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From Stage to Cyberspace:
Intermediality and Performativity in Jennifer Haley's *The Nether*

Sahneden Siberuzam'a: Jennifer Haley'in *The Nether* Oyununda Medyalararasılık ve Edimsellik

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ABSTRACT

Jennifer Haley's *The Nether* premiered in 2013 at the Kirk Douglas Theater. It is an interplay between stage and virtual reality (VR), also known as, cyberspace. This quality makes the play an example of "intermedial" theater, which links digital media elements to the performance on stage indissolubly. The play not only provides a rich exploration of intermediality that reshapes traditional notions of character and acting, but also the characters in the play are presented as having avatars in VR, which ultimately highlights the fluidity of roles based on identity. Applying Judith Butler's theory of performative construction of identity and gender to analyze the characters, who are portrayed as having double identities and fulfilling fluid gender roles, is highly relevant in a play that uniquely blends dramatic performance with digital media to create a complex narrative landscape. By analyzing key scenes and particularly focusing on three major characters in the play, Sims, Doyle, and Morris, it is aimed in this study to see how performativity, as theorized by Butler, is redefined in virtual environments, as characters navigate identities mediated through digital avatars. The interaction between media both enhances the narrative but also prompts audiences to reflect on the significance of repetitive performance in gender and identity formation; therefore, this study also highlights the play's innovative approach to media interaction and contributes to contemporary discussions on the relationship between theatre, digital technology, space, and gender studies.

Introduction

On May 13th 2024, the leading artificial intelligence (AI) platform, OpenAI released ChatGPT 4.o, the most significant update in the platform's history. With this update, ChatGPT can now simultaneously process voice, text, and visual data, interpret these inputs logically, and respond to users synchronously in a human-like manner. The bot's responses sound so natural and fluid that it sometimes becomes easy to forget the fact that the user is interacting with an AI. This illusion is a great milestone in the history of human and technology, specifically human and AI interaction. Unlike earlier versions of AI platforms, which were only able to respond via typing, ChatGPT 4.o can now interact directly with the user, and with the help of a camera, it can communicate by interpreting visual inputs. For instance, it can comment on your outfit, say hi to your friends, talk with them on various topics including, politics or sports. The significance of the "o" in ChatGPT 4.o stands for "omni," a Latin prefix meaning "all" or "everything," and 'in all ways or places', or 'of all things' as seen in words like "omnipotent" (all-powerful), "omniscient" (all-knowing), and

"omnipresent" (present everywhere) (*OED*). OpenAI uses "omni" to highlight the update's capacity to perform almost everything a human can in daily interactions. It can react to visual, textual, and vocal data much like a human, with laughter, jokes, stammering, hesitating, smirking, complimenting, suggesting, and using natural sentence stress and intonation. This enhanced virtual reality allows users to immerse themselves in the AI's realm more intensely since it is highly easy and possible for users to lose their real-world selves and become absorbed in the AI's world.

A breakthrough AI development as it is, yet a frightening one definitely because the imaginary dystopian environment as envisioned in Isaac Asimov's pioneering novel, *I, Robot* (1950) and W. Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), or perhaps as in *R.U.R.* (1920) by Karel Čapek who coined the word "robot" in the play, and some other recent TV series such as *Black Mirror* (2011) or *Westworld* (2016) or the 2013 film *HER* (2013), might soon be inevitable for humanity.

The word cyberspace is used to mean the virtual environment created at a digital space and it is a term coined by the American novelist William Gibson in *Omni* magazine in 1982, and it has gained popularity after Gibson's repeated reference in his cyberpunk novel, *Neuromancer*. Cyberspace is used to refer to a "chaotic system" in which it is also often the case that some of the peculiarities related to what makes us human are irreversibly lost (Lévy 91), or alternatively, other non-human forms and entities have gained the capacity and capability to act like human beings (*OED*). In cyberspaces, the nuanced art of human conversation, with its subtle pauses, spontaneous humor, and emotional undertones, has almost become indistinguishable from AI-generated interactions. The unique capacity for empathy, where humans connect deeply through shared experiences and emotions, are diluted as AI and VR begin to replicate these interactions flawlessly. People gradually become less in need of physical human presence in a world where digital interactions become increasingly immersive and realistic with VR. The spontaneity and unpredictability of human behavior, which often lead to innovation and unexpected discoveries, are overshadowed by AI's calculated and optimized responses. The sense of personal identity and individuality are also at risk because people have become more engaged with their AI companions in VR realms. As a result, these technologies are, and will definitely continue to be, blurring the lines between reality and virtual experiences, possibly leading to a loss of the quintessential defining values of our humanity in the near future.

Virtual Reality and Performance

The advancement in VR and AI have not gone unnoticed in the realm of contemporary theater since the 1990s. Playwrights and directors are increasingly incorporating themes related to these technologies into their works, and they explore the implications of these advancements on human identity and social dynamics. As Kattenbelt points out, contemporary theater thus becomes a space where the interplay between human experience and technological innovations is depicted and critically examined (21). Through these artistic explorations, theater can provide a unique lens to consider the profound changes brought about by technological advancements and invite the audience to contemplate the future of human interaction in an increasingly digital world.

After Lehmann coined the term "post-dramatic theater," the integration of films, videos, and other digital media sources in performances gained momentum. A number of influential researchers drew attention to the increasing effects of new technologies on stage productions. Chapple and Kattenbelt notes that a defining feature of contemporary theatre has been integrating digital technology and incorporating various media within theatre productions (11). As a result of this trend, "during the last decade of the twentieth century, computer technologies played a dynamic and increasingly important role in live theater, dance, and performance; and new dramatic forms and performance genres emerged in interactive installations and on the Internet" (Dixon 1). Chapple and Kattenbelt also emphasize that contemporary theatre heavily relies on merging genre

boundaries, creating "crossover and hybrid performances, intertextuality, hypermediality," and a self-aware reflexivity that highlights the techniques of performance within the performance itself (11).

In the aftermath of post-dramatic theater, there is a definitive challenge to the domination of plot and dramatic illusion in contemporary theater. Performance, visuality, improvisation, and interaction between various media are emphasized. The emphasis on the performer, their acting performances, and their influence on the audience are major concerns. As Antonin Artaud prophetically announced in 1958,

> An actor who has passionately launched into their work needs infinitely more control to stop themselves committing a crime than a murderer actually needs to achieve theirs. And it is here, in this state of abandon, that the presentation of an emotion in the theatre comes across as something infinitely more valid that an actual real-life emotion. (41)

The reality represented on stage has often been compared to the reality outside the dramatic environment, with the former being seen as "more valid" than the latter. One interpretation of Artaud's words is that the performed reality on stage functions as a defamiliarization of what has become familiar and banal, which most people tend to ignore. Once defamiliarized on stage, it prompts people to reconsider those familiar and often ignored concerns and values. The power of the illusion in a stage performance and its influence on the audience has been a central concern of experimental theater, including Brecht's epic theater, Artaud's theater of cruelty, 90s "in-yer-face" theater, and Lehmann's "postdramatic" theater. Notoriously for example, Brechtian epic theater problematizes the notion of alienation and employs techniques such as the "V-effect," with 'V' standing for "Verfremdung" in German, meaning estrangement or distancing effect (Bradley 7); and "montage," which involves juxtaposing "interruptive, defamiliarizing inserts" (Mumford 31), such as independent images and scenes in a performance. Both techniques aim to disrupt the illusory reality constructed on stage by breaking the fourth wall and challenging the conventions of Aristotelian drama. These efforts echo later in in-yer-face theater and postdramatic theater which also problematize the notions of reality and illusion.

Accordingly, in recent productions, the incorporation of films, VR and AI visions, and other sorts of media in theatre has been tagged with various names. Rosemary Klich uses the term "multimediality" to refer to performances which interact with a variety of media with a purpose to "re-awaken the old art forms of world performance with the new tools of the digital age" (10). Dixon uses the term "digital performances" to describe "all performance works where computer technologies play a key role rather than a subsidiary one in content, techniques, aesthetics, or delivery forms" (3). Playwright Annie Dorsen employs "algorithmic theater" to refer to a sort of theater that "challenges conventions of theatrical presence, action, consciousness, and ephemerality, among others" (Felton-Dansky, 68). Woycicki refers to the phenomenon as "post-cinematic theatre" which specifically uses film segments on stage with "a heightened awareness of cinematic modes of operation [...] through its deconstructive intermedial strategies" (2). For Woycicki, rather than randomly inserting images, films, or videos, the purpose of incorporating these elements is to draw attention to the artificially constructed nature of the illusionary dramatic effect, akin to Brechtian montage techniques. This incorporation adds a metafictional layer, ultimately fostering awareness among the audience. Focusing on the use of film and video in performance, Giesekam employs the term "intermedial productions," to denote a

> more extensive interaction between the performers and various media, reshaping notions of character and acting, where neither the live material nor the recorded material would make much sense without the other, and where often the interaction between the media substantially modifies how the respective media conventionally function and invites

reflection upon their nature and methods. (8)

For Giesekam and Woycicki, the interaction between performance and other media forms should not merely serve to vary the mode of performance; to be considered truly intermedial or post-cinematic, there must be a deeper, more integrated interaction between the media and the performance. Also, Woycicki considers "intermedial theatre" as fundamentally a hybrid art form that integrates elements of theatre, film, live performance, computer-generated virtual realities, and communication technologies (1). Chapple and Kattenbelt view this transgression of generic boundaries in contemporary theatre as a fruitful and enriching progress since it enables "new modes of representation; new dramaturgical strategies; new ways of structuring and staging words, images and sounds; new ways of positioning bodies in time and space; new ways of creating temporal and spatial interrelations" (Chapple and Kattenbelt 11). As these critics highlight, this hybridity and intermediality is used to increase the impact of plays on the audience in our changing world.

Among such transgression is the trend that incorporates VR in theatrical performance. VR, as a term entered our lives in 1979, refers to "a computer-generated simulation of a lifelike environment that can be interacted with in a seemingly real or physical way by a person, esp. by means of responsive hardware such as a visor with screen or gloves with sensors; such environments or the associated technology as a medium of activity or field of study" (*OED*). It is also almost synonymous to William Gibson's cyberspace defined above. Be it VR or cyberspace, digital versions of physical reality have impacted humanity's capacity to understand their environments profoundly around the turn of the millennium when computer technology gained momentum. The technological shift has also led to a process of reconsideration of long-established human values. In a rapidly digitalizing world, with platforms like "Metaverse," "Second Life," and "Fortnite," and the recent "head-mounted displays" (HMDs), such as "Google Glass," "Meta Quest," or "Apple Vision," it has become possible for people—or should we say "users"—to interact with each other and the digital world through avatars and immersive experiences. In line with this development, the experimentation with VR technology in theatrical performance has been popular among contemporary playwrights and stage designers, such as Jennifer Haley, Simon McBurney, Annie Dorsen, who have composed scripts that explicitly draw on immersive VR technologies. Numerous plays including *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl, Tim Crouch's *An Oak Tree* or Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* have been adapted by stage designers to incorporate VR devices tackling the challenging scenes of the scripts. However, there are those who consider the interaction of VR with theatre dating to something as ancient as humanity, to the classical Greek and Roman drama, and the use of VR on stage is an extension of this ancient tradition. As Dixon notes, one of the pioneering stage designers who utilizes VR technology in theatrical performance, Mark Reaney, considers theater to be "the original virtual reality machine," with deus-ex-machina or other mechanisms used in Greek and Roman plays to create images distorting the integrity of physical reality; and for Oliver Grau, VR is just a new computer-aided illusionary alternative that enables artists to examine "the relationship of humans to images" problematizing reality, imitation, manipulation and performance (Dixon 364).

With the help of VR, traditional physical restraints for the playwrights, stage designers and performers are overcome. With VR, projection of parallel worlds challenging the one-dimensional representation of a particular reality or a better glimpse into the inner worlds of the characters suffering on stage deepens the experience that audience enjoys in theatres. As Reaney notes, "virtual reality can unlock many scripts, realizing potentials that have been thwarted by production techniques that, being bound by muslin, wood and steel, cannot keep pace with the imagination of playwrights. [With VR] Furniture can float, walls can spin, the audience can look down from the ceiling, dancers can fly and people can walk through walls. (1996 41-42) Reaney

prefers to use "virtual scenography" or "virtual theatricality" to refer to the performance that incorporates VR (1996 41); Gabriella Giannachi opts out simply with "virtual theatre" (2004). Reaney and Giannachi use these terms to describe the use of VR devices to enhance the audience experience and break through the traditional confines of the stage in theater.

Jennifer Haley's The Nether as an Example of Intermedial Theater

The play analyzed in this paper, Jennifer Haley's *The Nether* premiered in the US in 2013 and in Europe 2014. Because of its projection of more than one realm, one real life and one alternative reality where characters are transferred into avatar forms, *The Nether* is an example of intermedial theater even though the performed versions of the play in the US or England do not necessarily incorporate VR devices despite the projection of virtual and physical realities side by side. Intermedial theater, as termed by Giesekam and Woycicki, denotes the interaction of theater with other forms of media in an inseparable manner, often with a subversive purpose. In this sense, with the projection of the real and the virtual side by side interacting with one another, the play is highly relevant to intermedial theater as described by Giesekam and Woycicki.

Kattenbelt also points at intermediality in theater essentially "refer[ring] to the co-relation of media in the sense of mutual influences between media" whereas "'multimediality' refers to the occurrence where there are many media in one and the same object and 'transmediality' to the transfer from one medium to another medium (media change) (21). Accordingly, intermediality is used in this study as a reference to an inextricable and mutual interaction between theater and VR. In addition, the use of VR devices to augment the theatrical experience is not among the concerns of this paper. Instead, the focus is on the projection of two forms of reality in *The Nether*: one where actors perform within the traditional theater setting, and another where characters in VR assume new identities, thereby problematizing their former ones. Hence, as Kattenbelt counted as one of the functions of intermediality *The Nether* is a play that feeds on intermedial performance and "leads to a refreshed perception" for viewers (26).

The play is set in a near future labelled as "soon" where technological advancements have transformed the Internet into the Nether (Haley 2). The word, Nether means "designating the lower or bottom part (section, component, segment, etc.) of a person or thing" in old English (*OED*), yet it is defined at the beginning of the play by Haley as such:

> *Nether Realm*
> 1. Another world for mythical creatures
> 2. Demon world
> 3. A dimension of Evil or Imagination (Haley 3)

Accordingly, the Nether realm in the play offers its users countless VR sub-realms for work, education, entertainment as well as various experiences including dark and illegal fantasies. One of these realms, "The Hideaway," is under police investigation at the beginning of the play. The Hideaway is highlighted for its advanced sensory experiences and for allowing individuals with pedophiliac tendencies to act their fantasies out. Haley's work explores the ethical implications of virtual reality and examines how technology affects human relationships, identity, gender roles, and desire. As a VR environment for pedophiles and sadists, the Hideaway in the Nether offers a community where moral and social values are trespassed. The allure of the Hideaway is twofold: It attracts users with its sense of belonging and its picturesque setting which envisions a Victorian nostalgia starkly in contrast with the bleak and barren real world which is a dystopian post-cataclysmic environment where "real grass," "snap peas," "swiss chard," "cotton," "brown stone" are all luxury (Haley 12). Stage design also highlights this contrast: the simple, cold interrogation room representing the barren real world, and the vibrant, detailed Hideaway offering desirable living conditions. The scene frequently shifts between "The interrogation room" and "The

Hideaway Foyer, The Nether." The detective Morris, who was introduced as "an in-world representative" investigating the case of the Hideaway realm, draws attention to the potential risks involved in creating a digital realm like the Hideaway where participants will easily lose their real selves and become "shades," that are digital entities without bodies in the Nether realm. A highly charming realm as the Hideaway is, it offers the participants simple joys of the ancient world, such as trees with leaves "flickering light and soft sound as they sway in the sun and wind [that] is almost overwhelming [...] surround[ing] a beautifully rendered 1880s Gothic Revival [house] with a squeak in the top porch step" (Haley 7-8). Participants of the Hideaway are in search of authenticity in a dystopian world where everything including education and parenting have become digitalized, yet ironically, they try to get this still via further digitalization, in the Hideaway, a cyberspace that stages the most extreme sensory experience for the participants. Upon ringing the doorbell to enter for the first time into the Hideaway, detective Morris notices the extremely heightened or enhanced virtual reality there and reports "I can actually feel my hand sweat, clutching my carpetbag. I peek through a window and spy figures in the foyer — an impeccably dressed man stroking the face of one of the children, a little girl" (Haley 7). These contrasting settings amplify the tension audience might feel upon realizing the pedophiliac undercurrents of the play. On the one hand, there is the unfertile, dark real-world environment, and on the other, the heavenly digital realm inhabited by avatars enjoying sunshine, greenery, or wind, yet abusing young kids who are designed to never age. However, in both realms, avatars and real-world characters are portrayed on stage by the same actors, and hence, what is presented on stage whether be in the Hideaway or in the interrogation room resembles nothing but a distorted and dystopian version of actuality because of its pedophiliac, sadist, and gory details. In this way, the play problematizes the concept of the offence of "imaginative agency" and questions whether it is detrimental when the damage they cause exists only in thought or in an imaginary realm.

Furthermore, the Hideaway in the Nether offers limitless possibilities for identity transformation since the users can adopt avatars that would allow them to be of any gender, age, race, or appearance. For instance, Doyle, a childhood-traumatized "middle-aged science teacher" becomes an eight-year-old girl named Iris in the Nether realm; and the creator of the realm, Sims, prefers to be referred as "papa" both by the kids and the users of the Hideaway and acts as the father, owner, and controller of the girls in the realm; Morris, described as "a young female detective," chooses to be represented as an older man with "a fresh-face" at the Hideaway, as Mr. Woodnut (Haley 2). Although there are set options for avatars, the variety is extensive enough to cater to diverse preferences. These avatars conceal participants' true identities while expanding their sense of self. Although the characters in the Hideaway are still rooted in physical characteristics such as age and gender, the digital personas in the VR are disconnected from these physical constraints and external influences. The vivid sensations experienced by characters through avatars highlight the stability and influence of the physical body despite the digital transformation because the material body remains the ultimate recipient of these sensory experiences. This refers to a connection between "disembodiment" and "re-embodiment," and although the sensations experienced do not change, the reactions of the characters in disguise might. Consequently, characters' reactions to these sensory experiences result from an amalgamation of feelings at both the physical body level and the virtual reality level via digital avatars. The interplay between physical and digital identities with the sensory experiences associated with them is what *The Nether* problematizes perhaps the most as an unconventional play. Accordingly, psychological and ethical implications of such a problematization of identity remind Judith Butler's framework of performativity. The virtual world in *The Nether*, distinct from our tangible reality, provides a stage where individuals can explore and perform identities that deviate from their real-life personas. The play presents a dualistic view of identity: one adhering to societal norms and the other lurking within virtual spaces, which may more closely align with the individual's unmanifested desires and aspects of

selfhood, hence *The Nether* is a challenge to our understanding of identity and the self.

Double Identities and Performativity

Judith Butler argues that gender is not an innate quality but rather a performance enacted through repeated behaviors, gestures, and speech that align with socially established norms (Butler 179). This performativity creates the illusion of a stable identity, reinforcing the societal expectations around gender and selfhood. Butler posits that these repetitive performances construct and maintain the identities people present to the world. Individuals act in ways that reflect their internalization of social norms, perpetuating the belief that these norms represent a "true" identity, but they are indeed "performative" in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are "fabrications" manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (Butler 173). This process applies not only to gender but also to all facets of identity formation, including social, professional, and cultural roles. In *The Nether*, this repetitive performativity becomes evident in the characters' real-world and virtual identities. In the real world, performers assume identities and genders either to continue the oft-repeated roles within the society they live in, or to be aware of the performative repetitive nature of these roles they try to pose or perform new ones that would best describe or suit them. In the virtual world of *The Nether*, characters explore roles that differ significantly from those they fulfill in the real world, and their avatars become an expression of selves unconstrained by societal norms.

At this point, there appears a dichotomy between the roles assumed in society and the ones that human beings refrain to reveal in the public, and a quest in deciding which of these social roles or identities can be truly associated with the individual or the agent performing a harmful or beneficial action. In *The Nether*, the infrastructure of the Hideaway, a virtual world designed by a software developer, facilitates this identity exploration by creating an environment that feels real and emotionally engaging, encouraging participants to shed their real-world constraints and experiment with new personas. In line with this, technology is reflected not simply as a tool or background element; it plays a pivotal role in mediating the characters' identities and creating the immersive environment where these identities are explored and contested, thus making the play an example of intermedial theater. The design of the Hideaway enables participants to fully immerse themselves in a virtual reality which secures anonymity and freedom from societal and legal restrictions. Characters have the ability to transcend their physical attributes, age, and societal roles. They are free to choose avatars that allow them to embody new selves and interact with other participants under the control of the creator of the Hideaway, that is Sims who is known as Papa by others and evocatively named after one of the best-selling life simulation video games, "The Sims" introduced in 2000.

The Hideaway's integration of immersive virtual reality and carefully curated design enhances the authenticity of the experience. As a result of this, the lines demarcating the virtual from the real interactions are blurred. This careful design allows characters to act out their deepest desires without fear of judgment or repercussion and reinforces their attachment to the personas they adopt in this digital realm. By providing a convincing simulation of reality, the Hideaway becomes a space where participants can shape their understanding of self and the world around them, which, as a result, makes them entities independent from their physical bodies. Doyle highlights the transformation within a digitalizing world with "Single School Act," and poignantly refers to how educational methods in the Nether have transitioned entirely to game-based learning (p. 22). He further states:

> Our bodies are ninety-nine percent space. Physical sensation is inconsequential. [...]
> But there are no longer physical barriers to that contact. Now we may communicate with anyone, through any form we choose. And this communication – this experience of each

> other – is the root of consciousness. It is the universe wanting to know itself. Can't you see what a wonder it is that we may interact outside our bodies? It's as revolutionary as – discovering fire! (Haley 22-23)

Hence, without any physical contact, participants value a Baudrillardian hyperreality over the authentic truth because what hyperreality provides for them is designed in line with their true desires and selves.

As a result of this, within the virtual environment of the Hideaway, characters such as Sims, a.k.a. Papa, Morris, a.k.a. Woodnut, and Doyle, a.k.a. Iris, adopt identities that reveal darker, more complex desires. Sims carefully curates the environment to reflect a Victorian-style aesthetic to allow the participants and himself, to feel a sense of nostalgia, safety, and naivety in a space where they can act without fear of social or legal repercussions. Under interrogation, Sims reacts to Morris's claims of the Hideaway as an unreal world, a world of "shade," by remarking, "Just because it's virtual doesn't mean it isn't real" (Haley 13). Perhaps in a Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum* way, he refers to the value or truth behind experience or feelings lying not in the tangibility or the observability of the experience but in how human beings are involved in it in their minds. Therefore, the physical body that matters in the physical world and limits beings into its entity becomes insignificant with the VR. Sims's avatar, Papa, embodies his pedophilia and his desire for control and freedom. It enables him to exert influence over the virtual world in a way that his real-world identity cannot. He spends "an average of sixteen hours a day in the Nether" because he believes that Papa in the VR is his true self, not Sims in physicality (Haley 12). He knows that he is not welcome in the physical world as he is, and cries to Morris:

> Look, Detective, I am sick. I am sick and have always been sick and there is no cure. No amount of cognitive behavioral therapy or relapse determent or even chemical castration will sway me from my urges toward children. I am sick and no matter how much I loved him or her I would make my own child sick and I see this, I see this – not all of us see this – but I have been cursed with both compulsion and insight. I have taken responsibility for my sickness. I am protecting my neighbor's children and my brother's children and the children I won't allow myself to have, and the only way I can do this is because I've created a place where I can be my fucking self! (Haley 15)

In a highly manipulative manner, Sims excuses himself, claiming that the Hideaway functions as a stress reliever for the tension arising from his undesirable tendencies in society. He alleviates his guilty conscience by noting that he would otherwise be detrimental to society, its values, and even his loved ones. His true self, which clearly does not align with the ethical values and norms of society, is freely expressed in the Hideaway realm through his performance. The dualistic performativity of his character suggests that social roles are not predetermined; human beings are defined by what they perform and create, not by roles assigned to them. Thus, whom he pretends to be in the real world is just as illusory as the persona he crafts in the VR realm since both are constructed through his performed roles.

In particular, Cedric Doyle, with the avatar of Iris, illustrates this conflict further. He is a college professor who "won a Distinguished Teaching Award in Science" in real life, yet in the Hideaway, he is transformed into a young girl who embodies his desires for innocence, youth, and taboo relationships (Haley 9). This avatar allows Doyle to engage with other participants in ways that would be legally and ethically impermissible outside the virtual realm. The performance of this identity showcases how virtual worlds offer individuals the opportunity to transcend societal limitations and construct selves that align more closely with their hidden inclinations. The capabilities and design of the Nether as a digital platform directly influence how characters navigate their identities. By allowing Doyle to adopt an avatar like Iris and explore elaborate,

immersive environments in the Hideaway, the platform creates a unique space for Doyle to reach his innermost obsessions. The anonymity afforded by his avatar enables him to transcend his physical appearance, age, and social status, and his disembodiment from Doyle into his re-embodiment as Iris is because of his need to form an identity not bound by the limitations of the tangible world. Doyle plans to leave his physical body in this world and to "cross over" into the Hideaway realm completely to become a "shade" there in the form of Iris (Haley 23). In response, Doyle merely asks, 'May I keep her?' referring to his cyberspace character, Iris (Haley 10). However, this would be impossible due to legal constraints concerning the Hideaway world. Disheartened by this reality, Doyle withdraws completely from Morris's interrogation, lamenting, "I have nothing to say" (Haley 10).

Doyle prefers to remain as a shade with his avatar, Iris. His choice highlights the conflict in his mind between societal expectations and personal desires. The immersive technology of the Nether allows Doyle, like many others, to not only create but fully embody an identity that deviates significantly from his real-world persona. This duality between his prestigious real-life role and his virtual identity reflects a broader commentary on the nature of self and the boundaries of ethical behavior. Doyle's choice, opting out to exist solely in the virtual world, is an example that shows how technology can facilitate the exploration of self in ways that are otherwise constrained by real-world moral and legal frameworks. His decision to forgo a potential real-world fulfillment for his virtual existence is not just a form escape, but it is a profound transformation that questions the very essence of identity and morality in the digital age.

Likewise, Morris's transformation into Woodnut also demonstrates the use of technology to explore various aspects of identity that would be restricted in the real world. In the Hideaway, Woodnut is free to engage in behaviors that contradict Morris's socially compliant persona as an investigator in the real world. A female detective in real life and acting as a male participant in the Hideaway, Morris is implied to have been involved in pedophilic activities and as having sadist tendencies towards the immersive virtual reality experience in *The Nether*. When Iris is described as suddenly "lift[ing] her dress over her head and stand[ing] in her knickers," Scene 6 is cut, and the next scene begins with Morris's reading from the investigation report (Haley 28-29):

> I approach the little girl and fold her into my arms. Her skin is covered in goosebumps, which quickly fade into my embrace. [*Looking up*] The next section of the report is classified, but our agent did collect the evidence we needed to pursue this case. He confessed to me in person this experience left him traumatized. (Haley 29)

In these remarks, Woodnut is clearly seen as absorbed in the world of the Hideaway, but what goes unexplained in the text is also the aftermath of Iris's undressing, and Morris, not revealing to Sims that she was Woodnut indeed, reads this excerpt above from his report. This dichotomy between Morris as a female detective, and Woodnut as a male delinquent, demonstrates the performative nature of identity, highlighting how virtual platforms offer the opportunity for individuals to take up alternative selves. Morris becomes immersed in the realm too much and is traumatized due to her complicity within the Nether for the sake of continuing the investigation. Papa, seeing that Woodnut and Iris got too close to one another, makes Woodnut use an axe to kill Iris dismembering her into pieces. Morris, as Woodnut in the Hideaway, is in shock with the smell of blood on his hands and the gore around after killing Iris with an axe. He writes in the report, "A giggle at the door, and she reappears, coming toward me with her arms open – and I lift the axe and do it again. And I do it again. And I do it again. I want her to stop coming so I know I've done something. But she keeps coming, and now it's not just my hands covered in blood, it's my face, it's my body, I can taste it in my mouth, it's so exquisite I am crying, I have never felt so much with every nerve, felt so much, felt so much … feeling" (Haley 58). As is clear in his words, Morris is awestruck and simultaneously in hatred as a result of Iris's reappearance. He wants Iris to stop coming to see the

result of his actions in cyberspace. However, he is disheartened to realize that not only his distasteful activities like attacking Iris with an axe, but also all his previous precious moments with her are nothing but illusions. Although his feelings are intact in this cyberspace, and he can feel pain, love, hatred, disgust, and even the sweat on his body and the smell of gore, they have never existed in reality, and all are presented to him as experiences merely felt in his brain. Hence, Morris/Woodnut laments, "But if there has been no consequence, there has been no meaning – no meaning between her and myself, between myself and myself – and if there has been meaning, then I am a monster" (Haley 58). Morris cannot find the meaning he craves in cyberspace, and his search for substance in there leads him into an existential crisis.

Morris asks herself repeatedly whether all these events mean anything. Initially dismissing them as unreal, she later reveals to Cedric Doyle that he is her "first love" (Haley 61). This confession clearly shows that the events occurred in the Hideaway meant a lot for her traumatizing her deeply. In the play, there is a recurring, suspicious mention of an axe, and Papa frequently asks Iris whether Woodnut has ever used the axe, and upon realizing that he has not, he manipulates Iris to force Woodnut to use it. This axe, designed by Papa, is meant to prevent participants from becoming fully immersed in the Hideaway and losing touch with the real world, which could endanger both themselves and the virtual realm. To maintain control, Papa also removes "naughty" girl avatars by sending them "to boarding school," a phrase steeped in Victorian tradition (Haley 39-40). We are also informed that before Iris, there were Barnaby, Donald, Antonia, all of whom, Morris writes in the report, are designed as inspired "from an era associated with ... innocence" (Haley 6).

Even though Morris is a detective trying to put things right and as a member of law enforcement, to penalize offenders and pedophiles like Sims and Doyle, she reveals at one point in the play that, she has also suffered from parental abuses when she was a kid, and the identity and social and professional roles she is in is not what she desires. She quotes a passage from the American poet, Theodore Roethke:

> Dark, dark my light, and darker my desire.
> My soul, like some heat-maddened summer fly,
> Keeps buzzing at the sill. Which I is I?
> A fallen man, I climb out of my fear.
> The mind enters itself, and God the mind,
> And one is One, free in the tearing wind. (Haley 52)

She finds her personal dilemma reflected in her father's highlighted passage cited above from his copy of Roethke's book of poems. Roethke's poem, as referenced by Detective Morris in the play, mirrors her internal conflict related to her self-perception and identity. In essence, she is caught between two identities: Morris as a female detective abused by her parents when she was a child and Woodnut as a male pedophile. Once a victim of abuse and trauma in reality, she becomes an abuser and traumatizer in cyberspace. In the context of the play, Morris identifies with this poem, seeing her own life's turmoil reflected in the chaotic imagery. Despite her role as law enforcement officer, her internal conflicts and unresolved trauma from childhood abuses make her sympathize with the complexities of human desires and identities, just as the speaker in Roethke's poem, or as the characters, Doyle or Sims who are all portrayed in *The Nether* as grappling with their inner selves.

The ethical and psychological implications explored in *The Nether* extend beyond the characters themselves, and there are reflections on broader societal concerns about identity formation in the age of VRs. In real life recently, as the number of people engaging with digital platforms is definitely on the rise, and hence, the divide between virtual and real identities has become increasingly

porous, each one of us questions how these dual lives impact certain moral frameworks and our personal well-being. Apart from the issues mentioned above, Haley's play envisions the inherent risks of exploring identity in virtual spaces where anonymity can lead to behaviors that contradict real-world norms. The play's depiction of characters preferring avatars over their real selves, reveal their hidden desire to challenge traditional perceptions. This is an inversion of reality where virtuality becomes a more accurate reflection of self than everyday life. In *The Nether*, Papa notes, the virtual reality he created, is "nothing but images. And there is no consequence," to which Morris responds, "Images – ideas – create reality. Everything around us – our houses, our bridges, our wars, our peace treaties – began as figments in someone's mind before becoming a physical or social fact" (Haley 30). With these remarks, the play provokes a critical examination of how we navigate the complexities of identity in a digitized world. Moreover, it urges the audience of this theatrical performance or the reader of the playscript to reconsider the ethical dimensions of their virtual engagements and the implications for their real-world behaviors and beliefs. At the final scene of the play, which is titled as "Epilogue," the audience witness a rerun of a previous scene that has taken place between Papa and Iris in the Hideaway realm. In the rerun, they go up to the stage not in disguise of their avatars but as Sims and Doyle celebrating Iris's birthday and the intimacy between Iris and Papa with pedophilic undertones are reperformed between Sims and Doyle in the same pattern:

> DOYLE: And there's another sound. The sound of tiny dwarves who live in snowy mountains singing falsetto. Can you hear it?
> SIMS: No. It must be only for children to hear.
> DOYLE: Is that why you don't want me to grow up? Because I'll no longer hear the singing?
> SIMS: Because I don't want to lose you.
> DOYLE: It wouldn't be good for business.
> SIMS: That's not why. You know why. Don't you?
> DOYLE: I feel it, but … I do sometimes wonder if it's real. […]
> DOYLE: I love you.
> *Sims hesitates.*
> SIMS: You cannot know how much I love you. (Haley 70-71)

With this tension, the audience is irritated to the extreme as the play further tests their ethical boundaries with the sexual nature of this interaction at this scene's re-enacted version, this time between two older men. The intensity of a highly irksome moment is amplified and transformed into a scene that would function as catalyst to evoke a visceral reaction from the audience. This scene suggests that through VR both Doyle and Sims can now act on their taboo urges and that Nether provided an outlet for these taboo desires to grow in to real life. This deliberate provocation serves as a potent reminder of the disturbing potentials within virtual spaces and their capacity to blur moral boundaries. Moreover, this scene highlights the performative nature of gender identity and sexuality as these men continue their role-play now in real life. Layered with ethical ambiguity and psychological tension, the epilogue forces the audience to confront the uncomfortable truths about the human psyche's adaptability to different moral landscapes.

Conclusion

Jennifer Haley's play, *The Nether*, is a definitive example of intermedial theater due to its intensive and interactive integration of theatrical performance with virtual reality. The characters' performed behaviors, particularly their avatars in the Hideaway realm represent extensions of their socially influenced identities shaped by technology. The ethical ambiguity and psychological tension arising from this fluid identity exploration underscore the impossibility of maintaining stable personas across digital and real realms and emphasize the complexities and irregularities in identity and gender performances. With the technological infrastructure of the Hideaway,

power dynamics and control issues that influence participants' identities and actions are laid bare in *The Nether*. Theorists and authors who explore themes of monstrosity, plurality, cyborgs, and the blending of human, animal, and technological entities, have celebrated multiplicity, nontraditional alternatives, third spaces across their works. Eminently, Donna Haraway celebrates the multiplicity and plurality of modern human beings transforming into cyborgs, moving away from stable, concrete forms of existence in a digitized world. She describes how perceptions of machines have shifted from paranoid to a recognition of their lively presence, contrasting our own frightening inertia since machines are "self-moving, self-designing, autonomous" and "achieving man's dreams" (106). Furthering Haraway's celebration, recently, with our smartphones, smart assistants, smart devices, VR, AI, and technology enhanced software and tools in particular, human beings have been reduced into a position of abstraction, a lesser being than a cyborg in a state of incorporeality, a trend that could intensify unless checked. Therefore, *The Nether* stages the persistent anxiety and fear about lacking corporeality, authenticity, or meaning in a rapidly digitalizing world.

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Disclosure Statement

A Semiological Reading of Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls of the King and Other Poems* and Julia Margaret Cameron's Photographic Illustrations

Alfred Tennyson'ın *Idylls of the King and Other Poems* Kitabı ve Julia Margaret Cameron'ın Fotoğrafları Üzerine Göstergebilimsel Bir Okuma

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ABSTRACT

Alfred Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Other Poems connects poetry with photographic illustrations by Julia Margaret Cameron. The book is one of the pioneering examples of illustrated poetry. Cameron had her friends and family members dressed in medieval clothes to pose for her and photographed them for Tennyson's epic. However, when she willingly accepted Tennyson's request to illustrate his poetry book with photographs, she did not envisage how her photographs would look reduced in scale in a poetry book. Then she had them reprinted in a deluxe edition to increase the effect of poetry through her photographic illustrations. In time, her portraits of family and friends reached a level of not only illustrating Tennyson's poems but also passing over the influence of poetry. Cameron's photographs, despite the technological difficulties of her age in printing photography, reflected the themes and characters of Tennyson's poems to carry their meanings further. This article discusses and analyses, from the semiological point of view, the contribution of the art of photography to poetry.

Introduction

Poetry is a verbal art. It does not, in the first instance, present itself as something imagery. It has got a philosophical exquisiteness derived from what poets seek to convey by composing their words in a lyrical pattern. As one of the most prominent and celebrated forms of verbal art, poetry, then, stands out as a powerful form of writing that captures the complex and multidimensional nature of human experiences and emotions through beautiful language, recognized as a vital and dynamic form of literary expression across cultures. If, as Christopher Ricks argues, "nothing is more important than being able to hear the rhythms and cadences of a poem," (1999: xxxix) there may occur controversies between the appreciator's image of the poem and the images envisaged by the poets. Although poetry may be said to be graphic at times in terms of its organization of the lines and stanzas in a certain shape that may contribute to the meaning, the meaning is still obliged to be limited within the readers' imaginary power. Poetry relies on the verbal meaning that always goes beyond the lexical meaning of the words in lines. Alfred Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Other Poems, first published in 1896, is a rare example that connects poetry with photographic illustrations by Julia Margaret Cameron. The book is one of the pioneering examples of illustrated poetry.

Idylls of the King is a collection of narrative poems which recount the legendary tale of King Arthur and the Knight of the Round Table. These poems were written over a period of many years until they could be published in a volume in 1859. Alfred Tennyson's narration of the Arthurian legends is renowned for its rich imagery, exploration of the themes of chivalry and honor together with its Victorian sensitivity. This collection consists of twelve narrative poems, including "The Coming of Arthur", "The Holy Grail", and "The Passing of Arthur". The poetic style of Tennyson can be identified by its musical quality, lively descriptions and its emotional depth. His works reflect the fascination with medievalism and the idealization of chivalry in the Victorian period.

The structure and composition of the poems fall into the category of epic poems comprising of twelve interconnected narrative poems each of which tell a different episode or aspect of the Arthurian Legend. In its chronological sequence, Tennyson centres on the themes of chivalry, nobility and honor that are associated with the Arthurian Legend. The Knights of the round table are portrayed as noble warriors guided by a code of conduct. Tennyson also explores the conflict between good and evil in this work. The narrative is often eclipsed by moral struggles and conflicts between the characters like King Arthur and Sir Mordred.

Tennyson described Arthur as a noble and just king who attempts to create a utopian society based on the principles of justice and chivalry. Yet, his idealism faces challenges, and the narrative reflects on the difficulties of maintaining such ideals in the face of human frailty. The complex relationships among Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot contribute to the tragedy of the story. Tennyson revolves around the themes of love, betrayal and the destructive consequences of personal desires conflicting with the ideals of the Round Table. The poems certainly involve some symbolism and allegory. The quest for the grail serves as a central motif that represents the quest for spiritual enlightenment, purity and the divine. It also becomes a symbol of the unattainable ideal, emphasizing the flaws and limitations of humanity. Camelot, on the other hand, symbolizes the utopian vision of Arthur's kingdom, a place of glorified ideas. The fall of Camelot mirrors the broader decline of the Arthurian world.

Certainly, Idylls of the King reflects all the Victorian values, including medievalism, with which the Victorians were fascinated. Medievalism, as William J. Diebold argues, is a "peripheral study of medieval art history and visual culture" by discussing how medievalism contributes to contemporary art and literature (247). For Diebold, medievalism is best defined as "the reception of the Middle Ages" which equates medievalism with "reception of history" (249). David Mathews, on the other hand, states that medievalism does not only refer to a period in the past "but to a mindset and an ideology in the present" and this mindset refers to "those who would resist the march of modernity" as well as indicating "conservatism" and "nostalgia" (696). In accordance with what Mathews called as "a mindset"; William E. Buckler had coined "Tennysonian Medievalism" that complies with the "general rubric of 'Victorian Medievalism'" which is a suitable way in which "Tennyson saw matters" differently from how "his contemporaries saw them" by individually creating a "distinctive structural model", "a persona undergoing the jeopardy of process" (85).

This fascination with medievalism allowed the Victorians to explore moral and ethical questions within the context of an imagined, idealized past. Through the lens of Arthurian legend, Tennyson delves into timeless themes of chivalry, honor, and nobility, presenting them as ideals to which society should aspire. By doing so, he invites his readers to reflect on their own time, contrasting the perceived purity and simplicity of the past with the complexities of the present. Moreover, Tennyson employs social criticism in his work, using the narrative to subtly address contemporary issues. One of the critical aspects of his social commentary is the changing role of women in Victorian society. Tennyson's portrayal of female characters, such as Guinevere and Elaine, reflects the struggles and expectations placed upon women, highlighting both their strength and their

suffering within a patriarchal framework. This commentary aligns with the broader Victorian debate about women's rights and their place in society. In addition to gender issues, Tennyson's work also touches on the impacts of industrialization. The rapid industrial growth of the Victorian era brought about significant social and economic changes, leading to both progress and disruption. Tennyson's depiction of Camelot as a once-great kingdom now facing decay and corruption can be seen as a metaphor for the challenges of maintaining traditional values and social cohesion in the face of modern industrial forces. Furthermore, Idylls of the King grapples with the challenge of upholding traditional values in a rapidly evolving world. The tension between the noble ideals of King Arthur's court and the moral ambiguities faced by its members reflects the Victorian struggle to reconcile a romanticized past with the realities of contemporary life. Through characters' failures and triumphs, Tennyson critiques the notion that merely looking back to a golden age can provide simple solutions to modern problems. Overall, Tennyson's Idylls of the King is not just a nostalgic homage to medieval times but a complex work that engages with Victorian societal issues. By weaving together medievalism and social criticism, Tennyson offers a nuanced perspective on the values and challenges of his time, encouraging readers to consider the ways in which history, tradition, and progress intersect.

Among literary studies on Tennyson, from 1990s to date, Noelle Bowles focuses on how Tennyson "linked faith specifically with Anglicanism and the conservative order of church and state" and discusses the poet encourages the "nineteenth century readers to conclude" that the political and religious traditions of England were still viable in their age (589). In another example, Ian McGuire reads Idylls of the King from an epistemological perspective and argues that the failures of "psychological and epistemological" forms of "sublimation" cause "the basic fragility of the larger structure of capitalism imperialism" in the nineteenth century (398). Margaret Linley, on the other hand, reads and problematizes the "nationality and sexuality" that arises "out of the ideological disruptions" in Tennyson's work (365). Linley argues that Tennyson "retrieves value and virility for his domesticated, emasculated gentleman by virtually locking actual women out of his house" by challenging the bourgeois ideology (380). This present study, instead, reads and analyses the power of photography in creating new meanings and dimensions in Tennyson's poetry rather than dealing with nationalism, relationship between church and state, psychological and epistemological sublimations or the connection between nationality and sexuality. This paper focuses on the relationship between literature and semiotics through photographs.

Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*

Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, which is described by Harold Bloom as "an attempt to renovate an archaism in the modern age" (89), is renowned for its rich imagery and symbolism, which serve to deepen both the emotional and thematic resonance of the narrative. Tennyson "provides such a synchronicity, highlighting Idylls of the King as an example of the unnatural delineation of character" creating a kind of dramatization that presents his natural "lyrical gifts, rather than when they are forced by the tale he attempts to tell" (Bloom 89). He employs lively and evocative images that draw on elements of nature, myths, and archetypal symbolism, thereby enhancing the reader's engagement and understanding. Bloom, quoting from Arthur Henry Hallam, points out Tennyson's five distinctive characteristics in his poetry: "the control of a luxuriant imagination"; "accuracy of adjustment" in characters' moods; "skill in emotionally fusing a vivid, 'picturesque' portrayal of objects; and "mellow soberness of tone" (xiii).

Tennyson often uses natural imagery, such as the changing seasons, to mirror the internal states of his characters or the shifting fortunes of Camelot. This not only brings the story to life but also creates a layered narrative where the environment reflects the human condition. The use of mythological and symbolic references further enriches the text. Tennyson draws from a well of Arthurian legends, infusing his poetry with symbols like the Holy Grail, Excalibur, and the Round

Table, each carrying significant connotations. These symbols are not mere decorations but integral to the unfolding of the plot and the development of themes such as purity, loyalty, and the quest for spiritual and moral perfection. For instance, the Holy Grail quest represents not just a physical journey but a spiritual odyssey, highlighting the characters' inner struggles and aspirations.

Additionally, Tennyson's Idylls of the King is distinguished by its musicality. The poet's use of musical language and rhythmic patterns significantly contributes to the overall aesthetic experience of the work. The rhythmic flow and melodic qualities of Tennyson's verse create a sense of harmony and beauty, enhancing the reader's immersion in the text. The careful attention to meter and sound evokes an almost hypnotic effect, drawing readers into the lyrical and mythic world of Camelot. This musicality also serves a thematic purpose, reflecting the balance and order that King Arthur seeks to impose upon his kingdom, as well as the dissonance that arises when these ideals are threatened. The interplay of rhythm and sound mirrors the tensions and resolutions within the narrative, adding another layer of meaning to the poem. As Ayşe Çelikkol notes, there is an elaborated link between music and spontaneity in the pre-Arthurian world and Tennyson's poem provides, in Çelikkol's words, "a sophisticated commentary on the affective and political functions of music" though this link (239). It should particularly be noted that "instrumental and vocal music could strengthen the sense of national belonging" (Çelikkol 239).

Olivia Loksing Moy studies the poem on a more linguistic level and considers it as a text characterized by "the stagnancy and slow deterioration of its characters" when it presents "poetic movements of symmetry and recursion, of retrospection and return", because the language of the poem, according to Moy, often features "circles and repetition" at a poetic level (268). This linguistic level justifies the relationship between Tennyson's poetry and semiological representation. To a certain extent, poetry relies on linguistic symmetry, chiasmus and grammatical plays as in photography's plays on light, perspective and symmetrical and asymmetrical representations of the subjects. Simon Cooke regards Tennysons's encodement of "the characters' serenity" in an elaborated language of "peaceful landscapes, rustic villages, framing trees of a recognizably English variety" as his "semiotics of the English idyll" (74). It is quite intriguing to see the parallelism between this present paper and Leonée Ormond's argument that emphasizes Tennyson's poetry as having a narrative form that foregrounds "a strong moral code" and "some of the most decorative" poems "with their extended epic" (114). She also points out the fact that very few poets "retain their lyric gifts beyond early middle age, and, after he reached fifty, Tennyson's poetry tended towards narrative or exposition" (147).

Thus, Idylls of the King remains a significant work in the Victorian literary canon, not only for its exploration of timeless themes but also for its representation of the complexities of human nature, morality, and social ideals. Tennyson's masterful use of imagery, symbolism, and musicality makes the work a profound meditation on the human experience. It addresses the eternal struggles between idealism and reality, order and chaos, and tradition and change. By encapsulating these universal concerns within the framework of Arthurian legend, Tennyson ensures that Idylls of the King continues to resonate with readers, offering insights into both the Victorian era and the broader human condition.

Cameron's Photography

Julia Margaret Cameron, who took photographs for Tennyson's poetry, was one of the earliest British photographers. She was active in the mid-19th century, around the same time as Tennyson. She is mostly known for her striking portraits and her use of short focus, which was quite unconventional for such an early period of the art of photography. Cameron was a friend of Tennyson and due to their friendship she produced a series of photographic illustrations for his Idylls of the King. She was born in Calcutta in 1815, and she was one of the six daughters of "the

Bengal civil servant James Pattle" as Charles W. Millard relates (187). In 1839, she married Charles Hay Cameron, and settled at Freshwater Bays on the Isle of Wight where she "moved in a circle that included Tennyson, Darwin, Carlyle, Browning, Ellen Terry, Sir John Herschel, and George Frederick Watts, all of whom she was to photograph" (Millard 187). Millard points out that she was "reportedly first given a camera by her daughter in 1863, on her 48th birthday" (187). As she was interested in amateur theatricals, her art of photography was influenced by her interest and thus she was "tender and demanding in her dealings with those she directed and photographed" (Millard 187). As a result of her talent and interest in creating mise-en-scène's, Tennyson requested her to "create some illustrations to the Idylls of the King for the "People's" (or Cabinet) edition of his works in preparation by Henry S. King and Co." (188).

Cameron's illustrations for Alfred Tennyson's work were created between 1874 and 1875. The photographs depicted scenes and characters from Idylls of the King and brings his poetry to life through photographs. Cameron's unique and artistic approach to portraits is visible in these images that she created for Tennyson's poems, since she searches for possibilities of capturing emotional and symbolic essence of Tennyson's narrative. It is important to note that she was not the only artist who illustrated Tennyson's poetry. Gustave Doré, who was born in 1832, produced wood-engraved illustrations, for which he gained worldwide reputation, on Tennyson's poems (Doré 7). Yet, the photographic illusions by Cameron reinforce the semantic influence of the poems by strongly emphasizing the mise-en-scène semiologically.

When Tennyson's poems and Cameron's photographs come together, they represent a convergence of literature and visual art that highlights the spirit of the Victorian era when particularly Tennyson's intellectual circle was involved with medievalism. This union showcases the efforts of artists to explore and interpret shared themes, enriching the cultural tapestry of their time. Tennyson and Cameron's collaborative works exemplify how different artistic mediums can complement and enhance each other, creating a more profound and multidimensional experience for the audience. Tennyson, with his evocative poetry, and Cameron, with her pioneering photographic techniques, each brought a unique perspective to their artistic endeavors. Tennyson's poetry, rich with imagery, symbolism, and rhythmic beauty, found a visual counterpart in Cameron's photographs, which often depicted scenes and characters from Tennyson's works. Cameron's photographs provided a visual representation that brought Tennyson's words to life, allowing readers to see the poetic imagery in a tangible form. Beverly Taylor points out Tennyson's argument that "art should focus on characters" in the same way as painting when he remakes to Millais saying that "if you have humans beings before a wall, the wall ought to be picturesquely painted" (60). The images' powerful impact on the meaning by light and picaresque setting is particularly dealt with here to distinguish this work from the earlier studies that usually focus on Medievalism in illusions.

This interplay between text and image enabled a deeper understanding and appreciation of the themes and emotions embedded in Tennyson's poems. Both Tennyson and Cameron played crucial roles in shaping the cultural and artistic landscape of the Victorian era. Tennyson, as the Poet Laureate, was a leading literary figure whose works were widely read and admired. His exploration of themes such as chivalry, honor, love, and loss resonated deeply with the Victorian public. Cameron, on the other hand, was a trailblazer in photography, transforming it from a mere mechanical process into a true art form. Her innovative use of soft focus and dramatic lighting, as well as her ability to capture the essence of her subjects, marked a significant departure from the rigid and formal style of early photography.

Their collaboration is a testament to the interdisciplinary nature of Victorian artistic endeavors which included joint artistic productions such as those of Doré's illustrations for Tennyson's poems. It reflects a period when Tennyson sought to break down the boundaries between different

forms of expression, believing that literature, visual art, and other mediums could inform and elevate one another. This synergy is evident in how Cameron's photographs not only illustrated Tennyson's texts but also interpreted and added new dimensions to his themes. Her images of characters like King Arthur, Guinevere, and Sir Galahad provided a visual narrative that complemented and expanded upon Tennyson's poetic vision. Furthermore, the partnership between Tennyson and Cameron highlights the Victorian era's broader cultural movements, such as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which emphasized a return to detail, vibrant colors, and complex compositions in both painting and literature. These movements were characterized by a deep appreciation for the past and a desire to infuse contemporary works with a sense of historical and emotional depth. Tennyson and Cameron, through their respective arts, embodied these ideals and contributed significantly to the Victorian aesthetic.

Julia Margaret Cameron had her friends and family members dressed in medieval clothes to pose for her and photographed them for Tennyson's epic. However, when she willingly accepted Tennyson's request to illustrate his poetry book with photographs, she did not envisage how her photographs would look reduced in scale in a poetry book. Then she had them reprinted in a deluxe edition to increase the effect of poetry through her photographic illustrations. In time, her portraits of family and friends reached a level of not only illustrating Tennyson's poems but also passing over the influence of poetry. Cameron's photographs, despite the technological difficulties of her age in printing photography, reflected the themes and characters of Tennyson's poems to carry their meanings further. Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs invite powerful analyses in connection with Tennyson's poetry from the semiological and narratological perspective and raise questions whether or not the themes and content of poetry could be enhanced by photographic images.

Narratology and Semiology

From the narratological perspective, Cameron's images turned poetry into a visible entry. Since narratology is traditionally accepted, as Monica Fludernik explains, to be a "sub-discipline of the study of literature" (9) with strong connections to poetics and to the semiotics, Cameron's contribution to Tennyson's poetry is open to semiological analyses as well. He not only employed poetic symbolism but also experimented lively descriptions that would help his readers to visualize what they were reading. Hence, a narratological reading appears to be a rather relevant way of reading Idylls. As in very well-known definition of John Berger, if "seeing comes before words" (Berger 7); narratology, in Fludernik's approach, is an analytic method that "resembles semiotics in so far as it analyses the constitution" of meaning in texts and contexts such as films or conversational narratives (Fludernik 9).

According to John Berger, an image is a "recreated of reproduced" sight, it is "an appearance, or a set of appearances" detached from "the place and time" where and when it first appeared (9). In Berger's views, the invention of the camera changed the way people saw and the visible "came to mean something different to them" (22). The semiological signs, according to Roland Barthes, let us "foresee the nature of the semiological sign in relation to the linguistics sign" and they consist of "signifier and a signified" with many semiological systems such as objects, gestures, pictorial images (41). Semiotics, therefore, as Daniel Chandler confirms, is a study of "visual signs" that help us comment on "drawings, paintings and photographs" (1-2). It involves not only studying the "signs in everyday speech", but also studying "everything that stands for something else", which means "signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects" (Chandler 2). The meaning of a sign does not present its relationship to other signs linguistically but it rather indicates the social context of its use (Chandler 9). A solely "text-based approach" to narrativity, on the other hand, puts aside "interesting issues," according to Fludernik, related to "its production, circulation and reception" (19). Therefore, a context "should be taken into account

when interpreting texts, particularly if the aim is an ideological or gender-specific reading" (Fludernik 20). For this reason, it is important to consider semiotic signs that support the context.

Adera Scheinker posits that the photographs created by Cameron for Tennyson's poems may be viewed as forms of "tableaux vivant" (34). Tableau vivant was a "popular Victorian parlor entertainment" and Cameron was renowned at that time to organize such events in the garden of her home (Scheinker 34). This form of entertainment included ornamental costumes to "recreate a theatrical setting" in which each participant was "positioned in a pose" that illustrated "a climactic moment in a particular literary scene" (Scheinker 34). When the required position was maintained, the participants froze in their positions for a few second to "allow the audience to admire the dramatic presentation" as Scheinker says (34). By this way, the players became a part of a living picture, or in other words a tableau vivant. Cameron's photographs are close examples of tableau vivant culture and they represent more than what conventional book illustrations show. Despite the fact that her photographs "are related to the text," in Scheinker's point of view, they are placed next to "excerpts from the poem" instead of being "inserted in to the full textual model" (35). Therefore, there is isolation between the images and the words and Cameron did not only attempt to "insert her images into Tennyson's already existing text structure", but instead of that she took out some framed fragments of the poems and put the next to her images to reproduce them (Scheinker 35). Yet, by doing so, she created another album of her photographs by adding some of Tennyson's lines next to the photographs and thus isolated her art from Tennyson's full text. Same as a tableau vivant that isolates "a moment in literature from the entire work" of literature, Cameron's volume also isolates the moments in tableau vivant from Tennyson's poem (Scheinker 35). In many Victorian novels, as Fludernik points out, "pars pro toto locutions are used extensively to identify characters: the man with the silken shirt, the boy in the red hat" which inevitably generates narrative tropes like "synecdoche and metonymy" that inherently constitute "a major role" in the introduction of the actors "in a narrative since they offer access to the social, spatial and visual contexts of the story" (44).

The utilization of props in this book is not solely attributed to Cameron. Tennyson also employed artifice to enrich his borrowed text. When crafting the Idylls, Tennyson situated Sir Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century legend within the Victorian cultural framework. By doing so, he rendered the legend acceptable to his contemporaries by emphasizing sin as the downfall of noble ideals. Tennyson refrains from fully embracing the fantasy by subtly incorporating modern elements. This results in a captivating interplay of appropriation and artifice throughout this work. Scheinker considers this focus "on a woman's power and knowledge" and asserts that the "overt artifice" that Cameron reveals is significant as it alerts "the seemingly subversive notion of the female appropriating knowledge from the male" (36).

The use of props and clearly orchestrated staging evokes the innocent, playful quality of the photograph, reminiscent of a tableau vivant. Cameron achieves this by situating the scene within the traditionally feminine domain of the tableau vivant. Similar to the female character in Eliot's narrative, Cameron operates within the confines of the socially acceptable space allotted to nineteenth-century women of her social class. Instead of making a bold statement about Vivien, Cameron engages with her as a director orchestrating a static tableau vivant, distancing herself from any implication as a portrayal of the villainous Vivien. Consequently, Cameron's adaptation of Tennyson's tale poses no threat; rather, it serves as a harmless reimagining of the story within the limited artistic vocabulary available to women, remaining safely within the realm of femininity. Scheinker argues that the artifice serves, at the same time, "a secondary purpose", that reminds the viewer of the unreal quality of the scene (36). Adera Scheinker also argues that it is "this same quality" exaggerated by Tennyson's artifices. Both Cameron and Tennyson use artifice to appeal to Victorian sensibilities. Cameron's circle of friends, like many Victorians, romanticized the

preindustrial past but were often unwilling to relinquish the technological advances on which they had learned to rely. They frequently viewed the middle ages through the structures of their industrialized world. As Eliot explained, an imitation may have more success than the original. Hence, the artifices present in this volume could have served a dual purpose for Cameron. They may have soothed Victorian viewers who preferred to view medievalism through an obviously artificial lens. Simultaneously, these elements could detach Cameron from affiliations with the evil Vivien. Cameron is able to offset the tangled hair, the white robes of knowledge, and the charged finger with fractured action, obvious props and tableau vivant artifice. Through these devices, Cameron controls the fantasy. In this way, the middle ages can be viewed from a safe distance. Simultaneously, Cameron asserts her position within the space allowed to Victorian women (Scheinker 36).

Fludernik suggests that within the narratives of novels and conversations, the concept of perspective, or in other terms the point of view and focalization, stands out as a metaphor (114). The reader visualizes events from the point of view of a character in a novel. In actual fact, though, the reader only sees letters on the page. Therefore metaphor of sight and seeing becomes the intentions of conveying the mimetic illusion achieved by the narrative technique (Fludernik 114). In the scene depicting the encounter of Vivien and Merlin, Cameron uses as models her husband Charles Hay and an unknown woman referred to as a lady who visits Freshwater[1] (See Image 1):

> For Merlin, over talk'd and overwork;
> Had yielded, told her all the charm, and slept.
> Then, in one moment, she put forth the charm
> Of woven paces and of waving hands,
> And in the hollow oak he lay as dead.
> And lost to life and use and name and fame. (Line 963-969)

Cameron's use of blurred images create a dream-like reality which reflects Tennyson's legendary style. In semiotics, suggests Fludernik, "we distinguish between three kinds of signs: deictic, iconic and symbolic" (102). As the image above suggests, iconic appearance of Merlin as a long, white-bearded man also symbolizes the deictic appearance of legendary heroes. In this part, Vivien follows the wise magician Merlin into the woods, and according to Scheinker, begins loving the elderly man in "an attempt to convince him to teach her an incantation" (34). In this image, Vivien freezes while she is preparing to put a spell on Merlin. The photographs blurred, dark and misty visualization of the characters reflect Tennyson's legendary mythification and idolization of Merlin. Particularly the use of pointing finger toward the forehead seems to be a striking image of "putting a spell". It should also be pointed out that these powerful photographs are designed not only as

Image 1: Cox & Colin, 2003, 480.

photographic images of the people, but also photographic images of poetic lines. Thus, the upright woman in white and solemn and dignified stance of a white-bearded male figure are not coincidental, as they exemplify an artistic and conscientious study by Cameron in order to increase the poetic effect.

Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs evoke praisal for their emotional depth, unconventional beauty and their challenges to the accepted norms of 19th century photography. She was always

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[1] All the images throughout the article are excerpted from "Cox, J. & Colin F. (2003). *Julia Margaret Cameron: The complete photographs*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications."

willing to experiment with the media to contribute to the evolution of photography not only as an artistic form but also as an expressive tool. Her style is usually characterized by soft focus, deliberate blurring of the subject and a strong emphasis on the emotional and spiritual aspects of her models instead of attaching herself to strict realism. She was interested in using long exposures which resulted in creating dreamlike and ethereal quality in her images, and this kind of technique moved her away from the dominant photographic understandings of her time.

Blurred, unclear images that Cameron created also help increase the emotional power of the poems. For instance (See Image 2):

> But - for her heard of Arthur newly crown'd,
> Tho' not with our an uproar made by those
> Who cried, 'He is not Uther's son' - the King
> Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us thou!
> For here between the man and beast we die.' (Lines 42-45)

1163

Vivien and Merlin
Agnes Mangles, Charles Hay Cameron
[1874]; copyright December 8, 1874
JPGM 84.XO.732.1.1.5
Image 2: Cox & Colin, 2003, 472.

In the image for the above lines; Arthur, in his deathbed, is visualized in a blurry photograph, creating a poignant and evocative image that generates feelings of farewell, grief, and loneliness. The use of blurriness in the photograph is not merely a technical flaw but a deliberate artistic choice. This technique softens the edges and details, creating an ethereal and dreamlike quality that emphasizes the transient nature of life and the inevitability of death. The blurriness symbolizes the fading presence of King Arthur, a legendary figure whose time is coming to an end. It reflects the emotional and physical decline of a once-mighty ruler, capturing the fragility and vulnerability of his final moments. The indistinct contours of Arthur's form evoke a sense of fading memory, as if he is already slipping away from the realm of the living and into the annals of myth and legend. This visual representation intensifies the feelings of farewell, as viewers are confronted with the stark reality of Arthur's impending departure. The blurred image serves as a metaphor for the uncertainty and ambiguity that accompanies death. It elicits a deep sense of grief, as those who admire and revere Arthur are forced to come to terms with the loss of a great leader and the end of an era. The photograph also conveys a profound sense of loneliness. In his final moments, Arthur is depicted as a solitary figure, isolated from the world he once ruled. The blurriness enhances this isolation, as if he is enveloped in a mist that separates him from his surroundings and the people he loves. This visual isolation mirrors the emotional isolation that often accompanies death, highlighting the personal and existential loneliness that Arthur experiences as he faces the unknown. Moreover, the aesthetic choice of blurriness aligns with the Victorian fascination with the supernatural and the afterlife. It evokes the idea of a liminal space, a threshold between life and death, reality and myth. Arthur's blurred form suggests that he is on the cusp of crossing over into another realm, enhancing the mystical and melancholic atmosphere of the scene.

She was an experimentalist. Her approach to the art of photography was revolutionary, as she welcomes imperfections like distorting the lens and creating blurriness. She used such techniques not as the defects of photography but as her artistic ornamentation. Her use of close-ups and unprecedented compositions made her work a distinctive one. Cameron often used a makeshift studio in the garden of her home on the Isle of Wight. She created elaborate sets and used natural

light to enhance the atmosphere of her photographs. Although she was not entirely known and celebrated during her life, Cameron's art has gained recognition for her talent in artistic arrangement of her subjects, which influenced later generations of photographers since her unconventional techniques led her to an important figure who would shape the characteristics of the art of photography in the 20th century. As Han Er states, Cameron used "oversized cameras to produce evocative portraits" that put forward her style as a pictorialist, as a consequence of improved lens qualities and decreased exposure times (118).

In another image about Merlin, Julia Margaret Cameron uses close-up, intimate, and touchy mise-en-scène to picturesquely dramatize the relationship between Vivien and Merlin. Her approach focuses on the emotional intensity and complexity of their interaction, bringing the characters to life with a depth and immediacy that draws the viewer into their world. By employing close-up shots, Cameron captures the subtle nuances of expression and gesture that convey the underlying tension and intrigue in the relationship between Vivien and Merlin. These shots allow viewers to see the minute details of the characters' faces, emphasizing their emotional states and the dynamics of their interaction. The proximity of the camera to the subjects creates a sense of intimacy, making the viewer feel as if they are witnessing a private, intense moment between the two characters. The intimate mise-en-scène further enhances this sense of closeness. Cameron's careful arrangement of the characters within the frame highlights the physical and emotional proximity between Vivien and Merlin. She often positions them in close quarters, with their bodies and faces turned toward each other, creating a palpable sense of connection and interaction. This arrangement not only draws attention to their relationship but also intensifies the drama of the scene, making the viewer feel the tension and magnetism between them. Cameron's use of touchy mise-en-scène adds another layer of emotional depth to the photographs. The physical contact between Vivien and Merlin, whether it is a gentle touch, a grasping hand, or an entwined embrace, conveys the power dynamics and the manipulation at play in their relationship. The tactile interactions are carefully staged to reflect the themes of seduction, control, and vulnerability that define their story. Through these physical gestures, Cameron dramatizes the psychological and emotional struggle between Vivien, the enchantress, and Merlin, the wise yet susceptible sage.

Additionally, the picturesque quality of Cameron's compositions adds to the dramatic effect. She employs soft lighting, blurred backgrounds, and carefully chosen props to create a visually appealing and evocative setting. This picturesque mise-en-scène not only enhances the aesthetic beauty of the photographs but also serves to underscore the mythical and legendary nature of the characters and their story. The combination of artistic elements creates a mood that is both romantic and mysterious, drawing viewers deeper into the narrative (See Image 3):

1190

The corpse of Elaine in the Palace of King Arthur
Charles Hay Cameron, William Warder, Mrs. Hardinge, two unknown men, unknown woman

[1875]
GEH 76:0024:0011

Image 3: Cox & Colin, 2003, 473.

> And there I saw Merlin, whose vast wit
> And hundred winters are but as the hands
> Of Loyal vassals toiling for their liege
> And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,
> Who knows a subtler magic than his own -
> Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
> She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword,
> Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist
> Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
> Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;
> But there was heard among the holy hymns
> A voice as of the waters, for she dwells

> Down in a deep - calm, whatsoever storms
> May shake the world - and when the surface rolls,
> Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord. (Lines 279-293)

Conclusion

Narratology in poetry extends beyond phonological and semantic patterns to encompass the structural design of lines and stanzas, which plays a vital role in shaping the poem's narrative and emotional resonance. The formal organization of poetry adds a unique dimension to the storytelling and meaning-making process. In the case of Alfred Lord Tennyson's work, this structural integrity is further enriched by the inclusion of visual imagery, notably through the photography of Julia Margaret Cameron. Cameron's artistic contributions, through her semiotic use of photography, not only accompany but elevate Tennyson's poetic lines by deepening the semantic layers of meaning.

Cameron's photographs do not only echo the text; they also serve as visual representations that offer a distinct, interpretative lens through which Tennyson's themes and imagery can be understood. While Tennyson's poetry evokes powerful emotions and vivid mental pictures, the subjective nature of textual interpretation means that readers may form varied and inconsistent images in their minds. Cameron's photographic work functions as a clarifying agent, grounding these variable interpretations in a more concrete visual form that enhances the thematic and emotional elements of the poetry. By doing so, Cameron bridges the gap between abstract poetic imagination and a more tangible representation of the poet's vision. This interplay between text and image not only intensifies the narrative but also makes the poet's work more accessible and vivid, offering a richer, multi-dimensional reading experience.

The collaboration between text and image, while offering a rich, multidimensional interpretation of poetry, can also introduce interpretive complexities. In the case of Julia Margaret Cameron's photographic contributions to Alfred Lord Tennyson's poetry, the interplay between these two art forms may not always create a faultless parallelism. One of the inherent challenges of such collaborations lies in the variability of readers' subjective responses. Each reader approaches a poem with a unique set of personal experiences, cultural frameworks, and emotional resonances that shape their visualization and understanding of the text. This individual engagement with a poem allows for a multiplicity of imagined worlds, each reader creating mental images that correspond to their interpretation of the poet's language.

Cameron's photographs, while artistically profound and deeply intertwined with the text, offer a single, specific visual interpretation. These images, by their very nature, may not fully encapsulate the diverse range of interpretations that readers might individually envision. This potential incongruity between a reader's imagined landscape and the fixed representation of Cameron's photographs underlines the subjectivity already inherent in both reading and viewing. The act of reading poetry is deeply personal, where meaning is negotiated in the space between the text and the reader's imaginative engagement. Cameron's visual interpretations, though insightful, reflect one possible reading among many, highlighting the complex, layered nature of literary and artistic interpretation.

Despite this potential for dissonance, Cameron's photographs invariably enhance the depth of Tennyson's poems. Her visual artistry adds new layers of meaning, offering not only an aesthetic complement but also an interpretative aid that intensifies the themes and emotions embedded within the poetry. By providing a concrete visual narrative, Cameron helps to evoke additional insights that may not be immediately accessible through the text alone. This process enriches the reader's experience, prompting a re-evaluation and deeper exploration of the poetry in light of the images. The visual context encourages readers to reconsider their interpretations, blending the

poet's words with the photographer's vision to produce a more comprehensive engagement with the text.

In conclusion, Cameron's photographs act as a form of semiotic amplification, deepening both the semantic and narrative complexity of Tennyson's poetry. Whether her images align with or diverge from the reader's imagination, they serve as a vital interpretive tool that expands the reader's understanding of the poetic work. The convergence of Tennyson's lyricism with Cameron's visual art creates a richly textured interplay, where words and images together invite readers into a multifaceted exploration of meaning, emotion, and theme. This collaboration transcends mere illustration, transforming the reader's encounter with the poem into an immersive, multidimensional experience that enhances both the literary and artistic dimensions of the work. Ultimately, the partnership between text and image in Tennyson and Cameron's work contributes to a more nuanced and expansive literary landscape, encouraging continuous reinterpretation and emotional discovery.

Acknowledgement

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Linguistics | research article

Comprehension of Ambiguous Idioms in Prefrontal Cortex: Evidence from rTMS

Belirsiz Deyimlerin Anlaşılmasında Prefrontal Korteksin Rolü: Bir rTMS Çalışması

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ABSTRACT

The cognitive processes related to idiom comprehension have been predominantly associated with neural mechanisms and conceptual mapping processes controlled by the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC). Although the role of the DLPFC in idiom comprehension has been extensively studied, ambiguous idioms—those with more than one acceptable meaning—have been relatively understudied in the neuroscientific literature. This study explores how the left and right DLPFC contribute to resolving ambiguous idioms, with a focus on understanding the neural mechanisms underlying conceptual mapping during the comprehension of such idioms. In the study, the left and right DLPFC regions of 15 native Turkish-speaking participants were temporarily inhibited using repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) to examine the role of prefrontal areas in the brain in resolving ambiguous idioms. Following the brain stimulation, participants engaged in an experiment that required them to interpret both literal sentences without figurative meaning and ambiguous idiomatic expressions in which all figurative interpretations were meaningful and plausible. The findings revealed that when left DLPFC was suppressed, participants' ability to accurately comprehend the figurative meanings of ambiguous idioms was significantly impaired, as evidenced by increased reaction times and decreased accuracy rates. In contrast, no significant impairment in processing ambiguous idioms was observed when the right DLPFC was suppressed. These findings suggest that the cognitive load involved in processing ambiguous idioms with multiple acceptable meanings is predominantly managed by the left hemisphere. This study provides insight into the functions of both the right and left prefrontal areas of the brain during the resolution of ambiguous linguistic units, offering further understanding of lateralization, a key phenomenon in the neuroscientific processes of language comprehension.

1. Introduction
1.1 Idioms, Ambiguity and Conceptual Mapping

Early definitions describe idioms as linguistic expressions composed of multiple words, where literal meanings are lost through conventionalization (Aksan, 2003, Palmer, 2001; Çotuksöken, 1998). These expressions represent a unique linguistic phenomenon where the sum of the parts does not equal the whole, making them particularly intriguing for linguists and cognitive scientists

alike. Idioms are seen as constructions with syntactic and semantic limitations, characterized by their fixed and culturally rooted nature (Arıca-Akkök, 2007). This fixed nature often reflects deep-seated cultural norms, beliefs, and values, which can make idioms challenging to translate or understand across different languages and cultural contexts. Cognitive approaches suggest idioms are conceptualizations shaped by thought systems and world knowledge (Lakoff, 1993). These conceptualizations often involve abstract thinking and the ability to understand metaphorical language, which is a key feature of human cognition. Despite the lack of a direct link between idiomatic and literal meanings, native speakers can infer the intended meaning, which involves complex cognitive processing (Bobrow & Bell, 1973; Weinreich, 1969). This inferential process relies heavily on the listener's ability to use context effectively, drawing on both linguistic and extralinguistic cues to resolve the inherent ambiguity in idiomatic expressions. The mental lexicon, where idioms are thought to be stored as fixed semantic units, plays a crucial role in this process, allowing for the rapid retrieval of figurative meanings before literal ones are even considered (Swinney & Cutler, 1979). This idea has been supported by numerous psycholinguistic studies, which suggest that the automaticity of idiom processing is a result of their frequent usage and the strong associative links that have been formed between the idiom's form and its meaning (Gibbs 1980; Cacciari & Tabossi, 1988).

Idiom comprehension is influenced by several factors such as familiarity, frequency, predictability, and ambiguity, which directly affect how they are perceived (Cronk, Lima, and Schweigert, 1993; Giora and Fein, 1999; Titone and Connine, 1999). Familiarity, in particular, is a crucial determinant of how quickly and accurately an idiom is processed. Idioms that are highly familiar to the speaker are often processed with greater ease and speed, due to the strengthened mental representations of these expressions. Frequency of use also contributes to the robustness of these representations in the mental lexicon, making it easier for speakers to retrieve and comprehend idiomatic expressions rapidly. Predictability within a given context can further facilitate comprehension, as it allows speakers to anticipate the occurrence of an idiom and prepare for its interpretation (Cacciari et al., 2007). As opposed to the facilitative effects of these factors, ambiguity adds a layer of complexity, as idioms with multiple potential meanings require the listener to engage in more sophisticated cognitive processing to determine the intended meaning.

The ambiguity phenomenon in idioms, which is the focus of this study, refers to the situation where some idioms have two meanings simultaneously (Lodge and Leach, 1975). This duality can manifest in various forms, such as idioms that have both a literal and a figurative meaning, or idioms that have multiple figurative meanings depending on the context. For instance, the English idiom "spill the beans" can mean both "to spill the beans" literally and "to reveal a secret" figuratively, depending on the context. This duality complicates processing and requires more cognitive load for inference based on the context. The complexity of such idioms lies not only in their dual meanings but also in the cognitive effort required to navigate these meanings and arrive at the correct interpretation. Similarly, the Turkish idiom "*söz kesmek*" contains two different and possible meanings. To determine which meaning is used in a communicative setting, the listener must operate mental processes such as conceptual mapping, combining the speaker's intent with contextual information at that moment. Conceptual mapping is a cognitive process that organizes, structures, and connects ideas, concepts, and information into a network of associations. This process is essential for understanding language, particularly when it comes to figurative language, which often involves abstract and non-literal meanings (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, Jackendoff, 1992). The relationship between idiom comprehension and conceptual mapping has been an interesting topic within cognitive linguistics and psychology. Researchers have explored how conceptual mapping enables people to comprehend and make sense of complex information by establishing mental links between various concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). When we encounter an ambiguous idiom, our cognitive system must activate and select the appropriate conceptual

mappings to accurately interpret it. This involves three key stages: (1) Contextual Activation: The context activates relevant meanings (Swinney & Cutler 1979; Tabossi & Zardon, 1993). For example, if the conversation is about sleeping, the 'go to bed' meaning of 'hit the sack' is more likely to come up. (2) Mapping Selection: Based on the context, the brain chooses the best acceptable meaning from among several options. (3) Integration: The chosen meaning is then integrated into the wider context to ensure consistent understanding (Hagoort, 2007). These stages highlight the flexibility and adaptability of the cognitive system in navigating linguistic ambiguities (Gibbs et al., 1989).

