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Southern White Women's Anti-Lynching Struggle: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, 1930-1942

Özgür Atmaca

Abstract

This article examines the anti-lynching struggle of Jessie Daniel Ames and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL) in the 1930s, which aimed to bring an end to the practice of lynching in the southern states of the U.S. Originally a form of vigilante violence against various individuals, especially in the areas far from federal government's control, lynching became a practice based on racial superiority in the late nineteenth century. Allegations of sexual assault by African American men against white women were often used to justify the actions of lynch mobs in the southern states. In this respect, alongside northern anti-lynching organizations, southern white women standing up against lynchings, which were supposedly carried out in the name of protecting them, made a significant contribution to the anti-lynching struggle in the first half of the twentieth century. This paper analyzes the actions taken by the organization under the leadership of Ames in order to change widely held assumptions about the lynchers and their victims.

Keywords: Lynching, Anti-Lynching Struggle, Jessie Daniel Ames, ASWPL

Güneyli Beyaz Kadınların Linç Karşıtı Mücadelesi: Jessie Daniel Ames ve Linçin Önlenmesine Yönelik Güneyli Kadınlar Derneği, 1930-1942

Öz

Bu makale, 1930'larda Jessie Daniel Ames ve Linçin Önlenmesine Yönelik Güneyli Kadınlar Derneği'nin (ASWPL) ABD'nin güney eyaletlerinde linç uygulamasına son vermeyi amaçlayan mücadelesini incelemektedir. Başlangıçta özellikle federal hükümetin kontrolünden uzak bölgelerde çeşitli bireylere yönelik kanunsuz bir şiddet eylemi olan linç, on dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonlarında ırksal üstünlüğe dayalı bir uygulamaya dönüşmüştür. Afrikalı Amerikalı erkeklerin beyaz kadınlara yönelik cinsel saldırı iddiaları genellikle güney eyaletlerindeki linç çetelerinin eylemlerini meşrulaştırmak için kullanılmıştır. Bu bakımdan, kuzeyli linç karşıtı örgütlerin yanı sıra, güneyli beyaz kadınların onları korumak adına yapıldığı iddia edilen linçlere karşı durmalarının, yirminci yüzyılın ilk yarısındaki linç karşıtı mücadeleye büyük katkısı olmuştur. Bu makale, linç edenler ve kurbanları hakkında yaygın olarak kabul gören varsayımları değiştirmek için Ames'in liderliğindeki örgütün mücadelesini incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Linç, Linç Karşıtı Mücadele, Jessie Daniel Ames, ASWPL

Introduction

Lynching, a practice to strike terror and to subordinate and control racial minorities was once a defining aspect of the southern states of the United States. What started as vigilante violence for quick justice towards the individuals and groups who were assumed to disrupt local social order, especially in places far from the jurisdiction of the federal state (Pfeifer 14, 15), evolved into a strategy for upholding white patriarchal rule over African Americans for almost a century (Wood and Donaldson 11). The first lynching statistics were compiled in 1882 (Rushdy 32), and between that year and 1940, nearly five thousand people were victims of lynching in the United States (Hall, "The Mind That Burns" 329). The highest number of lynchings occurred in 1892 when 255 people were lynched by mobs (Tuskegee Institute). Although

the victims were mostly males, females were also lynched when they were found guilty of murder or had any connections to the accused person. Alongside the male suspects, some women became the target of the mobs for collaborating in committing the alleged crimes (Brown 3). Thus, contrary to popular belief, lynching was not only directed at black men, as women could also be targeted.

Beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, the anti-lynching movement gained momentum in the twentieth century in order to bring an end to this brutal practice. In contrast to the previous figures, the following years, after 1882, saw a gradual fall in the practice, and by 1929, 10 people were reported to be victims of lynching (Tuskegee Institute). This was primarily the success of individual activists and groups who worked at state and federal levels. It is a fact that the early anti-lynching efforts of prominent African American figures such as Ida B. Wells and Mary Church Tyrell, who were founding female members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), played an important role in raising awareness on the issue. Other African American women organized in the Anti-Lynching Crusaders, led by Mary B. Talbert, conducted large scale anti-lynching campaigns for a federal anti-lynching law in the 1920s.

Nevertheless, in the first year of the Great Depression, in addition to other social problems, there was an abrupt increase in lynchings in the southern states (Brown 203). As the practice was gradually being associated with the South, some southern liberals started to take action through the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), which included women and men carrying out investigations and holding meetings in order to find solutions to the problem. In the same year, Jessie Daniel Ames, a former women's suffrage activist and director of the Women's Work of CIC, launched the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL). The organization's intention was to prevent lynchings in rural and remote areas of the South by using the social and moral influence of organized white women. From 1930 to the beginning of 1940, the members of the ASWPL, under the leadership of Ames, conducted campaigns, meetings, and educational programs in order to raise awareness in the South about lynchings by rejecting the lynching pretext which was based on the protection of the southern white women. As Henry E. Barber points out, "who could better campaign against lynching than those whom it was supposed to protect – Southern white women?"

(378). Whatever the real reasons were, claims of sexual assault were used to justify the practice of lynching. Thus, white southern women's rejection of lynching as a practice for the protection of women can be viewed as an important step in the eradication of lynching in the South.

The aim of this paper is to explore the anti-lynching struggle of Jessie Daniel Ames and the ASWPL in the 1930s which aimed to bring an end to the practice of lynching in the southern states of the U.S. Drawing on archival records and secondary sources, this paper will analyze the strategies and tactics employed by the organization in that period to change the widely-held assumptions about the lynchers and their victims. Despite the organization's anti-lynching efforts, the ASWPL was also subjected to criticism because of its whites-only organizational structure and its opposition to a federal anti-lynching law. This paper will also examine the reasons for the ASWPL's organizational structure and Ames's response to criticism from interracial organizations. The study argues that although the importance of an African American-led anti-lynching movement in the northern states cannot be underestimated, without the active involvement and mobilization of the southern white women, it would have been more difficult to fight against the approving attitude of the southern white communities towards lynching.

A Historical Overview of Lynching

The term 'lynch law' and 'lynching' became popular when Charles Lynch Bedford formed a vigilante group which practiced violence towards loyalist groups without trials during the Revolutionary War (Rushdy 41). Despite the calls from the higher-ranking military officers to deliver the accused to the officials, he continued to punish the captured prisoners and began to use the phrase 'Lynch Law' to "describe the rough justice he dispensed to those he deemed enemies of the state" (41). In the first half of the eighteenth century, the term was applied to the actions of the groups or mobs to punish the individuals accused of murder or theft (Brown 22). In this respect, before it took on a racial dimension, lynching was practiced to enforce local laws and maintain social order in the less-densely populated frontier areas of the United States, which had low population and few officials (Brown 22, Hall 130).

According to Jaquelyn Dowd Hall, in the antebellum South,

lynching was also a common practice to suppress both rebelling slaves and white dissidence. During that period, the victims of this violence were generally whites as "the planter's self-interest and the ideology of paternalism gave a measure of protection to the slave" (131). Because of slaves' monetary worth and since an act of violence against the slave would be considered an act of violence against the owner rather than the slave, the system prevented large-scale mob violence towards African Americans. On the other hand, one point must be stressed: The severity of punishment a master could impose on his slaves was essentially unrestricted. However, after the Civil War, lynching gained a feature of racial terrorism against African Americans and, to a greater degree, "it replaced slavery and supplemented disfranchisement, economic disempowerment, and Jim Crow segregation as a primary strategy of social control over African Americans" (Rushdy 70). During the Reconstruction period, white supremacist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan or the Knights of the White Camelia committed massacres to prevent black citizens from performing political activities or taking part in elections (71). Some of the most horrific criminal acts in American history were carried out by these groups. At times, attacks on individuals escalated into acts of collective terrorism and local uprisings. For example, in September 1868, members of the Knights killed over two hundred freed blacks in two days in St. Landry Parish, Louisiana, following a dispute over black political rights (79). In another instance, in 1873, armed members of the Klan attacked African Americans in the town of Colfax, Louisiana, killing many former slaves and black militiamen even though they had surrendered (Foner 576). Similar acts of terror were common in other areas of the South during this period. Although these paramilitary organizations were outlawed and disbanded by the Federal Enforcement Acts of 1870 and 1871, Klan terrorism resurfaced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and continued through mob violence against civilians. Lynchings were carried out by white supremacists as a means of political repression against African Americans. As Hall claims "lynching functioned as a means of uniting whites across class lines in the face of a common enemy" (132). Hence, through racial violence during the Reconstruction, African Americans were warned and reminded of the limits of their social, political, and economic activities.

The period from the 1880s to the end of the Great Depression can be called, in Rushdy's words, an "era of lynching" since the practice

became a subject of heated discussions by intellectuals, civil society groups, and politicians (92). Gradually transforming into a distinctive southern practice, stories on lynching began to receive more and more coverage in the newspapers. Through the considerable circulation of information, more details about the practice and the myths behind lynchings were brought to the public's attention. The lynchings of this era had ritualistic dimensions with the attendance of large numbers of people as part of a spectacle. In Paris, Texas, in 1883, thousands of people attended the lynching ritual of a black man accused of rape. He was tortured, mutilated, hanged, and burned by the mob (Rushdy 95). Similar patterns could also be seen in many other lynchings in that period in which bodies of victims were tortured and even taken as souvenirs after the event.

Although both female and male African Americans were subjected to violence and lynching for various reasons, the mythology behind the lynching of male individuals was grounded in their sexual activities. In her book *Revolt Against Chivalry*, Jacquelyn D. Hall states that

> the notion of black retrogression, which continued to influence both popular and academic thought into 1930s, was closely bound up with the question of black sexual behavior. Freed from the restraints of slavery, the 'new issue' Negro had supposedly reverted to African primitivism. The chief evidence was sexual immorality . . . above all, black men were acting upon the innate lasciviousness of the savage beast. (145)

Obviously, the extremities of violence committed by the lynching mobs were justified on the pretext of sexual assault. In many cases, the image of the black rapist was used to demonstrate how the victims had violated the purity of vulnerable white women. In this sense, violence was regarded as a measure to protect white women from sexual assaults by black men. Rather than being a shameful act carried out in secrecy, members of the white community openly participated in these violent 'rituals' to show their support. Leading figures in the mob were regarded "chivalrous, heroic champions of justice and white prerogatives" (Brown 28). The discourse which justified lynching as an act of protection and revenge enabled the lynchers to be viewed as respectable defenders of the honor of all the members of the white community, but especially white womanhood. Anyone who disagreed

with this discourse could be accused of being against morality and values of society. Consequently, the meaning of the incident was established by the discourse of lynching, as were the parameters of the discussion surrounding the event.

The Anti-Lynching Struggle

After lynching entered a new phase targeting African Americans in the South, an organized fight against it also emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. Black women were at the forefront of the anti-lynching movement in the 1890s, which grew into a significant movement in the later years. A major anti-lynching activist, Ida B. Wells, who witnessed the deaths of her friends at the hands of a mob, began to write newspaper columns, essays, and pamphlets to challenge the belief that all the victims of lynching were rapists. She attacked "the theory of white women's protection by proving statistically that most men killed by lynching were never accused of rape but died for a variety of real or concocted offenses" (Brown, "Advocates in the Age of Jazz" 380). In her pamphlet "Southern Horrors" (1892), Wells advocated 'self-help' as a solution to oppression, suggesting that African Americans should withdraw from the labor force in the South and migrate to the North in order to influence white business interests there. Wells noted that "the appeal to the white man's pocket has ever been more effectual than all the appeals ever made to his conscience. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is to be gained by a further sacrifice of manhood and self-respect" (66). Another suggestion Wells made in the face of lynching was to take up arms to use in self-defense. A rifle, according to her, "should have a place of honor in every black home, and it should be used for that protection which the lawn refuses to give" (66). Wells' tactics, which were based on "investigation and exposure," served as a model for later anti-lynching activism.

In the twentieth century, black and white activists in the northern states were involved in the fight by joining various organizations. Especially, under the banner of the NAACP, founded in 1909, male and female activists campaigned against lynching. Important female figures such as Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Tyrell, Mary White Ovington, Jane Addams, and Harriet Stanton Blatch were active members of the organization. Besides intellectual contribution to the

movement, the women also carried out on-site investigations to collect information about the lynchings and to reveal the real motives behind the violence. For example, in 1916, a female field agent assigned by NAACP was sent to Waco, Texas to investigate the lynching of Jesse Washington, and her findings were published in *The Crisis* under the title "The Waco Horror." Interviewing local individuals, sheriffs and law officials, the agent included graphic pictures in her eight-page report to demonstrate the degree of the atrocity ("The Waco Horror"). The NAACP distributed her report to every congressman and made public use of it to raise awareness of the Waco lynching and to collect funds for an anti-lynching campaign ("Advocates in the Age of Jazz" 381). After 1916, anti-lynching campaigns were aimed to have a solution to the problem through a federal legislation.

In 1922, when the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill was passed in the House of Representatives, the NAACP, with all its branches and women's clubs, led campaigns for the approval of the bill in the Senate. In June, about five thousand African American women participated in a silent protest march against lynching in Washington. That summer, the Anti-Lynching Crusaders (ALC) was formed under the leadership of Mary Talbert, with the aim of mobilizing one million women to protest and to raise funds for the NAACP's anti-lynching efforts ("Agreement"). In their initial statement, ALC urged women of different colors to take part in the campaign: "American women are realizing that until this crime is ended, no home is sacred from violence, no part of the country from race clashes, and the fair name of our country is soiled throughout the civilized world" ("Plan Organization"). As with previous efforts, the Crusaders carried out investigations, disclosures on a number of lynchings, and published statistics with detailed information about the victims (Brown 146). Despite these efforts, the Dyer Bill was not passed in the Senate because Southern Democrats blocked its approval. The campaign also fell short of having the support of white southern women who were crucial to ending the violence. As a result, the ALC was disbanded in 1923 (Player 60). However, the spirit of the anti-lynching movement began to spread to the southern states in the late 1920s as more and more southern white women, led by Jessie Daniel Ames, began to reject claims based on white women's protection and organized campaigns to end the violent practice.

Jessie Daniel Ames and the ASWPL

Jessie Daniel Ames was born on 2 November 1889 in Palestine, Texas. When she was ten, her family moved to Georgetown, Texas and, at the age of nineteen, she graduated from Southwestern University (Guffey). In 1905, she married an army surgeon, Roger Post, but five years later he left Ames for a mission in Guatemala. The death of her father in 1911, followed by that of her husband in 1914, ushered in a new phase in her life. Until then, Ames had led a life of passivity since her social activities were restricted first by her father's presence and later by her status as a married woman who was mainly recognized through her husband's identity. However, soon after that period, Ames became more involved in public matters (Hall 19). Her involvement in business life, taking over the management of her father's local telephone company, was to have an impact on her activism and growth years later. As Hall states, "whether arguing for a raise in telephone rates before the city council, or enforcing a strict bill collecting policy, she demonstrated a new-found talent for administration and organization" (29). Obviously, Ames's business activities would enable her to have an autonomy, making it easier for her to engage in the women's rights movement.

As part of her efforts to protect her economic rights, Ames joined the women's suffrage movement and founded the Equal Suffrage League in 1916 through which she was able to interact with other women's clubs and religious societies (Guffey). By 1918, "Ames could draw a crowd of one hundred women to her suffrage talks" (Hall 35). She would use her networking and inciting skills in the anti-lynching movement of the 1930s. After the passage of Nineteenth Amendment, she did not stop lobbying for the rights of women and continued to give educational talks to women on how to exercise their political rights (45). Although it is not known exactly what motivated Ames to shift her interest from women's rights to racial issues, she became the director of Women's Work for the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) in 1929. One year later, she was leading the ASWPL to organize white southern women against the lynching of African Americans.

On November 1, 1930, upon Ames's invitation, a group of women from seven southern states held a meeting in Atlanta, Georgia,

to discuss the increasing number of lynchings in the southern states and what they could do to stop them. After the meeting, the women made a public statement that condemned lynching "in every form and under all circumstances" ("Resolutions"). After subsequent meetings in several states to get organized, the women of the ASWPL published a declaration:

> We declare lynching is an indefensible crime, destructive of all principles of government, hateful and hostile to every ideal of religion and humanity, debasing and degrading to every person involved . . . public opinion has accepted too easily the claim of lynchers and mobsters that they are acting solely in defense of womanhood. In light of the facts, we dare no longer to permit this claim to pass unchallenged nor allow those bent upon personal revenge and savagery to commit acts of violence and lawlessness in the name of women . . . We will teach our children at home, at school, and at church a new interpretation of law and religion; we will assist all officials in upholding their oath of office; and finally, we will join with every minister, editor, schoolteacher, and patriotic citizen in a program of education to eradicate lynching and mobs forever from our land. ("A Declaration")

This statement was an open challenge by white southern women to the lynchers' claims. In fact, as the pledge depicted, the alleged accusations were invented not to protect white womanhood but to cover up reasons based on 'personal revenge' and to gain the support of southern society for the act of violence. Even when claims of sexual harassment were true, women still rejected acts of violence and supported law and order in handling problems. This demand was also stated in the CIC's Southern Commission's findings in its study on lynchings: "Decrying the mob as a reversion of barbarism, leading white women re-emphasized the fact that Southern womanhood depends for its protection upon officers and southern courts, not upon the mob" (5). The pledge also demonstrated the decisiveness of women to actively get involved in campaigns and educational programs for social change in southern society. In this respect, rather than leaving the public space to men, women positioned themselves as the leading force to change the mindset of the society. Their efforts would include the social activities that had previously been carried out by African Americans to prevent lynching.

