Atwood 2017, 57). As such, the power of the patriarchal linguistic jargon is demonstrated through its transmission to the female characters' inner consciousness to the point of prosecuting each other. The power of linguistic repetition is clearly conveyed through the handmaids 'acceptance of guilt and shame which are, in reality, beyond their responsibilities. Even Offred who secretly resists the whole system tends to blame Jennine by expressing her disgust for her: "She looked disgusting… even though we knew what was being done to her, we despised her…We meant it, which was the bad part" (Atwood 2017, 137). Offred's consciousness of being manipulated and ideologically programmed by the governmental and patriarchal control incites her to question her forcibly- inquired beliefs and doctrines. Though she deploys Gilead's misogynist linguistic system, Offred is aware of her contradictory internalized ideologies. Despite her awareness of the usurpation of her freedom, she unconsciously internalizes the patriarchal hatred and sexual exploitation of women and acts accordingly, while behaving with her fellow handmaids. What is noticeable as far as the character of Offred is concerned is the linguistic division and dilemmas she bears within her inner psyche. The external patriarchal restricted and coded jargon is trespassing her inner submerged cherished memories which struggle to come to the surface. Offred's female identity oscillates between erasure and re-emergence, being strictly controlled by the

power of language. Being aware of the danger caused by verbal spoken language, Offred clings to her inner unspoken monologue which keeps reminding her of her previous past when she used to have a female voice. Hence, Offred's past stands as a source of survival for her female identity. She seems to be torn between her real life which is controlled by Gilead's patriarchal political and religious discourses, and her past life cherished through her internal thoughts. The linguistic division she goes through impacts her identity and yields her schizophrenic female identity. The fact of living within two contradictory worlds, guided by an audible external authoritarian language and a submerging past monologue, leads Offred to question her usurped freedom.

Through language, a whole category of women is defined in terms of its reproductive functions and forced to bear children as a national duty. The role language plays in *The Handmaid's Tale* is reminiscent of the linguistic tyrannical use in George Orwell's *1984*, though the former aims only fertile women, rather than all members of society. The targeted novel explores the ways in which women are controlled and oppressed through physical and verbal violence, psychological manipulation, and institutionalized sexism (Ruddick 1989, 82). What's remarkable is the religious debate surrounding women's forced reproduction in Gilead. "The society in the novel is based on a twisted interpretation of Christianity, which justifies the subjugation of women. The novel critiques the ways in which religion has been used to justify patriarchal structures and limit women's rights and freedoms" (Alwan 2023, 3). The three discourses: the patriarchal, the political and religious ones conspire to usurp women's reproductive rights and freedom of expression. Offred's monologue stands as a counter discourse to the governmental one and stems heavily from Offred's memories and past life. Every single detail is politicized and regulated in Gilead. The fact that they are obliged to gather and read the bible at the Commander's house is a violent linguistic discourse, used to remind the handmaids of the necessity to follow the governmental laws which stem, by their turns, from the religious text. Her ritualistic sexual intercourse with the commander is presented as a national duty too. Offred's description of the scene is very neutral and pragmatic; free from any emotional involvement. She is placed, by force, between the legs of the commander's wife, meanwhile the former performs his national and religious duty towards the Gilead government and God.

> The commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body. I do not say making love, because this is not what he's doing. Copulating too would be inaccurate, because it would imply two people and only one is involved. Nor does rape cover it: nothing is going on here that I haven't signed up for. There wasn't a lot of choice but there was some, and this is what I chose. (Atwood 2017, 104-05)

Sexuality has become a problematic issue within the Gilead Government since it is restricted to child birth and undergoes rigid rules. The absence of feelings and sensations make it an unnatural automatic act, dictated by governmental rules. Even sexuality is ruled by a discourse inflicted by the government which stems its hegemony from religion. As part of their national duties, the handmaids succumb to the sexual brutality of the commanders who exploit their "docile bodies" (Foucault 1995, 135). This leads us to refer to Holst Petersen and Rutherford's concept of the "double colonization" (1986, 85).

Eventually, the handmaids are mentally colonized by the political discourses of Gilead government and physically conquered by the sexual exploitation of the commanders.

Females suffer from the overlapping of political, religious and patriarchal subjugation. The violence of discourse is transmitted implicitly through the political laws and explicitly through sexual abuse. In *Handmaid's Tale*, the governmental discourse and the patriarchal one are two facets of the same coin. They work in parallel to subjugate women and reappropriate their reproductive rights. In this vein Sadeghi and Mizrapour aver that "the novel depicts the subjugation of handmaids, their marginalization as well as their struggle to survive and resist the imperial/patriarchal discourses" (2020, 22). The patriarchal, political and religious control is equated to colonization, mainly taking into consideration the coup d état witnessed by the American government followed by the rise of a theocratic, patriarchal society of Gilead government. Thus, the political and religious discourses, align with the patriarchal ideology and scheme to undermine the position of women by subdividing them into fertile and infertile female categories, whereby degrading the female status by defining it strictly in terms of fertility and procreation. Fertile women lose their total freedom and are compelled to play the role of surrogate mothers for the commanders. "The double colonization" of the handmaids 'is demonstrated through the commanders' sexual exploitation of their "docile bodies" and the governmental colonization of their psychological worlds through the inflicted political and religious discourses.