An early study by Cacciari and Glucksberg (1991) proposed that figurative expressions activate frontal regions of the brain responsible for the linguistic analysis of the expression. Especially, the language-related functions of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) encompass several elements of language processing, including discourse management, semantic integration, interpretation of the nonliteral meaning, inference making, and ambiguity resolution. These functions are critical for the successful comprehension of idiomatic expressions, which often require the integration of multiple levels of meaning. Non-invasive brain stimulation studies have revealed that stimulation of the prefrontal areas, particularly the DLPFC, clearly impaired the comprehension of idiomatic expressions (Fogliata et al., 2007). This suggests that the DLPFC is not only involved in the comprehension of literal language but is also crucial for interpreting more complex and abstract language forms, such as idioms. The DLPFC's role in managing cognitive control and executive functions further underscores its importance in processing the nuanced and context-dependent meanings of idiomatic expressions. A transcranial magnetic stimulation study by Rizzo et al. (2007) observed that after applying inhibitory repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) to the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC), -also known as the "cognitive control region"- participants' idiom processing was impaired. This finding supports the idea that the DLPFC plays a pivotal role in managing the cognitive load associated with idiom comprehension, particularly when the idioms are ambiguous and require the integration of multiple possible meanings. Hauser et al. (2016) suggested that left ventrolateral prefrontal cortex (VLPFC) stimulation affected the processing of idioms, further indicating that different regions within the prefrontal cortex may contribute to various aspects of figurative language processing. Kurada et al. (2021) found that left DLPFC functions are more critical when referring to the figurative associations of the idioms, adding to the growing body of evidence that highlights the importance of this brain region in the nuanced interpretation of language. Behavioral and imaging studies have also demonstrated that the right hemisphere (RH) plays a role in resolving semantic ambiguity and understanding the figurative aspects of language (Anaki et al., 1998; Brownell et al., 1990, Bottini et al., 1994; Faust & Chiarello, 1998; Mashal et al., 2005, 2007; Pobric et al., 2008; Eviatar & Just 2006). Giora (2005) claimed that the right hemisphere is involved in processing non-salient interpretations and has a special role in ambiguity resolution. An fMRI study (Mashal et al., 2008) suggested that RH areas are involved in semantic ambiguity resolution and in processing non-salient meanings of conventional idiomatic expressions. According to Beeman (1998) and Jung-Beeman (2005), both hemispheres are engaged in semantic activation, integration, and selection of meaning when processing figurative language; however, the right hemisphere (RH) is more tuned to establishing relationships between weak and dispersed semantic information, organizing pragmatic information, and reinterpreting language stimuli (Beeman, 1998; Beeman & Chiarello, 1998; Jung-Beeman, 2005). These findings suggest that while the left hemisphere, particularly the DLPFC, is involved in the more structured and direct aspects of language processing, the right hemisphere contributes to the broader and more integrative aspects of meaning construction.

Based on these controversial findings in the literature, this study sought to examine the role of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) in the comprehension of ambiguous idioms, which requires

complex conceptual mapping. Specifically, we aimed to investigate how the temporary suppression of activity in both the right and left DLPFC, using repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS), affects the processing of ambiguous idioms. Through this approach, we aimed to elucidate the contribution of each hemisphere's DLPFC to the cognitive mechanisms underlying idiomatic language comprehension. By examining the effects of TMS on each hemisphere, we sought to determine if the suppression would primarily affect the processing of the literal or the idiomatic interpretation of the ambiguous expressions.

This research contributes to our understanding of how different regions of the brain are involved in the complex task of language processing and highlights the importance of the DLPFC in managing the cognitive processes required for interpreting ambiguous idioms, especially in contexts where both literal and figurative meanings coexist. By investigating the effects of TMS on the right and left DLPFC, this study aims to shed light on the specific roles these brain regions play in the comprehension of idiomatic expressions, offering a deeper insight into the lateralization of language functions in the human brain.

2. Method
2.1 Participants

The study included 15 right-handed volunteers (9 males, 6 females, age range: 18-24 years, mean age: 21.04, SD: 0.71) who were monolingual native Turkish speakers, university students, and had no neurological or psychological health issues. Right-handedness was controlled to account for potential hemispheric dominance effects on language processing (Nalçacı, Kalaycıoğlu, Güneş & Çiçek, 2002). Participants were screened for contraindications to rTMS application, following Wassermann's (1998) guidelines, including a detailed medical history to ensure no epilepsy, history of seizures, or implanted medical devices were present. Strict inclusion criteria ensured all participants had no history of language, speech, hearing impairments, or psychiatric/neurological diseases like epilepsy, depression, or anxiety. A pre-screening questionnaire covered health and lifestyle factors that might influence study outcomes or pose risks during rTMS sessions. Participants were informed about the nature of the study, including the rTMS procedure, the tasks they would be required to perform, and the potential risks involved. All participants provided informed consent prior to their involvement in the study, in accordance with the ethical standards outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Ankara University, ensuring that all procedures adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. Participants were compensated for their time and effort with a small monetary reward, and they were debriefed at the end of the study regarding the aims and expected outcomes of the research.

2.2 Experimental Stimuli

The study's experimental stimuli comprised three categories: (1) ambiguous idioms, (2) literal expressions, and (3) filler items. To ensure the robustness of the stimuli, a comprehensive screening process was employed. A total of 11,216 idioms were initially sourced from the Turkish Language Association's Current Turkish Idioms Dictionary (April, 2009). After a rigorous selection process involving a panel of expert linguists to confirm the ambiguity of idioms that could be interpreted in both a literal and figurative sense, 10 idioms in the form [EÖ AÖ E] (subject-object-verb order) with two words in basic word order were selected. These idioms, such as "söz kesmek," (*to interrupt* or *getting engaged*) were chosen due to their dual interpretative potential. For the control sentences, 10 literal expressions were selected, ensuring that they had no figurative meaning and matched the idioms in syntactic structure ([EÖ AÖ E]) regarding the word order. The selection of these literal sentences aimed to maintain structural consistency with the idioms, allowing for a direct comparison between literal and figurative processing. In addition, three target

words were meticulously matched with each stimulus to further test comprehension and reaction times. For instance, for the idiom "söz kesmek," two related target words e.g., "nişan" (engagement) and "kabalık" (rudeness) and one unrelated target word e.g., "silgi" (eraser) were selected. These target words were carefully chosen and compared for frequency using the Turkish National Corpus (TNC, Aksan et al., 2016) to ensure that they were appropriately matched in terms of usage frequency, thus controlling for any potential confounding variables related to word familiarity or frequency effects.

To create a balanced experimental design and prevent participants from adopting any specific strategies during the task, an additional set of 20 idioms was included as filler items. These fillers were carefully selected to maintain numerical balance between the experimental conditions, ensuring that the participants remained engaged and that their responses were not biased towards any particular category of stimuli. Moreover, all experimental stimuli were meticulously matched for psycholinguistic properties, such as sentence length (idioms: M = 2.06, SD = 1.34; literal sentences: M = 2.11, SD = 1.31), predictability (idioms: M = 4.25, SD = 3.34; literal sentences: M = 4.31, SD = 3.41), and familiarity (idioms: M = 4.29, SD = 3.24; literal sentences: M = 4.33, SD = 3.30). These matching procedures were critical in ensuring that any differences in processing were attributable to the ambiguity and idiomatic nature of the expressions rather than other linguistic factors. Finally, all the experimental stimuli were digitized and transferred into a computer environment using the SuperLab.5 stimulus presentation software. This software was specifically chosen for its ability to precisely measure reaction times and accuracy, allowing for detailed analysis of the participants' responses. An evaluation experiment was then created, which provided a controlled setting to test the impact of DLPFC suppression on the comprehension of ambiguous idioms, with a focus on both literal and figurative interpretations.

2.3 Procedure
2.3.1 Brain Stimulation with rTMS

The study employed a standard inhibitory repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) protocol that adhered to established TMS safety guidelines (Wassermann, 1998). This protocol was selected to ensure both the effectiveness and safety of the brain stimulation procedures. Participants underwent brain stimulation and subsequent judgment experiments across three separate sessions, designed to target the right DLPFC, the left DLPFC, and a control condition without brain stimulation (no TMS session). This within-subject design allowed for a direct comparison of the effects of rTMS on idiomatic comprehension, isolating the role of each hemisphere's DLPFC in processing ambiguous idioms. The rTMS was delivered using a MagLite magnetic stimulation device equipped with a figure-8 TMS coil. Each wing of the coil had an outer diameter of approximately 95 mm, capable of producing a peak magnetic field of around 1.5 Tesla. The figure-8 coil configuration is commonly used in TMS research due to its ability to focus the magnetic field on a specific brain region, enhancing the precision of cortical stimulation. To accurately target the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) in both the right and left hemispheres, coil placement on the skull was determined using the internationally recognized EEG 10-20 system. Specifically, the coil was positioned over the areas corresponding to F3 (left DLPFC) and F4 (right DLPFC), which are standard locations for stimulating the DLPFC. The Beam/F3 Method was employed to identify these locations (Beam et al., 2009). This method involves measuring the surface distances between the nasion (the midpoint between the eyes), the inion (the prominent point at the lower rear of the skull), and the tragus (the small, pointed eminence of the external ear). These measurements provide a reliable and reproducible way to locate the DLPFC for experimental purposes. The Beam/F3 Method has been extensively validated in the literature, with studies demonstrating that it is as effective as more sophisticated neuronavigation techniques, such as MRI-guided neuronavigation, in localizing the DLPFC (Mir-Moghtadaei et al.,

2015). This validation underscores the method's utility in experimental settings where access to neuronavigation may be limited or impractical.

Before beginning the rTMS procedures, participants were thoroughly assessed for any contraindications to TMS, such as a history of seizures, metal implants in the head, or other relevant medical conditions. This step was crucial to ensure participant safety and to minimize the risk of adverse effects during the stimulation sessions. During the rTMS sessions, participants were positioned comfortably on a stretcher with their heads securely stabilized to prevent movement, which could affect the precision of the stimulation. The rTMS was then applied to the DLPFC location identified by the Beam/F3 Method, at a strength of 10% above the individual's active motor threshold (AMT) at that moment (i.e., 110% of AMT). The stimulation was delivered at a frequency of 1 Hz for a total duration of 15 minutes, amounting to 900 stimulations per session. This specific protocol is known to induce temporary suppression of cognitive functions associated with the stimulated brain region, effectively creating a temporary "virtual lesion" that allows researchers to study the impact of reduced DLPFC activity on task performance. The neuromodulatory effects of this 15-minute inhibitory rTMS protocol are known to last approximately 30 to 40 minutes, providing a window during which the cognitive functions mediated by the DLPFC are suppressed. This time frame was utilized to conduct the subsequent judgment experiments, ensuring that the effects of the rTMS were active during the critical period of idiom comprehension. Importantly, participants reported no side effects during or after the rTMS stimulation, indicating that the protocol was well-tolerated and that the safety procedures were effective. To further safeguard participant well-being and to avoid carryover effects, brain stimulation sessions were spaced at least one week apart. Additionally, the order of the sessions (right DLPFC, left DLPFC, and noTMS) was randomized for each participant, reducing the potential for order effects and enhancing the validity of the findings.

2.3.2 Experimental Task Procedure

Immediately after the inhibitory brain stimulation to the DLPFC using rTMS, participants underwent the idiom judgment experiment. This experiment was designed to measure processing efficiency and reaction times in milliseconds, providing insights into the cognitive impact of DLPFC suppression on ambiguous idiom comprehension. The entire experiment was conducted in a controlled computer environment using the SuperLab.5 stimulus presentation software, paired with a response key system to accurately capture participants' reactions. Before the main experiment began, participants completed a practice session involving five stimuli to familiarize themselves with the procedure and ensure they understood the task. This practice session was crucial for minimizing any learning effects during the actual experiment and ensuring that participants were comfortable with the task demands.

The experimental procedure started with the presentation of a fixation cross ("+") on the screen, which was displayed for 500 milliseconds. This served as a trigger for participants to prepare for the upcoming stimulus. Following this, an idiom sentence, such as "*söz kesmek*," (to interrupt) was displayed for 2000 milliseconds. This duration was chosen to allow participants enough time to read and process the idiom without overwhelming their cognitive resources. After the idiom disappeared, a second fixation point appeared on the screen for 750 milliseconds, serving as a brief interlude before the target word was presented. The target word, which reflected either the first or second meaning of the idiom or was entirely unrelated, was then displayed for a very short duration of 250 milliseconds. This brief presentation aimed to simulate natural reading conditions and to test the immediacy of the participants' semantic processing. Following the target word, a question mark appeared on the screen, indicating that participants had 2000 milliseconds to respond. At this stage, they were asked to press the blue button if they perceived a semantic relationship between the idiom and the target word, or the red button if they did not detect any

semantic relationship. This response mechanism was designed to probe participants' ability to access and identify all possible meanings of the idiom under the influence of DLPFC suppression. To ensure the validity and reliability of the experiment, the types of stimuli—including literal sentences, idioms, and filler items—were presented in a mixed order. This randomized presentation was crucial for preventing participants from predicting the type of stimulus and developing response strategies, which could potentially bias the results. This randomization was applied not only within each session but also across the rTMS sessions themselves, ensuring that any potential order effects were minimized. Thus, the order of experimental conditions (right and left DLPFC stimulation) was also presented in a mixed order for each session.

Reaction times and accuracy values for each stimulus were automatically recorded by the SuperLab.5 software, ensuring precise and unbiased data collection. The experiment was conducted in a soundproof room, different from where the rTMS applications were performed, to eliminate any potential auditory distractions that could interfere with the participants' concentration. Participants completed the experiment alone, further ensuring that their responses were not influenced by external factors. The entire semantic judgment experiment lasted approximately 15 minutes, which was sufficient to gather the necessary data without causing fatigue or loss of focus among the participants. The experiment was conducted on a 16.5-inch monitor with a 60 Hz refresh rate, providing clear and consistent visual stimuli. Prior to starting the experiment, the distance between the participants and the screen was carefully measured and set at 60 cm to standardize the viewing conditions and ensure consistency across all sessions. This approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of the effects of DLPFC suppression on idiom comprehension, with each participant serving as their own control across different conditions.

3. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using linear mixed-effects models created with the lme4 package (version 1.1-23) in R (R Core Team, 2013; Bates et al., 2015). The lmer() function was used for reaction time analysis, and the glmer() function for accuracy data analysis. For reaction time analysis, fixation times less than two and a half times the difference from the mean ($\mu_i - (\sigma_i \times 2.5)$) and more than two and a half times the sum of the mean stabilization times and standard deviation ($\mu_i + (\sigma_i \times 2.5)$) were excluded from the analysis. Outlier exclusion resulted in a 4% data loss. Additionally, filler items and practice session data were excluded at this stage. The primary dependent variables in this study were reaction time and accuracy. Reaction time data provided insights into how quickly participants could process and respond to the stimuli, reflecting the efficiency of cognitive processing under different experimental conditions. Accuracy data, on the other hand, offered information about the correctness of participants' responses, shedding light on their ability to comprehend and correctly interpret the ambiguous idioms presented to them. By analyzing both reaction time and accuracy, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive picture of the cognitive processes involved in idiom comprehension, particularly under the influence of DLPFC suppression. These analytical approaches ensured that the study's findings were based on robust and reliable data, allowing for meaningful interpretations and conclusions to be drawn about the effects of rTMS on idiomatic language processing.

4. Results

Initially, we compared reaction time and accuracy data across the different experimental sessions. The accuracy analysis revealed a notable decrease in accuracy when rTMS was applied to the left DLPFC, compared to the session targeting the right DLPFC (Left DLPFC: M = 0.792, SD = 0.406; Right DLPFC: M = 0.808, SD = 0.394). Additionally, the control session, where no rTMS was administered, showed a significantly higher accuracy rate than both stimulation conditions (No_TMS: M = 0.883, SD = 0.322). However, it is important to note that the difference in accuracy

rates was statistically significant only between the control session and the left DLPFC session (p < 0.05), indicating a specific effect related to the left hemisphere stimulation. However, the difference in accuracy rates was statistically significant only between the control session and the left DLPFC session (p < 0.05, Cohen's d = 0.55), indicating a specific effect related to the left hemisphere stimulation.

Significant findings were also observed in reaction times. Reaction times during the left DLPFC session were notably longer compared to the right DLPFC session (Left DLPFC: M = 666.333 ms, SD = 351.033; Right DLPFC: M = 572.242 ms, SD = 306.732). Moreover, reaction times in the control session, where no rTMS was applied, were significantly shorter than in both stimulation conditions (No TMS: M = 503.975 ms, SD = 264.226). Statistical analyses further confirmed that the difference between the No TMS condition and both stimulation conditions was significant (p < 0.05, Cohen's d = 0.62). The linear mixed-effects models (lme4 package in R) incorporated random intercepts for participants and fixed effects for condition. The models confirmed a significant main effect of condition on both accuracy and reaction times (β = 0.45, SE = 0.12, t = 3.75, p < 0.001 for accuracy; β = 0.37, SE = 0.10, t = 3.40, p = 0.001 for reaction times).

When analyzing the effects of brain stimulation on different types of stimuli, we found that the reaction time for ambiguous idioms was significantly longer than for literal expressions in the left DLPFC session, with this difference reaching statistical significance ($F(1, 58)$ = 15.67, p < 0.001). Similarly, accuracy rates for ambiguous idioms were lower than for literal expressions in the left DLPFC session, with this difference also being statistically significant ($F(1, 58)$ = 20.89, p < 0.001). These findings suggest that left DLPFC stimulation particularly affects the processing of ambiguous idioms, likely due to the increased cognitive demands associated with resolving their dual meanings. In contrast, no significant difference in reaction times or accuracy rates between literal and ambiguous idioms was observed during the right DLPFC session (p > 0.05), indicating that the right DLPFC may not play as crucial a role in this specific aspect of idiom processing.

Finally, when examining the effects of brain stimulation on the processing of multiple semantic references within idioms, it was observed that reaction times for the figurative meanings of ambiguous idioms in the left DLPFC session were significantly longer than for their literal meanings, with this difference being statistically significant ($F(1, 58)$ = 18.34, p < 0.001). Similarly, the accuracy rates for correctly matching idioms with their figurative meanings in the left DLPFC session were lower than for their literal meanings, with this difference again reaching statistical significance ($F(1, 58)$ = 22.76, p < 0.001). These findings underscore the critical role of the left DLPFC in the retrieval and processing of figurative meanings of idioms. Interestingly, in the right DLPFC session, no significant difference in reaction time or accuracy rate was found between the figurative and literal meanings of ambiguous idioms (p > 0.05), suggesting that the right DLPFC may not be as involved in these specific retrieval processes.
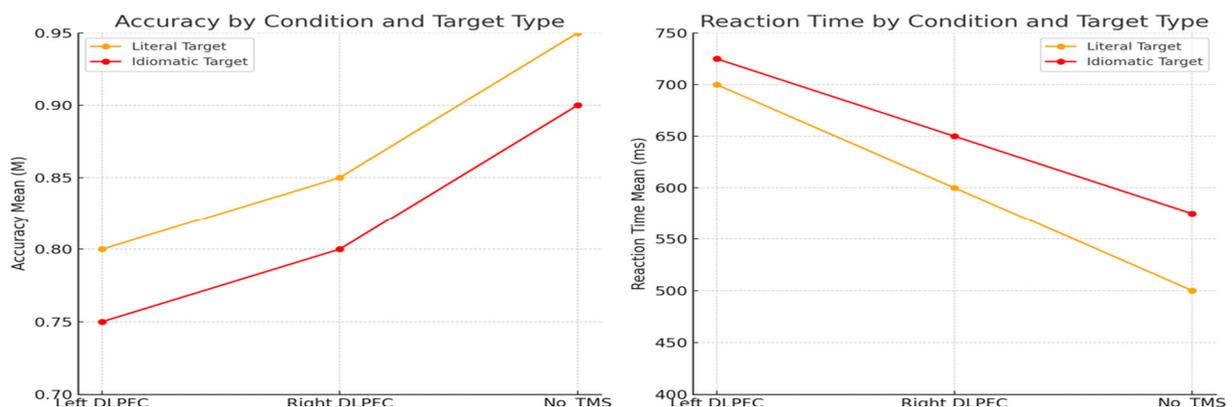
Figure 1. Accuracy and Reaction Time by Condition and Target Type in Experimental Task

Figure 1 summarizes the accuracy and reaction time for both literal and idiomatic target words across different conditions (Left DLPFC, Right DLPFC, and No TMS). The results indicate that left DLPFC stimulation notably decreased, accuracy and increased reaction times, particularly for idiomatic meanings. In contrast, the No TMS condition showed the highest accuracy and the shortest reaction times, highlighting the critical role of the left DLPFC in the retrieval of figurative meanings in idiom comprehension.

5. Discussion

In this study, we investigated the effects of repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) on the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC), specifically focusing on how this brain region influences the processing of ambiguous idioms. By temporarily suppressing activity in the left and right DLPFC, we aimed to understand the contributions of these areas to the cognitive mechanisms involved in idiomatic language comprehension, particularly in resolving ambiguity between literal and figurative meanings. Our findings revealed that the left DLPFC plays a crucial role in the retrieval and processing of figurative meanings in ambiguous idioms. When rTMS was applied to the left DLPFC, participants showed significantly longer reaction times and lower accuracy rates when interpreting figurative meanings, compared to literal meanings. This suggests that the left DLPFC is particularly involved in the conceptual mapping processes that are necessary to resolve the ambiguity in idiomatic expressions.

These results align with the findings of earlier studies that have emphasized the importance of the DLPFC in language processing, particularly in tasks requiring the interpretation of figurative language (Rizzo et al., 2007; Fogliata et al., 2007; Kurada et al., 2021). For instance, Rizzo et al. (2007) observed that rTMS applied to the DLPFC impaired participants' ability to process idiomatic expressions, reinforcing the idea that this region is integral to managing the complexities of figurative language. Our study extends this understanding by highlighting the specific role of the left DLPFC in managing the ambiguity inherent in idiomatic expressions.

The conceptual mapping process, which is crucial for interpreting ambiguous idioms, is thought to be heavily reliant on the prefrontal cortex, particularly the DLPFC. Cognitive theories, such as those proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), suggest that idioms are conceptualizations shaped by thought systems and world knowledge, rather than mere linguistic expressions. Our findings support this view, as the suppression of the left DLPFC, which is deeply involved in executive functions and conceptual mapping, led to significant difficulties in processing figurative meanings. This aligns with the research by Cacciari & Glucksberg (1991), who demonstrated the critical role of the prefrontal cortex in the linguistic analysis of figurative expressions. Furthermore, the findings from our study are consistent with those of Swinney and Cutler (1979), who argued that idioms are stored as fixed semantic units in the mental lexicon, with figurative meanings being accessed more readily than literal ones. The impairment observed in the figurative meaning processing during the left DLPFC session suggests that this area may be crucial for accessing and integrating these fixed semantic representations.

Role of Conceptual Mapping in Ambiguous Idiom Processing

The cognitive process of conceptual mapping is central to resolving the ambiguity in idiomatic expressions. When faced with an ambiguous idiom, the brain must activate and select from multiple potential mappings based on contextual information. This process is particularly demanding in idioms where both literal and figurative meanings are plausible, as it requires the integration of context with stored semantic knowledge to arrive at the intended meaning. Our results suggest that the left DLPFC is essential for facilitating these conceptual mapping processes, especially when the task involves retrieving and integrating figurative meanings. The significant impact of left DLPFC suppression on both reaction times and accuracy rates indicates that this

brain region is heavily involved in managing the cognitive load associated with resolving idiom ambiguity. Interestingly, no significant differences were found between the processing of figurative and literal meanings in the right DLPFC session. This finding suggests that while the right DLPFC contributes to language processing, its role may be more generalized or related to broader aspects of language comprehension, such as semantic integration or the resolution of more subtle ambiguities. This is in line with the work of Beeman (1998) and Jung-Beeman (2005), who proposed that the right hemisphere is more involved in processing non-salient interpretations and establishing connections between dispersed semantic information.

Implications for Idiom Comprehension and Brain Lateralization

The results of this study have important implications for our understanding of idiom comprehension and the lateralization of language functions in the brain. The distinct roles of the left and right DLPFCs in processing ambiguous idioms highlight the lateralized nature of language processing. While the left DLPFC appears to be specialized for tasks involving the retrieval of figurative meanings and conceptual mapping, the right DLPFC may play a more supportive role in handling broader semantic and integrative functions. These findings also contribute to the ongoing debate in the literature regarding the lateralization of language functions. Previous research has shown that the right hemisphere plays a role in resolving semantic ambiguity and understanding the figurative aspects of language (Anaki et al., 1998; Brownell et al., 1990; Bottini et al., 1994). However, our study suggests that the left DLPFC is more critically involved when the task demands the resolution of idiom ambiguity through conceptual mapping, particularly in accessing and integrating figurative meanings. The results also suggest that idiom comprehension, particularly when dealing with ambiguous idioms, requires a complex interplay of cognitive processes that are distributed across both hemispheres but are differentially engaged depending on the specific demands of the task. The left DLPFC's role in managing the retrieval of figurative meanings, as demonstrated by the significant impairment observed when this area was suppressed, highlights the importance of this region in the overall process of idiom comprehension.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides robust evidence for the critical role of the left DLPFC in the processing of ambiguous idioms, particularly in tasks that require the retrieval of figurative meanings through conceptual mapping. The findings contribute to our understanding of the neural mechanisms underlying idiom comprehension and offer new insights into the lateralization of language functions in the brain. Future research should continue to explore the specific contributions of the left and right DLPFCs to different aspects of language processing, with a particular focus on how these regions interact during the comprehension of complex and ambiguous linguistic expressions. Overall, our study highlights the crucial role of the left DLPFC in the cognitive processing of idiomatic language, particularly in tasks involving the retrieval of figurative meanings. The differential effects observed between the left and right DLPFC sessions provide important insights into the lateralized functions of the prefrontal cortex in language comprehension, particularly, in understanding idioms.

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Corpus Stylistic Analysis of Plague in Orhan Pamuk's *Nights of Plague* and Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*

Orhan Pamuk'un *Veba Geceleri* ve Daniel Defoe'nun *Veba Yılı Günlüğü* Eserlerinde Veba Temasının Derlem Biçembilimsel Analizi

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on corpus stylistics techniques, we analysed *Nights of Plague* and *A Journal of the Plague Year* by comparatively uncovering the keywords, clusters, and thematic signals by dint of Sketch Engine as an innovative corpus tool. Analysing each novel centering around "plague, political issues, fear, and panic in England and Minger Island", the study attempted to explore how Defoe and Pamuk represent the plague through characters and events. Top-down and bottom-up approaches followed statistical and contextual patterns and associations based on the analysis of "perception of disease." Log-likelihood and frequency contributed to the interpretation of the data. The main theme of "plague" affects both the characters and events and is explored in terms of the impact of disease, highlighting similarities and differences in commonly used lexical patterns. This analysis brings a recent global perspective to the concept of "plague" by examining its devastating effects.

Introduction

The combination of corpus linguistics and literary stylistics refers to corpus stylistics, which offers new insights into literary texts thorough a systematic exploration. Being an empirical interdisciplinary approach, corpus stylistics makes the connection between literary interpretations and linguistic patterns. While corpus linguistics contributes to the field of corpus stylistics in analysing literary texts through the use of corpus tools, corpus stylistics deal with stylistic frameworks, theories as well as models in corpus analysis with various tools assisting the analysis of texts (Mclntyre & Walker,2019). In this regard, the corpus approach plays a key role in literary analysis and in examining sorts of linguistic patterns in texts. The particular linguistic patterns are uncovered to help interpretation, and readable data represents the language of literature not easily detectible by human eye. In this perspective, linguistic analysis plays a vital role in providing insights into literary texts while offering a holistic understanding (Mahlberg, 2007). Leech indicates that stylistics reveals language and the system of language while the stylistic features in this context also yield to the examination of the texts based on a set of linguistic

framework through corpora (Leech, 2008). Analysing a writer's individual style in an interdisciplinary fashion with regard to the particular language use, corpus stylistics leads to decoding hidden layers objectively in a text, improving techniques for encoding the meaning of language based on the aim of the approach. The analysis provides another perspective on a particular writer, the style of particular work, and the particular period by examining the stylistic features thoroughly (Mahlberg, 2007). In this respect, corpus tools provide great opportunities to analyse literary texts by effectively enabling the comparison of individual works, collections, or language variety as well as the exploration of new aspects through the software while datasets do not propound new knowledge of the language (McEnery & Wilson, 2001). Stockwell and Whiteley (2014) pointed that the essential purpose of research is centering upon the evidence to extrapolate from large corpus data while revealing the qualities of each text and literary interpretation as an objective methodological tool with the guidance of subjective interpretation. Innovative tools prevent overinterpretation and misconstruction in the analysis of literary texts and the application of corpus methods in this respect focuses on notable features of the texts, propounding the relevant findings for corpus stylistics analysis. Apart from providing quantitative data, Malberg suggests that the corpus linguistic approach provides categories for linguistic phenomena such as collocation and keywords (Mahlberg, 2007).

Key studies demonstrate how corpus tools can reveal unique insights into literary language that might not be as apparent through traditional close reading. For instance, Semino and Short (2004) applied corpus stylistics to study reported speech and thought in 20th-century fiction, highlighting distinct narrative styles and voice representation patterns. Their findings underscored how corpus-based approaches allow researchers to observe stylistic nuances across larger datasets, providing empirical support for previously theorized stylistic conventions. Another influential work, Mahlberg's (2015) Corpus Stylistics and Dickens's Fiction, leverages corpus analysis to uncover recurring clusters and keywords in Charles Dickens's novels, showing how Dickens creates vivid social worlds through specific linguistic patterns. Mahlberg's research highlights the potential of corpus tools, like keyword analysis, to elucidate authors' characteristic styles and thematic motifs. Culpeper (2002) used corpus techniques to analyse the dialogue in Romeo and Juliet, focusing on the keywords and collocations associated with each character. By examining word frequency and word clusters, Culpeper identified unique language patterns that distinguish characters' social roles, emotions, and relationships. This study highlights how corpus methods can reveal insights into character construction and thematic expression in literary works. In Style in Fiction, Leech and Short (2007) used corpus stylistics to examine the stylistic features of different genres, focusing on lexical and grammatical patterns that define specific literary styles. One notable study within the book compared the use of foregrounded language in fiction and nonfiction, showing how corpus data can uncover subtle stylistic choices that contribute to a text's emotional impact or tone. Their research demonstrated how stylistic features like lexical density and syntactic complexity play a role in shaping readers' responses to different genres.

Our study aimed to analyse two significant novels which are A Journal of the Plague Year by Daniel Defoe and Nights of Plague by Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk by examining how both authors depict the plague through their characters and events. This analysis is guided by three research questions:

1. What kind of relationship is revealed through corpus analysis between the keywords, thematic signals, and clusters in A Journal of the Plague Year and Nights of Plague?"
2. How can thematic foci be identified using the Sketch Engine corpus tool?
3. What are the relations of thematic foci with keywords, thematic signals, and clusters?

We basically adopted a corpus stylistics approach through which the identification of thematic signals, keywords, and clusters were comparatively analysed. The language of *A Journal of Plague*

Year and *Nights of Plague* was analysed by using corpus stylistic techniques based on thematic foci in both novels through a quantitative approach. The analysis yielded significant findings related to the thematic categorizations of the two novels under study. By doing so, we tried to obtain common thematic and stylistic features as well as clusters and keywords in comparative terms and the findings were used to make literary interpretations of the two novels. There is no corpus-driven study on the analysis of *A Journal of Plague Year* and *Nights of Plague* based on the plague and literary texts in the literature. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap.

1. Analysis of Literary Texts in the Study

Orhan Pamuk published *Nights of Plague* in 2021. The novel is about the effects of the plague on the Ottoman Empire, and Pamuk represents love, politics, quarantine, and the state in the expanding wave of infection. Daniel Defoe, on the other hand, published A Journal of the Plague Year in 1722. He tells the Great Plague of London by depicting experiences during the plague year. Indeed, Orhan Pamuk's *Nights of Plague* and Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* are historical fictions in which the storyline takes place in the past. While the story in Orhan Pamuk's *Nights of Plague* takes place during the reign of Ottoman Empire, Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* takes place in London, 1665. Orhan Pamuk created a fictional novel centering around historical event. Being a contradictory novel in terms fictional or autobiographical content, *A Journal of the Plague Year* fictionalized the experience of the Great Plague.

The Great Plague had struck England from 1665 to 1666, and Daniel Defoe narrated the experience of an epidemic to illustrate the fatal situation in the city. When the first case of plague was diagnosed, and the suspicious deaths were reported, nobody diagnosed the cause of the death and the authority failed to take the required actions on time for the plague because of a lack of information. As Defoe pointed out the situation in London, the citizens were imprisoned and the doors of houses were marked with a big cross and the frightened eyes were following each other to be preserved from the plague. Regardless of gender, age, nobility and wealth, the plague badly affected people (Moote & Moote, 2006). The knowledge of death spread to the public, and precautions were taken immediately in the city where Lord Mayor was in charge to restrain the plague. His orders which were called *Plague Orders* included everyone in the city. When the houses were shut up with regard to precautions and the watchmen were guarding the houses to assume control, residents remained isolated from the outer world (Moote & Moote, 2006). Dead bodies were collected consistently by driving carts and they were buried in graves at night as described by Defoe. "Beginning of the Visitation to the End, there was not less than eighteen or twenty of them kill'd." (H. F., Part 3, Magistrates' Orders and Their Effects) (Defoe, 1992, p. 63).

Defoe illustrated that the fear of plague which lasted until February 1666 caused a desperate situation, and people became miserable, doing anything to escape from the plague. The dialogue among people reflected the prevalent panic situation in the city. Besides, the quarantine continued within that period and many activities such as public gatherings, schools, and the city's law courts were shut down (Moote & Moote, 2006). The streets were silent but the poor working people were struggling. Unless any aid was supplied, they were afraid of starvation and only religious figures helped poor people in terrible condition by providing food. While Lord Mayor ordered public fires to remove traces of plague in each street, Bill of Mortality did not reflect the real number of deaths, and so the burials were not listed anymore (Moote & Moote, 2006).

Night of Plague, which is a historical novel, is set in an imagined Ottoman state where the plague struck Minger Island from 1900 to 1991 during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamit II. The story begins with Pakize Sultan, the sultan's niece, and her husband, Doctor Nuri, embarking on a journey to China to advocate for quarantine measures. Accompanying them is General Bonkowski and his assistant, Doctor İlias. Despite the plague being diagnosed on Minger Island, the administration

failed to take precautions, allowing the disease to spread. Although quarantine rules were enacted, the public ignored them, leading citizens to attempt to flee when the island was finally sealed off. General management in İstanbul was ineffective, and Governor Sami was aware of the dire situation. Commander Kamil, as head of the soldiers, cut all communication with the outside world, disrupting the administration and preventing Abdülhamit II from issuing orders. Minger Island's population, comprised of Muslims and Rums in similar proportions, faced ethnic tensions as the plague spread. The conflict between Ramiz and Commander Kamil deepened political divisions, with Kamil ultimately declaring independence for the island, governing it as a new state. However, his rule was short-lived, as he and his wife, Zeynep, died from the plague. Following Kamil's death, Sheikh Hamdullah took control and lifted quarantine measures, resulting in a daily death toll of at least 50. After Sheikh Hamdullah's demise, Pakize Sultan and Doctor Nuri assumed leadership, implementing strict lockdowns. The epidemics led to anxiety, nationalism, and political strife, but ultimately a stable administration emerged, bringing the plague on Minger Island to an end.

2. Method

The combination of approaches provides comprehensive aesthetic dimensions for both A Journal of the Plague Year by Daniel Defoe and Nights of Plague by Orhan Pamuk. The analysis was based on the corpora designed from Orhan Pamuk's *Nights of Plague* and Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*. While Orhan Pamuk's *Nights of Plague* is Turkish corpus, Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* is English corpus, as shown in Table 1. These literary texts were analysed through the Sketch Engine, a text analysis software which provides frequency data, N-grams, word clusters as well as statistical information based on qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Table 1: Attributes of NP and JPY

Corpora	Year of Publication	Language	Number of Words
Nights of Plague (NP)	2021	Turkish	165,444
A Journal of the Plague Year (JPY)	1722	English	93,657

The analysis focused on the analysis of keywords, thematic signals as well as clusters by comparing the two different literary works. Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of two corpora: the NP corpus, published in 2021, and the JPY corpus, published in 1722. The NP corpus, written in Turkish, comprises a substantial total of 165,444 words, while the JPY corpus, in English, contains 93,657 words. This comparison clearly illustrates that the NP corpus encompasses a greater number of words than the JPY corpus. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the two corpora are derived from different linguistic backgrounds, highlighting the diversity in language use across time periods and cultures. During the data analysis, keywords that are frequent or repeated in the texts were compared and the log-likelihood values were calculated. Words signalling thematic unity were categorized into smaller groups each with examples from the texts. Clusters were also examined and comparative analysis of keywords, thematic signals, and clusters provided insight into the perception of disease reflected by emphasizing "plague" in each text.

2. 1 Keyword Analysis

Keywords are defined as particular words in a corpus (Mahlberg & Mclyntyre, 2011), and their analysis uncover lexical patterns which notify the text content (Scott & Tibble, 2006). The analysis of a novel starts by compiling keywords by providing literary interpretations of texts and perceiving the main point of a text through the chain repetitions (Scott, 2010). Presenting important implications for text, the keywords occur frequently or infrequently in quantitative

analysis (Scott, 2004). Frequent words construct keywords in a text, and the analysis reveals statistically frequent words in the corpora as well as identify semantically related words with a focus on detecting authorial style and thematic signals. Computer-generated keyword analysis enables detailed investigations and determines the relationships among keywords as well as analysing the extracted ones in the context (Baker, 2009). Keyword lists provide evidence to determine the particular thematic interests of the corpus in constructing the fictional worlds of both novels (Mahlberg & Mclntyre, 2011).

2. 2 Thematic-Signal Analysis

Thematic signals include particular words indicating the themes in the texts and reveal the hidden meaning or clue by reflecting the text itself. The close keyword analysis consists of categorizing particular words corresponding to the same meanings or semantic relations together. Mahlberg and MacIntyre stated that the categorization of keywords is a method to associate each word based on its similarities (Mahlberg & Mclntyre, 2011). In Mahlberg and MacIntyre's study (2011), keywords are divided into two specific groups: "fictional world signals" and "thematic signals". Thematic signals refer to the building of fictional worlds as well as thematic concerns of the novel by revealing literary meanings in the texts. The categorization of keywords constitutes thematic signals, and it is the interpretative process for individual readers and researchers by giving both quantitative and qualitative information. As "thematic signal" keywords are more abstract unlike "fictional world" keywords, they are open to interpretations (Moustafa, 2022). While "fictional world" keywords have concrete meanings, "thematic signal" keywords present the thematic interests of the novel. "Fictional world keywords" include the identification of characters and objects. These keywords create the fictional world in readers' minds as cognitive hints. Both thematic signals and fictional world keywords present decoding hidden layers of meaning in a literary work. Besides, both abstract and metaphorical meanings constitute "thematic signal keywords" and the concordance lines pinpoint to reveal thematic keywords with particular categorization.

2. 3 Clusters

Being a sequence of words repeatedly following each other in the context (Scott, 2004), clusters comprise associations of lexis and grammar in general and therefore, the relationships of words are relevant to creating textual meaning in a text. They are also considered an indicator of textual functions that refer to the repeated sequences of words in the text as well as give clues to decode particular aspects such as structural concepts. Corpus stylistics emphasize that textually encoded meanings and functions constitute clusters as pointers and cluster analysis facilitates textual meanings in a text (Moustafa, 2022). Moreover, repeated sequences of words and lexical bundles occur frequently or infrequently in the text and the frequency of lexical bundles refers to the textual functions occurring in texts (Baker, 2009). A cluster analysis focuses on the units of meaning in a text but each unit alone does not correspond to single word units (Mahlberg, 2007). In particular, each text represents individual qualities based on prominent linguistic features.

3. Data Analysis

In this section, we aim to uncover the thematic salience of keywords through a comparative analysis of the two novels. Using the Sketch Engine corpus tool, we identified keywords that stand out in each text. The analysis was performed by comparing wordlists derived from both novels, employing log-likelihood (LL) as the statistical measure to ascertain the significance of these keywords. This method allows us to assess the likelihood that the observed frequency of a word in one corpus is significantly higher than in the other, highlighting terms that are particularly salient within each literary context. The comparison of literary texts regarding lexical items not only illuminates the unique authorial styles of the respective writers but also reflects their textual

styles and thematic preoccupations. Each author's choice of vocabulary and the frequency of certain words can provide insights into their perspective, thematic concerns, and the socio-historical context in which they wrote. To further enrich our analysis, we employ the type/token ratio (TTR) as a measure of lexical diversity. This metric assesses both the lexical richness and vocabulary size in each text. The type/token ratio is calculated by dividing the number of unique words (types) by the total number of words (tokens) in the text. A higher TTR indicates a greater variety of vocabulary, which can suggest a more sophisticated or nuanced use of language.

Table 2 presents the type/token ratios for Nights of Plague and A Journal of the Plague Year, providing a quantitative basis for comparison. By analysing these ratios, we can infer differences in lexical richness between the two works, shedding light on how each author constructs their narrative and engages with themes related to plague, societal response, and human behaviour. This quantitative analysis, combined with our qualitative keyword examination, offers a comprehensive understanding of how thematic salience is constructed through language in these novels.

Table 2. Type/token ratio of the two Corpora

Novels	Type	Tokens	Type /token ratio
Nights of Plague	37520	160,808	4.2 %
A Journal of Plague Year	**5671**	**94,628**	**16.6 %**

The TTR for A Journal of Plague Year is significantly higher at 16.6% compared to 4.2% for Nights of Plague. This indicates that A Journal of Plague Year utilizes a more diverse vocabulary relative to its overall word count, suggesting a richer lexical variety in its language use. A high TTR often reflects a greater complexity in word choice and thematic exploration, allowing for nuanced expression. With 37,520 types in Nights of Plague, despite its larger number of total tokens (160,808), the relatively low TTR implies that the text may have a higher frequency of repeated words or phrases. This could indicate a stylistic choice by the author to emphasize certain themes or motifs, potentially aiming for a more accessible or repetitive style. In Table 3 below, 16 keywords are listed in terms of frequencies and log-likelihood (LL) values by comparing JPY with NP.

Table 3. Top sixteen keywords of in both corpora

LL	Rank	Keyword of JPY	Keyword of NP	Freq. JPY	Freq. NP
276.39	1	my	benim	282	74
142.41	2	city	şehir	199	80
104.77	3	shut	karantina	103	496
88.31	4	time	zaman	267	196
59.32	5	day	gün	80	341
54.15	6	sick	hasta	129	82
46.99	7	plague	veba	259	248
46.00	8	dead	ölü	139	102
44.10	9	year	yıl	41	202
38.24	10	streets	sokaklar	94	61
8.34	11	end	son	81	207
3.32	12	place	yer	73	97
3.12	13	ships	gemi	52	66

1.69	14	good	iyi	84	176
0.01	15	person	kişi	66	118
0.00	16	night	gece	61	108

The corpus data reveals that the number of possessive adjectives is frequent in JPY unlike NP (*my*) and some words explicitly represent the 'aboutness' of the text. Keywords such as '*sick*', '*shut*', and '*dead*' are related to the plot which illustrates '*plague*' in the texts. '*Time*' is one of the most frequent keywords and it is closely related to essential keywords like '*day*', '*year*', and '*night*' in the table above. Even though JPY and NP are written in different languages, the keywords are close to each other in terms of the frequencies and LL values. However, particular keywords seem to have distinctive features compared to other literary texts. When '*day*' (341) is mostly used in NP, it is used less frequently in JPY. Furthermore, '*year*' (202) and '*night*' (108) are frequent keywords in NP too. In this respect, it is important to emphasize that the conception of time is stressed in NP by using various words based on the indication of a timeline. Just as '*time*' (196) occurs in NP, it is also a highly frequent keyword in JPY, which indicates that the conception of time is stressed in both texts regarding plot structure.

each, few more or less: but from the **time** that the plague first began in St Giles's parish.
died weekly were from four to six or eight, whereas at that **time** they were increased ;
there had none died in the city for all this **time** , my Lord Mayor gave certificates of health
any other shelter whatever; and that, as my **times** were in His hands. He was as able to
in His hands. He was as able to keep me in a **time** of the infection as in a time of health:
in a time of the infection as in a **time** of health; and if He did not think fit to deliver me,
It was a very ill **time** to be sick in, for if any one complained, it was immediately said

Concordance 1. Occurrences of time in JPY

Concordance lines from JPY indicate the occurrences of the concept of time, which is intricately linked to the motif of the plague throughout the narrative. The patterns within these lines reveal how the author emphasizes the struggle against both time and the plague, illustrating a profound relationship between temporal experience and the societal impact of disease. In line 1, the keyword 'time' is mentioned in connection to the first recorded instance of plague in England, highlighting its significance as the origin of the outbreak. This contextualizes the narrative within a historical framework, situating the reader in a specific temporal moment that bears immense implications for the population. In line 2, 'time' is stressed as the narrative notes the rising number of infected individuals, creating a sense of urgency and foreboding. Conversely, line 3 introduces a glimmer of hope with the mention of a decrease in the death toll. This juxtaposition illustrates the dual nature of time during a plague: while it can signify despair and loss, it can also offer moments of relief and resilience.

The narrative's shift from an increase in deaths to a decline underscores the profound emotional turmoil experienced by individuals in the city. The phrase "difficult times" in line 2 encapsulates the atmosphere of fear and instability that the plague instigates, affecting daily life and social activities. The narrator's acknowledgment of fluctuating death rates reflects a broader commentary on mortality and the human condition in times of crisis. The term "my Lord Mayor" in line 3 highlights the significant role of civic leadership in combating the plague. The possessive adjective "my" conveys a sense of respect and personal connection to authority, suggesting that the Lord Mayor is not just a figurehead but a trusted leader in a time of crisis. This use of the possessive pronoun also implies a shared responsibility among the community, reinforcing the collective fight against the plague. The high log-likelihood (LL) value associated with the possessive adjective "my" indicates its thematic importance and frequency, further emphasizing the narrator's emotional investment in the well-being of the city. In line 4, the collocational pattern "my times" reiterates the personal stakes involved, as the narrator grapples with the pervasive

panic caused by the daily death toll. The reference to 'time' becomes a source of anxiety, as the ticking clock symbolizes both the progression of the plague and the urgency for action. The phrase evokes a sense of desperation, as the narrator seeks solace in a higher power, specifically in line 5, where 'His hands' alludes to God. The capitalized 'His' signifies divine authority, suggesting that, in the face of overwhelming despair, the narrator turns to faith as a source of hope and refuge.

Moreover, the essential patterns observed in lines 5 and 6 reveal how 'time' co-occurs with specific nouns such as "infection" and "health." These collocations illustrate the interconnectedness of time and plague, with the narrator tracking the infection's progression over time. The term "infection" in line 5 serves as a reminder of the ongoing threat posed by the plague, emphasizing the need for vigilance and awareness. In line 6, the phrase 'time of health' underscores the narrator's aspiration for well-being amidst the chaos, reflecting a dual focus on the present reality of illness and the desire for a future free from disease. The author's choice to describe 'time' as 'ill' in line 7 conveys a critical perspective on the temporal experience of the plague. The adjective 'ill' carries negative connotations, suggesting that the periods marked by disease are fraught with suffering and instability. The figurative expression 'ill time' serves as a powerful literary device, reinforcing the grim atmosphere of the narrative while revealing the author's stylistic approach. This word choice creates a vivid connection between negative experiences and the overarching plot, allowing readers to engage with the emotional landscape of those enduring the plague. The keyword 'time' emerges as a central motif in the novel, intricately woven into the fabric of the plague narrative. It not only signifies the progression of the epidemic but also encapsulates the human experience of fear, hope, and resilience. The author's exploration of time reflects a deeper philosophical inquiry into mortality and the significance of temporal awareness during periods of crisis. Thus, the conception of time becomes a pivotal element of the author's stylistic and thematic framework, enriching the text's exploration of the plague's impact on society.

On the other hand, concordance lines below reveal the conception of time in NP. Even though the keyword '*time*' is one of the frequent words in NP, it seems that there is a difference in terms of frequency and concordance. '*Time*' is directly related to the timeline in each line, and it does not refer to '*plague*' the same way as it does in JPY. The author mostly uses the keyword '*time*' to connect with the plot and characters and particularly the lines 2, 4, and 5 show that reduplications are stressed frequently in concordance lines (*zaman zaman*), indicating that reduplications create an aesthetic value in the literary text and that using reduplications can be the author's style to emphasize the meaning.

bir koğuşta ishal salgını ya da ateşli bir hastalık çıkar, o   **zaman**   o koğuş karantinaya alınırdı
en azından Düvel-i Muazzama'ya gözdağı verebileceğine zaman   **zaman**   inanıyordu.
Memo koruyor, Vali Paşamızın vilayet merkezinden askeri yetiş tirmesi çok   **zaman**   alıyor.
öldürdüğü Minger tarihçileri arasında, gönülsüzce de olsa hala   **zaman**   zaman tartışılır.
haykırırken ne istediklerini anlamış ve   **zaman**   zaman içtenlikle hak vermişti onlara.

Concordance 2. Occurrences of time in NP

The analysis of concordance lines is essential to uncover keywords based on 'thematic signals' and 'fictional world' in the literary contexts. Therefore, the keyword analysis sheds light on the text due to the relationship between these concepts. To investigate the literary texts in more detail, the group of keywords that are categorized as 'thematic signal' and 'fictional world' were analysed.

Thematic signals were analysed through comparison and categorized as both thematic signal keywords and fictional world keywords to determine particular words representing the indication of main themes. Fictional world and thematic signal keywords present an informative snapshot by identifying textual structures and thematic motifs. Table 4 and 5 illustrate thematic signals of the two literary texts by providing samples from subgroups. As the fictional world keywords and thematic signal keywords are fairly concrete, they enable interpretation from a wider perspective

(Moote & Moote, 2006). Concordance analysis determined the keywords, identified the thematic signals and fictional world keywords and the identification process revealed textual cues for further investigation. Table 4 indicates fictional world and thematic signal keywords through examples in JPY. The category of the fictional world is listed as subcategories based on the novel.

Table 4. Fictional world and thematic signal keywords with examples- JPY

Category	Example keywords
Fictional World Characters:	people, man, person, john, lord, physician, woman, child, watchman, officer, servant
Setting:	house, city, street, town, country, London, ship, church
Time:	time, day, week, night, year
Thematic Signals:	time, plague, people, city, dead, shut, infection, sick

The word '*people*' as the most frequent thematic signal occurs 633 times among the characters and it is used for demonstrating the difficult situation of citizens due to the plague, encompassing other characters such as man, woman, child, and watchman in general terms. For instance, the word '*watchman*' which occurs 59 times indicates precaution to fight against the plague in London. The watchman has a duty to control both citizens and the plague by shutting the houses. Due to the fact that they take orders from the Lord, people have fear of watchmen in London. The word '*lord*' which is one of the frequent thematic signals is the representation of authority by establishing rules against the deadly disease. Even though Lord tries to manage the situation during the time of the Plague, the authority has been damaged as a consequence of increases in death. However, the narrator always indicates the word 'Lord' with huge respect. Furthermore, the word '*john*' is also an important figure in the novel, but there are three characters who have the same names. The author uses the name '*john*' by illustrating different roles and situations as a Londoner, an acquaintance, and a soldier in the novel. The author shows readers different experiences with different roles in society, so readers can observe the characters' experiences during the tough times. Different lives and the same names demonstrate particular roles in society as well. A Londoner, an acquaintance, and a soldier are distinct from each other due to the roles which are attributed by the citizens in London. Even though each character has an impact on different events in the novel, they are ultimately connected with the main theme 'plague'. The setting is another subcategory in Table 4, and the examples of setting point out common places where people suffer due to the plague. The word "house" which occurs 383 times reflects citizens' miserable situation since inflected people are trapped in their houses. Watchmen keep an eye on houses by strolling in the streets, and the infected people have to stay inside the house. If people who are trapped in their houses die, they would be burned with their houses. Actually, houses indicate the death of people due to the plague. Similarly, other words such as "city, street, town, and country" are related words based on thematic value. Because the whole Londoner deals with miserable situations in every corner of the city, each street, and each country began to be infected during the time of the Plague. The narrator tells the situations of people in the streets, cities, and countries. Despite the fact that plague influences everyone and every action in different places, the consequence of the deadly disease kills many people regardless of any distinction in society. While the word '*ship*' indicates an escape attempt from the plague, the world '*church*' emphasizes divine power, God, desperation, and Christianity. The author has the intention to convey religious messages by using the word 'church'. Therefore, most citizens pray to God as a way to salvation from deadly diseases. On the other hand, the subcategory of "time" has a profound influence on both keywords and thematic signals. The words *'day', 'week', 'night',* and *'year'* are frequently used because the narrator records the daily cases in a journal. The word "day" which occurs 150 times is the most

frequent indication of time in this category. It is also important to emphasize that the word *"day"* co-occurs with *"next"*, *"every"* and *"few"*. These occurrences show a certain time stamp by indicating a fight against time to destroy the plague.

The subcategory of thematic signals includes the most frequent words demonstrating the relationship between the lexical patterns in the text. Since the main theme is *'plague'* throughout the novel, the other thematic signals gain value around the central theme. For instance, such words as *'dead'*, *'infection'*, and *'sick'* are associated with *'plague'* directly. Besides, these thematic signals have negative connotations when expressing the situation of people toward deadly diseases. In this regard, the word *'people'* is both the subject of these situations and the effected individuals as the most frequent thematic signal. Similarly, the verb 'shut' illustrates the relation of thematic signals as well as a precaution against plague.

which had bewitched the poor common people,	**shut**	up their shops, finding indeed no trade; for the
: of infected families. `</s><s>` I mentioned above	**shutting**	of houses up; and it is needful to say something
direction of the Secretary of State, had begun to	**shut**	up houses in the parishes of St Giles-in-the-Fie
means to the putting a check to it. `</s><s>` This	**shutting**	up of houses was a method first taken, as I und
g James the First to the crown; and the power of	**shutting**	people up in their own houses was granted by /
s being but four; and some houses having been	**shut**	up in the city, and some people being removed

Concordance 2. Occurrences of shut in JPY

As seen in the concordance, the verb 'shut' is used with nouns *'house'*, *'city'*, and *'people'* in the same sentences. Concordance lines represent the textual phrases such as *'shut up'*, *'shutting of houses'* and *'the power of shutting people up'*. The occurrence of *'the power of shutting people up'* in line 5 indicates the authority of the crown and parliament in England. Therefore, rules which are established to prevent plague display not only the power of authority but also people's submission to authority. Table 5 shows the fictional world and thematic signal keywords with examples in NP. The subcategories of the fictional world illustrate the examples in accordance with the novel.

Table 5. Fictional world and thematic signal keywords with examples- NP

Category	Example keywords
Fictional World Characters	doktor (doctor), paşa (general), vali (governor), sami, pakize, şeyh (sheikh), nuri, sultan, bonkowski, kolağası, damat (groom), komutan (commander), efendi (lord), padişah (ruler), rum, abdülhamit, kraliçe (queen), kişi (person), ingiliz (english), kamil, fransız (french), hamdullah, ramiz, zeynep
Setting	istanbul, ada (island), izmir, sehir (city), gemi (ship)
Time	zaman (time), gün (day), gece (night), yıl (year), süre (duration), sabah (morning)
Thematic Signals	zaman (time), veba (plague), karantina (quarantine), ıstanbul, şeyh (sheikh)

As seen in Table 5, the category of characters encompasses many character names frequently mentioned in the text. However, character names that represent both specific gender segregation and gender roles with an overview can differ based on semantic connotations. While the words *'kraliçe (queen)'*, *'sultan'*, and *'zeynep'* appeal to women, the other characters such as *'vali (governor)'* and *'komutan (commander)'* are related to men. These distinctions bring out gender roles as well as the perception of gender of the time. The names which directly indicate woman characters reveal women's roles in the sentences. Each woman character has a different role in the novel, and it is also possible to discern the distinctions of titles. For instance, the titles like 'kraliçe

(queen)' and 'sultan' occupy a privileged position in society. They have a duty to manage issues for the Ottoman Empire. It is also important to emphasize that most character names, related to men, have a close relationship with authority. Similarly, the words *'paşa (general)'*, *'şeyh (sheikh)'*, *'kolağası'*, *'damat (groom)'*, *'efendi (lord)'*, and *'padişah (ruler)'* reflect the authority which exercises power over the public.

These names attribute authority to make decisions to ensure the safety and tranquility of the public. Especially, their decisions and their style of governance affect every part of the Ottoman Empire in the novel. On the other hand, the character names which are related to the woman are not frequent words compared to the names attributed to men. For instance, *'sultan'* (458) and *'zeynep'* (163) are considered infrequent character names in the literary text. Even if woman characters have an influence on the ways of governance, man characters change the plot in the novel completely. As a political figure, the character name 'abdülhamit' has a significant role in the novel and the historical process. Among the examples of characters, the most frequent name is *'paşa (general)'* which occurs 1,164 times in the literary text. Even if *'abdülhamit'* is a significant political figure, *'paşa (general)'* is a more frequent character name due to being a generic term at the time and that includes male characters based on Ottoman culture. The character name 'abdülhamit' has a huge effect on both history and the time of the plague in the novel. People call 'abdülhamit' a 'paşa' because it is a title and way of naming. The author would choose mostly the title to mention 'abdülhmait' due to the fact that he may intend to reflect that period by using his own authorial style in the novel. Furthermore, the different nationalities are mentioned in the novel by emphasizing the political situation during the Ottoman period. The words *'rum'*, *'ingiliz (english)'* and *'fransız (french)'* are indications of nationalities. These generic names demonstrate the cosmopolitan Ottoman Empire, and the word *'rum'* (219) is the most frequent one among the three nationalities. It can be considered that the population of the Rums was quite large during the Ottoman Empire.

The category of setting comprises places where the plot takes place in the novel. The most frequent setting is *'istanbul'* which occurs 459 times, and it has an important role in terms of political, economic, and social perspectives. Since Abdülhamit who was a padishah of the Ottoman Empire at that time governed the whole empire from Istanbul, the other states waited for his orders through telegraphy during the plague year. Istanbul was also one of the port cities, and so the word *'gemi (ship)'* is related to both the economic aspect and the spread of the plague. The plague epidemic spreads to other cities from Istanbul where the trade was quite lively at the time. However, the word *'gemi (ship)'* is directly related not only to trade but also to escape from the deadly disease.

İstanbul Caddesi ve liman civa rındaki **gemi** acentaları pazar gece yarısından başlayarak adadan ayrılacak doğru kıvrıldılar. </s><s> **Gemi** acentalarının önünde kuyruklar oluştuğu nu, liman da ve limana inen sokaklarda tehlikeydi. </s><s> Rıhtımda toplanıp **gemi** bekleyen korkulu insan ların telaşını bugün haklı buluyoruz. asıl nedeni de bazı Rumlara göre buydu : **Gemi** seferleri başlarsa Rumlar yine çoğunluk olacaklardı.

Concordance 3. Occurrences of gemi (ship) in NP

As seen in Concordance 3, the word *'gemi (ship)'* conveys the meaning of escape from the island in line 1. Besides, lines 2 and line 3 represent either fear or panic against the plague, and so people fall in line to embark. In the final line, *'gemi (ship)'* is related to Rums in the context as Rums were the majority of the passengers on board. In addition, the word *'gemi (ship)'* gives an indication of the spread of the plague by cruise passengers. According to the novel, people who go on pilgrimage spread the plague. Even if they were kept in quarantine, the revolt of pilgrims occurred against quarantine. The concordance lines show that the state of panic and fear led to escape from the

island. It was also the case that Rums were more willing to leave the place than other citizens on the island.

The category of time has great importance for the plot structure in each literary text. Table 5 illustrates the example of time expressions such as *'zaman (time)'*, *'gün (day)'* and *'gece (night)'*, and the most frequent time expression is *'gün (day)'* which occurs 341 times in the text. While these time expressions reflect the fight against plague, they also emphasize the symptoms and conditions of diseases that change day by day. In the NP, thematic signals include time, main themes, setting, and character. The character name *'şeyh (sheikh)'* is the one of most frequent thematic signals among the category because of the political issue which was related to Sheikh Hamdullah. He had both religious force and political force on the people and so, the authority was enthroned spreading of plague in the Island. Sheikh Hamdullah, one of the main characters, disrupts the balance between peace and disorder, causing both the spread of the plague and unrest among the people. Additionally, the word *'karantina (quarantine)'* is the most frequent thematic signal in a predictable way. In JPY, the narrator emphasizes the word *'watchman'* to convey the struggle associated with the role. While *'watchman'* and *'kolağası'* have a duty of taking control against people who opposed the rules, *'kolağası'* also makes a huge impact on political change during the administration of General Sami. Secondly, settings give an indication of a particular place that occurs the stream of events in each literary text. As *'istanbul'* and *'london'* are the capital cities at that time, major decisions come from these cities related to the plague. While the word *'ada (island)'* is the place where the events take place in the novel of NP, *'london'* is the center of England and the main place in JPY. The word *'ship'* which has the same meaning as *'gemi'* in Turkish represents escaping from the plague, fear of people, and spreading of the deadly disease in both literary texts. However, the religious figure is frequently mentioned in JPY in terms of '*church'*. In the novel NP, there is no such a religious figure presented directly, but there is a reference to religion through the description of 'Sheikh Hamdullah'. This character who is the leader of the durgah opposes quarantine after mosques are shut by force of precautions. Thus, the narrator remarks on the religious figure by creating the character of 'Sheikh Hamduallah'. Among the thematic signals, the character *'sheikh'* is one of the frequent words, influencing the plot structure with regard to social and political aspects. In addition, the thematic signals *'time'*, *'plague'*, *'shut'*, *'zaman (time)'*, *'veba (plague)'* and *'karantina (quarantine)'* that are used frequently in both literary texts have the effect of creating the perception of disease based on the contexts.

Clusters are related to characters and themes by presenting the narrator's style and function with the indication of time and place (Mahlberg, 2007). Focusing on clusters to determine the lexical sequences which represent characteristics of texts, the analysis was done based on the corpora containing three-word clusters in each literary text. As seen in Table 6, the three groups of clusters are illustrated by comparing the corpus of JPY and NP.

Table 6. Three-word clusters in JPY and NP

Rank	JPY	F	NP	F
1	in the city	34	bir süre sonra (after a while)	48
2	in the streets	33	ne yazık ki (unfortunately)	46
3	the poor people	28	bir kere daha (once again)	31
4	the Lord Mayor	28	uzun bir süre (for a long time)	25
5	into the country	25	başka bir şey (something else)	22
6	it is true	23	bir an önce (at once)	17
7	a great many	19	kısa bir süre (for a short while)	15
8	I have observed	19	pek çok kişi (a lot of people)	15
9	I have mentioned	16	beş yıl önce (five years ago)	11
10	had the plague	14	on altı yıl (sixteen years)	8
11	the whole city	14		

12	cannot say	14

These clusters emphasize thematic features as well as the role of particular characters in the corpus of JPY. For instance, the most frequent three-word cluster is 'in the city' which indicates the place by the relation of plague like clusters 'in the streets', 'into the country', and 'the whole city'. Likewise, the four-word clusters 'the city of London', 'part of the town', and 'end of the town' are place clusters. Due to the spread of the plague, cities and streets are the places that are mostly affected in England. The third frequent three-word cluster 'the poor people' gives an indication to social segregation regarding the deadly disease.

very seriously reflecting how **the poor people** were terrified by the force of their own imagination.
shrieks and outcries of **the poor people** , terrified and even frighted to death by the sight of the condition
especially if they heard **the poor people** call upon God to have mercy upon them, as many would
was not very improbable, viz., that **the poor people** in London, being distressed and starved for want of work, ;
it was observed that the first Sabbath-day **the poor people** kept retired, worshipped God together,

Concordance 4. Occurrences of the poor people in JPY

In the concordance 4 above, the three-word cluster *'the poor people'* describes miserable situation of lower class during the plague year. The cluster is used with the verb *'terrified'* frequently so that these people are vulnerable both financially and psychologically toward the plague. In line 4, the social segregation takes place through the words such as *'distressed'* and *'starved'*. Poor people are unemployed and worried along with the acceleration of plague. Besides, *'God'* which is a strong religious figure is mentioned as a source of faith in line 3 and 5. Especially, the four-word cluster *'in a dreadful manner'* emphasizes the effect of difficult times for many people. Since the poor people do not have the power to withstand tough times, they can only pray to get through these difficult times. The occurrences show that the lower class is more affected than upper and middle classes due to their economic and social status. On the other hand, the four-word cluster *'relief of the poor'* which occurs 8 times has positive prosody despite the miserable situations. In NP corpus, three- word cluster *'ne yazık ki (unfortunately)'* which occurs 46 times reflects the difficult times in the city as a negative connotation.

It is also important to mention that the cluster *'the Lord Mayor'*, occurring 28 times, represents authority figure as a character in the novel. The cluster 'the Lord Mayor' is a political figure who is in charge of the government for the safety of society in England. Rules and orders come from 'the Lord Mayor', and this cluster is mentioned frequently in the novel by emphasizing the importance of both the plot and the fight against the plague. Other three-word clusters *'I have observed'* and *'I have mentioned'* are added into the frequent clusters because the first-person narrator tells the whole story in the novel. The narrator utters the events, people and daily status of city based on observations, so the first-person narration gives a subjective account of events. It is also noticeable that the three-word cluster *'had a plague'*, the four word clusters *'shutting up of houses'* and *'died of the plague'* are directly related to thematic feature. On the other hand, NP corpus frequently contains time clusters like *'bir süre sonra (after a while)'*, *'beş yıl önce (five years ago)'* and *'on altı yıl (sixteen years)'* when compared to those in JPY corpus. While three-word clusters in JPY corpus are direct references to theme and character, three-word clusters in NP are mostly related to time in comparison with those in JPY. Place clusters also contain among the three-word clusters in JPY. The writers both present the readers with some novel ideas in the course of the plot based on two seemingly diverse thematic concerns in the sense that the former focuses on the Physical Space and the latter does this with the Temporal Space. In addition, the creation of the physical space in Defoe's books is contrasted to the temporal space as presented in Pamuk's work. While the locational features mostly dwell on JPY by mentioning streets, city and country, the temporal space mostly dwells upon the novel of Orhan Pamuk as *'bir süre sonra (after a while)'*, *'uzun bir süre (for a long time)'*, and *' kısa bir süre (for a short while)'*. The most notable and the distinctive feature of

the novels are observed in the presentation of Plague narrations though several conceptual meanings rathe then metaphorical. On the whole, the comparison of three-word clusters illustrates the link between sequence of words and textual meaning on the basis of repetition.

Conclusion

This study has provided corpus stylistic analysis as a novel approach that uncovers linguistic patterns in the literary texts by the computer-aided tools and also by bringing together both qualitative and quantitative methodologies with a relatively objective framework in the course of action. It set out to compare the findings of a stylistic analysis of Orhan Pamuk's *Nights of Plague* and Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* by using corpus based analytical tools enabling researchers to empirically uncover the subtle dimensions of novels under close scrutiny such as textual structures and meaning. By comparing each literary text, keywords, thematic signals, and clusters were analyzed based on the frequencies of words, and the analysis of keywords is based on statistically frequent words. Indeed, certain time phrases which are related to the conception of time and plague were frequently used in both novels. The keyword *'time'* in JPY retained the same word as reduplications *'zaman zaman'* in NP. Thematic signals revealed the association of the words bythe relevant themes and characters relying on the categories of the fictional word and thematic signal keywords. The analysis also showed that the word *'people'* occured frequently in JPY as a general term whereas particular character names such as *'nuri'*, *'sami'*, and *'zeynep'* were noted in NP, suggesting that the gender relations were dominant in the Turkish corpus. Besides, *'ship'* is associated with the fear of plague and the attempt to escape in both literary texts. As being the repeated sequences of words, clusters led to interpretation of literary texts with regard to time, place, character, and theme. The comparison of three-word clusters illustrated that place clusters frequently occur in JPY while time clusters mostly occur in NP. The diversity of space is indicated as physical space and temporal space in the literary texts. The conception of time is more emphasized in NP than JPY by indicating certain time phrases.

In our corpus stylistic analysis, the ultimate purpose was to reveal insights into keywords, thematic signals, and clusters in both novels. From the analysis of corpus concordances and content, we concluded that Daniel Defoe and Orhan Pamuk wrote their literary works by following both common and different stylistic features. Firstly, the conception of time which is related to the thematic foci *'plague'* is reflected through particular time phrases in JPY and NP. Secondly, Pamuk uses specific names by indicating gender relations in society while Defoe mostly uses names by observing his surroundings from a general perspective. Thirdly, the noun 'ship' is associated with thematic foci and fear of plague in both novels. Defoe frequently mentioned place clusters by emphasizing particular locations which have an impact on society while Pamuk points out time clusters in the novel.

With regard to thematic foci *'plague'* in each novel, the analysis provided a detailed interpretation of findings and illustrated the variety of repeated patterns. In particular, the corpus stylistic approach indicated that the comparison of different corpora is crucial to investigating the language of literature. In this study, identification themes, words and phrases revealed that corpus stylistic methods aid determining the elements of a text through further qualitative analysis (Mahlberg & Mclnytr, 2011). Evidently, a corpus stylistic analysis may help to provide critical ground for further studies. We hope to have shown that corpus stylistic analysis of Orhan Pamuk's *Nights of Plague* and Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* enabled insights into the historical background, author's style, and literary language by reflecting the perception of the disease.

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Disclosure Statement

English Language | research article

The Role of Age in Second Language Acquisition
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ABSTRACT
When it comes to learning a second language, no matter what age, almost every publication talks about individual differences that lead the learners to success. It is possible to say that the age factor is the most significant of these. Various elements occur as a result of individual differences: The rate of acquisition, ultimate achievement and the processes involved in language acquisition are important ones affected by differences among learners, particularly their age. The present work deals mainly with the age issue in second language acquisition, along with other factors related to individual differences, which are often treated in psychological positions. The data were obtained from a literature search. Looking at the written literature in the field, it has been found that the onset of second language acquisition and the final accomplishment are also the two titles that scholars have studied very much. The question of whether a critical period addressed language acquisition exists is a controversial one in the scientific world. However, even though there are no well-delineated age restrictions ready for attaining native or native-like proficiency in a second language, the period (age) at which one starts has been shown to correlate with ultimate proficiency.

Introduction

The question of how age influences the acquisition of first and further languages (Here, more emphasis will be placed on second language acquisition.) is one of the most recurrently addressed issues in second language acquisition (SLA) inquiry. We see that a number of books – a few to be mentioned are Harley, 1986, Singleton and Lengyel, 1995, Birdsong, 1999 – and a large number of articles have addressed this matter in the framework of a variety of theoretical standpoints over decades. As always, this issue attracts the attention of scientists and linguists, and the debates on this subject continue with all its intensity.

There are both theoretical and practical reasons for studying how the time at which learners start to learn a language affects second acquisition. The work provides empirical evidence from the research in connection with the points of how people acquire languages and how their ability to do so varies with age (Ellis, 2015). Ellis offers an in-depth look at this important realm of applied linguistics. He examines different theories of second language acquisition and critical responses to them rather than taking a particular stance.

It is widely believed that children can acquire language better than adults, i.e., they are better learners, which is why if individuals start to learn a language at a younger age, they will be more

successful. Even though it seems reasonable, the evidence from the works written until now gives us the clue that the phenomenon is multifaceted. It would be better if there were a distinction between ultimate attainment and the rate of acquisition. The issue with the ultimate attainment is perhaps the most controversial and the most fascinating dispute in theory.

The more we know about the age factor (i.e., the internal factor), the more beneficial it will be to us. Because the teaching of foreign languages can be organized accordingly., curriculum arrangements can be shaped according to these research results. It should also be noted that in this age of increasing migration between countries, the need and amount of learning and teaching of foreign languages are increasing daily.

It must be said that the discussions on learning two languages and the age factor have always been interesting points in linguistics. We satisfied our curiosity regarding the point mentioned in this study. Unfortunately, in the literature we scanned, we realized that almost all of the scientific studies covered the childhood-adolescence periods and that very little was said about the acquisition of two languages by middle-aged or older people. It should also be said that the acquisition of two or more languages in middle and older ages is crucial in the educational realm and should be studied.

Although it is perhaps the most widely observed language acquisition phenomenon among people, the success of children in acquiring a second language with respect to that of adults is paradoxically still hotly debated, circa a half-century after the work of Lenneberg's (1967) Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) which is an exceedingly debated substance between specialists of a significant number of scientific areas such as linguistics, biology, psychology, cognitive psychology, second language acquisition, first language acquisition, sociolinguistics together with bi-multilingualism.

The following two questions give the central theme pertaining to age (i.e. maturation) as a fundamental problem in a second language's acquisition, which is a broad outline consideration realized that has not been until now.

Question 1: Are adults learning a second language capable of reaching a proficiency level in this language similar to native speakers?
Question 2: Do second language beginners in childhood attain a higher position of competence than adult beginners learning a second language do?

An important aspect of research to date has been the landscape of the linguistic domain involved. For example, while researchers have predominantly investigated "competence" regarding articulation, be it accent or be it grammar, other indispensable characteristics of competence that are essential for being well understood exist, such as lexical knowledge (as well as formulaic orders) and pragmatic capability which are necessary to practice language in a socio-linguistically suitable way. We observed that both have received little research attention.

We see that the linguistic studies carried out for the age research talk about two specific human experiments (i.e. Genie and Victor), which are well-known in the field. It should be pointed out that not only the idea of the case of Genie in connection with language development but also that of Victor (Lane, 1976) is mentioned the most in the literature. Both, which have given evidence for the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), hold that when the first language development does not begin during the critical period/sensitive time, it will not occur at all. The criticisms raised to the mentioned cases are that the evidence is challenging to comment on, information about them is insufficient, the amount of exposure to language experienced is not accurate, and the status of their mental health is not fully known.

It is necessary to repeat here that plenty of academic examinations have been done to find out the reasons why some second language learners are more successful than other learners. Various

factors influencing second language acquisition have been studied extensively in linguistics. However, it seems that there is no certainty that age only plays a role in native-like proficiency or optimal success in second language learning, even though age, along with other internal factors, has been well-researched and much-reasoned discussion has taken place. (For more reading, see Cook and Singleton 2014; Herschensohn 2007). In addition to CPH, the main topic i.e. individual differences in second language learners will be discussed, with a particular focus on age and second language acquisition. This will be followed by the discussion and conclusion section.

Individual Difference in Learners

One aspect acknowledged by the discipline of Second Language Acquisition as an academic branch is that there are individual differences when language acquisition occurs. The mentioned phenomenon occurs as a result of the psychological dimension of difference. We can say that there are a great number of miscellaneous dimensions playing a role in language acquisition. The so-called affective factors (Ellis, 2023), like the personality of individuals, can have an impact on the amount of anxiety the learners experience and the willingness whether they can have the power to come face to face with the risks during learning and employing a second language. Almost all people learning a second language use different strategies in producing their speech, in prosody or punctuation. It is possible to list the significant reasons why there are differences in the acquisition of a language between learners as follows: Language aptitude, gender, motivation, personality, cognitive style, learning strategies, and age. When the subject is handled, specific consideration will be given to the issue of age.

Actually, cognitive style, personality and learning strategy are narrowly interconnected and interact with each other. The pivotal question that arises is how individual differences function and to what extent they are effective. Despite the absence of a definitive answer within the scientific community, a number of compelling arguments will be presented in this regard.

The argument that language aptitude is part of general abilities and, at the same time, partly separate from them is a point made in linguistics. The supposition that an ability exists (particularly in language learning) has been widely believed for a long time. The same idea must have motivated Carroll (1965) to write his work to classify innumerable constituents of language aptitude. The four important components that are frequently found in the linguistic literature are "Grammatical sensitivity, Inductive language learning ability, Phonemic coding ability, and Associative memory capacity." We are going to discuss them briefly because they are essential for understanding language acquisition.