The ASWPL was not a strictly structured organization formed by a group of women working to achieve a single political and social goal. The group lacked the qualities that define a true organization; hence, it could not be considered an organization in the traditional meaning of the word: "There were no constitution, charter, or by-laws, and there were no conventions, local units, or dues. In fact, the Association did not even have a real membership or constituency" (Barber 380). Instead, having a central council, the Association heavily depended on existent women's clubs and societies. As Jack and Massagee point out, the ASWPL "served as a clearinghouse for information and strategies that other women's groups could use to change public opinion about lynching" (497). In her pamphlet *Changing Character of Lynching* (1942), Ames names the clubs and church societies that helped the Association. These include the Federation of Women's Club, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, the Young Women's Christian Association, Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the Baptist Southern Convention Women's Missionary Union, the Disciples of Christ International Convention, and similar religious groups of white women (20). As these examples demonstrate, the Association was a movement composed of cooperating clubs and religious societies which, besides anti-lynching efforts, had their own social, economic, and religious agendas. The prominent women of these organizations represented thirteen state councils of the ASWPL and carried out anti-lynching activities with the help of local individual volunteers.

In contrast to the women of African American anti-lynching societies, these white women activists were regarded as important figures respected by the members of their community. By mobilizing religious groups and clubs, the ASWPL made it easier to reach more conservative communities in rural towns where lynching was more common. In this sense, their efforts to prevent lynching had a great impact on southern society and drew attention to the issue. As John Shelton Reed expresses,

> [o]perating through existing church and civic groups in this fashion allowed the Association to isolate a very strategic population. The ladies reached by the Association were precisely those most likely to adhere to the conservative "law and order" value . . . They were utterly respectable politically, were in the habit of doing community improvement work . . . Perhaps most importantly, the social position of many of these churchwomen was such that they, their husbands, or

> their kinsmen could bring fairly powerful pressures to bear on lynchers to cease and desist and on sheriffs to uphold the law. (174)

Consequently, the women of the movement, as members of their own clubs and under the leadership of their own leaders, took a stand against lynching. ASWPL leadership only provided strategies, information, material, and direction to these women's local activities (Barber 381). The profile of the women demonstrates that the Association was not a movement led by radical political leaders who rejected the norms of womanhood. On the contrary, the effectiveness of the anti-lynching effort, in fact, depended largely on how well its members lived up to this principle. On the other hand, the members aimed to dissociate the image of women from female fragility and retaliatory violence to undermine the justifications for lynching. As Hall points out, "with even fewer reservations, they attacked the paternalism of chivalry" (194). Thus, they refused to take on the role that had been imposed on them when it came to lynching, asserting their status as independent citizens who were confident in their own morality.

The ASWPL's Tactics

As part of the ASWPL's program, numerous brochures, posters, and flyers were produced for distribution (Jack and Massagee 494). These publications included information about the Association, signatures of prominent figures to prevent lynchings, advice on what to do if there was a possibility of lynching, and debates and statistics specifically relating to lynchings and their prevention. One of the important actions was to denounce the language used in newspapers which, on several occasions, had encouraged mobs to lynch suspects. The way in which southern newspaper editors and publishers dealt with the problem of lynching and the Association's efforts to educate against it were of particular concern to Ames. In one of her speeches which she later published with the title "Editorial Treatment of Lynching" in her pamphlet, Ames emphasizes the role of southern editors as justifiers of the acts of violence. She criticizes editors:

> Editors, with few exceptions, condone lynching by offering reasons for lynchers which are in effect sympathetic excuses defending the right of citizens under provocation to take the law

> into their own hands and constitute themselves judge, jury, and executioner all the same time. The exceptions are so few, in fact, that they do not make up even a respectable minority. (51)

Hence, in parallel with the prevalent ideas in the southern white society, editors also accepted lynching as "justifiable homicide in defense of society" (51). They functioned in taking the attention away from the lynchers and in targeting other groups of people, such as communists and northern activists, as scapegoats for local crimes. By this way, the lynchers were cleared of their crimes by the newspapers, and the community was still, in Ames's words, "if not as white as snow, at least as white as it was before the lynching" (52). In another speech entitled "Can Newspaper Harmonize their Editorial Policy" (1936), Ames mentions how newspapers functioned as producers of fear and hatred towards African Americans through mostly fictional stories about sexual assault on white women. Extreme emotions of rage were directed at African Americans in order to mobilize white people. Phrases such as "young, lovely, innocent, devout in her religious life, loving, affectionate; now broken and ruined a glorious future of proud womanhood destroyed and blasted" were used by newspapers to describe the victims of sexual assault (58). Through these descriptions, all kinds of acts of brutality that a hysterical mob might conduct were justified. It would be almost impossible to start a war or carry out a lynching without forging hate and fear though such stories. By this way,

> men and women alike see in outraged womanhood their own mothers or wives or sisters, and they are moved by and invincible force to mete out punishment to the vandals Something of Arthurian chivalry stirs men's minds; they wear the colors of their own womanhood into a battle for all womanhood. (Ames 55)

Just as propaganda replaces the truth in wars, the truth was falsified in lynchings, and, in these cases where hatred dominated, society turned into a lynch mob under the influence of the story created. According to Ames, newspapers suppressed the details of the acts of the mob which demonstrated savagery rather than chivalry. Moreover, in many cases, when the facts were uncovered, there were other reasons, rather than sexual claims, that led to lynching. In other words, when white men failed to "achieve individual superiority over

their [African American] neighbors," news was feeding the ideology of racial superiority as "an attribute of birth" (58). As such, the southern women of the Association had to uncover and spread facts about lynching.

Like the women of the northern anti-lynching movement, they also went to sites where lynchings had taken place and collected the facts. At the beginning, Ames was conducting the investigations with the help of women in the local branches of the above-mentioned women's clubs and societies. In later investigations, local women started to initiate their own probes (Barber 383-384). According to Hall, from 1933 to 1935, Ames carried out twenty investigations, and the number of such cases conducted by the women of the ASWPL had reached forty-two by 1941. Initially, women frequently used the white residents of the area as witnesses in these investigations. However, they occasionally got access to the African American accounts of lynchings by overcoming their own prejudices (217). Through the information gathered, the women began to spread the actual reasons based on individual hostilities rather than the stories written in the newspapers. In other words, through their research on lynchings, the women unveiled the fact that they were being utilized as a shield to defend the violence towards helpless people. Thus, as Ames underlines, "they took the only action they could. They pledged themselves to educate against lynching in the towns where they lived and to publish by word of mouth the facts about women and lynching" (60). Consequently, it was important to reach the editors of southern newspapers to change their news coverage.

From the beginning of the movement, Ames encouraged women to voice their opposition to local editors who reported on lynchings in graphic details, presenting the lynchers as the actual victims rather than the alleged suspects murdered by the mob. They sent letters to the editors "complaining about . . . their anti-lynching editorial policies and their inflammatory reporting of the news" (Hall 219). They tried to gain the support of the newspapers through meetings and conferences that contributed to their efforts. During the annual meeting of the Newspaper Publishers' Association, Ames gave a speech (1936) to an almost all-male group which was part of her effort to "reach the men who control this power," that is, the power controlling newspapers (Ames 56). Criticizing some local newspapers for their editorial policies, Ames emphasized the significance of newspapers as possible

local allies and supporters of southern women in transforming public opinion on lynching.

Another target of the women was southern law officers, especially town sheriffs. For the members of the Association, sheriffs had an important responsibility in preventing a lynch mob from inflicting violence. They could either prevent lynching or capture the suspects to conduct a legal trial rather than submitting to the pressure of the mobs (Nordyke 3). Yet, sheriffs, as locally elected officials in southern towns, were "dependent for their livelihoods on the electoral support of the mob that confronted them" (Hall 224). In addition, as the Association's women later discovered, in certain circumstances, sheriffs collaborated with the mob and let them lynch their prisoners (225). Thus, women started to use their political influence as an association and electors to press the local officials and sheriffs to prevent lynching. In this regard, it is obvious that the women's suffrage movement had positive impacts not only on their own rights, but suffrage could also be used as a weapon for the protection of racial minorities from lynching. While expressing the importance of the suffrage movement as a process of political awareness for women, Ames also emphasizes how they "had the power to affect the political lives of local and county politicians whose bread and butter upon the will and the wishes of their constituents" (61). Women conducted campaigns against the reelection of the sheriffs and other state officials who failed to take action against lynching. They sent petitions to support or threaten the sheriffs in accordance with their attitudes. Moreover, they asked sheriffs to sign the statements and pledges that demonstrated their support for anti-lynching efforts. As a result, 1,355 state officials and sheriffs had signed these documents by 1941 (Hall 227). The impact of women was reported in a newspaper of the period:

> Southern women know local politics. No strange woman from the central state office called on a sheriff in the counties of the fifteen states. Nothing like that. A woman voter living in each sheriff's own county went to him about the lynching matters, and that is about as firm political pressure as can be applied. Each time there was a crime, or an accusation which might lead to a lynching, the women went into swift action. The sheriffs started getting calls from influential voters from prominent men and women. (Nordyke 3)

Women, accompanied by men who had anti-lynching

sentiments, used their voting power to win the support of the state governors and their executive power. In some cases, they sent letters to governors requesting the removal of sheriffs from office or the sending of state militias to prevent lynching. They also conducted surveys on the "governors and gubernatorial candidates" to learn their opinions about lynchings and publicized the results in bulletins (Barber 385). Through these efforts, they put pressure on the possible candidates for the next elections.

In addition to letters, petitions and personal contacts, the women of the Association were carrying out activities to change public opinion. In other words, they were also looking for other ways to prevent individuals that were potential lynchers. In this context, the activities of church women became increasingly important. Working through Baptist and Methodist missionary societies, the women of the ASWPL reached out small towns and communities to hold meetings in churches and Sunday schools with local religious women. Drawing on the religious and moral character of the southern women, they tried to persuade the mothers and sisters of the potential lynchers about the immorality of lynching. In this regard, Hall states that "assuming a sisterhood of believers, a church within a church fostered by women's autonomous missionary societies, association leaders appealed to women's traditional self-concepts while at the same time subtly challenging the male monopoly over the definition of public events" (231). Besides churches, the Association was involved in educational activities in which women went to high schools where they met with teachers and students. As part of these activities, in 1938, two one-act plays, *County Sunday* by Walter Spearman and *Lawd, Does Yo' Undahstan'?* by Ann Seymour, were written and staged in school drama clubs (Barber 389). Both plays were written to draw attention to the negative effects of lynching on both black and white communities.

Indeed, just like African American communities, these women were also threatened by various groups while they were in action in areas where the practice of lynching was entrenched. They were forced to abandon their anti-lynching campaigns for their own protection. Nordyke notes that "organizations which had made the terrorization of [African Americans] their main business since the Civil War turned against the women, issuing sinister warnings or sending them on their own official letterheads" (2). These statements demonstrate that women who spoke out against lynching were also closely monitored and

regarded as potential targets of fundamentalist terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan. Ironically, the organizations that asserted to defend white women in the South from African American men were issuing warnings that threatened those same women. Since women were aware that lynching was a practice motivated by political and economic factors rather than their protection, they were "by no means safe at all times. They knew of the constant danger, and they didn't forget to pray" (Ames qtd. in Nordyke 2). Despite threats, they carried out their investigations and anti-lynching campaigns in communities where lynchings had taken place.

Eventually, the anti-lynching activities led by white women in the South had a major impact on society's attitude to violence. By 1939, the number of lynchings in the South had dropped to three, and the excuses were no longer based on the protection of white women (Tuskegee Institute). Ames expresses the contribution of these activities to the decreasing number of lynchings:

> These meetings, schools, the church and home, the press and Southern women as an organized bloc–are all contributing factors to a changing public opinion in the South toward lynching . . . lynching is decreasing and disappearing by the initiative and support of Southern white people. Lynchers are no longer held in esteem and they are beginning to feel it. (61)

Obviously, disregarding ridicule and threats, women became more and more confident within the movement and had leading roles in changing the mindset of their society.

Despite its efforts to end lynching, the ASWPL did not support the passage of a federal anti-lynching law while other organizations were stressing its importance. In the first half of the 1930s, there was an increase in the number of lynchings and, northern organizations, especially NAACP, were campaigning for a federal bill named Costigan-Wagner Bill. If approved, the law would impose severe fines on the counties where lynchings occurred, as well as on ineffective law enforcement officials. For that reason, the NAACP and African American women urged southern white women to endorse the bill (Jack and Massagee 502). However, the ASWPL did not support it for several reasons. First, the women of the Association believed that "if the federal government intervenes in the activities of the lynchers,

then the burden of stopping lynching will no longer rest on the South" (Ames 54). Obviously, they did not want a transferring of responsibility for eliminating lynching from local law officers and people to the federal government. Besides, as the organization was based on the support of the religious local white women, who acted as the members of their communities and devoted themselves to change the common attitudes toward lynching, they did not want to get "too far ahead of public opinion" (Nordyke 4). Rather than that, they wanted to make 'converts' through a process of education and social change. Besides, as the members of white southern communities, they did not want the federal government to have too much power over the internal affairs of the states under their jurisdiction. In order to explain the Association's involuntary attitude toward the bill, Jack and Massagee state that

> focusing on public opinion offered a more comfortable strategy to white Southern women. Because these were the very women whose delicacy and supposed superiority was used to justify lynchings, their status as all-white women's organization was an important factor in their success, enabling them to speak as insiders to other whites. (503)

Many progressive southerners supported the bill, yet the ASWPL women believed in local remedies and education to change public opinion to prevent the racial violence. As a result, the Costigan-Wagner Bill, like its predecessors, failed to pass in the Congress due to opposition from southern senators.

Conclusion

As early as 1904, when African Americans were leading campaigns to stop lynching, Mary Church Terrell called on southern women to join the anti-lynching struggle. Terrell did not expect radical actions from white women, but rather asked them to rest on their traditional image as the symbol of ideal womanhood and purity to stop lynching by imploring "their fathers, husbands and sons no longer to stain their hands with the black man's blood!" (862). Although there were some southern women who had been involved in the anti-lynching struggle in the 1920s, it was not until the 1930s that they emerged on the stage of history as an organized political force against lynching under the leadership of Jessie Daniel Ames. Indeed, Ames wanted

to conduct her work by resting on white woman's moral position in society. As Hall states, "she wore ladyhood a mask, employed evangelical language for reformist ends" (277). Since the strategy was to appeal to their communities as insiders, Ames and southern women did not support the actions that would be considered extreme by both the religious women members working for the Association and the society in general. Except for occasional meetings with African American activists, the Association did not even have African American women as active members in their struggle since, they thought, that would make it more difficult for them to appeal to their communities. Consequently, the ASWPL made its reform decisions from a set of constrained possibilities in order to avoid large-scale backlash in the South.

On the other hand, the women of the Association also demonstrated a mobility and determination that challenged the traditional image of the southern lady. They used their networks or put pressure on peace officers to prevent lynching by threatening them with their political power as voters. They were also traveling across the South to carry out investigations about lynching incidents to uncover the real reasons that led to racial violence. Most importantly, through these fact-checking investigations, they became more aware of the fact that white women were used as a shield by lynchers to justify their actions. Thus, their primary aim was to dissociate the act of lynching from white women's sexuality. The sexual connotation behind the act of lynching was a problem for white women. This myth was not only based on black men's excessive desire for white women, but also implied that white women were defenseless. Besides, lynching was also a message to both white women and black men about the dangerous consequences of an interracial sexual affair. In this sense, lynching was, on the one hand, an act that aimed at consolidating racial superiority and, on the other hand, a patriarchal manifestation that demonstrated to women their desired place in the society. The ASWPL's campaign was a women's response to these claims. It was a rejection of white man's so called chivalric act, his protection of white women. Women of the Association wanted to be treated as independent citizens, not as sexual objects.

The Association was dissolved in 1942 as lynching statistics dropped considerably and women became engaged more in the issues related to the World War II (Barber 11). For a time, Ames continued

her work as Director of Woman's Work for the CIC. Yet, in 1944, she resigned from her duties and moved to live in a village in North Carolina (Hall 261). In later years, until her death in 1972, she was involved in the local matters rather than the nationwide Civil Rights Movement. Ames's political ideas and actions may seem limited from today's perspective but her ability and success in organizing southern white women in a conservative society to oppose lynching cannot be underestimated. Although the act of racial violence towards African Americans did not stop after 1942, general public opinion was no longer in favor of lynching; and, except for occasional incidents, such as Emmett Till and Charles Mack Parker's lynchings, in years, campaigns were carried out for other civil rights issues, such as racial segregation and inequality at national and state levels.

Even today, such social issues are still a reality despite the long years of struggle to solve the problems faced by African Americans. Furthermore, it would be wrong to think that the U.S. has left behind the issues of lynching and anti-lynching. On the contrary, there have been several incidents of racist attacks in which police officers and white civilians have not hesitated to kill African Americans under the pretext of safety that caused widespread protests. These protests can be regarded as reminiscent of the anti-lynching movement. In 2012, the killing of Trayvon Martin and the release of his murderer led to powerful demonstrations under the slogan "Black Lives Matter," which would become one of the largest social movements in the following years. During the demonstrations, BLM activists exposed how U.S. legal institutions not only failed to prosecute criminals, but also indirectly encouraged potential perpetrators to commit acts of violence against African Americans as such acts often went unpunished. In 2020, five African Americans were found dead hanging from trees, which the police declared as suicides. However, the BLM activists argued that these hangings were a repetition of a historical pattern of lynching. As stated in *Washington Post,* "tree hangings [evoked] traumatic memories of America's grisly history of unpunished lynchings of thousands of black adults and children between 1880 and 1968" (Patton). That same year, alongside the shocking footage of the police killing of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old black man, was stalked and murdered in Georgia by three white men who were not arrested for two months (Fausset). Nationwide protests by BLM activists and heated debates about racial violence created a strong opinion that

there was a need for an anti-lynching legislation. This public pressure, eventually, led the Unites States government to enact a federal law to punish lynching and other racial crimes. In 2022, when the Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Bill passed the Congress and was signed into law by Joe Biden, lynching became a federal crime for the first time in U.S. history.