II- The female anti-discourse: Offred's monologue and revolutionary oral narration

Although, the violent patriarchal and governmental discourse is omnipresent in *The Handmaid's Tale*, it does not conceal the female characters' attempts to challenge it by creating a feminist movement that functions underground and prepares a political upheaval. The female revolutionary movement, known as 'Mayday,' symbolizes hope and the potential for liberation. The label is very symbolic, connoting the possibility of achieving the female freedom one day. To study it from a historiographical perspective, the name of the feminist movement "Mayday" is an explicit reference to the French word "m'aidez" which means help me and deployed as an international distress signal. To trace back the historical origin of the concept "Mayday"[3], the latter is used in emergency cases to ask for help. Hence, the feminist secret movement asks for help and urges to save the exploited handmaids. When Ofglen divulges the secret existence of Mayday to Offred and invites her to join the members, Offred indulges in answering her without hesitation: "There is an *us* then, there's a we. I knew it" (Atwood 2017, 177). For the first time, Offred senses a feeling of belonging to a female revolutionary and anti-patriarchal movement that allows her to freely impose her own discourse. Immediately, Offred transforms from a passive, objectified figure to an insurrectionary voice of dissent. Her sense of belonging empowers her to exteriorize her internal monologue which preserves her survival all along her life in the commander's house. The movement strengthens her will to recuperate her reproductive rights and female identity. "The Mayday" movement stands as a feminist counter discourse to the previously inflicted patriarchal one. Offred gains her anti- narrative as a counterpart to the violent

male discourse. Her affiliation with "Maday Movement" enables her to articulate her monologue into audible words. Offred's insurrection against the male coercive dystopia comes through her writing of her own womanhood and her reappropriation of female narration.

The feminist writers project of writing the female selfhood is conveyed through the female characters' telling of their own life stories. "In reconstructing the language, women restructure their relation to society" (Firestone 1970, 22) and overturn the gender hierarchies. The danger of the female writing and narration lies at the level of deconstructing the male predominating narratives. *The Handmaid's Tale* is narrated by Offred herself who is "traded by the commanders of Gilead, passes from house to house in a form of contract pregnancy that determines her role as a "good" mother, one who gives up her child and subserves her gestational rights to the male genetic claim to his property" (Myrsiades 1999, 220). She is valued only in terms of her reproductive power which is considered as a national property. "Offred is one of a class of fertile women acting as designated breeders for the state of Gilead" (Atwood 2017, 227). Narrating her own story allows her to reclaim her agency and identity. Her commander treats her "reproductive body as a mere container, isolated from the rest of herself and serving merely as walls for the central presence of the embryo" (Myrsiades 1999, 220). As a mother, she has no biological rights over her infant as it will be raised by her commander and his wife. In this context, women are regarded as replaceable machines, undertaking surrogacy roles for the national service. "The handmaid writes herself into existence by telling her own tale and thereby taking possession of it" (220). Her womb is a national property serving the government through giving birth to babies, on whom she has no rights. Offred is depicted as an object of exchange, imprisoned within her commander's house with no human rights. Bearing in mind the date of its publication, the book bears various aspects of realism, mainly the rise of the international feminist movement during the cold war period. The historical events are implicitly mirrored in the plot. The book was written in Berlin, notably during a historical period characterized by a political upheaval which is more or less transmitted within the folds of the narrative. "The mayday movement" stands for the rise of international feminist movements appealing for female rights, notably that of abortion. Subsequently, the book's posthumous female reproductive image comes as a feminist warning against the denial of the human emotions and the relegation of women to a debased status limited to an automatic birth giving. "Because her reproductive organs formed the center of her being, [offred] was to be constrained from using her brain" (221). For the Gilead Government, women should not be allowed to use their brains seeing the repercussions on their reproductive potentials. "The brain and ovary could not develop at the same time" (Rosenberg 1975, 288). What is critical is that the female body is deployed to empower the dominant males. The objectification of the female body is at stake; hence the Handmaid's tale comes as a cautionary futuristic tale, envisioning a risky future for female generations unless serious measures will be taken by the activist feminist movements.

In the Gilead government, women gain social positions through their pregnancy, as one of the handmaids is depicted as "vastly pregnant; her belly, under her loose garment, swells triumphantly...

She is a magic presence to us, an object of envy and desire, we covet her. She's a flag on a hilltop, showing us what can still be done: we too can be saved" (Atwood 2017, 35). The question of pregnancy leads us to discuss the patriarchal view of women as reproductive machines regardless their cognitive abilities. The handmaids, though absented and denied any human rights, are compelled by the republic of Gilead to bear children. What's more, the undermined handmaid is aware of her degraded position. She admits: "I avoid looking down at my body, not so much because it's shameful or immodest but because I don't want to see it. I don't want to look at something that determines me so completely" (94). Her awareness of being objectified and treated like a machine works to liberate her potential. Women are defined in terms of their female bodies and ability to bear children. Offred's ability to distance herself from her body highlights the extent to which she succeeds to resist the patriarchal definition of womanhood. The handmaid's narration aims to resist the dominating system. Her oral narration and testimony are the sole refuge from the Gilead. Otherwise, she will receive the same destiny as her rebellious mother who revolts against the Gilead's treatment of women and ends by being casted, together with the Jews, into the wastelands. Telling her story she admits: "It hurts me to tell it over, over again. Once was enough…But I keep on going with this sad and hungry and sordid, this limping and mutilated story" (344). Narrating her own tale empowers her to regain her position. Believing in the power of repetition, Offred does not surrender to the overwhelming political system, rather she stands against it by narrating and orally telling her life story. "The Gileadean assignment of handmaids as ambulatory hatcheries for the commander's seed" (Myrsiades 1999, 222) is being resisted by the handmaid's narration of her own story, thus reappropriating her usurped body while dis-appropriating the patriarchal designed female body. The handmaid's protest is limited to narrating her secret attempts of leaving the Gilead government. Her counter discourse represents her control over the narration process. The fact that she joins the "Mayday" movement is in itself an insurrectionary act from her part. Thence, the secret feminist movement which challenges the governmental power stands as a counter patriarchal discourse. Though their evolution is secretly spread underground, still it attracts various psychologically restless handmaids who just pretend to surrender to governmental control.