Grammatical sensitivity: It is concerned with central processing. It means that the capability to diagnose the grammatical functions of words inside sentences, identifying a sentence's subject and object, can be provided as a good instance.

Inductive language learning ability: It is also concerned with central processing, i.e., recognizing whether arrangements of matching and affiliations exist between form and meaning. We can give the following example: whether the learners have the capacity to spot that in English, the preposition "to" can indicate direction and that the preposition "at" location. We can talk about some other crucial abilities encapsulating the features below: Explaining further processing of the segmented auditory input by the brain with the aim to make generalizations, to know the grammatical functions belonging to elements and articulate rules.

Phonemic coding ability: This feature is the aptitude to operate on the input of auditory into sections which can be put in storage and re-claimed without any kind of effort. It means the ability to detect the sounds of a foreign language with the intention of the fact that these can be recalled at a specific time later. We see this skill mentioned is connected to the capacity to handle sound-

signs connections, e.g., to ascertain the sound for which "th" stands.

Associative memory capacity: The capacity to form and retain associations between stimuli is crucial for vocabulary acquisition. This process is integral to the storage, recall, and utilization of linguistic items. The extent of an individual's associative memory capacity determines the selection of appropriate elements from the stored second language repertoire, which in turn influences the speaker's fluency.

In his 1998 review of inquiry in this area, Skehan largely supports the above-mentioned supposition. However, he also states that there is the possibility that a learner's ability may show a discrepancy depending on specific factors that can play a role. For instance, a learner who demonstrates grammatical sensitivity at a high grade may exhibit poor associative memory or vice versa. It should be stated that it is unnecessary to possess innate talent in all factors to succeed in second language learning. Skehan (1998, p. 209) reports: "Some proficient learners achieve success as a result of their linguistic-analytic abilities, while others do so due to their memory ability. I additionally posit that language-learning aptitude is not completely separate from general cognitive abilities, as reflected in intelligence tests. However, it is not identical to these abilities either."

It is necessary to point out that the results demonstrate that ability is a significant predictor of success, which is drawn to be a discrepancy in second language learning not only in naturalistic circumstances but also in official classroom surroundings. We should emphasize that it is, however, not an absolutely deterministic phenomenon and is but one of some causes that may affect eventual second language ability.

Next, we want to express "learning strategies," which are used to describe the approaches and techniques that learners employ with the purpose of simplifying the learning of a language. The ease with which a language can be learned depends on these strategies' effectiveness. Consequently, the main objective of the learner is to detect and utilize efficacious strategies, thereby ensuring success in their linguistic pursuits.

There are miscellaneous strategies used by the learners, some of which have also been recognized by Ellis (2003, p. 77). Cognitive strategies are defined as those processes contained in the analysis, synthesis, or transformation of materials being learned. To illuminate that, an example can be "recombination", which contains the construction of an expressive sentence by recombining known components of the second language in a novel manner. He says: "Metacognitive strategies are those involved in the processes of planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning." An example of that can be "selective attention," whereby learners learning a language make a deliberate judgement by focusing their attention on particular elements of the input. The last category mentioned is social/affective strategies, which encompass the ways in which learners decide to interact with other speakers. An example can be "questioning for clarification." It encompasses requesting a reiteration, a restatement, or an instance.

It should be said that this way of learning is important. Because the investigation of learning strategies may prove beneficial for those engaged in the arena of language instruction, i.e. if learning strategies that are crucial for learning can be identified, it may be possible to implement a training programme for students to enable them to use them.

Motivation plays an essential role in determining the extent of effort that language learners of a second language invest in at altered phases of progression. The term "motivation" is defined in many different ways, but it is habitually imagined as a construct incorporating a minimum constituent. Some prominent scholars, such as Oxford and Ehmans (1993) and Dörnyei (2001), handled this. They delineate it as a "noteworthy aim or requirement, a wish to achieve the goal,

the insight that second language learners are relevant to accomplishing the goal of meeting the necessity, a confidence in the possible attainment or failure of second language's learning, the worth of probable consequences or rewards to be received."

On the other hand, the two most commonly recognized categories of motivation are integrative and instrumental (Skehan, 1989). We should give some brief information about both terms. Integrative motivation can be defined as the following: It is grounded on an interest which is or will be displayed while learning a second language occurs due to a wish to learn about or associate with the individuals in the community who practise it (if necessary to give an instance: romantic reasons), or due to a goal to join in or fit in the second language speech community where it is utilized; whatever the circumstance may be, it can be said that sentimental or affective factors are central point. From the other point of view, the following term can be demarcated so: Instrumental motivation is concerned with the perception shown for the practical worth designed for learning the second language, such as augmenting one's employability or business prospects. Likewise, the motivation to learn a language may be driven by some other influences, including the desire to gain opportunities, boost one's prestige and power, get into academic and technical information, or simply pass a lesson exam in the school he is going to.

Personality plays a noteworthy role in second language acquisition. Some key facts can be given: Extroversion vs. Introversion discussion is that extroverted learners tend to be more eager to communicate and take risks, which can lead to more practice and faster language gaining. We should speak of an important point about introverted learners; they are more cautious and less likely to speak up, and this can decelerate their advancement in language acquisition. Again, anxiety is one of the most investigated components of personality traits (Bartol, 1995). High levels of anxiety can hinder language acquisition in the manner that it induces stress and plummets the capability to process and produce a language that is being learned or is on the way to being learned.

Self-esteem is also a feature of personality. Learners with higher self-esteem are more likely to take risks and participate in communication, which is fundamental for language exercise. One of the other components of personality is empathy. Empathetic learners might be better at understanding and mimicking the social and cultural degrees of the language, which can boost their communicative competence. In essence, the diagnosis and making a speech about differences in learners regarding personality can facilitate the development of language learning approaches that are optimized for the individual learner. To examine and read wide-ranging overviews of enquiry pertaining to aptitude, motivation, cognitive style, personality, and learning strategies, one can read some important works written by scholars such as Dörnyei (2005, 2006), Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) and Granena and Long (2013).

The age factor, which is scrutinized within the framework of personal differences (sometimes of internal factors), always appears before us and is often treated under the title of Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH). It would be useful to address the questions of what CPH really is, how it relates to age, and what its characteristics are.

Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH)

This hypothesis was first put forward by Penfield and Roberts (1959), who argued that a phase exists. The spoken period is characteristically defined as the age up to the beginning of the teenage years. In this period, language learners are able to easily and implicitly acquire a second language and succeed in native speaker proficiency. However, when this phase finishes, second language acquisition becomes more difficult and is hardly ever wholly successful. We should talk about the evidence circulating in the linguistic field. Lenneberg (1967) reported on a study showing that infants had language difficulties after right hemispheric injury, but adults had no such difficulties. Conversely, adults who underwent left hemisphere surgery experienced almost complete

language loss, whereas children did not. After such operations, the adults exhibited long-lasting language impairment, but the children quickly regained full control of their language. Lenneberg concluded that language's biological foundation differs between children and adults.

Lenneberg believed that the human capability to acquire language is restricted by a critical period from the age of two until puberty, which coincides with lateralization - the specialization of the dominant brain hemisphere for language. It is compulsory to say that a wide range of evidence indicating alterations in the brain that were taking place during this phase was offered. However, his assertion that lateralization finishes in adolescence has been seriously undercut by means of studies carried out afterwards reinterpreting the facts in question as demonstrating that the process is complete in early childhood (Kinsbourne and Hiscock, 1977; Krashen, 1973). Furthermore, the part of Lenneberg's argument that concerned second language learning, that the claim that post-pubertal second language learning is "laborious" and that foreign accent learning is "difficult" (Lenneberg, 1967, p. 176), was questionable in academic terms.

Some situations called unfortunate children supported Lenneberg with respect to the views he reported in the field. Throughout their childhood, such children have been deprived of the opportunity to hear and speak a language. A study of Genie was reported by Curtiss (1977). According to Curtiss, she was set aside in virtual isolation for most of her life. When discovered at the age of thirteen, she did not have speech. Later, Genie could successfully learn English to a definite extent, particularly with vocabulary, but she did not accomplish full grammatical ability. She was also struggling to engage in normal social interaction. Curtiss proposed that her limited grammatical development was due to the fact that she had passed the critical period, which was crucial for language acquisition. However, some counterarguments appeared, suggesting (Rymer, 1993) that it may have been caused by the disorder in feeling Genie lived as a child, which continued to manifest as an adult. This could be an explanation for her problems with social interaction, which in turn may have been a limitation on the enlargement of her grammatical competence.

It must be explained that the ending time of the critical period is disputable; in other words, there is no clear consensus on where the critical period for language learning comes to an end. Looking at the written literature displaying this problem, we can see that the claims range from the time close to birth to the late teenage years. We can also understand that if there is a critical period, there is a discrepancy in terms of which aspect of the language is being studied. For example, Granena and Long (2012) offer data to propose that the end of prospect in language acquisition is reached first for second language phonological skills, possibly at age 4, then for vocabulary and collocations, and then for grammar, by the mid-teens.

The Role of Age

First, we want to emphasize that the role of age as an internal factor, which is well-researched and cited in the literature, is perhaps the most important aspect of learner differences in second language acquisition. In addition to internal factors, external factors such as micro (for instance, interaction) and macro (for instance, economic, political) sociological aspects are important to us because they give us clues about how language(s) are acquired in the outside world.

It should be said that, on the one hand, it is widely believed that children are more successful second language learners than adults, but on the other hand, the evidence for this is truthfully mixed, which may be unexpected for many. One reason for the seeming inconsistency in inquiry findings is that some studies describe relative "success" in terms of initial learning rate (where, in contrast to popular belief, older learners have an advantage), while other studies describe it in terms of ultimate attainment (where learners introduced to the second language during the childhood do look like to have an advantage). Furthermore, some studies describe "success" with

regard to how close a learner's articulation is to that of a native speaker, others with regard to how close a learner comes to native grammatical judgments, and still others with regard to fluency or functional capability. So, it is very significant to keep the criteria for evaluation noticeably in mind when making judgments about disagreeing claims.

Whether and how age influences second language production has been an important topic in second language acquisition for several decades, and several recent publications have provided reviews from different perspectives (e.g. Birdsong, 1999; Scovel, 2000; Singleton, 2001).

Two important scholars have reported some of the benefits for both younger and older learners circulated in the literature. These are M. S. Troike and K. Barto (2020, 91). They give them as:

<u>Younger advantage</u>
- Brain plasticity
- Not analytical
- Fewer inhibitions (usually)
- Weaker group identity
- Simplified input is more likely

<u>Older advantage</u>
- Learning capacity
- Analytic ability
- Pragmatic skills
- Greater knowledge of LI
- Real-world knowledge.

It is worth pointing out once again that many linguists and psychologists agree that there is a critical period in the acquisition of a first language. According to them, children only have a limited number of years in which ordinary acquisition is potential. In addition, changes in physiological situations cause the brain to lose its plasticity or ability to take on the new functions which language learning requires. These scholars point out that persons who, for whatever cause, lack the linguistic input required to activate the acquisition of a first language for the critical period will never learn a language in the normal way.

As we dwelt on earlier, the case of the abused experimental girl (kept isolated from all language input and interaction until she became thirteen years old) is documented and well-known. We should take it for granted that it is rarely cited as evidence. That means that, despite years of intensive efforts at remediation, Genie never developed linguistic knowledge and skills for her first language (English), which were comparable to those of learners who start acquisition in early childhood (Curtiss, 1977).

Discussion

Many linguistic circles discuss the age-related consolidation of bilinguals' first language acquisition or other cognitive characteristics of bilingualism. However, it should be stressed that some of these are age-dependent, while others are age-independent. We have talked a lot about the pros and cons of a CPH. To return to the subject, the following points should be made.

We want to note that the theoretical significance of the CPH, which has a direct connection with age disputation, is its support for Chomsky's (1965) understanding of language. He claimed that children are endowed with an apparatus through which they acquire a language. He maintained that children are equipped with a language acquisition device that is an innate, biological ability to learn language, unlike other cognitive abilities. This device was subject to some criticisms. It, in Chomsky's view, comprises knowledge of the linguistic universals that lie beneath the grammatical rules of every language, and it is because children have access to these universals that they are

capable of mastering the grammar of their mother tongue without challenges.

It is better to state that individual differences cannot show merely a part of the whole picture of internal factors ascribed to second language acquisition. In the end, it is better when a comprehensive clarification of age effects on second language acquisition is taken into account, which contains not only the numerous evaluative criteria (Herschensohn, 2007) of "success" mentioned but also the system of language which the individuals are learning, further the phase of second language progress thoughts, the role of both natural (i.e. innate) and environmental predispositions, and the complexity of input and differences in learners are also crucial for that.

We consider the opinions of two scientists to be important. There are Seliger (1978) and Long (1990). They argued that there are a number of periods that enforce constraints on different facets of language. It was pointed out that, for example, different periods have to do with the acquisition of phonology as opposed to the acquisition of syntax. At the same time, they recommended that these time limits should not be absolute. According to their views, it is simply the case that second language acquisition is more probable to be complete, provided that it begins in childhood than if it begins later.

It is important to convey a point that Krashen (Youtube: A historic webinar with Chomsky and Krashen in 2021: Modern Linguistics moderated by Nabil Belmekki) who is an expert of the field language acquisition expressed about the ultimate success in different areas of the language. There, he repeatedly touched on and emphasized it three years ago. This is his explanation about the pronunciation of second language learners who cannot reach the final conclusion, in other words, who cannot reach the mother tongue level. He states that the reason why second language learners cannot reach the level of the mother tongue is because they do not want to enter the opposite language community voluntarily. He says that because the people in question are unwilling to become club members, their pronunciation does not reach the level of native pronunciation. As stated, this is a voluntary and conscious form of linguistic behaviour.

The importance of phonetics in a language is once again brought to light. Children have the capacity to learn the pronunciation of several languages at the same time, and they do. In fact, it is reported that children learn the pronunciation of these languages much faster and at a much more perfect level (Baker, 2015). However, it is said that children often struggle with pronunciation difficulties after the critical period. Yaş (2019) gives a striking explanation and a quote in his study.

For example, in English, the rounded "r," the guttural "th," and nasal sounds are very difficult or even impossible to learn and pronounce. In his statements on this subject, Baker adds:

> Usually their pronunciation carries the ring of the first language. Compare mainland Europeans, Africans, Arabs and Asians who have learned to speak English fluently. Rarely do they pronounce English like a North American or British person. Their first language's sound and pronunciation affect how the English is intonated. Young children are more likely to pick up the appropriate pronunciation of their two languages than those who later learn a second language. (2007, p. 32)

Let's try to answer the two questions we have raised before: "Can second language adult learners achieve native-like competence in a second language?" and "Do learners who begin to learn a second language at the time of childhood attain a higher level of proficiency in the second language than do learners who start to learn as adults?" It must be said that some studies have made known that late learners of a second language do not become native-like speakers, while other studies have proposed that second language learners who began learning after adolescence were able to attain native speaker proficiency. As Ellis (2015) reported, Bongaerts (1999) used the ratings of native speakers to scrutinize if nine post-adolescent Dutch learners of a second language, French,

had reached an accent at the level where a native speaker is.

The recordings of their speech were mixed with the recordings of 18 Dutch learners of French at a lower level of proficiency and with nine native speakers. Three of the advanced students were able to pass for native speakers. Bongaert argues that a high level of motivation in combination with pronunciation exercise qualified the mentioned capable learners to accomplish the level of native speakers. It is indispensable to show that there are, as a minimum, certain differences between highly successful late learners and native speakers in order to counter Bongaert's claim.

Evidence for this was found by Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2009). They stated that none of the learners beginning late, native-like learners in their scrutiny scored in the same range as native speakers on all ten measures they used, but on only some of them, which are pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. In contrast, some of the early learners younger than 12 years old performed at the same level as the native speakers. Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003, p. 580) maintained: "The subtle differences between near-native and native proficiency that we found lend backing to the CPH; on the other hand, we also noted that the mentioned differences are probable to be very small in all facets of the lives of second language learners."

When the differences between the acquisition of a second language that begins in childhood and the acquisition of two languages that begins in adulthood are considered, it is said that children show better and better success, while adults acquire a second language faster. It should also be emphasized that when considering the long years of work, it would not be wrong to state that the CPH idea cannot be denied.

Some prominent researchers, such as Abrahamsson, Hyltenstam, and Bylund (2018), have long conducted significant studies on age influence and one/two language acquisition. They provided some results from their research, stating that age onset does not reveal experimental, sociological, or psychological variables. They admit that they could not show a linear function between the starting age and the final achievement of bilingual acquisition of children. This linear function does not have a gradual decline over a supposedly critical cut-off age.

They state that they have failed to identify a single adult learner with second language proficiency that is indistinct from that of native speakers. They pointed out that their results do not suggest that bilingualism rather than late language exposure is preventing second language learners from achieving fully native-like proficiency or that monolingualism is an advantageous learning circumstance.

It should be pointed out that although many of the findings from the research carried out so far are entirely consistent with what would be predicted by the CPH, the mere conclusion that can be drawn from the normally disseminated samples of learners is that native-like final attainment is an exceedingly uncommon phenomenon among the adults learning a second language. The opposite statement is also true if it is said that all late learners are non-native speakers.

Conclusion

The reason why some second language learners are more successful than others is often discussed in the linguistic field. We know that there are many differences between learners. Age, which is one of them, is an important one. In particular, the influence of age on starting a second language and ultimate success is hotly debated. In their studies, the scholars recurrently attained measures of two different variables: starting age and second language proficiency, i.e., ultimate attainment.

Symptomatically, no study has testified to the absence of a relationship between the age of starting and final attainment. Although the coefficients of correlation differ across research, it is well acknowledged that the age of starting seems to be the independent variable that best explicates the data. It must be given that it normally accounts for about 30% of the variance in final second

language grammar achievement and about 50% in pronunciation, as reported by Long (2013, p. 7).

Although the clearly ascertained age boundaries for attaining native proficiency in a second language do not exist, the maturation period, i.e., the age at which proficiency begins, has been shown to correlate with ultimate proficiency (the first question which is raised in the introduction). We should emphasize that it is only when learners possess sufficient exposure to the aimed language that the benefits of starting young for ultimate attainment are realized. It seems like it gives us a reason for the fact that there are doubts about the importance of beginning to learn a foreign language in a classroom milieu at an early age.

One conclusion drawn from the inquiries is that, with the exception of pronunciation, older learners acquire a second language more quickly than younger learners in the primary phases. This may be because older students use more conscious learning strategies while younger students use more tacit learning strategies.

On the other hand, it is uncertain whether or not age, in other words, maturation times, has an impact on the process of second language acquisition. Certain studies have made known that the age of entry does not have an influence on the order and sequence of acquisition. However, some other studies propose that the analytical skills of older learners do have an effect on how they acquire certain grammatical features. Put differently, while learners who begin to learn as adults can achieve a high level of proficiency in a second language, there is increasing evidence that they may fall short of the full range of competence similar to their native language. But this may simply reveal the fact that the "multilingualism" of a bilingual is qualitatively different from that of a monolingual.

Critical, sometimes called sensitive period, phases were identified in different aspects of the language, beginning with phonology, then vocabulary and collocations, and termination with grammar. In the literature, different estimates have been proposed for native-speaking adult learners.

Perhaps the most cited is that of Selinker (1972, p. 212), who found that only 5 per cent of second language learners reached the final level. Nevertheless, the experimental studies differ in their reports, ranging from a relatively high number of occurrences, between 10 and 20 per cent, to no occurrences at all. It seems significant to note that these results are linked to the type of learners studied, the sort of linguistic constructions analyzed and even the sort of techniques used or the type of definition advocated.

One possible explanation for the idea that younger is better is that younger learners are better suited to be involved in inherent learning, and older learners are more reliant on non-inherent learning (i.e., implicit vs. explicit learning or conscious vs. unconscious learning). Conscious learning is a slow process that requires a massive amount of exposure to the second language. Therefore, there is no instantaneous benefit to be gained for younger learners. Truthfully, explicit learning may lead to more immediate success.

We should repeatedly point out that, perhaps different learning mechanisms, e.g. implicit-procedural or others, are used by children and adults to develop language.

Future research should include measures of second language skills in all modes/domains of language, such as phonetics, syntax, lexis, pragmatics, phonology, and morphology, with other social and psychological variables, etc., in both production and perceptual realms. It is better to select highly advanced participants for studies, especially those involving only participants whom native speakers consider to be potentially native-like. It becomes important to use tools that are sensitive enough to distinguish between near-native and native-like proficiency, along with

between different amounts of near-native proficiency.

Finally, far-reaching studies involving different kinds of monolingual and bilingual first and second language speakers encapsulating different facets of linguistic knowledge are unquestionably needed to clarify these issues.

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Disclosure Statement

New Materialist Ecopoetics in Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Little Sparta*: The Garden as a Living Text

Ian Hamilton Finlay'in Little Sparta'sında Yeni Materyalist Ekopoetik: Yaşayan bir Metin Olarak Bahçe

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ABSTRACT

This article explores Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Little Sparta* through the lens of New Materialism, presenting the garden as both an aesthetic space and an active agent that redefines human-nature relations. Central to this study are concepts like *agential realism*, *vibrant matter*, and *intra-action*, which highlight dynamic interactions between the garden's installations and their surroundings. Rather than being solely shaped by human intervention, the garden evolves through natural processes—seasonal shifts, weather changes, and plant growth—making it a co-creative, living text. The study emphasizes *Little Sparta*'s role in challenging anthropocentric views by merging poetry with natural elements, thereby advocating a holistic understanding of ecological and cultural narratives. Through the integration of art and nature, the garden dissolves boundaries, illustrating interconnectedness and fostering environmental empathy. As a space of continuous interaction, *Little Sparta* positions itself as an ecopoetic landscape that prompts visitors to reconsider their role within ecosystems. This approach not only enhances aesthetic and ecological engagement but also demonstrates how New Materialist principles can transform our perceptions of both art and the environment.

> *Poetry, Painting, and Gardening, or the Science of Landscape, will forever by men of taste be deemed Three Sisters, or the Three New Graces who dress and adorn nature.*
>
> Horace Walpole[1]

Introduction

Little Sparta, (see Figure 1a & 1b) created by Scottish poet and artist Ian Hamilton Finlay[2] (1925-2006),[3] represents a radical synthesis of art, literature, and landscape. Located in the Pentland

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[1] MS annotation to William Mason's Satirical Poems, published in an edition of the relevant poems by Paget Toynbee (Oxford, 1926), p. 43 (Hunt 1971:294).

[2] Finlay was born in the Bahamas in 1925 but spent most of his life in Scotland. He published his first book of short stories in 1958 (while working as a shepherd in Rousay in Orkney). Although he's written in various genres such as short story, novel, poetry etc he's well known as a poet and with his concrete poems. He is the pioneer figure in concrete poetry movement in the UK.

[3] All photos used in the article belong to the author unless otherwise stated.

Hills near Edinburgh,[4] this garden functions as more than a curated collection of plants and sculptures; it is an evolving narrative space that challenges traditional notions of human dominance over nature. Little Sparta houses more than 270 artworks arranged in what Finlay referred to as "specific landscapes," distinct areas within the garden, each with a unique character and ambiance. Finlay collaborated with stone carvers, letterers, and occasionally other artists and poets to produce numerous sculptures and artworks, all of which are integral to the garden's design. These pieces address a variety of themes, including the sea and its fishing fleets, human connections to nature, classical antiquity, the French Revolution, and the Second World War. The

Figure 1a

individual poetic and sculptural elements—crafted in wood, stone, and metal—are thoughtfully positioned within meticulously designed landscaping and plantings. Thus, the garden as a whole becomes the artwork (*The Little Sparta Trust* n.d.).

Figure 1b

Integrating New Materialist theories such as Karen Barad's *agential realism* and Jane Bennett's concept of *vibrant matter*, this study reinterprets the garden as an active participant that continuously engages with its surroundings. Installations, ranging from inscribed stones to sculptural elements, serve as mediators that dissolve traditional boundaries between culture and nature, positioning the garden as a 'living text' where human and non-human actors co-create meaning, reshaping ecological and cultural narratives.

Historically, gardens have symbolized humanity's quest to replicate and master nature's perceived perfection, often envisioned as

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[4] Little Sparta is located in the western foothills of the Pentland Hills near Edinburgh. The garden, a small farmstead at Stonypath that was left to Mrs Finlay by her family, has been created over the course of a 23-year cooperation. Its original name was Stonypath until emended to Little Sparta in 1983. The place took its name because of a long-running conflict with a local authority. The Council desired to categorise it as a gallery and boost its tax rate correspondingly, but Finlay protested that it was a temple for art. Living in a place that was at conflict with Edinburgh, he picked the name Little Sparta in response to Edinburgh's reputation as the 'Athens of the North', the centre of learning during the Enlightenment, and the fact that Sparta was the military city state that was constantly in opposition to Athens. Finlay's Little Sparta is a cultural outpost that challenges Edinburgh's cultural hegemony. In other words, this conflict between Finlay and the Council can be compared to the division between the belief in nature and the belief in monotheistic religion (God), in which Edinburgh, a major cultural hub like Athens and Rome, demanded taxes from the place that the poet considered to be a temple. Thus, instead of a serene garden of solitude, Finlay's Little Sparta was supposed to be an "attack," since Finlay was a figure who challenged authority throughout his life (Linklater, 2015, p. 1). The garden allows entry only at specific times of the year—June to September—aligning with Finlay's intention for visitors to experience the artworks integrated with the lush greenery, as trees and plants reach full bloom during this period.

microcosms of the idealized Garden of Eden. This quest is evident in the meticulous cultivation of land, where art and science converge. As Raymond Williams discusses in *Keywords*, land cultivation reflects societal values and power dynamics, extending beyond physical work to cultural processes. Similarly, Edward Said interprets gardens like the one in *Mansfield Park* as symbols of colonial relationships, where land management mirrors imperial control. While Franco Moretti, in *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900*, critiques Said's reading as flawed and superficial, the debate underscores how the garden becomes a contested space of cultural and ideological production, linking it to broader historical narratives. In literature and art, gardens are portrayed not only as retreats from the wild but as spaces where human aspirations engage with nature's autonomy. Finlay extends this tradition by embedding his poetic and artistic visions into the living earth, creating environments where art and nature maintain a continuous dialogue.

This dialogue is particularly evident in the ecopoetics of *Little Sparta*. Ecopoetics, a concept merging ecology with poetic expression, positions poetry as a transformative force capable of enhancing ecological consciousness and fostering environmental empathy. William Rueckert characterizes poetry as "stored energy," describing it as a form of "formal turbulence," a renewable, dynamic source derived from language and imagination (1996, p. 108). Poetry, therefore, not only represents nature but actively contributes to it, embodying humanity's efforts to weave the natural world into the fabric of poetic expression.

Moreover, *Little Sparta* exemplifies New Materialist perspectives that challenge hierarchical distinctions between subjects and objects, culture and nature. Emerging from feminist thought, science studies, and environmental humanities, New Materialism views the world as an interconnected network of forces and materials. Within this framework, *Little Sparta* serves as a vivid example, as it redefines agency as an inherent capacity of all matter, suggesting that stones, water, plants, and poems actively shape their surroundings (Bennett, 2010, p. 21). The garden's landscape, language, and inscriptions create a co-creative space where human and non-human elements merge, reinforcing the idea that materiality is not passive but actively participates in shaping reality.

Finlay's "poetry garden" not only repositions poetry within physical space but also aligns with the New Materialist ambition to blur the boundaries between the human and the non-human, relocating the poetic locus from the self to the environment (Rodger, 2020, p. 2). As Carlson notes, the garden "ambushes the visitor" with language that is inscribed on various surfaces, making *Little Sparta* both a "sustained, sensuous poem" and a radical metaphorical space (Carlson, n.d.). This dynamic interaction highlights the interconnected network of forces, emphasizing Finlay's vision to blend poetry and landscape, reshaping both cultural and ecological narratives.

Little Sparta is not merely an art garden; it is a "poetry garden," representing a significant shift in modernist poetics, where the poem extends beyond the page to inhabit physical space (Rodger, 2020, p. 2). This shift relocates the poetic locus from the self to the broader environment, aligning with Finlay's ambition to blend poetry with physical space and reshape both cultural and ecological narratives.

This article argues that *Little Sparta* embodies New Materialist principles by redefining the garden as a space where ecological and poetic elements merge. It proposes that the garden's design and inscriptions invite visitors to engage with an environment where human and non-human agencies interact. By analysing Finlay's integration of language, landscape, and sculpture, this study reveals how *Little Sparta* prompts a re-evaluation of human-nature relationships, illustrating that art and nature are mutually influential. The article examines six installations—*CURFEW/Curlew*, *The Present Order Is the Disorder of the Future*, *Apollon Terroriste*, *MARE NOSTRUM*, *Evening Will Come*, *They Will Sew The Blue Sail,* and *Man: A Passerby* —for their unique representations of human-

nature interactions, demonstrating the material and symbolic complexities within the garden.[5]

Literature Review

Existing scholarship on Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Little Sparta* predominantly emphasizes its integration of art, poetry, and landscape, framing it as a dialogic space that redefines traditional garden aesthetics. Rodger (2020) describes *Little Sparta* as an example of *topographical poetics*, shifting the focus from individual subjectivity to broader environmental interactions. This approach aligns with New Materialist principles, which stress the collaborative creation of meaning between human and non-human elements, positioning the garden as an evolving co-creator rather than a static art form.

Eyres (2009) interprets *Little Sparta* as a "People's Arcadia," underscoring Finlay's blend of classical ideals with contemporary site-specific art. He emphasizes how the garden fosters a sustained dialogue between historical Arcadian themes and modern landscapes, demonstrating Finlay's commitment to spaces that are both aesthetic and ecologically resonant. This interaction between culture and nature aligns with New Materialist concepts of entangled agency, where cultural elements co-create meaning alongside natural processes. Drawing on Raymond Williams's discussion in *The Country and the City* (1973), *Little Sparta* not only contests the traditional culture versus nature dualism but also embodies an immanent reconstruction of this relationship. This ecopoetic perspective suggests that meaning emerges through the material interactions within the landscape itself.

Hunt (2012) elaborates on the interpretive depth of *Little Sparta*, presenting it as a "readable garden" characterized by inscribed texts and sculptural elements that provoke reflection. Hunt's analysis highlights how Finlay's use of small-scale *follies*—designed to engage thought and interaction—suits the garden's modest scale and aligns with New Materialist themes, where each component plays a role in dynamic meaning-making processes. This notion resonates with Donna Haraway's ideas in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (1991), which discuss the co-creation of meaning through complex networks of human and non-human interactions. Similarly, Oppermann and Iovino's work on material ecocriticism emphasizes the active participation of both organic and inorganic agents in shaping ecological narratives, further supporting the interpretation of *Little Sparta* as a living text that continuously evolves through such interactions.

Linklater (2015) further enhances the understanding of *Little Sparta* by exploring its juxtaposition of beauty and provocation. He notes how the garden serves as a space that not only inspires aesthetic appreciation but also confronts complex themes such as warfare, classical philosophy, and revolution. Finlay's installations blur the lines between art and nature, embodying New Materialist ideas that emphasize material agency and the dissolution of traditional boundaries. In this context, matter itself is seen as possessing agency, actively participating in meaning-making and shaping reality rather than merely serving as a passive object influenced by human action. For instance, the *Monument to the First Battle of Little Sparta* symbolizes Finlay's resistance against local authorities, reflecting the garden's rebellious spirit and critique of institutional norms.

Thomas (2005) examines the ideological implications of Finlay's installations, observing how the aesthetic choices in *Little Sparta* critique authority and institutional control. This perspective aligns with New Materialist critiques of anthropocentrism, emphasizing material agency—the capacity of non-human entities, such as objects, landscapes, and elements, to shape socio-political narratives. Thomas illustrates how the garden's material elements actively contribute to its

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[5] I have chosen to focus on seven specific examples from Little Sparta's 270 artworks due to the impracticality of analysing each piece in depth within a single article. These selected works represent Finlay's thematic and aesthetic vision, allowing for a balanced exploration of his artistry without overwhelming the reader.

evolving political and philosophical messages, highlighting the role of non-human actors in constructing meaning within the landscape.

Guziur (2021) extends this analysis by interpreting the classical column bases in *Little Sparta* as "neopresocratic" symbols of philosophical ideas about order and chaos, aligning with Finlay's engagement with material symbolism and New Materialist theories. This perspective underscores the active role of all matter—whether human-made or natural—in shaping the garden's narrative. Meanwhile, Kochetkova (2021) introduces a temporal dimension, suggesting that *Little Sparta* functions as a microcosm embodying both classical traditions and contemporary ecological awareness. Her analysis emphasizes the continuous interaction between historical narratives and material reality, proposing that the garden encourages a rethinking of human-nature relationships over time.

Additionally, Mitchell (2024) highlights *Little Sparta's* potential as a site of philosophical inquiry, focusing on its integration of classical references, historical narratives, and natural elements. He argues that the garden fosters a contemplative yet visually engaging space, where human and non-human elements co-create meaning. This aligns with Timothy Morton's "ecological thought," which insists on acknowledging the complex interrelation of all things and urges a shift away from anthropocentric doctrines toward a deeper understanding of shared agency and interconnectedness.

In summary, the literature on *Little Sparta* highlights its function as a dynamic text that integrates poetic, artistic, and ecological elements, creating an interactive space that challenges conventional distinctions between culture and nature. However, while existing studies emphasize the garden's aesthetic, ideological, and symbolic features, they often overlook a comprehensive New Materialist interpretation that accounts for the entangled agency among human and non-human actors. This article aims to address this gap by examining *Little Sparta* through a New Materialist lens, emphasizing its role as an active participant in cultural and ecological narratives, where matter and meaning co-constitute one another.

Principles of New Materialism

New Materialism disrupts conventional ecological and artistic discourses, by asserting that all matter—whether animate or inanimate—possesses agency. This approach aligns with deep ecology's call for a "radical conceptualisation of humanity's place on the planet," promoting a "nature-centred system of values" (Clark, p. 23; Garrard, p. 24). Both frameworks emphasize the "fundamental interconnectedness of all life forms and natural features" (Nayar, p. 336), advocating for a broader "circle of identification with other living things" (Clark, p. 23) that transcends anthropocentric hierarchies.

Aligned with Arne Naess's "biospherical egalitarianism," which prioritizes the interests of the biosphere over individual species (Marland, p. 850), New Materialism proposes an immanent approach that redefines human-nature relations, extending respect not just for all life forms but also for natural landscapes like rivers and mountains (Nayar, p. 336).

Donna Haraway's *A Manifesto for Cyborgs* (1985) critiques Western dualisms—such as self/other, culture/nature, and active/passive—that underpin systemic forms of domination across gender, race, and environmental lines (Haraway, 1985, p. 35). New Materialism embraces this critique, advocating a framework that acknowledges the entangled agency of all entities. By dissolving these dualisms, New Materialism proposes a more complex network of relations where matter and meaning co-constitute one another.

Barad's concept of "agential realism" is crucial in this discourse, redefining agency as emerging from "intra-actions" rather than from pre-existing entities acting independently (2007, p. 26).

Barad argues that entities do not exist prior to their interactions; instead, they emerge through these "intra-actions," which fundamentally shape their identities and capacities (2007, p. 33). In *Little Sparta*, Barad's concept manifest in the interactions between human-created inscriptions and natural elements, where meanings evolve continuously through non-human influences, illustrating Barad's assertion that "matter and meaning are not separate elements; they are inextricably fused together" (Barad, 2007, p. 3).

Barad's framework encourages a reconsideration of conventional ethical and scientific paradigms, promoting a holistic approach that acknowledges the entangled nature of being, knowing, and acting (2007, p. 5). This perspective not only redefines agency but also fosters a more ethical engagement with the world. In *Little Sparta*, for example, inscribed stones do not convey fixed messages; instead, their interactions with weather, water, and plant growth transform the garden into a co-creator of meaning. This aligns with Barad's assertion that both human and non-human elements actively contribute to the garden's evolving narrative.

Building on this foundation, Rosi Braidotti extends the non-anthropocentric vision of New Materialism by advocating for a posthuman perspective that intertwines ethical considerations with environmental sustainability (2013, pp. 3-4). Braidotti critiques traditional human-centred notions of agency and environmental action, suggesting a subjectivity that recognizes human embeddedness within the material world (2013, pp. 11-12). This approach aligns with Cary Wolfe's assertion that "the 'human,' we now know, is not now and never was itself" (Wolfe, 2003, p. xiii), emphasizing the critique of speciesism and deconstructing the human/animal boundary, as illustrated by Derrida's concept of *animot* (Derrida, 2002, p. 399). Additionally, Braidotti's perspective resonates with Serenella Iovino's "ecological horizontalism," which stresses shared materiality and the dissolution of the human/nature binary (Iovino, 2012, p. 52).

Recognizing non-human agency in ecological art fosters a more inclusive approach to environmental engagement, encouraging individuals to reconsider their roles within ecosystems (Braidotti, 2013, p. 6). This approach is particularly evident in *Little Sparta*, where the garden's design embodies intricate connections between human creations and non-human elements. The interplay of sculptures, inscriptions, plants, water flows, and weather changes illustrates Braidotti's emphasis on non-human participation in shaping ecological narratives. By presenting art as inherently interwoven with nature, *Little Sparta* invites visitors to reconsider their role within ecosystems, advocating for a more sustainable and inclusive form of engagement (Braidotti, 2013, p. 7).

Braidotti's integration of New Materialism with a posthuman approach also calls for ethical reorientation towards non-human actors, shifting from exploitative to reciprocal relationships with nature (2013, p. 12). This ethical stance is vital in addressing current environmental crises, as it promotes a holistic view of sustainability that includes all ecosystem participants, not just humans. In *Little Sparta*, this principle is evident in the coexistence of artistic and natural elements, where each component contributes to the garden's narrative, fostering deeper ecological awareness.

Braidotti's approach not only critiques traditional humanism but also offers transformative potential for environmental philosophy, art, and policy. It promotes an integrated approach that honours the myriad forms of life, inviting new strategies to tackle ecological challenges. As a dynamic embodiment of this posthumanist vision, *Little Sparta* encourages ethical engagement with the more-than-human world, exemplifying Braidotti's call for responsible and inclusive ecological practices.

Jane Bennett's concept of *vibrant matter* enriches the theoretical framework of New Materialism by suggesting that all matter, including seemingly inert objects like stones or rivers, possesses

agency (2010, p. 2). Bennett argues that these entities actively participate in ecological and political spheres, challenging the perception of the non-human world as passive (2010, p. 24). This perspective broadens ethical and political responsibilities toward non-human entities.

In artistic contexts, Bennett's idea reimagines art as a collaborative interaction between human and non-human forces, where the creative process emerges from the engagement of all forms of matter (Bennett, 2010, p. 23). This perspective expands our understanding of creativity, acknowledging the role of non-human elements in shaping artistic and cultural landscapes.

In *Little Sparta*, these ideas are actualized as the garden becomes an active entity where art and nature coalesce through *vibrant matter*. For instance, inscribed stones interact continuously with sunlight, rain, and plant growth, transforming the garden into a living exchange that embodies diverse material agencies (Bennett, 2010, p. 24). This perspective fosters a holistic appreciation of the interconnectedness of all matter, bridging the gap between humans and the more-than-human world.

New Materialism offers a comprehensive framework for understanding interactions within *Little Sparta*. It emphasizes that to fully grasp the garden's potential, one must consider its dynamic relationships, resonating with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "heterogenesis," where components form an ever-evolving whole (Deleuze & Guattari, [1980] 1987). This perspective rejects fixed essences in favor of multiplicity, suggesting that concepts are not static but constantly evolving assemblages.

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *puissance*, or "the ability to affect and be affected" (Smith & Protevi, n.d.), applies to *Little Sparta*, where elements (plants, sculptures, inscriptions) continually reshape the garden's meaning. As they propose, the understanding of *Little Sparta* emerges from its interactions with the environment, emphasizing a process-oriented, relational approach to ecological engagement.

The garden transcends aesthetic boundaries, functioning as a "network of living texts" that engages continuously with visitors, flora, and natural elements. Each component—from stone sculptures and inscriptions to plants and water features—contributes to an ongoing dialogue. This perspective aligns with Deleuze and Guattari's *natureculture*, where *Little Sparta* is seen not as a static entity but as an active participant in ecological and cultural processes (Herzogenrath, 2008, p. 2).

This interpretation deepens our understanding of Ian Hamilton Finlay's artistic vision, demonstrating how each element within *Little Sparta* embodies potential energy and agency, contributing to an evolving narrative shaped by both human and non-human interactions. This interplay exemplifies New Materialism's challenge to traditional views by illustrating how the garden's materiality—its stones, plants, and texts—engages in a continuous dialogue, dissolving boundaries between nature and culture, art and environment.

The Garden as Text: A New Materialist Approach

Within New Materialist discourse, gardens are not merely collections of flora and objects but rather "texts" that communicate with visitors and engage dynamically with their surroundings. This approach broadens the concept of textuality to include a range of material expressions and interactions, as observed in *Little Sparta*. Here, the garden's narrative unfolds not only through visual engagement but also via sensory interactions and continuous dialogues with the surrounding ecosystem (Bennett, 2010, p. 29).

Specific elements within *Little Sparta*, such as inscribed stones, actively participate in a dialogue with the environment. These inscriptions may contrast with the wildness of nearby foliage or harmonize with the rhythmic sounds of water, enriching the garden's narrative through layered

meanings. This nuanced interplay between human writing and natural forms aligns with ecopoetic principles, emphasizing the fusion of text and nature (Skinner, 2018, p. 66). Finlay argues that while a single word on a page lacks the relational context necessary to form a complete poem, the same word within a garden can transform into a full poem when considered part of the poetic landscape (Hunt, 2005, p. 302). This perspective suggests that art is not solely about objects but also about their interactions with surroundings and their reception by audiences.

Elements within *Little Sparta*—stones, plants, and water—are not merely decorative; they possess agency in the New Materialist sense. These elements engage in dialogues with visitors, altering perceptions and inviting new interpretations with each encounter. Recognized as texts, these components hold meaning: a stone's placement, a plant's growth, or the sound of water contributes to the evolving narrative of the garden. heir communication is evident in interactions with human and non-human actors, demonstrating Barad's notion of "intra-action," where entities emerge through interactions, shaping their identities and meanings (Barad, 2007, pp. 11-12). As Finlay elaborates:

> [U]sually each area gets a small artefact, which reigns like a small deity or spirit of place. My understanding is that the work is the whole composition – the artefact in its context. The work is not an isolated object, but an object with flowers, plants, trees, water and so on …. [It is a] giant work of art, a poem which exists within and with nature. (in Harling-Lee, 2021)

Agency in *Little Sparta* permeates the entire ecosystem, impacting both animate and inanimate elements. Reflecting Jane Bennett's concept of "vibrant matter," the garden illustrates how all components, regardless of form, have the capacity to influence and be influenced by their surroundings (Bennett, 2010, p. 23). Sculptures and plants, therefore, are not mere ornaments; they actively contribute to the garden's evolving experience, responding to visitors, weather, and one another.

Recognizing the agency of these elements, *Little Sparta* emerges as a living text, continually shaped and reshaped by its engagements. This perspective invites a re-evaluation of how to read a garden, perceiving its components not as static objects but as active participants in a network of ecological and cultural significance. It becomes a space where artistry meets natural processes, with visitors serving as integral parts of the text's creation (Hunt, 2008, p. 23; Braidotti, 2013, p. 12). In *Little Sparta*, poems materialize not only through tangible elements like intricately carved stones but also through more transient manifestations like blossoming flowers, shifting shadows, subtle changes in light, and ambient sounds. This rich sensory environment embodies a New Materialist perspective, affirming that non-human entities possess agency and actively shape the garden's evolving narrative. By engaging visitors on multiple sensory levels, the garden emphasizes that human and non-human actors co-create a shared story, challenging anthropocentric narratives that prioritize human

Figure 2

perspectives over the intrinsic value and agency of the natural world.

To illustrate the active role of symbolic elements within *Little Sparta*, this section deepens the analysis of specific installations like *CURFEW/Curlew* (see Figure 2). The poem, inscribed on a stone, physically anchors itself in the landscape while metaphorically bridging the gap between the ephemeral and the enduring. The onomatopoeic repetition of "cur-lee, cur-lee" mirrors the curlew's call at dusk, reinforcing the continuity between human language and natural rhythms. This repetition embodies Bennett's notion of "vibrant matter," asserting that all matter possesses life and agency (Bennett, 2010, p. 24). The poem's placement, often traversed at twilight, accentuates the theme of diurnal transition: as natural light fades, the inscription becomes less visible, paralleling the fading of the curlew's call into the night. This sensory overlap transforms the poem into a living experience, inviting viewers to actively engage with the changing environment.

The term *curfew*, derived from the Old French *couvre-feu* (literally "cover fire"), historically referred to extinguishing fires at a designated time, symbolizing an enforced closure. In contrast, the curlew's call at dusk represents continuity, echoing through the dimming light as a natural transition. This juxtaposition—between human-imposed order and the organic rhythm of the curlew—aligns with Karen Barad's New Materialist concept of "intra-action," where entities emerge through interaction rather than existing independently. Here, human language and natural processes reshape one another in real-time, blurring the boundaries between culture and nature.

The poem's placement within *Little Sparta* is equally significant. Located along a path often traversed during twilight, it reinforces the theme of diurnal transition. As natural light fades, the inscription becomes less visible, paralleling the gradual disappearance of the curlew's call into the night. This sensory overlap—fading words and diminishing sound—transforms the poem into a living experience, prompting viewers to engage actively with the changing environment. The shift from light to darkness not only represents a physical transition but also invites deeper contemplation of the interconnected rhythms of humans and nature.

Figure 3

In the curated environment of *Little Sparta*, the phrase by French revolutionary Louis Antoine Léon de Saint-Just, *"The Present Order Is the Disorder of the Future"* (see Figure 3), is prominently engraved on large stone blocks. This inscription questions the stability of human-made systems and emphasizes their inevitable transformation over time. The deliberate arrangement of the stones—puzzle-like with intentional gaps—visually suggests disorder within perceived order. As each stone weathers over time, the erosion of words vividly demonstrates Bennett's concept of *vibrant matter*, showing how even stone—typically seen as a stable material—exhibits life-like qualities through its active interaction with the environment.

The installation serves as a philosophical and ecological reflection, suggesting that seemingly stable structures often precede future disruptions. This aligns with New Materialist thought, proposing that all matter—whether stone, plant, or living being—is interconnected and actively participates in cycles of creation, dissolution, and reformation. The engraved phrase, situated within the context of a constantly changing landscape, embodies the transient nature of social, political, and ecological systems, emphasizing that they are subject to natural forces that drive transformation.

By integrating these reflections into *Little Sparta*, Ian Hamilton Finlay creates a site that transcends mere aesthetic appreciation, inviting a deeper meditation on the forces shaping human understanding of nature and culture. The stones, with their physical permanence contrasted by the temporary nature of their inscriptions, become active participants in a dialogue that blurs the boundaries between human creation and natural processes. This interplay of permanence and impermanence positions the garden as a 'living text,' where human and non-human elements continually shape evolving narratives of interaction and transformation. This dynamic can be conceptualized as 'nature as narration / narration as nature,' highlighting how ecological and cultural narratives are intertwined in a continuous dialogue. Such an approach not only rejects dualistic thinking but aligns with Agamben's notions of *bios* (qualified life, defined by political frameworks) and *zoe*[6] (bare life, shared by all living beings), suggesting a broader, boundary-transcending perspective on ecological and cultural processes.

Moreover, the placement of inscribed stones among natural growth and decay amplifies their message. As plants grow, weather the stones, or partially obscure inscriptions, they highlight the relentless natural processes that erode human imprints on the landscape, reinforcing an inevitable return to organic forms. The garden thereby embodies principles of ecological succession and entropy, serving as a microcosm of broader environmental cycles and forces. This evolving visual scene, influenced by changing seasons and natural weathering, underscores the fluid nature of cultural symbols when juxtaposed with the enduring cycles of nature. This dynamic interaction can be conceptualized as 'nature as narration / narration as nature,' emphasizing how ecological and cultural narratives are mutually constitutive, where each shape and is shaped by the other in a continuous process of transformation.

In this way, the installation not only highlights the inevitability of change but also positions *Little Sparta* as a mediator between human cultural expressions and nature's unyielding forces. It invites visitors to reconsider the fragility of human constructs in contrast to nature's persistent presence, prompting a re-evaluation of the complex relationship between humanity and the natural world. Finlay's garden transcends aesthetics, emerging as a symbol of philosophical inquiry and ecological awareness—a space where human aspirations and natural realities continuously interact, revealing deeper insights into humanity's place within the evolving natural order. The

Figure 4a

statue of Apollo, titled *"Apollon Terroriste"* (see Figures 4a and 4b), further exemplifies this complex interplay of classical symbolism and subversive potential. The sculpture juxtaposes the

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[6] *Bios* and *zoe* are key concepts in Giorgio Agamben's philosophical work, where *bios* refers to life defined by social and political structures, while *zoe* denotes the biological life shared by all organisms. The distinction emphasizes the need to recognize both dimensions in discussions of life and nature, which *Little Sparta* embodies by fostering a holistic engagement with both human and non-human elements.

idealized form of Apollo—a symbol of harmony and rationality—with a reinterpretation that disrupts these associations. The figure appears to be simultaneously emerging from the earth and shaped by human hands, representing a synthesis between cultural artifacts and natural forces. This design challenges conventional distinctions between human achievements and natural elements, presenting a visual and conceptual synthesis central to New Materialist thought.

Reimagining Apollo as a "terrorist" unsettles traditional iconography, which typically associates the god with order and control. In *Apollon Terroriste*, these associations are placed within the context of modern political conflicts and environmental activism, reflecting the tensions between authority and resistance. The figure's partially unfinished form and stance suggest potential chaos and conflict, aligning with Bennett's idea of *vibrant matter*, which emphasizes that all matter—whether human-made or natural—possesses agency. By foregrounding Apollo's destabilized image, Finlay emphasizes the active role of matter in shaping cultural narratives and environmental contexts, demonstrating that boundaries between human creations and natural forces are fluid.

The hybrid aesthetic of *Apollon Terroriste*, merging classical and contemporary elements, epitomizes the New Materialist perspective that all matter is vibrant and co-creative. The statue's rough texture and fragmented form evoke natural erosion, further blurring distinctions between human and non-human elements. This material interplay encourages viewers to rethink how art and nature coalesce into a hybrid space, where traditional binaries are not just blurred but actively intertwined. The sculpture's presence becomes a symbolic reminder of the interconnected relationship between creativity and natural energy, illustrating how each reshapes the other.

Through *Apollon Terroriste*, Finlay provocatively suggests that art should not be seen merely as an aesthetic refuge but as a force capable of challenging and transforming societal norms and natural orders. The piece acts as a catalyst within the garden, prompting visitors to reflect on the potential of art to question and redefine boundaries—whether

Figure 4b

between beauty and terror, culture and nature, or order and chaos. This perspective aligns with Rosi Braidotti's posthuman framework, which emphasizes the entanglement of human and non-human elements in a shared space of creation and interaction.

 The sculpture not only enriches the visual and thematic landscape of *Little Sparta* but also reinforces the garden's role as a space of philosophical inquiry and ecological interaction. Here, every element, from stone to plant to sculpture, participates in a larger, evolving narrative that continuously redefines human and non-human relationships. As such, *Apollon Terroriste* serves as a powerful representation of the New Materialist view that art and nature are co-creators in shaping the material world, challenging visitors to engage with both the potential and the limitations of human cultural endeavours when placed in direct conversation with the forces of nature.
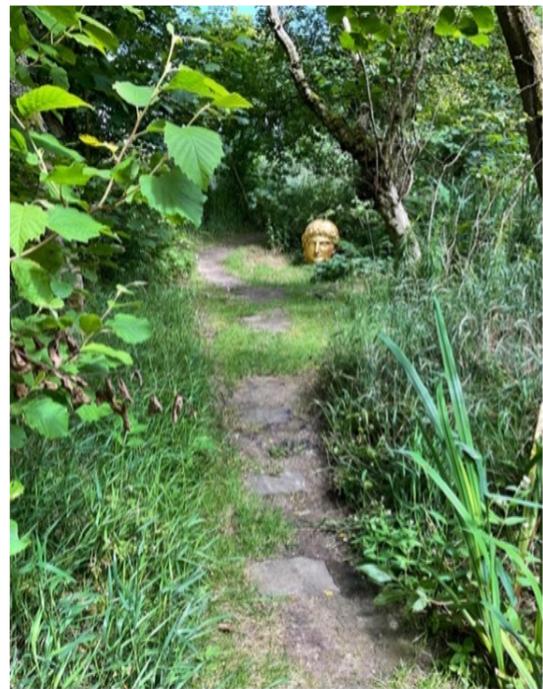
Figure 5

In *Little Sparta*, the *"MARE NOSTRUM"* plaque (see Figure 5) on an ash tree merges historical resonance with natural qualities. The phrase, meaning "Our Sea," symbolizes Roman identity and cultural exchange. Positioned within the garden, it represents broader narratives of coexistence and conflict. The rustling of the tree's leaves mimics the sound of waves, creating a sense of an "island kingdom," despite being inland (Mitchell, 2024, n.p.). The choice of the ash tree is significant, as its expansive canopy enhances the sea-like ambiance. Alec Finlay explains: "the ash fills the garden with its sea-sound … That is our sea" (Finlay, 2011). This installation suggests a fluid dialogue between human culture and nature, embodying the fluidity of cultural boundaries and interconnected histories.

The placement of *MARE NOSTRUM* promotes contemplation, encouraging visitors to consider the broader implications of human interaction with nature. The plaque transcends its decorative role, becoming part of a living narrative that merges human and natural histories into a cohesive ecopoetic expression. The ash tree embodies both communication and memory, using its rustling leaves as a language through which the garden speaks.

Transitioning from auditory to visual and thematic richness, the poem *"Evening Will Come, They Will Sew The Blue Sail"* (see Figure 6), inscribed on a gravestone-shaped stele beside the pond, explores themes of death, renewal, and cyclical continuity. The phrase, *Evening Will Come*, evokes the closure associated with the day's end, while *sewing the sail* suggests preparation for an impending journey. This aligns with mythological transitions, such as the crossing of the river Styx in Greek mythology or Odysseus' voyage into the unknown. The juxtaposition of these elements highlights the interconnected concepts of endings and new beginnings, situating the poem within a broader ecological and mythic framework.

Figure 6

The gravestone-shaped stele reinforces themes of mortality, serving as a material reminder of life's transience. However, its proximity to the pond—a symbol of water, life, and rebirth—adds a layer of cyclical symbolism, emphasizing renewal. This placement creates a thematic dialogue that moves beyond linear interpretations of time, embracing the cyclical nature of existence found in both human and natural realms. Water, traditionally a symbol of death and regeneration, underscores the notion that closure in life is also the precursor to renewal, echoing the principles

of ecological succession.

The blue colour of the sail enriches the poem's symbolism, representing both sea and sky—elements traditionally associated with vastness, the unconscious depths of the human psyche, and transcendence beyond the material world. This choice of colour suggests a connection between human mortality and broader cosmic cycles, emphasizing the New Materialist perspective that human experiences are part of a larger, interconnected material network. The blue sail, as a metaphorical vessel, not only symbolizes the journey of human life navigating existential uncertainties but also represents the influence of natural and cosmic forces that shape human understanding and identity.

The poem's inscription on the stele is not merely a static text; it actively participates in *Little Sparta's* ecopoetic landscape. Drawing on Karen Barad's concept of "intra-action," where entities emerge and influence each other through their interactions rather than existing as isolated components, the poem and its surroundings shape one another's meanings. The pond's reflection of the gravestone changes throughout the day, as the words shift in visibility depending on light, weather, and water conditions. This interplay embodies the New Materialist idea that matter possesses agency, contributing to the evolving narrative of the space.

In addition to its philosophical implications, the poem invites an emotional response. Its melancholic tone and mythic references encourage introspection, prompting visitors to contemplate their mortality within the context of the garden's living ecosystem. By placing the poem beside the pond, Finlay creates a space where human emotions, poetic expression, and natural elements merge, allowing for multi-layered engagement with the text on sensory and intellectual levels.

Through this installation, *Evening Will Come, They Will Sew The Blue Sail* becomes a site of layered meaning, blurring the distinctions between human creation and natural processes. It serves not only as a poetic representation of life's transience but also as a material manifestation of New Materialist principles, where human and non-human elements collaboratively shape a narrative of life, death, and renewal. This engagement aligns with *Little Sparta's* broader ecopoetic vision, urging a rethinking of human mortality in relation to the enduring cycles of nature.

The legend of *Lokman Hekim*, (*Luqman the Wise*) famed for discovering a plant that could grant immortality, metaphorically enriches the narrative explored in *Little Sparta*. In this legend, Lokman Hekim's knowledge of eternal life is ultimately lost, symbolizing the inherent limitations of human understanding and the transient nature of existence. This myth resonates deeply with the themes present in *Little Sparta*, where the motif of impermanence permeates the garden's design. Installations like *Evening Will Come, They Will Sew The Blue Sail* echo a similar acknowledgment of mortality, underscoring the futility of human endeavours to transcend the natural limits imposed by life's cyclical processes.

Although the legend of Lokman Hekim is not physically represented within the garden, its essence aligns with Finlay's conceptual approach, challenging human aspirations to dominate nature. In contrast to Gilgamesh's legendary quest to conquer nature and achieve immortality, Lokman Hekim's philosophy emphasizes harmony with nature's cycles, highlighting interconnectedness rather than domination. Both the legend and the garden underscore the reciprocal relationship between human endeavours and nature's enduring rhythms. In this way, *Little Sparta* becomes more than a collection of sculptures and inscriptions; it transforms into a contemplative space that continuously explores the themes of life, death, and renewal. Visitors are invited to reflect on broader philosophical questions related to New Materialism, where matter's agency extends beyond symbolism, actively shaping the evolving narrative of the garden.

By metaphorically connecting *Little Sparta* to the legend of Lokman Hekim, the interpretation positions the garden as a living text that embodies the complex interplay of existence—an ecosystem where human and non-human elements engage dynamically, revealing both the potential and limitations of human understanding. This perspective encourages a reconsideration of the garden's role, not merely as an artistic creation but as a symbolic dialogue between humanity and nature's continuous cycles. The installations, through their interaction with natural forces like weathering, water flow, and plant growth, reflect New Materialism's emphasis on vibrant matter, co-creating meanings with human interpretations.

The phrase *Man: A Passerby* (see Figure 7) inscribed on a stone in *Little Sparta* serves as a poignant reminder of human transience in contrast to the relative permanence of natural processes. This concept resonates with New Materialist themes, especially agential realism and vibrant matter, which question the centrality and permanence of humanity in nature. Here, "Man" is portrayed not as a dominating or lasting entity but as a transient participant in the ongoing natural narrative.

<div align="right">**Figure 7**</div>

This inscription conveys the humility of the human condition, presenting humanity as merely passing through, akin to other transient phenomena in nature. The term "passerby" underscores the temporary nature of human presence, ultimately rendering it less consequential than the enduring ecological cycles. This aligns with *Little Sparta*'s ecopoetic philosophy, wherein human art and inscriptions are integrated within a dynamic natural environment, subject to the forces of weathering and growth that gradually obscure or alter them. This interplay embodies the concept of intra-action, wherein human and non-human elements constantly shape and redefine one another.

In the framework of New Materialism, this inscription invites reflection on the temporality of human life within a world where non-human entities persist, evolve, and interact independently. By depicting "man" as a passerby, Finlay subtly challenges anthropocentric narratives, promoting a view of humans as integrated into, rather than separate from, the ecological cycles shaping *Little Sparta*. Thus, this inscription serves not only as a memento mori but also as a New Materialist statement, encouraging contemplation of humanity's place within an interconnected, self-sustaining environment that extends beyond human influence. It reinforces the idea of *Little Sparta* as a "living text," where human artifacts are enmeshed with natural processes, illustrating the dissolution of boundaries between human culture and the natural world.

In sum, *Little Sparta* functions as an ecopoetic landscape, enriched by metaphorical elements that deepen its philosophical resonance. The garden's layered narratives imply that while human knowledge seeks permanence, it remains bound by the temporal rhythms of the natural world. In this way, *Little Sparta* embodies New Materialist principles, offering a holistic engagement that bridges tangible and conceptual elements, challenging traditional distinctions between culture and nature, life and death, and knowledge and mystery.

Conclusion

Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Little Sparta* exemplifies New Materialist principles, evolving from a traditional aesthetic space into a dynamic, textual, and ecological entity. By integrating art, literature, and landscape, the garden establishes itself as an active participant in cultural and environmental dialogues. It transcends conventional aesthetics, becoming a continuous site of

interaction where human and non-human elements collaboratively create meaning.

The integration of art and nature in *Little Sparta* reflects the New Materialist notion that all matter possesses agency. Elements like inscribed stones and sculptures actively engage in dialogues that dissolve the boundaries between human and non-human actors. This interaction fosters a comprehensive understanding of the environment, highlighting each element's active role—whether living or non-living—in shaping the garden's narrative. Consequently, *Little Sparta* emerges as more than just an ecopoetic manifestation; it becomes a space where poetry and nature converge, generating new ecological and cultural meanings that encourage visitors to reassess their relationship with the environment.

The garden's physical and textual elements prompt a re-evaluation of conventional notions of agency and textuality. In alignment with Jane Bennett's concept of *vibrant matter*, Finlay's work emphasizes the dynamic capabilities of all matter, transforming *Little Sparta* from a scenic garden into a collaborative ecological and cultural discourse. For example, the interplay among water features, sculptural elements, and pathways creates a nuanced interaction among stones, plants, and water, reinforcing the idea that each component actively contributes to the garden's evolving narrative.

As a critical embodiment of New Materialist principles, *Little Sparta* challenges anthropocentric narratives, advocating for a model of human and non-human co-creation essential to environmental understanding. This approach not only enriches aesthetic and ecological experiences but also offers a vital framework for addressing urgent environmental challenges. By presenting the garden as a 'text' where poetic inscriptions and material interactions merge, Finlay's work strengthens the notion of ecopoetics as a means to foster deeper environmental empathy and engagement. The dynamic interplay of elements within the garden emphasizes the inseparability of human actions and natural processes, underscoring the need for integrated approaches to sustainability.

In conclusion, *Little Sparta* is not only a reflection of Finlay's artistic vision but also a critical landscape that deepens our understanding of material interactions and cultural dynamics. By merging artistic and natural forces, the garden illustrates how New Materialist perspectives can inspire further studies of other artistic landscapes, inviting exploration of the entangled relationships among art, nature, and culture. The garden's transformative potential enhances our understanding of ecological and artistic interconnections and calls for more holistic and inclusive approaches to addressing contemporary environmental challenges.

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Disclosure Statement

Literary Studies | research article

A Language of Their Own: Deconstructing Patriarchal Language and Religious Oppression in Miriam Toews' *Women Talking*

Kendilerine Ait Bir Dil: Miriam Toews'ın *Women Talking* Romanında Ataerkil Dil ve Dinsel Baskının Yıkımı

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores the depiction of linguistic and religious oppression of women in Miriam Toews' *Women Talking*, while focusing on their efforts to deconstruct patriarchal structures and reclaim agency. Set within a patriarchal Mennonite community, the novel illustrates the lives of women and their endeavors to find a solution to the systemic sexual violence perpetrated by men within the community. This essay argues that the women's journey toward self-discovery and liberation hinges on their ability to deconstruct patriarchal language and reconstruct a new, emancipatory form of expression. Since language is central to the novel, the analysis of the women's dialogues and interpretive acts brings their journey of challenging oppressive structures into sharper focus. In this context, Kristeva's theory of symbolic and semiotic modalities, which transcend phallogocentrism, and Derrida's theory of deconstruction, which challenges fixed meanings and centralized authority in language offer significant insight into how these women navigate the journey of deconstructing oppressive language and religion while attempting to reconstruct new ones. Building on these theoretical perspectives, the essay situates the novel within discussions of feminism, religious hegemony, and gender-based violence, exploring how language and religion, as tools of patriarchal oppression, intersect to shape the women's experiences. Finally, it demonstrates how *Women Talking* challenges and redefines narratives of power and agency in contemporary literature.

> *- … It has to do with the Biblical exhortation that women obey and submit to their husbands. How, if we are to remain good wives, can we leave our men? Is it not disobedient to do so?*
> *- We can't read, so how are we to know what is in the Bible?*
> *- We have been told what is in the Bible.*
> *- Yes, by Peters and the elders and by our husbands.*
> *- Right, and by our sons.*
> *- And what is the common denominator linking Peters and the elders and our sons and husbands? … They are all men!*

Introduction

Since the 1960s, Mennonite literature has become an influential part of Canadian writing. Writers like Rudy Wiebe, Sarah Klassen, and Patrick Friesen are well-known both within and beyond Mennonite communities. Among these authors, Canadian secular Mennonite writer Miriam Toews has recently gained significant attention by readers interested in the genre. The success of her

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novel *Women Talking* (2018) among both religious and secular readership lies in its powerful portrayal of the struggle to create a genuinely feminist community. Toews' fiction frequently confronts themes of religious hypocrisy and patriarchal control—elements she perceives as part of her cultural heritage. The novel is primarily concerned with issues of language, religion, and subjectivity, and as the title of the novel suggests, Toews emphasizes the role of language in women's journey toward self-discovery.

Numerous scholars have explored Mennonite literature, with a particular focus on Miriam Toews' works. Grace Kehler, for example, concentrates on Mennonite theologies of pacifism and Toews' critique of the church and its failure to authentically represent the pacifist ideals within the community. Kehler (2020) provides an insightful analysis of *Women Talking*, viewing Toews's novel as a "feminist theological parable of women" through the lens of Luce Irigaray's philosophy on "becoming divine women." She suggests that the women of Molotschna "restore a feminist peace theology from below, translating it into a renewed, liberatory community" (pp. 409-10). Victoria Glista (2023) also offers a thoughtful reading of the novel, focusing on the transformation of women, which she describes as reliant on "gestures, postures, and reorientations." Drawing from feminist political and critical theories on the gestural and postural life of nonviolence, especially in Judith Butler's slant on "aggressive nonviolence," Glista brings embodiment — particularly "bodily comportment" — into the foreground, highlighting its vitality within the novel (p. 97).

While this essay considers women's religious enlightenment, it significantly diverges from the previous works by intertwining language and religion, focusing on the role of patriarchal language in shaping women's identity and religious beliefs. The emphasis will be on women's efforts to deconstruct this language and reconstruct their own, fostering a vision of a new religion that promises a non-hierarchical, egalitarian colony.

The novel begins with the revelation that all women in the novel are illiterate and thus dependent on a male minute-taker for their secret meetings. Soon, the male narrator and minute-taker reveals the main reason for the hastily organized meeting, that "since 2005, nearly every girl and woman has been raped" and experienced strange, violent nightly attacks while they were put into the state of unconsciousness (p. 4). Although the sexual violence faced by these women in religious community is deeply concerning, the deliberate illiteracy imposed upon Mennonite women is noticeable in the first place, which renders them reliant on men for reading, writing, and interpreting scriptures. Yet, these resourceful women's ongoing dialogue culminates in a decision that challenges the status quo. They reject the notion that a language shaped by men serves their needs, realizing instead the necessity of creating their own manifesto in a language free from patriarchal influence. At this point, readers grasp the metaphorical depiction of illiteracy: As long as women rely on male language and their interpretation of the sacred texts, they are illiterate and thus their conception of the world is constrained and controlled. This leads them to deconstructing man-made phallogocentric language (used by Derrida for language that prioritizes men and their values) and generating a language of their own, a language that doesn't reinforce male dominance and gender inequality.

While the exact nature of this language — whether it aligns with Virginia Woolf's concept of a "man-womanly" androgynous language or Julia Kristeva's notion of a womanly semiotic language—is not explicitly stated, what remains certain is that the symbolic language constructed by men, and the subsequent patriarchal interpretations of sacred texts, are wielded as tools of oppression to subjugate and control women.

In this essay, we will focus on the intersection of language and religion within *Women Talking* and explore how religious patriarchal norms are imposed upon women to perpetuate a submissive

feminine identity, reinforcing the dominance and control of oppressive men over the bodies and souls of women. In choosing the title "A Language of Their Own," we aim to underscore the profound exploration of gender and identity articulated by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), as both works illuminate how women have historically crafted distinct literary languages and spaces to articulate their unique experiences and perspectives. In this regard, we will refer to Derrida's theory of deconstruction and Kristeva's concepts of symbolic and semiotic language to illuminate the ways the Toews' female characters confront and transcend their linguistic confinement. Derrida's deconstruction reveals how the women challenge the binary oppositions inherent in phallogocentric language, subverting the rigid structures that perpetuate patriarchal control. Meanwhile, Kristeva's distinction between symbolic and semiotic language underscores the contrast between paternal, rule-bound discourse and maternal, fluid expression. Symbolic language represents the rigid, rational framework imposed by patriarchal systems, while semiotic language offers a more rebellious and flexible means of communication. By utilizing these theories, we will explore how the women in *Women Talking* navigate and disrupt these linguistic boundaries, seeking to escape from a restrictive patriarchal language and establish new forms of expression. We will also consider how through their acts of interpretation — of biblical texts, stories, and so on — they deconstruct male-dominated interpretations of the Bible and work toward reconstructing a religion grounded in their own agency and understanding.

Language and Deconstruction: Derrida and Kristeva's Theories

In examining the evolution of language form from past to present, we encounter a profound shift in philosophical perspectives on meaning and presence. Historically, Western philosophy had focused on the metaphysics of presence, where binary oppositions — such as presence/absence and truth/error — were crucial in establishing definitive meaning and truth. However, the 20th century introduced a radical rethinking of these notions through the work of French philosopher Jacques Derrida. The term "deconstruction" was first introduced by Derrida in the late 1960s as a reaction to structuralist views regarding text and its meaning. The term was also used to criticize the basic metaphysical assumptions of traditional western philosophy. In his *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida challenges both Western thought and structuralism by questioning the concept of a fixed center of meaning, which he refers to as "logocentrism". This critique basically aims to lay bare the reliance on an assumed central truth or origin in texts and philosophical systems, suggesting instead that meaning is fluid and constructed through language. In his *Dissemination*, Derrida provides a deconstructive reading of Plato and attempts to subvert the idea that the structure of a text is fixed, originated from the fixed center. As he argues:

> There is nothing but text, there is nothing but extratext, in sum an 'unceasing preface' that undoes the philosophical representation of the text, the received opposition between the text and what exceeds it. The space of dissemination does not merely place the plural in effervescence, it shakes up an endless contradiction, marked out by the undecidable syntax of 'more'. (1972, p. 43)

In his essay "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1966) Derrida offers a critique of structuralist thought and Western metaphysics. The essay begins with Michel de Montaigne's quote: "We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things" (p. 247). This sets the stage for Derrida's exploration of how interpretations and meaning are not fixed but are constantly shifting within the structures of thought and language. Focusing on duality and paradox within traditional thought regarding "center" of a structure, he sees that the center is both within the structure (as its organizing principle that provides stability) and outside it (as transcendent, such as God, truth or reason, and not subject to the structure's rules). This paradox leads Derrida to the provocative assertion: "The center is not the center" (p. 248). By this, he means

that the center is not a fixed, stable entity but rather a placeholder that shifts over time and across contexts. Since language itself is a structure, it follows that it has no fixed center and no definitive meaning. This is the negation of logocentrism inherent in western philosophy. The idea extends to foundational religious texts like bible and their interpretations, suggesting that they too lack a singular, ultimate meaning. This in fact opens up space for multiple interpretations of holy texts.

This approach of reading a text while emphasizing on the absence of a central meaning is further emphasized by dismantling the hierarchical binary opposition of classical idealism that helps provide the final meaning of a text. His deconstruction challenges these binary oppositions, labeling them as "violent hierarchies" (1981, p. 41). He challenges speech/writing binary and puts into question the western thought of privileging speech over writing (phonocentrism), arguing instead that this hierarchy is flawed because both speech and writing are forms of signification that rely on "différance," where meaning is not fixed but constantly deferred and shaped by their differences (1972, pp. 5-6, 25). This critique extends to Western thought's broader dichotomies, such as good vs. evil, being vs. nothingness, presence vs. absence, and man vs. woman, all of which are structured within the logocentric system. Derrida also observes that sexual difference sets the foundation of this hierarchy, which he names phallogocentrism (p. 49). By deconstructing the speech/writing binary, denouncing phallogocentrism and other oppositions, Derrida reveals that both sides of these pairs share inherent instabilities, that the reversal of binary hierarchies are possible, ultimately indicating that words and texts do not possess a single, central meaning. As he states: "language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique" (1966, p. 253).

Influenced by Derrida, the Bulgarian-French philosopher Julia Kristeva talks about limitations of language, of meaning and philosophy. Kristeva explores the binary pair of the semiotic and symbolic modalities, which she famously details in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. She describes two systems within language: one that is closed and rational (the symbolic), and another that is open, irrational and disruptive (the semiotic). Drawing on Lacan's concept of the three orders — imaginary, symbolic, and real — Kristeva identifies the semiotic as an irrational aspect of language associated with the pre-Oedipal phase, occurring before the mirror stage and entry into the symbolic order. She defines semiotic as "rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgement, but restrained by a single guarantee, syntax" (1984, p. 29). In this phase, language manifests as rhythmic, pre-Oedipal babbling of children. Kristeva labels this realm the "semiotic chora," where the child exists in a maternal, undifferentiated dyad with the mother. However, once the child enters the symbolic order — the realm of the father's law and structured language — the rational, rule-based system of language comes into effect. This symbolic phase imposes repression and censorship, requiring the child to sever ties with the mother and regard her as an object of abjection (1984, p. 31).

Kristeva focuses on poetic language and the way it transcends and disrupts conventional grammatical and syntactic structures. She notes that poetic language often violates the strict rules of language through rhythmic and phonetic elements, which introduce a semiotic layer that breaks away from clear, structured meanings. This semiotic layer — the aspects of language tied to rhythm, tone, and form — is distinct from the "symbolic," or the structured language that adheres to syntax and grammar. As she states:

> In any poetic language, not only do the rhythmic constraints, for example, go so far as to violate certain grammatical rules of a national language . . . but in recent texts, these semiotic constraints (rhythm, vocalic timbres in Symbolist work, but also graphic disposition on the page) are accompanied by nonrecoverable syntactic elisions; it is impossible to reconstitute the particular elided syntactic category (object or verb), which makes the meaning of the utterance decidable. (1984, p. 134)

It is this quality of elision, or omission that removes the possibility of fixed meanings in any poetic language, making the interpretation of the text fluid, ambiguous, and open to individual perception. Essentially, Kristeva suggests that poetry engages the semiotic as it disregards the strictures of symbolic language. It is this "undecidability" within the semiotic/poetic language that make it disruptive.

Despite being labeled as feminine, the semiotic realm is not limited by gender; Both men and women can intermittently access it as a form of resistance to the symbolic order. This resistance is often evident in poetic language, where traditional language rules and syntax are subverted, creating an expressive, liberated space outside the constraints of conventional speech. Critics such as De Nooy highlight the ways in which Kristeva's theory is absorbed into Derrida's deconstruction. She states that what Kristeva terms as the symbolic and the semiotic are in fact "a pair of terms among others, subordinated to the movement of 'difference', the symbolic merely a deferred moment of the semiotic" (1998, p. 15). By referring to masculine/feminine and self/other opposition, both Derrida and Kristeva attempt to rewrite the traditional perception of woman as the Other. Kristeva's use of *le feminine* as what resides within every speaking subject, even though ungraspable to some, disrupts the masculine/feminine binary. She sees the feminine as remnants of the maternal body before the stage of self/other separation, and before entering to the realm of language. As the child learns language and tries to establish a distinct self, the mother-child fusion is severed, and the mother becomes the Other or abjected. *Le feminine* and the maternal body cannot embody the sign system of language and thus remains as an unsymbolized remainder within the subject which is accessible only in specific moments. What Kristeva aims to show here is that the masculine/feminine binary oppositions are sexual identities constructed within the language system and shaped by the constraints of society on the one hand, and the *jouissance* of the mother-child fusion on the other. Within the language system and shaped by the symbolic/semiotic, man and woman are other to themselves (De Nooy, 1998, p. 118). But according to the theory of deconstruction, the subversion of this system is possible.