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Contemporary American Family on Stage: Disability Justice and Access Intimacy in Stephen Karam's *The Humans*

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Abstract

Traditional family dramas have long relied on disability and queerness as metaphors to depict the dysfunctional states of American families. Although Stephen Karam's *The Humans* borrows elements from the canon with its portrayal of a family tested by secrets, resentments, and illnesses, it diverges significantly from the tradition. As this article demonstrates, the portrayal of disability and caretaking in *The Humans* is not stereotypical since it places access intimacy, a term disability activist Mia Mingus has coined, to the center as a trope that keeps the family together and gives them strength to be resilient in the face of drawbacks. In the presence of access intimacy and reciprocal care, the bond that connects family members to each other is strengthened. This article argues that although Stephen Karam is not a disability rights activist, his play *The Humans* contributes significantly to the disability justice movement with its focus on access intimacy within the family.

Keywords: American Theater, Stephen Karam, *The Humans*, Disability Studies, Mia Mingus

Sahnede Çağdaş Amerikan Ailesi: Stephen Karam'ın *The Humans* Adlı Eserinde Engellilik ve Erişilebilir Yakınlık

Öz

Amerikan aile yapısını konu alan geleneksel Amerikan oyunları, engelli ve kuir karakterleri Amerikan ailelerinin işlevsizliğini vurgulamak için metafor olarak kullanmıştır. Birbirinden sır saklayan, birbirine kızan ve hastalıklarla test edilen bir aileyi konu alması sebebiyle geleneksel Amerikan oyunlarıyla ortak unsurlar taşısa da Stephen Karam'ın *The Humans* eseri bu oyunlardan oldukça farklıdır. Bu makalede gösterildiği gibi, engellilik ve bakım verme *The Humans* eserinde klişe bir şekilde anlatılmamıştır. Aksine, engelli hakları savunucusu Mia Mingus'un "access intimacy" (erişilebilir yakınlık) kavramı oyunun ana temasıdır. Engelli bireylerin bakım ve erişim ihtiyaçlarını karşılayan diğer bireyler ile kurduğu yakınlığı tanımlamak için kullanılan "access intimacy" kavramı aile üyelerinin zorluklar karşısında güçlü ve metanetli kalmalarını sağlar. Bu oyun, "access intimacy" kavramını içselleştirmenin ve karşılıklı olarak birbirlerinin bakım ihtiyaçlarını karşılamanın aile bağlarını ne kadar güçlendirdiğini göstermektedir. Bu makalede de tartışıldığı üzere, Stephen Karam engelli hakları aktivisti olmasa bile, aile içinde erişilebilir yakınlığın (access intimacy) varlığının önemini merkeze alarak engelli hakları hareketine katkıda bulunmakta ve destek olmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Amerikan Tiyatrosu, Stephen Karam, *The Humans*, Engellilik Çalışmaları, Mia Mingus

Introduction

In the twentieth century, the two-parent nuclear family, consisting of a white, middle-class, able-bodied heterosexual couple, and children, was glorified in American society. Conformity to normative standards was expected of families, and they were encouraged to follow the American Dream rather than their own desires and dreams. In contrast to American society's glorification of the perfect family, the playwrights of the era criticized this myth by portraying dysfunctional family dynamics in their works. Death, hypocrisy, incest, racial and

sexual violence, blame, guilt, and denial were the main themes. The most notable family plays of the first half of the era include but are not limited to Clifford Odet's *Awake and Sing* (1935), Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* (1945), Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949), Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into the Night* (1956), Edward Albee's *The American Dream* (1961) and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962). Sam Shepard's family dramas dominated the second half of the twentieth century with plays such as *Curse of the Starving Class* (1976), *Buried Child* (1979), *True West* (1980), and *A Lie of the Mind* (1985). These works deconstruct the perfect family myth and challenge the idea of family as a monolith. While doing so, most rely on disability and queerness as metaphors to depict social problems that need to be fixed.

On the contemporary stage, however, the representations of the American family have notably transformed as playwrights began exploring diverse family structures marked by intersectionality. In other words, American families in the contemporary plays are not monolithic, but they are shaped by various forces such as the politics of race, body, gender, or class. Relying mainly on realism, contemporary playwrights have envisioned and promoted a theater that employs pressing concerns to expose problems lying at the center of the social politics in the United States. Such reevaluation prompted a critique of not only neoliberalism but also oppressive body and identity politics, resulting in the dehumanization and social stigmatization of minority groups.

Stephen Karam's *The Humans* is an example of such plays. The play had its premiere at the American Theater Company in Chicago in 2014. It opened off-Broadway in 2015 and had its Broadway premiere in 2016. The play was critically acclaimed. It won the Obie Award for Playwriting, the Tony Award for Best Play and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award in 2016. It was also a finalist for the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.[1] In the play, Karam depicts the motivations, desires, and disappointments of an Irish American family, whose members are caregivers, disabled, and queer, in a post-9/11 setting. Although the play borrows elements from the canon with its portrayal of a family tested by secrets, resentments, and illnesses, it diverges significantly from the tradition. *The Humans* lacks the essentials of a traditional realist play that follows the pattern of a well-made play with a climax that eventually results catharsis. Reflecting the atmosphere in the United

States after the 9/11 attacks and the economic crisis of 2008, the content is also unorthodox since neoliberal structures emerge as a problem that American families face now, while disability and queerness are essential parts of the family rather than metaphors. In other words, Karam dramatizes the Blake family's personal and familial crises while placing them in larger social, political, and economic contexts. In this vein, this article explores how Stephen Karam subverts and transforms the genre by focusing on disability and care work as experiences that keep the family together.

The Humans presents a family gathering at Thanksgiving in Brigid's new apartment where she lives with her boyfriend Richard. Brigid's parents, Erik and Deirdre, come from Scranton with Erik's mother, "Momo," who has dementia and uses a wheelchair. It is revealed that Erik and Deirdre cannot hire a professional caretaker for Momo because of their financial problems. The main reason for the financial crisis is that Erik lost his job after his affair with a colleague was revealed. As a result, the couple must sell the house they hope to live in after retirement. They are under considerable stress since taking care of Erik's mother is difficult while struggling with financial problems and trying to save their marriage.

Moreover, Erik and Deirdre's relationship with their daughters, Brigid and Aimee, is complicated despite their strong bond and deep affection. As traditional parents, the couple desperately wants Brigid to follow cultural norms and marry Richard. On the other hand, they accept their lesbian daughter, Aimee, supporting her relationship decisions and consoling her when she is heartbroken. Erik and Deirdre also resent their daughters for becoming non-religious and giving up on faith. They insistently remind Brigid and Aimee of the significance of faith, resulting in a chronic family conflict. Throughout the play, the audience/reader witnesses the family rekindling, evading, or tolerating these conflicts while also caring for one another and Momo. Meanwhile, Deirdre and Erik continuously exchange nervous looks as they wait for the right time for Erik to tell their daughters about his affair and financial problems. When he finally discloses his secret at the end of the play, Brigid and Aimee react strongly, feeling disappointed and frustrated. Everybody but Erik leaves the apartment, and he has an anxiety attack when all the lights go out. Finally, he also exists to calm down and meet the family outside, leaving the audience/reader uninformed about whether the conflict will be resolved or not.

In their correspondence regarding disability representation in canonical works and contemporary plays, disability studies scholars Ann M. Fox and Carrie Sandahl confirm the play's significant contribution to the field. Also, Carrie Sandahl notes in this discussion that in *The Humans*, "we see disability as it impacts a family across different generations" (Fox and Sandahl 148). All characters in the play are disabled on different levels, and the disability experience is presented with its complexities in real-life circumstances in a realist setting. Contrary to the tendency to narrow disability down to physical and mental impairment, Rosemarie Garland Thomson claims that disability is an umbrella term that includes "congenital and acquired physical differences, mental illness and retardation, chronic and acute illnesses, fatal and progressive diseases, temporary and permanent injuries, and a wide range of bodily characteristics considered disfiguring, such as scars, birthmarks, unusual proportions, or obesity" (13). Within this context, various disabilities exist on stage: Momo has dementia, Erik suffers from insomnia and chronic pain, Deirdre has arthritis, and she has developed an eating disorder as a coping mechanism. Aimee has broken up with her girlfriend and lost her job because of her severe intestinal problems, and now needs to undergo surgery. Brigid, on the other hand, struggles with depression since she cannot find a job and works at a bar to pay her student loans.

In this regard, the portrayal of disability and caretaking in *The Humans* is not stereotypical. Despite their disputes and problems, the family members always maintain an affective relationship, especially about care. All the while, "access intimacy," a term disability activist Mia Mingus has coined, keeps the family together, and it gives them strength to be resilient in the face of drawbacks. Within this context, this article argues that *The Humans* contributes significantly to the disability justice movement with its focus on "access intimacy" within the family as an enriching affective response to disability and care work.

Access Intimacy and Disability Justice

Disability activism against stigmatization and discrimination in the United States gained momentum along with the Civil Rights Movement. Historian Kim Nielsen states that building on the arguments of feminist, African American, and queer activists, disabled people also claimed that "their bodies did not render them defective. Indeed,

their bodies could even be sources of political, sexual, and artistic strength" (160). In the following decades, disability activists fought against ableism in all areas of life, and claimed legal rights to protect them from discrimination, insisted on removing physical barriers, and they spoke against institutionalization. As a result, several laws passed to secure disability rights, including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, which "prohibits employment, access, housing, and educational discrimination against people with disabilities" (Nielsen 181). The activism of disabled people resonated with artists, playwrights, artists and scholars who not only exposed discriminatory attitudes in art, literature, and academia, but they also advocated for justice for disabled individuals.

These discussions created a disability culture in the United States, and today, disability activists resist ableism, hierarchal establishments, and the concept of normalcy that defines individuals through binary oppositions. Accepting that the Disability Rights Movement has brought crucial changes in terms of physical accessibility, disability activists claimed in the early 2000s that it is now time for a second wave to the movement, which must gravitate toward a justice-based activism rather than a rights-based one. They define disability in intersectional terms and claim that disability oppression is intertwined with racism, sexism, ageism, and classism. Within this context, disability activists, such as Mia Mingus, Eli Clare, Patty Berne, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, and Simi Linton, argue that all individuals are interconnected, and societies can achieve justice and equality through interdependence and close community relations.

Sins Invalid, a disability justice-based performance group that aims to expand disability justice, has published *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People* to provide a definition for disability justice and share their experiences in establishing this concept. They propose the following principles that disability justice should be based on: intersectionality, leadership of those most impacted, anti-capitalist politics, cross-movement solidarity, recognizing wholeness; sustainability, commitment to cross-disability solidarity, interdependence, collective access and collective liberation (23-26). Drawing on the principles of disability justice, Mia Mingus has contributed to the movement by coining the term "access intimacy." In her renowned 2011 blog post entitled "Access Intimacy: The Missing Link," Mingus introduces "access intimacy" to describe an "elusive,

hard to describe feeling when someone else 'gets' your access needs." Differentiating access intimacy from physical, emotional, intellectual, political, familial, or sexual intimacies, Mingus defines it as "[t]he kind of eerie comfort that your disabled self feels with someone on a purely access level." As Mingus argues, access intimacy is not for a specific group or community, and anyone has the potential to experience it. Instead, access intimacy is possible when individuals possess a similar emotional state in that both subjects share a needs/access-based intimacy.

Although Mingus does not claim it to be an affect, access intimacy can be characterized as a feeling evoked as a result of positive affective circulations. This change in affective registers regarding disability will help to develop other intimacies fundamental to human existence. In other words, it is a positively loaded emotive representation of the affect of disability; therefore, it is transformative. Mingus writes: "There have been relationships where access intimacy has helped to create the conditions out of which emotional, familial and political intimacy could grow" ("Access"). Then, access intimacy cultivates compassion, connection, and interdependence because it "invites attention to our fundamental intersubjectivity, our inherent vulnerability, and the asymmetries of power in any relationship" (Valentine 78). In this sense, what is fundamental to access intimacy is to understand disability as a "natural part of human experience" (Volion 87).

Since access is often associated with removing physical barriers, a disability justice based approach to disability broadens the definition of access. For instance, Piepzna-Samarasinha defines it as "a collective joy and offering we can give to each other" (17). Similarly, Desiree Valentine explains that defining "access" within a disability justice framework would force one to consider beyond physical accommodation. Emphasizing the significance of interdependence, access "demands attention to the wealth of social, emotional, and mental diversities of ways to inhabit the world" (80). The scholar also asserts that when access issues are discussed, "the cognitive and affective dimensions of (in)accessibility" should also be taken into account, and she states that attending to elements of access such as "everyday feeling, habits, values, and worldviews" will help social transformation (81).

When taken through this framework, access is inextricably intertwined with care since it is about access to one's physical, emotional, psychological, or social needs. As Peggy Phelan states, "[t]o take care of the body, to care for the body, and to care about bodies requires a specific ethics—one that takes touch as axiomatic, emotional attachment as a value, and interconnection as constant" (323). Therefore, access intimacy is not opening up a space for the disabled but creating a new social order with the disabled in every aspect of life. This is possible when a person has "crip knowledge" (Piepzna-Samarasinha 252). Such realization manifests itself when subjects open themselves up to one another, learn and value the knowledge embodied in all bodyminds.

Access intimacy breaks off the associations of access with logistics, and it moves the issue to the "realm of relationships" where interdependence and care become prominent (Mingus, "Access Intimacy, Interdependence"). Then, access intimacy promotes the "transformation *of*" the ableist society instead of "inclusion *into*" it (Valentine 84). As Mingus explains, "access for the sake of access is not necessarily liberatory, but access for the sake of connection, justice, community, love and liberation is" ("Access Intimacy, Interdependence"). In this regard, care relationships in *The Humans* demonstrate that the health of families, communities, and relationships depends significantly on transforming the affect of disability and care work. Access intimacy in *The Humans* results in a new kind of emotion as individuals' affective states and affects circulating among them differ from the stereotypes.

Care and Access Intimacy in *The Humans*

Before discussing the dramaturgical choices in *The Humans*, it is necessary to talk about the setting since it contributes significantly to the portrayal of family dynamics and access intimacy. The run-down, two-story apartment building in Chinatown requires a lot of maintenance. The family's life is constantly interrupted by the strange—sometimes eerie—sounds coming from upstairs. Karam depicts the apartment as follows: "It's big enough to not feel small. It's just small enough to not feel big. . . . The rooms are worn, the floors are warped, but clean and well kept" (9). Just like the apartment, the

family has its cracks and each character struggles with their flaws and problems. Yet, they always take shelter in the family. Family members feel connected to one another in any case and never break the affective bond that keeps the family together.

Bess Rowen notes that, except for the inclusion of a lesbian daughter, the play does not challenge the conventions of realism or naturalism with its "standard cut-away house on stage" (338). This may be stylistically true; however, Karam's dramaturgical choices when depicting the family and the house diverge from traditional family dramas. First, although the house's physical condition is the symbol of the family's current situation, the family members accept and support each other no matter what happens, and they enjoy one another's company in all circumstances. Moreover, the family structure in the play subverts the traditional and normative representations of the American family. That is, neither the queer character nor the disabilities in the family lie at the core of the family's dysfunctional state. They do not function as metaphors for the problems existing within the family, either. Karam rather points out that it is the current neoliberal politics that exacerbates stigmatization and frictions, pushing people to the edges of society. For instance, Brigid suffers from depression because she cannot find a job despite her degree, and she is forced to live a precarious life by working part time without health insurance and financial security. Similarly, Erik and Deirdre become disabled because of the physical labor, but they cannot afford to access decent healthcare, causing them to live with chronic pain. Aimee, on the other hand, is forced to resign because she uses her sick leave more than the company tolerates.

In such an oppressive environment, all characters are in a reciprocal care relationship, and the primary care work revolves around the grandmother, Momo, who has dementia. Janet Gibson points out that people with dementia are stereotypically labeled as the "living dead" because their cognitive and physical capabilities change to the point where they cannot function autonomously. Therefore, they are no longer seen or accepted as real people (4). *The Humans* challenges this perception by showing that the affective care network surrounding Momo continues incessantly from the beginning of the play to the end. In this regard, the focus of the play is not what the family and Momo have lost but how they have adjusted their lives according to Momo's needs, and how they enjoy their time together. This does not mean that

Karam ignores the difficulties that come with the care work. While acknowledging the complexities, the play provides novel perspectives on creating access intimacy.

In the opening scene, the audience is introduced to Momo's wheelchair before Momo herself. The existence of a wheelchair—or a disabled character—on the stage per se does not make a play inclusive, yet it is a political expression when used to claim disability justice. Petra Kuppers points out the potential wheelchairs hold, claiming they can be "icons and communication symbols" (81). Then, the use of a wheelchair in *The Humans* draws attention to care and accessibility, thereby carrying political significance to transform affective responses to disability, care, and illness. Paul Longmore and Lauri Umansky note that disability in American society is associated with the loss of many things, such as independence, autonomy, or control (7). In *The Humans*, Momo experiences all of these, and to an ableist mind, Momo and her wheelchair bear the affect of loss. However, in Karam's world, the wheelchair becomes a signifier of care, interdependence, and access intimacy. Although it exists for Momo, she is not the one who uses the wheelchair. Everyone in the family is a wheelchair user since Momo's dementia is at a point where she does not have control over her body. Helping Momo with the wheelchair never poses a problem for anyone. On the contrary, they see it as an opportunity to connect and spend time with her. In this vein, dramatizing the real-life experiences of dementia as well as the portrayal of access intimacy both alter the perceptions of the nondisabled reader/audience and make people with dementia visible on stage not as passive stage props but as active participants.