The female resistance of the governmental and religious discourses initiates as a covert movement and ends as an overt female narration that controls the whole fictional plot. By the end of the novel, we come to discover that the narration is dominated by Offred who is silenced all along the narrative. Her resistance to male discourse is embodied through her narration of the events which comes as a counter-discourse. Hence, apart from the "Mayday movement" which stands as a revolutionary feminist attempt to overthrow the religious power of "the sons of Jacobs", Offred's oral narration of the events is a feminist triumph in itself over the patriarchal manipulation of women and the commanders' sexual exploitation of the handmaids. Offred's triumph is clear enough as she avers: "This is a recording. I'm telling you this story. I'm telling it to you because I am telling it to myself" (Atwood 2017, 57). The female counter discourse is embodied, also, through Offred's recording of the whole story, whereby conquering the Gilead authoritarian world. Offred

addresses her female self in order to be convinced of the necessity to revolt and overcome the delineated patriarchal world of Gilead. Her orality serves to liberate her womanhood as well as to raise the consciousness of her audience in general. Her recording implicitly conveys that "the vessels are upright; the vessels have acquired legs. The sacred vessels are on the move…They move slowly at first then faster and faster" (Wittig 1973, 32). Offred's narration survives the spatial and temporal frames to become a memorial recording, as a witness to her tortured life, as well as that of the other handmaids during Gilead rule. "Orality was one issue that feminist literary aesthetics re-enlisted as a means to challenge patriarchal literary discourse. Capitalizing on the way that oral discourse has been associated with the feminine" (Klarer 1995, 140). Since the bygone ages, storytelling has always been linked to women agents who narrate fairytales to children and transmit them to future generations as a family heritage. Though it is considered as a maternal tradition, orality empowers Offred to trespass the political and patriarchal boundaries and voice her suffocated monologue. Taking into consideration the fact that orality flows more natural, bearing the different human emotional and psychological traits than does writing, Offred's recording is viewed as an authentic, reliable and spontaneous feminist appeal to reconsider the female position, guarantee gender equality and recuperate women's reproductive rights all over the world.

Conclusion

To end with, this article has studied the female frail position within the Gilead government as an authoritarian religious regime. The first part has dealt with the violent patriarchal and governmental discourse which is designed to usurp women's basic rights notably the reproductive ones, based on the sacred religious text as a justification for the patriarchal doctrine. A close text analysis has revealed the religious nature of the Gilead government which manipulates the sacred text to limit women's liberty and exploit them sexually seeking to bear children for the infertile privileged classes. The governmental chosen jargon serves the patriarchal goal to increase the birth rate after an abrupt population decrease within the nation. Women are the targeted victims who have to submit to the sexual brutality of their commanders under the presence of their infertile wives. The threatening and violent male discourse colonizes women's psychological worlds and invades even their inner monologues, aiming to restrict their linguistic tools and cognitive abilities. Hence, the language used is always limited, tending to reinforce the patriarchal regime, by empowering it over the handmaids. Relying on the religious biblical discourse, the commanders cripple the handmaids' liberties and limit their existence to child birth. Women in Gilead are totally usurped from their history and female identities, including their original names. After erasing their essences, women are moulded by the political power, to serve their national duties as surrogate mothers. The violent governmental discourse deploys religion to maintain the patriarchal power and sexually exploit the handmaids. As for the second part, the work underhand has dealt with the female revolutionary counter discourse. The reappropriation of the female body whether through the rise of the feminist "Mayday" movement or the act of narration as we have already seen with Offred in *The Handmaids' Tale* serve

as a female technique of patriarchal deconstruction and resistance to the phallocentric violent discourse that have usurped the female body. By dominating their own narratives, women are controlling their own bodies and imposing their subjectivities. The "Mayday" movement provides a feminist private space where women dare to revolt against the Gilead religious government and bring forth their repressed souvenirs and inner monologues. Actually, it represents their revolutionary counter discourse that stands against the atrocious patriarchal discourse of Gilead. Offred's orality and recording of the narrative illustrates her female insurrectionary discourse as well. The fact that she controls the narrative through her orality represents her triumph over the imposed patriarchal discourse. Her recording remains as an eternal witness to her seized female liberty and her sexual abuse by the commanders.