Deconstructing Patriarchal language in *Women Talking*

Language plays a significant role in restricting and subjugating women in the novel. As the novel opens, the male minute taker August Epp, whose name is derived from a tree called "women's tongue" (p. 3) explains how he gets the role of becoming a group of Molotschnan women's tongue by writing what they discuss secretly in a loft. His name symbolizes his role as the articulate voice of women who are unable to speak for themselves. August Epp delineates the linguistic constraints imposed upon women, revealing the isolation within the confines of their community. According to August, the only language these women know is Plaudietsch, the "unwritten medieval language" spoken exclusively by a small number of Mennonites (p. 8). Ona Friesen, a woman who is primarily preoccupied with how language restricts her and women in general, articulates her thoughts by saying "we are women without a voice... we are women out of time and place, without even the language of the country we reside in" (p. 56). The women in *Women Talking* are isolated within their colony, denied access to external information, while men, fluent in English and Spanish, control all connections to the outside world. This linguistic confinement reinforces gender inequality, as men monopolize knowledge and religious interpretation, limiting women's independence and perpetuating their dependency on male authority. The patriarchal system benefits from this control, using religious doctrine to enforce submission and silence dissent. Without exposure to alternative ideologies, women internalize the patriarchal norms, which stifle their autonomy and reinforce their subjugation.

The language used by these women is man-made, and as Dale Spender has argued in her book *Man-made Language*, both syntax and semantics are created to serve patriarchy in the best way possible. Spender considers language more than a neutral Saussurian sign system with signifier

and signified, not "a vehicle that carries the ideas" but "a shaper of ideas" (p.139), the ideas that are biased in favour of men and therefore obviously sexist. Miriam Toews' women who are inexorably the users of this language have no way of escaping oppression as long as they use the same language. By using man-made language, they internalize the sexual hierarchy and get ignorant to the violence and oppression being imposed on them. An example of this could be Agata's reference to the word "pacifism" as one of the central tenets of Monnonite faith (p. 103). The ideological power of the word is so strong on women they couldn't stay and fight to defend their rights.

To overcome the oppressive effects of man-made language, Mennonite women have to deconstruct patriarchal language and then reconstruct a new one. Firstly, they try to get over the binary opposition within language which has fixed categories and hierarchies, and thus in Derrida's manner they attempted to deconstruct the language. Agata's fervent appeal to "put aside the animal/non-animal and forgiveness/non-forgiveness and inspirational/ non-inspirational… debates to concentrate on the matter at hand" (p. 38) can be seen as a huge step taken to subvert the inherent goals of the man-made language. To ignore binary opposition within the language indicates the overturn of western patriarchal philosophies with inherent hierarchies within them.

One significant binary opposition that the women deconstruct in *Women Talking* is that of violence and nonviolence, which becomes most evident in Salome Friesen's expression of anger after learning that her three-year-old daughter has been repeatedly attacked by the rapists. When Salome attempts to kill the attackers with a scythe, she is condemned by the Mennonite community (p. 44). Here, the patriarchal religious structure uses "pacifism" and "forgiveness" as tools of control, requiring that the rapists "be forgiven by the victims and in return have the victims forgiven by God" (p. 45). This notion of pacifism aligns with submission, pushing women to embody a passive, compliant nonviolence that upholds male authority, and compelling Salome and the other victims to stifle anger or resistance in favor of silence. Although they appear to accept and internalize the doctrines of the patriarchal Mennonite faith, but as the women begin to question and reshape their beliefs, they experience a profound shift in how they understand nonviolence. As Glista argues, their journey "revivifies nonviolence as agonistic and egalitarian," (p. 95) transforming it into an empowering, assertive stance. By engaging in gestures, postures, and new forms of community interaction, they develop what Glista calls "aggressive nonviolence," which rejects passivity and redefines nonviolence as an active, revolutionary force. This new approach disrupts the binary opposition of violence/nonviolence and reveals the limitations of a simplistic framework that associates nonviolence with submission and compliance. By reinterpreting nonviolence as a liberating and empowering force, they deconstruct its traditional meaning, unveiling its latent potential for resistance rather than repression. Obviously, we see Derrida's theory at play here.

In addition, while the women in the novel are illiterate and rely on speech for their discussions, they insist on the act of writing by August Epp as a way to document their experiences and decisions. This challenges phonocentrism by recognizing writing not as a secondary or inferior mode of expression but as a necessary complement to speech. In the context of Western philosophy, speech is often seen as more authentic because it is immediate and tied to presence. Writing, by contrast, is viewed as derivative and distant. Derrida critiques this privileging of speech over writing, arguing that both are interdependent, and writing plays an essential role in constructing meaning. The women's insistence on detailed writing in *Women Talking* can thus be seen as a deconstruction of this traditional hierarchy.

On the other hand, Toews highlights the inherent limitations of the language itself. When the women gather to discuss the nightly assaults, they turn to spoken language—the symbolic, as Kristeva terms it—to make sense of what has happened to them and to plan their next steps. Yet,

this language quickly reveals its limitations. As they speak, one warns another against using an "incorrect word" (p.182), and sometimes these exchanges escalate into arguments over language. The tension even strains mother-daughter bonds, as with Agata and Ona. When Agata uses the phrase "run away," Ona snaps, "We're not running away, we're not rats fleeing a burning barn, we've made a decision to leave" (p.182). Though upset by the phrasing, Ona knows, as do they all, that the words themselves fall short of what they truly mean. She soon regrets her reaction, thus apologizing and promising to "stay quiet," and realizes that their love and shared understanding transcend these verbal missteps. When they finally decide to act, rather than talk, they understand the shortcoming of symbolic language. Ona deeply grasps this when she "takes back her words, to take them back inside her body" (p.101).

In this way, the women begin to recognize that the symbolic language of rules and definitions will not hold them together, nor will it sustain their trust. Instead, they find unity through their unspoken bond. Heart to heart, hand in hand, they bridge the gaps that words cannot fill. "Agata takes Ona's hand who takes Salome's hand who takes Majal's hand who takes Neitje's hand" (p. 165), they all take each other's hands — all join hands, and in a powerful gesture of solidarity, they reach for August as well. When August drops his pen — a symbol of the symbolic, of words, definitions, written language — he joins them in the "semiotic," a pre-verbal realm of shared feeling and understanding and start singing a hymn. Here, beyond symbolic language and by libidinal energies they find a deeper connection that empowers them as they take their first steps toward freedom together.

It is remarkable how August, as a man, succeeds in forming such a deep bond with the women. Critics such as Kehler see August as the one "stranded between masculinity and femininity as well as between tradition and change" (p.422). August Epp is the only man in the colony who understands women, participates in their "collective singing" (p.29) and interpretation of dreams, stories and poems. At times, he finds himself reciting silently the same poem with women, as for example when he and Ona quote Virgil together (p. 79). Through his involvement in singing and poetry recitation—both rhythmic forms that transcend ordinary speech—he aligns himself with the women's semiotic language. He is a man who oscillates between Kristeva's symbolic and semiotic and establishes a deep connection with women within rhythmic semiotic realm. As Kristeva's semiotic is not gender specific and not necessarily limited to women, the presence of August Epp within semiotic realm seems ordinary.

Glista argues that it is feminism that holds the "capacity to move those bodies, to spur them into action and coalition". For her, the women's feminist "movement" is both a literal and symbolic force — an organized struggle for change and a physical commitment to nonviolent transformation (2023, p. 99). Drawing on Kristeva's symbolic/semiotic modalities, we argue that this movement is not driven by symbolic language, with its rule-bound limited structures, but by the subversive force of semiotic — a rebellious, pre-verbal force that defies the restrictions imposed by patriarchal society. This semiotic language pushes them forward to break through boundaries and move them toward liberation.

Throughout discussion these women notice the ambiguity and confusion within the symbolic language, made by semantically related words such as "fleeing" and "leaving" (p. 40-41). They understand that these related words, used interchangeably can cause confusion and varied interpretations, because a word that is perceived as positive in one context, can be perceived as negative in another. These connotations in fact arise from cultural, historical, and contextual factors, as well as the specific usage of the words over time. This type of language is thus complex, and the potential for misinterpretation or misunderstanding exists, especially when dealing with subtle differences in meaning or connotation. Toews' women question the reliability of this language by discussing its deficiencies. Moreover, the author skillfully directs the reader's focus

towards the limitations of language, illustrating how certain phrases defy translation into other languages: "Agata has enough breath now to speak. Yoma leid exhai, she says. (This is untranslatable)" (p. 183).

The portrayal of female characters as ostensibly illiterate while endowing them with a profound understanding of language challenges traditional notions of literacy and education. The writer vividly depicts these women as possessing an intrinsic, if unconventional, grasp of linguistic concepts, effectively positioning them as sophisticated analysts of language. This subversion is particularly evident when an elderly female character discusses binary opposition—a concept typically associated with formal linguistic theory — and suggests that women should transcend such rigid dichotomies. Although she is described as illiterate in the conventional sense, her insightful commentary on binary structures aligns closely with Derrida's deconstructive approach, revealing an unexpected depth of understanding. This juxtaposition not only undermines the simplistic binary of literate/illiterate but also highlights how the meaning of illiteracy is more phenomenological than pure. Derrida's theory suggests that such meanings are embedded within the system of signification itself, rather than existing as pure, unmediated entities (1981, pp. 31-32). Thus, the novel's depiction of these women as both "illiterate" and linguistically adept serves to challenge and destabilize traditional categories of literacy. Moreover, the portrayal of these women as well-versed in the works of renowned poets like Virgil and Samuel Taylor Coleridge — whom they refer to as "a metaphysical dreamer, in pain" (p. 77) demonstrate that their so-called illiteracy is not a straightforward lack of knowledge but rather a complex, nuanced engagement with language. In Kristeva's framework, the term "dreamer" aligns closely with the semiotic realm, which encompasses pre-verbal, unconscious drives and connections often expressed through dreams, rhythms, and symbols. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva talks about "the vital role played by Freudian processes of displacement and condensation in the organization of the semiotic" (p. 29), the processes that are mostly seen in dreams. So for both poets and the women in *Women Talking*, "dreamer" represents an entry point into the semiotic — a space where language is fluid and meanings are intuitive rather than strictly defined. Poets, like Coleridge, are "dreamers" because they navigate between the symbolic structures of language and the boundless imagery of the unconscious, often accessing truths that lie beyond direct expression. Similarly, the women, as "dreamers," use dreams to access a shared, intuitive understanding that transcends formal language.

As the women talk, they begin sharing their dreams — terrifying visions that, at first, seem like isolated nightmares. But over time, they come to realize "they were collectively dreaming one dream, and that it wasn't a dream at all" (p. 15). One by one, they take turns recounting what they've dreamt, joining in a collective effort to interpret these dreams. As mentioned above, much of their communication in this space aligns with Kristeva's concept of the semiotic, as the language of dreams and the semiotic both reside in the unconscious, beyond structured meaning. Ona acknowledges this bond, saying, "All we women have are our dreams – so of course we are dreamers" (p. 56). It is through these shared dreams, through the rhythms and symbols of their unconscious minds, that they reach their ultimate decision. Here, beyond the limitations of spoken language, they find a profound unity that drives them toward action and transformation.

An illustration of the women's preference for the semiotic over the symbolic is seen in Nettie who, as a protest to the violation enforced on her, retreats to a silent mode. The way she communicates with other women without a need of man-made language is outstanding and greatly noticeable: "she apologizes for letting Miep out of her sight, for allowing Miep to run away to her mother, although she says all this *without using words*" (p. 64, my emphasis). Choosing silence over speech, she is not the borrower of a man-made language (echoing Dale Spender's perspective); Rather, she uses what Kristeva calls "pre-Oedipal semiotic" (1984, pp. 22-27), where the Law of the Father is

not there to oppress and tyrannize her. Kristeva's semiotic language is associated with the maternal, and is characterized by its fluidity and openness, operating outside rigid constraints and embracing a more flexible, often irrational approach. That is why Toews emphasizes that Nettie only communicates with children (p. 64). By dedicating herself solely to engaging with the children of the colony, she chooses a path of semiotic expression. Obviously, by embracing this pre-Oedipal form of expression, women can subvert the conventional structures of patriarchal discourse and pave the way for more dynamic and egalitarian forms of communication. No doubt, Toews women never struggle to comprehend this language, the maternally connected language that can also connect and unite all women. Even the young teenagers practice "using body language" and communicate with each other without using words (p. 39). Moreover, the younger generation's rebellion against patriarchal norms is marked not by patriarchal symbolic language but by subtle, defiant actions that challenge established codes. For example, they resist societal expectations for women to cover their bodies modestly: they roll their socks "into little doughnuts that encircle their ankles" (p. 19) and shed their kerchiefs in the presence of August, though tradition dictates they wear them around men (pp. 39, 69). By breaking dress code expectations in small but deliberate ways, these young women reject the authority of patriarchal rules not through speech, but through action. Glista's observation resonates particularly well here, as she points out: "An attention to bodily comportment draws our gaze beyond the dominance of language and toward movement, toward what is often resistant to definition or clarity, but nevertheless generates new formations of gender and social relations" (p. 107). While this paper's focus is not primarily on bodily movement, it's clear that these women recognize the limitations of using patriarchal language as a means of rebellion.

Finally, these women begin to deconstruct the patriarchal language that confines their identities and actions to male-imposed definitions:

> Can we agree that we will not feel guilt … about disobeying our husbands by leaving Molotschna because we are not entirely convinced that we are being disobedient? Or that such a thing as disobedience even exists?
> Oh, it exists, says Mariche.
> Yes, says Salome, as a word, as a concept, and as an action. But it isn't correct word to define our leaving Molotschna.
> It might be *one* word, says Mariche, to define our leaving.
> True, says Salome, one word out of many. But it's a word that the men of Molotschna would use, not God. (pp. 158-159)

Agata's question here introduces the possibility of reinterpreting "disobedience" as a socially constructed label rather than a universal truth. Mariche and Salome's responses reveal the limitations of this term and emphasize that it belongs to the male symbolic order. Salome distinguishes the symbolic language of the men from a potentially more meaningful, spiritual understanding. This assertion underscores their desire to break free from the restrictive language imposed by men and suggests a search for expressions more aligned with their lived experiences and values. By re-examining terms such as "disobedience," the women initiate a process of deconstruction, seeking a language that reflects their autonomy and resists patriarchal definitions

After a two-day meeting, the women in the novel have finally reached a point of heightened consciousness. They envision creating a society and language of their own, free from sexism, sexual oppression, and all forms of hierarchy and tyranny. It's important to note that they do not view men as adversaries. Instead, they invite men to join their community if they align with their principles and their manifesto, demonstrating their commitment to an egalitarian society rather than engaging in a battle of the sexes. Perhaps they embody and embrace the internalized tenet of "pacifism" in its most profound sense.

Deconstructing Patriarchal Religion in *Women Talking*

Just as Toews' women strive to deconstruct patriarchal language and challenge phallogocentrism, the same applies to religion. Religious doctrines, often derived from sacred texts, are traditionally grounded in fixed, authoritative interpretations. However, Derrida's concept of deconstruction reveals that these texts, including the Bible, are open to multiple interpretations and lack a singular, central truth. Toews examines how traditional, male-centric interpretations have influenced the understanding of biblical texts, often resulting in readings that favor men and marginalize women, contributing to their oppression. In this section, we will examine how women deconstruct religion by rejecting patriarchal interpretations and offering new, inclusive readings.

Many feminist works critically examine male interpretations of the Bible and investigate how gender influences biblical exegesis. These studies often seek to challenge and reframe traditional, male-dominated readings, addressing the gender biases inherent in interpreting biblical texts. One significant example is *The Woman's Bible* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1993), which is considered as the original feminist critique of the Bible. The book explores how male interpretations are sometimes internalized by women as "the word of God," thereby hindering their emancipation. In the book's introduction, Stanton highlights how priests and legislators frequently cite scripture to reinforce notions of female inferiority, subservience, and dependence. She counters these views by reinterpreting biblical texts from a feminist perspective, emphasizing principles of liberty, justice, and equality for all individuals (pp. 7-13). In a similar vein, Fulkerson (1998) examines how sexist interpretations affect the understanding of biblical texts and church practices, urging a feminist reassessment of traditional readings. Fulkerson highlights how the meaning of biblical texts is influenced by the gender biases and cultural norms of the communities interpreting them. She calls on the church to address these biases and adopt more equitable practices to ensure that biblical interpretations support gender justice and inclusivity.

Miriam Toews' novel vividly reflects these feminist perspectives on religion, incorporating and exploring themes that challenge traditional gender roles and religious norms. The society of *Women Talking* operates within a religious framework, where religion serves as a repository of rules and principles that are articulated in holy scriptures. Obviously, religious norms within these sacred texts are prescribed by means of language. However, widespread illiteracy among women prevents them from accessing these holy texts directly. Instead, men assume the authority to read, interpret, and communicate the scriptures, shaping the women's understanding and reinforcing patriarchal control. Yet, it is the self-educated, intellectually curious women—and as we discussed above, those who are passionately engaged with language, words and definitions, and poetry—who dare to challenge this dynamic.

In an interview with Ben MacPhee-Sigurdson (2018), Toews criticizes "the idea of fundamentalism, of scripture being used to oppress girls and women," seeking to inspire Mennonite women to actively engage in transformative change, and to present a call for reparative action. Scholars like Karen Armstrong (2001) discuss how fundamentalists in different religions rely on scripture as an unchanging authority. This definition of fundamentalism as strict adherence to sacred texts, particularly through a fixed literal interpretation is in stark contrast with Derrida's theory of deconstruction. Derrida argues that texts, including religious ones, are always open to reinterpretation and that meaning is constantly deferred through "différance" — a process where words and concepts gain meaning through their differences from other words and concepts, never arriving at a final or stable interpretation. The way Mennonite women in the novel seek to redefine key tenets of their religion — "pacifism, love, and forgiveness" (p. 111) — and challenge fundamentalism by embracing a broader hermeneutic and reinterpretation of sacred texts, aligns with Derrida's deconstruction of logocentrism. As Agata Friesen asserts, "We will find a road and we will travel" (p. 113), which is a promising act of transformation.

Toews' portrayal of the women gathering in the symbolically liminal space of the hayloft, "between earth and sky" (p. 166), is a powerful metaphor for their journey towards deconstructing and reconstructing language and religion. This liminal space, existing between the material world and the spiritual realm, reflects the women's position at the threshold of transformation. By questioning the traditional religious interpretations handed down to them by men and confronting their own experiences of oppression, they begin to deconstruct the patriarchal structures that have shaped their understanding of religion and language. For example, influenced by male reading of the bible regarding "forgiveness", they first advocate forgiving men, believing that by doing so, they will earn God's forgiveness and gain entrance to the gates of heaven (p. 24). It's evident that this ideology is imposed on women by men, and like what Stanton stated above, women accept them passively as words of God. While women are made to see forgiveness as ethical principle and an act of mercy, Peters and the male figures use women's passive forgiveness as a tool for disempowerment of victims and impunity from any punishment for their wrongdoing. Soon, they become aware of having male interpretation of the bible which harms them in various ways. Ona' statement that "our inability to read or write puts us at a great disadvantage in any negotiation over the interpretation of the Bible" (p. 158) can serve as motivation and encouragement for women to create their own language and religion. In this regard, the new language means new interpretation of the Bible, and the new interpretation means new tenets and doctrines, and thus the new religion. The great success of women towards the end of the novel is when, for the first time, they interpret "the word of God for themselves" (p. 159) where their leaving Molotschna and its brutal men is not considered "disobedience" and sin but rather interpreted as a time for love and peace (p. 159).

Throughout this spiritual journey, the women understand that religion which proclaims the message of justice is used to promote injustice; they see themselves as victims of religious exploitation and false teachings, which results in apostasy and deconstructing religion: "[Greta] makes a radical statement. She says that she is no longer a Mennonite" (p. 62). Also, as mentioned in the above section, the younger generation deconstruct dress code in this religious society, and by not wearing their kerchiefs and socks properly (pp. 19, 39, 69), they challenge the oppressive ideologies that seek to control and dictate their appearance. This act of rebellion not only asserts their autonomy and individuality but also highlights the need for greater freedom of expression and equality within these religious societies.

Therefore, as these women take a journey to create their own language, so is true about religion. Throughout discussions, Ona states: "A new religion, extrapolated from the old but focused on love, will be created by the women of Molotschna" (p. 56). The motif of "map" in *Women Talking* could be interpreted in relation to these women's spiritual journey. Women in the novel keep referring to the fact that they don't have a map, thus not knowing where they are in the world and where to go (p. 62). Symbolically, the idea of characters creating their own map can suggest their desire for autonomy and self-determination in navigating their lives: "'Perhaps the women can create their own map as they go.' 'Now that's a unique idea.'" (p. 84). They decide to take ownership of their path; a path which is not dictated by oppressive men, but a unique, personalized one. In this regard, Kehler suggests that the women in *Women Talking* are developing a belief in faith that diverges from the rigid, patriarchal religion of their colony, stating that the women's faith is grounded in movement, exploration, and relation, contrasting sharply with the colony's static and oppressive emphasis on purity and rigid dogma (p. 418). In their quest for meaning, purpose and enlightenment, they challenge the centrality of established structures that resonates with Derrida's deconstruction.

The women who engage in reinterpretation of the Bible also practice the art of interpretation more broadly throughout the novel. Beyond sacred texts, they interpret stories, paintings, and their own

lived experiences. These interpretive practices may ultimately empower them to approach the Bible with greater confidence and insight, enabling them to challenge patriarchal readings and uncover new possibilities within its teachings. Toews highlights the richness of multiple interpretations by crafting key moments in the novel that celebrate diverse perspectives. In a contemplative moment, August Epp asks Ona about the butterfly named Comma (pp. 101-102). Ona offers a poetic interpretation, likening its perpetual motion to a comma's function in punctuation—a pause amidst movement. Though aware of the literal reason for the name, the comma-shaped marking on its wings, August refrains from correcting her, valuing her perspective and the richness of multiple interpretations. Notably, Ona's interpretation focuses on the butterfly's behavior rather than its appearance, challenging patriarchal norms that prioritize superficial beauty over substance. Her view celebrates movement and agency, offering a refreshing departure from societal expectations of passivity.

The second instance involves August and Ona's discussion of Michelangelo's two paintings, The Creation of Adam and Eve (pp. 97-98). Here, August presents diverse interpretations, while pondering and questioning to grasp the true intention behind the artwork's creation. Particularly striking is his feminist analysis of *The Creation of Eve*, which stands out for its thoughtful consideration: "In the painting, Eve is beseeching God, begging, imploring… perhaps reasoning, as though she has it within her power to restore Christianity to its original grandeur" (p. 98). Through his alternative interpretation of the painting, August dismantles the phallogocentric reading of the artwork, which indicates that Eve was created from the rib of Adam, demonstrating how she is perceived as an appendage, relegated to a secondary position behind the original ideal, which is typically embodied by a man. August takes our attention to the way God himself has come down to earth just for the creation of Eve and to talk to her directly (p. 98), emphasizing on the way God gives value to this female creature. This is contrasted with the *Creation of Adam* in which God has a noticeable distance from the male creature, Adam. By deconstructing phallogocentric texts and artworks, Miriam Toews' characters present a different interpretation that transcends patriarchal ideologies, offering a fresh perspective that advocates for a more equitable existence for women. This alternative viewpoint extends beyond the confines of traditional norms, embracing diverse languages, religions, and non-patriarchal interpretations. By envisioning new possibilities for women's lives, rooted in enlightenment and empowerment, they challenge existing power structures and pave the way for a more liberated and just society.

Conclusion

Miriam Toews' novel *Women Talking* serves as a powerful exploration of linguistic confinement and religious oppression and the journey toward freedom and self-determination for women within a patriarchal Mennonite community. Through an analysis of the characters' dialogues and perspectives, this essay has highlighted how patriarchal structures and religious doctrines are used to control women, while showcasing their acts of resistance and agency. Central to this resistance is the women's deconstruction of male-dominated language and interpretations of religion. We attempted to show how, based on Kristeva's symbolic and semiotic modalities, the women recognized the deficiencies within the patriarchal symbolic system. By tapping into semiotic language — rooted in rhythm, fluidity, and the maternal — they were able to challenge and deconstruct phallogocentrism. Toews' portrayal of the limitations of language — seen in the women's debates over the use of incorrect words, August's struggle to translate certain sentences, and their turn to unity and togetherness through singing hymns, reciting poetry, or engaging in acts rather than speech — aligns closely with Kristeva's theory of semiotic and symbolic modalities. By associating the rhythmic and subversive qualities of the semiotic with rebellion, Kristeva's framework helps illuminate how the women in the novel challenge the rigid, patriarchal symbolic order. Moreover, the women's collective efforts to discuss and interpret each other's

dreams echoes Kristeva's semiotic, as both the language of dreams and the semiotic reside in the unconscious, beyond structured meaning. To further deconstruct male-dominated language, women overcame the binary oppositions such as obedience/disobedience and violence/nonviolence, rejecting rigid hierarchies in favor of fluid interpretations. This parallels with Derrida's critique of binary opposition which is central to western philosophy. Furthermore, Toews brilliantly challenges traditional notions of literacy and education by portraying ostensibly illiterate women as possessing a profound and nuanced understanding of language. Through their discussions of binary oppositions, references to poets like Virgil and Coleridge, and their sophisticated engagement with linguistic concepts, the women subvert the simplistic literate/illiterate binary and reveal how literacy is more phenomenological than rigidly defined, resonating with Derrida's deconstructive approach to meaning and signification. In addition, Toews's depiction of the interplay between speech and writing mirrors Derrida's critique of rigid binaries as well. While the women rely on verbal dialogue for immediacy and collective engagement, they recognize the significance of writing in asserting their autonomy and preserving their legacy. Therefore, they insist on the male minute-taker's detailed writing of their verbal discussions. This dual emphasis destabilizes phonocentrism and reflects Derrida's argument that both speech and writing are interdependent and equally capable of generating meaning. Besides, using Derrida's critique of logocentrism, which posits that there is no fixed center or final meaning in a text, the essay attempted to show how the women embraced the multiplicity of meanings and reinterpreted biblical texts and patriarchal doctrines on their own terms. By practicing and embracing multiple interpretations, the women of Molotschna challenge the authority of oppressive religious system and reclaim the act of interpretation as a tool for empowerment. The passive forgiveness of women as an ethical principle in male-centric biblical interpretation is shown to be exploited by men to maintain power. Therefore, through her portrayal of women challenging male-centric interpretations of sacred texts and the key tenets of Mennonite religion such as pacifism, Toews aligns with Derrida's critique of logocentrism by exposing how religious doctrines, traditionally rooted in fixed, authoritative meanings, are instead open to fluid, shifting interpretations. As women embark on a journey to create a language and religion rooted in their own agency, they move beyond the confines of male-dominated traditions. Their efforts inspire readers to imagine possibilities for liberation, equality, and a more inclusive society. Through their courage and determination, they offer a vision of transformation and justice grounded in shared humanity.

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Disclosure Statement

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Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*: A Narrative of Postcolonial Writing
Anita Desai'nin *Clear Light of Day* Romanı: Sömürgecilik Sonrası Yazının Bir Anlatısı

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ABSTRACT
Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* successfully reflects memory and individual experiences in Indian postcolonial culture and features Desai's talented portrayal of time as both a devourer and a cure. The narration depends on a time circle to present the continual effects of colonialism on individual and social history. In this novel, the women's position in Indian culture is examined through a changing perspective toward the general assumptions of Indian gender roles. A complicated evaluation of women's fights for independence inside a man-dominated system is given by Desai with female characters Bim, Tara, and Aunt Mira. *Clear Light of Day* both serves as a strong narration and also contributes to the wider postcolonial literary field. Desai encourages her readers to think about the complicated characteristics of cultural identity in a postcolonial culture besides the everlasting impacts of colonialism via the unity of personal experiences with more extensive historical and social conditions. This paper aims to reveal Bhabha's postcolonial theories such as subaltern, hybridity, mimicry, and third space by investigating Desai's own multicultural background and Indian history after the Partition as well as the effects of time on the individuals through an analysis of thematic perspectives of colonialism.

Introduction

India struggled with the complex history of Independence and Partition following the colonial period and a new social order emerged in which people tried to define their identities apart from those of the British colonisers. This was a challenging attempt as the country underwent a transformation period that gave rise to two distinct cultures with different religious roots. Set in India after Independence, *Clear Light of Day* by Anita Desai illustrates this chaotic atmosphere by presenting a postcolonial perspective of Bhabha's theories of the subaltern, hybridity, mimicry, and third space.

Expanding upon the notion of the subaltern, Bhabha discusses groups marginalised by prevailing political entities and sheds light on their complex and dual nature within power dynamics. The subaltern exists in a state of "in-betweenness" and blends within the power structure occupying a ground where they are neither entirely assimilated into the culture nor entirely detached from it (Bhabha, 1994, p. 55). In this space called "elliptical," there is room for acts of resistance when the subaltern's existence disrupts the clear power divisions like the coloniser and colonised distinction (Bhabha, 1994, p. 60). The subaltern's existence signifies both oppression and defiance

symbolised by "the evil eye" embodying a force that challenges the dominating power (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 55-56). This duality shows how the subaltern defies are controlled by disrupting established power structures and identities. Thus, the subaltern is "neither empty nor full, neither part nor whole" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 64). These mixed feelings present the intricacies of shaping one identity in settings where people balance cultural and political impacts simultaneously subaltern identities are a blend that consistently transitions between various roles and defies rigid explanations. This mixture adds layers of complexity to the distinctions between those in power and those oppressed emphasising the flexibility and unpredictability of influence in the postcolonial realm. The subaltern plays a crucial role in the continuous process of defining identity and culture in postcolonial communities.

In his analysis of societies' cultural dynamics, Bhabha highlights the roles played by literature and music as key components in developing resistance and shaping hybrid identities through mimicry. He views literature as a "masque of mimicry" whereby the colonised mirrors the practices and language of the coloniser (Bhabha, 1994, p.121). This act of mimicry goes beyond replication, it carries traces of ambiguity that challenge the dominance of colonial authority. Postcolonial authors challenge the narrative by adopting the colonial language to create a space of hybridisation where new identities emerge through writing and storytelling. According to Bhabha, literature becomes a platform for ongoing negotiation and subversion of colonial authority by disturbing established norms. Hence, literature enables the expression of a postcolonial awareness that includes local and foreign elements (Bhabha, 1994, p.13). Bhabha also considers music more than an art form, he sees it as an element in postcolonial communities that reflect contemporary life challenges and diverse cultural influences through a blend of traditional and Western sounds (1994, p. 241). The blending of cultures enables both the resistance and integration of influences in music traditions retaining aspects of heritage while adapting and reshaping the coloniser's culture. Music serves as a site of remembrance and reinvention of the legacy of colonialism providing postcolonial subjects. In this way, literature and music, which play essential roles in Desai's novel, are important in cultural expression and resistance as extensions of ambivalence and hybridity of postcolonial identities.

Before studying the novel, the historical context of India should be discussed through the major changes that followed the end of British colonisation which produced a fundamental reinterpretation of identity, culture, and belonging in addition to a political shift. Bhabha's "third space" of cultural enunciation evaluates this idea to challenge colonial ideologies and identities (1994, p. 37), disrupting the binary distinctions between coloniser and colonised (1994, p. 276). While it emphasises ambiguity, uncertainty, and negotiation in cultural encounters to subvert colonial power dynamics, material realities, resistance struggles, and unequal access to resources complicate the possibility of resisting colonial influences in intercultural interactions. Hence, in negotiating cultural differences between colonisers and colonised, a new cultural identity is formed that combines and transcends past and present by creating an in-between space that innovates and disrupts the present (Bhabha, 1994, p. 7). This space is a creative indeterminacy, producing hybrid cultural identities in the ongoing colonial present through the multiplicity of voices and identities in this cultural hybrid space. This third space also helps shape the characters' identities in *Clear Light of Day*.

Bhabha believes that subversion of authority in colonial settings occurs through the mixing of cultures as hybridisation. He defines "hybridity" as a challenge to traditional colonial representation where marginalised knowledge disrupts the dominant discourse and undermines its authority (Bhabha, 1994, p. 114). It challenges traditional colonial discourse and allows the colonised to express themselves in a subversive way. Discrimination and social norms are disrupted by providing a space for resistance and self-expression by embracing hybridity (Bhabha,

1994, p. 112). This contests the colonial power's hegemony over interpretations and acknowledges the impact of marginalised cultures (Bhabha, 1994, p. 156). This process disrupts the colonial discourse and exposes the impact of other cultures, leading to a renegotiation of cultural power dynamics. By challenging traditional histories, the third space opens new possibilities requiring fresh thinking. Thus, Bhabha's hybridity theory focuses on the concept of "mimicry" involving similarity and difference (1994, p. 86). It challenges the idea that cultures can be neatly separated and categorised into distinct entities. Instead, colonial hybridity complicates the dominant discourse and disrupts traditional notions of authority and identity. Hybridity highlights the limitations of viewing cultural differences as static and objective, emphasising the need for a more complex understanding of cultural dynamics (Bhabha, 1994, p. 114). Bhabha argues that the coloniser imposes a "mimicry strategy" onto the colonised to internalise inferiority and fears the reformed colonised, wanting them to be almost the same but not quite. He accepts mimicry as both "resemblance and menace" highlighting the coloniser's anxiety and the colonised's actions (Bhabha, 1994, p. 123). Mimicry is troubling to the coloniser because it means their authentic identity can be imitated leading to fear of the Other. Hence, severe distinctions emerged among these different cultures through these colonial and missional actions.

As the century progressed, a complex consideration of identity and nationalism in India emerged through the contrast between the Muslim side led by Jinnah and the Hindu faction led by leaders like Gandhi and Nehru. People had to confront existential questions as the battle grew more intense and they tried to comprehend the distinction between being a citizen of India and Pakistan. If they were the citizens of a determined group, whether their rights were supported or protected through religion, government or fundamental human rights could present them with justice and independence (Khan, 2007, p. 4). The conclusion of these discussions resulted in the 1947 separation which enabled the birth of Pakistan and India and caused the desire to fit in a group accompanied by a desire to fit out of another (Sawhney, 2018, p. 217). However, the Partition did not just divide these two regions, it also covered a shared ethnical inheritance by centring on social divisions. Thus, this not only resulted in painful and traumatic incidents for both regions but also urged the development of the modern mood and its expression in the literary world of India (Kumar, 2018, p. 256). The crisis started taking on disturbing situations such as hopelessness, devastation or sacrifices for irrational forces and began reflecting on themselves by becoming a new reality that they needed to get accustomed to (Kumar, 2018, p. 257). During this violent period, new topics for Indian writing emerged. These topics reflected the pain of existence and included the country's political, socioeconomic, and societal context, particularly in the 'post-Partition India' setting where they presented a culture shock. As a recognised figure in modern Indian writing, Anita Desai masterfully mixed these social issues and individual features in *Clear Light of Day* by giving the perplexing picture of individuals battling with their characters in the shadow of their history. Through an investigation of her novel on memory, time, and the complicated connections between them over a wide period, this paper expects to analyse how Desai constructs subaltern, hybridity, mimicry, and third space to present social and individual disintegration that postcolonial cultures experience.

Revealing Subalternity, Hybridity, Mimicry, and Third Space

Clear Light of Day undoubtedly brings on Desai's own experience even though it might not be regarded as completely autobiographical writing. The story combines memories of her early years spent in Old Delhi which offers readers an in-depth awareness of the complexities of identity, belonging, and the long-term consequences of postcolonialism. Through the eyes of a writer whose own life embodies the complicated relationship between multiple cultural influences explore the postcolonial elements as well as a transformative period in Indian history. In the distinctive structure of Anita Desai's life, the trip through *Clear Light of Day* takes on even more significance.

"As a postcolonial, multilingual, multicultural" woman, Desai's childhood reflects the combination of Eastern and Western cultures; her parents were German and Indian, and she was multilingual who spoke German, English, and Hindu (Chakrabarti, 2018, p. 173). She gained a deep understanding of her mother's Western upbringing, particularly concerning literary and musical works, and the various Indian towns' landscapes.

In *Clear Light of Day*, Desai's deliberate time analysis is firmly connected to her character assessment and having a place as a subaltern in postcolonial India. Her perspective on character confusion is completed by T.S. Eliot and Emily Dickinson's epigraphs which offer a reflection on time's consequences for characters and familial components. The novel has four parts starting with two epigraphs of Emily Dickinson and T.S. Eliot. The excerpt from *Four Quartet* by Eliot describes that time passes but nothing is changed. Desai ends her novel with another excerpt from the same poem: "Time the destroyer is time the preserver" (1980, p. 182)[1]. In her interview, she explains that her book is based on the setting of Old Delhi and the significant transformations experienced by a Hindu family since 1947. Her focus was to create a dimensional narrative illustrating how a family's journey unfolds across time. The narrative delves into the concept of time as both a force of destruction and preservation exploring the impact of constraints on individuals. She believed life's cycle continues in a circular motion where past and future coexist within the present moment (Gopal, 2013, p. 90). Hence, she starts her novel by describing the present situations of her characters; in Part Two, readers go back to the adolescence of the characters in Indian Independence in 1947. Part Three goes back to the childhood of the characters, how they perceive the world and what they expect from it. Finally, in Part Four, the story comes back to the present again and gives its readers a chance to determine whether the characters catch up with their dreams or not. One of the main characters, Bim foreshadows this time-lapse at the end of the first part, she believes that life often resembles a flowing "river," punctuated by moments of calmness and sudden rushes of excitement and the summer of 1947 marked a time of change and bustling period (pp. 42-43). Thus, the novel's first and fourth parts are in the present and include memories and nostalgia of the past such as the brother Raja's sickness, the younger sister Tara's running away from the beehive, and leaving the elder sister Bim as stuck. These insignificant incidents are explained in the novel's second and third parts showing that the past is related to the present and characters re-experience them. Furthermore, the second part has a historical background – the Partition in 1947 and explains it with the help of Bim's and Raja's past. Then, through the third part, readers witness the growing up of Tara, the birth of the youngest autistic brother Baba, and the arrival of Aunt Mira. Finally, the last part provides readers with opportunities for confessions, judgements, interpretations of characters, and comparisons of histories. Therefore, the way that fragments of partially recollected memories blend and shape the adult characters' knowledge of one another. Desai's storytelling shifts between the characters' past and present to offer Bhabha's idea of mimicry where characters strive to imitate ideals. While these characters experience the new environment as a subaltern of the idealised culture, they ultimately circle back to their cultural origins unavoidably constrained by them. Hence, Desai criticises the continuous impact of colonial legacies shaping postcolonial identities by framing the novel around recurring memories and fragmented encounters. She deliberately highlights how individual and cultural past narratives reflect on the current day.

Postcolonialism highlights diversity in marginalised populations and the silent women become the subalterns in their homes and countries. The circumstances of these groups frequently do not significantly change despite efforts to give these voices more power (Spivak, 1988, p. 288). Spivak explores the concept of "the subaltern" which has gained significant attention in postcolonial theory by equating the subaltern with marginalised individuals (1988, p. 285). She challenges the

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[1]From now on, only page numbers will be given for the citations from *Clear Light of Day* by Desai 1980.

notion that the subaltern can have a voice or action, particularly in the context of colonial societies where their history and identity are erased focusing on the additional challenges faced by female subalterns in society (Spivak, 1988, p. 287). She strongly argues that being poor and female presents a set of challenges (Spivak, 1988, p. 284). Spivak explores the situation of Indian women, particularly focusing on the practice of "Sati," where widows choose to burn themselves on their husband's funeral pyre (1988, p. 297). She critiques the Western narrative of the British abolishing this practice as a case of "white men saving brown women from brown men," and discusses the Indian nativist perspective that suggests the women actually wanted to die (Spivak, 1988, p. 297). The subaltern is unable to speak due to conflicting discourses, leaving no space for their voice to be heard, so "the subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak, 1988, p. 308). In this context, this novel questions the position of women in India. Firstly, it is crucial to have an idea about the traditional attitudes of Indian culture towards women. According to Prasad, people have followed the advice of Manusmrti which is completely traditional. The husband of the woman provides for her protection when she is a young woman as her father cares for her during her upbringing, and her sons look after her as she ages. So, the woman is unfit to be free. (2005, p. 183). During Independence and Partition, Gandhi believes women are not weaker but nobler than men. He sees women as embodiments "of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith, and knowledge" (Everett, 1991, p. 76). In *Clear Light of Day,* Desai discusses Indian women's situation by showing various types of women through Bim, Tara, and Aunt Mira. Although Bim and Tara grow up together, they perceive the world from different perspectives. Bim is the one who is not afraid of pushing boundaries, she likes sports, plays with Raja, and helps others; but Tara is passive. It is stated in the novel that Bim idolises Florence Nightingale and Joan of Arc while Tara secretly wishes to hide from the world and never has to prove herself or do anything (p. 126). Tara is a traditional woman with her childhood images about having a husband and children; on the other hand, Bim is a modern woman who imagines being a heroine with being successful at school and wishing for a career rather than being a mother. Unfortunately, with their parents' deaths, Bim has to take care of her brothers and her aunt struggling with alcoholism. Thus, her new role in the family destroys her plans and wishes for the future. It should not be forgotten that Bim is not a traditional woman even if she prefers to stay with her family rather than getting married. In the second part of the novel, Dr Biswas, who treats both Raja and Aunt Mira, likes Bim and he invites her to a tea party to introduce his mother. After a while, Bim is bored and wants to leave. She insists on going back alone, claiming it is safe for a woman like her despite warnings against it (p. 92). She is not afraid of the chaotic atmosphere of the city; she does not need the protection of a man. The subaltern exists in a "hybrid space" where they can subtly resist norms while navigating their own sense of self and identity (Bhabha, 1994, p. 55). Even though Bim may seem to adhere to expectations on the surface by choosing not to marry and taking care of her family; her actions also present a quiet form of rebellion. This mix of conflicting feelings and choices that Bhabha refers to as typical in experiences allows Bim to challenge gender norms without disregarding her commitment to her family. This character illustrates how Indian women's self-perception has changed and how their level of awareness has increased (Anand, 2018, p. 190).

The postcolonial theory deals with women's position in society and women are often seen as 'the other' or the subaltern oppressed by the male population. The presence of women vanishes and is caught between "patriarchy and imperialism" at a savage pace that reinvests the conventional symbols with new metaphors. Thus, the female figure becomes a third-world woman caught between modernisation and convention (Spivak, 1988, p. 306). Indian social system encourages male domination and it becomes an effective narrative tool in *Clear Light of Day.* After her marriage to Bakul, Tara has changed; she looks elegant and has even curly hair which she desired much in her childhood and Bim cut it to make curls. She does her best to satisfy her husband and tries to adapt herself to his norms of beauty. However, she is oppressed by the male identity. For instance,

Tara serves her husband, Bakul, tea with a little bit of milk left. She asks if it is enough and feels guilty, but he does not respond (p. 8). Later, she straightens his clothes and offers him a choice of ties, showing her approval of his decisions (p. 11). Although Tara wants to talk about important things and seeks Bakul's opinions, he ignores her and finds her speech distracting as "the chirping of a single sparrow that would not quieten down at night" (p. 158). Bhabha discusses the concept of the "Third Space" as a place where subaltern individuals navigate between identities that often conflict with each other (1994, p. 36). Tara exemplifies this idea by balancing norms with the values she acquired through her marriage to Bakul. Although she outwardly conforms to her husband's wishes, her inner confusion reflects her position as a subaltern torn between upholding patriarchal traditions and embracing her true self. Additionally, the character of Tara exemplifies Bhabha's idea of hybridity by embracing beliefs in her marriage yet staying true to her family values. This blend of influences offers an identity influenced by both her colonial-influenced marriage and her rooted family traditions presenting the complexity of postcolonial identities that defy simple labels and categories (Bhabha, 1994, p. 175). So, the Indian patriarchy upholds the idea that men are superior, but the novel also shows how a woman's voice can be heard loud and clear beneath the surface, challenging his ultimate power (Adhikari, 2018, p. 208). The other oppressed female character is Aunt Mira who stays with the family to look after the children. In the novel, she is defined as a woman with bad fortune. Even though their mother is older than her, she looks older. She is married to a man at the age of twelve and her husband dies on their wedding night. His family blames her for bringing bad luck to her husband. So, she has to take care of them out of guilt (p. 108). Aunt Mira is the victim of the system; she has no right to voice up because of her gender. Thus, she has lived as a subaltern even in her new home. Finally, she tries to find peace with alcohol. The portrayal of Aunt Mira as a widow taking care of her family reflects Bhabha's idea of being a subaltern due to her gender and social standing within the family and society. Her silence and isolation symbolise what Bhabha calls a life without a sense of belonging or connection to mainstream norms (1994, p. 9). Aunt Mira's subaltern role eventually drives her to rely on alcohol as a coping mechanism which sheds light on the impact of her exclusion. Although Aunt Mira has a role in the family dynamics and relies on alcohol as a form of rebellion, she quietly asserts her identity through overlooked acts of resistance in Bhabha's "Third Space" (1994, p. 36). Her behaviours emphasise the constraints on her ability to influence outcomes and focus on the loneliness that Bhabha points out as central to a subaltern's experience. Her "subaltern identity" has excluded her "from mainstream society" in which Indian enslaved female figures have to continuously fight against discrimination and injustice based on their "race, gender, and class oppression and inequality" (Misir, 2018, p. 12). In his writing, Bhabha puts forward a form of resistance to the limitations enforced by family and society in India. This indicates the balance between being controlled and having autonomy exhibited by both characters. Thus, it emphasises how Bhabha's ideas align with Desai's representation of hybrid and subaltern identities.

According to Huggan, an essential part of the creation and upkeep of colonial power structures is played by music (1990, p. 13). Desai skilfully presents her readers with her characters' personalities through their social relationships shaped by literature and music including characteristics of the colonial heritage. In *Clear Light of Day*, Baba never speaks and obsessively plays records of the forties on an old gramophone. It was brought to India by British colonies and the records include Western popular songs. Baba's obsession with this antique gramophone and old hit music points out that the effects of colonialism are still valid culture in India. These music records represent the colonial past through its Western style of living and its everlasting impact is still crucial for the Indian people. The daughter of Hyder Ali, Benazir, whom Raja eventually married, possesses the gramophone that features the complex connections of power and social allocation in colonial nations. As far as "hegemonizing native elite culture" is concerned, Loomba thinks literature study is also helpful (1991, p. 178). Hyder Ali is a rich man who invites people to

read poems and discuss them. These reading parties serve as useful tools for Desai's search for the impact of literature in dominating the Indian high-class culture. Infused by Hyder Ali's admiration of poetry, Raja attempts to compose poems in a similar style as him. However, years later Bim realises the poets he loves greatly influenced his writing with no original ideas or phrases of his own (p. 168). Bim's realisation of Raja's absence of creativity uncovers the deliberate manners that common Indian people have been impacted by English colonial constructions. Raja's poems show a mix of the colonial culture with his native culture by overclouding the poetic expressions and tools between these two cultures despite his aim to draw in his Indian heritage. Desai presents a complex evaluation of colonialism in affecting the characteristics of the Indian people and their culture with the help of music and literature. *Clear Light of Day* also underlines the importance of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence in shaping identities. These themes are especially evident in the representation of music and literature within the novel presenting how colonial and indigenous elements mix to reflect the diverse nature of postcolonial identity. The figure of Raja epitomises mimicry as he endeavours to replicate the techniques and cultural beliefs of practices in his poetic creations. However, Bim realises that his creative output lacks uniqueness and highlights the conflict between imitating structures and the inability to capture them authentically as intended by Bhabha's perspective on mimicry. This mirrors Bhabha's belief that mimicry may seem to support power but weaken it by revealing the impossibility of flawless imitation. The gramophone also symbolises this fusion of cultures as music initially enforced during colonial reign now blends into the routines of Indian individuals such as Baba. His intense interest in the documents from the 1940s rooted in culture underscores the ongoing impact of colonial works blending with local customs even after the departure of colonisers. The fusion of these elements is complex and contradictory. While the presence of the gramophone symbolises colonialism's influence, it also reflects a lack of integration of Western values since Baba maintains a certain emotional distance and communicates solely through these remnants of colonial authority. Desai employs music and literature not to show the lasting impacts of colonialism but to delve into how postcolonial individuals navigate and shape their identities in a diverse cultural setting. Through this perspective, the readers can observe the complexities of hybridised cultures and the presence of individuals in postcolonial India which is demanded by the characters' relationships through music and literature.

The reinterpretation of the past is a crucial technique for postcolonial writers. Edward Said utters that those writers who emerged after colonialism carried their pasts with them, urgently reinterpreting and redeploying them as experiences where the once-silent native spoke and moved on land reclaimed from the colonisers (1986, p. 55). Bhabha suggests that the "Third Space" provides a setting where cultural reinterpretation takes place a realm where established historical stories can be broken down and pieced together into new structures. This allows authors to portray identity as an ongoing process that goes beyond basic distinctions of the past and present (1994, p. 37). The reinterpretation of the past can be transferred "by memory, fantasy, narrative and myth" (Hall, 1993, p. 226). These ideas help writers engage their countries' past experiences with the present ones. Thus, it allows how (after-) colonisation affects the present by creating characters troubled by flashbacks to the division of India and the establishment of Pakistan (Sawhney, 2018, p. 213). *Clear Light of Day* starts with a reunion of these two sisters – Bim and Tara and takes them back into their childhood and adolescence memories. These mentioned concepts assist the author in connecting the experiences of their nations with realities. The recollections of Bim and Tara are situated in what Bhabha refers to as the "Third Space" where their past is not a fixed memory but a dynamic arena for shaping their sense of self. It enables them to reexamine events from their youth as elements of their developing selves struggling between a longing for the past and the painful legacy of Partition. To them, past and present in Old Delhi are static and unchanged. Yet, the writer presents complicated and contrasting aspects of the narrative

story and real experience into an interactive partnership that converts static memories into a moving and active recalling (Bandlamudi and Ramakrishnan, 2018, p. 18). In the novel, Bim states that Old Delhi has not altered, all it has is rot like an enormous graveyard and each home becomes an asleep grave (p. 5). She also compares it with New Delhi built by the British colony and implies that traces of other cultures such as "the Tughlaqs, the Khiljis, the Sultanate, the Moghuls" (p. 5) are eliminated. However, at their home, they are also numb and lifeless (p. 5). In Bhabha's perspective, Old Delhi serves as a Third Space that embodies the intertwining of colonial and after-colonial narratives and presents the city as a centre of cultural mixtures. To Bim, the numb state of Old Delhi symbolises the oppression of identities by forces whereas contrasting it with New Delhi emphasises how cultural richness was diminished during colonial modernisation efforts. Although these two female characters talk about the past with a sense of nostalgia, Tara and Bim declare that they are really happy those days remained in the past and there is no chance to reexperience them (p. 43). The idea of ambivalence in Bhabha's work also deals with the emotions of nostalgia and relief experienced by Bim and Tara. These characters construct individuals who are caught between the persistent impact of the past and their desire for the future beyond it. This sense of conflicted feelings highlights Bhabha's notion of identities where individuals struggle with past wounds while striving to create new selves in a third space that transcends colonial influences. When the novel comes to an ending after sharing some memories, both women acknowledge their early years as children and adolescents, because those traumatic experiences are always with them (p. 174). Thus, rethinking personal memories merged with the country's history and social and historical environments plays a crucial role in shaping memories. It represents not just lexical meanings but also collective cultural memories in which all members of society are engaged. In the novel's second part, British India is separated into India and Pakistan and the family in *Clear Light of Day* is also divided. Through their disinterested parents' deaths, Raja's sickness and leaving home to join his idol Hyder Ali in Hyderabad, Tara's marriage with a diplomatist and going abroad, Aunt Mira's death due to alcoholism, the family is separated and only Bim and Baba live in the household. The fragmented relationships within this family introduce the lasting impact of histories in shaping identities. This results in the emergence of a Third Space where individual and shared identities are in a state of re-evaluation.

Desai constructed a traditional narrative in *Clear Light of Day*. Her deliberate narration technique can be discussed by Bhabha's theory which often points to the characters who appear to fit into roles but challenge them with hidden contradictions. Bhabha exposes "the colonial subject as a partial presence" (1994, p. 86) and Desai's storytelling style participates in it by giving the impression of conformity. Because the ambivalent portrayal of roles by Bim, Raja, and Tara simultaneously embraces and questions ideals through critical aspects of values. In the third part of the novel, the siblings dream about their future when they are children. Bim and Raja want to be leading figures and Tara wants to be a mother. Bim is highly self-confident and full of ambitions; she believes that she will work and earn her money as an independent woman and can also take care of other family members as a powerful woman when everything goes normal (pp. 140 – 141). However, she has to give up the idea of an independent woman to look after Raja, Aunt Mira, and Baba. She knows that they need her and chooses to stay at home. Bhabha's idea of hybridity sheds light on Bim's personality as she combines the qualities of a caring woman with a drive for freedom. Hence, it forms a position where conventional norms and individual dreams meet in what Bhabha calls a third space. Desai uses Bim's struggles to focus on the conflicts in postcolonial identities where individuals navigate their environments influenced by both inherited beliefs and the longing for self-determination. Raja also wants to be a hero. Before the Partition, his friends at school wanted to count him in fighting for Hindu nationalism which is considered a heroic act; but he has sympathy with the Muslims and he threatens to notify them (p. 57). Bim ironically defines Raja by resembling him with Lord Byron who fights for Greek independence and dies. She

describes him as a man struggling in dramatic situations in a romantic manner like Byron even though he wants to help desperate people, he will, unfortunately, end up falling ill or dying (p. 60). The way Raja looks up to leaders and his intricate stance during the Partition reflect Bhabha's idea of mimicry. Through his behaviour, the author indicates the positions of individuals who take on characteristics of the other in a manner that challenges distinctions. This experience mirrors Desai's portrayal of figures who do not entirely fit into one culture but rather navigate through various cultural loyalties. Thus, this concept creates a third space of both fitting in and feeling out of place as described by Bhabha. Additionally, Bim and Raja make fun of Tara when she reflects on her desire to become a mother, but Aunt Mira is positive that she will make her dream true because it is a typical norm for a woman, but the aunt strongly believes that being leading figures in their society is not possible for Bim and Raja (p. 112). As the aunt foreshadows, Tara makes her dreams come true. The nature of Tara's aspiration to be a mother is an example of mimicry. It suggests the idea that women are meant to desire domesticity, and these domestic roles and duties are approved in the right manner for women in a patriarchal world. Because mimicry is not only an "imitation" that reasserts power but rather a "partial presence" through which the restrictive authority of colonial or traditional frameworks is rendered explicit (Bhabha, 1994, p. 88). Additionally, Aunt Mira's belief that Bim and Raja can never be leading figures is closely related to Bhabha's hybridity. Their ambitions show a hybrid identity, for their roots live in tradition but their desires hope for individual freedom. In this regard, the ambitions of Bim and Raja exist within a Third Space where their dreams create an effective space of possibility even though their aunt sees these dreams in absolute liminality that exceeds normative domains. Hence, this hybridity questions the patriarchal roles that Aunt Mira tries to enforce, so hybrid identities between two cultures challenge fixed roles and create new zones of possibility. Desai mentions this issue in one of her interviews. Though she is loath to write of leading figures in the run of titles, her refractory characters have often seemed like losers whatever the fact that is a new embodiment of heroism that is a way of surviving. She believes that if you can live a life not sacrificing your heart and spirit but with them intact, that is heroism worth commemorating. Bim has seen her beliefs shattered, picked up the pieces, and at last accepted her disillusionment, so this makes her the heroine (1978, p. 4). Even though Bim is educated and dreams about independence, she does not leave Baba and her family home. The brother Raja is given the chance to be a hero, but he chooses to leave home and settle in Hyderabad. Thus, Bim struggles to survive without any help.

Desai uses "the well" in the garden as a symbol of women's situations and three female characters are linked to this symbol. Aunt Mira convinces the family to buy a cow for fresh milk, but the gardener leaves it out and falls into the well. It cannot be rescued and left to rot. This disturbing event causes intense horror and distress for the family (p. 118). The well can be viewed as a Third Space representing a place where various social pressures from patriarchal and colonial influences unite to trap the characters in the story's setting. The distinction between freedom of action and limitations becomes blurred. It also reveals a setting that reflects their sense of self and constrained freedom within the norms they navigate. As an important female character, Aunt Mira links herself to it, and she rots in her bed and dies. Aunt Mira's strong connection to the well presents Bhabha's idea of being trapped in a place of uncertainty known as the Third Space. She finds herself torn between her duties as a caretaker and her hidden wishes leading to a sense of displacement. This creates a situation that leaves her feelings detached from any sense of self within her family or community (Bhabha, 1994, p.9). Other female characters Tara and Bim also use the well as a symbol. After returning home, Tara feels like Bim is bringing her down and making her feel oppressed, numb, and bored. She feels like drowning in her childhood memories (p. 149). Bim also expresses a feeling of doom, comparing themselves to the leading figures who have disappeared and ended up at the bottom of a well where a cow once drowned. Bim fears that they will eventually find themselves in that same dark "well" one day (p. 157). That sense of being

drowned represents the dualities of postcolonial identity within which the individual is stuck between where society wants them to be and where they wish to go. To Tara and Bim, the well symbolises this inner conflict as a form of third space, representing their divided selves formed by social norms governing their existence where they are not allowed to establish an identity outside of one another. Hence, these females are still suffering because of the "unequal treatment of women" (Davey, 2018, p. 57), and they resemble water at the bottom of the well, and most of their dreams are darkened by various conditions through "the weight of socially discriminatory practices" (Ghosh, 2018, p. 64). Hence, the well symbolises the "unhomely" that Bhabha theorises in his concept of the Third Space wherein home as imagined to be a secure, ideal place instead emerges as a source of psychological and cultural violence (1994, p. 9). The blurring of the familiar and unfamiliar conditions shows how deeply buried the social and personal dreams of these characters are beneath centuries-old social restrictions that would leave them to remain in a literal symbolic "well."

As mentioned before, the novel follows a time circle, and in the last part, the readers again witness the present conditions of the characters after reading about their childhood and youth. Hence, characters turn to the past and face their memories with a sense of nostalgia. Bhabha points "the past is a necessary precondition for any identity" (1994, p. 35). Bim's exploration of her memories echoes this notion as she begins to understand that her personal identity and inner resilience are deeply intertwined with her family's past and her reminiscences of both happiness and pain. For instance, Bim realises that the meaning of life is the love for others not the love for the self, and she decides to forgive Raja who writes a letter to her as a landlord rather than a brother. Bim exemplifies an identity as described by Bhabha where conflicting feelings of resentment and love are harmonised in her life. She embraces these emotions as aspects of her journey to exist in a third space that transcends narratives of blame or affection and develops a deeper understanding of herself. In the end, it is stated that though Bim is deeply in love and longs for her family, she also acknowledges the imperfections in her love. She understands that to overcome obstacles in life, she must heal and strengthen her bonds with family members (p. 165). After having this revelation, Bim gets closure and clarity about her family. She perceives the problems and weaknesses in her past relationships by understanding the significance of love and the meaning of forgiveness. In this setting, the influence of Bhabha's concept of the Third Space is obvious. The novel's cyclical timeline blurs the lines between past and present seamlessly creating a space for reflection and transformation for Bim to revisit her memories and seek reconciliation through a new perspective. A thorough exploration of this mixed-time setting allows Bim to navigate her sense of self in a changing comprehension of her family's intertwined past. Thus, reexperiencing the past gives her the chance for relief: "Everything had been said at last, cleared out of the way finally. There was nothing left in the way of a barrier or a shadow, only the clear light pouring down from the sun" (177). Finally, she finds the power to bury the hatchet and has a chance to move on with a "clear light of day." Moreover, returning to the past shows how memory and its reflection can change over time. Bim admits that the situation turns into a sense of peace and dignity as clear weather after the rain. By embracing acceptance and forgiveness of the past, she metaphorically clears the atmosphere. Bhabha accepts identity as flexible and always in change and this is reflected in Bim's experience as she embraces her past and evolves her sense of self through forgiveness. Connecting with Bhabha's idea, identity can change when old wounds are forgiven; other people become a blend of the past and how they see things in the present helps to develop one's identity. This shows how intricate postcolonial identities can be. Furthermore, the way that Desai portrays memory in *Clear Light of Day* provides well-informed perspectives about various complexities of family relationships and forgiveness. Bim's attitude of self-revelation welcomes the readers to think about their own past associations and possible healings.

Conclusion

Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* narrates several lives of ordinary Indian people by dealing with periods before and after the Independence and the Partition through postcolonial elements, gender roles, and the complexities of memory. She successfully examines crossing cultural issues between the coloniser and the colonised, family bonds, and personal desires using the perspectives of ordinary Indian people and their experiences after the Partition. This novel indicates the everlasting impacts of the past on both personal and social perceptions. Constructing a time circle helps the narration to move smoothly between the past and the present. Moreover, Desai's portrayals of women characters such as Aunt Mira, Bim, and Tara deliberately undermine gender roles by stressing the position of women in different social assumptions. The novelist also makes use of music and English literature as elements of colonialism. Consequently, the family is reunited on the last pages of the book and life goes on with a "clear light of day."

Bhabha's notion of mimicry, hybridity, and third space resonates with Desai's novel on postcolonial themes. The concept of mimicry illustrates how colonial subjects often imitate the coloniser but in a way that subtly undermines the coloniser's power. The novel emphasises it with Raja as an admirer of Hyder Ali who tries to follow Western literary traditions. Raja also writes poetry influenced by British canon poets, this presents a blending of colonial borrowings and Indian cultural history. Inhabiting this new borderland challenges the identity of the characters, particularly with their difficulty in becoming postcolonial subjects in the remnants of the colonially accepted culture they were mingled with both personally and socially. Desai's complex relationship between the characters and their colonial past illuminates Bhabha's claim that postcolonial identity is ambivalent, and contradictory emerged in the third space. Desai connects the narrative to these theoretical issues so tightly as if demonstrating this point which explains how interconnected colonialism and its shadow still are with personal identities and cultural representation. It may be suggested to argue that *Clear Light of Day* is a profound statement on the ongoing effect of European empires. Thus, far above its valuable thematic substance, the novel becomes a prolific source to show the long-term effects of colonial culture, the ongoing battle for independence, and the effort to try to define the self in the day-by-day changing world. Desai's writing skills about the theme guide her readers to muse over how the past goes on affecting the present by opening the doors for forgiveness and moving on after understanding humankind.

Desai's narrative presents a much clearer understanding of the complicated nature of India from the beginning to the very last page of this novel. The novel becomes an immortal representation of how a plot line may reveal tiny nuances of human lives by reflecting and uniting the divisions between individuals. In this world in which we have to put up with these divisions and complexities, Desai's narration can be accepted as a chance of hope that assists us with the recollection of our personal history through empathy, understanding, and forgiveness. If we think deeply about her words, we might at some point be inspired to recognise the resemblance that actually connects us all. As well as contributing to the literary world with *Clear Light of Day*, Desai has also touched our souls by allowing us to think over the experiences of this ordinary Indian family. She encourages us to seek connections by emphasising the importance of our variable stories while we try to be prepared to take leave of them.

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Disclosure Statement

The Place of Special Women in the Art of Poetry for Russian Poet Nekrasov
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ABSTRACT
Nikolay Alexeyevich Nekrasov, who had a very important place in the 19th century Russian literature, existed as a poet in the literary scene of his period, apart from his identity as a literary authority and publisher. Despite being an aristocrat, the artist, who grew up with slave peasant children, is closely acquainted with the problems and understanding of slave peasants, who were considered the lowest class of the Russian people. He integrated these experiences with realism, one of the widespread movements of his time, and tried to be the voice of these people who were ignored in their country. When we look at the poet's art of poetry, it will be observed that he breaks this line only in the verses he dedicates to women who are special to him. The heroes of these poems, written in a romantic and pessimistic style close to the old tradition, are three women who are very important to the author. First, we see the poet's mother, who had a bitter fate in the art of poetry and died at a young age. Then, we meet Avdotya Panayeva, a married woman with whom he had an illicit affair for many years. And finally, his wife, Zinaida Nekrosova, continued it. When the poems written about these three women are considered in general, great sadness, darkness, and longing are felt in all the poems he wrote to his mother. The poems dedicated to Panayeva, one of the women he loved, are the panorama of a relationship that continued with ups and downs for many years. Those dedicated to Zinaida were written more positively and lovingly because they coincided with the most painful years of the poet's illness and instilled hope in her.

Introduction

Nikolay Alexeyevich Nekrasov (1821-1877), who has an important place in the history of Russian literature both as an artist and as a publisher, is one of the important names who managed to leave a mark not only for his period but also for the following periods. The author brought a different vision to Russian poetry with his realistic approach and reached the peak of his tendency towards the people that started with the famous Russian poet A. S. Pushkin (1799-1837). When we look at the subjects that Nekrasov deals with in his poems, it will be observed that the first line is the reflection of the harsh living conditions of the Russian people and the oppression of a ruthless administration, both in rural areas and in big cities. It is observed that the artist emphatically emphasized in his poem titled "Poet and Citizen" (Poet i grajdanin, 1856) that the artist cannot ignore people's troubles and that his first duty is not artistic pleasures but that these people's

problems should be important in his literary life. In his works, Nekrasov focused on people's problems rather than aesthetic concerns. It focuses on the problems of every age group without distinction between men, women and children. The villagers living in difficult conditions with him, the poor people in big cities, and their problems are brought to the fore almost for the first time in the art of poetry (Arhipov, 1973, p. 298).

While the poet deals with these subjects that will change the elegance of poetry, he gives a separate place to female characters in a different way from his contemporaries. The artist specifically deals with the oppression of women both in the aristocratic environment and in the village life and slavery system in his poems. Besides these women, another woman image that draws attention in the artist's poetry is the woman in his private life. His first love, his mother, and then his forbidden relationship, and lastly, his wife, whom no one in the family can accept. These three women have an important place in his art. The works dedicated to these three women have a special place in the poet's poetry. As we emphasized above, Nekrasov's realistic and impartial style, which is also a characteristic feature of his art, is not seen in any of these works. Just like in his private life, he gave these women a separate place in his art from other people. He addresses them romantically, like poets from the old tradition, in a way that emotions push facts aside. For this reason, the poems devoted to these three women are a different color in Nekrasov's poetry. In this study, we will focus on this color.

Special Women in the Art of Poetry for Russian Poet N. A. Nekrasov

In the early poems of the artist, the first of these three women is his mother, Aleksandra Andreyevna Zakrevskaya (1803-1841). Later, we will talk about the poem of Avdotya Yakovlevna Panayeva (1820-1893), his lover and great love with whom he spent seventeen years together. Finally, although his last darling, whose name is Fiokla Anisimovna Viktorova (1851-1915). We will focus on the poem devoted to his lover, whom the poet calls Zinaida.

It will be seen that Nekrasov, as the son of an unhappy mother in an unhappy marriage, as well as financially, has shown a special sensitivity and care towards women since his childhood. Especially to his mother, whom he saw constantly suffering as he was growing up. His mother has an important place in the poet's literary and individual development. She is the architect of his good sides. The official name of mother Nekrasov, in the records is Aleksandra Andreyevna Zakrevskaya. She was born as the daughter of a well-known landlord. Everyone, especially the poet, calls the woman named Yelena when she is baptized (Oberuchev, 1903, p. 177).

Yelena was a beautiful girl who was brought up in all noble traditions. She married Alexei Sergeyevich Nekrasov (1788-1862), whom she met at a ball at the age of seventeen, in 1817, against her family's consent. Alexei Nekrasov was a very cruel man. He was very unloving and cruel not only to his wife but also to his children. Nekrasov addresses his father as a 'despot,' 'killer,' and 'executioner' in his poems (Chukovsky, 1929, p. xi). Yelena, who endures all the torments of her husband, attributes her bad marriage to the fact that it happened against her family's consent. Yelena gave birth to six children to her husband and always hid all the problems she had in order not to upset her children (Oberuchev, 1903, p. 176). There is a very tight bond between Yelena and her third child, Nekrasov. Understanding each other's problems from their eyes, the mother and son will be able to maintain this bond until their last breath. The struggle of his mother against his father in order to become an artist is especially important, and it cannot be ignored. The most important reason for Nekrasov's becoming an artist is his mother. He awakens the lyrical spirit in his soul. Nekrasov openly writes down the tears that his mother hid from them in his works. Dostoyevsky describes the bond between Nekrasov and his mother in his memoirs like this: "He was very touched when he was talking about his mother, his mother evoked something sacred in him, his mother saved Nekrasov, became his lighthouse, his guiding star" (Rozanova, 1988, p. 39).

Nekrasov first addresses his mother in his autobiographical work "Homeland" (Rodina), which he wrote in 1846, five years after her death:

> Here is the dark, dark garden…/ In the depths of the tree-lined path through the branches/ Who is this sick and sad face that appears and disappears? / I know, why are you crying mommy! /Who ruined your life…/ Ah! I know, I know!... / You gave your life to a sullen ignorant forever,/ You never had empty dreams,/ The thought of rebelling against your destiny frightened you,/ By keeping quiet like a slave.../passions were not alien to your soul;/ She was proud, stubborn, and very beautiful/ And forgave everything she could afford to endure/The devastating pre-death whisper!... (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 37)

The poet's grief is clearly felt, as he calls the garden where he played games as a child "dark." She is a model of a mother who submits to the 'sulky ignorant', that is, to her father, sheds tear in grief and thinks of someone else even in that painful state so that her children do not see these tears.

We can clearly see from the poem that Nekrasov was also angry at his mother's silence for this reason, despite all her love. But most of all, he is angry with himself for not being able to prevent it. He will write these lines, which are full of sorrow, in his memoirs, "Here is a little boy's heart aching great sorrows" (Tartskova, 1988, p. 92). He continues to live with this grief until his last breath.

After his mother, Nekrasov is most fond of his older sister, Yelizaveta (1821-?). Yelizaveta also makes a bad marriage, just as her mother was destined to do. This bitter fate has spread from mother to daughter. Nekrasov experiences the same grief for his older sister. In this poem, in which she rebels against her mother's bad fate, she calls her sister "the sister of my soul" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 38). However, no traces of her sister can be seen in any other work.

Nine years after he penned this poem, he once again calls out to his mother in his poem "He Has Been A Heavy Fate" (Tyajoliy krest dostalsya yey na dolyu), which he wrote during the depression in 1855, which he dedicated to his lover Panayeva: "He suffered a heavy fate:/ Suffer, shut up, pretend and don't cry" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 176).

Another striking feature of this work is the monologue technique that the poet does not use in the poem. In the poem, the poet is in front of his mother's gravestone and remembers what his father said to his mother. While listening to these, his mother stands like a statue. "Don't say it!" he ends his lines with these sentences: "Horrible, deadly sounds! / She is silent, breaking my arms, / She looks like a beautiful white statue…/ And what could she say to to her husband. what can her son say to her?" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 177).

The desperation of the artist is obvious. A short life of pain. No one, especially the artist, has ever been able to help him. Years later, he would openly express this remorse in his autobiographical poem "Knight for an Hour" (Ritsar na ças, 1860-1862), and he would consider himself a useless knight in front of his father. The work is full of depictions of the last spring season, whose day and night are not bright. The mood of everyone living in the house is parallel to the weather. A storm is about to break. "Sleep, who can - I cannot sleep, / I stand quietly, without noise/ On a meadow covered with haystacks/ And I think an involuntary thought. / (…) / Tonight I would like to cry/ On a distant grave/ Where lies my poor mother…" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 271).

Nekrasov is someone who visits his mother's grave very often in real life. In the same way, in his poems, he often goes to his mother's grave. In this poem, he is again in front of his mother's grave. Mother and son deal with him as in the old days.

> You lived your whole life unloved, / You have lived your whole life for others. / With a head open to the storms of life, / All my life under an angry thunderstorm/ She stood - with her breasts/ Protecting beloved children. / And the storm broke over you! / You, without

flinching, took the blow, / For enemies, dying, prayed,/ The mercy of God called on the children. (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 272)

These verses clearly reveal how well-intentioned her mother was. It is a very important detail that she prays like an angel for all the people who caused her pain and death at such a young age. He also clearly reveals what his mother means in the eyes of the poet. Another thing that is revealed in the poem is the weight of the fact that Nekrasov's mother endured all this suffering just so that he and his brothers would not be upset. The poet cannot get rid of this sadness, so he makes his reader feel this weight in every verse that his mother passes. In 1868, Nekrasov wrote the poem "Mother" (Mat), in which he once more addressed his mother. The same pain is expressed again in the poem. In his poem, the artist told his mother, "Your love, your holy pain, your struggle; I sing of your selfless activism!" (Rozanova, 1988, p. 45). This poem is a part of the work titled "From the Poema of the Mother" (Iz poemi "Mat") on which the author has been working for twenty-seven years. The poet composes his work, which started in 1850 and finished in 1877, shortly before his death, in three parts. As in his other autobiographical works, his mother's sad home life is treated with the same pessimism. Especially her mother's quiet and sad state in her gardens; "Quiet as the night, light as a shadow, / You used to walk around every day, my mother" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 228).

Another remarkable expression in the poem is that new generations do not value the concept of mother as much as they used to. The poet also recommends that the value of mothers who are alive as a mother should be appreciated, "A great and lofty word: 'Mother'/In our sarcastic and daring age / It does not arouse emotion" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 226). The continuation of the poem continues in the same parallel as in the poems above. The only difference is that as a poet, he can cast a spell on his mother and immortalize her name. He explains this magic like this: "I am happy! / Now that you have left this world, / But you will continue to live in the minds of people, / As long as the lyre can live there. / Years will pass, and my faithful admirer/ Will open to read; / And he sighs in you as he visits the ashes of the poet, / sighs to him" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 234).

For Nekrasov, his mother, a suffering woman carrying her own cross, appears in her works in this way with all her goodness, sorrow, and desperation. Until his last breath, the poet tries to immortalize his name with the only power he can. When we look at the mother types in Nekrasov's works, it will be remarkable that all mothers are suffering and good people. These women get all their power from the poet's mother. For Nekrasov, his mother is the representation of "beauty and goodness."

Avdotya Yakovlevna Panayeva is the first name that draws attention after her mother in Nekrasov's poems. Panayeva is the daughter of Yakov Grigoryevich Bryanskiy (1790-1853), an important actor of the Alexander Theater, and Anna Matveyevna (1797-1878), a famous opera singer who was born in Petersburg in 1820. Although the artist grew up in a family, she had a difficult childhood due to the despotic character of her mother. (Panaeva, 1927). Panayeva, who will be named "Peterburg's most beautiful girl" by Vladimir Sologup, soon begins to attract everyone's attention (Panayeva, 1927). For example, Fyodor M. Dostoevsky openly admits that he fell in love with her in his youth (Panayeva, 1927). Fascinated by this remarkable beauty, Ivan Ivanovich Panayev (1812-1862), one of the important literary authorities of the period, married the young girl despite his family's disapproval. However, Panayev soon gets bored of his beautiful wife and returns to his old life. He either works or spends time with other women. Meanwhile, Panayeva, who gave birth to a daughter and was shaken by the death of her daughter, does not neglect her husband's duty to host the literary circle. This is how they meet Nekrasov. The couple, who fell in love the moment they saw each other for the first time, will start a forbidden relationship for seventeen years. In her memoirs, Panayeva writes of this encounter as follows:

> I saw Nekrasov for the first time in the winter of 1842. Belinskiy brought him to read his work 'Peterburg Corners.' Belinsky was waiting to play cards. V. P. Botkin, who came from Moscow, was also sitting with us... Nekrasov looked embarrassed when he started reading. His voice was always low, and he read very quietly. But then he got excited. Nekrasov looked sickly and much older than he was. He had a distinctive demeanor. (Panaeva, 1927, p. 1)

The couple, who concealed their feelings until 1845, now begins to meet secretly, moving across their house to be with this woman, who was married to one of the most important names of the period. In this way, their relationship continues for many years. Panayeva gives birth to two sons from Nekrasov. However, one of the children was stillborn, and the other died as soon as he was born (Panayeva, 1927, p. 57). The relationship, which went through a lot of scandals and many discussions, ended when Panayeva, who was freed after Panayev's death in 1862, wanted to get married. Two years after this date, Panayeva fell in love with Apollon Filippovich Golovachyov (1831-1877), who was eleven years younger than her and the secretary of the magazine "Sovremennik" (Skatov, 2004, p. 405). Nekrasov regrets his ex-girlfriend's decision to marry and begs Panayeva to return to him, but it is too late. Panayeva soon gave birth to a daughter from Golovachyov and devoted herself to her daughter until her death (Nikolay Nekrasov i Avdotya Panayeva: http://domochag.net/people/history38.php).