At the beginning of the play, the only character on stage is Erik, standing next to the wheelchair. Deirdre and Momo exit the bathroom after a toilet flush is heard, an implication that Momo needs care for the basic daily tasks. Beginning a play with a toilet flush sound and showing two characters leaving the bathroom result in an immediate disaffection in the audience/reader since a bathroom's affect is associated with the emotions of disgust, filthiness, and privacy. The scene causes disaffection because Karam exposes a hidden, not publicly discussed aspect of caregiving. After Erik and Deirdre—together—help Momo to sit in the wheelchair, Momo begins mumbling words and sentences that do not make sense. It is understood that Momo does not recognize her environment and the people around her. Nevertheless, the family members try to listen to what she is articulating and communicate

with her. Erik explains to her that they are in Brigid's new apartment, where they will have a Thanksgiving dinner. However, Momo keeps repeating the phrase, "you can never come back," to which Brigid responds, "Momo, you can absolutely come back, any time you want" (13). As the quotation shows, the family members neither intimidate nor humiliate Momo. On the contrary, they attend to her well-being always in a loving manner and continue to communicate with her. Mingus states that access intimacy is "knowing that someone else is with me in this mess. It is knowing that someone else is willing to be with me in the never-ending and ever-changing daily obstacle course that is navigating an inaccessible world" ("Access"). In this sense, the characters make sure that Momo knows they are with her under all circumstances, so she never feels alone, desperate, or uncomfortable. In addition to the characters' positive affective states toward Momo and her current embodiment, they also consider her comfort. For instance, when Deirdre helps Momo lay down on the couch, Brigid, and even Richard, help to make her more comfortable by finding extra pillows and blankets, or by lifting and moving her feet to help her get situated. In this sense, affective immediacy of care coalesces into access intimacy in the family.

Karam does not narrow down Momo's individuality to her disability and shows that she is not just a body without agency. In this regard, not only does he dramatize how she is cared for, but he also conveys her story through other characters' anecdotes. As Gibson argues, in dramatizing dementia, it is necessary to offer "affordances for people with dementia" by depicting their "comprehension of reality" (197). This would help playwrights create "alternative narratives to dominant cultural ones" because they would be giving "voice to those who are usually silenced or thought not to be able to speak" (Gibson 197). In other words, Gibson insists on reimagining and dramatizing the subjectivity of people with dementia to achieve cultural change (197). Karam successfully creates an alternative narrative by completing her story and characterization through multiple perspectives. For instance, Deirdre tells Richard how she refused to quit driving when she was first diagnosed:

> She was something, she refused to quit driving, Rich, refused, but . . . six years ago? Erik couldn't bring himself to take the keys from her, so he got her to take a driver's exam so the decision wouldn't be on him, and part of her test is—they show

> her a picture of a "yield" sign, but without the word "yield" on it . . . well she can't name it, but enough of her's still there that she goes to the poor guy giving the test, really pissed off, she goes: "Trust me, I'd know what to do if I was driving." And he's like: "Then just tell me what you'd do if you were driving and pulled up to this sign." And she goes: "I'd see what everyone else was doing; then I'd do that." (67)

As the story reveals, adjusting to life with dementia is a multifaceted experience, and it is difficult not only for the person experiencing it but also for family members. Erik struggles to ask Momo to stop driving, whereas Momo refuses to accept that she is not capable of doing specific tasks anymore. Nevertheless, Momo gradually embraces her new bodymind and accepts it as a part of her selfhood. The family members also learn to adjust their lives according to Momo's needs and her new embodiment.

In a later scene, when all family members say grace, Deirdre reads an e-mail from Momo, which has become a part of their Thanksgiving tradition. The use of the e-mail is dramaturgically significant regarding disability representation on stage because by giving Momo a voice, it upholds disability justice for people with dementia and refutes ableist notions that devalue their lives. It functions as a tool to give Momo agency and voice. Deirdre reads:

> "Dear Aimee and Brigid, I was clumsy around you both today and felt confused. I couldn't remember your names and felt bad about that. It's strange slowly becoming someone I don't know. But while I *am* still here, I want to say: don't worry about me once I drift off for good. I'm not scared. If anything, I wish I could've known that most of the stuff I *did* spend my life worrying about wasn't so bad. Maybe it's because this disease has me forgetting the worst stuff, but right now I'm feeling nothing about this life was worth getting so worked up about. Not even dancing at weddings." *(The Blakes smile. They have inside understanding of this remark)* "Dancing at weddings always scared the crap out of me, but now it doesn't seem like such a big deal. This is taking me forever to type. Consider this my fond farewell. *Erin go bragh*. Dance more than I did. Drink less than I did. Go to church. Be good to everyone you love. I love you more than you'll ever know." (123)

Compared to the anecdote Deirdre shared, the e-mail showcases the transformation in Momo's understanding of dementia. As Susan Wendell suggests, living with disability or illness "creates valuable ways of being that give valuable perspectives on life and the world," ways of being that would be lost in case of the elimination of illness and disability (31). Within this context, Momo began living in crip time after dementia. In "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time," where Ellen Samuels discusses the "less appealing aspects of crip time," she describes crip time as "broken time" and discusses that the disabled individuals must adjust their bodies and minds "to new rhythms, new patterns of thinking and feeling and moving through the world. It forces us to take breaks, even when we don't want to . . . It insists that we listen to our bodyminds so closely, so attentively in a culture that tells us to divide the two" (192). In this sense, Momo has learned to perceive the world from a different view and embraced crip time. Through the Thanksgiving letter, she passes her knowledge to her granddaughters, and crip time teaches her to accept the drawbacks of the illness as a natural course of human life.

It is not just Momo who develops a new perspective on life and the corporeality of dementia. Similarly, Erik's remarks, such as "[t]his is definitely not one of your better days Mom . . . oh man, we, uh . . . we'll all be there some day, right? . . . / we love you so much, Mom. . ." (95), show that he—and other family members—now see disability experience differently and they also embrace the crip time Momo lives in. This makes them commit to access intimacy rather than seeing care work as a burden or tragedy. In this regard, the family members never stigmatize Momo's disability and Erik's remarks evoke an acceptance of the disability activists' noteworthy claim that everybody will eventually be disabled if they live long enough.

Moreover, Marian Barnes posits that reciprocation cannot be expected when providing care for a family member with dementia. She notes, "[t]he changes in behaviors, activities, interactions and expectations resulting from dementia affect the individual concerned, their loved ones and close family members. They have significant impact on family dynamics, and on social networks" (55). In this regard, the Blake family also acknowledges the complexities of care and dementia, and they adjust themselves according to Momo's needs. Even though they are concerned about her health, they do not assign negative affects to her new corporeality. As Ashley Volion

argues, access intimacy requires acknowledging that every individual "navigates the world differently," but this difference "does not mean lesser" (89). Therefore, none of the family members perceive Momo's new bodymind as a lesser form of being. Also, Alison Kafer notes that "[t]o eliminate disability is to eliminate the possibility of discovering alternative ways of being in the world, to foreclose the possibility of recognizing and valuing our interdependence" (83). Within this context, incorporating Momo's dementia into the play as an enriching rather than a degrading experience paves the way for the transmission of positive affects between the text and the reader or between the cast on stage and the audience.

Although a nondisabled actress plays Momo, the audience who has family members with dementia relates to the experience depicted on stage.[2] As Lauren Klein (Momo) explains in an interview, the characterization resonated with the audience, and she received positive feedback regarding her role. She states that the audience appreciated the way dementia was dramatized on stage, and they thanked her for giving voice to people with dementia. For instance, an audience member embraced Klein at the end of the performance and said, "You are playing the role that my wife recently played" ("Working in the Theater" 43:33 – 44:00). In this vein, dramatizing access intimacy and the real-life experiences of people with dementia alters the perceptions of the nondisabled reader/audience and it makes people with dementia visible on the stage, a place where they are traditionally rendered invisible.

As stated previously, Momo is not the only disabled character on the stage, and all characters are disabled on different levels. While the characters deal with their disabilities on their own terms, they also participate in a reciprocal care relationship based on access intimacy. Gibson suggests that "performance is always much more than text alone. It is, among many other factors, bodies, nonverbal language, gestures, lighting, and so on. . . . Bodies on stage are as responsible for creating stimulating theatre as are words" (115-116). Given Gibson's argument, it can be suggested that *The Humans* makes use of nonverbal language and gestures in access intimacy representation, but the play's real strength comes from the playwright's dramaturgical choices. The continuous action, both on stage and the page, provided by "the doll house" view, allows a simultaneous portrayal of care, crises, and anxieties. In other words, each character gets their private moment,

either in another room or floor ("Theater Talk" 8:33 – 8:49). For instance, the audience watches Aimee, who is upstairs, nursing a cramp before she enters the bathroom while Deirdre wheels Momo downstairs to calm her down. Meanwhile, Brigid interrupts Erik's conversation to ask for his health and general well-being, and she questions why he cannot sleep (54). In another scene, Deirdre, Richard, and Brigid take care of Momo downstairs while Erik is upstairs and consoling Aimee, who breaks into tears after a phone conversation with her ex-girlfriend. As the examples demonstrate, the audience members sometimes watch manifestations of care on both floors, but other times they hear characters argue on one side of the stage while watching others engaging in care elsewhere. This simultaneity not only allows the audience to witness the access intimacy and the complexities within the family, but it also breaks the traditional linear structure of a regular realist play.

Family Conflicts, Neoliberalism, and Disability

Although the relationship dynamics of the family are marked by access intimacy, the characters do not always grasp the concerns or problems of the other, mainly due to the generation gap. The affective responses of daughters and parents toward one another oscillate between care and resentfulness. On the one hand, characters are very attentive to the well-being of each family member; on the other hand, they are quick to criticize one another's decisions and actions. In this sense, Karam successfully grasps the tension between generations.

Deirdre and Erik have achieved middle-class status through hard work, hoping to provide their daughters with a better and more comfortable future. However, as Jayne Houdyshell (Deirdre) states, both Erik and Deirdre are "perplexed" by the idea of a "better life" because even though both girls are college graduates, their lives are as precarious as their parents' ("Theater Talk" 13:16 – 13:35). Moreover, neither Brigid nor Aimee shares Erik and Deirdre's devoted faith, from which they draw strength and resilience. Brigid and Aimee also find it difficult to fully understand Erik and Deirdre's motives and struggles. They can imagine how difficult it is for their parents to take care of Momo, both physically and mentally. However, they fail to see that the care work is only one aspect of the couple's struggles.

It can be suggested that Erik and Deirdre are the victims of what Lauren Berlant calls "cruel optimism." The scholar explains

that a desire for a good life, which has financial, intimate and moral aspects, lies at the center of cruel optimism because individuals drain themselves to satisfy this desire. According to Berlant, attachments to "upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and lively, durable intimacy" result in cruel optimism (3). Within this context, both Erik and Deirdre are physically worn out because of hard work, yet still, they are not financially secure. As Erik tells Richard, "I'll tell you Rich, save your money now . . . I thought I'd be settled by my age, you know, but man, it never ends . . . mortgage, car payments, internet, our dishwasher just gave out [. . .] don'ycha think it should cost less to be alive?" (40). The quote reveals that the promise of upward mobility does not apply to all citizens of the United States. On the contrary, it exhausts and oppresses them while shattering their hopes for a better life.

Erik also reveals that after twenty-eight years of labor, the school not only fired him but also took away his pension using the so-called "morality code" rule against him. With no savings and his retirement in danger, Erik now works part-time at Walmart, and the couple is planning to sell the house and rent an apartment instead because of the medical expenses. Similarly, Deirdre has been working for the same company for a long time. However, when Erik states that the company "would fall apart without her," she says, ". . . yeah, well my *salary* doesn't reflect that, and these new kids they hired, I'm working for two guys in their twenties, and just 'cause they have a special degree they're making five times what I make over forty years" (50). Deirdre's statement exposes the contradictory consequences of the highly promoted values such as competitiveness, progress, and hard work since they apply only to a small group of citizens.

Erik and Deirdre's situation indicates the precarious state of their social and financial positions, and it confirms that disability and class are closely interlaced in contemporary America. They seem to achieve the American dream, yet Karam shows that the dream is no more than an illusion, especially when disability is involved. They work hard all their lives to live a better life, but the gains of hard work can dissipate overnight, depending on their employers' decisions. Moreover, Erik and Deirdre suffer from "neoliberal ableism," defined as the intertwinement of neoliberalism and ableism since "neoliberalism provides an ecosystem for the nourishment of ableism" (Goodley et. al. 981). Victims of neoliberal ableism do not have access to affordable health care, and they experience "slow death" as they are "more

fatigued, in more pain, less capable of ordinary breathing and working, and die earlier than the average for higher-income workers" (Berlant 114). In this sense, after years of doing the same work, Deirdre has arthritis, and Erik suffers from chronic back pain. They have worked hard for a better life, including access to affordable healthcare and a financially comfortable life, yet—ironically—the money they make does not even cover the expenses of health problems caused by their labor.

The excessive pain they are living with cannot go unnoticed; therefore, Brigid and Aimee repeatedly inquire about their health, but the parents try to hide it, and both state they are doing okay. Brigid and Aimee's conversation shows the worrying state of Erik and Deirdre's health problems:

> AIMEE: I'm more worried about—did you notice Mom's knees? . . . Going down / the stairs?
>
> BRIGID: I saw, yeah . . . I'm afraid to ask how her arthritis is . . . or Dad's back . . . / I don't wanna know . . .
>
> AIMEE: Well it's bothering him—can't you tell he's—
>
> BRIGID: No, yeah, do you think it's because . . . he hasn't been sleeping, right? . . . (83).

The quote reveals that Aimee and Brigid pick up their parents' affective states, yet they ascribe the negative affectivity to the care work and health problems. Ignorant of the couple's other problems, the daughters either level fierce criticism at their parents, or they tease them cruelly. For instance, everybody in the family mocks Deirdre's overeating, disregarding the fact that it is her body's affective response to stress and pressure. The more Erik postpones disclosing "the secret" to Brigid and Aime, the more Deirdre eats impulsively because she carries the affective burden of Erik's mistake. Therefore, her emotional state of nervous tension increases as the play progresses.

Erik, on the other hand, grapples with PTSD besides other health problems. Starting from the play's first scene, Erik seems uncomfortable and uneasy. He is already nervous about the announcement he needs to make, but his anxious state also reflects Erik's affective response to New York and the apartment. It is revealed that Erik and Aimee were

in New York City when the World Trade Center was hit by planes on 9/11. Erik was at Dunkin' Donuts waiting for the observation deck to open while Aimee was in a job interview. After the incident, Erik could not find Aimee for hours. He later recounts a scene which has become a recurring nightmare: "—this fireman was holding a body with your same suit on? [. . .] but with a coat of ash melted onto her?, like she got turned into a statue like [. . .] there was gray in her eyes and mouth even, it was . . . like her whole . . . (a discovery) [. . . face was gone. . .]" (140-141). Therefore, Erik associates New York City with the affect of horror, and being in the city and Brigid's apartment that is close to World Trade Center aggravates his PTSD. For instance, when he sees falling ashes that "look like light flurries," he feels "unsettled" and "steps away from the window, takes a few calming deep breaths" (61). His PTSD is also triggered by random thuds and rumbles coming from all directions in the apartment, which eventually induce a panic attack at the end of the play. Despite suffering from its consequences, Erik never sees PTSD as a serious condition, nor does he seek treatment to recover. As a traditional Catholic and a member of a generation that perceives mental problems as a weakness, he only talks to the priest about his dreams and uneasiness, which does not solve his problems.

In contrast to Erik, Aimee is not disturbed by New York City, nor does she accept having been influenced by the attack. It is not revealed in the play whether Aimee's illness is actually related to PTSD or whether Aimee suffers from PTSD at all. However, she is obviously afflicted by cramps and pain, and she needs surgery because of cancer risk. Although she does not reveal this to her parents, Aimee is concerned about the stigma and marginalization that come with disability:

> BRIGID: You'll lose the whole intestine?
>
> AIMEE: It cures the disease, though, so, . . . but . . . yeah . . . they make a hole in your abdomen so the waste can, you know . . .
>
> BRIGID: Do Mom and Dad know?
>
> AIMEE: No, I don't want to discuss it at dinner and . . . I'm okay, I'm mostly just like . . . uhhhh, how am I gonna find another girl friend? . . . / I'm serious . . .
>
> BRIGID: You're a complete catch.

> AIMEE: I'm gonna be pooing out of a hole in my abdomen. Who's gonna date me?
>
> [. . .]
>
> AIMEE: Uh-huh . . . when do I even—do I wait until the third date to be like: "Just FYI, I shit out of a hole in my belly." Is that a fifth date thing? (82)

Aimee's concern shows how important it is to have access intimacy and crip wealth/knowledge in relationships. Having crip knowledge would invalidate, in Piepzna-Samarasinha's words, the "ableist shame" and cultivate access intimacy. She states, "You can live in your sweatpants, you can change your ostomy bag in front of me, you can be really, really weird, the amount of time it takes for you to transfer to the toilet is normal. . . . some of our wealth is creating these small spaces away from shame, where it is okay to have a disabled bodymind" (252). In this regard, Karam attempts to demolish "disability shaming" through Aimee and Momo's bathroom scenes. Significantly, both Aimee and Momo (with Deirdre) visit the bathroom many times, and Aimee repeatedly reminds the family members that it smells bad after she leaves the bathroom. For instance, when Brigid asks if she needs anything, Aimee says, "An air freshener . . .?" (58). Brigid ensures that Aimee understands that no one in the family cares about the smell and that her well-being is more important to them. In this sense, Brigid and other family members always focus on Aimee's access needs:

> AIMEE: . . . okay, Mom, so . . . and I missed even more time right before they made their decision, I had another flare-up this month, so—
>
> DEIRDRE: Why didn't you tell us?
>
> ERIK: Oh babe, I'm sorry . . .
>
> AIMEE: Because I don't want you to worry—
>
> DEIRDRE: I would've sent you a care-package . . .
>
> AIMEE: Yeah, and a bunch of text messages asking about my bowel movements.
>
> DEIRDRE: I just wanna know what's / going on.