Endnotes:

1. The term *genetic engineering* initially referred to various techniques used for the modification or manipulation of organisms through the processes of heredity and reproduction. As such, the term embraced both artificial selection and all the interventions of biomedical techniques, among them artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization (e.g., "test-tube" babies), cloning, and gene manipulation. (Britannica)
2. A mode of thought predicated on seemingly stable oppositions (such as good and evil or male and female) that is seen in post-structuralist analysis as an inadequate approach to areas of difference (Meriem-Webster)
3. Mayday first came into English in 1923. In fact, it was first used by a British aviator, Frederick Stanley Mockford, who suggested it to the British authorities in 1923. It is an internationally recognized radio word to signal distress. There was a lot of air traffic between England and France in those days, and evidently there were enough international problems over the English Channel that both parties wanted to find a good distress signal that everyone would understand. (Sullivan 2020, 82-1)

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'What Was There Behind it - Her Beauty, Her Splendour?': Femininity and Masquerade in Psychoanalysis and *To the Lighthouse*

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Abstract:

This essay explores the correlation between femininity and absence through Mrs Ramsay in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* alongside analyses of femininity in psychoanalysis. For Freud and Klein, femininity is built upon the absence of masculinity; the transition from girl to woman is catalysed by the castration complex. In 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', Joan Riviere suggests that the true nature of femininity is a mystery by insisting that there is no difference between genuine womanliness and femininity as masquerade. I use my analysis of Mrs Ramsay to emphasise how Freud and Klein fail to construct a well-rounded definition of femininity by equating it with absence. Much of the scholarship on Woolf's novel suggests that Mrs Ramsay performs her role as the archetypal woman and mother; however, our knowledge of Mrs Ramsay derives from other characters' perceptions of her. I reverse the notion that Mrs Ramsay performs her femininity by proposing that womanliness is projected onto her, obscuring her true character. Woolf problematises the notion that femininity is founded upon the absence of masculinity by refusing to reveal Mrs Ramsay's true character. Thus, she challenges us to dismantle the structures that efface woman's subjectivity to construct a more accurate understanding of femininity.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, femininity, absence, womanliness, masquerade, Virginia Woolf.

Psychoanalysis in the early twentieth century is preoccupied with femininity. In *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933), Sigmund Freud states that throughout history, analysts have 'knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity.'[1] Both Freud and Melanie Klein consider how the young girl becomes the adult woman. For both psychoanalysts, the transition from girl to woman is tied to penis-envy. Freud outlines his theory of femininity in 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (1905) and builds on his analysis in 'The Infantile Genital Organisation of the Libido' (1924) and 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinctions Between the Sexes' (1925). Crucially, Freud declares that femininity does not exist prior to maleness but only begins when the girl becomes aware that she does not possess a penis. The girl then replaces her desire for the penis with the desire for a child. In 'Early Stages of the Oedipus Complex' (1928), Klein also proposes that femininity and motherhood are only made possible through the castration complex. For both Freud and Klein, then, femininity is built upon the absence of masculinity.

Whilst Freud and Klein have contributed to our understanding of the ways in which gender is formed in the early stages of development, both tie femininity to absence. It is the link between femininity and absence that I will focus on in this essay. In 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' (1929), Joan Rivere suggests that womanliness can be worn as a mask to conceal the possession of masculine characteristics. Rivere claims that there is 'no such difference' between 'genuine womanliness' and 'the masquerade',[2] anticipating the later idea that femininity is performative. In this essay, I will examine the link between femininity and the castration complex alongside Riviere's 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' to argue that woman is absent from psychoanalysis. I will then explore the correlation between femininity and absence through Mrs. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927). Much of the scholarship written on Woolf's novel insists that Mrs. Ramsay performs her role as the archetypal woman and mother. For critics, she is the Angel in the House; the model of perfect femininity that must be defeated for the new woman to flourish. However, much of what we know of Mrs. Ramsay derives from the other characters' perceptions of her. Therefore, I intend to reverse the notion that Mrs. Ramsay performs her femininity. I argue that womanliness is not enacted but is projected onto her by her peers which obscures her true character. Finally, I will consider how far Lily Briscoe's abstract portrait captures Mrs. Ramsay's (absent) character. In doing so, I hope to show that the model of femininity that we find in Freud and Klein's psychoanalysis inhibits a more comprehensive understanding of femininity by removing woman from the narrative.

In Freud's psychoanalysis, femininity is constructed through the castration complex. In his lecture on 'Femininity', Freud insists that 'psychoanalysis does not try to describe what woman is – that would be a task it could scarcely perform - but sets about enquiring how she comes into being, how a woman develops out of a child with a bisexual disposition' (4718). Though Freud does not explicitly state that he is concerned with the construction of gender, he makes it clear that femininity is a process of becoming rather than an innate disposition. Freud insists that the little girl is 'biologically destined' to pass from the 'masculine phase to the feminine one', and so he presents the transition as natural (4720). Freud first considers femininity in early childhood in 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality.' When the little girl notices that she does not have a penis, she is 'immediately overcome by envy – an envy culminating in the wish, which is so important in its consequences, to be [a] boy.'[3] In 'The Infantile Genital Organisation of the Libido', Freud emphasises the importance of the castration complex to the development of femininity. For both sexes in childhood, 'only one kind of genital organ comes into account – the male.'[4] The little boy acknowledges that he has a penis; the little girl notices that she does not. Thus, 'maleness has come to life, but no femaleness. The antithesis runs: a male genital organ or a castrated condition' (129). In 'On "Psychoanalysis and Feminism"' (1992), Elizabeth Young-Bruehl and Laura Wexler examine the changing relationship between feminism and psychoanalysis between the 1920s and the 1990s. Young-Bruehl and Wexler argue that feminist thinkers in the late twentieth century reject Freud's notion of femininity based on its insistence that there is a singular concept of 'feminine "normality."'[5] By stating that 'normal' femininity is achieved through the castration complex, Freud suggests that conventional femininity