Nekrasov reflects this turbulent life in his works. The poet never speaks openly to Panayeva in his poems, but it is known by the reader to whom these poems are dedicated. The first poem of forbidden love is "You Are Always Wonderfully Beautiful" (Tı vsegda horoşa nesravnenno), dated 1847. In the work, the artist describes Panayeva, whose beauty is epic in Russia, with these words: "You are always wonderfully beautiful, / But when I am sad and sullen, / Your cheerful, sarcastic mind/ It comes alive so enthusiastically/ You laugh so lively and pleasantly that, / You scold my stupid enemies, / Sometimes you bow your head in sadness, / You make me laugh so cunningly" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 54).

For the poet with a pessimistic soul and a sick body, Panayeva is like a source of healing and joy. They have managed to be extremely loving, understanding, and supportive towards each other in their relationships. This relationship is received very harshly in society. In fact, this society, which does not care much about extramarital relationships morally, values such relationships only in order to make them a topic of conversation in the halls and to show themselves at a high moral level. Panayeva also becomes the focus of the community's rumors. These rumors sometimes turn into verbal abuse. Nerkasov, to make his lover care about these rumors, calls out with his poem "When His Blood Flared Up" (Kogda gorit v tvoyey krovi...) of their joint work, "Three Countries of the World" (Tri Strani Sveta, 1848-1849). "True love's flame, / When it blazes in your blood, / When you deepen your rational rights, / When you are conscious. / Believe: the rumor won't kill you/ With its cruel slander!" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom V., p. 204).

The fact that the wife of an important man of the period had an affair with a noble but poor poet whose name is beginning to be heard becomes a rumor that keeps its freshness for many years. One of the most important reasons for this situation is Panayev's calm attitude towards his wife's betrayal and his ability to maintain his friendship with Nekrasov. This situation disturbs Nekrasov more than Panayev. In the same poem, she advises her lover to leave her husband if she loves him: "But if your passion is weak/ And your faith is not deep/ Become your husband's eternal slave, / Otherwise you will regret it very much!" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom V., p. 204).

Panayeva and Nekrasov are indeed madly in love with each other. This spell will shake after the grief of their first son, who will die in 1848, and create an estrangement between the couple. These are very difficult times for the poet. The death of the child shortly after birth shocks him deeply. He expresses this pain openly in his poem, "Defeated by Loss That Will Never Return" (Porajena

poterey nevozvratnoy...), which he first thought of as the title of "From Black Day" (V çyorniy den). "I am waiting... But the night is approaching dawn. / And there is a deadly darkness around..." (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 151). In this dark time, the poet's illness, which has not been diagnosed for years, is clearly revealed. Learning that he has bowel cancer, Nekrasov becomes depressed; his voice is hoarse, sometimes he does not speak for days, and he thinks he will die. He became introverted (Panaeva, 1927, p. 54.).

Nekrasov expresses his distance from the woman he loves at this time with these lines: "She is not far away anyway:/ We are more excited with the last desire/ But there is a secret coldness and sorrow in our hearts .../ When the river rises more in the autumn/ Like the rushing waves are colder" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 63).

Between 1850 and 1855, Nekrasov became more pessimistic and began to distance himself from Panayeva. He expressed his grief with the following lines in his poem "Oh, Our Life Flowed with Struggle" (Da, naşa jizn tekla myatejno...). "Our life has flown by in struggle, / Full of anxiety and loss, / Parting was inevitable-/ I'm glad for you now! / But since everything around has become a desert for me/ I can't devote myself to anything with enthusiasm, / And life is boring and time is too long, / And "I got bored with my job" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 64).

This pessimism reached its peak with the death of their second baby. Nekrasov selfishly began to think that he was the only one who suffered. It was a great injustice for a woman like Panayeva, who faced the reactions of all of Russia just out of love for him. Their relationship was about to break down. He clearly expressed his determination to leave in his poem titled "And you? Didn't You Give Yourself to Sorrow?" (A tı? Tak je li peçali predana?...). "Were we happy together? / Tell me! I have to know... / How strangely I love you! / I wish and pray for you happiness, / But the thought that the grief of separation troubles you, / It eases the pain in my heart" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 64).

Panayeva responded to this call for separation and returned to her husband's house. Nekrasov realized the mistake he had made, and that he was not the only one suffering, and in 1850, he wrote a poem asking for forgiveness called "Darling, Is This a Joke?" (Tak to shuka? Milaya moya). "Darling, is this a joke? / How cowardly and unsympathetic I am! / I wept for your deliberately harsh, short and cold letter, / Neither with friendly affection nor with open words, / You did not please my heart with it" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 65).

He continued this poem in the poems he wrote in the form of a letter written by the poet to his lover who left him. His first poem was his work titled "Ah, Letters of the Woman We Love" (O pisma jenşini, nam miloy), which was published in 1852 as a chapter with the title "Passage" (Otrivok). Here, he clearly revealed his grief with the lines "The last hour of separation was so unfortunate, / So heavy, so bitter, so sad..." (Nerkasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 66). He would continue this poem with "Letter" (Pismo, 1855) and "Hot Letters" (Goryaşçiye pisma, 1877).

Nekrasov and Panayeva were very similar in their impulsiveness. For this reason, they quarrel frequently and make up just as often. Their relationship continued with these ebbs and flows. In 1851, Nekrasov wrote the poem "We Are Inconsistent People With You!" (Mi s toboy bestolkoviye lyudi) to end the ongoing resentment between him and Panayeva. In the work, the poet addresses the woman he loves as follows:

> We are inconsistent people with you,/ We are ready to shine every minute!/ The relief of the excited chest,/ They are unreasonable, sharp words./ When you are angry, tell me,/ Everything that worries and upsets your soul!/ Let's be angry openly my friend:/ It was easy to make peace, but it will quickly become boring./ If prose is inevitable in love,/ Let's take our share of happiness from it;/ After the quarrel, it will come so full, so tender,/The return

of love and care will come back… (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 70)

This work of Nekrasov, who never reflected his own feelings and thoughts in his works, was enough to express the sadness he experienced over the pain of separation. The fact that the woman he called out as a romantic lover did not respond to him excites him even more. He got more passionate verses written.

> So important, rejected by/ I was walking on these shores, / Like rushing into the waves, / Full of ominous thought. / They shone attractively. / I stepped on the edge of the cliff-/ In an instant the waves grew eerily dark, / And fear stopped me! / Later on full of love and happiness, / We came here often. / And you blessed then / The waves that rejected me. / Now alone, forgotten by / After many unlucky years, / I wander these shores again / With a faint soul. / And It comes to my mind again / I stand on the edge of the cliff, / But the waves do not threaten harshly, / They pull me into the depths… (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 141)

The name "Already, When You Rejected..." (Davno otvernutiy toboyu...) was later added to this poem, in which the poet noted "The night of April 25, 1855" in the scribbles. The poem created a lot of buzz as soon as it was published. In fact, the Russian revolutionary Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky (1828-1889) would have his heroine Katya Polozova read in his work titled "How to Do It?" (Şto delat?, 1902) (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 624).

The poet, who says "I wander around with my dead soul", which was the result of the pain and mood he was experiencing, expresses his pain in verses in a metaphorical way. She was depicted as lost among the surging waves, and the places she used to visit with her lover are drowned in gloom.

After this poem, the poet clearly expressed his most intimate feelings towards Panayeva in another of his works. His poem "Where's Your Dark Face" (Gde tvayo liçiko smugloye) was one of these bravely written poems.

> Where is your dark face, / Who is it laughing at now? / Oh, loneliness is everywhere! / I promise no one! / However, it would have been eagerly / When you came to me in the evening, / How carefree with you, / We were both joyful! / How vividly you expressed your naive feelings! / Do you remember, you especially/ used to like my teeth." (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 169)

Unfortunately, the poet did not publish this poem, which he wrote to his lover whose smiling face he missed in the same year. After the work was written, he published it on December 29, 1861 (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 634). Together with these poems, he wrote his poem "Forgive" (Prosti) with the same pain. The narrator, separated from his lover, called out to his lover as follows: "Forgive! Forget the days of fall, sorrow, / Disappointment, anger, / Forget the storm, forget the tears, / Forget the threats of jealousy! / But the days when the sun of love rose upon us with compassion, / And when we finish the journey vigorously/ Bless and do not forget!" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 181).

All of Nekrasov's love calls were never answered by his lover. The health of the poet, who gradually deteriorated spiritually, also deteriorated. A second attack occurred in his disease in 1855. The artist, who felt spiritually alone, thought that he would die due to his illness, which made him even more pessimistic. This mood drew attention in almost all of the poems of 1855 and 1856. His poem titled "Hard Year - Illness Destroyed Me" (Tyajoliy god slomil menya nedug) is one of his works dating back to 1855. He wrote the following lines in his work, in which he reproached his lover for leaving him alone in these difficult days but explained that he knew how much pain she felt from this situation.

> Hard year- malady has destroyed me, / Trouble has caught me, happiness is betrayal, /

> Neither foe nor friend has pity on me, / And even you did not! / Exhausted, ambitious, / Fighting with mortal enemies!/ Brave woman! You stand before me / Like a ghost with eyes that have lost my mind! / Your hair has fallen on your shoulders, / Your lips are burning, your cheeks shine rosy, / And unbridled speech/ I am involved in terrible, cruel, unjust condemnations... Stop! / Your youthful years/ To life unhappy and in captivity/ I wasn't the one who condemned / I am your friend, not your executioner! / But you do not listen... (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom I., p. 143)

It was obvious that the severity of the poet's illness and how much this situation affected him psychologically. The artist also expressed his loneliness with the lines "Neither enemies nor friends pity me." These reproachful verses never find a response. In 1856, Nekrasov, who was now in a bad mood, wrote "Hot Letters" (Goryaşçhiye pisma), in which he addressed his lover once again, but the work was published shortly before the poet died (1877). This poem, which the poet could not finish, is compared to the poem "Burning Letter" (Sojjonoye pismo) written by the famous Russian poet A. S. Pushkin in 1825. In the poem, the lover waits for a light after his departed lover. However, this light was never visible. It was said that the closed doors would bring about the end of the narrator. Nerkasov's poem was in the same parallel. "You freely made your choice, / And I did not fall to your knees like a slave;/ But you walk up the steep stairs, / And you burn the steps you climb with courage!... / Your crazy step!... / Maybe it will lead to disaster...." (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom II., p. 225).

It was very striking that your lover burns the steps he climbed when leaving. It was no longer possible to return. The poet also realized this. He addressed his lover for the last time in his last poem, "Three Elegiya" (Tri elegiyi), which he wrote for Panayeva in 1874, consisting of three different sections. In the work, the narrator called out to his lover, who left him and married another man, for the last time, through these lines. "Even if the wish comes true, what does it matter?... / The irresistible idea that he can never be happy without me, / Lives in my soul!/ We put everything we value in our lives,/ Our most beautiful things/ On the same altar/ And this fire has not gone out!" (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom II., p. 166).

It is very striking that the narrator in the poem thinks that the woman he loves can never be happy with someone else. This message was written in 1864 upon the news that Panayeva had married Golovachyov. Nerkasov was very angry with his lover, who did not return to him despite all these calls and even married another man. But this anger was selfishness. In 1862, as soon as her husband died, Panayeva sent a message to Nekrasov stating that she would return if he accepted the marriage in the presence of the church. However, Nekrasov puts aside the love he expressed in all these verses and declares that he would not accept this marriage. This will put an end to it. Panayeva had been definitely abandoned him. Nekrasov addresses his lover, whom he refused to marry, as follows:

> She will come... / And she is shy as always, / Impatient and proud, / She will silently look at the ground / Then... What shall I say then?... / (...) / My anxious heart is beating, / The eyes are smoky. / The burning breeze of passions / Has descended on me like a storm. / I remember the bright eyes/ of my distant wanderer, / I repeat the fiery verses/ that I once wrote for her. (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom II., pp.166-167)

While Nekrasov was repeating his fiery verses, he heard that Panayeva had a daughter in 1866. This woman, who has been burning with the desire to become a mother for a long time, has achieved her goal. She has forgotten all her other desires and focuses on her maternal duties with all her strength. The fact that the woman he always wanted to have a child with has a child from another man is definitive proof that there was no turning back. His last lines for Panayeva were: "My hair is turning grey.. / The problem is solved: Work, as long as you live/ And wait for death! It

is not far away either…. / Why you, oh my heart! / Have you not made peace with your fate?/ Why this gloom of yours?/(…)/ Fall asleep… Die!..” (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom II., p. 167).

These poems, which Nekrasov wrote almost like a romantic by suspending his realistic side, are called the “Panayeva Series” (Panayevskiy tsikl). As can be seen from the examples above, it is very numerous and full of memories.

After breaking up with Panayeva, Nekrasov had short-term relationships with many different women, but he spent the last seven years of his life in great peace with Fiokla Anisimovna Viktorova (1851-1915), whom he met in 1870. The poet falls in love as soon as he sees the nineteen-year-old young girl who speaks Russian beautifully. As a forty-nine-year-old man, the poet finds life again in a young woman. (Skatov, 2004, p. 408). Nekrasov never calls his lover by his own name. Nekrasov calls Fiokla “Zinaida”, simply “Zina”, “Zinochka”. In an interview with the magazine “Saratov’s Reporter” (Saratovski vestnik), Zinaida explained why she changed her name as follows: “Nekrasov used to call me Zina and his father's name. After that, all her acquaintants began to call me Zina Nikolayevna, and eventually I got so used to this name that I forgot that my real name was Fiokla Anisimovna” (Loman, 1978, p. 60).

Another unknown feature of Zinaida, such as her changing name, was her past before meeting Nekrasov. There was different information on this subject. The first was the information from Karabikha.[1] From Nekrasov's close friend P. Koshkin, Zinaida was the daughter of a high-ranking officer serving in Vyshny Volochyok in the northeast of Russia. Secondly, it was the claim of Yekaterina Zhukovskaya, a close friend of the couple. Zhukovskaya claims that Zinaida is the daughter of a war journalist who worked in Vyshny Volochyok. Thirdly, the poet’s close friend, Korney Chukovsky, claimed that Zinaida's father was a military band officer. Fourthly, Zinaida’s acquaintances in Saratov, where she spent her last years, report that Nekrasov's widow's mother was a laundress and her father was a rank-and-file soldier (Loman, 1978, pp. 61-62). The most striking among these rumors is the following memory of T. I. Orlov in 1917: “My grandmother was the hunting companion of M. P. Sukhov’s daughter, Mariya Mikhailovna Nekrasova, and her neighbor from Chudovo. He used to tell a lot about Nikolay Alexeyevich and Zinaida Nikolayevna. According to my grandmother’s words, Z. N. was the daughter of a laundress. Nekrasov met him in Chudovo when he was coming back with a laundry basket over his head” (Loman, 1978, p. 62).

Nekrasov’s family had only one statement about Zinaida. She also says to her niece Vera Fedorovna Nekrasova in 1961: “We know very little about Zina Nikolayevna. They would not say anything about his father or mother. I only remember my mother saying that Zina Nikolayevna was a street vendor (selling flowers, if I remember correctly) and that she met Nikolay Alexeyevich there” (Loman, 1978, p. 62).

Vladislav Yevgenyevich Yevgenyev-Maksimov (1883-1955), known as a Nekrasov expert, says the following about the nature of this relationship while writing about Nekrasov’s life in 1915: There is no information in literature about Zinaida Nikolayevna's life until she met Nekrasov and how they met (Loman, 1978, p. 62).

Zinaida was a very cheerful girl. She also spread joy to those around her. She makes a great effort to keep up with Nekrasov’s educated, aristocratic environment. The poet tries hard not to embarrass his girlfriend. Nekrasov supports her efforts and makes her take private lessons. French teacher M. S. Naksariy describes Zinaida’s efforts as follows: “Zinaida Nikolayaevna was a very sympathetic, ordinary woman, similar to a fashion designer, but very smart. Nekrasov loved her very much. “Zinaida Nikolayevna learned French with great effort and success” (Loman, 1978, p.

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[1]Karabikha (Карáбиха, Karabiha) is a village in Yaroslavl Oblast, Russia. Nikolay Nekrasov lived and worked there for a long time.

66).

In addition to this skill of Zinaida, another talent that attracted attention and captured the heart of Nekrasov, who was a complete hunting enthusiast, was her ability to ride a horse very well and use weapons. Nekrasov's nephew Aleksandr Feodorovich described it as follows:

> I remember Zinaida Nikolayevna very well; her face was a charming color, she was a blue-eyed blonde, her lips looked like they were drawn with a pencil, and she had teeth like pearls. She was well-spoken, resourceful, and quick-witted. She used a gun and rode very well, so Nikolay Alexeyevich used to take her with him when he went hunting. (Loman, 1978, p. 65)

Nekrasov and Zinaida were a very happy couple. People in the poet's close circle have always spoken positively about this relationship. However, Nekrasov's family thinks that she married him inherits the sick poet's inheritance. The poet was also aware of this situation. A year before he died, he wanted to have a church wedding with Zinaida, but his illness did not allow him to go to church, so he invited the priest to the house to perform the wedding with a special request. Shortly after the poet's death, it was claimed that it was not legal for the priest to marry at home, and the marriage was deemed invalid. Zinaida cannot receive a share of Nekrasov's inheritance. However, she never fought against his family. She has been in love with both Nekrasov's personality as an artist and his heart as a man. N. V. Holshevnikov (1822-1907), a close friend of the poet, wrote about Zinaida's grief during the funeral as follows:

> Zinaida Nikolayevna stood bravely and strongly. But when Nekrasov's coffin was being taken out of the apartment, something bad happened. I held her, but she still fell to the ground. But she pulled herself together and started walking behind the coffin. I took her arm. I wanted to make her sit in the car, but she did not sit down and walked the whole way with the people next to her husband's coffin. (Loman, 1978, p. 75)

Zinaida goes through very difficult times financially after the death of the poet. When there is no support from the family and Nekrasov's close friends living in Karabikha keep their distance from her, she soon spends the money she has on charity organizations. She settles in Odessa and lives here until she dies (Zinaida Nikolaevna Nekrasova).

Zinaida is not very prominent in Nekrasov's poetry. It is hardly in the foreground, especially considering the part devoted to Panayeva. The poet has been busy compiling his autobiography and poems in two volumes during the years he has met Zinaida. The poet is also in the first of the two volumes of this compilation, "To my dear precious Zina". N. Nekrasov March 23, 1874" and the second one to "My sweet and only friend Zina. N. Nekrasov writes December 12, 1874", and dedicates all his works to her (Loman, 1978, p. 60).

In 1876, Nekrasov wrote his first poem to his beloved, who did not leave his bedside even once and never let go of his hand after suffering the last attack of illness that would put him to bed. This poem named "To Zina (You Have the Right to Live...)" (Zine (Ti yeşçio na jizn imeyeş pravo) will also have two continuation poems. The narrator is a poet himself and tells his lover not to grieve after she dies:

> You have the right to live, / I'm fast forwarding to the end of my days./ I'm going to die - my fame will fade,/ Don't be surprised- don't worry about him!/ My child, know; Fame for a long time and with bright lights/ It won't shine on my reputation:/ Struggle has prevented my poetry, songs have prevented my fighting./ Only to serve the sacred purposes of the century,/ To his struggle for the sake of his human brother/ He who dedicates his life completely/ He will live more than his life... (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom II, p. 215)

This work, which resembles a farewell letter, also reflects the poet's philosophy of life. The poet

expresses his duty as an artist in the life he questions. For the poet, only those who devote their whole life to the struggle will remain immortal. Therefore, he gives his lover the secret of immortality. It is also noteworthy that he calls the woman he loves a 'son.' The age difference between them is due to the fact that she is not only a lover but also gives him advice like a teacher.

In addition, the poet suffers greatly during his seizures. His sister and Zinaida stayed with him for a moment. Nekrasov also regrets this situation. It hurts him so much that his beautiful wife is so tired and never sleeps, and he almost begs her to get some sleep and rest. However, Zinaida never wants to leave his head. Nekrasov specifically addresses this situation in his work "To Zina" (It's been two hundred days...) (Zine (Dvesti uj dney)) on December 4, 1876:

> It's been two hundred days, / It's been two hundred nights/ My suffering continues, / Nights and all day long/ In your heart/ My groans ring, / Two hundred days are coming, / Two hundred nights! / Dark winter days, / Bright winter nights…/ Zina! Close your tired eyes! / Zina! Sleep! (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom II., p. 218)

However, Zinaida never sleeps and waits for her lover. Now, the poet is sure that the disease he has been fighting for years will end with death this time. It's out of power. He completes his trilogy called "To Zina" (Zine) dated February 13, 1877, in which he will address the woman he loves for the last time. This is the final call:

> Bring the pen, paper, books closer! / Dear friend! I have heard a legend:/ The chains of the worker have fallen from his shoulder/ And the worker has fallen dead. / Help me to work Zina! / Your labor has always revived me./ Look, here is a beautiful view,/ Write it down before I forget!/ Stop crying secretly! Believe in hope, / Laugh, sing to the bottom where you sing in the spring, / Repeat to my friends as before, / Every poem I have you dictated to me. / Tell your friend that you are pleased;/ Against my agonizing illness/ With the enthusiasm of your victory, / Your poet forgot death! (Nekrasov, 2010, Tom II., p. 235)

The lines "write them before I forget" show that Zinaida provided not only moral support but also material support by clearing her works. In addition, these last words are his advice to Zinaida to be strong and not to be sad in the face of approaching death. The thought of her being sad comes from the thought of death, which she feared for years, and she constantly asks her lover to be strong in her latest works. Although Nekrasov has reserved a small place for Zianida in his art, Zinaida's place in his art is very different spiritually. Many of the poet's masterpieces, which are considered to be his masterpieces, came to life in the seven years they spent together.

Conclusion

Bringing a different perspective to his era as a realist poet, Nekrasov follows a very different artistic line with his poems dedicated to women who are special to him in his private life. Apart from the poems dedicated to these three women, the artist, who writes both prose and poetry in a cold and impartial way, makes his presence felt deeply in each of his works, with his most intimate secrets and deep sorrow. Therefore, these poems are very valuable for us to understand Nekrasov's inner world. The author of "Who Lives Well in Russia" (Komu na Rusi jit horoşo), the encyclopedia of Russian people, this neutral man romantically addresses the women in his private life, like poets from the old tradition. In the poems, he addresses to his mother, we clearly see the great pain of his childhood and adolescence, his love for his mother, and his anger towards his father. As he said, the only thing he can do as a poet is to immortalize his mother. With great success, he succeeds in making his mother's pains read and written even after centuries. It is the result of this magic that we commemorate this woman who is fond of her children with great respect in our work.

Of course, the largest part of the poet's poems in terms of volume, which he dedicates to Panayeva,

cannot be ignored. However, while a few of these poems are love poems, we see that most of them are filled with the grief and regrets of the abandoned lover. When we look at the ones dedicated to Zinaida, it is noteworthy that they are almost insignificant in volume. Because of this togetherness, which coincides with both the poet's maturity period and his most productive years, it is noteworthy that the poet tends toward social problems rather than his love affairs. Zinaida gave the poet the power to create and complete many of his masterpieces, which will be mentioned centuries later. She personally served as his secretary, inspiring him to write more boldly. Above all, it provided an environment of peace and comfort to do these things.

When we look at the poems that Nekrasov dedicated to these three women in general, a pessimistic and dark atmosphere always draws attention. Except for the first-period poems written for Panayeva, the dominant colors are dark colors. The guilt of not being able to help his mother, the pain of losing his lover, and the cold hand of death when he has found complete happiness are clearly felt in his works. These poems of Nekrasov, who is called one of the rare people who brought different people and subjects to Russian poetry with his realist nature and his subjects, and even simplification, have revealed the romantic poet in his soul.

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Revisiting Antigone in Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan* (1996)
Marina Carr'ın *Portia Coughlan* Oyunu Üzerinden Antigone'yi Yeniden Okumak

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ABSTRACT
1990s Contemporary British Drama is epitomized with plays over which violence, cruelty, and abject depictions of selfhood reign in an attempt to propel a renegotiation of imposed normativity on the subject. Marina Carr, as a prominent contemporary Irish playwright writes plays that are experiential on a deeper level as she delves into characters that walk on the liminal borders between life and death. Marina Carr's play *Portia Coughlan* represents a family enmeshed in the incest taboo, re-negotiates the subversive familial subjectification enforced on Portia and explores the theme of a broken self, which is condensed by the loss of an irreplaceable brother. Interpreting *Portia Coughlan* as a re-evaluation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, this article initiates discussion on the play by applying contemporary arguments on the intersections between Antigone, gender normativity, taboos, kinship, familial ties and interior objectification of the subject as were discussed in Judith Butler's *Antigone's Claim* (2000). By questioning why gender is so crucial to our understanding of the self and why Portia and Antigone as tragic characters are left with no option but to die, this article aims to examine the function of ambiguity and uncontainable nature found in the heroines in regard to their treatment in plays as well as their premise in their respective cultural setting.

Introduction

Portia Coughlan was first staged at the Abbey Theatre in 1996, winning the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize the following year. It was later revived on the Peacock Stage as part of the AbbeyOneHundred centenary program in 2004. Even though the play was planned to be staged once more in September 2020 by Young Vic Theatre, with Caroline Bryne directing and Academy award-nominee Ruth Negga portraying the asphyxiated heroine, it was cancelled during the Covid Pandemic. *Portia Coughlan* was hailed for its sharp portrayal of a broken self where one critic called the original Garry Hynes production on the Abbey Theatre "a brutal and passionate drama of family relationships and personal disintegration, set on the day of Portia's thirtieth birthday over three, time-bending acts" (Ruane, 2003, p. 83). Breaking away from the linear plot structure in the play, Carr placed the death of Portia between the first and third act, adding to the liminal fragmentation of the heroine who is torn between the impositions on her feminine identity imposed by patriarchal authority and her twin brother's ubiquitous call for a reunification in

death.

Portia's persistence to live in the play vanes after a backlash of a suicide pact of which she backs out at the last minute. As she experiences the horrifying act of her twin brother's suicide, she feels ubiquitously stuck in a purgatory of darkness enshrouding her liminal post-Gabriel presence, the aberrations of her psyche. Portia's refusal to perform the duties of a wife and a mother is part of a feminist discourse Carr strives to convey throughout her Midland plays. Carr's feminist depictions in these plays were exemplified through taking the portrayal of patriarchal impositions on the wifehood and motherhood to extremities and taboo depictions. In Midlands trilogy and her other plays, Carr offers a re-reading of several female characters from Greek mythology such as Medea, Phaedra, and Antigone by locating them in a traditional yet modern Irish Midlands setting. The disobedience that Portia shows against paternal authority, the incestuous cycle of her familial surroundings and her liminal and splintered self that is condensed by loss are all closely reminiscent of Antigone's defiance and dramatic legacy.

The tragic story of Antigone stems from her insistence to give her brother Polyneices a proper burial against her uncle Creon's orders. The order is issued by the new king of Thebes since Polyneices had led a foreign army to invade Thebes and ensued a fight with his brother Eteocles. The fight ends with both siblings lying dead as Oedipus prophesized and Polyneices was consequently labelled a traitor, his body left for the beasts to be devoured. Antigone is willing to die in the name of giving her brother a proper burial and for enabling his soul to pass through the liminal River Styx that connects the realm of the living with the underworld under the domain of Hades. Antigone is also believed to possess incestuous love towards Polyneices, for whom she denies motherhood and wifehood. This sacrifice resonates with Portia's defiance as both commit suicide in spaces reminiscent of pre-natal existence: Antigone takes her own life in a cave whereas Portia jumps into the Belmont River. Sophocles' *Antigone*, especially her defiance raises issues in regard of kinship, authority, subjectification and gender, all of which point to Judith Butler's reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* in his influential book entitled *Antigone's Claim*. In this book, Butler revisits the literature on the character Antigone, pondering over her modern premise. Interpreting *Portia Coughlan* as a re-evaluation of the Sophocles' *Antigone*, this article will then read *Portia Coughlan* through Butlerian lenses that follow the literature on Sophocles' *Antigone*. Juxtaposition of Butler's arguments with Carr's play allow for re-negotiating the triad of kinship, the taboo subject of incest, and subject-formation for the purpose of unearthing the modern implications of the character by equating its reflections on Portia's defiance. Such reading necessitates revisiting the literature on *Antigone* by inquiring its possible reflections on Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan* through the argument on kinship ties and gender.

Liminal Crossings/Ghostly Apparitions

Portia Coughlan begins by introducing the titular heroine standing with a drink in her hand at her home, and simultaneously Gabriel as a ghost occupying the stage physically along the infamous Belmont River, culminating in an uncanny sequence where "*they mirror one another's posture and movements in an odd way; unconsciously*" (Carr, 2014, p. 165). Portia's fragmented self is juxtaposed against the ghost of Gabriel who often sings at the beginning of the acts and the ghost is only visible to Portia and to the audience throughout the play. Raphael Coughlan as the waning patriarch of the household suffers from a limp occupies the first scene, complaining about the state of Portia, who is drinking at such an early time: "Ten o'clock in the mornin' and you're at it already" (Carr, 2014, p. 165). It becomes clear that Portia is in an unhappy arranged marriage with Raphael, the wealthiest man in the area, a factory owner whose partnership through wedlock would increase the fortune of Sly Scully. Portia is often scorned by her family for not performing the duties of a proper wife and mother. She rejects familial obligations, spending her time flirting with her lover Damus Halion and barman Fintan Goolan in the Belmont River instead.

Portia often escapes to the liminal landscape, the Belmont River, which flows between the lands of her husband and father. However, the river does not only flow through these lands but also slashes through them. It serves as a way of escape from the interiority of familial bonds and impositions since the river still occupies the symbolic meaning of returning to Gabriel who killed himself by jumping into the river fifteen years ago. This connotation of the river as a liminal zone represents uncontainable nature of the heroine who refuses to be locked up in an interior space. It additionally serves as "a polyvalent metaphor … [a] watery womb, it is the place of original oneness, secret sexual union, and the dissolution of sex and gender boundaries. As River Styx, it represents the permeable border between the world of the living and the world of the dead" (Wald, 2007, p. 194). However, the liminal reasserts itself starkly when the audience is made aware that Portia's thirtieth birthday will recall and echo the departure date of her twin brother on their fifteenth birthday. Portia could not kill herself that day and she has been haunted by Gabriel's ghost calling her to reunite with him ever since. Breaking the linear plot structure, Marina Carr opens the second act with Portia's body being raised out of the Belmont River, the exact spot where Gabriel committed suicide.

The incestuous secrets of the Scully family are revealed after the wake ceremony where Maggie May, an old sex worker and Portia's aunt, confesses that she had sexual intercourse with Portia's grandmother Blaize Scully's husband, Old Sly Scully. This is followed after Blaize's abject depiction of her daughter-in-law Marianne's gypsy blood, calling them "Fuckin' tinkers, the Joyces, always and ever, with their waxy blood and wanin' souls" (Carr, 2014, p. 198). The third act traces Portia picking right after the end of the second act, giving more insight to the grief-stricken heroine and the hereditary incest looming on her familial background. Portia's closest friend Stacia, the Cyclops of Coolinarney as Marina Carr names her, often takes care of the children for Portia. In a conversation with Maggie May, Portia's aunt, Portia learns the looming secret of the cycle of incest long embedded in Scully family. Maggie reveals that Portia's parents Sly and Marianne were brother and sister and Blaize Scully, the old grandmother, knew the secret all along: "Marianne was auld Scully's child, around the same time Blaize was expectin' Sly. She knows. The auld bitch! Always knew. That I'm convinced of" (Carr, 2014, p. 213). The incest as a hereditary disease is carried through the Scully blood, as Maggie and Blaize insist, since Portia and Gabriel also had an incestuous relationship. This is evident towards the end of play where Portia confesses to her husband Raphael that: "ya see, me and Gabriel made love all the time down be the Belmont River among the swale, from the age of five – That's as far back as I can remember anyways" (Carr, 2014, p. 222). Portia's forced marital bond with Raphael is closest to being entombed alive, echoing Sophocles' *Antigone* whose vivisepulture in a cave by the orders of Creon is defied by a self-cathartic death. In a similar manner, Portia rejects the patriarchal impositions on her already fragmented self by walking on the borders of the symbolic order, attempting to exceed it the same way Antigone did in Sophocles' play.

Portia's dramatic fall invokes the spirit of Antigone who has already embraced her liminal existence in Sophocles' play when she addressed the polis: "What a wretched creature I am with nowhere to dwell, neither among mortals or corpses, not the living nor the dead" (Sophocles, 2009, p. 170). It can be argued that both are victims of a cursed family engraved in incest taboo. Antigone's suffering emanates from the curse of the Labdacids, the family from which Oedipus sprung. Antigone's father Oedipus kills his father Laius and marries his mother Jocasta. As the familial ties of the cursed family gets even more ambiguous, Antigone is betrothed to his cousin Haemon. It is also true that some critics see her having incestuous desires toward her brother Polyneices whom she views irreplaceable. In similar fashion Portia's parents Marianne and Sly are revealed to be brother and sisters, same father different mothers. Furthermore, Portia had incestuous relationship with Gabriel, as her father confronts her in the play: "watched how you played with him, how ya teased him, I watched yeer perverted activities, I seen yees, dancin' in

yeer pelts, disgustin', and the whole world asleep barrin' ye and the river - I'll sort you out once and for all, ya little hoor, ya, ya rip, ya fuckin' bitch ya!" (Carr, 2014, p. 219).

Ghosts as literary tropes are considered to embody liminal presences in dramas, a spectral or an apparition that is not alive but not quite dead, stuck between the two, haunting the living subjects for reasons repressed. The liminal ghost as a motif is exemplified through Gabriel in Marina Carr's play which is only seen by the audience and Portia. Echoing the concerns of Antigone over Polyneices' devoured body and unproper burial, the spirit of Gabriel was as if unable to pass through the River Styx, still occupying a presence in Portia's tormented netherworld. Ghosts as liminal entities are generally connoted to representing a repressed reality, a secret unknown but reflected in the image of the ghost. In Portia's case, this unutterable secret points to the cycle of incest running in the Scully family. This hereditary malady, as Portia's aunt and grandmother insist, condemned Portia and Gabriel to death since the day they were born out of incest between Marianne and Sly as half-siblings. The ghost is thus a symbol for the repression of a secret, as Abraham and Rand (2020) notes:

> From the brucolacs, the errant spirits of outcasts in ancient Greece, to the ghost of Hamlet's vengeful father, and on down to the rapping spirits of mod the theme of the dead - who, having suffered repression by their family or society, cannot enjoy, even in death, a state of authenticity - appears to be omnipresent (whether overtly expressed or disguised) on the fringes of religions and, failing that, in rational systems. (p. 287)

The ghost imagery is used to denote the repressed gap in the lives of others, as Abraham (2020) believes, whose presence is too fearful to utter as it signifies "a gap that the concealment of some part of a loved one's life produced in us. The phantom, therefore, also a metapsychological fact … what haunts not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets" (p. 287). Gabriel's ghost manifests itself therefore as a dissatisfied spirit, only encountered by Portia, not by his parents or others in the play. The reason why the apparition only appears to Portia can be ascribed to the close but uncanny connection between the twins. When Portia asks Marianne "We were so alike, weren't we, Mother?" (Carr, 2014, p. 181), her mother responds:

> Marianne: The spit; couldn't tell yees apart in the cradle.
> Portia: Came out of the womb holdin' hands - When God was handin' out souls he must've got mine and Gabriel's mixed up, aither that or he gave us just the one between us and it went into the Belmont River with him - Oh, Gabriel, ya had no right to discard me so, to float me on the world as if I were a ball of flotsam. Ya had no right. (Begins to weep uncontrollably.) (Carr, 2014, p. 181)

Portia's existence is splintered to its core after Gabriel's suicide, which culminates dramatically towards a reunification ushering death at the same spot, which results from crossing kinship boundaries as part of symbolic associations of the law of the Father. However, as Lacan's (1977) reading of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* would reveal, the ghost of Hamlet's father points to phallus, "one cannot strike the phallus, because the phallus, even the real phallus, is a *ghost*" (p. 50). In Hamlets' case, one could not be able to strike the phallus since it is a ghost haunting the troubled subject suffering from the Oedipal dilemma. The ghost of the father only exists in Hamlet's psyche. Unseen to others, striking it would be an enactment of the tragic reiteration of the complex of which Hamlet tragically wants to avoid and waver. The ghost therefore hints at the incest taboo since Hamlet would have done the same thing dictated by the Oedipus complex: he would kill his father the king and then marry his mother Queen Gertrude if such marriage had not been carried out by Claudius.

In *Portia Coughlan*, the twin brother's ghost is still the punitive manifestation of the social breach: breaking of the incest taboo. The taboo is traditionally considered to be a necessity for the

formation of kinship ties giving away to state formation, which would operate on the techniques of biopolitics inscribed on bodies to ensure subjects that are proper. The prohibition of incest is thought to be necessary for the biopolitics of the modern state as the scientific knowledge would affirm the fact that it reduces the gene pool from which healthy bodies are born *or* for society to be *possible* at all, the prohibition is self-referentially a must law. Hence, the castration-complex which by itself serves psychoanalytically as the most feared punishment of the child for any incestuous desires against the father ensures the entry into the symbolic order of the Father in the purpose of assuring a social order that regulates and administers sexual relationship, prohibiting incest.

The apparition of the dead brother in ghost form reveals that Gabriel is no longer a desire to be pursued but an overwhelming presence threating the boundaries between the living and the dead. This change is reflected in the play when the angelic voice of Gabriel is heard not only by Portia but near the Belmont River as well; "Still nights he can be heard singin' in his high girly voice" (Carr, 2014, p. 205). Gabriel represents the unattainable fulfilment of desire, the fantasy of which only exists to the extent that it is always deferred in remaining unattainable as such is the conundrum of desire. Portia could never fulfil the desire Gabriel represents in real life, she is forever doomed, the only way to redeem is a self-redemption in death. What Portia does is daring to cross the boundaries of symbolic associations of the clear-cut boundary between life and death, but this dangerous encounter with the Real would only result in death. Such lethal instance with the Real manifests itself when Portia commits suicide jumping into the Belmont River. As Zizek (2000) points out, the death drive "is the very opposite of dying, it is a name for the 'undead' eternal life itself, for the horrible fate of being caught in the endless repetitive cycle of wandering around in guilt and pain" (p. 292). This is precisely what torments Portia whose identity gets entrapped in the hereditary cycle of familial incest bounds followed by suffocation after Gabriel. The intrusion of *the Real* into the familiar territory as well as Gabriel's apparition into Portia's already tormented life results in the breaking of the familiar, culminating in the provocation of anxiety leading to death. When Portia encounters her *double* embodied through the ghost, as psychoanalysis would tell us, it is that "moment [where] one encounters one's double, one is headed for disaster; there seems to be no way out" (Dolar, 1991, p. 11).

If one is to further apply the Lacanian identity-formation by looking at the mirror stage on Portia's self-identification, it becomes clear that she always identified herself with that lost part of her very existence, Gabriel. Portia and Gabriel as twins were uncannily inseparable as Damus tells Fintan after they witnessed Portia's body raising out from the river; "You'd ask them a question and they'd both answer the same answer - at the same time, exact inflexion, exact pause, exact everythin'" (Carr, 2014, p. 194). Therefore, a gap resulted from her twin brother's death plagues Portia's self-identification, causing Portia to feel alienated, fragmented and lost in her post-Gabriel existence. The ghost is a reminder of the lost part of her identity as one being, half-Portia and half-Gabriel. As Portia always identified herself with her twin brother, even in the mirror stage as two beings in one body, the loss is unbearable to the point of death. This unfillable and forever-sought gap which Lacan formalized through the notion of *objet petit a* serve as a substitution to the lost desire of the fragmented self. Thus, having acknowledged that interior ties exemplified through the familial ties in the play, that is Raphael Coughlan and her kids, cannot substitute for the loss of Gabriel, Portia looks for ways of external self-identification to substitute the loss by meeting lovers in the Belmont River and heavy drinking to no avail.

Antigone in Modern Context

Having been forced to live in a familial space entrenched between two patriarchs, Portia feels as if she is gradually being buried alive just as Antigone was entombed after addressing the polis in an act of defiance against Creon's orders. Antigone's act denotes the fact the enforced notion of female

subjugation by patriarchal authority is long inscribed in western mode of thinking. In this vein, Sihra (2018) points out that the allocation of the public space as a male-dominated sphere in western society started with the Greeks, where natural biological activities such as giving birth attempted to "place her in *social roles* that in turn are considered to be at a lower order of the cultural process than man's," thus giving women a different psychic structure which is seen as closer to nature (p. 98). Taking this into consideration, Antigone knew that she would never give birth to any child and become a dutiful wife to Haemon as prophesized by Oedipus. Moreover, she dislocated herself from the submissive position of her sister Ismene who claims "Do not forget that we are women— it is not in our nature to oppose men but to be ruled by their power. We must submit, whatever they order, no matter how awful" (Sophocles, 2009, p. 141). Antigone *unmans* Creon by the same vocabulary she is barred from using, as Butler (2000) emphasizes that "to the extent that she occupies the language that can never belong to her, she functions as a chiasm within the vocabulary of political norms" (p. 82). Appealing to the same Gods Creon appeals, she subverts the discourse on "there is no way we can allow a woman to triumph" (Sophocles, 2009, p. 163) to Creon's tragic demise resulting from his unjust treatment of Antigone, "all [his] misdirected and ill-fated plans" (Sophocles, 2009, p. 185). In the same vein, *Portia Coughlan* embodies female defiance of patriarchal authority. Such act manifests itself as *Antigone* in the modern context whereby the domestic impositions of marriage and being a dutiful wife to the husband while nurturing the children are completely and explicitly rejected to be performed.

In the original *Dazzling Dark* version of *Portia Coughlan,* which was written in the local Midlands Dialect, Carr includes a folk tale about the Belmont River. This story revolves around how a young woman is blamed for witchcraft and how she would foretell the future: "If ya lookt her in th'eye ya didn't see her eye buh ya seen how an' whin ya war goin' ta die" (Carr, 1996, p. 253). Aside from the prophecy, the woman's expansive knowledge about nature is also seen as part of witchcraft by the people. She was accordingly subjected to the brutal acts of torture and slow death by townsfolk. This juxtaposition of young woman with Portia adds to her function as a fortune-teller like the same young girl left to die in the folk tale. This is most evident when Portia declares in a scene cut from the original text in guessing the imminent death of Gabriel who in a way had the same sort of supernatural purity in him as Melissa Sihra (2018) indicates:

> In the first edition, Portia foresees the future, like the young girl in the story, in a final monologue which is cut from the later editions: 'an' don't ax me how buh we boh knew he'd be dead chome spring. […] we seen him walchin' inta tha Belmont River; seen me wud you on our weddin' day […] we seen ud all Raphael down ta tha las' detail. (p. 101)

The story of a young woman who is tortured and left to die because of her instinctive and expansive knowledge of nature, a punishment and correction brought by patriarchy, resonates very closely with Antigone's tragic end in a cave. Antigone's premature burial is ordered by Creon who invokes the punishment of Gods against "the awesome throne of Justice" (Sophocles, 2009, p. 171) as he deputizes by himself as the new king of Thebes. Antigone had already known that the deed of giving her brother Polyneices a proper burial in defying Creon's orders would inevitably result in her death. This prophecy was already foretold by Oedipus who condemned and cursed his children a serving death. In similar vein, Portia knew that her end would be in the liminal terrain of the Belmont River, the same place Gabriel and she made a suicide pact fifteen years ago: "Ah wouldn't a bin afraid for ah know how an' whin ah will go down'" (Carr, 1996, p. 253). Both Antigone and Portia live on the margins of the symbolic order, kinship, and familial ties. However, they do not only walk on such liminal borders but they also dare crossing the symbolic associations brought by them, which inevitably result in death as Lacan would argue.

Judith Butler bases their interpretation by scrutinizing the philosophical discussions regarding Antigone that precede *Antigone's Claim*, primarily focusing on the perspectives of Georg Wilhelm

Friedrich Hegel and Jacques Lacan. Butler attempts to trace why they both viewed her death as an inevitable end. Hegel's argument on Antigone is structured around his dialectical understanding of the necessary transition from kinship to patriarchal state. Antigone as a character, Hegel believes, stands for kinship and familial ties, as was evident in her persistence over the proper burial of Polyneices against the orders of the patriarch of the state, his uncle Creon. According to Hegel, Antigone not only stands for those ties of primordial origin defining kinship but also the subordination of woman, affections and emotions that will have to eventually give way to the state which is to be associated with reason, power and authority, all male attributions. Hegel circumvents naming Antigone in his analysis. This avoidance was ascribed by Butler as his attempt of generalizing the unlawful deed attributed to all womanhood along with the representation of kinship. For Butler, these two arguments were used by Hegel to justify his dialectic of state-formation. Lacan's analysis on *Antigone* derives from his claim that Antigone bases her seemingly just right to give a proper burial to her brother on an unwritten law, which is only applicable to her brother. This stems from the fact that Antigone has an implicit lust for his deceased brother Polyneices, and she does not seem to be having the same passionate love neither for Ismene nor Eteocles. Lacan (1997) in his *Seminar VII* on Antigone points out that "It is because she goes toward *Atè* here … going beyond the limit *of Atè,* that Antigone interests the Chorus. It says that she's the one who violates the limits of *Atè* through her desire" (p. 277). What Lacan calls *Atè* points to going beyond the symbolic associations of death and living and as Antigone embodies this dangerous terrain exemplified best in lines where she exclaims: "already at birth I was doomed to join them, unmarried, in death" (Sophocles, 2009, p. 171). The price for crossing the line, for Lacan, is death:

> For Lacan, to seek recourse to the gods is precisely to seek recourse beyond human life, to seek recourse to death … as if the very invocation of that elsewhere precipitates desire in the direction of death, a second death, one that signifies the foreclosure of any further transformation. (Butler, 2000, p. 51)

The limit Lacan speaks of recalls his arguments on the Real which that cannot be confronted and if it is done so, signifying death. Butler (2000) does not necessarily associate this limit with the intrusion of the Real into Antigone's life. However, Butler further emphasizes that this prohibition marks a Lacanian "limit that is not precisely thinkable within life but that acts in life as the boundary over which the living cannot cross, a limit that constitutes and negates life simultaneously" (p. 49). For both Antigone and Portia, this limit can be conceived as an escape mechanism from the imposed structures of gendered norms and roles within kinship structure given the fact that it is the language and the symbolic entry into the father's authority that structure them in the first place.

Hysteria can be considered as a way of questioning one's own social and symbolic identity, an encounter with the Real. In this respect, Portia's hysteric discourse, which is evident more explicitly in the *Dazzling Dark* version, affirms the intrusion of the Real into Portia's tormented life. Such intrusion in the Lacanian sense eventually culminates toward her tragic end. This return to a pre-natal state embodied through psychoanalytical attribution of the Belmont River as the womb functioning as a gateway to self-redemption also marks "the return to an ineffaceable ontology, prelinguistic, is thus associated in Lacan with a return to death and, indeed, with a death drive (referentiality here figured as death)" (Butler, 2000, p. 53). Furthermore, Lacan evades calling Antigone's implicit lustful love for her brother an incestuous love, but as Butler (2000) points out, "It is not the content of her brother, Lacan claims, that she loves, but his "pure Being," an ideality of being that belongs to symbolic positions" (p. 51). This echoes the pureness of Gabriel who sang beautifully with his heavenly voice as his father recalls the past:

> God forgive me, but times I'd look at him through the mirror and the thought would go through me mind that this is no human child but some little outcast from hell. And then he'd

sing the long drive home and I knew I was listenin' to somethin' beautiful and rare though he never sang for me - Christ, I loved his singin', used stand in the vestry of Belmont chapel just to listen to his practisin'- those high notes of God he loved to sing. (Carr, 2014, p. 199)

Gabriel represents the ideal self, one who could go through committing suicide in contrast to Portia, who could not commit such an act after witnessing his suicide and being haunted by his ghost. To revisit the Lacanian argument on Gabriel as the object of desire, it seems plausible in this respect to assert that "the object [Gabriel as the object of desire] … is no more than the power to support a form of suffering, which is nothing else but the signifier of a limit. Suffering is conceived of as a stasis which affirms that that which is cannot return to the void from which it emerged" (Lacan, 1997, p. 261).

Lacan and Hegel regarded Antigone's end necessary, the former seeing her as standing at the limits of symbolic associations of kinship and family and the latter as merely standing for womanhood and kinship eventually giving away to state-formation. Butler, however, forms their own analysis in contrast to both. Hegel has "her [Antigone] stand for the transition from matriarchal to patriarchal rule, but also for the principle of kinship" (Butler, 2000, p. 1), and to the degree that Lacan also associated her with representing kinship ties. It is thereby concluded that "Antigone, who from Hegel through Lacan is said to defend kinship, a kinship that is markedly not social, a kinship that follows rules that are the condition of intelligibility for the social, nevertheless represents, as it were, kinship's fatal aberration" (Butler, 2000, p. 15). Even though they both saw the kinship embodied in Sophocles' *Antigone* as a natural and primal phenomenon before the intrusion of the social, Butler disagrees to the extent that the incest taboo is not only naturally forbidden but also socially considered taboo as well. Butler disagrees with both Lacan and Hegel, emphasizing that Antigone does not stand for all women but as a unique example. Although she walks on the borders of intelligibility, she does not stand at the limits of the symbolic associations:

> Antigone is a 'living dead' not in the sense (which Butler attributes to Lacan) of entering the mysterious domain of Ate, of going to the limit of the Law; she is a 'living dead in the sense of publicly assuming an uninhabitable position, a position for which there is no place in the public space. (Zizek, 2016, pp. 12-13)

According to Butler, the normative structure of kinship makes Antigone's standing ambivalent. In contrast with Lacan, they believe that Antigone is not driven towards her tragic end by merely *thanatos*, the death drive, but simply a lustful love for Polyneices. Furthermore, Sophocles' *Antigone* does not stand for femininity as Hegel conceived her. Antigone is not as submissive as Ismene was depicted in the play. She defies orders of Creon and claims a public sphere by *unmanning* him in his vocabulary, appealing to the Gods in an attempt to justify her claim.

Transcending and Transgressing Kinship Boundaries

Judith Butler's re-negotiation of Antigone's legacy in *Antigone's Claim* points to a liminal position for Antigone who is in between the submissive femininity supposedly occupied by Ismene and state-associated masculinity by Creon. Such position leads to further discussion on the character Antigone who not only walks on the margins of kinship but also challenges established gender normativities. The question of what constitutes gender in the context of Sophocles' play and its modern implications in Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan*, are further explored by our understanding of what kinship ties represent and to what extent they are impactful in shaping identity. Butler (2000) points to the performativity of kinship in their book, stating that kinship is "not a form of being but a form of doing" (p. 58). Antigone as a character does not stand for kinship in its natural sense since the family to which she belongs is a stark contrast to the ideal kinship ties: her father Oedipus is also her brother, and she is to be married to her uncle's son Haemon, which would only add to the ambivalence of the family tree. In close inspection, she also never openly admits that

she did the deed of burying Polyneices customarily; "I admit it—I do not deny anything" (Sophocles, 2009, p. 154). In addressing such ambiguity, Butler (2000) points out that "what she refuses is the linguistic possibility of severing herself from the deed, but she does not assert it in any unambiguously affirmative way: she does not simply say, 'I did the deed'" (p. 10). Though less ambiguous, Portia's ambivalence is derived from her liminal nature stuck between the socially obligated roles of motherhood and wifehood and a ubiquitous call for a re-unification in death. Even though she rejects such roles, she still tries to cling on to life, as was observed in the last scene with his husband Raphael; "I cooked your dinner, I poured your wine, I bathed Quintin, read him a story and all. Can't we knock a bit of pleasure out of one another for once?" (Carr, 2014, p. 222). Furthermore, Portia further reveals another attempt of clinging on to life: "if Raphael Coughlan notices me I will have a chance to enter the world and stay in it, which has always been the battle for me" (Carr, 2014, p. 223). Nevertheless, Portia preferred Raphael since he had an angelic name, a substitute for the lost Gabriel.

As she still lingers on the lost memory of Gabriel and as the world of Raphael pushes her to the edge of symbolic associations, when asked to choose between her husband and Gabriel, Portia utters the impossibility of such deed: "And you say you want me to talk about ya the way I talk about Gabriel - I cannot, Raphael, I cannot. And though everyone and everythin' tells me I have to forget him, I cannot, Raphael, I cannot" (Carr, 2014, p. 223). What Gabriel embodies for Portia, a love that surpasses kinship and familial ties, signals a reunion that is only achieved in death by our symbolic understanding. In this vein, Antigone possesses a much more ambiguous love when one considers it as a re-exercise of the Oedipal attachment to father in the play. In other words, Antigone's love is arguably not directed towards Polyneices but to his father Oedipus who is also her brother as they shared the same mother, Jocasta. On the other hand, in situating Antigone as opposed to Oedipus as a point of departure for psychoanalytic criticism, Patricia Johnson (1997) claims that "Antigone transfers her affections to her brothers, and to Polynices specifically in *Antigone*. When this devotion earns her death, she both laments that death as a substitute marriage, and justifies its inevitability for a child devoted to the oedipal project" (p. 395). Both Antigone and Portia have Oedipal attachments to the brother figure. For the former, "Polyneices [represents] the natal family" (Johnson, 1997, p. 393), and for the latter, Gabriel is a reminder of the pre-natal, pre-symbolic symbiosis to be found in the womb. Thus, both Portia and Antigone cannot let go of the brother figure for their conventional marriage.

For Butler, associating Antigone with kinship requires understanding the act of proper burial as the foundation of her relationship with her brother. Since the concept of kinship and familial structures point to a language of relationships, which is inherently gendered, Antigone's defiance primarily lies in challenging the conventional gendered roles within the established vocabulary of family dynamics. Antigone stands outside of symbolic associations of kinship in its natural sense and as she is not intelligible within the norms governed by them. One finds it difficult to place her in a natural kinship context. She seems to be on the edge of kinship ties as well as the vocabulary of a kinship language that is gendered and structured as norms, she simply does not seem to fit. As Antigone does not appear to be a human but speaks its language as Butler avers, she really posits a very ambivalent character both in terms of her kinship and familial ties and attribution of gender. However, as the literature on Sophocles' *Antigone* continuously shapes the understanding of what the character might be claiming, it is only plausible to assert at this point is that she claims for recognition for those that are ambiguous in nature, outside of normativity, resisting social impositions of social categorization, those that are uncontainable like Portia Coughlan. In Carr's play, the titular heroine rejects the familial interiority, ties and roles that are imposed by them. Portia associates herself with the Belmont River, a liminal gateway breaking through the lands of two patriarchs that serves as a way of self-redemption as Sihra (2018) indicates:

> Characteristic of water is its excessive drive to overflow, to transgress demarcated boundaries. The Belmont River is a metaphor for Portia who, like the river, is uncontainable. Carr observes, 'With Portia I would say, the river is her. It's her and Gabriel. The unceasing current of the Belmont River erodes the male-owned farmlands, powerfully redefining the contours of patriarchy. (p. 107)

However, the tragic ending of these heroines begs the question: why do they have to die? The tragedy of their deaths adds to the sharpness of their defiance, but all the more asks: Can the ambivalent nature of their defiance still upset the gendered vocabulary of kinship and family that is imposing the roles of motherhood and wifehood on women? Contemplating on the legacy of Sophocles' *Antigone* on family and kinship, Butler (2000) questions the future of symbolic impositions brought by the psychoanalytical schema of the Oedipal dilemma for those standing outside of clear-cut gendered normativity:

> I ask this question, of course, during a time in which the family is at once idealized in nostalgic ways within various cultural forms ... What will the legacy of Oedipus be for those who are formed in these situations, where positions are hardly clear, where the place of the father is dispersed, where the place of the mother is multiply occupied or displaced, where the symbolic in its stasis no longer holds? (p. 22)

Julia Kristeva (1982) has also made a critique of the Oedipal schema, mainly the "posterity the strength of (incestuous) desire and the desire for (the father's) death ... [the] blinding light cast by Freud, following Oedipus, on abjection, as he invites us to recognize ourselves in it without gouging out our eyes" (p. 88). The psychoanalytical law is therefore perverse since it incorporates within itself the perversion and the norm: "One might simply say in a psychoanalytic spirit that Antigone represents a perversion of the law and conclude that the law requires perversion and that, in some dialectical sense, the law is, therefore, perverse" (Butler, 2000, p. 67).

As Kristeva (1982) observes, the prohibition against incest "has the logical import of founding, by means of that very prohibition, the discreteness of interchangeable units, thus establishing social order and the symbolic" (p. 64). The kinship ties are therefore formed through the exchange of women with the establishment of the taboo in primitive society. The ties located the female in the passive familial position as the mother and wife whereas the men actively engaged in the political sphere. Kristeva (1982) talks of an authority of the male that "shapes the body into a *territory* having areas, orifices, points and lines, surfaces and hollows, where the archaic power of mastery and neglect, of the differentiation of proper-clean and improper dirty, possible and impossible, is impressed and exerted" (p. 72). The inscription on the female body as submissive, passive mother and wife are rejected by Portia who, by definition, is the abject drawn "toward the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). The fact that Portia is married off to Raphael can be considered as part of a ritual of purification as the catholic attribution of marriage connotes to Kristevan claim that "in a number of primitive societies religious rites are purification rites whose function is to separate this or that social, sexual, or age group from another one, by means of prohibiting a filthy, defiling element" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 165). This manifests itself as a defilement "by means of the rituals that consecrate it, is perhaps, for a social aggregate, only-one of the possible foundings of abjection bordering the frail identity of the speaking being" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 68), which is embodied in the incestuous relationship Portia had with Gabriel. The function of these rituals has strategic value for the religious program of cleansing the defilement off the subject which poses a striking threat.

The abject for Portia recalls the moment when she is severed from the mother in the womb and bonded herself with Gabriel, thereby constituting the boundary between a united self, comprised of Gabriel and Portia and the other. Claire Wallace (2001) associates Portia with the abjection of

Gabriel's haunting self, pointing out that "If described through the lens of Kristeva's discussion of abjection and food loathing, Portia hungers for Gabriel whom she regards as contiguous with her self, and yet in order to establish her self she must expel Gabriel, in other words, abject her self" (p. 446). In *Portia Coughlan*, the perversion of the law is literally embodied in the dictated marriage on Portia's part by his father whose union was perverse, which propels the idea that the law that condemns Portia is perverse by itself. The law is perverse since they push Portia into a role, a state of unintelligibility. Regardless of her choice, Portia would inevitably defy inherently patriarchal authorities: if she were to choose Gabriel, as she does, this would mean betraying her husband and children, while choosing them would constitute a betrayal to Gabriel.

Conclusion

The predetermined gender norms and roles embedded in kinship and family structures define the notions of gender. *Portia Coughlan* clearly illustrates that Portia and Gabriel's gender attributions are enforced by social norms dictated by the patriarchal order. Gabriel is expected to help his father on his farm who only deals with "animals, not ghosts" (Carr, 2014, p. 219), but far from it, he focused on singing, "the outcast from hell" also "Looked like a girl … Sang like one, too" (Carr, 2014, p. 194). Furthermore, Portia and Gabriel were two sides of the same coin, they would dress the same and be undistinguishable from one another, blurring the socially constituted gender roles attributed to them. Taking these into consideration, Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan* offers a subversive re-reading of the argument on gendered kinship and familial ties through the uncanny twins. Carr's reading not only asks the question of why gender is so crucial to our understanding of what means to the self, but breeds another: Is it not the imposed gendered norms that binds her to a familial setting which suffocates her, pushing her to the edge of what constitutes a proper human being?

Butler's response to the gender argument provides a valuable insight into what Marina Carr attempts to achieve through one of the darkest and sharpest characters in contemporary theatre embodied in the tragic story of *Portia Coughlan*: "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results" (Butler, 2015, p. 33). It is the pre-determined notions of gender reality which enforce heteronormative roles of the binary gender matrix on its subjects. The normative structure of the heteronormative gender matrix still enforces a limited grammar on gender roles in the familial space. However, the stark representations of how such impositions torment the subject begs a re-negotiation of what gender ties constitute. Having considered the Irish catholic setting where what womanhood is associated with assigned roles of being a dutiful mother and wife, Portia's stark defiance triggers a renegotiation of the gendered norms and roles attributed to family and kinship. *Portia Coughlan* also challenges the applicability of such roles for those occupying a liminal presence, the uncategorized and thereby ascribed as the abject. In close alliance with *Antigone's Claim*, *Portia Coughlan* not only upsets the very patriarchal language that creates the gendered roles within the family, but also renegotiates the necessity of the ways to come up with a new vocabulary of understanding for those outside of normative bounds of the pre-determined gender structure.

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Traces of Postmodernism and Posthumanism in the Construction of Body and Identity in Greek Mythology
Yunan Mitolojisinde Beden ve Kimliğin İnşasında Postmodernizm ve Posthumanizmin İzleri

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ABSTRACT

This paper intends to explore how the notions of the body and identity are conceptualized, represented, and experienced in Greek mythology by pointing out the parallelism between Greek mythology and postmodernism since postmodern concepts and theories of the body and identity politics can be traced back to myths. Myths offer enchanting narratives about the creation of the universe, the nature of existence, and natural events, alongside fantastical tales of deities, extraordinary beings such as monsters, superhuman heroes, magical transformations, and polymorphous metamorphoses. Classical mythology is also fascinated with etiology, the study of first causes, and the origins of the conditions in our lives. In this sense, how mythical bodies emerge and identities take on certain shapes and develop in various ways gain importance. Myths are full of boundary-breaking forms of existence, transgressive and subversive identities, fluid beings, indeterminate origins, and hybrid bodies, through which we are transported into alternative visions. They defy all kinds of rigid categories, unalterable formations, and the hierarchical order of existence. Similarly, postmodern bodies blur the boundaries among different forms of beings and they are characterized by fluidity, hybridity, multiplicity, fragmentation, discontinuity, and uncertainty. In this sense, this paper sets out to argue that myths align with postmodern and posthumanist understanding of body and identity and mythic thinking is integral to human intellectual dimension and has influenced the emergence of bodies and identities in postmodern texts.

Introduction

Myths are universal, and as Tournier (1977) argues in *Le Vent Paraclet*, humanity is innately mythological. Since mythic thinking and imagination are inherent aspects of our intellectual life, myths have been revisited, recycled, and recontextualized for various purposes in different literary periods. This paper emphasizes the connection between myths and postmodern literature, highlighting the continuity of human thought that has shaped certain attitudes toward the body and identity. The main motivation for this study is the observation of how bodies and identities are perceived, constructed, and represented in myths, and how these elements might have been

inherited by postmodernism due to striking parallels between postmodernism and ancient Greek myths.

Several works examining the relationship between myths and postmodernism highlight the concept of "cyclic repetition," arguing that postmodern texts either parody or stylize original myths through their reinterpretations and recontextualizations (Olizko and Danilova, 2018). Some authors rework and revise myths within the postmodern context to deconstruct culturally and ideologically established ideas and reconstruct traditional stories through the lens of postmodernist values, identities, and issues. Postmodern writers often remix existing myths, blending them with literary elements, genres, or other cultural narratives to create literary hybrids. Like the works of writers such as Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, Madeline Miller and Salman Rushdie, these retellings often focus on marginalized voices to explore perspectives overlooked, underrepresented or underprivileged in traditional narratives, particularly regarding gender/sex, body and sexuality. However, there appears to be a lack of works specifically arguing that myths and postmodernism share similar notions of body and identity. This paper centralizes the argument that postmodernism draws on ancient myths because of their creative, transgressive, subversive, and transformative capacities, which challenge established orders, fixed definitions, rigid categories, and limitations. This perspective may help explain the similarities between myths and postmodern and/or posthumanist notions of body and identity.

Myths provide versatile materials for postmodern writers who are very much captivated by the mythical universe and engaged in recycling, reimagining, and reworking ancient myths that fit very well into the postmodern thinking. Mythic and postmodern thinking are similar in that they dethrone the centrality of reason and logic and delve into the exploration of the irrational, the illogical, and the realm of the marvelous along with repressed fantasies and desires. In addition, what the modern man has been trying to achieve through science and technology is very much similar to what myth-making men aimed to reach through their imagination, which shows that the ambition to overcome and transcend bodily limitations and the boundaries of existence has always existed in mankind. Roland Barthes (1957), Claude Lévi-Strauss (2001) and Michel Tournier (1977) highlight the capacity of myths to critique, deconstruct and challenge societal and cultural norms and concepts (Panek, 2012). They also suggest that myths can serve as a means to explore alternative realities and to promote new ways of understanding the world and ways of being.

In mythic understanding, all kinds of identities and physical forms are perceived as fluid, and open-ended, devoid of finality, closure, and certainty. As Doan (1994) suggests, postmodern narratives, much like myths, "interrogate, trouble, subvert and tamper with gender, identity and sexuality" (p. 154). Postmodernism denounces and condemns "the ideals of representation, truth, rationality, system, foundation, certainty (…)/ as well as the concepts of the subject, meaning, and causality" (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 256). Hassan (1993) describes postmodern culture as the culture of "unmaking" that embodies the principles of "decreation, disintegration, deconstruction, decenterment, displacement, difference, discontinuity, disjunction, disappearance, decomposition, de-definition, demystification, detotalization, delegitimation" (p. 282). Both in postmodern and mythic frameworks, what has been established as true, real, or fixed as shaped by hegemonic discourse and characterized by essentialist and reductionist perspectives, has been critically challenged and problematized. Consequently, all the constraints and limitations imposed on the definitions of what is possible, natural, normal and ordinary are removed in both narratives.

Both postmodernism and mythology exercise imagination to delimit the boundaries of the body and expand its capacities. Thanks to the mythic imagination, bodies are represented as flexible and adaptable, able to transform from one shape to another, with the capacity to assume different variations. Since myths embody "the oppositional spirit" of postmodernism in "resisting or deconstructing common assumptions of culture" (Bordo, 1992, p. 160), they depict characters and

their bodies outside the dominant value systems and the established orders of law. Mythological thought is opposed to dualistic and "hierarchical thinking" (Bordo, 1992, p. 161) and thus, the rejection of the body in favor of the mind, reflecting a deep-seated fear or disdain for the material body in male-dominated cultures, is not a phenomenon that can be observed in mythological narratives. Since the mythological mindset is anti-Cartesian, anti-essentialist and non-determinist, myths shape bodies and identities in ways that transcend binary and hierarchical frameworks of thought. Postmodernism likewise defies binary oppositions which are based on illusions of purity, essentialism, and the rigidity of categories such as body, self, and identity. Corporeality is central to both postmodernism and myths, and for various reasons, bodies have always been crucial and visible in both. Hence, like myths, "Postmodernism, both as cultural practice and critical discourse does seem to be characterized by an enduring obsession with the body" (Longfellow, 1990, p. 180).

Myths and postmodernism also share a focus on accommodating and celebrating the plurality of identities and multiplicity of bodies. Consequently, both can be described as featuring an "explosion of bodies and beings" (Bordo, 1992, p. 160). In order to liberate imagination to produce different alternatives and versions through the proliferation of the normal and the natural, postmodern narratives celebrate magical realism and fantasy. Myths also embody elements of magical realism, as they do not seek logical or conventional explanations for denaturalized bodies. Instead, they encourage alternative ways of being, existing, and thinking. Proliferation is one of the key concepts in both postmodernism and myths where it is not possible to pin down or standardize a certain form of body or existence. Johan Daisne coined the term Magisch-realisme in 1943 and described it as follows: "Dream and reality constitute the two poles of the human condition, and it is through the magnetism of these poles that magic is born" (Herman, 1996, p. 125).[1] Dreams, as manifestations of human creative imagination, provide novel perspectives for perception, thought, emotion, and understanding. The function of magical realism in postmodern and mythical narratives is to describe the human and the non-human as well as the familiar events in such a way that a fresh vision of life and a fresh outlook on existence can possibly emerge. For this purpose, postmodern and mythic aesthetics make use of defamiliarization not to "invent completely a new world" but to invert "elements of this world, re-combining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and apparently 'new', absolutely 'other' and different" (Jackson, 2008, p. 4).

Salman Rushdie (1981) suggests that magical realism, generally seen within the postmodern framework since it intersects with postmodern themes, is the "commingling of the improbable and the mundane" (p. 1). In myths, since the borderline between fact and fiction, and the real and the unreal is removed, we accept mystery and magic as an ordinary part of everyday life. Furthermore, the distinctions and boundaries between the natural and the supernatural, and the ordinary and the magical are violated and trespassed in myths. "The distinction between natural and supernatural, in fact, broke down; and when it had done so, one realized how great a comfort it had been—how it had eased the burden of intolerable strangeness which this universe imposes on us" (Lewis, 1944, p. 11). In this sense, myths should not be seen as mere representations of the impossible, the marvelous and the fantastic but rather as the manifestations of different versions and possible expressions of the real. Jackson (2008) supports the very same idea when she argues that the fantastic elements in postmodern narratives should not be viewed as irrational or unreal; rather, they highlight the arbitrary nature of what is considered real and possible (p. 12).

According to Leal (1995), magical realism is an "attitude towards reality" that includes the "discovery of the mysterious relation between man and his circumstances" (p. 131). Magical realist narratives offer "new mythical and magical perspectives on reality" (Dombroski, 1997, p. 522) and

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[1] This quotation is translated by Luc Herman from Johan Daisne's *De Trap Van Steen en Wolken* (1942, p. 357).

give visibility to the invisible forces that are at work in the world to increase the capacity to see and write about all different dimensions of reality. This is in tune with mythology and postmodernism, which assert that reality is not singular, universal or objective. By making use of magic and fantasy, myths and postmodern narratives offer the "interrogation of the nature of the real" (Jackson, 2008, p. 5) and seek liberations from the regulating and restrictive literary conventions of realism, which is necessary to construct possible worlds and alternative forms of beings by transcending the fixed and unified notions of reality, subject and identity. The magic realist elements utilized in the construction of postmodern and mythic bodies and identities display "resistance to fixity" and attack "a closed, unified, or omniscient vision" (Jackson, 2008, pp. 2-8). They also serve to dissolve differences between species, genders, and ranks, allowing for new interactions among them as cultural, social, religious, and sexual taboos, and norms are lifted.

Keeping all these in mind, the following sections examine different bodies in myths in order to illustrate how they resonate with the construction and perception of postmodern bodies. The parallels between mythic and postmodern bodies are primarily explored in terms of resistance to fixity, hybridity, fluidity, multiplicity, uncertainty and engagement with biopower.

Parallels between Mythic and Postmodern Bodies

Mythological bodies are not constructed in terms of biological determinism or cultural essentialism; similarly, mythic identities make no claim for authenticity or singularity; they are rather polysemic. Since the mythological beings are not forged into fixity, bodies and identities are constantly open to revision and reconstructions. Similarly, postmodern identities and bodies are characterized by uncertainty, instability, indeterminacy, fluidity and fragmentation. The terms such as hybridity, ambiguity, "heterogeneity," "discontinuity, displacement," incoherence, and "destabilization" also signify postmodern "academic accessorizing" that reflects the epistemological and ontological "foundationlessness" in postmodernism (Bordo, 1992, p. 161). The postmodern self is motivated and driven by "the need for an escape from the restrictions of the unitary self" (Taylor, 1989, p. 463) since identities do not have core essence and accordingly, bodies are not represented as a coherent and unified whole. To Allan (1997), the postmodern self is a "non-essential, transient self, a fragmented self that has no essence, only images" (p. 3). Likewise, in the myths, the corporeal dimension of the body, lacking inherent essence, is foregrounded.

Mobile and nomadic identities prevalent both in mythic and postmodern texts construct "transformative subjectivities that express and exhibit the *multiple aspects* of identity, the different locations from which we see and think" (Bordo, 1992, p. 164). Because of the fluidity of the body and the self, Collins (1988) defines postmodern identities as *multiple, fluctuating*, and *situational* (pp. 255–259). The same applies to mythic identities. Teresias, the famous blind seer, is one among many that represents fluid bodies in Greek myths that challenge the limitations and boundaries of identity. He was transformed into a female body and spent 7 years of his life as a woman before he was turned into a man again. In myths, femininity and masculinity, femaleness and maleness are not regarded as fixed and unchangeable qualities inherently given. Rather, they are aspects of identity that are "changing and changeable" and "transformable" (Birke, 1999, p. 45). Such representations of the human body spotlight the self-surpassing and self-overcoming nature of the human.

Instead of exposing the essential nature of gender/sex identity, performative aspects of identities and bodies are foregrounded both in myths and postmodernism. Judith Butler (1999a) proposes that "Performativity is thus not a singular *act* for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition" (p. 241). The continuous reiteration of culturally determined bodily acts, accepted norms, and conventions create the effect of the natural and the normal in

shaping certain sexual and gender identities. Butler suggests that performativity challenges the idea of unchanging and innate identities through subversive bodily acts that bring about gender trouble by exposing the artificiality of sex/gender and body. "In the place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity" (Butler, 1999b, p. 418). Myths and postmodern narratives reveal the social, cultural and ideological constructedness of sex/gender and bodies since the conception of the "natural" is a dangerous "illusion" of which we must be "cured" (Bordo, 1992, p. 169). They also reject the idea that the inner core or essence determines, regulates and organizes our bodies and identities; they rather emerge as a result of "the dramatic effects" of bodily performances since there is no natural body, sex or gender that exists prior to the process of genderization (Goffman, 1956, pp. 122–123; Butler, 2006, p. 177).

Athena's and Dionysus' performances challenge and complicate conventional understandings of sex, gender and identity. Athena is not associated with traditional female or domestic roles; rather, she is a warrior who engages in battle and embodies qualities typically considered masculine. As an accomplished war strategist and an inventor of ship and agricultural tools, as well as a foundational figure in mathematics, her intellectual and physical prowess surpasses that of nearly all male deities. Dionysus, on the other hand, is perceived as feminine because of the effect of his bodily performances in various aspects of his worship, his androgynous appearance and the emotional, and ecstatic qualities of his cult. He is often depicted wearing flowing robes or garments made of fine materials and his elaborate adornments and extravagant outfits reflect his female attributes. Additionally, his close association with the cult of Cybele, a mother goddess connected to fertility and nature, further emphasizes his feminine qualities.

Transvestism, generally known as crossdressing, that is, dressing in the opposite sex`s clothing, is very common in Greek myths which share with postmodernism the celebration of queer bodies and identities. There is an abundance of instances in which various heroic figures and deities crossed gender lines. The most famous examples include the tales of Achilles' and Dionysus` cross-dressings (Irving, 1990, p. 150). In order to protect Dionysus from the tyranny of Hera, he was dressed up as a girl. Similarly, Achilles, one of the greatest heroes, was disguised under the appearance of a maiden named Phyrra in order not to join the Greeks for the Trojan War. The mythic crossdressers transgress conventional gender norms and through acts of subversive gender expression, they disrupt the perception of femininity and masculinity as inherent categories, thereby elucidating their socially and culturally constructed nature. This is in alignment with postmodern attitude towards sex and gender.

Myths offer numerous examples illustrating that the earliest manifestations of queer culture and practices can be traced back to myths. They gave expressions to non-heterosexual desires by "unleash[ing] the flows of desire on [the] body as a deterritorialized field" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. 417). Queer activities and representations are not treated as forms of perversion, sickness or abnormality in mythic and postmodern cultures. On the contrary, queer bodies are recognized as integral components of sexual diversity. Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) assert that postmodernism sets forth to describe how borders are reshaped by "redraw[ing] the very maps of meaning, desire, and difference" (p. 81). Postmodern culture seeks to reorder and recontextualize in order to expand the boundaries of bodily existence, a perspective that is also reflected in mythic conceptualizations of the body.

A prominent trope that interrogates the notions of fixity, stability, and the naturalness of the body is the motif of metamorphosis in Greek mythology. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1958), a collection of fifteen Latin narrative poems, is considered the first literary work to explore corporeal transformations. Ovid retells over two hundred fifty Greek myths through vivid depictions of bodily metamorphoses with an emphasis on the ever-changing nature of creation and being. Through

shape-shifting, all the ontological boundaries among the species are crossed over and different modes of existence are merged into one other.