ERIK: You know we'd do anything for you, right?— [. . .] How about . . . financially, are you okay, or—?

[. . .]

DEIRDRE: But just—how are you feeling?

AIMEE: Just minor cramping, I'm good, I am . . .

RICHARD: How about food-wise, can we get you / something special— (44-45)

The scene is another moment that portrays access intimacy as the family members consider Aimee's needs in all aspects. As a result, Aimee is thankful to be in such a loving and connected family, especially at a time when she has lost her job, her girlfriend, and her health (122).

Contrary to the comfort of access intimacy within the family environment, Aimee faces neoliberal ableism at work. As David Mitchell argues, bodies are used and exploited by neoliberalist values (4). The ideal employee in a neoliberal structure is "healthy, rational, autonomous, educated, economically viable, self-governing and able" (Goodley and Lawthom 372). When employees do not fit into this definition and when they do not "adequately maintain their bodies," they are blamed for their illnesses and impairments (Mitchell 4). Accordingly, Aimee is demoted because she "missed a lot of time" when she was sick, yet she is still expected to respond to e-mails even at Thanksgiving. In the corporate world, demotion means asking the employee to quit, so Aimee is at risk of unemployment and access to healthcare. In other words, she is held responsible for her health problems. When Deirdre states it is illegal to fire an employee because of a medical condition, Aimee summarizes the hypocrisy neoliberal values harbor: "Well they gave other reasons, obviously, but . . . yeah, you get the sense that they support your chronic illness as long as it doesn't affect your billable hours" (45). As the quote shows, Aimee's condition also demonstrates the significance of "crip time" in achieving disability justice. According to Kafer, ignoring people's needs, work schedules are strict and normative; therefore, crip time is necessary since it is "a challenge to normative and normalizing expectations of pace and scheduling. Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds" (27). In this regard, neoliberal work structures refuse to accept disability as a part of human condition. Forced to work beyond

her limits, Aimee is a victim of neoliberal ableism that is inflexible, insensitive, and inhumane.

The play ends after Erik discloses his affair and their financial problems to his daughters. Although such news is initially met with aggression, the family members calm down eventually, and all characters leave the stage one after the other—to unite again outside. In this regard, although the play does not offer a proper denouement, the audience knows that the family will overcome the problem together, as they always did. Once again, the play diverges from twentieth-century family dramas in which families do not survive the crisis after all secrets are revealed and collapse. In *The Humans*, however, the family does survive because the antidote to psychological turmoil and social stigmatization is prescribed as care that provides unity and connection. Therefore, the audience does not witness the traditional display of a dissolution of the family on stage but an act of rebuilding it over and over again.

Conclusion

Karam transforms the stage by dramatizing a family that succeeds in forming an interdependent care relationship and enjoys access intimacy despite their differences, secrets, and resentments. While doing so, he refrains from glorifying the family as a socially constructed institution, but he also shows that the contemporary problems in the United States stem not from the dissolution of the perfect American family myth but from neoliberal oppression and ableism. As Mingus states, this provides an understanding of disability that "shifts from being silencing to freeing; from being isolating to connecting; from hidden and invisible to visible; from burdensome to valuable; from a resentful obligation to an opportunity; from shameful to powerful; from ridge to creative" ("Access Intimacy, Interdependence"). Portraying disability in Mingus's terms, Karam expresses solidarity with the disability justice movement, and he shows that changing affects associated with disability will eventually bring social and political transformation. In other words, putting issues that are considered socially taboo on stage/page as a normal part of everyday disability experience compels the audience to reevaluate their perceptions of disability, access, justice, and normalcy. Moreover, it enriches disability representation in theater by incorporating disability not as a metaphor but as a real embodied experience.

Notes

[1] It was not only the play that received awards. Justin Townsend and Fitz Patton were awarded Drama Desk Awards, respectively, for Lighting Design for a Play and Sound Design in a Play. Also, Reed Birney (Erik) and Jayne Houdyshell (Deirdre) received Tony Awards for their performances in the Broadway production of the play.

[2] Disability activists argue that it is necessary to cast disabled people for disabled characters. However, in her article "Why Disability Identity Matters: From Dramaturgy to Casting in John Belluso's Pyretown," Carrie Sandahl highlights the complexities of casting, and her analysis shows that each case should be evaluated separately. In *The Humans*, for instance, Momo's dementia has progressed to the point where she does not recognize her environment. Casting an actress with dementia at that level would not be easy, and it would raise ethical questions. In this sense, issues regarding casting remain out of the scope of this article since it requires a more in-depth discussion and analysis.

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Re-Evaluating T. S. Eliot's Use of Epigraph in Light of Deleuze and Guattari's Theory of Assemblage

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Abstract

The function of epigraph in Eliot's poetry has become the focal point of a perennial debate for a long time. As it is the case, there have been different researches conducted on this inquiry in the scholarly field. Some critics argue that Eliot uses epigraph in homage to the literary tradition. They tend to undervalue the contribution of epigraph in his poetry since they regard its use as obscure and incomprehensible. On the other hand, some other critics consider it as a significant part of his poetry. They argue that Eliot's poetry would have lost its integrity without epigraph. Although both groups have a fair share in their studies on Eliot's use of epigraph, this argument still needs further considerations to have more insight into the role of epigraph in Eliot's poetry. To bridge this gap and to further discuss the complexity of the role of epigraph in Eliot's poetry, this study traces Eliot's use of epigraph in light of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of assemblage, which is expounded in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the second volume of their book, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1980)*. Similar to Deleuze-Guattarian assemblage theory, epigraph may function as one of poem's production components without losing its own integrity. It may function both as a unit of production and a product in itself. As such, it juxtaposes individual and universal aspects of poetry without distorting the poetic harmony. In this context, this article aims to study the role of epigraph in Eliot's poetry in line with Deleuze-Guattarian assemblage. To theoretically ground the argument, this article firstly explores the nature of Eliot's poetry, and then elucidates Deleuze-

Guattarian assemblage in detail. Lastly, it examines this function of epigraph in some of Eliot's selected poems.

Keywords: Assemblage, Epigraph, Poetry, Criticism, T. S. Eliot

Deleuze and Guattari'nin Asamblaj Kuramı Işığında T.S. Eliot'ın Epigraf Kullanımını Değerlendirmek

Öz

Eliot'ın şiirlerinde epigrafın fonksiyonu uzun bir zamandır süregelen bir tartışmanın odak noktası olmuştur. Bu durum bu konu üzerine farklı araştırmalar yapılmasına vesile olmuştur. Bazı eleştirmenler Eliot'ın epigrafı edebi geleneğe saygısını göstermek için kullandığını ileri sürer. Epigrafın şiirdeki işlevini belirsiz ve anlaşılmaz olarak algıladıklarından epigrafın Eliot'ın şiirine olan katkısını göz ardı etmeye meyillidirler. Buna karşın, bazı diğer eleştirmenler epigrafın şiirin önemli bir unsuru olduğunu düşünürler. Bu eleştirmenler epigraf olmadan şiirin bütünselliğini yitireceğini ileri sürerler. Her iki grubun epigrafın fonksiyonuyla ilgili tartışmalarında haklılık payları olsa da, epigrafın rolünü daha iyi anlamak için daha fazla araştırma yapmak gerekir. Bu açığı kapatmak ve Eliot'ın şiirlerinde epigrafın rolünün karmaşıklığını daha detaylı tartışmak için bu çalışma Eliot'ın epigraf kullanımının, Deleuze ve Guattari'nin *Kapitalizm ve Şizofreni* (1980) adlı kitaplarının ikinci cildi *Bin Yayla'* da ileri sürdüğü asamblaj teorisi ışığında izini sürer. Deleuze-Guattari'nin asamblaj kuramına benzer bir şekilde epigraf kendi bütünlüğünü kaybetmeden şiirin üretim unsurlarından biri olarak işlev görebilir. Kendi içinde başlıca bir üretim olduğu kadar başka bir üretimin bir unsuru olabilir. Bu bakımdan, şiirin bireysel ve evrensel unsurlarını şiirsel ahengi bozmadan bir araya getirir. Bu bağlamda, bu makale Eliot'ın şiirlerinde epigrafın rolünü Deleuze-Guattari'nin asamblaj teorisi ışığında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tartışmayı kuramsal olarak temellendirmek için, bu makale öncelikle Eliot'ın sanatsal yönünü araştırır, ardından Deleuze-Guattarian asamblaj kuramını ayrıntılı olarak açıklar ve son olarak da Eliot'ın seçili şiirlerinde epigrafın rolünü inceler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Asamblaj, Epigraf, Şiir, Eleştiri, T. S. Eliot

Introduction

Epigraph is an important characteristic of Eliot's poetry. Therefore, the function of epigraph in Eliot's poetry has long been discussed in the academic circles. Its ambiguous function has brought forth various interpretations. Some critics like Barzinji and Worthington tend to perceive the use of epigraph in Eliot's poetry as obscure and incomprehensible due to its ambiguous function. Whether it is a meaningful and integrative part of the poem is questionable and brings about uncertainty. They also argue that readers may find it confusing to make a connection between the epigraph and the poem in Eliot's poetry (Worthington 1; Barzinji 79). Mathiessen, an important critic on Eliot's poetry, claims that epigraph "is designed to form an integral part of the effect of the poem" (52). He further states that epigraph is a device that "is to enable the poet to secure a condensed expression in the poem itself" (52). Banerjee similarly expresses that epigraph for Eliot is the bridge that helps him identify with the giant figures of the literary canon (962). Likewise, Sirhan, another researcher, features the role of epigraph in building the intertextual relations in Eliot's poetry (1-7). Unlike the aforementioned early criticism on the contribution of the epigraph in Eliot's poetry, recent criticism of the Eliotic use of epigraph has shifted over time and developed a learned way of understanding it. For example, Sharratt argues that Eliot's frequent appeal to the use of quotations can be "a sign of erudition" or "a mark of elite authority" (224). Donoghue, however, highlights Eliot's pleasure in "keeping readers on their toes" by using epigraphs in contradiction with the poems (98). Moreover, Murphy refers to the revealing aspect of the Eliotic epigraph on the poem to come (317). He further argues, "[Eliot's] epigraphs serve the purpose of mind-opening exercises in the extension of language into thought and of thought into paradox" (228). It is no accident that Eliot's use of epigraph opens a variety of discussion. Eliot's explanation in relation to the role of epigraphs preceding his poem, "Burnt Norton" in a letter to Raymond Preston, 09 Aug 1945 may corroborate this point. Eliot says, "The value of such an epigraph [a phrase from Herakleitos] is partly due to the ambiguity and the variety of possible interpretations" (1165). Its ambiguous role is a like a Sphinx riddle the answer of which will help to clear the fog over Eliot's complex poems. To better understand the role of the Eliotic epigraph still requires further exploration. Therefore, the argument of this study will embark on a new quest to shed a new light on the

enigmatic function of the Eliotic epigraph in his poetry. The epigraph in this study will be observed in light of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of assemblage, considering the structural formation of an assemblage expounded by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the second volume of their book, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1980)*.

Similar to an assemblage, the use of epigraph in Eliot's poetry serves, in Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, for macro-and micro multiplicities. It not only functions as a unit in the production of the poem but it also seems to stand as a product that is aloof, detached, and somehow disconnected to the rest of the poem. In light of this argument, this article aims to examine Eliot's epigraph as Deleuze-Guattarian assemblage by carefully observing the function of epigraph in some of Eliot's selected poems. To theoretically ground the argument, this article firstly explores the nature of Eliot's poetry, and then elucidates Deleuze-Guattarian assemblage in detail.

T. S. Eliot: A Poet in the Purgatory

In his talk on the unity of European culture, he refers to the significance of learning from the past literature to sharpen one's creativity in one's poetic voyage (711). Therefore, one may note that Eliot's search for the originality in the Western literary tradition and his desire for the continuity of the Western civilization are likely to shape his approach towards the literary tradition. However, he is aware of the challenging path to create a truly original poetic identity in the deeply rooted tradition of the great poets like Shakespeare, Dante, and Donne. To speak in Bloom's terms, he feels overwhelmed by anxiety and belatedness, often reflected in his poetry (Bloom 29). However, such seemingly traumatic feelings surprisingly carry him to a state of mind continuously oscillating between killing and creating, objective and subjective, past and present, mythology and reality, reason and feeling, appreciation and criticism, conformity and novelty. Although his tortured mind caused by his fears, worries, and hesitations do some harm on his social/marital life, it is the same spirit that hones his poetic skills.

In the introduction to *Sacred Wood*, Eliot claims, "it is part of the business of the critic to preserve tradition to see literature steadily and to see it whole" (Eliot xiii-xiv). When considered from this point of view, his poetry may be seen as the preserved site for the literary

tradition since the past for Eliot, as Kirk notes, "is not a thing frozen, but lives in us" (35). Kirk also points out that the contemporaneity of the past is much felt in the literary quotes taken from various sources of authority in Eliot's poetry (52). These quotes- mostly unidentified, unattributed and not translated- might puzzle the readers at first glimpse due to their obscurity, but once they are translated by the readers, as Murphy claims, the readers can realize the intentional usage beyond the mere showing-off of Eliot's erudition (432).

In his poetry, Eliot's usage of direct quotes in their original languages might result from his wish to revive European literature and culture. This attitude might be regarded as the divergent point between Eliot and Ezra Pound to whom he owes a lot in forging his literary career. Unlike Eliot's view, Pound mostly favors translation over quotation in poetry since he assumes that translation is the bridge that blends the past with the new rhythms of the time (Huang 113). Despite their different methods, they both show respect and dignity for the past literature. In Eliot's case, his appreciation of the past tradition might be regarded as a significant part of his quest for becoming an original poet in the literary canon.

It is not wrong to claim that Eliot is a poet in purgatory. He is like Beckett's crippled Hamm whose words are dancing in the aporia of the ambiguous signifiers. He is stuck between past and present. Eliot suggests that "[the poet] is not likely to know what is to be done, not of what is dead, but of what is already living" (53). Hence the present is seen as the forming part of the past and vice versa, and the poem makes us aware of this by providing a kind of heteroglossia that implies a dialogic interaction between past and present discourses that make up one's culture and identity.

For Eliot, as Crawford argues, modernity is a death wish (20). He states that he adopted such a dreary view of life in the 1920s and 30s when the increasing complexity of the modern world together with the economical hardships exacerbated Eliot's hesitations and fears (20). However, this gloomy condition enables him to gain a new insight into looking things differently from the accepted norms of the literary canon. Thus, he feels the utmost need to develop a poetic style that best expresses the disconnected, episodic life in the modern world. He notices that the vagueness of the Victorian/Romantic poetry in style and expression is insufficient to portray the discontinuous, fragmented

nature of the modern world. He argues that Romantic poetry is too personal which is deeply invested in the recollections of emotions. He says, "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" (52-53). He claims that a poet should depersonalize oneself from one's emotions so that the words that one uses can fully grasp the complexity surrounding us. Eliot uses the phrase "objective correlative" in *The Sacred Wood*, *Hamlet and His Problems*:

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which shall be the formula for that particular emotion. (92)

He makes an analogy between a catalyst and a poet. Eliot exemplifies it with the fusion of sulphurous acid. Eliot emphasizes that platinum helps to produce a new compound without leaving its trace on either oxygen or sulphur dioxide. In other words, platinum is necessary to produce a new chemical compound but it is not contained in the new compound. Eliot draws a similarity between the function of platinum and that of the modernist poet in that the poet catalyzes past and present; tradition and innovation, as the platinum does with the chemical elements, and produces a new work out of this process (48). The continuous interplay of various forces is noticeable in his poetry. It manifests itself in the emotionally intense episodes or the seemingly disconnected vignettes. The poet like a catalyst fuses such disparate realities into a collage. However, this fusion does not destroy individuality. Each episode still stands on its own as much as serving for the universality of the poem. To examine the individual and collective aspects of Eliot's poetry, it is important to discuss his use of the epigraph. Epigraph in his poetry not only preserves its individualistic elements, but it also seems to bear the whole poem in it. In this sense, it can be considered as an assemblage that simultaneously shelters micro and macro-multiplicities. In other words, it embraces the whole poem in it as well as playing a part in the constitution of the poem. To better understand it, next part will focus on Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory.

Deleuze-Guattarian Theory of Assemblage

To have insight into Deleuze-Guattarian philosophy, it is essential to understand the concept of assemblage. Most critics agree with the point that the English word "assemblage" is not the exact equivalence of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "agencement" in French. Nail points out that there is a subtle difference between the French word "agencement" meaning "a construction, an arrangement, a layout" and the English word "assemblage" meaning "the joining or union of two things (180)." Despite the difference, the critics tend to use the concept of assemblage in the original meaning of "agencement" by adhering to the early translation of the concept by Paul Foss and Paul Patton and later by Brian Massumi (De Assis 19).

In his dialogue with Parnet, Deleuze defines assemblage as "a multiplicity which is made up of heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures…" (Deleuze and Parnet 69). As De Assis mentions, assemblage has a fluid nature that is always mobile and nomadic, moving from one state to another (12). Assemblage for Deleuze and Guattari is "a living arrangement" (Yu 385). To exemplify the animistic aspect of assemblage, Buchanan refers to Guattari's analysis of Man Ray's dancer/danger photo. In the photo, he senses the dancing spirit in the co-functioning of the parts of the machine (384). For Deleuze and Guattari, assemblage is a desiring machine the parts of which are dancing in constant flux, and never moved by the totalizing principles but by the free, ceaseless interactions of its fragments (8).