is secondary to maleness. In 'The Castration Complex Revisited' (2018), Howard B. Levine also suggests that what is revealed in Freud's psychoanalysis is 'constructed rather than found.'[6] For Levine, psychoanalysis is a 'dialogical process in which meaning is often created rather than summoned back to mind' (109). Freud presents the castration complex as a 'concrete and significant fact linked to the problem of the anatomical sex difference' (106). In doing so, Freud creates a phallocentric rendition of femininity by giving 'little or no credence to representation of the female genitals, anatomy or sexual apparatus in the little girl' (106). Whilst they recognise that Freud's concept of femininity is phallocentric, neither Young-Bruehl and Wexler nor Levine focus on the relationship between femininity and the lack of the phallus in detail. In Freud's analysis, femininity cannot exist without its lack of maleness. Thus, not only does Freud contribute to the notion that femininity is secondary to maleness, but he creates a rendition of femininity that amounts to absence.

Motherhood in Freud's psychoanalysis is also founded upon the absence of masculinity. In 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinctions Between the Sexes', Freud insists that when the little girl realises that she lacks a penis, she develops 'a sense of inferiority.' She believes that her lack of a penis is a punishment, and 'begins to share the contempt felt by men for a sex which is lesser in so important a respect.' Crucially, the female castration complex results in a 'loosening of the girl's relation with her mother as love-object.' Her mother has 'sent her into the world insufficiently equipped', and so the mother is held responsible.[7] Now, the little girl can 'give up her wish for a penis and put in place of it a wish for a child: and with that purpose in view she takes her father as love-object.' In part three of 'Three Essays', Freud expands on the progression from girl to woman. Whilst puberty catalyses an 'accession of libido in boys', it is 'marked in girls by a fresh wave of repression, in which it is clitoridal sexuality that is affected.' To repress her wish for masculinity, the girl must change her 'leading erotogenic zone' from the clitoris to the vagina. Only then will she possess the 'essence of femininity' (220). In 'The Sexual Solipsism of Sigmund Freud' (1963), Betty Friedan states that 'much of what Freud believed to be biological [and] instinctual' is 'merely characteristic of certain middle-class European men and women at the end of the nineteenth century.'[8] In Freud's theory, 'The motive force of woman's personality [is] her envy of the penis, which causes her to feel as much depreciated in her own eyes as in the eyes of the boy.' Woman's lack of masculinity leads to 'normal femininity', which enables the 'wish of the penis of her husband' (89). It also encourages her to perceive her mother and all women as depreciated [Friedan, p.91]. Now, we can argue that the transition from female child to woman and adult mother in Freud's analysis is cyclical. Upon finding herself castrated, the little girl changes her love-object from mother to father and replaces her wish for masculinity with the desire for a child. She then changes her leading zone from the clitoris to the vagina; from 'thing' to 'no-thing.' In becoming a mother, she will be held in contempt by her child for her lack of masculinity. For Freud, motherhood only serves to reinforce woman's lack of subjectivity. Thus, he makes it impossible for the 'normal' adult woman to combat the lack of masculinity developed in childhood.

In Klein's 'Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict' (1928), femininity and motherhood are also

equated with absence. Like Freud, Klein insists that the Oedipus complex catalyses the 'anatomical difference between the sexes.' However, Klein suggests that the Oedipus complex begins earlier, during the first and second years of life. The Oedipus tendencies are released 'in consequence of the frustration which the child experiences at weaning ... and receive reinforcement through the anal frustrations undergone during training in cleanliness.' When the little boy finds himself 'impelled to abandon the oral and anal positions for the genital', he 'passes on to the aim of penetration with possession of the penis.' As the little girl does not have a penis, 'the receptive aim is carried over from the oral to the genital position.'[9] The girl experiences a double castration complex:

> This early grievance about the lack of a penis is greatly magnified later on, when the castration-complex [is] in full swing. Freud has stated that the discovery of the lack of a penis causes the turning from the mother to the father. My findings show, however, that this discovery operates only as a reinforcement in his direction, since it follows on a very early stage in the Oedipus conflict, and is succeeded by the wish for a child, by which it is actually replaced in later development. (175)