> Now I shall tell of things that change, new being
> Out of old since you, O Gods, created
> Mutable arts and gifts, give me the voice
> To tell the shifting story of the world
> From its beginning to the present hour. (Ovid, 1958, p. 3)

The exploration of transformation in Ovid's poems illustrates the dynamic relationship between humans and nonhumans, where one can morph into the other. This theme encompasses a wide range of metamorphoses, including radical forms of posthuman evolution, such as humans becoming one with the earth or transforming into animals, insects, trees, flowers, and even lifeless objects like streams, stones, and constellations. Likewise, a transformed human can revert to their original human form, or an individual may take on the identity of a deity (Na, 2022, p. 44).

Mythic metamorphosis, particularly the corporeal metamorphosis, has immensely influenced the way bodies and identities are constructed and represented in postmodern texts (Na, 2022, p. 43). Metamorphosis, in the biological sense, refers to the notable and sudden transformation of an animal's body structure through cell proliferation and differentiation following birth or hatching. The metamorphoses of humans in myths and postmodern narratives are treated as an artificial process that is brought about by external forces such as a mythical deity or an ambitious scientist, who uses enchanting magic or advanced science and technology to perform extraordinary transformations. In this sense, many classical myths and postmodern narratives explore the re-crafting of bodies. Postmodern characters can change their sexed bodies for new gender orientations or abruptly transform into other forms of beings or take on the qualities of hybrid mixedness. Thus, the postmodern endeavor to construct and represent bodies as malleable and alterable forms can be traced back to myths that demonstrate that physical borders are flexible and can be reterritorialized. Bodies and identities in the boundary-breaking narratives of myths and postmodernism destabilize and confuse the fixed epistemological and ontological limits by celebrating "ultimate mobility and perfect exchange" (Haraway, 1991, p. 168).

The ability or the potential to change sexed/gendered bodies conveys symbolic and imaginative significance in myths. Sex/gender division has always been the most essential division in mankind, which fundamentally shapes every aspect of life including culture, politics, economy as well as perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes. The mobility of bodies serves as a tool of transcending societal expectations, cultural and ethical norms and religious teachings by offering a diverse range of possibilities and the richness of experience. Postmodernism also makes use of bodily transformation, transvestism or queer identities to attack the idea of purity and authenticity. Postmodernism strongly advocates that concepts like "natural" and "normal" are ideologically determined and can be redefined. As Donna Haraway (1999) puts it, "Bodies have been as thoroughly denaturalized as sign, context, and time. Organisms are made; they are constructs of a world-changing kind" (p. 207). In postmodernist thought, there is no such thing as a biologically natural body; all the bodies are naturalized constructions and they are culturally, historically, ideologically and subjectively engineered. In this sense, bodies are not born but made. Similarly, in myths, the body is not "conceptualized as a fixed, unitary, primarily biological reality" but "as a historical, plural, culturally mediated form" (Bordo, 1993, p. 288).

Mythic imagination that rejects pure bodies and pure identities and confines the species within their own distinct and proper ontological territories resonates with postmodernist thought. Donna Haraway (1991) maintains that "[...] the boundary between human and animal is thoroughly breached. The last beachheads of uniqueness have been polluted [...]" (p. 151). She argues that the

distinctive features that keep the species apart from each other are not valid any more since they are no longer particularly unique to any one species due to advancements in technology, science, and cultural norms. With cyborgs that problematize traditional ideas of purity, distinctiveness, and rigid classification along with human exceptionalism, Haraway advocates for a more intricate and integrated view of identity that allows for interdependent and fluid relationships among humans, animals, and other forms of existence. This encourages a serious reevaluation and reconsideration of humanity in a world where ontological boundaries are in a constant state of flux.

Bodily constructions in myths "leave[s] room for changes and mergings with other bodies, where bodies are held together not by a stable body image and a gendered identity, but by forces of connection and interaction between" different bodies (Lindenmeyer, 1999, p. 48). The absence of the difference between the self and the other is indeed mitigating, liberating and rewarding. The characters in myths live on the thresholds. They embody liminality, creating spaces of hybridity where heroes exist neither in the realm of humanity nor in that of divine pantheons. "This paraxial area could be taken to represent the spectral region of the fantastic, whose imaginary world is neither entirely 'real' (object), nor entirely 'unreal' (image), but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two" (Jackson, 2008, p. 12). Ontological liminality destabilizes the hierarchy among the species along with the primacy of men. The mythic and postmodern notion of a man negates the man "as the king of creation", presenting instead a vision of man "as the being who is in intimate contact with the profound life of all forms or all types of beings" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. 404). Fusions between species create a new existential order and diverse forms, enriching bodily experiences across different identities and expanding the scope of life. This can lead to a deeper and broader understanding of nomadic existences and beings.

The postmodernist celebration of mixedness, blending, and amalgamation of different forms of beings is notably reflected in myths. It is common for deities to engage in sexual intercourse with mortals, resulting in offspring that possess a fusion of human and divine qualities, giving rise to superheroic characters. The greatest hero of the Trojan War, Achilles, born of the Titan goddess Thetis and a mortal king Peleus, embodies both mortality and immortality simultaneously within the same body. Other figures that inhabit a liminal space include semi-demi gods like satyrs, half-goat, half-human beings, and nymphs that are neither fully deities nor entirely human, but existing in the intermediary realm between divinity and humanity. Pan, the son of Hermes and a god of shepherds and nature, is born with the ears, horns, legs and a tail of a goat. Minotaur, the monstrous offspring of Pasiphaë and a splendid bull sent by Poseidon, is half-bull and half-man. Sirens, sea nymphs, are winged women that appear in different combinations of women and birds. The Sphinx is a creature with the head of a woman, the body of a lion, a serpent's tail, and the wings of an eagle. There are numerous such examples in myths that incorporate what can be termed postmodern hybridity. Hybridity and liminality emerge as the two defining characteristics of postmodernism. Similar to myths, postmodern hybridization is closely related to pluralism, eclecticism, ambiguity, indeterminacy, impurity, and subversiveness. In this context, the hybrids of postmodernism draw on the hybrids of myths, which typically emerge from a blend of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic features.

The blurred, flexible, and uncertain boundaries between the dead and the living, as well as between various forms of life underscore Stacy Alaimo's theory of trans-corporeality (2010). This concept posits that all living beings possess an inherent balance and symbiotic relationships with one another, illustrating profound interconnectedness across different forms of existence (p. 3). Thanks to the quality of trans-corporeality, changing from one form of existence into another is quite acceptable in myths. There are several examples that show this transitivity among the species. Animate beings can turn into the non-animate, human beings are transformed into gods, animals, plants or monsters, and similarly, Gods into human beings or animals. Pygmalion's marble statue

Galatea was turned into a living woman. Atlas was turned into a mountain by the severed head of Medusa. Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, was turned into a stone which eternally cries out of grief for the murder of her children. Narcissus was eventually turned into a flower, the narcissus. Some of the mortals were brought back to life from death or granted immortality. Heracles, Telemachus, Penelope, and Semele were all transported to the realm of immortality. Pelops who was killed and served as a meal to Olympian Gods by his father Tantalus is also brought back to life. All these examples point out the fluidity and dynamic nature of life that challenges traditional notions of identity and categorization, suggesting that existence is characterized by constant movement and transformation.

Body Politics in Myths and Postmodernism

Mythology and postmodernism exhibit similar body politics, wherein bodies function as a site of resistance against hegemonic forces and power relations are rearranged. Actions concerning bodies can be life-saving efforts aimed at resisting or evading various forms of oppression, victimization, and violence or they can be performed to exercise power and authority over unbending and unyielding characters or to provide protection, comfort and safety under a certain disguise or to punish overreachers. During the epic war between the Titans and the Olympians, the victorious Olympians change themselves into animals in order to avoid the most terrifying and hideous monster Typhon. Zeus transforms himself into a ram, Artemis a cat, Hermes a stork, Hera a cow, Apollo into a crow, Aphrodite a fish, and Dionysus a goat. Pan's transformation is more innovative, and he turns the lower part of his body into a fish and upper part into a goat. Zeus is also in the habit of transforming his lovers into animals to protect them from Hera's jealousy and cruelty. For instance, the mortal Io has been transformed into a cow, and Callisto into a bear. Female figures, on the other hand, use shape-shifting to protect themselves against male sexual advances or male violence. The tale of Metis is first recounted in Hesiod`s *Theogony* and her shape-shiftings are undertaken for protective reasons in an attempt both to avoid Zeus's sexual advances and to save herself from being swallowed by Zeus (Irving, 1990, p.184). Like Metis, Daphne, a mountain nymph, changes herself into a laurel tree to resist against Apollo's seduction. Procne and her sister Philomela are turned into birds, a nightingale and a swallow by Gods to protect them from Tereus who raped Philomela.

In addition, both myths and postmodern texts utilize bodies as a space where disciplinary power is exercised to establish domination and mastery, which Michel Foucault calls bio-power. Foucault (1979) asserts that the hegemonic or ruling political power regulates the subjects through "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations" (p. 140). Biopower operates according to the principle of the *anatomo-politics of the human body* and it is not only exercised on the individual body but also directed at the *bio-politics of the population* which refers to the body of a certain species (pp. 139-143). Some forms of shape-shifting in myths bear the quality of biopower since it is employed as a controlling, correcting, regulating and disciplining mechanism for the passivation, subordination or the normalization of subjects through their bodies (Foucault et al., 2003, pp. 242–243). Circe, the famous sorceress, turns men into swans for their destructive behaviors and sexual abuses. Medusa, once a beautiful and young maiden, is transformed into a Gorgon, a snake-headed woman by Athena for vilifying and contaminating her temple by her sexual intercourse although it is an act of rape that takes place in Athena's temple and Medusa is just a victim of this sexual crime. Scylla, once a beautiful nymph, has been transformed into a dreadful monster, a long-necked, six-headed beast by the envy-ridden goddess, Circe, when Glaucus chooses Scylla as his prospective wife. These preliminary examples demonstrate how biopower operates to regulate, and govern bodies and identities in myths, resonating with the ways power functions to manage and control life, health, and the body in postmodern societies.

Bodily transformations of male figures illustrate the power dynamics at play, where their control over female bodies becomes a means of exerting dominance. Zeus makes use of metamorphoses quite frequently, especially for the satisfaction of his sexual desires. To get Hera, for instance, he changes himself into a rain-soaked cuckoo. Moreover, in order to punish her mother Rhea when she dares to forbid him to marry because of his excessive lust, he transforms himself into a vicious serpent and violates her who has already transformed into a serpent against her son's threat of sexual violence. Poseidon also transforms his shape quite often in order to perform his seductive activities and he appears to Medusa as a bird and to Demeter as a stallion. Poseidon has sexual intercourse in the shape of a dolphin, and a bull as well. His acts of shapeshifting also have a determining impact on his offspring who are born into different bodily forms including a wild horse Arion by Demeter, golden-fleeced ram by Theophane and Pegasus, a winged horse, by Medusa. Forced and nonconsensual sexual activities encompass a range of experiences, including sexual assault, rape, coercion and manipulation. These acts illustrate the intersection of male sexuality and violence, revealing how women are often reduced to objects to be possessed and controlled. Similarly, the relationship between male sexuality and male violence is examined in postmodern narratives, which intertwine masculinity with aggression and suggest that dominance and control are integral to male identity. Postmodern discourse critiques both the objectification of female bodies and the normalization of violent behavior as a means of asserting masculinity.

Resonance between Mythic and Posthumanist Bodies

Some prominent features found in myths align with various aspects of posthumanism. Posthumanism is usually regarded as both a continuation and an expansion of postmodern thought, especially in its emphasis on the fluidity of identity, its examination of the fundamental boundaries defining humanity, and its critiques of the principles of modernity and Enlightenment humanism. Posthumanism, like potmodernism, rejects the notion of a fixed human essence and anthropocentric perspectives. Ihab Hassan (1977) spotlights the deconstructive function of posthumanism in the contemporary age and presents the concepts of *posthuman* and *posthumanism* as the next phase in humanism in *Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture.* It is crucial to acknowledge that the very structure of humanity, including its desires and outward manifestations, has been undergoing drastic changes, necessitating a reimagining and redefinition of what it means to be human. Hassan traces the roots of posthumanism in mythology and employs the myth of Prometheus to signify and explain the rise of posthuman society. To Hassan, the most pertinent aspect of the Promethean dialectic in the context of posthumanism involves the interplay between imagination and science, myth and technology, as well as earth and sky—two realms that converge. In this sense, Prometheus`s primary function is to go beyond binary oppositions such as human vs. divine, trickster vs. hero, imagination vs. science, myth vs. technology, man vs. machine, one vs. many and earth vs. sky: "Prometheus is himself the figure of a flawed consciousness struggling to transcend such divisions as the One and the Many, Cosmos and Culture, the Universal and the Concrete" (Hassan, 1977, p. 838). Myths serve a similar function to posthumanism since they embody the convergence of imagination and science as "agents of change, crucibles of values, modes not only of representation but also of transformation, their interplay may now be the vital performing principle in culture and consciousness – a key to posthumanism" (Hassan, 1977, p. 838).

There exists a close relationship between myths and science. Both myths and science arise from the need to explain natural phenomena and human nature and thus seek and offer frameworks for understanding the world, creation and existence. Early civilizations often relied on myths to explain events they did not understand, such as natural disasters or celestial movements. The Greeks, for instance, used the myth of separation and reunion of Demeter and Persephone to explain seasonal changes. As Rachel Carson argues, both science and myths try to grasp the reality of living, that is, "the what, the how, the why of everything in our experience" (p. 91). Many scientific ideas and

concepts indeed have origins in mythological thought. Latour (1988), in *Science in Action*, examines how the production of scientific knowledge is akin to myth-making processes. Science and myth function as complementary forces, stimulating and inspiring each other to generate a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of reality and knowledge about the world, life and human. In this sense, myth and science are two faces that reflect the same reality.

As a scientific endeavor, ancient people were keen on playing with the idea of what if we could multiply the number of certain organs or bodily parts in one single body and this fantasy is still popular among posthumanists who embrace infinite diversity and all its potential combinations. Since ancient times, humankind has been pursuing the ambition to expand the possibilities of the body. In this sense, mythological deities act as creative sculptures and talented artists of plastic arts, who are engaged in innovative and productive processes of crafting in which multiple, subversive and transgressive bodies and identities can be re/constructed. As a result, the human mind creates extraordinary beings with plural organs like hundred-handed giants and cyclops. Likewise, Typhon, one of the most frightening monsters, has one hundred serpentine heads through which he can spit fire and speak in the voices of both human beings and animals. Such examples display that myths are based on liberated imagination that can generate multiple visions and plural perspectives about different versions of beings, existences, bodies and identities since ontological plurality is a well-established trope in myths as in postmodernism. Posthumanism extends this pluralism through science and technology to include non-human entities, suggesting that various forms of existence should be acknowledged and valued.

Such examples demonstrate that ancient people held dynamic and complex ideas regarding interspecies biology and biotechnology, which were sometimes realized through imagination or magic and at other times through craftsmanship. These practices can be viewed as preliminary attempts at human enhancement. Mythological characters' undertakings that include radical experimentations and creative innovations, leading to a wide range of bodily expressions are early pursuits for genetic engineering and robotics. Such narratives reflect posthumanist thought in myths as they advocate hybridity and challenge established notions of fixed identities and bodies. Recrafting and refashioning bodies lead to the breakdown of the notion of the coherence and stability of the self along with the rearrangement of power structures and reconstructions of identities. Myths are full of inspiring ideas that serve as catalysts for the development of progressive and revolutionary reproductive technologies that can be seen in posthumanist projects. One of the most ambitious projects posthumanists undertake is the possibility of mothering men; that is, creating male body as a birthing body. It would not be wrong to suggest that some posthumanist reproductive technologies are borrowed or at least inspired by ancient myths. Cronus may be the first to have experimented on the possibility of constructing the male body as a birthing body with the capacity of pregnancy and delivery. He swallowed five of his newly born babies and carried them in his belly like a pregnant woman. Zeus showed a great interest in performing the task of procreation and went through the experience of pregnancy twice. Zeus gave birth to the goddess Athena out of his head since he swallowed Metis up when she was pregnant with her first baby. On another occasion, Zeus's as-yet unborn child was saved from the ashes of his mother Semele and placed inside his thigh where he carried the child for three months and the baby Dionysus, known as the twice-born god, was delivered by Zeus. Hera, after the birth of Athena, tried another form of reproduction called *parthenogenesis* and procreated Hephaestus without a male partner. Aphrodite also owed her birth to parthenogenesis. Aphrodite, as a word, means "out of foam" since she was born out of the white foam created by the genitalia of Uranus which was castrated and thrown into the sea by his son Cronus. Hermaphroditus, a double-sexed child of Hermes and Aphrodite, is the first hermaphrodite, which means a person born with both male and female genital organs. All these examples demonstrate what Stuart Hall refers to as "postmodern excess" (Drew, 1998, p.177) that can be observed in several cases of hermaphroditic reproduction, polymorphous sexuality, and

androgyny in ancient myths. They also clearly indicate that myths go beyond all the normative biological restrictions and consider multiple sexed/gendered bodies and identities as culturally and biologically intelligible.

Posthumanist imagination is also very obvious in Gods' experimentations not only with the bodily forms but also with ways of creation. Adonis, for instance, is not born out of his mother's womb but the tree the mother Smyrna is transformed into. Mankind as a race is faced with the threat of total extinction several times and Zeus repopulates the earth by recreating men either out of stones or by transforming animals into human beings. Once, he transforms ants into human beings when Hera kills almost all the inhabitants of the island named after Zeus's lover, Aegina. All such examples in myths indicate that the parameters of biological reproduction are expanded by removing the constraints on the natural process of childbirth.

Starting with the late 20th century, the mythological versions of postmodern bodies gained visible and tangible forms. Donna Haraway (1991) describes our age as a mythic time in which we have all become cyborgs. "By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs" (p. 150). A cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and physical reality, to be more exact, "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway, 1991, p. 150). Haraway (1991) presents the cyborg as a means of breaking down divisive binaries and turning upside down all the privileged positions in the dichotomous structures including "culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive, [...] right/wrong, truth/illusion, total/partial, God/man" (p. 177) to achieve the elusive posthuman state of being. Like postmodern cyborgs, all forms of beings and existences in myths are envisioned in terms of disassembly and reassembly: "The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self" (Haraway, 1991, p. 164). Human beings can be dismantled into different bodily forms and reassembled in different combinations since there is no natural material design that can be imposed on the body to pin down the self and identity into fixity.

The primordial images of cyborgs initially appeared in myths with their transgressive and subversive potential, signifying the coexistence of hybrid qualities in the physical body. Haraway (1991) explains that her "cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities" (p. 155). Cyborgs emerge in myths exactly where the boundary between human and fauna or human and flora is transgressed. Mythological characters like those in the postmodern narratives are not "afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines" (Haraway, p. 154). A cyborg, both as an idea and as a concrete form, is an ideological construction that unsettles fixity, destabilizes stability and de-solidifies what is rigid and stiff to confuse solid boundaries so that the flowing, blending and intermingling of one form into many others can be possible. Cyborgs in the late 20th century "have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines" (Haraway, 1991, p. 153). In doing so, they point out the complexities of identity and invite us to reconsider traditional classifications and categories such as human/machine, male/female, and natural/artificial by prompting discussions about what it means to be human. They also offer critical reflection on the implications of living in a world where boundaries are continuously negotiated and redefined, ultimately enriching forms of existence and living.

Through cyborg images, the notion of unachievable perfection assigned to deities and heroes is also problematized. There are several stories where Gods and great men are depicted in terms of their inferior qualities, weaknesses, faults and wrongdoings and turn into tragic figures who end up in catastrophes as vulnerable, pitiable, and laughable beings. The anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations of divinities undermine the notions of greatness, perfection, infallibility and

invincibility by blurring the boundaries between the profane and the divine, the mortal and the immortal, the fallible and the infallible. This aligns with the posthumanist call to abandon anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism by uprooting both human beings and divine figures from their centralized and privileged positions, demonstrating that the value status of humanity diminishes with the emergence of posthuman subjects.

As already discussed, in postmodern literature, numerous characters exemplify not only "the deaths of Man, of the Subject" (Bordo, 1992, p. 159) but also the demise of fixed and natural identities, giving rise to discontinuous, indeterminate, subversive, transgressive, and plural bodies. Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and Jeanette Winterson's *Stone Gods* (2007) serve as specific examples that illustrate bodies and identities paralleling those found in myths. Sophie Fevvers, the main character in Carter's *Nights at the Circus*, embodies the postmodern notions of the body. She exhibits fluidity, ambiguity, hybridity, and transformation—traits also found in mythological figures. Fevvers claims to have been hatched from an egg, transcending the biological boundaries of existence. Upon reaching puberty, she transforms into a bird-woman with her colorful, magnificent wings sprouting from her shoulders. Her body also defies established norms of beauty and conventional femininity; she is "more like a dray mare than an angel" (Carter, 1993, p. 9), "as large as life" (p. 13), with a face "broad and oval as a meat dish" (p. 9). It is difficult to pin down exactly who Fevvers is, as she is always open to revision and redefinition. Thus, she is ambiguously celebrated as the "lady of the hub of the celestial wheel, creature half of earth and half of air, virgin and whore, reconciler of fundament and firmament, reconciler of opposite states through the mediation of your ambivalent body" (Carter, 1993, p. 81). Her constitution and bodily expressions highlight the lasting influence of mythological constructs on postmodern identity formation.

Other characters in the novel also manifest postmodern bodies. Several anthropomorphized animals, such as The Princess, a dancing tiger, the Professor, an ape, and Sybil, a prophetic pet pig, integrate into human society and communicate in human language. Educated apes, who dress, study, read, and write, exhibit qualities of humanness (Carter, 1993, p. 108). Human and animal traits are not unique to their respective species; rather, they are commonly shared. Thus, human beings display animal qualities, while animals exhibit human characteristics. The postmodern hybridity, diversity and multiplicity of forms can also be observed in Madame Schreck's museum, filled with freak characters, including "Dear old Fanny the Four Eyes, the Sleeping Beauty, and the Wiltshire Wonder, who was not three feet high, and Albert/Albertina, who was bipartite" (Carter, 1993, p. 66). Due to magical realism, all these bodies exist within the realms of the normal, the ordinary and the possible, rejecting the essentialist and reductionist perspectives.

Similarly, Winterson's *Stone Gods* (2007) depicts a technologically designed society where the constant reconstructions and modifications of bodies occur through biotechnology, cosmetic surgeries, and genetic modifications. Winterson introduces various posthuman bodies, including Robo Sapiens, a fusion of human and machine that can feel and think, technologically enhanced bodies, queer bodies, and radioactive mutants. Billie/Billy Crusoe and Spike/Spikkers, a fe/male robot, exemplify these gender transformations. In both *Nights at the Circus* and *Stone Gods*, characters are defined by "assemblages" that include human/machine, human/animal, and human/monster, resulting in bodies that are neither completely human nor entirely nonhuman by surpassing the limits of biological determinism.

Conclusion

Myths, by presenting multiple forms of bodies and identities within both inter- and intraspecies realms, pave the way for a postmodern reconsideration and redefinition of what it means to be human, divine, animal, vegetal, or inanimate. The conceptualizations and representations of the body and self in mythology and postmodernism share significant similarities. Both frameworks

challenge the Enlightenment ideals that underpin humanist notions of identity, which typically center on a singular conception of humanity. In both discursive practices, bodies are conceived not merely as biological entities but as products of imagination, highlighting the discontinuities and uncertainties inherent in our existence. Mythological constructions of bodies and identities mirror the postmodern cultural and ideological "inclination towards the unstable, fluid, fragmented, indeterminate, ironic and heterogeneous, [for that] which resists definition, closure and fixity" (Bordo, 1993, p. 38). Multiplicity, plurality and hybridity are highly celebrated in the configurations and performances of bodies and identities which emerge as a result of the mixture of different species. Bodily fusions and mergings, interspecies crossings and transmissibility are fundamental concepts in both mythology and posthumanism. The cross-transitions among human, flora and fauna bring down the hierarchy in the order of existence and the cultural and ideological hegemony of the existing styles for sex/gender and body is delegitimized. When considering these similarities and parallels, one can conclude that myths have significantly influenced the development of postmodern imagination and thought. Human modes of thinking, understanding, and perception have evolved significantly throughout history. This evolution of thought is indicative of shifting experiences and the acquisition of knowledge. Nevertheless, mythic thinking, manifested through storytelling, symbols, and archetypes, persists as a profound aspect of human cognition. Postmodern and posthumanist themes are certainly present in ancient myths since it is not the world itself that is considered postmodern but the way we think and understand, and the attitude towards concepts such as the subject, self, body and identity along with the way they are represented is postmodern. In this sense, postmodernist and posthumanist ideas serve as clear indications that mythic thought and intelligence remain intrinsic to the human mind, shaping our understanding and perception.

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A Lacanian Gaze into Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*
Jhumpa Lahiri'nin *The Namesake* Adlı Romanına Lacancı Bir Bakış Açısı

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ABSTRACT
The Namesake, published by Jhumpa Lahiri in 2003, illustrates the cultural and social identity issues of two generations of an Indian-American family, who struggle to adjust between two different cultures. As a second-generation son, Gogol, the protagonist of the novel, is trapped between these two cultures and experiences an identity crisis. In the journey of discovering his true self, Gogol has conflicts with his Indian roots along with the American society he has been raised in. He was named after his father's favourite Russian author. His biggest conflict, however, starts with the dilemma he experiences with his own name. To deal with his identity crisis, he tries to leave his roots behind and embraces his American side. However, this attempt will not be a solution to the crisis he feels deep down inside of him. In this respect, this study aims to explore the journey of the protagonist's identity construction in the context of Lacanian Psychoanalysis. In order to portray the identity development process of the protagonist, Gogol is analysed in relation to the three Orders of Lacan: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. Regarding the protagonist's experience of these three Orders, Gogol is seen to be a Lacanian infant, who is in pursuit of his lost object of desire called *object petit a* to sustain the intimate connection with his true self.

Introduction

This study examines Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* to illustrate the protagonist Gogol's challenges and conflicts in his journey of identity construction. Struggling between his Indian roots and American side, the two different cultures, Gogol feels trapped and questions his identity. To seek his true self, Gogol, like a Lacanian infant, pursues his lost object of desire. In this respect, Lacanian psychoanalytic theory has been used in this study in order to show the protagonist's identity development process. In the novel, Gogol's portrayal from birth to adulthood, including his romantic affairs and a marriage he passes through, renders it possible to analyse him in relation to Lacan's three Orders. On his path to obtain his lost object of desire, *object petit a*, Gogol confronts the laws of the Symbolic Order embodied in Indian and American cultural norms and experiences the moments when he questions his existence, which is only accessed through the Real.

Psychoanalytic criticism, primarily associated with Freudian thoughts, has gained a new dimension with the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-81), who reformulated

psychoanalysis in terms of language and structuralist views. Lacan places language as the basis of his theory to interpret the human psyche and behaviours. His thesis '...the unconscious... is structured like a language' (Lacan, 2006, p. 737) has become a motto for Lacanian psychoanalysis. According to Terry Eagleton (1996), Lacan's work is a notably innovative attempt to reinterpret Freudianism, regarding the human subject, its role in society, and, more importantly, its relationship to language (p. 142). As a non-traditional psychoanalyst, Lacan, however, is a controversial figure "among his interpreters concerning what he intended by many of his statements" (Tyson, 2006, p. 26). That's why his work is regarded as abstract and ambiguous and might cause difficulties in comprehending and applying the theory. On the other hand, he had no concern about being understood correctly, and he says that he writes to be read not to be understood (Lacan, 2013, p. 69). Despite this contradiction, Lacan "is arguably the most important psychoanalyst since Sigmund Freud" (Homer, 2005, p. 1) and provides an innovative perspective to classical psychoanalytic studies. Lacan, as a main follower of Freud, initiated the movement 'Return to Freud' in the 1950s, opposing the discipline of ego-psychology of post-Freud thinkers, and devoted most of his twenty-eight-year seminars to close reading and understanding of Freud's ideas and concepts. Holding annual seminars in Paris from 1953 to 1981, Lacan, thus, introduced radical ideas to psychoanalysis through the reconsideration of Freudianism. Even if he fully supports and makes valuable contributions to Freudianism, in time Lacan has formulated his own theory. Homer (2005) remarks that "[i]n seminar XI, for the first time, Lacan moved away from an exposition of Freud's ideas to the development of his own conception of psychoanalysis" (p. 11). Today, along with his seminars, Lacan's seminal book, *Ecrits: A Selection* (1966), which consists of his collected articles and lectures, presents ground resources for Lacanian studies.

Lacan divides the psyche that controls human beings into three groups: His three Orders called *the Imaginary*, *the Symbolic*, and *the Real*, constitute the base of this study. Lacan describes these three Orders to specify his theory of the psychological development of the infant. To better understand Lacan's Imaginary Order, the idea of the mirror stage, in which the child identifies himself with his image in the mirror and realizes his own entity, needs to be clarified first. Lacan first mentions the concept of the mirror stage, accepted as his first innovation in psychoanalysis, in the Congress of International Pyscho-Analytical Association (IPA) in 1936 with his paper called 'Le state du miroir'. He later conceptualizes the idea of the mirror stage in detail with his study entitled 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' at the 16th of Zurich IPA Congress in 1949. Today although the idea of the mirror stage is mostly associated with Lacan, he is not the one who first introduced the term to psychoanalytic studies. Lacan's concept of the mirror stage is considered to be based on the experiment of the mirror test conducted by the French Marxist Psychologist, Henri Wallon in 1931. In his mirror test conducted on six-month-old human babies and similar-aged chimpanzees, Wallon reveals that they differ in their reactions to the images in the mirror. While the chimpanzees show limited interest in their reflections, the human babies are completely fascinated by their reflections (Buchanan, 2010, p. 322). Thus, borrowing and modifying the Wallonian concept of the mirror test (Bailly, 2012, p. 22), Lacan created his theory of the mirror stage and placed it as an initiation in the psychological development of the infant, who experiences his three Orders.

The mirror stage, which includes the periods of 6 and 18 months, initiates the Imaginary Order, where the infant possesses a delightful complete union with its mother. The mirror stage is, therefore, viewed as a primary condition for the infant to enter the Imaginary Order. With its identification with the image reflected in the mirror, the infant experiences itself as a whole rather than a fragmented mass and develops a sense of self. For Lacan, the mirror stage is "the age indicated to the jubilant identification of the individual who is still an infant with the total form [of itself]" (2006, p. 428). In the same way, Lionel Bailly (2012) describes the mirror stage as the first time when the baby realizes itself beyond its perception of being immature, helpless, and

fragmented and discovers itself as a unitary being with an intense feeling of joy and excitement (p. 28). Thus, the infant, with its sense of feeling as a whole, steps into the realm of the Imaginary, where it perceives the world through images rather than words. For this reason, the Imaginary Order, as a preverbal stage, is a world constructed around the child's perceptions. "… [I]t is a world of fullness, completeness, and delight…" (Tyson, 2006, p. 27) because the child builds a unified and satisfying relationship with its mother. The child regards itself as an inseparable part of its mother and thinks that "my mother is all I need and I am all my mother needs" (p. 27). Due to this strong dyadic connection with its mother, the child feels complete and gratified and tastes an illusionary world. This is an intense sense of satisfaction and fulfilment that the child wishes to keep during its entire life. Lacan calls this delightful feeling 'the Desire of Mother', which the child continues to experience until it acquires language.

With its acquisition of language, the child leaves the Imaginary Order and enters the realm of the Symbolic. Lacan emphasizes the child's acquisition of language as its initiation into the Symbolic Order (Tyson, 2006, p. 28). Affected by the idea of 'structuralism' of Ferdinand de Saussure, Lacan creates a relation between the function of the Symbolic Order and language. Saussure claims that language is a system that governs what people say while they are unconsciously unaware of its rules (Homer, 2005, p. 37). That is to say, children are exposed to a specific language, and thus they are subject to that language's rules and system. Likewise, when the Lacanian infant enters the Symbolic Order, he is structured by the laws of the Symbolic Order. The first law the child confronts is the father's prohibition, through which the child experiences the biggest separation of his life and loses the intimate union with its mother, experienced during the Imaginary Order. Lacan states that this biggest separation constitutes our most important experience of loss that will haunt us all our lives (Tyson, 2006, p. 28). In this way, the child feels incomplete and seeks substitutes for that loss, unconsciously desiring it throughout its life, even if it will never sustain the satisfying bond with the mother. Bertens (2024) indicates that we do not have access to the preverbal self we live [in the Imaginary] with a lack, and thus the loss of our original state causes 'desire', a deep-felt longing, which we could never achieve but rather temporarily satisfy with symbolic substitutes (p. 117). Lacan calls this lost object of desire 'object petit a', which refers to the child's fantasy union with its mother.

With the child's entry into the Symbolic Order, the Desire of Mother is replaced with the Name-of-the-Father, a symbolic signifier, which represents all sorts of rules and prohibitions that the child abides by. That's why, the Name-of-the-Father symbolizes "the restrictive dimension of the Symbolic Order" (Tyson, 2006, p. 31). As an authority signifier of the Symbolic Order, the Name-of-the-Father breaks the closed circuit of mutual desire between the mother and child (Homer, 2005, p. 53) and determines the child's roles and relations in society. Surrounded by ideological systems like laws, values, and cultural norms, the Symbolic Order possesses an important function in the formation of the child's self. Namely, experiencing the Symbolic Order, the child enters the world of ideologies, which shapes its identity. Tyson (2006) says that "we are not the unique, independent individuals [because], [o]ur desires, beliefs, biases… are constructed for us…" when we immerse into the Symbolic Order. [For this reason], the way we respond to our society's ideologies makes who we are (p. 31).

Lacan's Real, on the other hand, is a difficult concept to explain. For Lacan, "the Real ex-sists because the Symbolic and Imaginary exist" (Bailly, 2012, p. 97). The tension between these two Orders might be the reason for the existence of the Real. Selden et al. (2005) claim that the Real is incomprehensible because it is "beyond reach because beyond the subject and beyond representation" (p. 158). The Real is not social realities experienced in the Symbolic or is not the idealized union desired in the Imaginary. It is "the void or abyss at the core of our being that we constantly try to fill out" (Homer, 2005, pp. 87-8). Whatever exists in that void, beyond reach and

existence, represents Lacan's Real. In the same way, Tyson (2006) presents interesting views on Lacan's Real, which are placed at the centre of this study. She indicates that "the Real is the uninterpretable dimension of existence" because it stays outside of all ideologies of society to explain existence. Behind the world of ideologies exists the Real even if we cannot realize it. The Real is the experience during the times "when we feel there is no purpose or meaning to life." For Lacan, the individual's experience of such anxious feelings results in trauma. *The trauma of the Real* is our realization that the buried reality behind the ideologies of society is beyond our capacity to understand and explain (p. 32).

Jhumpa Lahiri and the Analysis of *The Namesake*

Jhumpa Lahiri, born 1967 in England to immigrant parents from Indian descent and raised in America, has come to the international spotlight with her debut collection, *Interpreter of Maladies,* which won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. With the publication of her collection in 1999, *The New Yorker*, a renowned magazine for its reviews of literature and arts, praised her talent in writing and named Lahiri as "one of the 20 best writers under the age of 40" (Nelson, 2015, p. 295). As the first Indian-American female author to receive a Pulitzer in literature, Lahiri has taken her place among prominent diasporic writers like Salman Rushdie and Kiran Desai in immigrant literature.

As a second-generation immigrant raised with both Indian traditions and American culture, Lahiri experiences a sense of cultural displacement and identity conflict. In one of the interviews held with Lahiri, she expresses, "When I was growing up … I felt neither Indian nor American. Like many immigrant offspring, I felt intense pressure to be two things, loyal to the old world and fluent in the new, …" (Newsweek Staff, 2010). Based on her personal poignant experiences as a diasporic individual, Lahiri mostly deals with such issues as immigration, identity crisis, alienation, cultural conflicts, and a sense of belonging in her literary works. Tabur (2017) asserts that "like her fictional characters, Lahiri often points toward her own diasporic experience as being puzzled with the questions of home, identity, and belonging" (p. 145). Accordingly, in *The Namesake*, claimed as her autobiographical novel, Lahiri is concerned with similar issues so as to depict the protagonist Gogol's struggles and conflicts with his dual identity.

The Namesake, published in 2003, is a novel that narrates the life of two generations of an Indian-American family, the Gangulis, who struggle to adjust between two different cultures. The main characters are the first-generation immigrants, Ashoke and his wife, Ashima, and their American-born children Gogol and Sonia. The story centres around the life of the couple's son Gogol, who is named after his father's favourite Russian author, Nikolai Gogol. Being an American-born Indian with a Russian name, Gogol feels confused and has conflicts with his identity. He clashes with his Indian and American culture. His biggest conflict, however, starts with the dilemma he experiences with his own name. Burdened with these psychological conflicts, Gogol sets on a journey, where he desires to discover his lost identity. In his identity construction process, Gogol is now a Lacanian infant, who seeks his lost object of desire in order to maintain the idealised union with his true self.

Gogol's Conflict with His Name

Gogol's identity crisis starts from the moment he was born. The letter sent from India by their great-grandmother including Gogol's 'good' name never reaches his parents. It gets lost somewhere between India and America. In Indian culture, people are given two names: a *pet name* for the intimate circle of family and friends, and a *good name* for formal and professional occasions. This tradition of naming, however, causes a problem for Gogol, who was born in a country which has no such customs. Since the letter has not arrived yet, his parents decide to postpone the naming of their son. However, they learn that "in America, a baby cannot be released from the hospital

without a birth certificate. And that a birth certificate needs a name'' (Lahiri, 2006, p. 27). That is why his father Ashoke has named his son after his favourite author, Gogol, which is given as a pet name to be used among family members. Unexpectedly, the pet name Gogol, registered in the hospital's files, turns into a good name.

When Gogol begins his formal education, the time he starts kindergarten, his parents have finally decided on a good name for him to use at school. Now he will be called by a new name, 'Nikhil'. Gogol is, however, deeply concerned with this current situation and feels distressed. "He is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know'' (Lahiri, 2006, p. 57). Even more, as his father takes him to school, Gogol remains quiet and does not respond to any questions addressed to him. He just keeps looking down at his sneakers despite Mrs. Lapidus's insistence to communicate with him (p. 57).

In his childhood, Gogol embraces his name, which creates a sense of belonging for him. Despite being a Russian name, which has no relation with his Indian or American sides, from his childhood perception, Gogol is who he is. He associates his name with his real identity. Gogol's desire to keep his name reflects ''a self-imposed defence against an inevitable upheaval in his life'' (Munos, 2008, p. 109). Therefore, he refuses to have a new name his parents have chosen for him. This corresponds to the Lacanian concept of Imaginary Order, where the Lacanian infant inhabits the world of completeness and fulfilment with his mother. In Lacanian sense, Gogol is still clinging to his Imaginary Order, where he is satisfied with his connection with the Desire of Mother, which signifies his true self, identified with his name. In order not to lose the idealized union with his name, in another saying, to remain in the fantasy world of the Imaginary Order, Gogol insists on keeping his name. "At the end of his first day he is sent home with a letter to his parents from Mrs. Lapidus… explaining that due to their son's preference, he will be known as Gogol at school" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 60).

However, with his step into puberty, Gogol faces the confusion that his name causes. Thus, his Desire of Mother turns into the-Name-of-the-Father, which refers to ''a symbolic function that intrudes into the illusionary world of the child and breaks the imaginary dyad of the mother and the child'' (Homer, 2005, pp. 55-6). His name, Gogol is now a Lacanian father who restricts him from obtaining his lost object of desire 'object petit a', and results in a lack in his life. Thus, Gogol's idealized connection with his Desire of Mother disappears through the existence of the Lacanian father. In other words, he leaves the Imaginary Order and enters the realm of the Symbolic, where Gogol, as a Lacanian infant, unconsciously pursues his lost object of desire, associated with his true self: "He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American, but of all things Russian" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 76). He feels the need to satisfy his desire, which is unattainable now.

Especially during the time when he learns about the life of the author Nikolai Gogol in his literature class at high school, Gogol wants to escape from his Lacanian father, which breaks his satisfying bond with his Desire of Mother. That is to say, the name Gogol has become an obstacle that prevents him from being a normal American boy he wishes to be. As Mr. Lawson, his literature teacher, asks the students to read 'The Overcoat by Nikolai Gogol', Gogol never touches the book. "To read the story, he believes, would mean paying tribute to his namesake, accepting it somehow" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 92). In a way, he is afraid of facing his Lacanian father. In the course of analysing Nikolai Gogol in class, Mr. Lawson mentions that: "Gogol's life, in a nutshell, was a steady decline into madness … He was reputed to be hypochondriac, and a deeply paranoid, frustrated man… He never married, fathered no children. It's commonly believed he died a virgin'' (Lahiri, 2006, p. 91). This moment, however, is a sort of torture for Gogol to endure. He is panicked to death and worried about his classmates' thoughts about him. "Each time the name is uttered, he quietly winces" (p. 91). He, like a Lacanian infant, is forced to leave the idealized world of the Imaginary Order to confront his Lacanian father.

On a Saturday night, when his parents go out of town for the weekend, Gogol, with his American friends, sneaks out to a college party held at a university dorm. This is the first time he gets closer to a girl in his life. So far, he has never dared to date a girl due to his strange name. To avoid the reaction of the girl at the party, Gogol, despite his own shock, introduces himself as "Nikhil." As their conversation develops, Gogol kisses the girl at the end of the night. On the way back home, when his friends express their surprise, Gogol is completely in a daze. Astonished by what happened with the name Nikhil, Gogol has come to a new realization that: "'It wasn't me,' he nearly says. But he doesn't tell them that it hadn't been Gogol who'd kissed Kim. That Gogol had had nothing to do with it" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 96). Therefore, the name Nikhil, which has become a new signifier to help Gogol to avoid his Lacanian father, has replaced the name Gogol, associated as a barrier to reach the fantasy world of the Imaginary Order in his childhood.

As Gogol turns eighteen, just before his freshman year at university in New Haven, he officially changes his name into Nikhil. The moment he leaves the Court, feeling totally unburdened, Gogol "wonders if this is how it feels for an obese person to become thin, for a prisoner to walk free. 'I'm Nikhil,' he wants to tell [all] people…" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 102) in the street. In a sense, Gogol escapes from his Lacanian father, and thus Nikhil becomes a substitute for his lost object of desire in the Symbolic Order. Namely, Gogol tries to compensate for the lack, his lost identity, with his new name Nikhil. By changing his name, Gogol thinks that he frees himself from the law of his Lacanian father: "But now that he's Nikhil it's easier to ignore his parents, to tune out their concerns and pleas. … It's as Nikhil, that first semester, that he grows a goatee, starts smoking Camel Lights at parties and …" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 105). He feels satisfied with his renewed identity formed by his new name that replaces the identity created by the name Gogol.

For this reason, the name Nikhil represents the American culture that Gogol identifies himself with. That is to say, "Gogol becomes the identity of a foreign madman who never experienced sex or any of the other initiations that lead to an adult identity for modern Americans" (Ceaser, 2007, p. 109). Therefore, Gogol holds on to his new name Nikhil as a substitute in the Symbolic Order to seek his lost object of desire.

More importantly, Ashoke's sudden death has become a turning point in Gogol's life. After his father's death, his mother Ashima also leaves them to live in India. Hence, Gogol comes to such a point that he begins to question the meaning of life. While doing so, he especially focuses on his crisis with his name. His name Gogol means "future" to his father to help him survive a train crash whereas, for him, it represents the Indian roots he has always wanted to leave behind. But now, all his efforts to get rid of his name seem in vain to Gogol. Somehow, he senses something hidden in life even if he cannot fully comprehend what it is. This might be the moment Gogol experiences the Lacanian Real, where the infant finds no sense of meaning and everything is beyond its understanding in its life. Now, Gogol feels an endless void in the Real, neither filled with the substitutes in the Symbolic Order nor accessed through the fantasy union experienced in the Imaginary Order. His sense of true self gets a new form that he cannot fully understand.

Gogol's Conflict with His Family

Gogol's bicultural upbringing, shaped by his Indian and American culture, paves the way to question his identity. In his journey of self-discovery, Gogol has conflicts with his Indian roots along with the American society he has been raised in. Trapped between these two cultures, Gogol, therefore, experiences an identity crisis. At home, he is raised by a family, who deeply feels nostalgia for their heritage and tries to pass it to their children. However, outside his home, in the public sphere, he is surrounded by American traditions and customs. Focusing on the construction of identity and relation with ourselves, Rose states that relations are built in the name of certain objectives such as manliness, modesty, propriety, distinction, harmony, fulfilment, virtue, and

pleasure (p. 130).

For this reason, Gogol, feeling in-between, cannot deal with his dual identity. To resolve his confusion, he turns his back to his Indian roots and embraces his American side. For Gogol, his Indian roots mean a handicap to maintain his American identity. Deep down, Gogol perceives himself to be an American and feels alienated from his heritage. Particularly on their visits to Calcutta, his parents' hometown in India, Gogol's detachment from his roots becomes much clearer: "[These people] are related on their mother's or father's side, by marriage or by blood… but [Gogol and Sonia] do not feel close to them as their parents do" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 81). In this respect, in Gogol's Lacanian development of journey, his Indian heritage is regarded as the-Name-of-the-Father that restrains him from obtaining his lost object of desire. For Lacan, the father signifies the Law (Eagleton, 1996, p. 143). With his entrance into the Symbolic Order by the law of the Lacanian father, Gogol experiences a lack in his life and feels no sense of completeness. Likewise, Gogol is forced by his Lacanian father to accept the Indian norms of his heritage to which he has no sense of belonging. For this reason, to escape from his Lacanian father, Gogol strives to distance himself from his family and any circle of Indian community in America. For instance, when he attends a panel discussion about Indian novels written in English, where his distant cousin from India gives a speech, Gogol's thoughts clearly exemplify his escape from his roots: "Gogol has never heard the term *ABCD*. He eventually gathers that it stands for 'American-born confused deshi' In other words, him… But Gogol never thinks of India as *desh*. He thinks of it as Americans do, as India" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 118). The Symbolic Order, with its ideological word, has an important function even in the perceptive world of the subject. Thus Gogol, growing up in America, which is culturally different from India, is influenced by American system.

Even more, to escape from his family, Gogol settles in New York to work just after he graduates from university: "[A]fter four years in New Haven, he didn't want to move back to Massachusetts, to the one city in America his parents know. … He didn't want to go home … to go with them pujos or Bengali parties…" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 126). Unquestionably, Gogol does not want to remain with his family. Ceaser expresses that although he is now a grown man, he still seems to be going through the adolescent struggle to form an identity for himself separate from the world of his parents (2007, p. 111). For Gogol, his family is associated with his Lacanian father and forces him to stay in the Symbolic Order, where he experiences a lack and unconsciously desires to complete it in his entire life. However, to avoid his Lacanian father, Gogol identifies himself with his American side. He holds on to American culture as a substitute to compensate for his lost object of desire in the Symbolic Order. For Gogol, American culture represents the identity he desires to obtain. That's why, he is more inclined to his American culture than the unknown and distant culture of [his] parent's origin (Bhandari, 2018, p. 93). In his American culture, he feels free of the law of his Lacanian father, and thus he struggles to fill the emptiness in his Symbolic Order to reach his lost object of desire.

On the other hand, with his father's death, Gogol's attitudes toward his heritage seem to change. During those painful times, he never leaves his family alone, and as a dutiful son, he practices the 'ten-day mourning diet' ritual to pay his blessings to his father. Even more, when his American girlfriend comes to take him to his previous American life from his mournful environment, he rejects her by saying "I don't want to get away" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 182). In the years following his father's death, Gogol visits and supports his mother whenever she needs him. "His return to his parents' house in Massachusetts, argues Friedman (2008), is a physical and metaphoric return to his Indian roots" (p. 121). In Lacanian sense, Gogol's return to his roots shows that he accepts the law of his Lacanian father, who prevents him from reaching his object of desire. For that matter, the American culture he embraces as a substitute for his lost object of desire cannot recover the lack Gogol has experienced in the Symbolic Order.

Gogol's Conflict with Women

Gogol's romantic affairs with women provide no sense of reconciliation with his true self as well. *Maxine* as an American woman and *Moushumi* as an Indian woman play an important role in his identity crisis. His adulthood life in New York is mostly shaped around these two relationships. For Gogol, Maxine represents his American culture to which he feels closely tied: "Maxine is an affluent white American, a New Yorker by birth and privileged in every sense. She functions as a representative of Western high culture and international sophistication" (Bhalla, 2012, p. 113). Highly fascinated by Maxine's way of living with her parents, Lydia and Gerald, Gogol finds himself in her life without any hesitation and falls in love with her (Lahiri, 2006, p. 137). This way, Gogol separates himself from his family and immerses into the American culture he wishes to be a part of. Unsurprisingly, he easily fits into his new life with Maxine and feels free of the burden of his Indian descent: "From the very beginning he feels effortlessly incorporated into their lives… Gogol and Maxine come and go as they please, from movies and dinners out… At night he sleeps with her in the room she grew up in…" (p. 136). To adopt the American way of life and live like them is not a big challenge for him.

In Lacanian sense, Maxine is regarded as a substitute to compensate for Gogol's lost object of desire, which he has missed through the existence of the-Name-of-the-Father in the Symbolic Order. In his relationship with Maxine, Gogol hides himself in his American culture, which allows him a safe zone away from his Lacanian father: "He feels free of expectation, of responsibility, in willing exile from his own life. He is responsible for nothing in [this] house" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 142). In some way, Gogol keeps away from the law of his Lacanian father, which signifies the Indian cultural norms he is expected to follow. However, with his father's death, Gogol's intimate connection with Maxine is broken as in the case of the Lacanian infant's broken union with its mother through the presence of the-Name-of-the-Father. Thus, Gogol becomes dissatisfied with his substitute, Maxine, and begins to search for other substitutes to reach his lost object of desire in the Symbolic Order.

After his break-up with Maxine, following his father's death, Gogol is now closer to his family. Upon his mother's constant insistence, Gogol, not to upset her, agrees to meet Moushumi, the daughter of his parents' friends. Moushumi, like Gogol, is a second-generation immigrant, who shares similar troubles in America due to her origin. Likewise, she has ended a relationship with her American boyfriend. Somehow, these similar experiences bring them together in New York. Although Gogol remembers Moushumi from the parties and festivals of their parents in his childhood, this is the first time they meet outside the circle of their Indian communities. On their meeting, Gogol, despite his surprise, is highly impressed by Moushumi's beauty and attitude during their conversation. "He had not expected to enjoy himself, to be attracted to her in the least" (Lahiri, 2006, p. 199). Gogol has always refused to communicate with anyone from his family's origin. He has struggled to get rid of his heritage, which provides no sense of relief to him. But this time, their shared experiences and likeness comfort Gogol. He knows that he does not need to make any disturbing explanations related to who he is.

Within a year, they get married. They are united due to their common culture, shared experiences, and dilemmas that their roots lead to (Bhalla, 2012, p. 116). For Gogol, his relationship with Moushumi becomes a solution to his confusion with his self. It seems that he embraces the Indian side of his identity, and thus he makes peace with the crisis he feels deep inside of him. Gogol's "choice of Moushumi as a lover and then a wife seems to have been part of an unconscious attempt to concretize another identity, an adult identity that would connect him to his childhood world and to his family" (Ceaser, 2007, p. 114). In this respect, in Gogol's Lacanian developmental journey, Moushumi represents the Desire of Mother he wishes to connect. With his marriage to Moushumi, Gogol might enter the Imaginary Order, where he sustains an intimate union with his Lacanian

mother. Therefore, Gogol has a chance to experience a sense of fulfilment that he is always looking for in the Symbolic Order. However, upon Moushumi's betrayal, Gogol's intimate connection with his Lacanian mother is broken, and thus he leaves the fantasy world of the Imaginary Order, where he feels complete and delighted.

Like his father's death, Gogol's divorce from Moushumi becomes a turning point in his life. After his exit from the Imaginary Order, Gogol, as a Lacanian infant, finds himself in a void, where he has lost his way to reach his object petit a. He seems in a sort of limbo between his Imaginary and Symbolic Orders. Now, a year later, after his divorce, he waits at a train station for his sister Sonia to go home before his mother Ashima leaves for India "… but a sense of failure and shame persists, deep and abiding… It's as if a building he'd been responsible for designing has collapsed for all to see (Lahiri, 2006, pp. 283-4). As he waits at the train station, Gogol is seen to question the meaning of life. He questions what he gets from life and where to go in the future. He seems to be at a crossroads in his life. This might be the moment Gogol experiences the Lacanian Real, which is beyond the existence and the reach of the Imaginary and Symbolic Orders.

Conclusion

In the quest for his true self, Gogol sets on a Lacanian journey to retain his intimate union with his Desire of Mother. As a Lacanian infant, in his journey of identity construction, Gogol confronts his own name and Indian roots as the-Name-of-the-Father, and this situation causes him to experience an identity crisis. To deal with his identity crisis, Gogol begins to pursue his lost object desire, *object petit a*, which helps to maintain his satisfying union with his Lacanian mother. In a feeling of lost and no sense of complete as a result of his lost identity through the existence of the-Name-of-the-Father, Gogol is trapped in the Symbolic Order. To avoid his Lacanian father, Gogol adopts his American culture as a substitute for his lost object of desire. In a way, it is through his substitutes in the Symbolic Order that Gogol struggles to reach his Lacanian mother, which signifies his ultimate gratification with his true self. In this sense, Gogol's relationship with his American girlfriend Maxine represents his major substitute to compensate for his lost object of desire.

Even if Gogol mostly remains in the Symbolic Order in the course of his identity construction, from time to time, he has a chance to enter the Imaginary Order where he feels complete and delighted thanks to the connection he builds with his Desire of Mother. When he preserves his name Gogol in his childhood, he is satisfied with his true self and enjoys the blissful union with his Lacanian mother. In the same way, his return to his Indian roots with his marriage to Moushumi shows that Gogol might enter the Imaginary Order and recover his union with his Lacanian mother, which he has lost in the Symbolic Order through the law of the Father.

Gogol's father's sudden death and his divorce from Moushumi are accepted as crucial turning points in his identity construction process. After these two poignant events, Gogol is thought to have experienced the Lacanian Real, where he feels locked somewhere beyond the reach of his Imaginary and Symbolic Orders. He questions the purpose of his life. All these troubles he has experienced are beyond his comprehension. Neither his substitutes for his lost object of desire in the Symbolic Order nor his intimate union with his Desire of Mother in the Imaginary Order offers a sense of existence to Gogol.

With the application of Lacanian psychoanalysis to *The Namesake*, this study shows that the protagonist Gogol, experiencing Lacan's three Orders, strives to find a solution to his identity crisis and undergoes a transformation in the journey of discovering his true self. This study also, through its Lacanian analysis, provides an illuminative insight into *The Namesake* compared to the previous studies mostly carried out within the fields of diaspora and postcolonialism.

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Critique of Phonocentrism in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*

Elizabeth Cary'nin *The Tragedy of Mariam* Oyununda Sesmerkezcilik Eleştirisi

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ABSTRACT
According to Jacques Derrida, phonocentrism, the so-called supremacy of speech over writing, is in a close relationship with logocentrism, which is based upon male language. Phonocentric/logocentric worldview holds *agency* primarily as a matter of orality in that the spoken word is assumed to be offering a direct course to empowerment. Feminist theorists Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva aim to show the inhibitory impacts of logocentric language on women and suggest women should find *alternative* ways of expression to ward off its effects, which means women should invest in new models of communication where they can construct their political agency in line with their own material experiences. Such a struggle with patriarchal oppression of women's speech can be seen in the private life of Elizabeth Cary who was silenced by the patriarchy as a female playwright. Her closet drama *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613) mirrors her theatrical quest for agency in which a silent female character achieves power in a patriarchal surrounding by means of a strategic employment of silence. Within this context, this article claims that Cary's closet drama can be an example of écriture féminine (feminine writing) for it showcases the political potentials of silence as a strategic model of expression where both the playwright and her silent female character acquire significant positions through the deconstruction of the speech/writing dichotomy.

Introduction

Western philosophy is based upon binaries like man/woman, human/animal, white/black, west/east and culture/nature etc. in which the first component is privileged over the second as it is thought to be the normal and ideal way of being. As Lois Tyson clarifies, according to Jacques Derrida, such oppositions are "little hierarchies" in which the first terms are considered superior. Therefore, by identifying which of the terms is privileged over the other, it is possible to find clues as to the ideology generated by the oppositions (2006, p. 254). One such hierarchy in western metaphysics is between speech and writing Derrida formulates as phonocentrism, by which he refers to the priority attributed to speech over writing in Western thinking since Plato.

In Derrida's view, the privileged status of speech pertains to the concept of "metaphysics of presence" which echoes Husserl's and some other philosophers', like Plato, Heidegger and Lévi-Strauss, supposition of "an immediately available area of certainty" (Sarup, 1993, pp. 35-36). According to such thinkers, speech is more "genuine" than writing since the presence of a speaker is believed to guarantee meaning (Morris, 1998, p. 117). Metaphysics asserts that whereas there

is no voice in writing, in speech the mind has an immediate presence like a living object. Thus, for metaphysical philosophy, writing is "a lifeless instrument of recording, archiving or memorialization" (Wortham, 2010, p. 138) as opposed to the liveness and directness of speech.

Basing their arguments on the theories of Jacques Lacan, such feminist theorists as Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva suggest that in order to cope with the restricting influences of male-oriented perspectives on their thinking and lives, women should develop a language mode which differs from that of men. In *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Mariam's dare to resort to male-oriented language is one of the reasons for her condemnation by her society, and what Cary indicates is that unless women defy such language, it is not possible for them to overthrow patriarchal oppression at all. Indeed, Elizabeth Cary's preference for writing a closet drama reflects a similar concern since it was the only genre which allowed her voice to be heard among a number of leading male playwrights in her period. The genre she chose was not intended to be performed publicly but read individually as it was thought to be more acceptable for women. This study contends that Cary's forced preference for the silent closet drama can be regarded as an early experience of écriture féminine since it on the one hand reflects the oppressive material conditions that Cary herself had to endure and on the other hand addresses the political potentials around the ontological dynamics of silence by which both Cary and her silent female character can achieve power by means of a strategic employment of silence in a patriarchal surrounding.

The Tragedy of Mariam has been studied from various feminist perspectives so far. For instance, Bennett (2001) focuses on Salome as a representation of Eve, and Poitevin (2005) discusses the play's display of the issue of race and colour for female characters. Alfar (2008) examines the oppression of Mariam, Salome and Doris by the marriage law and their disregard of it, and Mackay (2014) points to how the conduct literature functioned to shape mother/daughter relations in the period. Whereas many analyses focus primarily on Mariam, some (Goldberg, 1997; Ferguson, 2003; Nesler, 2012) more specifically examine Graphina, who appears only in one brief scene. Likewise, my focus is on Graphina and how she challenges phonocentrism. Although some previous studies touched upon the play's display of phonocentrism, (Ferguson, 2003, p. 284; Hamamra, 2018, p. 86), this study takes critique of phonocentrism as its central point of analysis and focuses upon the convergence between phonocentrism and écriture féminine as represented in the play. While the tension around the attempts to achieve power through language has been the subject of critical debate in the existing scholarship on the play, this paper specifically focuses on how the intersection between écriture féminine and the critique of phonocentrism as embodied within the ontology of silence can offer an analytical space for the exploration of the notions of agency, power, and subjectivity. In this context, this study aims to contribute to the field by highlighting the importance of the play as an early instance of écriture féminine where both the playwright and the character of Graphina invest in the construction of an alternative communicative model that enables them to find and facilitate political potentials in even the most pervasive absence of speech.

Derridean Critique of Presence and Speech

While Saussure regards the sign as a "unity," in Derrida's thinking, there is not a direct relation between the signifier and the signified since they are constantly making up new combinations, which points to lack of clear boundaries between them. As signifiers constantly turn into signifieds and signifieds steadily transform into signifiers, it is not possible to reach a final signified that is not also a signifier (Sarup, 1993, p. 33). Therefore, language consists only of chains of signifiers, not of a union of signifiers and signifieds. It merely refers to the play of signifiers which itself is composed of and meaning is simply the "mental trace" this play of signifiers leaves behind (Tyson, 2006, pp. 252-253).

Derrida within this frame of thinking developed "deconstruction," a style of reading texts by focusing on their inconsistencies to question them from within. As Sarup points out, through deconstruction, the standards and the definitions which a text aims to foreground are used against it to reveal its own failure (1993, pp. 34-35). Deconstruction attempts to lay bare the working mechanisms of what Derrida conceptualizes as "metaphysics of presence", a reference to Western philosophy's perception of truth as 'presence' existing outside language. While metaphysics is associated with traditional forms of thinking and accepted social norms and aims to assert authority with the concept of "truth" at its center, deconstruction is essentially political and oppositional since it aims to question such traditional norms as the inferiority of women in patriarchal circles, intending to challenge the sources of social authority and hierarchy (Ryan, 2017, p. 87). In this sense, from a deconstructionist perspective, writing is a challenge to the whole concept of "structure" (Eagleton, 1996, p. 116) and Derrida's intention to interrogate the authority of speech is a challenge to whole metaphysical thinking.

The priority attributed to speech in Western philosophy, as Derrida puts forth, is directly linked with the supposition of "presence". Since Western philosophy contends speech conveys meaning directly and imminently, it is assumed to be closer to "presence" (Sarup, 1993, pp. 35-36). Conventionally, voice (Greek *phono*) is thought to be "the locus of truth" "and the presence of consciousness to itself" (Bunnin and Yu, 2004, p. 528); while one is searching for truth, for example, one hears the 'voice' of reason (p. 528). Therefore, speech is thought to be the sign of presence and truth. However, as Terry Eagleton explicates, Derridean philosophy argues that Western philosophers fail to see that voice is material like print. As spoken signs work through a process of difference[1] like written signs, speaking is a kind of writing as writing is a kind of speaking (1996, p. 113). For Derrida, speech is based on a prior writing, that is, on *difference* which generates meaning; therefore, the presence and privilege of speech is a mere illusion (Baldick, 2008, p. 257). This is to claim that the status attributed to the acoustic aspect of language over the graphic extent is one that is devoid of an inherent value because, first, this is a value-ridden perspective that seeks to follow socially-constructed hierarchies, and second, the fact that it is only the acoustic differences that constitute meaning in language is problematic on the ground that the written, or *grammatological*, aspect of language is no less capable of capturing meaning than speech. The phonocentric emphasis on the human capacity for "authentic self-expression" is, therefore, linked with social relations that uphold oral communication rather than textual means.

The critique of the priority of speech over textuality constitutes an important aspect of Derridean deconstruction, especially in its critical relation to logocentric "power" and "meaning." According to Derrida, phonocentrism and logocentrism are closely related as he emphasizes in *Of Grammatology*, "the heritage of that logocentrism [...] is also a phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning" (1997a, pp. 11-12). As he underlines, in Western phonocentric thinking, voice, being and meaning all incorporate each other. Logocentrism, the basis of all our conceptions, as Ryan remarks, can also be defined as the metaphysical suppositions that solidify hierarchical and authoritarian structures in the society (2017, p. 87). In logocentrism, there seems to be a desire for a "transcendental signifier" to relate to a fixed "transcendental signified". For example, God and Matter are such signs (logos) since they function as the foundation of a system of thought at the center of other signs. For Derrida, "[t]he function of this center [is] not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure [...] but above all to make sure that the organizing principles of the structure would limit what we might call the *freeplay* of the structure" (Derrida, 1997b, p. 115), which implies the center does not

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[1] Derrida coined the term "différance", a pun on "difference" and "deferment", by which he refers to the two aspects of language. First, in a signifying system, meaning is produced due to a word's "difference" from other words, secondly, it is constantly "deferred" because a final signified is not reached.

allow the presence, the ultimate truth, to be disrupted. In other words, the metaphysically present and immediate speech has its historical value not because it is inherently and essentially closer to truth but because it accompanies power structures that assign it a hierarchical value. In this sense, the dichotomy between speech and writing is arbitrary, and thus can be challenged.

In deciphering the ways by which structures function to govern meaning, Derrida not only breaks down but also subverts the hierarchy between speech and writing. For him, writing comes before speech since without difference and repetition there is no truth (Rivkin and Ryan, 2017, p. 452). The apparent primacy of speech is an illusion because speech can only be possible if it is preceded by writing (Allison and Garver, 1973, p. xl). Though paradoxical this may seem, Derrida asserts that writing is a more useful tool to understand the functions of language for it is the domain where signifiers are always generative "introducing a temporal aspect into signification which undermines any fusion between signifier and signified" (Newton, 1997, p. 112). Written signs have "a semiotic independence" which causes meaning to be always deferred as it will be produced in an endless way (Newton, 1997, p. 112). For these reasons, writing poses a threat to logos, that is, to speech and meaning because it produces conditions by which it is possible to explore the working mechanisms of *structures* in a manner that reflects the way language, a system based on difference and deferment, works. In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida argues "although there is no expression and meaning without speech, not everything in speech is 'expressive'" (Derrida, 1973, p. 31). In addition, he contends that the affinity of the voice with presence is a mere simulation, and "the history of spoken language is the archives of this simulation" (1973, p. 15). Through such arguments, Derrida not only questions the hierarchy between speech and writing but points to the superiority of writing since it is what makes speech possible.

On a final note in this section, Derridean critique of speech-writing dichotomy has implications that extend beyond the confines of the epistemology of writing and speech; it also weaves a commentary on human subjectivity through an implicit emphasis on two ontological spaces, namely, the domains of speakers and writers (or the voice versus silence). These two epistemological models – speech and writing – also address distinct forms of selfhood in that they constitute certain *categories* which attribute specific qualities to different subjectivities. For instance, Derridean critique interrogates the assumed category of speech (and thus speakers) as the domain of superior access to knowledge and of category of writing (and thus writers) as the realm of secondary importance. These categories imply that while speech is constituted by active, immediate, and closer-to-truth human *voice*, writing is the domain of *silence* where the absence of acoustics hinders direct access to knowledge and the human subject behind it. This is a point that Patrick Colm Hogan also makes. He argues that in phonocentric view "presence is manifest most fully in oral speech, in the human voice" whereas in writing one finds "the absence of voice" and "the loss of presence through the deferral of communication" (2000, p. 249). In this context, the epistemological split between speech and writing also produces an ontological difference between presence and absence and voice and silence. Following this line of thinking, it can be argued that Derridean critique of speech-writing dichotomy is also a challenge to the entrenched hierarchy between voice and silence since these categories rest on arbitrarily formed assumptions. As he repeatedly emphasizes the value of writing and its ontological nature as equally important as oral communication, Derrida makes a case for a non-phonocentric view of human subjectivity where agency, presence, absence, voicedness and silence need to be reconsidered on a non-hierarchical basis.

Elizabeth Cary: An Early Practitioner of Écriture Féminine

The Derridean emphasis on the epistemology and ontology of writing became one of the reference points for the feminist theory in the 1970s. Writing and textuality in general offered an important locale for the exploration of issues concerning women's empowerment under patriarchal culture.

This necessitated a thorough analysis of the factors that lead to women's oppression within and through discourses as well as material experiences. In this context, the Derridean emphasis on writing as an important tool of agency was combined by feminist theorists with psychoanalytical frameworks, primarily those of Jacques Lacan. "Écriture feminine," as it is usually named, was one such output where writing and psychoanalytical theories of the self were amalgamated to understand the historical, cultural, and psychological roots of women's oppression. Today, "écriture feminine" refers to the kind of literature which moves away from conventional styles of writing and delineates the relation between female body and feminine language. It emerged in France in the 1970s through the works of such feminist theorists as Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva who insist on the distinctiveness of female sexual experience and on an affinity between female body and women's writing. They also point to the restrictive influences of phallocentrism (male-oriented set of power relations) on women's bodies, sexualities and lives. Their main contention is that language, literature and culture are all built upon women's exclusion and subordination. With the aim of inspiring women to challenge phallocentric prescriptions which determine how they think and speak, they turn to (Lacanian) psychoanalysis which offers theories of preverbal development of the self.

Famously, Lacan asserts that "the unconscious is structured like a language," and as Macey clarifies, according to him, there is no direct relation between the signifier and the signified. Meaning is inclined to get out of control, and stability is provided by the phallus and the name-of-the-father, for which Derrida accuses him of perpetuating logocentrism and phallogocentrism (2000, p. 223). In Lacan's formulation of the pre-linguistic development of the self, before the emergence of the sense of self, the infant is in the Imaginary where there is an idealised integration with the mother. The imaginary is beyond grammar and rules like poetic language (Barry, 2009, p. 109). In this realm, the child is in the pre-linguistic, pre-Oedipal stage where the self is not separated from the rest of the world. The child is in a paradise-like realm in which there is no desire or lack (p. 124). In the mirror-stage between six-eighteen months, the child sees its own image in the mirror and perceives itself as a unified being. This is also when the child begins to enter the language system which is marked by rules and restrictions associated with the father which Lacan describes as the "Symbolic" that corresponds to the domain of patriarchal order and logic (p. 109). The Symbolic is where language acquisition happens and the child starts to be exposed to phallocentric convictions, which goes on for life.

Hélène Cixous, who coined the term "écriture feminine," argues that language generates "patriarchal binary thought", through which people see the world in terms of binaries that determine how they think (Tyson, 2006, p. 100). According to her, women have to create an "écriture féminine" based on the relation with the mother to resist their exclusion from culture. Although such a language derived from the infant-mother relationship already exists within the unconscious, it remains suppressed due to the domination of logocentric language. This feminine language distinguishes from male-centred language as it allows free play of signifiers rather than underpinning certainties or rigidities (Newton, 1997, p. 210). However, Cixous does not suggest that male language should be totally forsaken in favour of feminine language; rather, she emphasizes that since feminine body differs from male body "and that language is a translation which 'speaks through the body,'" women must express themselves in their own ways (p. 211).

In "The Laugh of the Medusa," where she coined the term, Cixous explicates that for centuries, writing was associated with reason, and therefore, with men; thus, women who attempted to write could easily be labelled as abnormal or unruly. For fear of being labelled as such, they avoided writing. Therefore, in her essay, she calls women to writing: "Women must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing" (1976, p. 875), emphasizing that women should focus on their own experiences in their writings, and their writing must inspire other women to

reverberate their personal experiences through writing. Moreover, she argues women should take their bodies as their source for their writings: "[W]hy don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it" (p. 876). Like their sexuality which is not uniform, their writing should be fluid to reflect their sexualities and bodily experiences. As she highlights in *The Newly Born Woman*, women have been alienated from their bodies: "She has not been able to live in her 'own' house, her very body. [...] They haven't gone exploring in their house. Their sex still frightens them. Their bodies, which they haven't dared enjoy, have been colonized" (Cixous and Clément, 1996, p. 68). She suggests women reunite with their bodies, take it as their source of inspiration and reflect its multiplicity, fluidity, versatility and openness in their writings.

The connection between the body, language and writing remains an important point in feminist theory, especially when analysing the possibilities for a feminist style of thinking and writing, as Irigaray did. While Cixous emphasizes the need for women's experiences to be written down, Irigaray also highlights the importance of women creating their own language. In the *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray critiques psychoanalysis for being based on patriarchal ideologies and criticizes Lacan's emphasis on the Symbolic (1985a). As Robbins clarifies, she insists that women should develop their own linguistic systems and representation modes which will let their speech be heard (2000, p. 155). She defines this speech as "parler-femme" which means "speaking women", "speaking about women" and "women speaking to women", which, like écriture féminine, rejects male discourses and celebrates the plurality of female sexuality. In addition, it rejects the linearity of realist and phallocentric writing modes of the Symbolic order (p. 155).

For Irigaray, it can only be possible through developing nonpatriarchal ways of thinking and speaking, that is, generating a feminine language she calls "womanspeak," that women can overthrow the restricting influences of patriarchy. According to her, the source of such language is in female sexuality which is "far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined" (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 28). As she underlines in *This Sex Which is Not One*, this "*[s]imultaneity* is its [feminine writing's] 'proper' aspect - a proper(ty) that is never fixed in its possible identity [...]. It is always *fluid*" (1985b, p. 79) and women should echo this fluidity in literature.

In contrast to Cixous and Irigaray, Kristeva does not believe in écriture féminine or womanspeak; instead, she asserts it is only possible to cope with patriarchy's oppression if men and women can gain access to "the *semiotic* dimension of language" (Tyson, 2006, p. 103). For her, language has two dimensions. The first is the "symbolic", the domain where words operate and meanings are attributed to them, and the second is the "semiotic" which involves such elements as body language, rhythm and intonation[2] (p. 103). She contends the semiotic is a period when babies have a relationship with their mothers through gestures and rhythms, which is the infants' first speech learnt through contact with nonverbal communication associated with the mother's body. Therefore, the semiotic is beyond patriarchal control, and women should reach this semiotic dimension of unconscious through art and literature (Tyson, 2006, p. 104).

As evident through this theoretical review of what can be called "women's literature," the relationship between "writing" and the female experience has been a recurrent focus for much of the history of feminist theory. While French feminists may propose different concepts for framing feminist thought, what they all agree on is the fact that writing is a fundamentally important means to express feminist mode of "being." Yet, while anachronistic it may sound, women's literature produced much long before the emergence of French feminist theories also provides significant examples where the relationship between the material and bodily experiences of women and writing is explored in ways that echo the feminist arguments of Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva. Born

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[2] See Kristeva, J. (1984). *Revolution in poetic language* (M. Waller, Trans.). Columbia UP.

in 1585 to a wealthy family with a considerable opportunity for an education in "French, Spanish, Italian, Latin, and Hebrew" (Bevington et al., 2002, p. 615), the English playwright Elizabeth Cary and her limited yet exceptional playwriting career exemplify one such case. Thanks to her family background, Cary had enough money for paper and quills, and thus, had the means to write (Ferguson, 2002, p. 483), yet, her class, which provided her with financial opportunities to write, also imposed rigid rules on her literary career and bodily experiences, which in a way determined the genre she chose and her relationship with her audience (p. 484). The social norms of the period expected women to perform *silence* as a general model of living. As Peter Stallybrass clarifies, in this period, women's dignity depended on whether they kept silent within public spaces and sustained respectable lives in domestic spheres[3] (1986, p. 127). An open mouth of a woman carried a number of dangerous implications including sexual ones, and within a culture like this which was nested in the dichotomy between male voice and female silence, it was assumed that fame was only for men; a woman could not be popular among other people as it would ruin her name (Jones, 1986, p. 74). Fame through rhetoric and public speech was predominantly a male privilege, so it was not possible for a woman of Elizabeth Cary's class to write commercial plays performed at the theatres, address a general audience or achieve fame with her work. As a result of such discursive as well as material limitations on women's experiences, especially within the theatre world which Cary was rather fond of, it was closet drama that offered women playwrights of the period an aesthetic space to follow their artistic instincts. As M. G. Nesler declares, women dramatists of closet drama[4] like Cary both "undermin[ed] those rules, [...] [and] generated disruptive compliance" (2012, pp. 364-365). Although they seemed to obey the social rules which required their imprisonment in the house, they found ways of being a part of the dramatic activities.

Closet dramas, which include long soliloquies and monologues with two or three actors on the stage and a chorus, are written to be read personally or among several people, and they are not performed on the stage[5]. As Gutierrez underlines, what is in the foreground is "philosophical discussion and poetic meditation" rather than action (1991, p. 237). Another important aspect of closet drama is its relation to "political discourse" (Gutierrez, 1991, p. 237); "[it] is a vehicle for direct exposition of political ideas" (p. 237), especially to declare "political dissent" (p. 237) without being exposed to censorship (Purkiss, 1998, p. xviii). That is, the playwrights could share subversive ideas with other women by negotiating with social norms that hinder active participation in theatrical activities. "Within closet spaces, writing was considered a silent and admissible performance for women because it occurred in ostensibly isolated locations" (Nesler 2012, p. 364). Through these silent plays, female authors could enter the homes of other women "turn[ing] the home[s] into [...] performative space[s] filled with a "greate companie'" (Nesler, 2009, p. 84). Thus, silence was "an active, powerful mode of expression" (Nesler 2009, p. 4) for women. It was a form of feminine language which enabled the playwrights like Cary to address their audience and share their experiences with other women. The silent dramatic mode was a delogocentric space where phallocentric authority over meaning could be subverted from a safe distance. Therefore, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, a silent play which echoes the silence of its playwright's mouth and her forced silence in social settings, can be regarded as an example of écriture feminine. In a way which echoes Cixous's ideas, Cary reflects her own bodily experience -

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[3] For a survey of plays from the period which showcase female silence see Luckyj, C. A. (1993). "A Moving Rhetoricke": women's silences and Renaissance texts. *Renaissance Drama*, New series, Perspectives on Renaissance Drama, *24*, 33-56. Jstor. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41917294

[4] Some of the other female dramatists of closet drama were Mary Sidney (1561-1621), Margret Lucas Cavendish (1623-1673) and Annie Finch (1661-1720).