Deleuze and Guattari analyze assemblage in two directions. On a horizontal axis, they make a distinction between the material and expressive components of the assemblage (88). They call them respectively, the machinic assemblages of desire and the collective assemblages of enunciation. As Buchanan explains, they are indispensable to but independent of each other (390). Buchanan exemplifies it with the relationship between sunset and the words "beautiful or melancholy":

> a sunset is an array of colours produced by the diffraction of light, but this does not cause us to see it as beautiful or melancholic; by the same token, our concepts of beauty and melancholy do not compel us to apprehend sunsets in this way. (390)

On the other hand, "on a vertical axis, the assemblage has both territorial sides, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and cutting edges of deterritorialization, which carry it away (88)." Both movements have convergent and divergent points. In this context, assemblage can be regarded as the ceaseless arrangement of the territory, an intersecting point between content and expression. It can be likened to a landslide always already moving away from the gravitational force of the center. Deleuze explains the constantly shifting force of the machinic assemblage to centrifugality by metaphorically comparing it to Kleist's marionette: "What defines a machine assemblage is the shift of a centre of gravity along an abstract line. As in Kleist's marionette, it is this shift which gives rise to actual lines or movements" (Deleuze and Parnet 104).

Assemblage has a fluid nature. It arises in the ceaseless arrangement of the heterogeneous elements in its sudden, multi-directional movement between the material world and the world of signs. The reciprocal relationship between various elements at molecular and molar states is a never-ending process that is fluid, nomadic, and multiple. Deleuze and Guattari use another term, "rhizome" to explain the complex relations that entail assemblage. Rhizome, as Ferraz discusses, is the fluid space where the content and the expression are constantly being battled (86). Rhizome does not have beginning or end. It is always in the middle. Therefore, "any point of a rhizome can be connected to any thing other, and must be" (Deleuze and Guattari 7). It enables the perpetual becoming of different heterogeneous elements as in the example of wasp and the orchid (10). In the process of de- and re-territorialization, the wasp and the orchid form a link that produces "a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp" (10). The process of becoming is a perpetual event basing on the de- and re-territorialization process.

In the process of de- and re-territorialization, assemblage not only becomes a component in its constitution (Deleuze and Guattari call it "molecular" unit), but also the machine itself (molar unit). To elucidate this point, De Assis refers to Deleuze and Guattari's discussion on proteins (13). Deleuze and Guattari argue that proteins are both molecules and molars. That is, they are both units of production and products (290). Various elements come together and constitute proteins and the arrangement of the proteins produces "the autoproduction of the unconscious" (290).

As one may note, Deleuze and Guattari's "assemblage" theory has a complex nature. To better understand it, Deleuze and Guattari appeal to different metaphors and examples. Among them, they use the term, "constellation." Similar to an assemblage, a constellation has a Self-organizing formation. As well as it develops "a kind of organism with a signifying totality," they claim that it may also continuously dismantle the components and create "a body without organs" (4). For further exemplifying their "assemblage" theory, Deleuze and Guattari benefit from Elias Canetti's observation of wolves' behaviors in the pack. Canetti observes that each wolf may behave individually on the hunt as well as it moves in harmony with the other wolves in the pack (54). Therefore, for Deleuze and Guattari, an assemblage is a multiplicity that has macro and micro principles. Ericson and Haggarty describe Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage as "a radical notion of multiplicity" because of its definition as "a multiplicity of heterogenous objects, whose unity comes solely from the fact that these items function together, that they work together as a functional entity" (608).

The characteristic of assemblage mentioned in the above-examples and metaphors will be the departure point to study Eliot's epigraph as assemblage. A careful reader of Eliot's poetry can possibly realize that Eliot's epigraph is not only a unit of production, but it is also a product itself. In other words, in his poetry, it is a singular event that can stand in itself as well as becoming a unit of assemblage through making rhizomatic connections to other events in the fluid space and time. Taken on this ground, the main section of this study will attempt to contextualize this theoretical argument by observing it in his selected poems.

Epigraph as an Assemblage in T. S. Eliot's Poetry

As mentioned above, the epigraph in Eliot's poetry serves simultaneously at micro and macro levels. Taking this into account, one may note the rhizomatic characteristic of epigraph in Eliot's poetry. Similar to a rhizome that "can be connected to any point" (Deleuze and Guattari 7), Eliot's epigraph act in the free play of association in semiotic chains. Deleuze and Guattari's example of the puppet strings can be given to substantiate it. They argue that the puppet strings are not connected

to the puppeteer, but to "a multiplicity of nerve fibers" (29), whereby the vibrations of the nerve fibers can create a meaningful association. Similarly, the vibrations triggered by the epigraph in the poem forms a kind of Yeatsian gyre[1], which has a chaotic nature. At macro level, the permeability of this energy through the seemingly fragmented parts helps to bind them together to achieve a sort of organic poetry.

The Epigraph in *The Waste Land* (1922), for example, serves for this purpose. It establishes synchronic and diachronic relations simultaneously. Through this function, the poem runs smoothly, and makes a collage of the dissimilar images despite the immediate fluctuations between the micro and macro events featured in the vignettes. The poem, as Eliot stresses in line 22, is "a heap of broken images where the sun beats" (Eliot 53). If one speaks in Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, in the poem, each image has "its own line of flight" (24), and develops nomadic relations with other images, but simultaneously they get on "the plane of consistency" (25) to have the macro-multiplicity that constitutes itself in the process of becoming. It is important to note that the epigraph and the images featured in the vignettes have rhizomatic relations to each other in the poem even though they seem loosely connected to each other.

The Epigraph in *The Waste Land* is a quotation from Petronius Arbiter's *Satyricon*, which mentions the words of the Sybil of Cumae: **"**I have seen with my own eyes, the Sibyl hanging in a jar, and when the boys asked her, 'What do you want?' she replied, 'I want to die'" (52). This epigraph alludes to the myth of the Sibyl of Cumae. She is the ancient prophetess of Apollo who cries for death. However, Apollo curses her, granting her the immortality but not the youth. She is a withered woman crying for death. Although this curse in the epigraph stands aloof and meaningful in its own way, it also builds a kind of organism that expands connections vertically and horizontally in the poem. It sets the tone for *The Waste Land* that repetitively evokes the sterility and stagnation of the modern world, which, according to Eliot, has lost the death-rebirth cycle that is the leitmotif in the ritualistic myths. Following Ezra Pound's advice, Eliot uses the myth of Sibyl as the epigraph. Sibyl is the decaying figure who could not complete the natural cycle: death-fertility-resurrection. The Sibyl's sterility symbolizes the rottenness of the modern world. Bloom argues that the Sibyl as the embodiment of Eliot's contemporary life is an intentional design to lead the reader through "a culture of living death" (29).

Throughout the poem, one witnesses the reverberations of the decaying, desolate nature in many different allusions to the private and collective, the past and present experiences of the humankind. The increasing tension caused by the echoes of the sameness also blurs the boundaries between the real and the unreal, thus destroying the spatio-temporal ground of the poem. The epigraph in *The Waste Land* functions as a magnet that keeps the fragmented images together. It propels a continuous dynamism that enables it to converge and diverge with other vignettes in the poem.

There are several significant figures such as Madame Sosostris and Tiresias in the poem that echo the prophecy of the Sibyl in the epigraph. They can be regarded as the metonyms or the empty shells through which the Sibyl's desire flows but never to be fulfilled. They act like the puppets whose strings vibrated by the desire of the Sibyl. Their vibrations constitute the unifying sensibility of the poem at macro level while they sustain their differences at micro level. Madame Sosostris with her wicked pack of cards and Tiresias' with his visionary are the unifying devices that enable Eliot to knit the disparate images together. However, their prophecies are just the resonances of what has already been mentioned in the epigraph. Madame Sosostris foresees the fate of the major symbolic characters of the poem such as Belladonna, Phoenician Sailor, the lady of situations, the Lady of the Rocks, and the Hanged Man. However, her apocalyptic vision about future is quite gloomy and she says, "I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring" (Eliot 54). It implicitly symbolizes that modern men live physically but they are spiritually dead. In this regard, people have been a part of the great machines of industrial society dominated by the dangerous everyday routine. In the second section of the poem, one may well notice the repetitive words that signify nothingness and sameness. In the lines: "I never know what you are thinking. Think" (57) and "You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember/ Nothing?" (57). The speaker draws our attention to the imbalance between thought and action. The modern world is trapped in the vicious cycle. It is best observed in the rich lady's rashness and anxiety to search for new activities after she is fed up with the chess game: "What shall I do now? What shall I do? / I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street" (57). This emphasis of rashness is also given in the story of Lil in a repetitive manner "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME" (58-59). The main point is that people have lost their patience, and they want to

have quick solutions to their problems, which disrupt balance in nature as in the Cumean Sibyl myth. Eliot strategically uses these characters to allude to the worn-out modern man. The speaker sympathizes with all characters with these lines: "Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, /Looking into the heart of light, the silence" (54). In brief, sheltering the universal and individual elements in its fabric, epigraph functions as a fluid space that enables Eliot to compose a concerto out of the seemingly dissonant lines.

Eliot's *Gerontion* (1920) firstly planned as part of *The Waste Land*, later published in its own right thanks to Ezra Pound's advice also starts with an epigraph (Johnson 61). It opens with an epigraph quoted from *William Shakespeare*'s *Measure for Measure*:

> Thou hast nor youth nor age
> But as it were an after dinner sleep
> Dreaming of both. (Shakespeare, Act 3, Scene 1) (Eliot 29)

As the epigraph of the poem, Eliot's reference to Friar Lodowick's (Claudio) exhortation to Claudio about the petals of life as the illusory stages in *William Shakespeare*'s *Measure for Measure* enables him to form rhizomatic connections among the metonymic chain of the seemingly unrelated events in *Gerontion*. Throughout the poem, the speaker's search for a meaning in the futility of modern life given in juxtaposition with an aging man's sentiments towards past, present and future is echoed in different sources to which Eliot referred. Long before Derrida who argues that the signified is always, already deferred in the sign system, Eliot is aware of the impossibility of moving with the principle of totality particularly in the aftermath of war. In his quest for the signified, Eliot appeals to the various references to express the inexpressible. Line 17 in the poem, "The word within a word, unable to speak a word" (29) reveals, to speak in Derrida's terms, Eliot's implication of the free interplay of signs, which is, according to Derrida, "a field of infinite substitutions in the closure of a finite ensemble" (923). Thus, Eliot's nomadic flight in the metaphorical pool of signifiers creates a harmony out of the seemingly dissonant rally of words devoid of the signified. The epigraph and other references in the poem reflect an echoing cry of the absurdity of life. The polyphonic texture of the poem presents, what Eshelman argues,

"the failure to recognize the history's teachings that our lives have become meaningless to us" (89). In *Gerontion*, the speaker identifies the desolate situation of the modern world with the ageing man aware of the bitter fact concerning, what J. M. Major mentions, "the world's failures, and blind follies, […], an apocalyptic vision of the ruin toward which civilization is moving" (29). Alluding to both the mysterious figures of the modernity and the giant playwrights of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods in the fluid space of the poem, Eliot attempts to evoke the simultaneity of eternity.

The Love Song of J.A. Prufrock is T. S. Eliot's another major poem, which starts with an epigraph. As in *The Waste Land* and *Gerontion*, it also plays an important role as an assemblage in presenting the concurrent vibrations between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic fibers of the events within the poem:

> If I but thought that my response were made
> to one perhaps returning to the world,
> this tongue of flame would cease to flicker.
> But since, up from these depths, no one has yet
> returned alive, if what I hear is true,
> I answer without fear of being shamed
> (Epigraph trans. in *The Love Song of J. A. Prufrock*) (Eliot 3)

Taken from Dante's *Inferno*, Canto 27, this epigraph is the desiring machine in the poem as well as becoming a functioning part in the production of the poem. The epigraph becomes the heart of the rhythm that co-vibrates with the heterogonous elements in the poem to convey the echoing voice of the suffering humanity in the modern world despite the shape-shifting images, characters and scenes. In other words, Eliot uses the epigraph to make fluid and mobile associations synchronically and diachronically among the seemingly disorganized scenes in the poem as if drawing a line in a Mobius strip.

Guido da Montefeltro's eternal punishment is juxtaposed with Prufrock's worries, anxieties and hesitations throughout the poem. Like Guido, Prufrock desires to escape from a hell like modern world, which imprisons him. He is stuck in time and space. He suffers from the inertia of the modern age in which words and action are out of balance. Hence,

Prufrock staggers and gets lost in questions. His cowardice prevents him from acting. Prufrock hesitates: "Do I dare? And, Do I dare? / Do I dare / Disturb the universe?" (4). Eventually he decides to act, but he does not know how and where to begin: " And how should I begin?" (5) He lacks Dante or Hamlet's courage in his descent into hell:

> No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
> Am an attendant lord, one that will do
> To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
> Advise the Prince; no doubt, an easy tool. (7)

He thinks himself cursed not to speak and act again. His tongue tortures him as Guido's flaming tongue to him. Like Guido, he feels condemned. He resembles himself to an insect pinned down onto wall (5). Its legs are wriggling but cannot move. The nomadic flights caused by Prufrock's sudden leaps from his desire to ask big questions to some trivial questions like whether he should eat peach or part his hair or roll the bottom of his trousers create a rhizomatic space where everything can be connected to everything. Eliot uses the epigraph in this poem by preserving its own territory but making it gradually lose its gravitational force. Thanks to this, it becomes a functioning unit co-vibrating with different characters, images, and scenes created throughout the poem to portray the suffering humanity in the modern world.

Eliot's another poem, *Hollow Men* (1925) begins with two epigraphs that unequivocally reverberate throughout the poem. The first one, "Mistah Kurtz-he dead" (78) is a reference to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The latter, "A penny for the Old Guy" (79) appears to be an allusion given to Guy Fawkes thought to have been responsible for the Gun Powder Plot. Although they do not seem to be related at first glance, the epigraphs feature the fragmentation in the psyche of the modern man. While the first epigraph signals how destructive knowledge devoid of wisdom obliterates the seemingly civilized man in the dehumanized society, the latter kindles a light to redemption from the mechanical cage that imprisons the modern man. Guy Fawkes's daring acts can be interpreted as a pushback to the inorganic state of the so-called civilization where Marlow witnesses the gradual destruction of the tribesmen as a consequence of the illumination idea, "Civilization" that tragically glitters on the heart of darkness.

However violent or insurgent such figures are, it is implied in the poem that such daring figures no longer exist in modern world. In fact, the references to Kurtz's death and Fawkes's straw effigy in the epigraphs imply loss of such violent, rebellious souls in the modern world. They also hint at the modern man's cowardice and timidity. His pusillanimity resonates with negative connotations such as "hollow men / stuffed men / fading star / empty man" (79) in the poem. In the first section of the poem, the speaker's desire to disguise himself in "rat's coat" and "crow skin" might also exemplify modern man's timid nature.

Eliot is aware of the fact that the bloody war caused an atrophy to people's senses. They lost the ability to act. In line 13, the speaker stresses this point saying, "paralyzed force, gesture without motion." Their words became meaningless, dry. They lost the traditional pillars, which they once held onto in pre-war period. They were cast adrift. They began to worship false Gods. The apocalyptic tone in the nursery rhymes is not coincidental. Eliot knows that something is rotten in European civilization since it lacks vigor, vitality, and energy. Howard as a critic of Eliot's *Hollow Men* interprets the last section of the poem as a good omen for the rebirth claiming that "the end is not the explosive finale they had anticipated but rather an unexpected and almost silent precursor to a spiritual beginning at which they may arrive only by breaching the barrier of despair and death and embracing the light found in the transformation induced by rebirth" (11). However, unlike Howard's claim, Eliot laments over destruction, fragmentation and decay in the Western civilization and seems to draw a gloomy image of the Post-war period.

Eliot's juxtaposing such figures like Kurtz, Fawkes in the epigraphs with the speaker as the mouthpiece of modern man in the rest of the poem may remind us of Prufrock's relationship with Guido in the epigraph to "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". Just like Prufrock, the speaker in *Hollow Men* is aware of his cowardice and inadequacy of daring great things in contrast to the historical figures mentioned in the epigraphs. Such revelatory awareness is raised in the shocking contrast heightened between the characters in epigraphs and the speakers of the poems. As in his other poems, Eliot's use of epigraphs as an assemblage in *Hollow Men* has a rhizomatic nature as well since Eliot is able to create a nomadic space where unrelated things can coexist and bring forth originality and new dimensions in

the poem without losing any individualistic tunes at the expense of the unifying harmony.

Conclusion

As one can realize, there is a strict connection between epigraph and the rest of the poem to which it is attached in Eliot's poetry. As discussed above, the use of epigraphs as an assemblage brings readers a deeper and richer understanding of Eliot's poetry. They also enable Eliot to create organic unity in his poetry by simultaneously vibrating the fibers of micro and macro events in the related poems. Like Deleuze-Guattarian assemblage, it constructs the poem on a paradoxical space folding back on itself where micro and macro events naturally converge or diverge at any point without breaking the poetic harmony.

The epigraph shelters the whole poem in itself while preserving its individual nature within the poem. That is, epigraph has an organic form when it is considered at metaphorical space. To better understand it, it is noteworthy to refer to Coleridge's analogy[2] between the seed and the growth of the plant (qtd. in Abrams 171). If the epigraph for Eliot is interpreted in this analogy, it can be viewed as the seed. The whole poem lies in the secret power of the epigraph. While it is growing, it begins to evolve into many forms assimilating its substance till it finally reaches the highest potentiality. In Eliot's poetry, the desired act in the epigraph brings on a metonymic chain of episodes in a non-linear way but at macro level, they coexist with one another in order to render the reconciliation between the dissonant elements possible.