The little girl's development is 'greatly handicapped.' Whilst the boy really does possess the penis, 'the little girl has only the unsatisfied desire for motherhood' (176). Therefore, femininity in Klein's analysis is characterised by a double-lack. To replace her desire for a penis, the little girl desires a child, which, like the penis, she cannot obtain. In 'Mothering, Object-Relations, and the Female Oedipal Configuration' (1978), Nancy Chodorow encourages us to reject the assumption that the transition from female child to adult mother is 'natural, self-evident and unintended.' To the contrary, 'it seems ideologically constructed.'[10] In both Freud and Klein's psychoanalysis, the girl 'identifies with her mother in their common feminine inferiority.' Freud claims that all children until the oedipal period are 'little men' and so, Chodorow states, 'it seems eminently reasonable to answer that woman was born' from psychoanalysis (142). In 'On Freud's Femininity' (1999), Daniel T. O'Hara also perceives femininity in psychoanalysis as performative. O'Hara states that Freud is 'the first major thinker in Western culture to argue that femininity (like masculinity) is a certain set of behaviours.'[11] Like Friedan, Chodorow and O'Hara highlight the fact that femininity and motherhood in psychoanalysis are ideological constructs. However, they maintain the view that both psychoanalysts bring woman into existence. Yet, woman is a double-lacking subject, particularly in Klein's psychoanalysis. She is born from the castration complex, which brings her the unsatisfied desire for a child. As we know, she will be held in contempt for her lack of masculinity when she becomes a mother in Freud's analysis. In 'Rethinking Matricide' (2017), Amber Jacobs rejects Freud's example of femininity. Instead, she calls for an example of motherhood that functions as an 'active agent of meaning' rather than a category that is 'organised around the Oedipal structure.'[12] For Jacobs, woman in psychoanalysis is either 'relentlessly idealised or denigrated'; she is 'nowhere theorized in terms of her own subjectivity' (26). Following Jacobs's analysis, we can say that Freud and Klein do not bring woman into existence, but remove her from the narrative and make it more difficult to determine how she comes into being.

We can further recognise woman's absence from psychoanalysis by considering Joan Riviere's

'Womanliness as a Masquerade.' Riviere claims that women who 'wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness' to avert anxiety and retribution. Riviere takes as her example an American woman who 'display[s] strong features of the other sex.' She has 'excellent relations with her husband' and is a proficient housewife. Though she excels in her professional life, which consists in 'speaking and writing', she experiences a considerable degree of anxiety after every performance (304). She is 'obsessed by a need for reassurance' from men, particularly 'indirect reassurance of the nature of sexual attentions.' Riviere proclaims that her subject displays 'well-known manifestations of the castration complex'; she feels that she is inferior to men and secretly wishes for masculinity after greatly identifying with her father in childhood. Publicly, however, she acknowledges and even emphasises 'her condition of womanhood' (305). Womanliness is therefore worn as a mask. Importantly, Riviere insists that there is 'no such difference' between 'genuine womanliness' and the 'masquerade' (307). In 'Masquerade Reconsidered: Further Thoughts on the Female Spectator' (1989), Mary Ann Doane argues that, like Freud, Rivere ties femininity to the lack of masculinity. Because the masquerade is 'designed to counter the possession of masculinity, it makes femininity dependent upon masculinity for its definition.' If femininity is 'the play of masks', then 'the mask is all there is – it conceals only an absence of "pure" or "real" femininity.'[13] Although Doane does not directly reference Freud or Klein's texts, we can see that Riviere's concept of 'genuine womanliness' conforms exactly to their renditions of the female subject which, as we know, seem to be ideologically constructed. For Vicky Lebeau in 'Revisiting Joan Riviere' (2019), the masquerade can be understood as 'women's alienation from themselves within a masculine social order.' The masquerade is thus a 'non-identity.'[14] Riviere concludes by asking, 'What is the essential nature of fully developed femininity? The conception of womanliness as a masquerade throws little light on the enigma' (313). Riviere shows us exactly how Freud and Klein efface the female subject. By defining femininity by its lack of maleness, they make it impossible to discern the 'essential nature' of femininity.

In Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay represents the ideal version of femininity that we find in Freud and Klein's psychoanalysis. This argument is reflected in the criticism published on the novel. For instance, in 'Mothers, Daughters, Mrs. Ramsay: Reflections' (2009), Brenda R. Silver states that Mrs. Ramsay is typically perceived as one of two extremes. On the one hand, she is the 'idealised vision of womanhood, motherhood and fertility.'[15] On the other, she is the 'antiquated version of maternal femininity' that must be defeated for Lily Briscoe, the independent female artist, to rise (271). For Shannon Forbes, Mrs. Ramsay embodies Woolf's Angel in the House, and must be conquered by her daughter Cam. In 'Professions for Women' (1931), Woolf argues that the female writer must kill the Angel in the House. The Angel is a phantom figure modelled on the Victorian woman: 'She [is] intensely sympathetic [and] utterly unselfish. She excel[s] in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrifice[s] herself daily.'[16] Like Freud and Klein's renditions of femininity, the Angel in the House is a passive figure formed through motherhood. Forbes suggests that Mrs. Ramsay 'sacrifices her independence, enacts the Angel role, and attempts to educate Cam to also relinquish her independence.'[17] Importantly, Forbes insists that Mrs. Ramsay 'enacts the role of the Angel in the House when she is around others' (469). To return to Jacobs, we can align Mrs. Ramsay with the

mother in psychoanalysis. Like the mother, she is a 'fantasised figure either relentlessly idealised or denigrated' by literary critics. However, neither Silver nor Forbes recognise that much of our knowledge of Mrs. Ramsay is formed through the other characters in the novel. In the first chapter, Charles Tansley is fascinated by Mrs. Ramsay's beauty:

> She was the most beautiful person he had ever seen. With stars in her eyes and veils in her hair. She was fifty at least; she had eight children (...) he let his arm fall down and looked at her; Charles Tansley felt an extraordinary pride ... for he was walking with a beautiful woman for the first time in his life.[18]