[5] For other closet drama examples see Gutierrez, N. A. (1991). Valuing Mariam: genre study and feminist analysis. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, *10*(2), 233-251. Jstor.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/464016

the silence of her mouth - in a silent form. In line with Irigaray's opinions, the silent dramatic genre poses a threat to the Symbolic as it is not exposed to control by patriarchal authority. In addition, it relates to the nonverbal communication of the infants in the Semiotic, which is free from any patriarchal scrutiny as proposed by Kristeva.

Through closet dramas, women transgressed "dramatic boundaries" and "created a narrative about effective non-vocal expression and its generation of authority"; their stories were heard by other women (Nesler 2009, p. 4). Through their texts, women dramatists had the chance to enter the "closets" of other women and shape their opinions. However, their teachings could be far from reinforcing the status-quo since they could "manipulate silence and instruct their readers on how to do the same" (Nesler 2009, p. 10). They could teach women how to make use of their silence in an excessively patriarchal household in which it was the most distinctive feature of a good wife.

Graphina: An Embodiment of Writing and the Silent Victoress

The Tragedy of Mariam, a Senecan tragedy and an example of closet drama, has a unique place in English theatre since it is the first original play by a woman.[6] The story, which takes place in only one day in Ancient Judea in 29 B.C.E, retells the history of Herod and Mariam as told by the Jewish historian Josephus in *Antiquities* translated by Thomas Lodge. Although the play is thought to have been written between 1602 and 1604, as Ferguson clarifies, it remained as a manuscript until it was printed in 1613. It was not printed again until 1914, and by the 1990s, only scholars were interested in the play (2002, p. 482), which was never performed[7] (Ferguson, 1991, p. 235).

The Tragedy of Mariam focuses on a series of power-related issues taking effect on the crossover between gender, language, and social norms. While the play is titled after its female lead Mariam whose tragedy frames the general flow of things, it in fact weaves a dramatic narrative in which various female experience come together to reveal the difficulty of achieving agency in a patriarchal culture. When the play opens, gender issues instantly come to the surface. Upon hearing the rumours that Herod has been killed in Rome by Caesar, Mariam reveals how she feels about his presumed death. What is unexpected for the moment is Mariam's linguistic explicitness in addressing her complex relationship with her husband at a moment of grief like this:

> Oft have I wished that I from him were free;[8]
> Oft have I wished that he might lose his breath;
> Oft have I wished his carcass dead to see. (p. 623, 16-18)
> [....]
> Then why grieves Mariam Herod's death to hear? (p. 624, 38)

These lines clearly display the emotional stalemate Mariam is in due to the recent unexpected news. On the one hand, she feels glad since the revenge of her brother Aristobulus and her grandfather Hyrcanus, who were killed by Herod, is taken. On the other hand, she is not at first entirely joyful because Herod in his own 'cruel' way loved her. Yet, Mariam ultimately confesses her hatred of him upon learning that he is alive: "With solemn vows I have forsworn his bed / [...] To live with him I so profoundly hate" (p. 647, 16, 20), explicitly addressing the deep rift between

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[6] Before Elizabeth Cary, some women in England translated or adapted other people's plays and the Countess of Pembroke wrote a short pastoral dialogue. However, it was Cary who made up her own plot with her own characters (Pearse, 1977, p. 601).

[7] To read on a counter-argument see Hamamra, B. T. (2018). "Tell thou my lord thou saw'st me lose my breath": silence, speech, and authorial identity in Cary's The Tragedy of Mariam. *ANQ A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, *32*(2), 84-92. DOI:10.1080/0895769X.2018.1471980. https://doi.org/10.1080/0895769X.2018.1471980

[8] All references to the play are to Cary, E. (2002). *The tragedy of Mariam*. In D. Bevington et al. (Eds.), *English renaissance drama: a norton anthology* (pp. 621-671). W. W. Norton & Company.

the spouses.

A similar mode of straightforwardness is visible with Alexandra who reproaches Mariam for weeping for Herod. She is content with Herod's death and insults and curses him as he murdered her son and father to ensure his own succession. Like Mariam, Alexandra openly announces her hate for Herod by insulting his race as "[b]ase" and "damnèd" (p. 625, 6). Spoken language plays a vital role here in expressing women's plight at the hand of men. In this vein, Alexandra's curses and insults can be regarded as a direct, non-mediated challenge to patriarchal portrayal of women as silent beings. As Templin underlines, uttering curses is a subversion of female silence since it provides women with a certain amount of social agency which they normally do not have (2014, p. 1).[9] Through her sharp tongue, Alexandra releases her anger towards Herod for killing her father and son, which she cannot do in any other way. Her curses are Alexandra's only weapons to raise her voice in a patriarchal society which constantly silences women.

Whether through curses or expressions of emotional complexity, the beginning of the play portrays the significance of language for the articulation of agency, and the play offers a rich repertoire in terms of the number of outspoken women. Salome appears as the third female voice who accuses Mariam of searching for a new husband; she and Mariam direct insults and charges at each other. Salome questions the sexual double standards of the time which grant the right of divorce only to men:

> Why should such privilege to man be given? (p. 629, 45)
> […]
> I'll be the custom-breaker, and begin
> To show my sex the way to freedom's door. (p. 629, 49-50)

In this monologue, Salome challenges the patriarchal norms which do not regard women equal to men in marriage and decides to be the first women to divorce at her own will. As such examples denote, Mariam and Alexandra can express their resentment for Herod as they believe him to be dead. As Rose comments, they are pleased with Herod's death for it releases their desires which they had to repress because of the tyrant's excessive control on their personal lives (2010, p. 211). As regards Salome, she is not a conventional feminine figure for she announces her intention of transgressing the gender roles the society was imposing on women at the time. In the first four scenes of the play, the female voice dominates the text which receives a critical outlook from the chorus, with implications that the dramatic space is ripe with tension between opposing voices.

At the centre of such tension is the very notion of speech itself. For instance, when Salome converses with Silleus about her plans to divorce, Constabarus reprimands her for not avoiding an open conversation with a stranger (p. 631, 1-4). Although Constabarus does not know what she is talking to Silleus about, he accuses her of smearing his name. In his view, his wife's talk to a man is shameful, which displays the gender-bound power dynamics and social norms regarding women's free speech at the time. Juxtaposed to such open talks coming from major female characters, 2.1 depicts a scene of private talk between Graphina, a slave girl, "[t]he only character whose name is not found in Josephus's text or in Lodge's translation of it" (Ferguson 1991, p. 237), and Pheroras, Herod's brother. Pheroras announces his love for Graphina, and adds that, for his love for Graphina, he rejected his brother's command to marry his niece. While he is speaking, Graphina is silent. Pheroras becomes restless by her silence and prompts her to speak. By his compulsion, Graphina speaks:

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[9] See Ünlü, E. (2017). *The Witch, The Witch of Edmonton, Vinegar Tom ve Byrthrite oyunlarında cadı imgesinin feminist analizi.* [Master's Thesis, Ankara University]. p. 65.
https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezSorguSonucYeni.jsp

> I have admirèd your affection long,
> And cannot yet therein a reason find.
> Your hand hath lifted me from lowest state
> To highest eminency, wondrous grace,
> And me, your handmaid, have you made your mate,
> Though all but you alone do count me base.
> You have preserved me pure at my request,
> Though you so weak a vassal might constrain
> To yield to your high will. Then, last not best,
> In my respect a princess you disdain. (p. 636, 55-64)

In these lines, it seems that as Ferguson underlines, "Graphina tells her lover only what he wants to hear, when he wants to hear it"; therefore, hers is a "safe speech" (Ferguson, 1991, p. 238). Since she is aware women have to be careful with whom they talk to, or what they talk about, she speaks only to Pheroras, and tells him what a lover wants to hear. Her avoidance from speaking to any men but Pheroras shows she is conscious of the patriarchal impositions of the time on women, and, through her silence, she displays her own experience without being condemned by phallocentric social discourse. Her silence might at first seem like a victory for patriarchy, but Graphina never speaks the language of patriarchy other than in this brief scene which marks her ascent up the social hierarchy. In this way, she on the one hand challenges the Symbolic order of patriarchy where women are forced to adopt male language and on the other hand acquires a place within that order by advancing a communicative model of her own that both protects her from social condemnation and offers her an articulation of agency.

With the play's juxtaposition of different subject positions represented by Graphina and other major characters, the tension surrounding the female speech acquires much more visibility. In 3.3, Mariam has a private conversation with Sohemus in which she hears from him Herod is alive and declares she wishes he was dead. Sohemus criticizes her for her outspokenness: "Unbridled speech is Mariam's disgrace, /And will endanger her without desart" (p. 648, 65-66). Speech, as a locale of communication, takes a dangerous turn upon receiving a warning from Sohemus, a representative figure of patriarchy, which means that speech has the potential to operate beyond the signs it simply incorporates for communicative reasons. It is a space for political discourse which may reproduce yet at the same time subvert phallocentric power dynamics, so Mariam's outspokenness bears a dangerous potential for the continuing operation of patriarchal discourses. For instance, when Herod wants to find out what Mariam did in his absence, he asks Salome in an inquisitive manner that focuses on her agency of speech: "have you heard her speak?" (p. 660, 69), pointing at an affinity between women's speech and promiscuity as underlined by the patriarchal society. Salome insinuates that Mariam had a relationship with Sohemus and Mariam is executed at Herod's behest.

The women in the play, except for Graphina, are predominantly outspoken, which becomes further evident in their attempts to transgress patriarchal norms through their verbal communicative preferences. However, speech is not presented in the play as a functional tool for self-expression for women since it does not provide them with any form of agency or power. On the contrary, the women's desire for a share in the oral universe of the play is swiftly met with harsh social condemnation, one that either cripples their ability to relate to social life in general or exterminates their social existence altogether, as evident in Mariam's tragedy. Furthermore, the kind of oral activities that most women are able to maintain is hardly productive: Alexandra and Doris can be outspoken only when Herod is absent; Salome is denounced by her husband for her private talk to another man; Mariam is condemned by the Chorus for transgressing the patriarchal boundaries with her speech. Graphina, on the other hand, evades social surveillance completely

through her strategic silence that she maintains throughout the play. As Nesler comments, Graphina can express herself so well that she even suppresses Pheroras's voice when she speaks (2012, p. 374). The Chorus does not condemn her because she is "an undecipherable and unknowable text" (Hamamra 2018, p. 89). That is how she can avoid scrutiny while making her voice being heard (Nesler 2012, p. 378). Thus, Graphina, who is generally overlooked by the Chorus and the critics, can be an example of how to have a verbal narrative without being condemned for transgressing prescribed boundaries for women (Nesler 2012, p. 364). It is even possible to argue that Graphina's ascension in the social ladder shows that speech is not even necessary for communicating with one's social environment and having a significant portion of agentic capacity.

In the light of such arguments, it can be claimed that Graphina's character rests on a series of ontological elements that reverberate the dynamics of *textuality*. Instead of following a communicative ideal like that of other women characters where meaning is direct, immediate and potentially hazardous in an ultra-conservative society, Graphina opts for a model of relationality which is nested in deferral and difference with multiple implications, like the deconstructive aura of a text that Derrida and feminist theorists argue for. As the very identity of Graphina is open to various interpretations, she also subverts the models of intentionality that one usually finds in a conventional drama. What does Graphina actually want? What are her true intentions and feelings? Since she very successfully evades the sociality that other women characters are embedded in, it is not really easy to answer such questions. In this respect, it is possible to read Graphina's character as an allegory of textuality in that her character is both very rich in meaning and open to difference as she does not invite immediate interpretation. In a way, following Hamamra (2018), Graphina is a text herself in that, instead of choosing to take side in phonocentric power conflicts, she embodies the plurality of voices that the silence of a text possesses.

Interestingly, a number of critics have commented on the meaning of Graphina's name and argued that Graphina resembles a text not just ontologically but also in name. According to Nesler, her name derives from the Latin root for "writing" (2012, p. 365). For Hamamra, it comes from "graphein," which means "to write" (2018, p. 85). Ferguson adds the name derives from the Greek "graphesis," which means "writing" (1991, p. 238). For Bell, too, it is a pun on "graphesis" (2007, p. 23). According to Jonathan Goldberg, the addition of the "-ina," the feminizing diminutive, makes her name mean "writing as a woman" (1997, p. 164). Thus, Graphina in a way means "écriture féminine" and exemplifies how feminine language characterized by silence in the play can help women to overthrow the supremacy of male-centred language and go beyond patriarchal portrayals of femininity, making their own voices be heard. All in all, she shows that "[w]riting and vocality are equally effective forms of speech" (Nesler, 2012, p. 377).

Conclusion

The female characters in the play - Mariam, Alexandra, Salome and Doris - declare their anger and content through their speech. However, their speech does not help them display their agency or identities. Instead, they are regarded as unruly women by the men around them. Graphina, who embodies the ontological dynamics of writing, is the only woman in the play who seems to be content with her life. Using her silence as a strategy to win Pheroras's love, the servant girl becomes the wife of the king's brother. As her rhetorical speech also reveals, she is an intelligent woman who is aware of the social norms and the expectations of society from women. She knows how to protect her name from any shame that any public speech to a man might cause. Through marriage to Pheroras, the brother of the king, she socially rises from the lowest class to the wife of the king's brother, which was a success and exhibition of power and authority for a woman at the time. In this way, within the socio-political dynamics of the time, she exemplifies that writing, which she embodies, can be even more effective than speech as a means of power and authority,

and constituting a presence out of absence, like Elizabeth Cary, she questions the speech-oriented society from within. However, it is necessary to be careful about one point here. Neither Cary's dramatic text nor Graphina's character implies that women should simply keep silent and comply with patriarchal norms in order to lead acceptable lives. On the contrary, as it was previously stated, since the play is primarily focusing on the issues of power in a rather conservative society, this tragedy addresses the need for women to carefully read into social circumstances and make strategic and smart moves which would help women in their search for further agency. In other words, the play shows that a careful analysis of materiality is necessary for claiming a share in power relations which would otherwise crush marginalized people like women. This is to say that it might not even be necessary for women to join the phonocentric order of things since they can find political potentials in even the most depoliticized form of communication like silence.

As a woman, Cary was supposed to be silent. By choosing a silent genre like closet drama, she writes about herself in her own personal way reflecting her experience, and thus, producing feminine writing. Her forced silence determines both the content and the form of her writing. Therefore, the play can be an example of écriture féminine as theorized by Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva. As proposed by Cixous, Cary wrote about specific experiences of women in her own period. Silence was a form of language for Cary that allowed her to connect to other women. Through this particular linguistic system, she got the chance to speak to women about women's experiences as suggested by Irigaray and, as Kristeva offers, could go beyond the Symbolic through literature. Thus, silence did not prevent her from achieving success as a writer. As a contemporary of great male playwrights such as Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson who became remarkably popular through frequent performances of their texts, she could achieve immortality like them, yet with an unperformed play, which is still read and studied today, challenging the supposed superiority of speech in Western thought.

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Navigating Global Migration:
An Analysis of *Exit West* through Appadurai's Five Scapes
Küresel Göçte Yol Bulmak: Appadurai'nin Beş Alanı Üzerinden Exit West'in Analizi

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ABSTRACT
The rapid surge in global migration today is deeply intertwined with shifts in the political and economic structures of the late twentieth century, characterized by the dominance of globalization and transnational capital. These shifts, while rooted in the historical legacies of colonialism, have assumed new dimensions as globalization reconfigures the movement of people, capital, and ideas. In *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid connects the personal experiences of migration with larger global forces, using magical doors to metaphorically illustrate the fluidity and unpredictability of global migration patterns. This paper employs Arjun Appadurai's five "scapes," which are *ethnoscapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, *mediascapes*, and *ideoscapes*, to examine how *Exit West* reflects and critiques the dynamics of globalization, migration, and identity formation. Hamid highlights how technological advancements facilitate movement while simultaneously revealing the inequalities that persist under the guise of globalization. Through the journeys of Saeed and Nadia, the novel reveals the fragmented nature of global flows and their impact on personal and collective identities.

Introduction

Exit West by Mohsin Hamid, published in 2017, is a novel that has attracted much attention for its timely exploration of migration, identity, and the impact of ongoing wars, highlighting how refugees are shaped as "a creation of the twentieth-century state" (Said, 1984, p.7). Winner of the 2018 Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Fiction and the inaugural Aspen Words Literary Prize, the novel was also selected as one of The New York Times Book Review's 10 Best Books of 2017 and shortlisted for the 2017 Man Booker Prize. The novel centers on a young couple, Saeed and Nadia, who are compelled to flee their war-torn and unnamed city. During their journey, Hamid integrates magical realism by introducing mysterious black doors that allow them to travel instantly between cities. Through these doors, Hamid sidesteps the often tragic and brutal realities of migration, such as perilous sea crossings and treacherous land routes, and instead offering a narrative that emphasizes the fundamental right to migrate (Asaad, 2020, pp. 77-78). The doors serve as a metaphor for the rapid and often disorienting nature of global migration, allowing Hamid to explore the intersections of personal and collective identities in a world increasingly defined by

movement and change.

To better understand the global flows depicted in *Exit West*, Arjun Appadurai's concept of the five "scapes" from his work *Modernity at Large* offers a valuable lens. Appadurai's perspective proves invaluable because it connects the characters' experiences to broader global patterns, suggesting that migration is not simply a movement from one place to another but an immersion in shifting landscapes influenced by technology, finance, and shared cultural imaginaries. Rather than focusing solely on individual struggles, Appadurai's scapes reveal how *Exit West* captures migration as a defining feature of modernity, where identity and belonging are shaped by both local and transnational forces. The use of an anthropologist's framework thus feels not only appropriate but essential in unpacking the full dimensions of Hamid's work, which speaks to the complex realities of migration in a world that is increasingly interconnected and in flux. Appadurai outlines five dimensions, such as *ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes,* and *ideoscapes*, through which global cultural flows can be understood (1996, pp. 33-37). *Ethnoscape* captures the movement of people, such as migrants and refugees, a theme central to Saeed and Nadia's journey as they traverse multiple cultural and geographical landscapes. *Technoscape*, reflecting the global spread of technology, is embodied in the novel by the magical doors that facilitate instant travel. These doors symbolize the ways technology connects distant places and people, yet also underscore the disorienting effects of such rapid changes on individuals and societies. *Financescape*, which encompasses the movement of capital and economic resources, underpins much of the migration in the novel. The economic disparities that drive the characters to seek better lives elsewhere mirror the broader economic forces shaping global migration today, highlighting the impact of financial flows on personal decisions and destinies. *Mediascape*, representing the influence of media in shaping perceptions of reality, is evident in the characters' interactions with the outside world. Media plays a role in determining the desirability of certain destinations, influencing how and where people choose to move. Finally, *ideoscape* refers to the flow of political ideas and ideologies, which profoundly affects the characters' understanding of their identities and the societies they enter. This aspect is especially relevant for Saeed, whose interactions with religious groups highlight the complex interplay between faith and cultural identity in unfamiliar environments, influencing his understanding of self and community in the midst of his migratory journey. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine how *Exit West* engages with Appadurai's five scapes, positioning the novel within broader discourses on migration, globalization, and identity as Saeed and Nadia navigate a world where traditional boundaries are increasingly fluid. Through an analysis of both globalization and postcolonialism, this paper aims to interrogate the complex dynamics at play in contemporary global relations, with particular attention to how global economic, political, and cultural systems continue to exert control over formerly colonized regions.

Globalization and Postcolonialism

Manfred B. Steger defines globalization in *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* as: "a set of social processes that appear to transform our present social condition of conventional nationality into one of globality" (2009, p. 8). Steger elaborates on this by describing globalization as the intensification of worldwide social relations that link distant localities, such that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away. Globalization, in its most basic understanding, refers to the increasing interconnectedness of nations, economies, and cultures in a way that transcends traditional boundaries, particularly since the late 20th century (Nayar, 2015, p. 85).

Similarly, for Ashcroft et al., globalization is the process by which local communities and individual lives are influenced by worldwide economic and cultural forces, essentially making the world feel like a single place (2007, p. 127). This idea reflects the increasing permeability of borders and the diminishing relevance of traditional nation-states as sole actors in international affairs. Ashcroft

et al. highlights the transition from older terms like "international" and "international relations," underscoring how these earlier concepts are rooted in a world dominated by territorial states, largely a product of European imperialism (2007, p. 127). This destabilization raises critical questions about the relevance of concepts such as nation-state, sovereignty, and cultural homogeneity in the contemporary world. Scholars like Roger Rouse argue that these changes necessitate new theoretical approaches that account for the fluidity and fragmentation that characterize modern life (cited in Behdad, 2005, p. 65). As old paradigms of identity and community lose their explanatory power, it becomes increasingly important to explore how individuals navigate the overlapping spaces of economy, culture, and politics in a globalized world (cited in Behdad, 2005, p. 65).

The relationship between globalization and postcolonialism has emerged as a significant point of intersection in contemporary theoretical discussions. Scholars of postcolonialism have long examined the enduring legacies of European colonialism, focusing on the socio-political, economic, and cultural impacts on formerly colonized regions. However, in recent decades, the accelerating processes of globalization have introduced a new set of challenges and opportunities for postcolonial critique (McLeod, 2010, p. 174). Globalization, with its transnational flows of capital, people, information, and culture, has often been described as a form of neo-imperialism, where power is no longer exclusively tied to the nation-state but is dispersed across global institutions and networks (McLeod, 2010, p. 174).

Globalization has emerged as a transformative force reshaping economic, political, and cultural dynamics on a global scale, often in ways that bypass traditional forms of authority, such as the nation-state (McLeod, 2010, p. 174). As transnational institutions, multinational corporations, and global financial networks exert growing influence, the balance of power has shifted away from localized governance to entities that operate across borders. This new reality raises critical questions about the distribution of power and the socioeconomic disparities that arise from this process (McLeod, 2010, p. 174). The shift from direct colonial rule to transnational economic and technological control has raised questions about whether the end of colonialism truly marked the end of imperial structures:

> We might like to think of globalization as a form of imperialism by remote control, one which no longer requires colonial settlement but which can obtain power over other locations and peoples – their resources, cultural and social activities, and wealth – precisely with recourse to the new technologies and '- scapes' which characterize the contemporary. (McLeod, 2010, p. 175)

The quote explores how globalization can be viewed as a new form of imperialism, where the traditional models of colonial settlement have been replaced by more remote methods of control and domination. As globalization has unfolded, it has become increasingly apparent that power operates through complex networks, often centered around multinational corporations (TNCs), financial institutions, and global governance bodies, which exert significant influence over resources, labor, and policy decisions across the world (McLeod, 2010, p. 176). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in *Empire*, argue that globalization represents a new "Empire," one that mirrors colonialism in its hierarchical power dynamics but is more diffuse and pervasive in its methods of control (2000, p. 43).

In postcolonial studies, globalization is essential for understanding modern power dynamics rooted in historical imperialism (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 128). Globalization today reflects the resistance once exhibited by colonized societies; it has evolved from overt colonial rule into complex systems of economic, communicative, and cultural influence (Ashcroft et al., p. 129). The U.S., often posited as a leading global force, exemplifies this shift, linking classical imperialism to

modern global influence through mass culture and elite-driven policies rather than direct colonization (Ashcroft et al., p. 129). Stuart Hall adds that contemporary globalization, largely American in nature, spreads predominantly through political and cultural elite channels (1991, pp. 27-8).

The relationship between globalization and postcolonialism has generated diverse responses among postcolonial theorists on whether globalization is simply a new phase of imperialism. Hardt and Negri argue that globalization has significantly weakened nation-states, promoting global uniformity that subordinates weaker economies (2000, p. 43). In contrast, Benita Parry contends that while globalization brings new controls, it does not fully negate the gains of postcolonial resistance, and national sovereignty remains relevant (Parry, 2004, pp. 93-103). The ethical implications of globalization are also central to postcolonial discourse. Kwame Anthony Appiah's "cosmopolitanism" advocates for balancing universal ethical obligations with respect for cultural diversity (Appiah, 2006, p. xiii). Paul Gilroy's "vernacular cosmopolitanism" similarly emphasizes ethical engagements with cultural differences through everyday encounters (Gilroy, 2004, p. 75). The role of postcolonial literature in global markets also reflects globalization's complexity. Authors like Salman Rushdie have achieved international acclaim, yet critics argue this success risks commodifying cultural differences, appealing to Western audiences for exoticism rather than challenging colonial perspectives (McLeod, 2010, p. 177).

Globalization, then, is multifaceted and contested, with some viewing it as a democratizing force and others as a driver of inequality (Ashcroft et al., p. 127). The stance of "critical globalism" avoids binary views, instead recognizing both the harms and benefits of globalization, such as economic growth alongside environmental concerns (Ashcroft et al., p. 128). In parallel, the concept of cosmopolitanism embodies the ethical and cultural responses to globalization, where critical frameworks like Johansen's "territorialized cosmopolitanism" highlight an ethical commitment to both local identities and global responsibilities (Johansen, 2008, p. 2). Together, globalization and cosmopolitanism capture the complex interplay of global structures and cultural responses, reflecting how individuals and societies negotiate the balance between global interconnectedness and local specificity in a world of fluid identities and permeable borders.

Arjun Appadurai and Globalization

Arjun Appadurai's conceptualization of globalization provides a perspective that captures the fluidity and unpredictability of global processes. In his book Modernity *at Large,* Arjun Appadurai talks about the idea of "post-nation" and "postnational" to explain what happens in the world during globalization. He uses these terms to explain three key points about globalization. First, he argues that globalization renders the nation-state, the traditional form of government, to become outdated: "We are in the process of moving to a global order in which the nation-state has become obsolete, and other formations for allegiance and identity have taken its place" (1996, p. 169). Second, Appadurai talks about new ways to organize the flow of resources, images, and ideas around the world (1996, p. 169). These new forms either challenge the nation-state or offer peaceful alternatives for large-scale political loyalties (Appadurai, 1996, p. 169). In this view, the nation-state is no longer the only or even the best way to manage these global flows. Third, he introduces the concept of "diasporic nationalisms," which refers to national identities that exist beyond physical territories, as the nation-state can no longer monopolize people's loyalties as it once did (Appadurai, 1996, p. 169). In illustrating his point, Appadurai cites the United States, emphasizing how its political system, built on pluralism, allows different immigrant communities to establish what he terms "delocalized transnations" (1996, p. 172). These groups maintain a special connection to their place of origin, but they have become entirely diasporic, meaning their members live and function outside their homeland. Appadurai's assertion that the nation-state is diminishing due to the increasing openness of borders, driven by global politics and free-trade

zones, highlights how globalization is shaping culture. (1996, p. 172).

The next issue to consider about Appadurai's view of globalization is how he sees the diaspora and its potential to bring about positive change. Appadurai regards the presence of diasporic communities in the United States as something beneficial (1996, p. 173). He believes that these communities are important for shaping a new kind of "postnational politics" (1996, p. 173). By this, he means a type of political thinking that moves beyond national borders. In the U.S., there is often a conflict between the aim to maintain a unified American identity, which Appadurai calls the "centripetal pull of Americanness," and the presence of diverse immigrant groups bringing different cultural backgrounds, which he terms the "centrifugal pull of diasporic diversity" (1996, p. 173). This new form of politics could help solve the tension between the pull of being American and the pull of maintaining a diverse, diasporic identity. In other words, Appadurai argues that these transnational communities force American society to deal with the challenges of diversity and immigration. They push the U.S. to build a society that embraces and is centered around the variety brought by different diasporic groups.

Appadurai argues that the emergence of these "delocalized transnations," communities connected to multiple locations rather than just one, compels American society to confront significant question (1996, p. 172). These include how to accommodate diversity and how to build a society that is inclusive of immigrants. Essentially, the presence of diasporic communities challenges the idea of a singular national identity and pushes societies like the United States to become more pluralistic, meaning they must accept and integrate multiple cultures and ways of life (Appadurai, 1996, p. 173).

Appadurai emphasizes the need to focus on how mass mediation and migration interact, viewing them as key components in shaping the cultural politics of modern globalization (1994, p. 21). Electronic media enables diasporic communities to engage in common cultural and political dialogues across borders, forming "diasporic public spheres" (1996, p. 21). As exemplified by Turkish workers in Germany watching Turkish films or Pakistani cab drivers in Chicago listening to sermons from home, these mediated connections transcend nation-state boundaries and contribute to a new global order (1996, p. 4).

Parallel to advancements in information technology, Appadurai highlights the inadequacy of existing theories to explain the current global cultural economy. According to him, today's global economy features fundamental disjunctures, with noticeable separations and misalignments between its economic, cultural, and political aspects (1994, p. 33). These disjunctures create a landscape that is difficult to navigate using existing theoretical models (Appadurai, 1994, p. 32). Appadurai acknowledges the need for new frameworks that can better understand the complexities of our globalized world. The traditional approaches, whether they focus on economic relations, migration patterns, or cultural exchanges, do not fully address the ways in which these elements now interact and influence each other in unpredictable and often disjointed ways (Appadurai, 1996, p. 32). Therefore, Appadurai introduces a set of five key concepts such as *ethnoscapes*, *technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes*, as a way to understand "the conditions under which current global flows occur" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 37). Each of these "scapes" represents a different aspect of global interactions and flows, marked by fluidity and irregularity (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33). The use of the suffix "-scape" emphasizes that these dimensions are not static or universally perceived but are shaped by varying perspectives depending on historical, linguistic, and political contexts (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33).

Different groups of people, like countries, big companies, immigrant communities, and even small groups like families, see and experience these scapes in their own ways (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33). The notion of these scapes expands on Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities,"

which explains how individuals in a nation feel a sense of connection despite not knowing one another personally (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33). However, these scapes take the idea further by forming "imagined worlds," where individuals and groups shape their own realities based on their experience. Governments and businesses play a role in shaping the imagined worlds, but they are also influenced by the ways in which people perceive and respond to their surroundings (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33). Today, many people live in these imagined worlds, which gives them the power to question or even change the stories that those in power try to impose (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33). For Appadurai, this is important because it shows that the world is more complicated and diverse than simple explanations can capture (1996, p. 33). That is to say, Appadurai introduces a new way of thinking about the world that focuses on how different people and groups experience and shape global connections.

Appadurai's framework aligns with "critical globalism," which acknowledges both the benefits and inequities of globalization. He argues that while global processes are often influenced by powerful centers, local actors actively negotiate, resist, or reshape these influences within their own contexts. Therefore, Appadurai's perspective offers a complex, layered understanding of globalization that transcends simple dichotomies.

Exit West and Five "Scapes"

Arjun Appadurai's conceptualization of globalization through his framework of five "scapes" provides a critical lens for analyzing Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, a narrative that weaves the complexities of migration and identity in a globalized world. In the novel, the fluidity of *ethnoscape* is palpable as characters navigate the challenges of displacement, revealing how their identities are shaped by the forces of globalization.

The concept of *ethnoscape* is a term that is used to capture the dynamic and fluid nature of human migration in our increasingly globalized world. Appadurai highlights how the movement of people, whether they are tourists, immigrants, refugees, or guest workers, has become a defining characteristic of our time. While there are still stable communities based on family, friendship, work, and where people live, these stable connections are often influenced by the movement of people (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33). More and more, people are dealing with the realities of needing to move or the dreams of wanting to move (Appadurai, 1996, p. 34). For example, people in villages in India now think about moving not just to nearby cities like Poona or Madras but also to places like Dubai or Houston. Refugees from Sri Lanka might end up in South India or even Switzerland, and the Hmong people might find themselves in London or Philadelphia (Appadurai, 1996, p. 34). As global economic needs change and governments adjust their policies on refugees, these moving groups cannot afford to settle down for too long, even if they want to. *Ethnoscapes* are deeply tied to the idea of transnational flows and the deterritorialization of culture, where identities and cultural practices are no longer strictly bound by geography or national borders.

Similarly, the opening sentences of the novel Exit West describe a world where the experience of being a refugee is increasingly common, reflecting the global movement of people that Appadurai discusses with his concept of *ethnoscapes*: "In a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not openly at war, a young man met a young woman in a classroom" (Hamid, 2018, p. 1). Saeed and Nadia, the two main protagonists, live in a city filled with refugees, indicating that migration and displacement are not just isolated events but a widespread reality in the contemporary world. This aligns with Appadurai's idea that the movement of people, whether they are fleeing war, seeking better opportunities, or driven by other forces, has become a central aspect of global life. Appadurai emphasizes that these moving groups not only affect the politics of nations but also embody the tension between stability and mobility in the modern world. For instance, the imagery of refugees occupying open spaces in the city, "pitching tents in the

greenbelts between roads" and "erecting lean-tos next to the boundary walls of houses," is a powerful reflection of Appadurai's *ethnoscape* (Hamid, 2018, p. 23). These scenes emphasize the unsettling presence of transient communities within urban settings, where the rhythms of normal life are both disrupted and reconstituted in makeshift environments. The sight of a family residing under a "sheet of plastic propped up with branches and a few chipped bricks" encapsulates the fragile and improvised nature of these new forms of settlement, which arise in response to the pressures of global migration and displacement (Hamid, 2018, p. 23). The refugees' presence in these spaces is emblematic of the "woof of human motion" that interweaves with the "warp" of stability (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33).

Amidst people fleeing wars and calamities, Saeed and Nadia too will soon decide to seek refuge in Western countries. As Saeed and Nadia eventually become refugees themselves, they join the broader *ethnoscapes* of individuals who are constantly on the move, shaped by the forces of globalization, conflict, and changing political landscapes. Saeed and Nadia's journey begins in a city without a name, but the three cities they access through magical doors, namely Mykonos in Greece, London in England, and Marin County in California, are all located in the global North. While the novel does not explicitly identify the first city, there is compelling evidence to suggest that it is modeled after Lahore, Pakistan. Hamid himself has stated that the unnamed city is based "in many ways on Lahore, where I have lived half my life" (Brice, 2020, p. 4).

As the characters move through each of the three cities, their different experiences illustrate the concept of *ethoscapes* in various settings. The story starts in Mykonos, where refugee camps near the coast evoke typical images of Mediterranean crossings prevalent in contemporary discussions. The novel's portrayal of a refugee camp on the Greek island of Mykonos, where people of "many colors and hues" gather around fires and speak in a "cacophony that was the languages of the world," encapsulates the essence of Appadurai's *ethnoscapes* (Hamid, 2018, p. 100). The camps are described as a microcosm of a global movement, where "everyone was foreign, and so, in a sense, no one was" (Hamid, 2018, p. 100). The fluidity and diversity of this gathering of displaced individuals on Mykonos underscore the idea that in a world increasingly characterized by mobility, the traditional boundaries of nation, culture, and identity are continually being renegotiated. The camp's inhabitants, hailing from diverse backgrounds yet sharing a common experience of displacement, represent the fragmented and interconnected world that Appadurai describes.

However, Hamid does not ignore the stereotypical associations often imposed upon refugees. In this regard, Sercan Hamza Bağlama in his article *Mohsin Hamid's Exit West: Co-Opting Refugees into Global Capitalism* argues that stereotypical representations of refugees as perpetrators of violence and disorder persist through a "criminal lexis" and the novel "[…] produces many stereotypical refugee images and perceptions for the addressee belonging to mainstream white society, which, in a way, reinforces and heightens the prejudices of the western world against 'them'" (2019, p. 151). In Exit West, Hamid acknowledges this problematic framing but simultaneously seeks to deconstruct it, as stated by Bağlama (2019, p. 152). For example, the narrative depicts violent episodes involving Middle Eastern militants who cross into Vienna, carrying out acts of violence that resonate with the Western biases Bağlama describes (Hamid, 2018, pp. 104, 168, 176). Such portrayals may initially appear to confirm negative stereotypes of refugees as sources of instability, yet Hamid simultaneously uses these episodes to critique the xenophobic biases that underpin these perceptions. Rather than presenting refugees as a monolithic group, Hamid characterizes them as complex individuals, remarking that "decent people vastly outnumbered dangerous ones" (2018, p. 101).

These dynamics of inclusion and exclusion are further highlighted through the imagery of the camp's "doors out" being "heavily guarded" in contrast to the "doors in," which remain "mostly left unsecured" (Hamid, 2018, p. 101). This contrast between restricted exits and open entrances

serves as a powerful metaphor for the larger global dynamics that shape contemporary migration, reinforcing neocolonial power structures that determine who may freely move and who must remain confined. As Edward Said argues, Orientalist thought is grounded in "an imaginative and yet drastically polarized geography," one that divides the world into two unequal parts: "the familiar, dominant Occident" or West and the "different Orient"(1981, p. 4). This binary continues to shape global perceptions, producing a worldview in which certain regions are categorized as "richer destinations" while others are designated as "poorer places" (Hamid, 2018, p. 101).

In this framework, the migrants on Mykonos find themselves caught within what Said describes as a deeply ingrained geographical hierarchy, where the West maintains a privileged, guarded status. This echoes Appadurai's observation that the movement of people is molded by "the shifting needs of international capital, technological advances, and the policies of nation-states" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 34). For these displaced individuals, who lack the agency to move "forward to richer destinations," migration is neither a straightforward nor liberating act but one tightly controlled by forces beyond their control (Hamid, 2018, p. 101). The open "doors in" may imply accessibility, but the heavily guarded "doors out" underscore the limited pathways for these migrants, reflecting a world order in which the lines of movement are starkly asymmetrical, mirroring Said's polarized geography.

This limited freedom aligns with Appadurai's assertion that these "moving groups can never afford to let their imaginations rest too long" as they are continually subjected to the economic and political demands of a global system that regards their mobility through the lens of profit and control (Appadurai, 1996, p. 34). By portraying the Mykonos camp in this manner, Hamid highlights how the "imaginative geography" described by Said continues to govern the experiences of migrants today, confining them within a global structure that perpetuates the uneven dynamics of inclusion and exclusion rooted in a colonial past.

In the novel, Hamid explores the shifting identities and experiences of displaced individuals, particularly as Saeed and Nadia migrate from Mykonos to London. Their movement into new environments underscores the themes of estrangement and realignment of identity within foreign spaces, resonating with Homi Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely." In *The World and the Home*, Bhabha draws on Freud's ideas of *heimlich* (homely) and *unheimlich* (unhomely), reinterpreting these terms to describe the migrant experience. For Bhabha, the unhomely represents "the estranging sense of relocation of the home and the world," where distinctions between private and public, home and world, become indistinct, leading to "a vision that is divided as it is disorienting" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 141). This framework theorizes migration as an experience that disrupts conventional understandings of home, compelling individuals to reconstruct a sense of belonging in spaces where the notion of "home" may no longer hold familiar meaning.

In London, the migrant community fragments under the weight of ethnonationalist pressures and nativist violence, with refugees regrouping into clusters based on shared national or ethnic backgrounds. Saeed feels this division acutely, finding the presence of unfamiliar languages and cultures "jarring" and initially unsettling, particularly as he becomes "the only man from his country" in a house dominated by other nationalities (Hamid, 2018, pp. 129, 146). This reaction aligns with Appadurai's concept of the "delocalized transnation," a diasporic identity that remains deeply connected to an imagined place of origin, even when separated geographically. Saeed's longing for connection with those from his homeland exemplifies a form of diasporic identity, where cultural ties continue to shape one's sense of self despite physical displacement. Appadurai describes this as loyalty to a "nonterritorial transnation", which is a community that exists ideologically, grounded in cultural memories rather than in a specific geographic location (Appadurai, 1996, p. 172).

Nadia, however, resists this pull toward national affiliation. Her exchange with Saeed, "From the country we used to be from," highlights her perspective that traditional ties to one's homeland need not define identity in a globalized world (Hamid, 2018, p. 149). Nadia embodies Bhabha's concept of the unhomely by challenging the conventional boundaries that define "home." For Bhabha, the unhomely does not equate to homelessness; rather, it is a condition in which "the border between home and world becomes confused," requiring a redefinition of belonging within spaces that are both familiar and strange (Bhabha, 1992, p. 141). Nadia's reluctance to join Saeed in "their own people's house" reflects her view that identity should evolve beyond national or ethnic lines, rooted instead in shared experiences within a new and diverse environment.

This divergence in perspective underscores Nadia's openness to a cosmopolitan identity. Her reaction to nativist hostility is complex; while she recognizes its familiarity, she also finds comfort in London's diversity, noting the presence of "people of all these different colors in all these different attires" as something reassuring amidst the hostility (Hamid, 2018, p. 156). This response illustrates her readiness to engage with a fluid and adaptive sense of self, contrasting Saeed's attachment to a collective identity rooted in his homeland. Bhabha suggests that the unhomely enables individuals to "make a home" within alien spaces by creating a sense of familiarity in unfamiliar surroundings (Bhabha, 1992, p. 141). Nadia's analogy of riding her motorcycle "with the visor lifted," braving the "dust and pollution and the little bugs," symbolizes her willingness to embrace the unknown, even at the cost of comfort (Hamid, 2018, pp. 156–157).

In Marin, California, Saeed and Nadia encounter a community that epitomizes the fluidity and diversity of Appadurai's ethnoscapes. Marin, situated "on the edge of a continent" and overlooking a vast ocean, serves as a metaphor for the emergence of new global communities shaped by migration and shared experiences (Hamid, 2018, p. 193). This community offers a space where individuals from varied backgrounds converge, not as members of discrete ethnic or national groups but as participants in a broader, transnational identity. In this setting, Nadia's journey toward a cosmopolitan self reflects the possibilities of a world in which identity is not strictly tied to place but is continually renegotiated within the dynamic landscape of globalization. In contrast, Saeed's search for familiar cultural connections underscores the ongoing relevance of Appadurai's concept of transnation, as displaced individuals navigate between the pull of their past and the new horizons that lie ahead.

Appadurai's concept of technoscapes refers to the global flow of technology that crosses borders rapidly, creating complex and interconnected systems (1996, p. 34). He highlights that technology is not just about advanced machinery but also includes the movement of people with various skill levels, like engineers and laborers, who contribute to technological developments in different parts of the world. The distribution of these technologies and the movement of people are influenced by global financial flows, political conditions, and labor markets rather than just traditional economic factors. The movement of people, especially migrants, and their engagement with global technology in *Exit West* can be analyzed through the lens of technoscape. The novel features "doors" that magically transport people across borders, symbolizing the rapid and often unpredictable movement enabled by modern technology. Magical doors in the novel represent the accelerated and often unexpected movements across borders facilitated by modern technology:

> The effect doors had on people altered as well. Rumors had begun to circulate of doors that could take you elsewhere, often to places far away, well removed from this death trap of a country. Some people claimed to know people who knew people who had been through such doors. A normal door, they said, could become a special door, and it could happen without warning to any door at all. Most people thought these rumors to be nonsense, the superstitions of the feeble-minded. However, most people began to gaze at their own doors a little differently nonetheless. (Hamid, 2018, pp. 69-70)

Saeed and Nadia's travels through these doors metaphorically demonstrate how technology blurs geographical lines, paralleling Appadurai's insights on technology's ability to breach once-solid borders.

The narrative of Saeed and Nadia's journey in *Exit West* is punctuated by short, fragmentary stories featuring unnamed characters in far-off locations. These secondary narratives accentuate the simultaneity of global events, a hallmark of the interconnectedness described by Appadurai in his concept of technoscape. In one such instance, a scene unfolds in Sydney, where a pale-skinned woman is asleep in her apartment as "Saeed's email was being downloaded from a server and read by his client" (Hamid, 2018, p. 5). This moment emphasizes how global technology interlinks seemingly isolated events, with characters unaware of each other but bound by the same digital currents. Through these brief, interwoven narratives, Hamid suggests that even mundane actions, such as receiving an email, are part of a larger, interconnected network facilitated by technology, highlighting the simultaneity and reach of the *technoscape*. As these characters move between countries via the novel's magical doors, Hamid adds another layer to this global interconnectedness. The figure that emerges from a woman's closet in Australia, initially described as dark and mysterious, is later revealed to be a refugee who entered through one of these magical portals. The figure is described in an almost spectral manner, with "dark, woolly hair" and skin that appears "darker than night … a rectangle of complete darkness—the heart of darkness" (Hamid, 2018, pp. 6-7), evoking Conrad's imagery and adding a sense of foreboding to the character's sudden arrival. The intensity of this darkness, reminiscent of Conrad's "heart of darkness," carries a double meaning: it is both an unknown threat and a symbol of the migrant experience, marked by fear and uncertainty as they cross into unfamiliar spaces (Perfect, 2019, p.14). In Hamid's narrative, the doors become symbols of both a "beginning and an end" for the migrants who pass through them, highlighting the unpredictable nature of transnational movement within the technoscape (Hamid, 2018, p. 98).

The sudden appearance of migrants through these doors symbolizes the unpredictability of global flows, reflecting the fluidity and disruption that Appadurai associates with *technoscapes*. Just as technology and people can cross borders in unexpected and sometimes unsettling ways, the dark doors in *Exit West* embody the blurred boundaries that characterize the modern, globally connected world. Hamid's literary technique of shifting scenes and contrasting physical locations seamlessly illustrates how technology and global migration can link distant parts of the world into a single, interconnected network. These simultaneous events, as Perfect (2019) notes, embody the "black holes in the fabric of the nation," where conventional national boundaries dissolve, allowing individuals to cross into new territories regardless of cultural or geopolitical divisions (2019, p. 17).

In addition to this, Hamid's recurrent references to mobile phones underscore their role in creating a continuous, fluid technoscape that connects the characters across fragmented geographies. In contrast to Saeed, who limits his usage, Nadia "saw no need to limit her phone," using it to escape the confinement of her environment by virtually connecting with the wider world (Hamid, 2018, p. 37). Through social media, she not only witnesses distant events such as "bombs falling, women exercising, men copulating, clouds gathering" but also engages in local economies facilitated by digital platforms, such as when she orders hallucinogenic mushrooms for delivery, exploiting the gray areas in law enforcement's priorities (Hamid, 2018, pp. 37-38). Her use of "opaque usernames and avatars, the online equivalents of her black robes" mirrors her cultural identity, reflecting a digital anonymity that maintains her privacy while still enabling her to explore global spaces (Hamid, 2018, pp. 37-38). This depiction of Nadia's digital life highlights the multifaceted nature of technoscape, where mobile phones become more than mere tools of communication; they are portals for personal agency, cultural expression, and access to informal

economies. By presenting mobile connectivity as both a means of transcending geographic boundaries and as a culturally situated practice, Hamid illustrates how technoscape shapes identity and connection in complex ways, underscoring technology's role in facilitating both global interconnectedness and individual autonomy.

In the novel, financescapes become a tangible aspect of Nadia and Saeed's journey, illustrating how monetary exchanges reshape possibilities for migrants. Each new location they enter introduces fresh forms of economic engagement and survival strategies, revealing the multifaceted nature of *financescapes* in migratory contexts. The camp on Mykonos functions "like a trading post in an old-time gold rush," creating an emergent market system where nearly every conceivable good and service is available for sale or barter (Hamid, 2018, p. 101). From essentials such as "sweaters to mobile phones to antibiotics" to more covert services like "sex and drugs," this space operates outside the bounds of traditional economic systems, shaping a distinctive financescape that reflects the precarious existence of its inhabitants (Hamid, 2018, p. 101). These exchanges underscore the ways in which global migration patterns generate informal economies, often grounded in urgent need and vulnerability. In Mykonos, Nadia and Saeed must adapt to this makeshift economy, navigating a financescape that requires immediate, pragmatic choices. As they arrive, their primary objectives are survival and basic comfort, reflected in their first purchases: "some water, food, a blanket, a larger backpack, a little tent...electric power and local numbers for their phones" (Hamid, 2018, p. 102). This list of essentials demonstrates a strategic approach to their limited resources, where financial transactions are not only for sustenance but also for security and connectivity within a precarious environment.

However, the novel also illustrates a darker aspect of financescapes through the figures of people smugglers, who exploit the desperation of refugees like Saeed and Nadia. Saeed's encounter with an old acquaintance, a "people smuggler" who "knew all the ins and outs" of facilitating escape, at first seems a stroke of fortune, representing an avenue of support amid the turbulent *financescape* of displacement (Hamid, 2018, p. 109). This acquaintance, familiar with the covert systems of movement, initially offers assistance with a substantial discount, and Saeed's gratitude and trust are apparent as he believes this person will fulfill his promise of safe passage to Sweden. However, this trust is betrayed as Saeed and Nadia awaken the next day to find that the smuggler has "disappeared overnight" with their payment, leaving them stranded and vulnerable (Hamid, 2018, p. 109). The smuggler's abrupt abandonment exposes the precarious nature of financial exchanges within migratory contexts, where trust is often extended out of necessity despite the risks of exploitation. In this context, *financescapes* are not merely about the movement of money but encompass a web of exchanges, dependencies, and betrayals that define the refugee experience. The smuggler's deceptive practices highlight the unstable, often predatory nature of *financescapes* within displaced communities, where refugees must navigate informal networks and face potential exploitation at every turn. This darker aspect of financescapes in Exit West thus reflects Appadurai's notion of financial flows that are "mysterious, rapid, and difficult" to trace, particularly within the complex realities of migration, where financial exchanges intertwine with issues of survival, trust, and the pursuit of safety (Appadurai, 1996, p. 34).

The novel further highlights the economic triggers of migration. Economic pressures in their homeland prompt Nadia and Saeed to move abroad, a scenario that depicts Appadurai's concept of *financescapes*, where migration is often dictated by global economic forces and capital movements. Saeed's boss, with visible tears, is compelled to close his business due to the larger financial instability that possibly spans the entire economy. This moment highlights the precariousness of enterprises and the livelihoods of those they employ when faced with failing financial systems. The emotional distress of the boss and his employees' support in return underscores the deep impact of economic disturbances on everyone involved. At Nadia's office, the

situation is even more telling. The payroll department stops issuing paychecks, leading to the collapse of the normal economic order within the company. This cessation of financial flow forces employees to engage in "calm looting," where they take physical assets as a form of compensation, reflecting a breakdown in the usual financial practices (Hamid, 2018, p. 67). The fact that security guards are the first to leave indicates the disintegration of organizational structure when financial stability is lost.

Additionally, one of the micro-stories provides a profound exploration of Appadurai's *financescapes*, focusing on the impact of global financial trends on the lives and properties of individuals. The story features an old woman living in Palo Alto who has spent her entire life in the same house. The woman is now wealthy due to the value of her property, though she continues to live modestly, unlike her children, who urge her to sell the house for its monetary worth. She refuses, telling them to wait until after her death, a reminder of their financial motivations. In contrast, the flat owned by Saeed's family, initially a valuable piece of property, becomes almost worthless in the context of war (Hamid, 2018, p. 9).

This change in Saeed's family house illustrates how financescapes are not static; they fluctuate depending on the broader geopolitical situation. The estate agents' mantra, "location, location, location," and the historians' response, "geography is destiny," succinctly capture how the value of property is contingent on the stability of the environment (Hamid, 2018, p. 9). In times of peace, the flat's location would have been desirable, but in conflict, it becomes a liability, showing the fluidity of financial value in different scapes. Appadurai's *financescapes* encompass the flux and uncertainty in global capital, which affects everything from real estate to national economies. The old woman's house and Saeed's family's flat are subject to these larger, impersonal forces, demonstrating how individual properties are caught in the currents of global financial flows.

This juxtaposition aligns with Edward Said's concept of *imaginative geography*, which underscores how space and geography are not neutral or static but are shaped by cultural, historical, and political forces. Said asserts that "none of us is outside or beyond geography," emphasizing how geographical spaces are deeply tied to human struggles, not just through physical conflicts but through "ideas, forms, and images" (1981, p. 7). In *Exit West*, the shifting fortunes of the properties reflect this interplay between geography and broader socio-political dynamics. The woman's property, situated in a stable and affluent part of the world, benefits from global economic trends, whereas Saeed's flat, located in a war-torn area shaped by colonial legacies, becomes a liability. Said's observation that "the extraordinary global reach of classical nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European imperialism still casts a considerable shadow over our own times" is particularly relevant here, as the colonial history of Saeed's city has left it vulnerable to geopolitical instability, directly impacting the value of its real estate (1981, p. 5).

Appadurai's concept of *mediascapes* refers to the global distribution and impact of media technologies like television, films, and the internet, which allow a wide range of groups to share and shape information worldwide (1996, p. 35). Hamid's *Exit West* encapsulates Appadurai's concept of *mediascapes* by illustrating the transformative impact of mobile technology on individual experience and societal connectivity. Nadia and Saeed's engagement with their phones serves as a microcosm of how media technologies connect people to a vast array of global and imaginary spaces, influencing their perceptions and interactions with both the local and global:

> In their phones were antennas, and these antennas sniffed out an invisible world as if by magic, a world that was all around them and also nowhere, transporting them to places distant and near and to places that had never been and would never be. (Hamid, 2018, p. 35)

In the text, the description of phones as magical devices that reveal an "invisible world" aligns with

Appadurai's idea that *mediascapes* allow people to access and imagine different realities and lives. This gateway opens not only to other locations but also to potential existences that may never be actualized, created by the international flow of media visuals and narratives. Saeed's cautious engagement with his phone, where he limits his app usage but still delves into the internet for a regulated hour each day, shows the compelling allure of the *mediascape*. Despite his reservations about the overwhelming nature of digital content, he finds it indispensable for maintaining a connection with Nadia. This reflects Appadurai's idea that *mediascapes* are not just about the consumption of media but are deeply interwoven into the fabric of daily life, influencing personal relationships and individual behavior.

Nadia's use of her phone contrasts with Saeed's, as she embraces its full potential to connect with the wider world (Hamid, 2018, p. 39). Her experiences browsing social media and ordering items like shrooms for delivery demonstrate how mediascapes can facilitate new forms of consumption and interaction. Her phone acts as a portal to global events and personal adventures, illustrating the dual role of *mediascapes* in providing access to both global imagery and localized services. In public, Nadia wears black robes and extends this principle online with opaque usernames and avatars, showing how people can use and adjust *mediascapes* to keep their privacy or develop new personas. This ability to shape one's presence in both physical and digital realms highlights the transformative power of mediascapes, as described by Appadurai.

Nadia and Saeed's home city's physical realities align closely with Appadurai's concept of *mediascapes*:

> But even now, the city's freewheeling virtual world stood in stark contrast to the day-to-day lives of most people, to those of young men, and especially of young women, and above all of children who went to sleep unfed but could see on some small screen people in foreign lands preparing and consuming and even conducting food fights with feasts of such opulence that the very fact of their existence boggled the mind. (Hamid, 2018, pp. 38-9)

The story sets the virtual world, filled with images of luxury and freedom, against the stark and sometimes brutal urban life, illustrating Appadurai's concept of *mediascapes* as zones where reality and fiction merge. This fusion prompts individuals, particularly those far from urban centers, to create imagined lives shaped by media (Appadurai, 1996, p. 35). Moreover, this passage exemplifies what Spivak describes as the continuation of colonial processes "under the rubric of 'globalization'"(Spivak, as cited in Capoor, 2004, p. 633). The digital realm's presentation of Western abundance to undernourished viewers mirrors historical colonial exhibitions of wealth, reinforcing global socioeconomic disparities while naturalizing them through constant media exposure. Nadia's contrasting experiences online and in physical space further illuminate this dynamic. Her digital freedom to order items and browse social media exists alongside street-level harassment for riding a motorcycle (Hamid, 2018, p. 39). This juxtaposition reflects what Spivak identifies as the particular burden borne by subaltern women in global systems of production and social control (cited in Kapoor, p. 633). The virtual world's promise of liberation collides with entrenched local patriarchal structures, themselves shaped by colonial histories.

Furthermore, the pirate radio station operated by militants adds another layer to the mediascapes in the story. Various media entities in the novel, including local and international channels and the militants' pirate radio, narrate different versions of the same situation, highlighting the mediascape as an intricate network of image-centric, narrative-driven accounts that influence the reality experienced by their viewers:

> The few remaining local channels still on the air were saying that the war was going well, but the international ones were saying that it was going badly indeed, adding to an unprecedented flow of migrants that was hitting the rich countries, who were building walls

and fences and strengthening their borders, but seemingly to unsatisfactory effect. The militants had their own pirate radio station [...] claimed in a decelerated but almost rap-like cadence that the fall of the city was imminent. (Hamid, 2018, pp. 70-1)

Firstly, the local channels, which portray the war as progressing favorably, likely reflect the interests of state or local powers who wish to maintain control or foster a sense of security among the populace. This aligns with Appadurai's observation that mediascapes can be influenced by the "interests of those who own and control them" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 35). In contrast, the international channels depict the situation as deteriorating, potentially aligning with global perspectives that emphasize the severity of the conflict and its broader implications, such as the refugee crisis affecting wealthier nations. This juxtaposition of narratives highlights how mediascapes can offer "large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes," which are profoundly mixed (Appadurai, 1996, p. 35). For Saeed and Nadia, the mediascape they navigate is a mosaic of conflicting realities, each vying for their belief and shaping their perceptions of the world outside. The different narratives create a sense of vagueness, making it difficult for them to discern the true state of affairs. The ambiguity in the information leads people to build their perceptions of the world from these disjointed pieces, reflecting Appadurai's theory that *mediascapes* offer scripts for audiences to craft imagined worlds described as "chimerical and disjointed" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 35).

Exit West can be connected to Appadurai's concept of *ideoscapes* in several ways, particularly in how the control and manipulation of communication channels reflect the flow and restriction of political ideas and ideologies. In their home city where Nadia and Saeed first live, weak government military efforts are failing to curb the terrorist and military actions of religious extremist groups called 'the militants,' who are gradually occupying more of the country and will ultimately govern all significant urban centers. These militants, also supported by foreign powers, enforce a reign of terror, executing anyone who opposes their views on religion, societal behavior, and gender relations and violently instituting a theocratic government. The government, in response to ongoing threats, has shut down mobile phone signals and internet connectivity in a city as an antiterrorism measure (Hamid, 2018, p.55). In the story, the government's decision to shut down mobile phone signals, internet connectivity, and other communication channels is a direct form of controlling the *ideoscapes*. By cutting off these channels, the government is limiting the spread of ideas, information, and communication that could challenge its power or spread counter-narratives. This aligns with Appadurai's observation that ideoscapes are often about the struggle between state ideologies and counter-ideologies. The shutdown of communication represents more than just a tactical move; it symbolizes a broader attempt to manipulate the ideoscape within the city. Appadurai notes that the elements of *ideoscapes*, such as freedom, rights, and democracy, are subject to reinterpretation and control as they spread globally. Here, the government's justification of the shutdown as an "antiterrorism measure" illustrates this manipulation, as the rhetoric of security is used to legitimize the restriction of communication, thereby controlling the ideoscape and limiting access to information that might challenge the state's authority.

The act of cutting off mobile and internet access leaves characters like Nadia and Saeed feeling "marooned and alone and much more afraid," highlighting the emotional and psychological impact of a restricted ideoscape (Hamid, 2018, p. 55). Appadurai argues that the spread of ideoscapes is closely tied to the creation of a public sphere where ideas can be exchanged and contested (1996, p. 36). By depriving Nadia, Saeed, and others of their "portals to each other and to the world provided by their mobile phones," the government is effectively dismantling this public sphere, isolating individuals and increasing their fear (Hamid, 2018, p. 55). The manipulation of the *ideoscapes* demonstrates how states can use their control over communication technologies to

shape not only political narratives but also the emotional and psychological state of the population, reinforcing Appadurai's concept of *ideoscapes* as powerful tools in the hands of those who control them. By severing the connections between individuals and the broader world of ideas, the government in *Exit West* is exercising control over the ideoscape in a manner that is both immediate and far-reaching.

Conclusion

In *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid portrays the contemporary conditions in countries affected by military interventions, which trigger mass migration from the region to the West. Through the depiction of an unnamed city, Hamid captures the political, social, economic, and cultural decline brought about by an influx of refugees and subsequent military actions against fundamentalist groups. Postcolonial scholars often argue that globalization perpetuates many of the dynamics that characterize colonialism. While European powers once exerted direct control over their colonies, today's control is maintained through supranational corporations, international treaties, and global economic systems. Globalization, from a postcolonial perspective, is not a neutral or purely economic process but one deeply entwined with historical patterns of exploitation, domination, and inequality. The continuation of these dynamics under the guise of global economic integration challenges the idea that globalization is a force for progress, revealing instead its role in perpetuating the legacies of imperialism in the modern world.

When analyzed through Appadurai's five scapes, this journey reflects the broader dynamics of global flows. The magical doors serve as metaphors for ethnoscapes, illustrating the fluidity of migration and the tensions it creates between old and new identities. The magical doors encapsulate the paradox of modern migration: they facilitate movement and new opportunities, yet they intensify the struggle for cultural belonging in a globalized world. As symbols of *ethnoscapes*, these doors underscore the fluidity of identity, revealing how migrants are caught between established and emergent selves in unfamiliar social landscapes. For Saeed, the doors heighten his attachment to traditional values, while for Nadia, they open pathways to new freedoms and identities. Through these doors, Hamid highlights the ambivalence of globalization, where the promise of movement is entangled with the complexities of adapting across fragmented cultural spaces, ultimately capturing the layered reality of the contemporary migrant experience.

As refugees navigate these new environments, *technoscapes* and *mediascapes* play crucial roles, with globalized technologies and media shaping perceptions of migration, belonging, and exclusion. *Finanscapes*, particularly in cosmopolitan cities, underscore the economic struggles of displaced individuals who must find ways to survive in unfamiliar, often hostile, territories. Finally, ideoscapes highlight the clash between traditional values, as embodied by Saeed, and the progressive, cosmopolitan identity that Nadia adopts. Appadurai's five-scapes framework thus provides a nuanced understanding of how global processes influence the evolution of refugee identities and their capacity to adapt to new territories shaped by both inclusion and exclusion. Appadurai's work provides a lens for understanding the chaotic and interconnected nature of the modern globalized world. His "scapes" highlight the multiple dimensions through which globalization operates, encompassing technology, finance, media, culture, and power. This framework helps us move beyond simplistic understandings of globalization as a one-way flow from powerful nations to weaker ones, instead showing how global and local forces constantly interact and reshape each other. These interactions are complex and unpredictable, making it necessary to think in more nuanced ways about the consequences of living in a globalized world.

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Disclosure Statement

Literary Studies | research article

In-between the Uncertainties:
Ted Hughes and the Art of Negative Capability
Belirsizlikler Arasında: Ted Hughes ve Negatif Yetenek Sanatı

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ABSTRACT
This paper deals with the analysis of the poems of Ted Hughes (1930-1998) from John Keats' term, Negative Capability. In one of his letters to his brother, Keats writes that Negative Capability is such a state in which a poet is "capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries and doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (1817/2005, p. 60). Moreover, poets, according to Keats, have no steady character, they must have a metamorphic identity like a chameleon to adapt themselves to troublesome situations. Keatsian Negative Capability allows the reader to interpret Hughes' poems from two distinct perspectives, one is about Hughes' personal life with his wife, Sylvia Plath, and the other one is his public persona in England. This paper aims to reveal Hughes' struggle with the difficulties both in his personal and public life and interpret his poems to display how he was negatively capable of surviving amid the tragedy of human existence and how he turned his suffering into a work of art in his poems such as "The Hawk in the Rain," "Wodwo" and "Thought Fox."

Introduction

In one of his letters, Gustave Flaubert (1857/1965) writes, "[i]n order to survive, one must give up having clear-cut opinions about anything at all" (p. 71-2). His argument originates from the idea that human beings with "limited senses" cannot obtain absolute knowledge. In some sense, Flaubert's claim about the link between art and absoluteness is closely related to John Keats's term, "Negative Capability." Keats didn't publish a formal book of literary criticism but mentioned one of his texts of criticism in a letter to his brothers George and Tom. In December 1817, Keats wrote,

> I had not a dispute but a disquisition with Dilke on various subjects; several things dovetailed in my mind, and at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge. This pursued through Volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes

> every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration. (italics original) (2005, pp. 60-61)

In the passage above, Keats refers to several points at the same time; first, he considers Shakespeare a man of achievement in literature. What makes Shakespeare so great is that he possesses negative capability. According to Keats, a writer with negative capability can occupy a certain position in uncertainties, mysteries and doubts. This is the second significant point in his argument; a writer can survive in the middle of mysteries and doubts.

Those "men of achievement" represent their miseries in art by fighting against the troubles. Keats's argument covers that the negatively-capable writers can turn agonies into a work of art. The ideal poet, however, does not stick to any idea firmly while expressing his/her despair. While standing by the troubles, the ideal poet stays out of the atmosphere as an outsider to keep him/herself away from any influences. In 1817, Keats writes in a letter that "Men of Genius ... have not any individuality, any determined Character" (2005, p. 52). Having no self, the poet, a man of genius, Keats designates, is a "camelion Poet" (p. 195). This ability to adapt oneself to any circumstances appears in the term chameleon poet which is uttered only once in his letters. Keats argues,

> As to the poetical Character itself ... it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence because he has no Identity; he is continually in for and filling some other Body. (2005, pp. 194-5)

In the above quotation, Keats sets the framework of his theory of the ideal poet as a person who likes light and shade and lives in gusto and agony at the same time. A poet with no identity is symbolised by the image of the chameleon so that the writer can easily make him/herself suitable for a troublesome situation in order to survive and reproduce him/herself again. This is about the nature of the chameleon that can easily change its colour according to the situation of its environment. Keats turns the changing character of the chameleon into a metaphor to signify the psychological ability of the poet which allows him to adapt to social life. Therefore, Keats notes, "[t]he poet has none; no identity" (1817/2005, p. 195). The opaque identity of the ideal poet enables him/her to reproduce different personalities to survive during hard times.

Keats furthers his argument by connecting negative capability to social life. The world is a place in which people suffer from troubles, and the ideal poet knows how to get away from those pains. For Keats (1817/2005), it is indispensable for the poet to build his/her soul; he notes, "how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul" (p. 291). By means of the troubles, the poet shapes his/her intelligence and produces a unique work of art. Through an analysis of poems like "An Otter," "The Jaguar," "Song of a Rat," "Famous Poet" and "The Thought-Fox" this paper will argue that Hughes displays a form of negative capability and deals with the complexity of human suffering to write poetry that embodies the troubles of existence. In this way, Hughes embraces a Keatsian ideal and shows how poets can confront and transform pain into art that reflects the tragedies and truths of human experience.

Social Negativity

Towards the latter half of the 1950s, Ted Hughes introduced a distinctive poetic style with his first collection, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), which innovatively united rural and natural imagery as its thematic centrepiece, and thereby established a notable departure in poetic sensibility. Hughes

(2003) regards himself as a survivor and he writes, "You could not fail to realise that cataclysms had happened to the population (in the first world war, where a single bad 10 minutes in no man's land would wipe out a street or even a village), to the industry (the shift to the East in textile manufacture), and to the Methodism (the new age). Gradually it dawned on you that you were living among the survivors, in the remains" (Hughes 2003, p. 1202). Hughes considers himself a "survivor" within the milieu of his hometown, Hughes witnesses a series of catastrophes wrought by the First World War and the deleterious aftermath of industrialization. Sagar (1981) claims that Hughes "suffered in childhood the crisis of our civilization in a very pure form" (p. 8). Furthermore, Sagar underlines an important observation regarding the significance of Hughes's motherland in his poetic works, he notes, "[t]he experience forced him into a fiercely dualistic attitude to life" (p. 8). This dualistic nature inherent in Hughes's perspective is apparent throughout his first three books, *The Hawk in the Rain*, *Lupercal* and *Wodwo* (p. 8). When he was seven, Hughes's family moved to Mexborough, South Yorkshire, and there he inevitably experienced a "double life" too, the first one with "the town boys, sons of miners and railwaymen" and the other one in "his bolt holes – a nearby farm or a private estate with woods and lakes" (p. 9). The binary nature reveals itself in the opening poem of his second book, *Lupercal* (1960).

The title of the book, *Lupercal*, derives from the ancient Roman pastoral festival known as Lupercalia, traditionally organised on February 15th to invoke fertility and well-being. During this festival, Roman priests would employ thongs from sacrificed animals to strike or whip barren women, supposedly to restore their fertility. A parallel depiction of this ritual occurs at the beginning of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, wherein Marc Antony is directed to touch Calpurnia in a similar manner to ensure her fertility. However, the symbolic gesture of fertility captures an inherent contradiction. As Terry Gifford (2009) posits, the title of the book represents the themes of both "violence and creativity" (p. 35). Therefore, Hughes displays a state of ambivalence beginning from the title of the book and goes on with the poems in the collection.

Published in 1960, *Lupercal* contains poems written at the end of the 50s. The tone Hughes employs in the poems of *Lupercal*, which mainly originates from a certain untamed force of humankind, is associated with the chaotic atmosphere of the 1950s, and it allows him to reveal the primitive aspects of human nature that intermingle with violence. In terms of the social milieu, Stan Smith (1975) claims that the poetry of the 1950s "returned to the central theme of violence" (p. 414). The return to the theme of violence in 1950s poetry can be understood as a response to the cultural, social and political consequences of World War II. The decade was marked by a sense of disillusionment and questioning of human nature after the brutalities of the war such as the Holocaust and the nuclear bombings in Japan. These events shook the foundations of Western ideals about progress, civilization, and rationality. Then, poets like Hughes employed violence as a motif to examine the chaotic and darker aspects of humanity. "Things Present" begins with a certain condition of uncertainty. The speaker states, "All things being done and undone" (Hughes 2003, p. 59). And the poem goes on, "As my hands adore or abandon" revealing that the poet-speaker is self-consciously aware of his/her uncertainty. Besides, the theme of violence appears in "A Woman Unconscious." In the opening line of the poem, the speaker says, "Russia and America circle each other" and alludes to the cold-war years after the second world war (p. 62). In the following lines, a woman is depicted lying on a hospital bed unconsciously and suffering from the social situation because of the atomic bombs.

War is another major subject in the poetry of Hughes. In "A Woman Unconscious," Hughes juxtaposes the representations of public and personal life. In such a senseless world that is traumatised by nuclear bombs, people become alienated terribly. However, the speaker believes that "the future's no calamitous change / But a malingering of now" (Hughes 2003, p. 62). The future is not a catastrophic change but a fake illness of having a painful ailment of the present time.

The speaker further claims that the future will be the same with the "histories, towns, [and] faces that no / Malice or accident much derange" (p. 63). At the end of the poem, Hughes deliberately keeps himself away from interfering on either side; he compares the significance of the death of a woman to the collective death of thousands. The poem reads as follows:

> Did a lesser death come
> Onto the white hospital bed
> Where one, numb beyond her last of sense,
> Closed her eyes on the world's evidence
> And into pillows sunk her head. (Hughes 2003, p. 63)

Hughes wants the reader to juxtapose the importance of the death of an unconscious woman lying on "the white hospital bed" with both the political and social disastrous climate of the world. Politically, it's shaped by the terror of mass destruction, while socially, it refers to alienation and helplessness in daily life. This duality enriches the theme of private versus public suffering and makes "A Woman Unconscious" revolve around several topics concurrently.

Remains of Elmet (1979) exemplifies many places, scenes and images from his hometown Elmet, Yorkshire, and the traces of the First World War repeat in his poems. "Long Screams" evidently carries the evil images of war, the speaker says, "Dark voices. / Swift weapons" (Hughes 1979, p. 26). Then, the speaker refers to the perpetual battle between people through the imagery of "unending bleeding" and "Deaths left over" (p. 26). The speaker reinforces the representation of war in which "The dead piled in cairns / Over the dead" (p. 26). Coming from Gaelic origin, the word cairn "resembles a larger version of the conical pile of stones that marks most summits" (Drummond 1991, p. 26). However, man-made cairns represent a death erected for remembrance (p. 27). In "Long Screams" the speaker underlines the ugly side of war in which dead people were piled up and turned into a cairn. And the speaker finishes painting the wartime picture, "Everywhere dead things for monuments / Of the dead" (Hughes 1979, p. 26). Accordingly, the dead people turn into a natural monument which signifies the dreadful side of war. At the end of the poem, the speaker says, "And now this whole scene, like a mother, / Lifts a cry … A solitary cry" (p. 26). Now, Hughes completes the imagery of the poem by uniting the title of the poem "Long Screams" with the "solitary cry" which is left after the war finishes.

While telling the story of his homeland, Hughes also gives an account of difficulties he faced in his childhood years especially referring to the memories of war in society in *Remains of Elmet*. Once again, Hughes refers to war survivors in "Hill Walls" and the speaker says, "No survivors. Here is the hulk, every rib shattered" (Hughes 1979, p. 30). Hughes claims that "The great adventure began" but this time no one survived. In this scene, however, only the wreck of a ship with its frame remained on the ground and every element of its body was smashed and broken into pieces. So, the skeleton of the ship lays on the ground in all its state of wrecks and havoc. The reason why this ship with its body lays on the ground is not revealed, but war is signified in the poem with its elements of destruction. Despite the lament references to war, Hughes highlights the only survivor of war is the body of the ship.

In "First, Mills," the thematic structure deals with the remains of war. The poem opens with a portrayal of mills, followed by descriptions of "steep wet cobbles" and "cenotaphs" (Hughes 1979, p. 34). In this picture, the mention of cenotaphs holds the attention of the reader since it means a monument built in honour of a dead person or people whose remains are somewhere else. Accordingly, in "First, Mills" the reference to war is obvious through the image of cenotaph as they are often erected after the war for those who are killed. Then, the speaker changes the scene:

> First, football pitches, crown greens,
> Then the bottomless wound of the railway station

That bled this valley to death. (Hughes 1979, p. 34)

In this stanza, the speaker begins with the imagery of football pitches and crown greens that evoke a lively social atmosphere. However, this scene suddenly changes as the railway station appears, which is portrayed as a deep, unhealing wound. Through this imagery, Hughes suggests a society traumatized by the hidden damage of past wars. Once the railway station used to be a place where people gathered, it is now a symbol of trauma and loss. The stanza closes with the representation of a valley that "bled to death" due to this wound, summarizing the themes of war and trauma that are embodied in Elmet. In the following line in "First, Mills" Hughes goes on, "A single, fatal wound. And the faces at windows / Whitened. Even the hair whitened" (1979, p. 34). Once again, the speaker refers to the wound that belongs to the railway station, but this time the wound is single and fatal, which is the cause of the trauma of Elmet. The imagery of people at windows implies a collective sense of horror and shock. The emotional consequence of the wound is emphasised by the white faces of people who are afraid of death. Then, Hughes leaves a blank and composes another single line: "Everything became very quiet" (p. 34). This line symbolises not only the people but also all nature went into silence due to the serious damage of the wound. Therefore, "The towns and the villages were sacked" and "Everything fell wetly to bits / In the memory" (p. 34). So, both "Long Screams" and "Hill Walls" in *Remains of Elmet* illustrate Hughes's vision of war and survival. In "Long Screams," Hughes embodies the brutality and pain of battle, while "Hill Walls" captures the severe state. Hughes's childhood memories turn into a nightmare and trauma due to the pains of war. Hughes adeptly shifts the reader's perspective from the universal to the personal and emphasises the notion that the tragedy of individual death evokes a far more profound sense of terror than the anticipation of possible future calamities.

Personal Negativity

The state of being in between the possible calamitous future and painful present transforms itself into the theme of belonging to nowhere in "An Otter." That Hughes (2003) chooses an animal that is "neither fish nor beast" (p. 79) represents his commitment to the state of duality, which shows itself in two different aspects. Firstly, it is the dualistic nature of the otter that is both aquatic and terrestrial; it can dwell both under water and on land. Also, it has "an eel's / Oil of water body" and "webbed feet and long ruddering tail" which enable it to move under the water like a fish (p. 79). Secondly, the otter "Gallops along land he no longer belongs to" indeed it belongs to "neither water nor land" (p. 79). This duality is emphasized with Smith's (1975) idea that the dualistic nature of otter symbolises "a deep ambivalence in the self" (p. 424), which suggests an existential conflict at the heart of the individual. Hughes's depiction of the otter, an animal that can adapt to different environments yet finds itself at home in neither, reveals the human experience of struggling with identity and the search for meaning in an indifferent world. In other words, the otter's dual nature enables it to thrive in water, yet it also moves across land, which illustrates a tension between worlds that neither fully accepts nor excludes it. Hughes extends this otter metaphor to reflect that individuals face an existential "in-betweenness," bearing various roles and identities without a fixed sense of belonging.