Notes

[1] Yeats uses the word to describe the unformulated, chaotic energy in his poetry.

[2] Despite Eliot's bitter criticism of romantic tradition, his use of epigraph in his search for universal poetry seems to bring him closer to Coleridge's definition of Subjective Universality in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817).

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Travel and Transgression in Northern Italy in *Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) by Edith Wharton and *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950) by Ernest Hemingway

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Abstract

In what ways do the experiences of travel and transgression converge? This question acquires particular focus in the fiction of both Edith Wharton and Ernest Hemingway when they contemplate their experience of Northern Italy and in particular Venice. This paper will offer an analysis of the pattern of transgressions in *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) by Wharton and *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950) by Hemingway. Although the novels are separated by thirty years around World War II, they are nevertheless bound by their setting and fundamental theme of seeking refuge in Northern Italy to escape social entrapment. In different ways, both novels reveal how crossing one's border is transgressive as it means challenging one's own culture, language, social and sexual norms. This is particularly true in Venice and in the area surrounding Lake Como in the twentieth-century, because Northern Italy proves to be a liberating place for all genders and sexual inclinations at that time. However, transgression is only temporary as the protagonists in the novels eventually return to their homeland. The temporariness of their journey is what makes it transgressive in the first place, just like the Carnival of Venice that allows all sorts of transgressions once a year.

Keywords: Literary Venice, transgression, travel, Northern Italy, American tourists, ephemerality

Edith Wharton'un *Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) *ve* Ernest Hemingway'in *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950) Eserlerinde Kuzey İtalya Gezileri ve İhlal

Öz

Gezi ve ihlal deneyimleri hangi durumlarda kesişir? Bu soru, Edith Wharton ve Ernest Hemingway'in Kuzey İtalya ve özellikle Venedik'teki deneyimlerini ele alan kurgularına odaklanmayı gerektirir. Bu makale *Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) ve *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950) adlı eserlerde ihlal örüntülerini analiz edecektir. Bu romanlar, aralarında Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nı da içine alan otuz yıllık bir zaman farkı olmasına rağmen, hikayelerin geçtiği yer ve toplumsal sıkışmışlıktan kaçıp Kuzey İtalya'da sığınak arama ana temaları ile benzeşmektedir. Her iki roman da başka bir ülkenin sınırlarına girmenin bireyin kültürel, dilsel, sosyal ve seksüel normlarının ihlali anlamına gelebileceğini gösterir. Bu durum, yirminci yüzyıl Kuzey İtalya'sının farklı cinsel kimlik ve yönelimlere sahip insanların özgürlüklerine alan açan Venedik'i ve özellikle Como Gölü'nü çevreleyen bölgesi için geçerlidir. Ancak, ihlal, ana karakterler sonunda kendi ülkelerine geri döndüğünden, geçici niteliktedir. Nasıl yılda bir kez gerçekleşen Venedik Karnavalı geçiciliği sayesinde her türlü ihlale mahal veriyorsa, bu gezilerin geçiciliği de, ana karakterler için ihlalleri beraberinde getirir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Edebiyatta Venedik, gezi, ihlal, Kuzey İtalya, Amerikalı turistler, geçicilik

Introduction

The following analysis focuses on Northern Italy and especially Venice. Being one of the most visited cities in the world, it is consequently one of the most written-about places in Italy. Its geography, history, architecture and dialect throughout centuries make it a unique place, always in a state of mobility, which constantly inspires cultural and literary representations.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were prolific in terms of Anglo-American literature set in Northern Italy and extensive studies have been conducted on this period of time. Part of this canon

were, to cite only a few, the works of Lord Byron, Hester Piozzi, John Ruskin, Margaret Fuller, Henry James, Emily Dickinson and Constance Fenimore Woolson. The interest in literature set in Venice continued at the beginning of the twentieth-century, as revealed in the fiction of E.M Forster, Frederick Rolfe, and on continental Europe, Thomas Mann and Marcel Proust for example. However, the phenomenon continued well into the twentieth century with far less critical attention. There is in fact a gap in literary tourism studies in twentieth-century Italy because most of them stop their analysis in the aftermath of the Grand Tour, but literary tourism does not disappear. According to John Pemble, there is a multiplicity of cultural representations and a sense of belatedness felt among early twentieth-century writers writing about Italy (28). Recent works have shown that writing about a city does not necessarily mean being daunted by previous literature: it can also add to our own perception of the city (Mozzi and Voltolini 7). As readers, literature can take us back to our own subjective impressions of a city. Although they have one name, they have a plurality of existences: "Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else." (Calvino 44). Similarly, other critics similarly read the city as a place where norms and codes are inverted: "The legend took root of the apotheosis of pleasure; of unending carnivals, fêtes, masquerades, and song" (Pemble 108).

Calvino's and Pemble's musings cast light on Venice's dramatic potentiality, especially since the city has a theatrical aspect as it is built like a stage, that is to say like an ephemeral place that is more concerned with appearances than with truthfulness. They also introduce the idea of transgression, a popular trope in literature set in Venice. Transgression, which comes from the latin 'transgredi', etymologically means the act of passing over, of crossing, of going beyond something. According to Michel Foucault, transgression is ephemeral. Additionally, it does not simply cross a limit but plays with the concept of limits. Therefore, transgression is not the result of an action but the action in itself:

> Transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses. The play of limits and transgression seems to be regulated by a simple obstinacy: transgression incessantly crosses and recrosses a

> line which closes up behind it in a wave of extremely short duration, and thus it is made to return once more right to the horizon of the uncrossable. (33-34)

This definition of transgression and of its ephemerality is applicable to Anglo-American literature taking place in Venice as usually the plot is centerd around characters who are travelling in Venice, but not staying there permanently. Their ephemeral stay in Venice leads them to experience an ephemeral range of transgressions, such as linguistic, social, sexual and economical ones. Foucault adds to the idea of limitlessness and ephemerality by showing the paradoxical aspect of transgression: transgression is at the same time restrictive and freeing. It is not formed in opposition to something but in relation to something else. James Eli Adams adds to this idea: "Transgression, in other words, is not a radically alien or 'unimaginable' phenomenon, but is a constant, central presence of our imaginative lives, whose authority can be felt in the intensity with which it is resisted and regulated both by individual agents and by larger social and discursive structures" (208).

Building on these definitions, this article will attempt to explain why transgression is constitutive of literary Venice in Anglo-American fiction at the beginning of the twentieth century. It will give examples of transgressions in two American novels set in Venice in this period of time: *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) by Edith Wharton, and *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950) by Ernest Hemingway. These two novels have been selected in an attempt to re-establish them as they both suffered from a lack of public and scholarly recognition, although they were both best-sellers when they were published. Both narratives also offer different perceptions of Venice as they cover a broad historical period, since *The Glimpses of the Moon* was written after World War I, and *Across the River and into the Trees* was written after World War II. Yet, they both share a literary Venetian continuity as they each portray protagonists seeking refuge in Northern Italy to escape social entrapment, and they both shed new light on Venetian literary tourism. Wharton's novel defies the idea that Venice was mostly written by male writers, making her novel transgressive in this regard.

Contexts of the Novels

Wharton's *The Glimpses of the Moon* was a best-selling novel soon after it was published, in 1922, although the reviews were not as positive as Wharton's other novels. She was already a very popular and prolific writer at the time: she had written *The House of Mirth* (1905), *Ethan Frome* (1911), and the novel that made her become the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in Literature, *The Age of Innocence* (1920). *The Glimpses of the Moon* was therefore a highly anticipated novel after the last one. According to Hermione Lee, Wharton's biographer: "Badly reviewed as it was, *Glimpses* fitted the 1922 market very well (...). Aggressively advertised, it was a huge best-seller, as big as *The House of Mirth*, selling 60,000 copies in three weeks and 100,000 within a few months. The film-rights were sold to Paramount for $15,000 and the film was made within a year." (626). The novel is set in Northern Italy and in France, where Wharton spent a lot of her time after World War I. Its main protagonists are Susy Branch and Nick Lansing, two young Americans with no money but connections. They strike an unusual agreement: a pretend marriage for only a year to be hosted around Europe for their honeymoon by family's friends: "People were always glad to lend their house to a newly-married couple" (Wharton 27). Their journey gives them access to a temporary social status and lifestyle that matches their social-climbing ambitions, but their union does not go as planned.

Ernest Hemingway's *Across the River and into the Trees* (1951) was also eagerly awaited by the reading public, given that the last one he had written, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, dated back to 1940. Similar to *Glimpses*, it was also a best-selling novel soon after it was published, although its reception was negative. The literary critic Isaac Rosenfeld from *The Kenyon Review*, in 1951, claims that it is Hemingway's worst novel: "It is not enough to say that *Across the River and into the Trees* is a bad novel, which nearly everyone has said (the fact is, a good deal of it is trash), or to ascribe its failure to Hemingway's playing Hemingway. (…) It seems to me that no writer of comparable stature has ever expressed in his work so false an attitude toward life" (2). The novel was written at a dark time in Hemingway's life, as he suffered from many health issues at the time, both physical and mental (Dearborn 522). The novel follows a fifty-year old American Colonel named Richard Cantwell who comes back to Venice after more than thirty years of absence. The last time he was in Northern Italy was

when he was a soldier there during WWI. The novel is punctuated by flashbacks he has from the war, flashbacks we could now interpret as symptoms of PTSD. The other main event of the novel is that Richard is secretly having an affair with Renata, the other protagonist, a nineteen-year old Venetian woman. Both *Glimpses* and *Across the River and into the Trees* have been overlooked in academic curricula, yet they have been given more attention recently: Paula Ortiz adapted and directed the eponymous movie *Across the River and into the Trees* in 2022, and a re-edition of *The Glimpses of the Moon* is in progress. As previously mentioned, Northern Italy and particularly Venice are places where transgressions take place. This first section will attempt to explain why Venice is such a transgressive place, especially for tourists, from a historical point of view.

An Icon of (Sexual) Freedom

Firstly, Venice was seen as being transgressive because of two major historical events: the depenalization of prostitution in the sixteenth-century and the Carnival. The first event shaped the perception of visitors to Venice, since, as Jennifer Scappettone puts it, the city is seen as having an ""internal otherness" (feminine, Eastern, Jewish, and/or cosmopolitan)" (41). By "feminine", she means that there is a tradition of seeing the city as a woman and referring to it as a "she". However, there seems to be two clear and polar tendencies. One is to refer to the city as a maiden "because it was never invaded or conquered before" (Cirino 49), the other is to refer to it as a prostitute. Paula C. Clarke explains how "Between 1360 and 1460 the Venetian government established a system of legalized prostitution under the supervision of government officials and confined, in theory, to a limited area of the city" (419), which impacted the sixteenth century:

> Thus, in the period from the legalization of prostitution in 1358 to the sixteenth century, government policy in general tended toward an increasing, if often unofficial, toleration. This resulted in giving the city a certain reputation: "sixteenth-century Venice became noted for the relative freedom it granted its sex workers, and visitors regarded its famed courtesans as one of the most noteworthy sights of the city. (461)

Brigitte Bailey puts forward a gender-based understanding

of referring to Italy as a "she" in the nineteenth century: "In this period Anglo-American tourists approached the difference that Italy represented quite consistently through the terms and ideology of gender; they constructed a feminine Italy as a counterpoint to the normative and masculine world identified with Britain or the U.S" (67). Italy, and in particular Venice, thus embodies a feminine fantasy for Anglo-American tourists, a place to escape that warms up the body and the soul. The analogy between the warmth of Italy and the warmth of a woman has also been written about extensively, in relation to how the 'heat' of places such as Italy affected both attitudes and behaviors.

Throughout the following centuries, the idea of sexual freedom remained in the minds of visitors, and repeatedly surfaced in literature. From the nineteenth-century, the city also gained the reputation of a safe place for homosexual people. Indeed, in 1885, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, or the Labouchere Amendment, was voted on in the United Kingdom. The Amendment condemned any sexual act between two men and sentenced Oscar Wilde, among others, to two years in jail in 1895. Wilde's trial remains infamous as it was covered in the press for months and destroyed Wilde's reputation. The amendment and Wilde's trial had a collective negative impact on the next generations of writers (Pemble 109). The glorification of masculine and heterosexual men is visible in Harold Loeb's comment about Hemingway, founder of the literary magazine *Broom* in 1921: "after the days of 'Oscar Wilde and his lily,' it boded well that men like Hemingway had become writers, freeing the profession from any 'taint' of femininity, homosexuality, and decadence" (Dearborn 109). For Robert Aldrich, the presence of British homosexual tourists in Italy is logical: "British homosexuals had an especially pragmatic reason for going to the Mediterranean: persecution of homosexuals in Britain" (69). As Italy did not have anti-homosexuals laws, it quickly became an eldorado for British homosexuals as it was not too remote from the United Kingdom, but also for Americans. French philosopher Didier Eribon theorizes how some cities are safe places for queer people, like Venice:

> There was - and doubtless still is - a phantasmagoric "elsewhere" for gays, an "elsewhere" that offered the possibility of realizing your hopes and dreams - ones that seemed impossible for so many reasons, unthinkable even, in your land of origin. Among possible examples, one might mention the appeal of Italy at the end of the nineteenth-century and the beginning of the twentieth. (20)

This idea of a safe place, a refuge, is not new in novels taking place in Venice. Pemble notes how Henry James expressed a similar idea: "He perceived the city as 'the refuge of endless strange secrets, broken fortunes, and wounded hearts', and in his fiction it became a metaphor for the hidden life" (Pemble 50). By referring to "the hidden life", Pemble includes all types of oppressed minorities in search for a breath of freedom in Venice during the nineteenth and twentieth-century, including women. Bailey explains why Italy was liberating for American women at the time: "Accepting, for the most part, the coding of Italy as feminine, women writers found that inhabiting the gap between a tourist - an aesthetic subject - and being an aesthetic subject (themselves objects of a similar gaze) could become intellectually productive" (Bailey 5). Although Bailey studies the mid nineteenth-century, Mark Cirino develops a similar interpretation when analyzing Renata in *Across the River*: "When Cantwell aligns himself with Torcello, then, he inserts himself in Venice's classical symbolic system as the masculine admirer of the feminine city, and the embodiment of that city, Renata" (Cirino 154). Bailey's theory is particularly accurate for Wharton's *Glimpses*, whose main character is Susy, as she is seen as an aesthetic subject by her second wooer, Strefford. For instance, when she breaks off her engagement with him, she knows that what upset Strefford was not the fact that she broke their engagement but the fact that she did so right before they were supposed to go to a dinner: "She had an idea that what he had most minded was her dropping so unceremoniously out of the Embassy Dinner" (Wharton 252), thus conveying the idea that Strefford saw her as an aesthetic prop he took pride in.

A Notorious Place of Trade Connected to the East

In addition to this, one could also mention that the reputation of Venice as a place of sexual license is analogous to its status as a place of trade. Therefore, transgression in Venice might also be explained by the transgressive power of Capital, where the libidinal economy meets the real economy. Mary McCarthy expresses this idea as well: "Venice has always been *accommodating* sexually, catering to all tastes, like the great hotel it is, with signs in French, German, English and Italian ('Petit déjeuner,' 'Frühstück,' 'Breakfast,' 'Prima colazione') advertising the mixture-as-before. The Italian institution of

the cicisbeo (sometimes a lover, sometimes a gigolo, sometimes a mere escort, to a married woman) was perfected, if not invented, in Venice" (271). Venice's status as a place of trade is connected to another trope often found in literature set in the city: the idea of Eastern Venice. As Jennifer Scappettone describes: "Liminal Venice is, in turn, stamped with any number of characteristics vilified by heroic modernism at the turn of the twentieth century, in a metonymically linked chain of associations—as fluid, feminine, "Oriental," irrational, decadent (of the "moon")—and therefore cast rhetorically outside of the modern moment and terrain, outside of the dominant historical record" (32). Venice and Constantinople were connected for many centuries, more than Venice and the rest of Europe. Pemble also summarizes the fact that: "for 400 years 'the East' had meant east of the Adriatic, and Venice had become, like Constantinople in Byzantine days, the great frontier city. It belonged to two geopolitical hemispheres and it represented racial and cultural heterogeneity" (118). It seems that with its geographical proximity to the Orient, Venice became associated with some Orientalist characteristics such as sensuality, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: "It bordered the Orient, and its civilization carried the stigma of miscegenation. The work of the most prolific and famous Venetian painters was tainted by sensuality" (Pemble 10). Venice is indeed often seen as the first step to the Orient: in *The Glimpses of the Moon*, Italy is also the first step towards the East as Coral Hicks, a wealthy acquaintance of Nick and Susy, goes for a cruise in Italy first and then intends to: "go to Bagdad next spring, and back by the Persian plateau and Turkestan" (Wharton 59). However, the 'Orientalization' of Venice leads to an even more stereotyped and inaccurate representation of the East, as Pemble explains: "In fact, in British and in French estimation Venice was more Oriental than much of the Orient. Samuel Rogers's reference to 'many a pile in more than Eastern pride' was no casual comparison. Venice more fully matched preconceptions about how Eastern cities should look than did the ancient cities of the Levant, whose domestic architecture was almost invariably nondescript or modern" (119).