Mrs. Ramsay is depicted as the beautiful mother that critics believe her to be, yet we are looking at her through Charles's gaze. The narrator hints at Mrs Ramsay's performativity: 'Suddenly, in she came, stood for a moment silent (as if she had been pretending up there, and for a moment let herself be now)' (16). However, this moment is brief in comparison to Charles's depiction of her beauty. In addition, we are not told who Mrs. Ramsay was 'pretending' to be, nor who she is when she stops performing. Instead, we are immediately thrust into Charles's point of view. As the novel progresses, the narrator makes it clear that Mrs. Ramsay's role as the archetypal mother is founded upon external perceptions of her: 'They came to her, naturally, since she was a woman, all day long with this and that; one wanting this, another that; the children were growing up; she often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions' (37). Mrs. Ramsay is a product of external desire and attention. The 'wanting' of 'this and that' from her children and her peers has erased her; she is 'nothing' besides their 'emotion.' In *To the Lighthouse*, then, we have a reversal of Riviere's 'Womanliness as a Masquerade.' 'Womanliness' is not performed by Mrs. Ramsay, but is projected onto her by the other characters in the novel.

Both the narrator and Lily confirm that they do not know Mrs. Ramsay's true character. Whilst Mrs. Ramsay measures a stocking for the lighthouse keeper's son, we enter her consciousness for a moment. Mrs. Ramsay considers the worn-out chairs in the room, the books, and the lighthouse. However, we are quickly removed from her psyche, and she becomes unknowable once again. The narrators says, 'never did anybody look so sad. But was it nothing but looks? People said. What was there behind it – her beauty, her splendour? Or was there nothing? Nothing but an incomparable beauty which she lived behind, and could do nothing to disturb?' (33). In 'The Brown Stocking' (2003), Eric Auerbach claims that in this chapter, Mrs. Ramsay is presented as an enigma: 'The person speaking here acts the part of one who has only an impression of Mrs. Ramsay, who looks at her face and renders the impression received, but is doubtful of its proper interpretation.'[19] Mrs. Ramsay is hidden from us; 'we are not taken into Virginia Woolf's confidence and allowed to share her knowledge of Mrs. Ramsay's character; we are given her character as it is reflected in and as it affects various figures in the novel' (534). Lily, too, is aware that Mrs. Ramsay remains elusive. Lily believes that Mrs. Ramsay is 'unquestionably the loveliest of people; the best, perhaps; but also, different too from the perfect shape which one saw there. But why different, and how different?' (55) Like the narrator, Lily defines Mrs. Ramsay by her beauty but insists that there is more to her

character. Even when Lily is sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay 'with her arms around Mrs. Ramsay's knees', she remains inaccessible: 'She imagined how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was, physically, touching her, were stood, like the treasures in the tombs of kings ... they would never be offered openly, never made public.' (57) In 'Woolf's Feminine Spaces and the New Woman in *To the Lighthouse*' (2020), Thais Rutledge, like Forbes, suggests that Mrs. Ramsay 'acts as though she is the "Angel in the House."' However, Rutledge claims that her thoughts 'frame her as a potential "New Woman."'[20] Like the conventional Victorian woman, 'the only space where [Mrs. Ramsay] is free to think about anything outside her duties is her mind.' Rutledge refers to the following passage in the novel: 'For now she need not think about anybody. She could be herself, by herself ... All being and the doing evaporated; and one shrunk to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others.' (70) Whilst the narrator affirms that Mrs. Ramsay adopts a different 'self' when she is alone, this 'self' is a 'wedge-shaped core of darkness.' She does not appear to us as a 'potential "New Woman", as Rutledge suggests. Instead, she is as 'invisible' to the reader as she is to the other characters in the novel. Even her name erases her; she is wife to Mr. Ramsay, and thus her identity is both created by and subordinate to him, just as woman is born from her lack of masculinity in Freud and Klein's texts. As woman is removed from Freud and Klein's psychoanalysis, Mrs. Ramsay is absent from the novel.

Lily's painting further depicts Mrs. Ramsay as absent. In part one, the narrator confirms that Lily is painting Mrs. Ramsay and James:

> Taking out a penknife, Mr. Bankes tapped the canvas with the bone handle. What did she wish to indicate by the triangular purple shape, 'just there?' he asked. It was Mrs. Ramsay reading to James, she said. She had made no attempt at likeness, she said. For what reason had she introduced them then? he asked. Why indeed? Except that if, in that corner, it was bright, here, in this, she felt the need of darkness. Mother and child then – objects of universal veneration, and in this case the mother was famous for her beauty – might be reduced, he pondered, to a purple shadow without irreverence. But the picture was not of them, she said. Or, not in his sense. (59)

In Lily's painting, Mrs. Ramsay is not characterised as the beautiful mother, as Mr. Bankes would like her to be. Instead, she is represented by the 'purple shadow.' In 'Lily Briscoe's Painting of Mrs. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Julia Stephens in Painting and Photography' (2021), Joy M. Pepe states that Lily's painting does capture Mrs. Ramsay's character. However, she maintains the view that, in both the painting and in the novel, Mrs. Ramsay embodies the ideal woman and mother. Pepe likens Mrs. Ramsay to Woolf's mother, Julia Stephens; both are 'mythical selfless wives and mothers.'[21] Lily 'extrapolates the powerful personality of Mrs. Ramsay into a modern painterly conception, where what was essential in her compositional design are the relations of masses, lights, and shadows, achieving visual unity.' Whilst her painting is a homage to Mrs. Ramsay, 'it is also a means for Lily to assert her own freedom from Mrs. Ramsay's expectations' (47). Yet Pepe seems to focus more on the 'visual unity' of the painting and its alignment with Mrs.