The Carnival Tradition

The last, and perhaps the main historical event that marked Venice's reputation, is its Carnival. Dating back to the tenth century,

the Carnival tradition transforms the city, which becomes "a theatre of masks and *maquillage*; a temple of the abnormal and the perverse; a hospital of pathological process" (Pemble 2). The Carnival gave to the city and its participants another identity for a temporary period of time, from December 26 to Shrove Tuesday (which can take place from February 3 to March 9). For Linda L. Carroll, the Carnival encouraged political and social transgressions from the Renaissance period. She takes the example of Beolco, a playwright and comedian of the time, treated differently during and after the Carnival. The following incident reveals the difference between life during the Carnival and the rigidity of everyday life outside it:

> A profound change occurred in 1523. Beolco had presented at Carnival a scurrilous play (probably the Betia or a version of it, filled with violent obscenities and ending with a pact of open marriage). Being appropriate to the season, it excited no comment. However, he had the temerity to stage it again in May at the wedding of the Doge's grandson in the ducal palace, thus crossing the boundaries of time and space set about Carnival. Marin Sanudo reacted to the break with tradition by condemning Beolco for his lack of respect. (Carroll 13)

"Crossing the boundaries of time and space" is probably one of the most accurate ways to describe the Carnival as it is its ephemerality that allows its excesses. One could dress freely, regardless of one's social class. The mask in particular allowed this freedom as one could create a completely different identity and "(…) signified a certain physical detachment from the situation, and by implication a moral detachment also" (Castle 39). Will Bowers adds to this idea: "For centuries, Britons and Europeans had come to the Venetian Carnival to spend a few weeks not being themselves" (95). Terry Castle emphasizes how the masquerades blur the distinctions between different categories, as it is based on the idea of an upside-down world, where transgression becomes the norm: "At the masquerade, however, counterpozed institutions everywhere collapsed into one another, as did ideological categories: masculinity into femininity, "Englishness" into exoticism, humanity into bestiality" (78).

The main historical and political events that gave Venice its reputation at the beginning of the twentieth-century have been explored. It should be noted that the characteristics and effects of the masquerade

are very similar to the characteristics and effects of travelling in Venice: both travelling and masquerading allow temporary transgressions. Furthermore, the traveler wears a type of mask as his or her identity does not have to remain the same as the one he/she has at home. The blurriness of identity is a pattern in both novels examined in this study: in *Glimpses*, Susy's married friend, Ellie Vanderlyn, reinvents herself by having an affair in a hidden villa in Venice and Susy and Nick perform a very particular version of themselves – a married couple - in the city. Renata, in *Across the River*, becomes a daughter because of her young age compared to the Colonel. People travelling to a masquerade are thus defined and transformed by the very act of travelling and, by going to the masquerade, they are already performing as part of their journey. One can also notice that the "elsewhere" mentioned by Eribon also matches the characteristics of the masquerade: "hopes and dreams - that seemed impossible for so many reasons, unthinkable even" (Eribon 20).

Because of all these reasons, Venice is seen as a place to escape social entrapment, and therefore a place where all kinds of transgressions happen - social, economic and sexual ones. Paradoxically, because transgressions are welcome in Venice, they also become banalised, thus questioning, as Foucault and Adams pointed out, the transgressive nature of transgression. The following section will look more closely at the thematic and linguistic transgressions in the novels *The Glimpses of the Moon* by Wharton (*Glimpses*) and *Across the River and into the Trees* by Hemingway (*Across the River*).

Travelling and Transgression

The initial transgression inherent to both novels is travelling. Crossing one's border, whether it is temporary or not, is transgressive because it means challenging one's own culture, language and social norms. In *Glimpses* and *Across the River* the plot starts *in media res*, since the characters have already arrived in Como for the former, and in Venice for the latter. While the settings are not mentioned right away, there are hints about the locations of the novels: "They started two hours before daylight, and at first, it was not necessary to break the ice across the canal as other boats had gone on ahead" (Hemingway 1). Soon after, the narrator mentions "the lagoon" (Hemingway 3),

but he only refers to Venice at the beginning of the third chapter. The reader seems to inevitably infer it is Venice, although it could be Milan for instance. *Glimpses* begins ambiguously with an enumeration of European and American cities ("Chicago"; "Versailles"; "Monte Carlo"), before Nick finally explains where he and his wife Susy are, thus emphasizing their cosmopolitanism: "Versailles in May would have been impossible: all our Paris crowd would have run us down within twenty-four hours. And Monte Carlo is ruled out because it's exactly the kind of place everybody expected us to go. So - with all your respect - it wasn't much of a mental strain to decide on Como!" (Wharton 9). Once in Italy, the characters are confronted with linguistic challenges, since if tourism, and especially Anglo-American tourism, is well-established in Italy at the beginning of the twentieth-century, there are often remaining linguistic gaps from both the American and the Italian sides. In *Across the River*, Richard Cantwell speaks Italian, but the narrator chooses not to transcribe his words in Italian, perhaps so that there is no gap between the reader and the narrator: "'It was easy,' the Colonel told her in Italian" (Hemingway 144). However, there are multiple passages in Italian, French and Spanish in Hemingway's novel: "Good-bye and *bonne chance and hasta la vista*. We always just say *merde* and let it go at that" (Hemingway 191); "We will say good-bye and I will get into the *motoscafo* with Jackson" (Hemingway 179). Theodor W. Adorno explains why he prefers using words and expressions in their original language, and one of the main reasons he mentions is that there is often no real alternative because some words are untranslatable from one language to another. Trying to translate everything can lead to confusion. This could explain why in *Across the River*, Hemingway keeps the "*motoscafo*" untranslated as it is connected to a Venetian reality that cannot be entirely rendered in another language. Hemingway may also choose not to translate the word for another reason that Adorno identifies: the pleasure of saying or writing untranslated words.

> Rather, since language is erotically charged in its words, at least for the kind of person who is capable of expression, love drives us to foreign words. In reality, it is that love that sets off the indignation over their use. The early craving for foreign words is like the craving for foreign and if possible exotic girls; what lures us is a kind of exogamy of language, which would like to escape from the sphere of what is always the same, the

> spell of what one is and knows anyway. At that time foreign words made us blush, like saying the name of a secret love. (Adorno 187)

However, when using different languages in one's novels, the writer risks losing a monolingual readership. This may explain why Hemingway chose to directly translate Richard's sentences into English, and to use other languages only when the expressions or words are easily inferred.

Travelling also allows the characters of each novel to lead an unconventional way of life, at least for the duration of their trip. *Glimpses* is centered around a non-traditional couple. It is made clear that Susy's and Nick's marriage is based on nothing romantic: "Why shouldn't they marry; belong to each other openly and honorably, if for ever so short a time, and with the definite understanding that whenever either of them got the chance to do better her or she be immediately released?" (Wharton 28). If Susy's and Nick's plan reveals their unconventional personalities, it is facilitated by the fact that they are travelling in Italy and France, far from their families and friends who might disapprove of their relationship. Indeed, the novel takes place in the 1920s, a period of social change that was still influenced by the rigidity of Victorian and Edwardian social norms in relation to gender and sexual liberation. Similarly, *Across the River* features a union that would be disapproved outside of Venice, because of the age gap between the characters but also because of their different social status, as Renata comes from a very wealthy Venetian family, unlike Richard.

Women in Literary Venice

These considerations on unconventional unions lead us to the idea of social freedom previously mentioned in section one, and more specifically to how women seem to be represented as free-spirited in literature taking place in Venice. Roderick Cavaliero reminds us that since the Romantic period, Italy was a well-known place for free living, especially for women: "It [Italy] was, moreover, a suitable place for women to visit and, to their surprise, English women visitors found that their own sex was, in Italy, in many ways more liberated than at home" (10). In *Across the River*, Renata is also described as a free-spirited woman. First of all, she is nineteen and her lover, Richard

Cantwell, is in his fifties. Her description is often associated with the wind: "Then she came into the room, shining in her youth and tall and striding beauty, and the carelessness the wind had made of her hair." (Hemingway 57); "The wind was in their backs and it blew the girl's hair forward. The wind parted her hair in the back and blew it forward about her face" (Hemingway 72). The wind motif emphasizes Renata's free-spiritedness and is reminiscent of her name, which means "reborn" in Italian. It also emphasizes the idea that she does not care about her looks, an idea that she gives voice to a few chapters later: "'The mirror bores me,' she said. 'Putting on lipstick and moving your mouths over each other to get it spread properly and combing your too heavy hair is not a life for a woman, or even a girl alone, who loves someone'" (Hemingway 84). However, paradoxically, she also conforms to male stereotypical views of the female: "She had used lipstick to make the sort of mouth she knew he most desired, and she had said to herself, making the mouth correctly, 'Don't think at all. Don't think. Above all don't be sad because he is going now'" (Hemingway 84).

Additionally, not only are female characters breaking social expectations in literature set in Venice, but so are female writers writing about Venice. Wharton's *Glimpses* breaks with the male gaze approach by placing a woman at the center of her novel, and by writing from a female point of view. Although male writers writing about Venice are a part of a long literary tradition, there is also in fact a tradition of women writing about Venice, which includes among others, Hester Piozzi and Ann Radcliffe. Wharton is part of this tradition. *Glimpses* participates in the transgression of writing as a female writer, transgression expressed fifty-years later by Hélène Cixous, in *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975). Although she was a successful writer, Wharton's writings were often compared to her friend Henry James', especially the ones set in Italy, when he was never compared to her.

Sexual Transgressions

The place of the Carnival, also referred to as masquerade, has been mentioned in section one and established as a moment featuring all sorts of transgressions, including the most prominent ones, sexual transgressions. Castle points out that during the masquerade, Venice is a place where incest can happen, in real life and in literature: "The masquerade was to blame for inciting a host of tabooed physical

contacts: between married women and men not their husbands, single women and men in general, members of the same sex, members of the same family" (81). References to incest are not visible in Wharton's novel but are in Hemingway's. Indeed, incest is mentioned by Renata, when she playfully suggests being called 'daughter' by Richard: "'I can be your daughter as well as everything else.' 'That would be incest.' 'I don't think that would be possible in a city as old as this and that has seen what this city has seen'" (Hemingway 69). Incest is therefore not real but an acknowledgement that Richard could be Renata's father. Renata's last sentence corroborates the idea that Venice has known many vices, including an incestuous relationship. This reveals that she knows Venice's reputation as a city allowing sexual freedom. It could also be interpreted as an acknowledgement that she would not be able to live her relationship with Richard freely elsewhere. Finally, it also reveals that Renata and Richard might want to imply that their relationship is taboo by emphasizing the age gap and tenderness they have for each other so much that they become related. This idea meets Foucault's previously mentioned quote on transgression, because masquerade does not signify absolute transgression, but a managed and circumscribed version of it.

Finally, a last type of sexual transgression that meets social transgression can be mentioned concerning *Across the River*. According to Debra A. Moddelmog, most of Hemingway's fiction is centered around a dysfunctional heterosexual couple, and most of Hemingway's masculine characters are wounded. *Across the River* is no exception to the rule, as Richard Cantwell has a wounded hand and other health-related issues. For Moddelmog, the wounded male body suggests Hemingway's ambivalence concerning heterosexuality and heteromasculinity: "The metonymic substitution of the wound for white heteromasculinity inevitably suggests that this particular form of masculinity is in itself a wound, a disabling of the man who possesses it" (130). Furthermore, Moddelmog notices that the men in Hemingway's fiction are not only wounded but also that their physical descriptions are never detailed or thorough, unlike the feminine characters: "(…) the other way that Hemingway's female protagonists are marked as female is through the 'perfection' of their bodies, the complete absence of physical scarring or wounds" (Moddelmog 128). Renata is described as being beautiful and a picture of health several times in the novel: "Then she came into the room, shining in her youth

and tall striding beauty, and the carelessness the wind had made of her hair. She had pale, almost olive colored skin, a profile that could break your, or anyone else's heart, and her dark hair, of an alive texture -, hung down over her shoulders" (Hemingway 57). This description aligns with the beauty standards of the time, yet we are not given any detail about what Renata truly looks like, such as the color of her eyes, the shape of her nose, lips, and the like. As Moddelmog points out, women are generally healthy and perfect looking in Hemingway's writing, yet they embody feminine stereotypes.

(Re) Writing One's Life

There is something transgressive about rewriting episodes of one's own life, inasmuch as it means shaping them into one's own fantasies and desires. By using real episodes as a basis for the plot of the novel, the writer also chooses to cast doubt on what happened in real life, therefore taking the risk of creating conflict with their immediate circle (if the way they are described displeases them for instance).

As discussed, both novels shared a mediocre reception, yet were both best-sellers. This leads us to another transgressive element that connects both novels and writers: drawing upon episodes of their own lives to write their novels. It is known that Wharton travelled extensively. Her fiction provides an ironic and meticulous insight into travelling with means, which is probably not too surprising since she travelled the same way: "At all times, travel was for Edith Wharton a means of pushing outward the boundaries of her universe. She travelled farther, faster, and in greater luxury than most women (or men) of her generation" (Wright, xx). Many of her writings, whether fictional or not, take place in Europe, particularly in Italy or France. Meredith L.Goldsmith and Emily J.Orlando analyze Wharton's way of travelling and draw on Maureen Montgomery's work: "Maureen Montgomery explores the relationship of Wharton's Italian writings to the discourse of travel writing in the late nineteenth century, demonstrating how she carved out a position contrary to the naïve American tourists embarking on the Grand Tour" (12). However, if Wharton was inspired by her own life, the influence was not as direct as in *Across the River* as Hemingway wrote it when he was himself in his fifties and in ill-health. He, too, was a soldier in Italy during WWI, and enjoyed going

back there in later life: "Carlos Baker points out that in his several stays in northern Italy Ernest came to love Venice so much that he sometimes imagined that he had defended the city during the First World War" (Dearborn 508). Dearborn also connects Hemingway's tradition of calling women whom he liked "Daughter" to when he was married to his second wife, a long time before he wrote the novel. She also points out that Renata was largely inspired by Adriana Ivancich, a Venetian young woman whom Hemingway met and fell in love with in 1948, when he was married to his last wife. Dearborn describes Ivancich in a way that is reminiscent of Renata: "Her clear green eyes set off her black hair, flawless olive skin, and prominent cheekbones, and her proportions were lovely. Her English was fair, but Ernest's eccentric speech patterns confused her, and his tourist's Italian, while better than average, remained rusty" (511). The alliterative names in *Across the River* (Richard and Renata) might suggest that the narrator believed the two characters were meant to be with each other. *Across the River* is therefore the fictional representation of Hemingway's love for Adriana, although it is unlikely that a love relationship ever happened between them. *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) is also about the fictional representation of Hemingway's love for real-life nurse Agnes von Kurowsky, who becomes protagonist Catherine Barkley, the main character's lover when in real life Agnes made clear that she was not interested in a relationship with Hemingway.

Death, the Ultimate Transgression

This leads us to the last transgression about literature set in Venice: death. According to Richard Owen: "Venice and the Veneto have always held a fatal fascination for writers, from Lord Byron and Henry James to Thomas Mann and Oscar Wilde - and Ernest Hemingway. All of them were enchanted and exhilarated by the lagoon city - yet it also (sometimes later, sometimes at the same moment) aroused in them feelings of sadness and melancholy" (122). More than any other city, Venice embodies perishability as the city is not only sinking but also rotting, which makes it bound to disappear one day. Therefore, decay and perishability, both components of transgression, are intrinsically part of Venice.

This makes Venice a place where novels about decay or decaying characters blossom: "In Venice, with its thousand rivulets, where the palaces themselves seem to come to life in their gently moving reflections, a man can look back upon his life, reflect, and finally accept death not as a tragic event but as an acceptance of life" (Cirino 159). For other scholars, the "viral recurrence of Venice as a locus of expiration, or perpetual twilight, in intellectual and artistic culture since Romanticism" (Scappettone 27). In *Across the River*, the Colonel is about to die, and the city reflects this stage of his life. The idea of decay is also conveyed by the season as the novel takes place in winter time. Venice's coldness, dampness and darkness is emphasized by the Colonel's descriptions of the city: "The wind was still blowing hard and he went to the open windows to check the weather. There was no light as yet in the east across the Grand Canal, but his eyes could see how rough the water was. Be a hell of a tide today, he thought. Probably flood the square." (Hemingway 118). The dampness of the city echoes the Colonel's memories of war in the Veneto, equally damp and cold: "You could not get dry and it was better to get wet quickly and stay wet." (Hemingway 23). The numerous mentions of bad weather seem to insist on the Colonel's awareness about natural elements in Venice, revealing that the city is particularly vulnerable to it given its topography. In *Glimpses*, although Como and then Venice are described as the epitomes of *romantic loci*, they prove to be the places where Susy and Nick's union dissolves - until the end of the novel at least, when they are not in Northern Italy anymore.

Conclusion

Unlike the Grand Tour tradition that marked the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, Anglo-American literature set in Northern Italy in the twentieth-century received considerably less scholarly attention. This article attempted to re-establish this period of time as being part of the Anglo-American literary tourism tradition, through the analysis of two American novels forgotten after their publication, yet equally part of this literary Venetian continuity. Both *The Glimpses of the Moon* and *Across the River and into the Trees* are centered on travelers in Northern Italy, whose stays are by definition temporary. This temporariness leads the characters to experience a range of transgressions, whether linguistic, social, sexual, economical. The travelling experience in Venice proves

to be similar in many aspects to the Carnival experience, as in both cases norms are inverted and identities blurred for a temporary period of time. Venice is a place that allows all sorts of transgressions, yet such a statement questions the nature of transgression. Perhaps going beyond the binary of transgressive/ non-transgressive is necessary in Venice. Susy, in *Glimpses*, seems to believe that the city's values resides elsewhere: "It was something, after all, to be with people who did not regard Venice simply as affording exceptional opportunities for bathing and adultery, but who were reverently if confusedly aware that they were in the presence of something unique and ineffable, and determined to make the utmost of their privilege" (Wharton 69).

Notes

[1] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 1957.

[2] For example: Kenneth Churchill, *Italy and English Literature 1764-1930*, 1980; James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture', 1800-1918*, 1993; John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion, Victorians and Edwardians in the South*, 1987.

[3] For instance, in *Twilight in Italy* (1916), D.H. Lawrence draws parallels between warm and cold places in Italy and how, according to him, it impacts Italian women's personalities.

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