Ramsay's beauty rather than its abstract nature. As Lily states in part one, 'the picture [is] not of [Mrs. Ramsay]' as Mr. Bankes chooses to see her which, as we know, is as the beautiful mother. In 'Lily Briscoe's Painting: A Key to Personal Relationships in *To the Lighthouse*' (1971), Sharon Wood Proudfit exclaims that Lily's painting exemplifies Roger Fry's theory of post-impressionism. Fry believes that 'the artist, before he begins to paint his picture, is struck by some scene or object [and] is overwhelmed by a glimpse of the reality beneath appearance.' The artist is then 'enveloped by an "idea" which he feels compelled to transmit.'[22] Lily certainly captures the 'glimpse of reality' beneath Mrs. Ramsay's exterior, but she does not portray her as the archetypal wife and mother. When Mrs. Ramsay is alone, her character becomes a 'wedge-shaped core of darkness.' In the painting, she is characterised by the 'purple shadow.' Like Pepe, Wood Proudfit insists that the painting primarily establishes Lily's independence. Wood Proudfit claims that Mrs. Ramsay stifles Lily: 'While Mrs. Ramsay lives ... Lily cannot finish her picture.' (32) If we return to the text, however, we can argue that the painting does not simply capture Mrs. Ramsay as the conventional matriarch. At the end of the novel, Lily completes her picture: 'There it was – her picture. Yes, with all its greens and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something.' (235). Lily's painting is not 'an attempt at likeness' but an 'attempt at something.' Whilst Lily recognises that she does not entirely know Mrs. Ramsay, she refuses to portray her as the beautiful mother. Her painting remains purposefully ambiguous, just as Mrs. Ramsay does for the reader.

Although Mrs. Ramsy remains elusive, her absence works productively when it is considered alongside the psychoanalytic texts that attempt to determine how woman 'comes into being.' The notion that Mrs. Ramsay performs her role as the beautiful wife and mother is projected onto her by the other characters in the novel and by many of the literary critics that focus on the text. Only Lily is able to see beyond Mrs. Ramsay as the matriarch, however, she cannot discern Mrs. Ramsay's true self. Instead, she portrays Mrs. Ramsay as an obscure and dark shape; as the 'purple triangle.' Thus, *To the Lighthouse* can be used to highlight Freud and Klein's failure to construct a more well-rounded definition of femininity. By insisting that femininity and motherhood are founded upon the absence of masculinity, Freud and Klein obscure true 'womanliness' in two ways. Firstly, they define femininity by its absence of masculinity and position femininity as secondary to maleness, which removes woman's subjectivity. Secondly, they mask a more detailed understanding of femininity by focusing too heavily on woman's lack. Though the masquerade is performed by Riviere's subject in 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', its construction is shaped by the psychoanalytic discourses that equate femininity and motherhood with absence. If we consider *To the Lighthouse* in light of the correlation between femininity and absence in psychoanalysis, we can see how the novel magnifies Woolf's politics of dissent. Woolf problematises the notion that femininity is founded upon the absence of masculinity by refusing to reveal Mrs. Ramsay's true character. In doing so, she challenges us to dismantle the structures that efface woman's subjectivity to construct a more accurate understanding of femininity.

Endnotes:

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2. Joan Rivere, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 10 (1929), p. 306.
3. Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 195.
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9. Melanie Klein, 'Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 9 (1928), p. 167.
10. Nancy Chodorow, 'Mothering, Object-Relations and the Female Oedipal Configuration', *Feminist Studies*, 4.1 (1978), p. 138.
11. Daniel T. O'Hara, 'On Freud's Femininity', *Boundary 2*, 26.2, (1999), p. 194.
12. Amber Jacobs, 'Rethinking Matricide', *The Mother in Psychoanalysis and Beyond*, ed. by Rosalind Mayo and Christina Moutsou (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 24.
13. Mary Ann Doane, 'Masquerade Reconsidered: Further Thoughts on the Female Spectator', *Discourse*, 11.1 (1989), p. 47.
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15. Brenda R. Silver, 'Mothers, Daughters, Mrs. Ramsay: Reflections', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 37.3 (2009), p. 259.
16. Virginia Woolf, 'Professions for Women', *Selected Essays*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 4-10.
17. Shannon Forbes, '"When Sometimes She Imagined Herself Like Her Mother": The Contrasting Responses of Cam and Mrs. Ramsay to the Role of the Angel in the House', *Studies in the Novel*, 32.4 (2000), p. 465.
18. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Vintage, 2019), p. 16.
19. Eric Auerbach, 'The Brown Stocking', *The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 532.
20. Thais Rutledge, 'Woolf's Feminine Spaces and the New Woman in *To the Lighthouse*: The Cases of Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe', *South Central Review*, 37.1 (2020), p. 73.
21. Joy M. Pepe, 'Lily Briscoe's Painting of Mrs. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Julia Stephen in Painting and Photography', *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, 97 (2021), p. 45.
22. Sharon Wood Proudfit, 'Lily Briscoe's Painting: A Key to Personal Relationships in *To the Lighthouse*', *Criticism*, 13.1 (1971), p. 28.

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VOLUME 8, NUMBER 2. NOVEMBER 2025

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ISSN 2517-4266