Hughes and Plath met at a party in Cambridge where they befriended and then later married. Their relationship contributed much to the development of Hughes's poetry, he said, when he came across Plath, he "met her library," but the suicides of Plath and Assia Wevill caused the "periods of artistic shutdown and the premature closure of poetic projects" (Webb 2013, p. 36). Especially, "Song of a Rat" which was written immediately after Plath's death signifies the precise negative and depressive atmosphere in Hughes's life. "Song of a Rat" published in the collection, *Wodwo* in 1967 announces the representation of a depressing animal in a trap. In the first part, "The Rat's Dance," the speaker says, "The rat is in the trap, it is in the trap" (Hughes 2003, p. 167). The reader can empathise with the psychology of the rat in the trap, however, Hughes does not reveal its

suffering directly, instead, he only depicts the personal distress the rat feels. In the second part, "The Rat's Vision," the poem begins,

> The rat hears the wind saying something in the straw
> And the night-fields that have come up to the fence, leaning their silence,
> The widowed land
> With its trees that know how to cry. (Hughes 2003, p. 169)

In the excerpt above, the rat is seen on a farm, not in a trap, but in the middle of the silence of the night fields. Even the land cries as it is abandoned and desolate. Yet, the dandelions beg the rat, "Do not go," the yard cinders beg, "Do not go" and the cracked trough cries as well (Hughes 2003, p. 170). And in the last part, "The Rat's Flight" the rat passes away.

In terms of his personal traumas, autobiographical elements usually repeat themselves in his poetry of Hughes. He does not directly tell his childhood events in his poems, instead, Hughes combines some autobiographical events with objective facts, yet he does not thoroughly reveal his personal feelings in the way some poets confess in their lines. When he was young, Hughes went to see one of the famous cliffs in the Calder Valley which he narrated both literally and figuratively, he writes,

> I have heard that valley is notable for its suicides, which I can believe, and I could also believe that rock is partly to blame for them … A slightly disastrous, crumbly, grey light, sunless and yet too clear, like a still from the documentary film of an accident … All because of that rock and its evil eye.
> It had an evil eye, I have no doubt. For one thing you cannot look at a precipice without thinking instantly what it would be like to fall down it, or jump down it. Mountaineers are simply men who need to counter-attack on that thought (qtd. in West 1985, p. 16)

The above excerpt manifests the conflict between the idea of suicide and the counter-attack on that thought and the conflict the young Hughes feels and later narrates in his poetry. West also establishes that "[a]t some stage in life the young Hughes felt vividly the conflicting roles of this mental drama" (1985, p. 16). However, instead of committing suicide in the valley, Hughes, like a mountaineer, challenges the idea of ending his own life. In some sense, he turns the turmoil of the conflict into a progressive activity through writing his poems.

In *The Remains of Elmet*, Hughes, in such an autobiographical manner, uses certain locations from his childhood years in his poems with specific positions. In "The Ancient Briton Lay under his Rock" Hughes refers to the Redacre Wood where the cenotaph of the ancient Briton lays. That Hughes employs the valley in his poetry is no surprise; the valley symbolises life and fertility, at the same time, peace and security (Olderr 2012, p. 212). However, Hughes does not employ the initial symbolic meaning of the valley, instead, he composes his poems by employing the landscape itself. In this sense, Hughes the poet turns into the representation of life and fertility as a poet himself.

Hughes witnessed the ravages of war firsthand, as his father, William Hughes, was a veteran of the First World War. Neil Roberts (2006) suggests that his father's traumatizing torment left an enduring mark on Hughes's childhood recollections, characterized by a pervasive sense of bitterness. Although William Hughes rarely discussed his wartime experiences, occasional nighttime outcries in his sleep indicated remaining psychological wounds (p. 13). According to some critics, not only his father's trauma but also the ordeal of war left a perpetual trace on him. His father's vivid recounting of his wartime experiences, which were coupled with the obvious psychological scars he bore, were so impactful that Hughes felt as though he personally had witnessed the apocalyptic carnage (Meyers 2013, p. 30).

In his poem "Out," included in *Wodwo*, Hughes engages in an emotional reflection on his childhood

particularly with an emphasis on recollections associated with his father. The first part of the poem, titled "The Dream Time" opens with the lines, "My father sat in his chair recovering / From the four-year mastication by gunfire and mud, / Body buffeted wordless, estranged by long soaking / In the colours of mutilation" (Hughes 1967, p. 155). The first line sets the scene establishing the focus of the poem; Hughes's father symbolises the theme of the consequences of war and its remaining effects. The use of "recovering" means a process of healing or returning to normal health. Also, it suggests his father's period of convalescence and attempts to heal himself after the trauma of war. In the second line of the poem, Hughes employs vivid language to depict the violence and brutality of his father's experiences of war. During the four-year period of the First World War, soldiers came across the frenzy of gunfire and mud, and in this line, "mastication" refers to the relentless and consuming force. In the following line, the mention of "colours of mutilation" indicates not only the physical wounds but also the psychological torments that remain long after the physical wounds. However, after the four-year hardships and restlessness of the Great War, William Hughes found himself in the house unproductive and in some sense useless, which is underscored by the "clock's tiny cog" (Hughes 1967, p. 155). According to Pearsall (2007), the passage of time in the poem "renders the father's actions passive, ineffectual," in other words, he is "literally demobilized" which is used "for discharged soldiers after the First World War" (p. 528).

In this scene, Hughes (1967), the poet places himself as a small, four-year-old child "laying on the carpet as his luckless double," which reflects his traumatised childhood memories (p. 155). Hughes vividly describes himself as a small child who is innocent and luckless. And considering himself his father's "luckless double" Hughes indicates a connection between his father and himself leaving the impression on the reader that he himself had witnessed the apocalyptic carnage. In the third part, titled "Remembrance Day," the poet-speaker says, "The shrapnel that shattered my father's paybook / Gripped me, and all his dead" (p. 156). Thus, on his personal level, Hughes writes his poem like a veteran coming back home after the war, and although he was gripped by the recollections of war as if he had gone to the battlefield. In the last part of the poem, Hughes (1967) delivers a poignant and evocative reflection on themes of loss and trauma. The poet-speaker says, "Let England close. Let the green sea-anemone close" (p. 157). Hughes concludes the poem with a powerful invocation for closure bidding farewell not only to significant elements of their personal history but also to extensive national or cultural symbols. The imagery of England along with the closing sea-anemone suggests a sense of sealing off, as Hughes prepares the reader to embrace the traumatic memories.

In an interview at a radio programme, Hughes stated that the First World War held a more significant presence within his imagination compared to the Second World War because "It was right there from the beginning so it was going on in us for eight years before the second world war came along" (qtd. in Sagar 1983, p. 10). After all those traumatic events, Hughes was not content in this terrific atmosphere and he noted, "Everything in West Yorkshire is slightly unpleasant. Nothing ever quite escapes into happiness … A disaster seems to hang around in the air there for a long time. I can never escape the impression that the whole region is in mourning for the First world war" (p. 10). In conclusion, Hughes's emotional recollection of the lasting impact of the First World War on his psyche is coupled with his observation of a pervasive sense of mourning remaining over West Yorkshire. And his memories emphasise the enduring significance of wartime trauma and its profound influence on both individual and collective consciousness.

The lingering impact of his tumultuous childhood experiences is evident in Ted Hughes's "Dust As We Are," a poem recounting the survival narrative of his father. The poem appeared in the poetry collection, *Wolfwatching*, published in 1989. The poem opens with the poet-speaker's reflection on his father: "My post-war father was so silent / He seemed to be listening" (Hughes 1989, p. 13).

This initial depiction underscores his father's passive and withdrawn demeanour, characterized by a conspicuous lack of verbal expression. Only his father's laugh had survived "nearly intact" (p. 13). Again, in the middle of the First World War, the poet-speaker vividly portrays the harrowing experiences of war: "bones and bits of equipment / Showered from every shell-burst" (p. 13). Despite the traumas of war, Hughes's father surprisingly survived, however, deeply changed; his father "had been salvaged and washed" and "He had been heavily killed. But [Hughes family] had revived him" (p. 14). Nevertheless, the poem suggests that in spite of the physical survival, William Hughes struggled to adapt to civilian life by dealing with the pains of the war.

Hughes's evocation of an animal comes up in various poems, the representation of personal suffering unfolds itself in "The Jaguar" through the image of a jaguar. The speaker opens the poem with a depiction of a zoo where apes yawn with fleas on them. The idleness of apes is reproduced in the image of a tiger and lion that "Lie still as the sun" in their cage "with indolence" (Hughes 2003, p. 19). In the next cage, it is observed that "the boa-constrictor's coil / Is a fossil" signifying its fossil-like long-time dead body, which is a reference to vastness and time is stopped there. The position of those animals in their cages arouses the feeling of confinement that is equal to one's personal suffering. Instead, those animals are posited in an unnatural place where they look like replicas of their originals. Here Hughes also portrays a zoo with cages, but it seems empty, "Cage after cage seems empty," says the speaker (p. 19). By means of the word, "empty," Hughes refers to those wild animals as dead for they do not live according to their own nature.

In the middle of the poem, the reader, figuratively, arrives at a cage different from the previous ones. Hughes changes the course of the poem by beginning the line with a "but," and it reads, "But who runs like the rest past these arrives" (Hughes 2003, p. 19). Immediately after "but," Hughes perplexes the reader with "who." Instead of revealing the animal at once, he does not utter the name of the animal to create a feeling of curiosity. At this cage, "where the crowd stands, stares, mesmerized, / As a child at a dream, at a jaguar hurrying enraged / Through prison darkness" (p. 19). The jaguar is portrayed as a living animal with its emotions and movements, in other words, it shows its natural anger which proves that it is alive, not dead like the other animals. Within such imprisonment, Hughes underlines, the jaguar does not accept the limitation of its wild nature.

In some culture, the jaguar is referred to as "the master of animals" (Olderr 2012, p. 118). Here in this barren zoo, the jaguar is represented as the master of the unnatural animalistic garden. The untamed nature with powerful emotions of the jaguar is emphasised through its "short fierce fuse" but it is "not in boredom" (Hughes 2003, p. 20). Here, Hughes deepens the juxtaposition of the image of the jaguar and that of the other animals in the zoo. It is different from the other animals in the way that it never surrenders and never accepts its imprisonment. Accordingly, Hughes invites the reader to spend some time in a zoo where animals give the impression of accepting their confinement in such a conformist manner.

In "The Jaguar," Hughes turns the image of the otter upside down by representing an animal in a place where it cannot dwell. On the other hand, the otter, both aquatic and terrestrial, can live wherever it wants. The jaguar is forced to dwell behind the bar of the cage, which signifies "the tension between boundless inner potency and an external limitation" (Smith 1975, p. 421). Through the jaguar imagery, Hughes represents the struggle for survival and the personal suffering originating from the confinement of external forces. "The Jaguar" announces "an existentially precarious humanity groping for meaning, identity and survival in a world of powerful, primaeval and barely understood natural and preternatural forces" (Ely 2015, p. 149). Accordingly, Hughes transforms the jaguar imagery into a metaphor to disclose the struggle against a negative state, the condition of imprisonment.

A Monstrously Famous Poet

Keats's argument that "Men of Genius ... have not any individuality" shows itself in Hughes's poem, "Famous Poet" in which Hughes addresses rhetorical questions to the reader. The poem begins with a distinctive command, "Stare at the monster;" the speaker underlines the difference between appearance and reality. The speaker says, "... remark / How difficult it is to define just what / Amounts to monstrosity in that / Very ordinary appearance" (Hughes 2003, p. 23). The speaker is depicted as "Neither thin nor fat, / Hair between light and dark" (p. 23). At the beginning of the poem, such opposition is emphasised both in the character and the appearance of the speaker to reveal that the poet-speaker is different from the other poets with his monstrosity. The speaker, further, pushes the reader to participate in finding an answer to the question, who is the monster? He says, "It is his dreg-boozed inner demon / Still tankarding from tissue and follicle / The vital fire, the spirit electrical / That puts the gloss on the normal hearty male?" (Hughes 2003, p. 23). Also, he confuses the mind of the reader through his phrase, "Or is it woman," which signifies that the poet is not necessarily a man. So, the reader is not allowed to identify themselves with the speaker of the poem, so-called Hughes. On the other hand, by placing himself above the restrictions of gender patterns Hughes frees himself from the confinement of individuality that Keats argues in his letter.

One of the most renowned poems of Hughes's, "The Thought-Fox," published in his collection *The Hawk in the Rain* in 1957, can be considered as a metaphor for the creating problems of a poet in the middle of mysteries and doubts. The poem has the precision of meaning that represents writer's block in general, but the focal point on the personal struggle of artistic creation indicates the role of the unconscious mind. The speaker in "The Thought-Fox" is all alone at winter midnight, with complete silence but the clock's ticks. The blank page on the table signifies that the poet-speaker has difficulty in writing his poem. Besides, the phrase that the poet cannot see any stars through the window establishes that he/she needs divine inspiration like muses. And something "cold and delicately" suddenly appears in the darkness, it is a fox whose "nose touches twig, leaf" (Hughes 2003, p. 21). The fox "Sets neat prints into the snow / Between trees" (p. 21). The fox's prints on the snow symbolise the simultaneous writing of the poet's on the white page. Finally, "The page is printed" (p. 21). And "the first 'animal' poem [he] ever wrote" came out (Hughes 1969, 19).

Regarding the fox, Hughes (1969) states, "[i]t is both a fox and a spirit. It is a real fox; as I read the poem I see it move, I see it setting its prints, I see its shadow going over the irregular surface of the snow. The words show me all this, bringing it nearer and nearer. It is very real to me. The words have made a body for it and given it somewhere to walk" (p. 20). Hughes reveals how he employed the imagery of the fox in his poem and transformed it into a work of art. Now, it is not the fox in his garden. The way Hughes composes his poem is not different from the way Keats does in his "Ode to a Grecian Urn." By looking at the urn that has certain decorative images Keats's speaker is fascinated and reads the poem. Keats's claim "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter" is a lament reference to the artistic creation of the poet because the word "unheard" covers the possible lines, imageries, and metaphors. Similarly, by employing the spirit of the fox in his lines, Hughes created a new real fox through the words, which became "sweeter" than the seen fox.

Hughes's "The Thought-Fox" carries the aspect of Keats's negative capability in a way that the poet-speaker struggles to find a solution to his/her trapped condition. Through the imagery of darkness at the beginning of the poem, Hughes directly points out the difficulty of the poet caught between doubts. In order to overcome the negative situation, the poet uses the fox as a metaphor. Besides, Hughes turns the poem itself into another metaphor of survival, as long as the poem is read, the fox, and of course, the poet will live eternally. In this regard, Hughes (1969) explains that "... in

some ways, my fox is better than an ordinary fox. It will live forever, it will never suffer from hunger or hounds. I have it with me wherever I go. And I made it. And all through imagining it clearly enough and finding the living words" (p. 21). Through poems like "The Thought-Fox" and "Famous Poet," Hughes emphasizes the power of art to go beyond personal and collective traumas and like Keats, proposes that poetry captures temporary moments of beauty and emotion and suggests a form of immortality that tolerates human suffering and loss.

Conclusion

Hughes's poems exemplify the marks of personal and public traumas. His first three books, especially *Lupercal*, represent the difficulties Hughes faced in his life. At the beginning of *Lupercal*, the poem, "Things Present" refers to the uncertain condition and "A Woman Unconscious" handles the political and social atmosphere suffered during the cold-war years. In terms of personal difficulties, Hughes alludes to bitter events, for example, Plath's suicide is a serious matter that affected his poetry too. Written after the suicide, "Song of a Rat" embodies the depressive atmosphere and deals with the feeling of confinement. The state of imprisonment can also be followed in "The Jaguar" too, and the poet as the creator is represented in "Famous Poet" and "The Thought-Fox."

When analysed from the theory of Keats's Negative Capability, it can be claimed that Hughes deals with the difficulties he faced in his both personal and social lives. Keats's chameleon identity is represented in the poems of Hughes, for instance, he employs the dualistic nature of the otter in "The Otter" or in "The Jaguar," he recreates the imagery of imprisonment. Thus, while Hughes deals with uncertainties, mysteries and doubts with a chameleon-like identity, he adapts himself to traumatic situations. His struggle against the troubles proves the presence of Keats's Negative Capability in his poetry. And the image of the poet in the middle of mysteries and doubts is embodied in "The Thought-Fox" in which the fox becomes the symbol of Hughes's artistic creation. To sum up, although Hughes is known to be an "Animal Poet," for many of his poems are entitled, horses, hawks and crows, Hughes's poems also cope with inner problems and personal traumas. Hughes uses animals as a metaphor to unveil hidden feelings and human experiences. Accordingly, Hughes's concern with trauma and resilience through a chameleon-like adaptability reveals his mastery of Keats's Negative Capability, as he deals with uncertainty and complexity and transforms these experiences into poetic symbols like the fox in "The Thought-Fox," which encapsulates his creative spirit. In seizing Keats's Negative Capability, Hughes's poetry allows him to confront and transform personal and social traumas through an artistic lens that captures immortality, resistance, and creativity at the heart of human experience.

Acknowledgement

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Minding the Class Gap:
Doppelgänger Cityscapes in Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*
Sınıf Uçurumuna Dikkat Etmek:
Neil Gaiman'ın *Neverwhere* Adlı Eserinde Doppelgänger Şehir Manzaraları

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ABSTRACT

Freud's article on the uncanny also includes the concept of the double. According to Freud, this concept points to the duality in the construction of the ego in the primary narcissism period, when the child acquires the understanding of moral control. This duality results from the splitting of the ego and creates an area where unwanted material is pushed into the subconscious. However, this repressed area carries traces of the ego because it was once part of it. Similarly, in Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996), London Above and London Below, as a divided city, represent the ego and the repressed space that emerges as a result of the split of the ego. London Above represents a politicized morality in which a fixed class structure is accepted, for example, the Upsiders not seeing the Downsiders, or Jessica's urge to appear in art galleries with Richard. As a representation of self, London Above embraces positive materials, while London Below functions as "the other" or "evil twin" because this space, accessed through doors or sewers, is dark, damp, and smelly. London Below also contains the repressed and unwanted social dynamics of London Above. However, since the doppelgänger is a division of a whole, the suppression of the undesirable underclass is also mimicked in London Below, thus resulting in a recurring matrix of social hierarchy in both cityscapes. In this context, this study aims to analyse the doppelgänger motif in relation to the class-based basin of London.

"World is crazier and more of it than we think,
Incorrigibly plural."
Louise MacNeice

Introduction

Neil Gaiman is credited with being a prolific writer in the genres of poetry, drama, short story, comics, and prose. Praised as an author who appeals to people of all ages, Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996) is a fantasy novel written for adults, which is originally conceived as a companion piece to the 1996 BBC television series of the same name. His works can be regarded as controversial in terms of genre, as stated on his personal website: "Gaiman's books are genre works that refuse to remain true to their genres."[1] Fluctuating between genres and various fictitious worlds, Gaiman

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[1] https://www.neilgaiman.com/About_Neil/Biography

declares: "Most of my books –*American Gods, Anansi Boys,* or *Neverwhere*– are at least recognizable as being sort of part of this world even if it's a rather delirious version of this world, or heightened version of this world, or a world in which metaphors are roaming freely" (qtd. in Campbell, 2014, p. 14). As Gaiman makes clear from his statement, *Neverwhere* is not an ordinary book, yet it offers the reader other worlds that they are not familiar with. It exemplifies his ability to blend genres and create complex, multi-layered narratives. What distinguishes this novel from his other works is that it presents discrete spatial and social realities that invite the reader to question the modern way of living.

Neverwhere follows the journey of Richard Oliver Mayhew, an ordinary middle-class Londoner whose life is upended when he helps an injured girl named Door. This act of kindness leads him to become invisible in his familiar world of London Above, and he is dragged into the hidden world of London Below, a labyrinthine underworld populated by those who have fallen through the cracks of society. As Richard navigates this new realm, he encounters a host of eccentric and often dangerous characters, each of whom plays a role in his quest. However, this quest is not just a physical journey but a psychological one, as Richard is forced to confront his own identity, societal values, and the stark class-based contrasts between London Above and London Below. His quest has garnered critical reception also in scholarly area. To Jódar, the purpose of Richard's quest is "to fulfil the whole cycle, thus bringing about the restoration of unity to his society/community" (2005, p. 170). Benczik declares that "this voyage, conforming to the quest formula, ultimately leads to personal transformation, resolutions and the savings of the city itself" (2017, p. 165). In a similar vein, Meteling proposes that this adventure reminding that of a medieval romance, separated into multiple tasks, is not meant to be "a physical one but is addressed at his character" (2017, p. 69). The transformation in the character and the milieu is built up on Richard's quest which reveals a narrative of a misfit in an urban fantasy. Different from those, this study aims to explore his quest from a psychoanalytical perspective because the identical structure of London Above and London Below paves the way for "good" and "evil" twin, namely doppelgänger, based on Freud's thoughts. By applying Freud's concept of the doppelgänger, the novel can be interpreted as a critique of social hierarchies and the ways in which they shape individual identity. As Richard oscillates between the two realms, his quest becomes not just a search for physical safety, but for spiritual and psychological wholeness, a journey towards the "Heimlich," which offers a new perspective to the previous studies.

Freudian Uncanny and the Concept of Doppelgänger

In his essay entitled "The Uncanny" (1919), Sigmund Freud lays the groundwork for psychoanalytical readings of works discussing the unusual and unsettling feeling of eeriness that can develop from familiar and everyday experiences. In this aspect, rooted in Freudian "uncanny" as a part, doppelgänger causes discomfort because it threatens the distinctive qualities of the self. To do so, it primarily uses a double or a look-alike image. Therefore, existing separately but complementing each other, "the double pursues the subject as his second self and makes him feel as himself and the other at the same time" (Živković, 2000, p. 122). The doppelgänger image, in this respect, can be regarded as the presentation of the self and the other, pursuing either contrasting or similar traits. In this context, Freud stresses corporeal parallelism and incorporeal connection of these characters by concentrating on their appearance and metaphysical alliance achieved through telepathy (1981, p. 234). By doing so, other than visual similarity, it is accentuated that they have a spiritual bond with one another sharing knowledge, feelings, and experience. Throughout this telepathic connection, the double exceeds physical alikeness and carries a more metaphorical meaning. At this point, it is also essential to establish a link to uncanny. Freud's exploration of the uncanny concentrates upon the idea that the feeling of uncanniness arises when something familiar becomes unfamiliar, or when something hidden or

repressed in the unconscious mind resurfaces. In the case of doppelgänger, the evil twin plays the role of the repressed, and the encounter with this double unveils once suppressed desires that now challenge self-identity. Therefore, the appearance of the doppelgänger can be seen as a manifestation of these repressed elements, returning to consciousness in an unsettling manner. For the same reason, Freud calls this predicament as "harbinger of death" (1981, p. 235) that erodes the line between life and death.

The return of the repressed, which menaces the self, can also be viewed through the lenses of ego, superego, and id. To consider "primarily narcissism" first, it refers to the earliest period when a child is unable to differentiate himself from the external world because his basic needs are fulfilled by a caregiver with whom he associates himself as one. It hinders the infant from growing a distinct self and awareness, resulting in the infant's identification with the caregiver. Considering this duplication, Freud relates primary narcissism to the double: The concept of the "double" initially serves as a safeguard to protect the ego against annihilation, hence becoming a defence mechanism against the fear of death. It is conceivable that the notion of an "immortal soul" originally stemmed from the idea of a "double" associated with the physical body (Freud, 1981, p. 235). Grounding on Otto Rank's opinions, Freud argues that the infant's lack of self-consciousness creates a tension of extinction, namely the fear of death, which is avoided by the formation of multiple identical materials of the self, aiming to gain immortality. Storing splitable and identical selves ensures the persistence of infant's consciousness. This stage navigates the double in the opposite direction because when the stage is overcome "the 'double' reverses its aspect" (Freud, 1981, p. 235). This inversion in the developmental process thereafter generates "a special agency" which can take a stand against the ego (Freud, 1981, p. 235). However, the self-centred desire directed to multiple surfaces falls short of making content in the relationship with the world, which steers into the development of the ego functioning as a mediator between the internal desires and the external world. Nevertheless, the double after the completion of the construction of the ego does not fully disappear but integrates into the id through the superego's repressive power pushing undesired materials of the ego into this primitive territory. The duplicity within oneself, represented by the double and the urges originating from the id, undergoes a division caused by the influence of the superego. This division creates a conflict within the self, where the double symbolizes the opposite of the ego and serves as a means to purge the urges emanating from the id. The motif of doppelgänger, in this sense, reflects the suppression of desires. As a result, the one that cooperates with and yields to the orders of the ego is regarded as "good," whereas the repressed one is represented as "evil" as an outcome of being forced into this rudimentary terrain. The evil is not only marginalized at the psychoanalytic level, yet its sociological projection is also categorized as "the other" considering from an ideological perspective because of the tendency to demonize the marginal: "Any social structure tends to exclude as "evil" anything radically different from itself or which threatens it with destruction, and this naming of difference as evil, is a significant ideological gesture" (Živković, 2000, p. 124). The stark ideological polarization brings about otherization in its wake. Even though the resurfaced desires reveal similarity with the unrepressed ones, because doppelgänger figure shares similar character traits as recurrence (Freud, 1981, p. 234), the ideological otherization forms and reforms the evil in accordance with the societal changes to attain the eventual aim to "exclude." The evil as a site of exclusion "refer[s] to a kind of feeling" to "describe an existential feeling of unhomeliness" (Windsor, 2019 p. 54). The duality of good and evil is, therefore, associated with "Heimlich" and "Unheimlich." Because the good collaborates with the ego mechanism, it fuels the feeling of homeliness which is related to human existence or "dasein"[2] in Heidegger's words. Krell points out that "Our being in the world, the world that is our

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[2] According to Stapleton, "Heidegger uses the word "Dasein" to refer to what customarily might be called the self or "I"; or, as he more cautiously puts it, to "this entity which each of us is himself " (qtd. in Heidegger, 1970,

only home, is marked by the uncanny discovery that we are not at home in the world" (1992, p. 44). In other words, while the good side of the doppelgänger is linked with being-in-the-world or being-at-home, the opposite side, not only psychoanalytically but also ideologically, is associated with being-not-at-home. The reason lurking behind this idea addresses to the negation of the repressed one. It directly posits the unwanted materials as inferior due to their correspondence with the id. However, the evil does not "construct an excluded zone in the topography of the ego" but rather, its "negation facilitates relations between the different regions of the ego's topography" (Vardoulakis, 2006, p. 102). The evil seemingly occupies a disadvantageous zone, but due to its bond with the good, it remains a menace to manifest the negations that the good also had when they were united.

With this theoretical framework in mind, Neil Gaiman's work epitomizes the motif of doppelgänger by illustrating a parallel existence of cityscapes divided as London Above and London Below. The former depicts the familiar, everyday world inhabited by regular Londoners, while the latter is a mysterious and fantastical realm hidden from the eyes of the Upper Londoners. The former thrives on its existence of "homely" feeling by providing an abundant world to its residents in which materialistic activities are highly valued because they serve for self-recognition and are, therefore, "good." However, the latter, a realm of negation or a site of exclusion, offers fewer materialistic chances since it is a mirror image of the self that houses all the repressed contents. Along with the othering of the repressed through the undesired debris at the psychoanalytical level, ideology is also at play in terms of precarious lives resulting from class segregation. This enables the doppelgänger in the novel to be read in relation to the materialistic ideals of each cityscape. From this vantage point, the division of London into two binaries corresponds to evolving and prevalent ideological and materialistic concepts. On the one hand, the doppelgänger cityscapes share similar characteristics in nature, on the other, they operate independently and ideologically. Hence, presenting worlds that are not mere xerox, Gaiman's novel becomes an up-to-date critique of societal issues, encouraging to explore what is hidden beneath the surface.

London Above as the Self

While Gaiman offers different versions of this world in all his works, *Neverwhere* presents London divided into two realms, London Above and London Below. While the former presents a closer representation of London's contemporary way of life, the latter depicts a place still ruled by feudal order. Inspired by a medieval narrative setting, it provides an ambience where the laws of everyday life are subverted through the inclusion of fantasy elements. Although they seem quite different from each other at first glance, the most significant notion that makes them halves of a whole is the striking portrayal of class distinction. Therefore, the novel weaves similarities between cityscapes that are intertwined in the context of class division, despite their differences as separate units located in different periods. This narrative arc of similarities and differences adds a layer that needs to be unravelled to explore the societal dynamics through spatial intricacy.

First of all, the story is told from the lens of a third-person narrator whose perspective is heavily shaped by the focus on experiences of Richard who is originally a man from Scotland and remembers his hometown as a place "small and sensible" (Gaiman, 2013, p. 4). Before leaving his small town of Scotland for London, Richard comes across an elderly woman who assumes he is a homeless man depending on his appearance: "he had a rumpled, just woken-up look" (Gaiman, 2013, p. 2). Giving details about his origins and mentioning his unkempt appearance are important as he is depicted as homeless seeking for a homely place. Although Scotland is not "Heimlich" enough, it shapes his thoughts about London when he first came to the city. His initial prejudice

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p. 27). […] "Dasein" means the self *as* the there (*Da*) of being (*Sein*), the place where an understanding of being erupts into being" (2010, p. 44).

about the city is that it is predominantly grey and black (Gaiman, 2013, p. 9). Because of his otherness and disconnection with the city, London does not sound rational at first, and consequently, he allows bias to guide his mind. However, after spending three years, he discovers the true diversity and vibrancy of London: He "was surprised to find London filled with colour. It was a city of red brick and white stone, red buses and large black taxis (which were often, to Richard's initial puzzlement gold, or green, or maroon) bright red post boxes, and green grassy parks and cemeteries" (Gaiman, 2013, p. 9). As he is used to the ways of the city, he shifts his perspective and feels more homely. He notices that the city offers more, and it almost seems like a colourful and harmonious masterpiece with unique features. London is also depicted as a living or breathing entity, not merely a space but a reflection of Richard's emotions.

Although there is a world outside to be lived, Richard seems passive and conforming in such a lively ambience. His small-town experience leads him to have a small social circle which comprises of his fiancée Jessica and his co-worker Gary. Çetiner-Öktem suggests, "London was never really Richard's city. This was a city where he could only exist as a couple, as a young businessman, and as a colleague, but never as an independent individual" (2019, p. 143). Richard lacks individuality as he is portrayed as dependent on the people around him to be a part of the city. He exists only when he socializes with these people, which reduces his being-in-the-world to social adaptation to the external world. This can be linked to the motif of the double in that it is a split and Richard spiritually looks for the other half for a sense of unity from the time he was in Scotland. His social worldmaking produces a homely effect when he is with other people or, in other words, when he is united. Relatedly, his narrow social circle gives him a sense of security and familiarity, which echoes his previous "small and sensible" spatial experience. Freud notes that "on the one hand "Heimlich" means familiar and aggregable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight" (1981, p. 224-225). Richard navigates a predictable life finding comfort in the first meaning of the term. However, the homeliness incorporates the hidden as well and Richard foresees it whilst travelling to London. For this reason, "Richard Mayhew went to London feeling like hell" (Gaiman, 2013, p. 5) because this feeling of uneasiness heralds that there is something disturbing beneath the familiar. After he sees the city through different perspectives, he implicates that within this "Heimlich" lies a financial-related hidden when talking about the flaws of the city: "a noisy, dirty, cheerful, troubled city, which fed on tourists, needed them as it despised them" (Gaiman, 2013, p. 9). On the one hand, the city excludes the strangers, but on the other, it financially feeds on them. Richard tends to make such observations because he is one of "the other" who represents the middle-class man in London Above. He lives in a decent flat and exhibits behaviours typical of his class background. However, his fiancée, Jessica Bartram, appears to be a proud upper-middle class member with a penchant for luxury and materialistic pursuits. She enjoys spending weekends in museums or art galleries and indulges in shopping at upscale stores like Harrods or Harvey Nichols. Jessica's preferences portray her as someone deeply embedded in consumerism and capitalist values. In this regard, Jessica's materialistic lifestyle perfectly matches with the superficial values of London Above. As she is a resident of this place, she willingly complies with its laws to nourish the sense of homeliness. Revisiting "Heimlich" from Jessica's lenses, the meaning of familiarity engenders a significant "I," which "posits itself absolutely" producing an "absolute ego" (Vardoulakis, 2006, p. 102). This absolute mechanism readily admits what fuels and enhances it. Jessica as a functioning element of it depends fully on the familiar ambience of the absolute "I" or the "self" of this cityscape. For this reason, London Above can be seen as representing the conscious mind in the psyche. The cityscape reflects the conscious awareness of individuals, where social norms and conventions govern their behaviour. Therefore, it stands for the self in the motif of doppelgänger, even an idealized self where individuals strive to live up to this idealized self-image, presenting themselves as "good" according to societal standards. In this regard, London Above can be considered the good side in the doppelgänger duality because it is

characterized by well-maintained streets, iconic landmarks, museums, galleries, and other symbols of culture and civilization. It is a place where individuals from higher social classes reside, enjoying a certain level of comfort and privilege. It is home to affluent neighbourhoods, luxury stores, and elegant establishments, representing a realm of abundance and opportunities for those who are economically better off. This affluence may be considered "good" from a materialistic perspective. Therefore, thinking in Jessica's shoes, her self functions as a small unit that accords with the larger self of the city. Nevertheless, she is so indulged in the pleasure of familiarity that she is unable to see what underneath is. From her lenses, there is no hidden as far as one takes an active part in the familiar.

Richard, however, struggles to keep up with Jessica's materialistic pursuits. His lack of interest in galleries and luxury shopping suggests that he does not fully identify himself with the class values she embodies. For Richard, "*anyone* could have confused the National Gallery with the National Portrait Gallery" because both places make no difference to him (Gaiman, 2013, p. 15). Richard is aware of the superficial values of the city and society. He is not besotted with the power of "good" or "absolute ego," yet he feels discomfort and fails to keep up with Jessica's lifestyle. His spiritual longing for unity begins with his move from Scotland to London and is intensified by his sense of not belonging in the city. In London, devoid of the feeling of "Heimlich" or homeliness, he sets out a physical search for the other half that will bring him spiritual unity. Therefore, he is not a true Upper Londoner who accepts the ways of the city with eyes wide shut. This is also the answer to question why he is the one who quests between two universes:

> "If you're part of London Below," said Door to Richard, in a conversational voice, as they walked, side by side, into the next hall, "they normally don't even notice you exist unless you stop and talk to them. And even then, they forget you pretty quickly."
> "But *I* saw you," said Richard. It had been bothering him for a while.
> "I know," said Door. "Isn't that odd?"
> "Everything's odd," said Richard, with feeling. (Gaiman, 2013, p. 187)

From the novel's beginning, London Above is depicted as the surface world, representing the visible and socially accepted aspects of society. Richard cannot truly find a place in such a structured environment because he often questions Jessica, who is absorbed extremely by the ways of the city. Being a misfit, it is unsurprising that it is no one but Richard embarks on this journey. From another perspective, the superficiality of the city leads its residents to pretension to be the recognized one. Therefore, it can be seen as the world where people wear social masks, presenting themselves in ways that align with social norms and expectations. They compete with one another to exist financially, so as not to be hidden like Below Londoners who are repressed in the act of forgetting in the unconscious. This can create a facade of goodness and propriety, reinforcing the perception of London Above as the good twin. Even though Richard is well-aware of his social mask, he puts an effort to keep up with Jessica. Nevertheless, he could not help but express his dissatisfaction with the exorbitant price he paid for just an éclair and tea:

> it is almost beyond the human capacity for belief to accept how much museum cafeterias will brazenly charge for a slice of cake and a cup of tea. "Here's your tea and your éclair," he told her. "It would have cost less to buy one of those Tintorettos." (Gaiman, 2013, p. 13)

Richard is aware that the city produces individuals who serve to feed the needs of the ego. It becomes an internalized deliberate act to continue wearing mask of a higher class because of "all those strivings of the ego which adverse external circumstances have crushed, and all our suppressed acts of volition which nourish in us the illusion of Free Will" (Freud, 1981, p. 236). The self secretly imposes on the individuals that it is their choice to purchase the higher priced material, and as a result they unwittingly comply with the desire. The illusion of free will helps

prevail the suppression of the unwanted. In this case, the city suppresses have-nots as unwanted class in the matrix of social structure. For this reason, Jessica responses that he exaggerates about the prices because she is illusioned with the desire to maintain a certain image.

Jessica is aware that Richard is not from an upper-class background. Nevertheless, she is in a relationship with him because she sees a powerful potential in him due to his coincidental collection of trolls. In her mind, great men collect something, and his troll collection fits this idea. Concisely speaking, Jessica projects her own values onto Richard. She encourages him to read books like "Dress for Success" and "A Hundred and Twenty-Five Habits of Successful Men," and to shop from the upper-class men's department at Harvey Nichols. These suggestions are meant to align him with upper-class codes and signifiers. However, Richard does not belong to this world and does not engage in such behaviours or discourse. It means that he goes through the chaos of the double within himself because he has a middle-class background to repress and an upper middle-class mask to wear. To mitigate the effects of this dilemma, a person, according to Freud, who has common feelings and experiences with the other identifies himself with another person, so that his own self becomes confused, or the alien self replaces his own self (1981, p. 234). As a result, he decides not to identify himself with the Upside that is not the "Heimlich" he looks for. He feels a growing sense of alienation from London Above because the stratified society of London Above dominates his life, pushing him to become a mechanistic part of a system that he does not truly relate to. His pretension to be a part of it is to avoid the resurface of "Unheimlich," yet the liminality is implied as a menace against life throughout the novel. At the juncture of overcoming the threat, he denies such an existence where he does not have a sense of belonging, and for that reason "in his embrace of the fantastic otherworld, his narrative arc moves inevitably towards an identification with this otherness and a denial of the hierarchy of value which insists on its inferiority" (Tiffin, 2008, p. 35). Obviously, Richard is not someone who can engage well with the predestined role London Above proposes for him. Consequently, the materialistic portrayal of the city contributes to his discordance. The persistence of the good twin encourages the embodiment of the ego that is purified from the repressed, which only promotes adherence to social norms and standards of behaviour. The characters in London Above, like Richard, initially conform to these societal expectations, which adds to the portrayal of the realm as the good conscious world. Therefore, in the psychoanalytical perspective, London Above can be viewed as the good twin because it represents the conscious mind's attempts to maintain a sense of order, stability, and conformity to social norms. However, the doppelgänger motif challenges this idealized image by bringing forth the repressed, unconscious aspects of society embodied by London Below. The motif, therefore, serves as a powerful tool in exploring the conscious and unconscious dimensions of human existence within the context of finance-based urban landscape depicted in the novel.

London Below as the Other

The good twin in the doppelgänger motif brings along the evil one which is a compilation of repressed or concealed materials in the psyche as "doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self" (Freud, 1981, p. 234). London Above as the good twin or the conscious mind pushes the undesirable aspects into the unconscious. While it represents an idealized version of society, the darker aspects and struggles of life are concealed or marginalized. In this respect, London Below becomes the repressed or the evil twin, and the doppelgänger motif, through its contrast with London Above, brings to light the hidden tensions in the conscious realm. According to Weinstock, "By estranging us from the world we know through the presentation of worlds that function according to different principles, fantasy works possess the capacity to provoke critical reflection on our familiar world—to let us reconceive nature as history and recognize that the way things are is not necessarily how they have to be." (2022, p. 49). London Above is so similar to the contemporary world order that the reader cannot find any fantasy elements. This familiarity is

broken only after the unfamiliar is presented in the novel. For this reason, the social commentary is drawn after the introduction of London Below where people from lower strata lead miserable lives. Because most of the fantasy events occur in this part of the represented world, a critique of the day-to-day reality is provoked only after the realities of the Downworld are strikingly presented as fraught with dangers and difficulties. For this reason, the repressed determines the borders of the dichotomy in doppelgänger and social criticism in the work. As Freud asserted that the self and the other was once united in the doppelgänger duality (1981, p. 234), it is the overwhelming power of the subjectivity of the evil that threatens the goodness of the values in London Above in this duality. In Vardoulakis' words, "negation becomes a catalyst for drawing a topology of the ego" (2006, p. 101). As the evil frankly reveals what it has as undesired in the opposite realm, then it poses a threat to the admitted and known ways of the Upside. In this context, negation also becomes a crucial instrument to map the structure of the self and to define the contours of hierarchical abyss between opposite groups.

This view can be supported firstly through the visibility problem in the novel. People from London Below are not visible to Above Londoners. The invisibility of the lower class is portrayed both metaphorically and literally. They both do not see them and do not acknowledge their presence. In other words, their being-in-the-world is not recognized by the Upsiders. For instance, when Door, the last member of a noble family from London Below, is injured and lying on the ground bleeding, Jessica neither sees her nor shows any inclination to help someone in urgent need. Instead, she threatens to end her engagement with Richard: "Richard Oliver Mayhew," said Jessica, coldly. "You put that girl down and come back here this minute. Or this engagement is at an end as of now. I'm warning you" (Gaiman, 2013, p. 22). The word "engagement" in this context carries a dual significance. On one level, Richard and Jessica are engaged to be married, signifying their romantic commitment to one another. On another level, the term "engaged" metaphorically represents Richard's connection to London Above, the familiar and ordinary world he inhabits. Jessica serves as a nexus to this world, making it "Heimlich" for Richard. Therefore, breaking their engagement would not only dissolve their romantic bond but also sever Richard's connection to his sense of belonging and homeliness. In the narrative, those who become disengaged from the lifestyle of London Above are rendered invisible, ignored by people like Jessica. This foreshadows that the end of Richard's engagement with Jessica will lead to his own disengagement from the safe, familiar world of London Above, resulting in a loss of homeliness and a descent into invisibility.

Throughout the text, it is evident that people from London Below are not seen by the inhabitants of London Above. This exemplifies how the lower class remains invisible to those in London Above, illustrating the disconnect between the social strata. The invisibility is linked to the oblivion caused by repression in the psyche. Doğan notes that "the uncanny is something intimately familiar but also forgotten because it is repressed into the recesses of the unconscious. It is illogically frightening as it has undergone repression and then returned from that repressed state; the residue of the repressed material, which is familiar but repressed, triggers a remembering process" (2021, p. 129). Although the undesired material is pushed into the repressed zone, the familiarity still leaves vestige that activates a process of remembering. For Jessica, Below Londoners still invades the repressed area, remaining in the state of forgetting; therefore, she cannot see Door. In Freud's words, "The better orientated in his environment a person is, the less readily will he get the impression of something uncanny in regard to the objects and events in it" (1981, p. 221). Because Jessica has a strong sense of belonging to the upper-middle class values, she successfully navigates this dictum. As she "project[s] that material outward as something foreign" (Freud, 1981, p. 236) to herself, she internalizes it and denies her bond with it. As a result, the psychoanalytic process of "Unheimlich" turns into social detachment. However, Richard's dissatisfaction with Jessica's upper-class superficial orbit has made him stand open in the

unconscious mind to escape her capitalist trajectory. From the beginning, Richard is the misfit who cannot comply with the capitalist activeness of London Above, and he is also the one who looks for a "Heimlich" place to be spiritually united. Thus, the remnants of the repressed make him recollect the undesired, which is activated upon seeing Door. As Richard recalls the forgotten, Door and other Below Londoners become visible to him, but in return, he ceases to be visible in his own society in Upper London. In this sense, Richard's contrasting perception of Door serves as a commentary on the disassociation from the upper-middle class.

Taking care of Door starts Richard's journey to the Downworld as she is the door to a more "Heimlich" place for Richard. Once a staff member in a prestigious investment analyst company, Richard now finds himself struggling to adapt to the conditions of the Downworld. In London Below, the rats, the true owners of the underground, hold a higher status, and people there show them respect whenever a rat appears (Gaiman, 2013, p. 76). As he realizes that the things he had avoided in the upper world now hold a higher position in hierarchy, he initially clings to his old habits because he cannot quit them all of a sudden. Freud indicates, "it is possible to recognize the dominance in the unconscious mind of a 'compulsion to repeat' proceeding from the instinctual impulses" (1981, p. 238). Although he does not fully approve the ways of the Upside, he realizes that it became a part of his instinctual nature to avoid rats. In this case, "Repetition is no longer that material element inherent in a cause, only to come to the fore in the effect" (Vardoulakis, 2006, p. 111). The role of the repetition in causality changes, coming to surface mechanically. Therefore, he questions whether acknowledging the new order requires abandoning old facts and reevaluating the prescribed social norms. In this regard, Anaesthesia's guidance becomes a tutorial that unravels what kind of conducts he should cultivate at his new home due to being dispossessed, disenfranchised, and outcasted. On this journey, he is shocked upon seeing her speaking rat-language, and wonders if being able to speak rat-language would make him a rat himself because "our self-identity is given by a language that is differentiating our own subject" (Vardoulakis, 2006, p. 113). He constructs an identity that speaks the language of the Upside and undergoes a course of disengagement that oscillates his former subjectivity. However, the repressed also has its own dynamics and self-identity built upon a discrete subjectivity. In Vardoulakis' words, "If the Doppelgänger's normal state is the overcoming an undoing the limits, then what we have here is a transgression of transgression, a redoing the limit" (2006, p. 114). Whist establishing regulations, the repressed reconstructs its own boundaries and its zone of transgression. He explores a totally new hierarchical system there, subverting what is familiar in London Above. Rats and other fantasy creatures have higher status than human beings. For example, Anaesthesia can communicate with rats because she "do[es] stuff for them" (Gaiman, 2013, p. 84) When Richard asks if she is a rat because she can speak the language, she responds that she would be lucky if she were one (Gaiman, 2013, p. 84), further highlighting the disparities in social strata and the upside down state of London Below where rats are not hated but respected.

Because he is now visible in London Below, Richard's Upside status falls even lower in this new cityscape. Marquis de Carabas says: "Young man," he said, "understand this: there are two Londons. There's London Above –that's where you lived– and then there's London Below –the Underside– inhabited by the people who fell through the cracks in the world. Now you're one of them" (Gaiman, 2013, p. 126). When de Carabas confronts Richard, asserting that he is one of them, he ensures that Richard fully integrates into the Downworld rather than oscillating between the two worlds. Pekşen suggests, "Being homeless may not always be a choice, but remaining in the gap is" (2017, p. 79) and belonging nowhere means living under more threat and undergoing the configurations of neither conscious nor unconscious mind. As Freud describes the encounter with the double as the resurfacing of repressed elements in an unsettling manner that blurs the distinction between life and death (1981, p. 235), remaining in the gap, as implicated by de Carabas, may cause Richard's death. This in-between state, being neither here nor there either

physically or locationally signifies the liminality between "Unheimlich" and "Heimlich." In such a case, the person fails to represent a certain identity and subjectivity. However, it does not necessarily mean that the representation of the self or the other guarantees to shield against every menace on behalf of the member. For example, Anaesthesia is found and adopted by rats, which is her first fall into the crack (Gaiman, 2006, p. 87), and she suddenly disappears on Night's Bridge, which is her subsequent fall (Gaiman, 2006, p. 104). In a capitalist world where precarity, unaffordability, and underrepresentation are regarded as undesirable labels, falling into continuous chasms comes to mean the resurface of social fears embedded in society. As Živković argues, "the concept of evil, which is usually attached to the double is relative, transforming with shifts in cultural fears and values" (2000, p. 124). Fantasy elements contribute to this notion as well because the Downworld is infested with "hungry vampires, genocidal angels, and deadly pea-soupers" (Elber-Aviram, 2013, p. 4-5). Although the idealized image of London Above swept "poverty, misery, and injustice are meticulously out of sight and mind" (Elber-Aviram, 2013, p. 4), London Below resurfaces the darkest repressed materials that resonate with cultural concerns and its social repercussions. In a similar vein, considering from a class-based perspective, the exclusion due to belonging to the lower class is another one of today's societal fears. Obviously, the Upside has its own class-related flaws, but it is crucial to say that the same negligence invades the Downworld. For example, while Door is a privileged lady, there is also Sewer Folk who seems to be the lowest in the hierarchy. They do not communicate through speaking but have a sign language and they wear "brown and green clothes, covered in a thick layer of something that might have been mold and might have been a petrochemical ooze, and might, conceivably, have been something much worse. They wore their hair long and matted. They smelled more or less as one would imagine" (Gaiman, 2013, 268). The lower-class as the repressed material draws a critique of social inequalities especially through the silhouette of the Downsiders "living in the cracks" (Gaiman, 2013, p. 96). From this general outlook, however, it turns out that London Below also has its own class hierarchy. Freud argues that while passing through the animistic stage, certain residues and traces persist, manifesting themselves through recurrence (1981, pp. 240-241). These remnants constitute the similarly shared features of the doppelgänger, paving the way for questioning not only the purity of the good, but also the defilement of the evil. The erosion between the boundaries converges two worlds at the same juncture: On a societal basis, it manifests the very human desire to create the echelon of lower and upper, maintaining the status quo. The emulation through psychic traces reveals the social structure of the Downworld as Richard observes, for example, Door's family is from upper class especially due to their unique ability to open doors and hailing from the House of Arch. They possess their own home and have access to the resources they require. Notably, although the majority of characters in London Below are not depicted as having books or engaging in reading, Door is portrayed reading *Mansfield Park* (Gaiman, 2006, p. 341). The fact that the Arch family possesses a library at their home stands in contrast to the true dispossessed in London Below, who may be without access to education or literacy, as evidenced by the absence of book exchange, for example, at the Floating Market where the focus is on practical necessities for daily life. The act of reading, especially in Door's case, symbolizes a form of empowerment and politicization, because reading allows individuals to question the societal systems and norms they encounter, leading to a deeper understanding of the world around them. Other than upper class people, there are also people like Marquis de Carabas who survives through bargaining, or Hunter who bodyguards and risks her life to exist. Yet, there are lower ones like Anaesthesia who is the true dispossessed having neither a family nor belongings. Therefore, the hierarchical structure of the Downworld mimics that of Upside. In addition to this, it is also essential to state that during his early days in Lower London, Richard also becomes dispossessed and is under threat of being killed, but being a friend to Lady Door saves him (Gaiman, 2013, p. 77). Door's being a member of the upper class saves him. Although his existence was not accepted there at first, in later times he rises in status and reaches a respected

position due to the prestigious "warrior" title he earns by killing the Beast of London (Gaiman, 2013, p. 343). No matter how risky and undesirable this realm is, it offers a chance for Richard to realize the potential within him. Therefore, Richard spiritually and locationally unites with the half which gives him the chance to prove his individuality. Therefore, the Downworld also depicts a cityscape where being-in-the-world dysfunctions for the people from lower strata. From this perspective, the doppelgänger sharing the similar character traits resonates with the embedment of social dynamics and power structures, showcasing how even in a world that may seem removed from contemporaneous reality the issues of social inequality remain incurable —as above, so below. As the title of the novel suggests, never and nowhere can one avoid hegemony.

Conclusion

It is an undeniable fact that binary opposites are a part of every aspect of life. While defined by the presence of one another, they also give shape to everyday life through the adopted institutional values. As one of these and one of the literary visions, the class-based structure of London is revealed by Richard's quest in Gaiman's work through a psychoanalytical backcloth. The doppelgänger motif discloses the class-based societal interventions with its similarities and differences through the image of "good" and "evil" in the division of London in the work. As Freud indicates, the doppelgänger constitutes differences in appearance and similarities in character features. This notion is handled in two ways in the work: Firstly, London Above is depicted as a colourful and vibrant cityscape, representing the visible and privileged surface, where the upper class wields influence and authority. London Below, however, is presented as dark, damp, and stenchy, embodying the hidden and overlooked underbelly of society, where the underprivileged struggle to survive and find their place. Secondly, the same hierarchical structure prevails London Below as well with the existence of haves and haves-nots and the expanding gulf between them. In this regard, the obvious dichotomy between the worlds is knotted together psychoanalytically, London Above as the self and London Below as the other. The former embraces the favourable and socially acceptable materials, while the latter, as the double, becomes "the other" or "the evil twin" due to the presence of undesirable elements. No matter how different they seem from each other due to stark contrasts, they are linked because the repressed materials leave residue that recurs. In this regard, on the surface it seems only London Above that has an identity and subjectivity, but London Below also has a discourse manifested through the echo of class division. Therefore, the repressed elements of the self kept hidden from consciousness continue to influence thoughts and behaviours from the subconscious level. Having its own subjectivity and identity, London Below uncovers the individuality within Richard and becomes the other half he searched before in different locations. For this reason, he prefers the place where offers him the chance to be himself, rather than a place where he accompanies other people's lives. Therefore, he opts for seeming like "a drowned rat" (Gaiman, 2013, p. 4) for his upcoming life, as he realizes the seemingly good is not good since one should always wear a social mask to compete with others. Although his being-in-the-world is not acknowledged in London Above, his newly gained title of warrior helps him climb the social ladder in the Downworld. Thus, the class-wise power struggle prevailing in both cityscapes dramatically draws a commentary on contemporary labels that today's people live for the sake of, which is laid bare in the work with the functional instrument of Freudian dictum that unveils social inequalities.

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Transculturality and Self-discovery
in Alev Croutier's *Seven Houses*
Alev Croutier'in *Yedi Evin Sırları* Kitabında Kültür Ötesilik ve Kendini Keşif

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ABSTRACT

With the increased human mobility, people can no longer define themselves within a monocultural identity, leading to the emergence of multi-layered and fluid identities, a phenomenon known as transculturality. At this intersection of cultures, new possibilities, perspectives, and ways of being emerge. Analysing Alev Lytle Croutier's *Seven Houses* (2003) is key to understanding how Croutier constructs her transcultural identity. Croutier, who describes her literary self as not belonging to any of the cultures in which she has lived, needs to uproot her established cultural truths and challenge them with a new understanding. Analysing the semi-fictional autobiography *Seven Houses* is crucial not only for understanding how Croutier constructed her transcultural feminist identity but also for exploring how she subverted the conventional norms of the Western novel and autobiography to forge a new literary self. This article aims to examine how Croutier crafted a transcultural space through her narrative style, positioned between East and West, spirituality and rationality, magical realism and reality. It also seeks to explore how she used this space to reconcile with her past and resolve the internal divisions within herself.

Introduction

As population movement increases, the concepts and behaviours associated with belonging are constantly being challenged. Most people no longer feel that they belong to a single culture and have difficulty defining themselves within the boundaries of that culture. The fact that one cannot define oneself with a monocultural identity often leads to the emergence of multi-layered and fluid identities, understood as the phenomenon of transculturality. At this intersection of cultures, new possibilities, perspectives, and ways of being emerge, and it is precisely at this point that an analysis of Alev Lytle Croutier's *Seven Houses* becomes necessary. Croutier, who describes her literary self as not belonging to any of the cultures in which she has lived, needs to uproot her established cultural truths and challenge them with a new understanding. Her pursuit of a literary identity that transcends fixed expectations and assumptions leads to a space of "both and neither," where seemingly contradictory positions can coexist.

Alev Lytle Croutier moved to the United States in 1963 at the age of eighteen and has remained there ever since. Her books have been translated into over twenty languages, making her one of the most translated writers of Turkish origin. In addition to *Seven Houses*, she is the author of several other novels, such as *The Palace of Tears* and *The Third Woman*, as well as the non-fiction books *Harem: The World Behind the Veil* and *Taking the Waters*. Academic circles have yet to give these seminal works the recognition they so richly deserve. While Füsun Döşkaya's insightful critiques (Döşkaya, 2022a, 2022b) provide valuable historical contextualisation and examine the portrayal of the United States of America within the Croutier's narrative, this essay extends upon existing scholarship. This analysis centers on the ways in which Croutier formed a transcultural identity and its manifestation through deliberate narrative choices such as genre, narrative style, use of magical realism, and palimpsest layering. Analysing the semi-fictional autobiography *Seven Houses* helps us understand not only how her transcultural feminist identity is formed but also how her narrative choices are used to create such a transcultural identity that exists in a realm where everything is interwoven. There is no separation between the real and the imaginary.

Although Croutier has spent most of her life in the United States and has written her literary works in English, she expresses a distinct sense of displacement when it comes to situating her writing within established literary traditions. As she articulates in one of her papers, "I am not part of the literary production in the USA. Neither am I in Turkey. I come from different experiences, different mythologies" (cited in Döşkaya 2022a, 838).[1] She, therefore, had to create an alternative realm between magic and rational into which she fitted. Parallel to what Ellen Berry and Mikhail Epstein note for transcultural writing, *Seven Houses* can thus be read as "an attempt at self-differentiation without losing one's own identity" (1999, 11).

Seven Houses, a narrative encompassing the life story of Croutier's family with a particular focus on her grandmother Zehra, deliberately disturbs conventional boundaries and creates a zone in which seemingly opposing forces, East and West, spirituality and rationality, coexist. Through her narrative, Croutier succeeds in realising Epstein's suggestion that transcultural writers forge a new interpersonal transcultural community to which they belong because of their differences rather than their similarities (2009, 328). Preserving these differences aligns with Audre Lorde's assertion that embracing difference can ignite our imaginations and ultimately turn into a creative function (2007, 111). This framework sheds light on Croutier's approach to autobiography, which transcends established literary boundaries and embraces novel modes of existence. Her writing seamlessly blends elements of magical realism, deeply ingrained in her Turkish heritage, with the conventions of Western realist traditions acquired through her education. This fusion generates an interconnected narrative space where the spiritual world of her grandmother harmonises with the rational framework of Western autobiography. Croutier further reflects on this point:

> García Márquez used to claim he never made it up but merely related what people believed was happening. I grew up in Turkey at a time when superstition and magic were still a prevalent part of the society. People talked about ghosts and communicating with the dead, told coffee fortunes, wore evil-eye charms, and some believed in birds or other creatures being spirits. This atmosphere was compounded with the literature I read, transcendentalists like Nizami, Rumi, and Tales from a Thousand and One Nights. But then, there was my Western education and rational conversion. I was enchanted with the nineteenth-century French writers like Balzac, Flaubert, Nerval, and Loti, and also Henry James. (2003, 308)

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[1] These quotations are taken from Döşkaya's article "The Ottoman State and Turkey in Alev Lytle Croutier's Historical Novels" which refers directly to Croutier's conference lecture entitled "Losing a Language" (held at Dokuz Eylul University on 31 October 2007).

As emphasised in this quote, Croutier does not invent magical realist features to subvert Western standards or attack the system or the rational; rather, she, like Garcia Márquez, describes her people, her grandmother's way of life and her belief in the natural flow of things. This is not "magic," but her people's lived reality. This transcultural understanding genuinely informs the reader about a new transcultural medium that can merge aspects of both cultures (East/West) and transcend the spiritual and rational binary. This would create a space where more than one culture is perpetuated, filling in each other's gaps and highlighting "the fundamental insufficiency and incompleteness of any culture" (Berry and Epstein 1999, 3).

The spiritual undertone of the story, extending beyond the narrative itself, is also recognised in the acknowledgment section of the novel placed at the end of the book. In this section, Croutier recounts a belief prevalent during her childhood in Turkey: that birds embody departed spirits and recalls being told that her grandmother, upon her passing, transformed into a nightingale (Croutier, 2003, 305). Croutier later describes a Christmas morning marked by writer's block, a feeling she describes as a "bird [having] eaten [her] tongue." This metaphorical bird manifests itself when a bird, neither indigenous to the area where she lives nor on the migratory pattern, dramatically crashes into her window. This jarring event unleashes a torrent of creative energy, enabling Croutier to complete the first draft of *Seven Houses* in a single week. Shortly thereafter, she receives news of her father's passing on that same Christmas Day (Croutier, 2003, 305). This confluence of events, presented by Croutier, suggests a narrative genesis fueled by forces beyond rational explanation. The bird, symbolic of her grandmother's and father's spirit, becomes the source of Croutier's inspiration and the catalyst for the emergence of her creative voice. She herself reinforces this idea, stating "[w]hat if the dramatic drive of stories is determined by "fate" more than intellect? That's what I'm looking for" (2003, 310). This is precisely the space through which *Seven Houses* needs to be approached, for it is a narrative propelled more by fate than by intellect.

Seven houses inhabited by the İpekçi family (Surrogate for Croutier's family) at different intervals become seven narrators who share the ups and downs of the İpekçi family, with a particular focus on revealing different aspects of womanhood, making the book a story of female empowerment. "I do not remember very much of the house in İzmir (Smyrna) where I was born. It faced the sea, was five stories high, and it had a hammam (bath house) […] A giant granite rock behind the house isolated it from the world" (Croutier, 1989, 9-10).

The first house introduced in Croutier's *Seven Houses*, a five-story dwelling complete with a traditional Turkish bath (a detail corroborated in her non-fiction work, *Harem: The World Behind the Veil*), serves as the residence of Esma, the family matriarch. Croutier draws inspiration for Esma from her own grandmother, Zehra, who resided in a familial harem in Macedonia and hailed from a lineage of affluent gunpowder manufacturers. Set against the backdrop of the fin de siècle, Esma's story reflects a woman navigating societal expectations and asserting her independence by establishing a home for herself and her two sons despite opposition from her elder brother, İskender. While the first two chapters capture the essence of the Ottoman dynasty, the next, Spinster Flat, illustrates the drastic change in the history of a nation and how this affects the smallest social unit — the İpekçi family. The final chapter of the first part, The Turquoise House, deals with Amber's connection to her mother, Camilla, and her grandmother, Malika. The novel's second part centers on "prodigal" granddaughter Amber's return from the United States to the family's ancestral home in Izmir. A grown woman, Amber grapples with her familial legacy, particularly her connection to her mother and grandmother. The final chapter closes the circle and ends where it all began in "The House in Izmir." Amber, the architect, the granddaughter of Esma, whom the critics and I resemble Croutier herself, somehow inhabits all seven houses and becomes

the "architect of the novel" (Croutier, 2003, 309).[2]

The Choice of Genre, Narration Style, Use of Palimpsest

Not belonging to one cultural literary production finds its reflection in the choice of genre in which Croutier wrote *Seven Houses*. Dagnino's definition of the transcultural writer is echoed in Croutier's dissection of both novel traditions and autobiographical conventions. As Dagnino puts forward, transcultural writers compose "in more than one linguistic code and narrative genre, thereby creating texts characterised by a mix of linguistic/cultural spaces and genres" (2015, 183).

Although *Seven Houses* was written as a novel with two parts and a total of seven chapters, it is steeped in Eastern storytelling conventions. Contrary to Benjamin's assertion that the tradition of the novel is distinct from that of the fairy tale, legend, and storytelling, *Seven Houses* achieves to entangle these two distinct narrative modes (1963, 83-84).

> Turkish culture is a highly evolved story-telling tradition. It is not a reflective culture where people spend a lot time pondering on the meaning of life and self-introspection. But they do excel in story-telling. My childhood, too, was full of story-telling, both traditional and modern. My Levantine grandmother from Bornova told Hellenic myths—I knew the Agamemnon trilogy and the house of Atrius at the same time as Cinderella or Snow White. Then came the transcendentals, Leyla ve Mecnun, 1001 Gece Masallari, etc. (cited in Döşkaya, 2022a, 838)

Croutier's positionality as a writer navigating multiple cultural landscapes informs her distinctive approach to narrative. Croutier views storytelling as a powerful form of oral tradition that helps her preserve her faith, culture, and roots. As she articulates, "I am not part of the literary production in the US. Neither am I in Turkey." This sense of existing between literary traditions becomes a defining characteristic of her work. She is not a storyteller; she is a novelist; however, she expands and punctures the boundaries that form the conventions of the novel. These holes are created by using features of magical realism, fairy tale conventions, and the tradition of storytelling —a tradition deeply rooted in her childhood experiences.

This genre hybridity is evident from the beginning of her semi-autobiographical work, which begins with the archetypal fairy tale phrase, "Once upon a time here in Smyrna." The beginning of the semi-autobiographical novel as a fairy tale is remarkable because it interrupts the reader's expectations of autobiography, which is expected to be a purely factual narrative, and releases the reader into a realm where the boundary between fantasy and reality is no longer clear. This blurring is further amplified by the magical realist traits and all the supernatural elements. Beyond the use of magical realism, autobiographical conventions are further challenged by the use of fictional elements and unconventional narrative devices. This deliberate blurring of fact and fiction serves to disrupt the traditional authority of the autobiographical voice, creating a space where multiple truths can coexist.

> I was deeply moved to describe an afternoon in my hundred-year-old grandmother's garden in Izmir. That story began clustering with other scenes with other family members, and then the fictional characters attached themselves, and soon I had a great tangle, a chaotic mélange of story and history. (Croutier, 2003, 234)

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[2] It is worth noting that the houses in *Seven Houses* not only chronicle the İpekçi family's evolution but also offer a nuanced perspective on Turkey's transition from empire to republic during the 20th century. While a comparative analysis of the official, secular, male-centric historiography with the spiritual narratives of the İpekçi women would undoubtedly yield compelling insights, such an endeavor falls outside the scope of this present study.

While *Seven Houses* is thinly fictionalised, its autobiographical underpinnings are easily recognisable. Croutier's highly acclaimed non-fiction book, *Harem: The World Behind the Veil*, in which Croutier draws from a number of first-hand narratives and memoirs as well as her own family history, becomes the sourcebook through which the autobiographical details are easily detected.

Croutier's approach to autobiography, as already stated, extends beyond the mere inclusion of fictional and magical elements. To establish authorial authority in an autobiography, one must write her/his autobiography in the first-person narrative. The narrator in *Seven Houses* is neither a singular "I" nor an omniscient third person; instead, Croutier employs the unconventional strategy of imbuing the dwellings inhabited by her family with narrative agency. This deliberate departure from established norms aligns with William Howarth's assertion that "even the simplest stylistic choices, of tense or person, are directly meaningful since they lead to larger effects, like those of metaphor and tone" (1980, 89). This conscious decision not to write a direct autobiography but to choose the houses as narrators makes sense, as Howard suggests, and definitely leads to more significant effects. Returning to Lorde's assertion that differences can give rise to new literary sub-genres that welcome innovative forms of existence and transcend conventional literary boundaries, these deliberate choices lead to a new form of autobiography that can exist outside the Western canon. Creating a new form of autobiography that can exist outside the boundaries of Western expectations is also necessary. As Gusdorf puts it, "It would seem that autobiography is not to be found outside of our cultural area; one would say that it expresses a concern peculiar to Western man […] When Gandhi tells his own story, he uses Western means to defend the East" (1980, 29). Croutier's writing, thus, challenges the autobiography notion suggested by Gusdorf by offering a form of self-narration that draws upon her own cultural background and resists easy categorisation within existing Western literary frameworks.

Croutier's decision to employ houses as the narrators in *Seven Houses* presents a compelling tension between literary innovation and established conventions of Western thought. This unconventional narrative strategy, while imbuing the text with a sense of magical realism, simultaneously challenges the Western emphasis on rationalism and verifiability. Attributing narrative authority to inanimate objects like houses can, for readers steeped in Western literary traditions, strain the bounds of believability and potentially undermine the perceived reliability of the narrative.

It is also critical to remember that autobiography, as William Howard argues, follows certain rules, one of which is the theme. "Theme may arise from the author's general philosophy, religious faith, or political and cultural attitudes. His theme is personal, but also representative of an era" (1980, 87). While inherently personal, the thematic concerns of an autobiography have evolved over time and reflected the changing demands of the era in which it was written. A brief survey of the history of the autobiographical genre, from the earliest apologies, orations, and confessions to the more contemporary forms such as memoirs and transcultural narratives, has revealed that autobiography has always been tailored to the converting intellectual and cultural landscapes of different periods. Each form, in their turn, reproduces the shifts in aesthetics that correspond to the evolving expectancies and sensibilities of its time.

Within this trajectory of evolution, transcultural autobiography emerges as a particularly salient framework for examining Croutier's work. Sonja Sarkowsky defines transcultural autobiographies as narratives that "overtly and self-reflexively refer to two or more cultural contexts and/or culturally coded narrative strategies" (2012, 629). By incorporating the houses with the narrative agency and using different modes of narrative techniques that are not typically accepted within the framework of formal autobiography, Croutier transcends the limitations of a single cultural

perspective, offering a richly layered and multifaceted exploration of autobiographical writing, reflecting the needs of her area.

> One of my European editors said to me, "But Alev, houses don't talk." Literally they don't, of course. But this is a point of view that allowed me to stay in the precinct of one house at a time, the constraint of one place, like a steady camera recording the incidents as in cinema vérité. The inherent challenges were the unity of the place. Everything had to occur within the vicinity of the houses. This constraint liberated me in a sense to explore the interior world of the characters through an objective lens. (Croutier, 2003, 235)

The utilisation of stationary houses as narrative agents in Croutier's *Seven Houses* presents a compelling paradox within the framework of transcultural autobiographical practice. While this innovative approach facilitates the deconstruction of traditional autobiographical norms and aligns with a transcultural sensibility, it simultaneously raises questions about potential limitations. Can a narrative framework rooted in fixity and immobility adequately capture the experiences of a transcultural individual whose identity is often forged through movement and displacement? Croutier deftly navigates this potential pitfall by illuminating the paradoxical nature of "home" as a site of both constraint and liberation. The seemingly ironic phrase "this constraint liberated me" encapsulates this duality, exposing and subverting prevailing cultural assumptions about domesticity and female agency. While domestic spaces and traditional gender roles are often perceived as restrictive, particularly for women, Croutier reclaims and redefines these spaces as potential sites of empowerment and self-discovery. The houses, through their roles as narrators, become more than mere physical structures; they transform into symbolic spaces where the women who inhabit them can flourish and forge their own identities.

The idea of using immobile houses as narrators allows for the deconstruction of traditional autobiographical norms and entails a transcultural approach. However, this innovative approach simultaneously raises questions about its potential limitations, particularly for a transcultural writer whose identity is forged in movement. Croutier deftly dispels this pitfall by showing that returning to the cosy embrace of home can be both touching and liberating. The seemingly ironic phrase "this constraint liberated me" encapsulates this duality and reflects the nature of the story by exposing and criticising prevailing assumptions about domesticity and female agency. Although domestic life is presented as a constraint that can restrict women, and houses as narrators can restrict the author, Croutier redefines these spaces as potential sites of empowerment and self-discovery. The houses, as narrators, become more than mere physical structures; they transform into symbolic spaces where the women who inhabit them can flourish and forge their own identities.

Although Croutier drastically challenges the traditions of autobiography by using houses as narrators, she actually succeeds in dismantling hierarchies and creating a more egalitarian narrative space than a first-person narrative could. According to Eli Friedlander, telling stories in the first person promotes truthfulness and the dismantling of hierarchies: "If telling everything is of the essence, the events of life are equalised, and none can have higher significance in and of itself" (2014, 60). However, rather than using first-person narration, with the houses functioning as impartial observers capturing the unfolding events, Croutier manages to convey the feeling of a steady camera capturing moments through an objective lens as in a film vérité. This technique enhances the sense of authenticity and immediacy while also deconstructing hierarchies.

Beyond analysing houses as narrative devices defying autobiographical traditions, it is equally important to consider how houses in Croutier's work also take on profound spiritual significance. To illustrate, in the following passage, Croutier describes the immediate spiritual connection and excitement Esma -drawing from Croutier's grandmother, Zehra- feels at the sight of her respective

house:

> Like an apparition, Esma shuffled from room to room, as if talking to the invisible faces on the walls, touching and smelling objects that caught her eye, chanting prayers. She opened the doors to every room cramped with dusty episodes […] Her eyes watered. She had come home, Love at first sight […] From that moment, we were inseparable. Even after death. (Croutier, 2003, 7-8)

As Gaston Bachelard asserts, the house serves as our refuge in the world, our primordial universe, a true cosmos in every sense of the word. Its intricate symbolism transcends mere functional aspects like room count or bathroom size. Entire universes find their place within its walls (1994, 5-9). Bachelard's assertion finds compelling expression in Croutier's depiction of Esma's relationship with her house. For Esma, the house is a refuge, a sanctuary, or a spiritual haven. She experiences a spiritual bond not only with the house itself but also with other life forms, such as djinns and peris that can dwindle within the walls. This spiritual dimension is further reflected in the passage that takes place after the great fire that almost destroyed all of Smyrna. Esma endeavours to save the house and breathe life back into it.

> Finally, Esma decided it was safe to unboard me but I had suffered so many scars … Touch the walls. Touch the walls, children. Give them your breath. Bring the spirits back […] Hosh! Hosh! Hosh! Hosh! Hosh! For Forty days and forty nights. The center of interest. The object of desire. Washed and scrubbed. Sang and smudged. New curtains. New kilims. New paint. New hope. (Croutier, 2003, 37)

Interestingly, the era in which Esma lived actually coincided with the fierce feminist demands that emerged in Europe. Yet her path to empowerment takes a different route as she refuses to give up her family or her role as a homemaker. As is evident from the passages above, Esma is closely connected to the house and becomes the proud guardian of the house. While European women empowered themselves through suffrage demands, and emphasised the separation of traditional gender roles and domestic spaces, Esma's power is initiated through the reawakening of the divine feminine in female spirituality. This feminine spirituality manifests in Esma's deep attachment to her home and her commitment to ritual offerings such as reading spiderwebs, pebbles, and coffee grains, lighting candles to Asclepius, offering sacrifices to Yadaji, Kum baba, the lord of sand, and Su baba, the famous water saint, and crafting magical charms. Esma's ability to read the language of spiderwebs and coffee grains reflects a kind of knowledge that goes beyond the limits of the rational mind. Her spiritual practices, passed down through generations of women, as we will see later, connect her to a lineage of feminine wisdom and power, offering a path to empowerment rooted in the pre-Oedipal, pre-linguistic realm of the maternal unconscious. These performances, which are not immediately available to symbolic-oriented minds, may help to grasp the spiritual connection with the unconscious and pre-oedipal mother.

> I can't allow you to live in a strange city all alone! In a big house like this! Who is to protect you? What will the people think? Her brother Iskender paced, exasperated. […] A woman shouldn't stray from her family.
> "This is my home," Esma was firm [….] God is on our side. (Croutier, 2003, 9)

Esma's courage is inextricably linked to her spirituality and the way she experiences her connection to the divine, never doubting that God would abandon her. This aligns with Wendy B. Faris' assertion that a writer's narrative is more connected to the "unconscious form of discourse that relates back to a connection with the maternal, and the spiritual, than with the symbolic kind of speech, which is allied with the father, patriarchal society, and rational thought" (2004, 171). Through the empowering passivity of spirituality and magical realism, Esma overcomes the limitations imposed by societal expectations. Not only does she become an influential figure who

can rival even the patriarch of her family, but she also becomes an inspiration to her prodigal granddaughter, Amber.

Croutier masterfully illustrates the transformative power of Esma's spirituality in a passage that seamlessly blends elements of magical realism, fairy tale motifs, prayers, music, art, colours, peace, and supernatural creatures. They are all intertwined, supporting each other in achieving perfection and serving as a solution to the never-ending human quest. When faced with financial difficulties, Esma uses her creative nature and nomadic ancestry to weave prayer rugs that have a spiritual meaning and follow the same pattern her mother taught her in Macedonia. Esma's spiritual energy is channelled through the meditative process of weaving into the intricate designs and vibrant colours of the rugs. She wove just like a harpist. Her prayer rugs, with their frenetic frenzy of patterns and colours and their colourful, bewitching trances, opened gateways into fantasy worlds reminiscent of fairy tales. These rugs, described as "magic carpets," were so unique that everyone wanted one. Customers who bought Esma's magic carpets floated away to realms of peace, beauty, and enchantment. In addition to overcoming her financial difficulties, Esma finds great inner serenity and spiritual pleasure through her artistic endeavours. Like Penelope, she concentrated on refining her designs. Her weaving, plucking, and pulling created melodies that were soothing to the sensitive ears. So much so that djinns and peris crawled out of their caves and danced (Croutier 2003, 44-45). This harmonious coexistence of the human and the supernatural highlights the permeability of boundaries in Esma's reality, a world where magic and spirituality infuse everyday life.

> My mother weaves her pain
> Entangling the threads
> So they will not break
> Their tension.
> My mother weaves her sacred self. (Croutier, 2003, 45)

This beautifully written passage, reminiscent of a fairy tale, perfectly encapsulates the essence of Esma's spirituality and its empowering effect on her feminine identity. The connection between harp playing and weaving becomes a manifestation of her artistic self. In a way, through her artistic self, Esma transcends the symbolic language and participates in the blissful realm of the pre-Oedipal. Through which she can communicate with invisible beings such as djinns and peris and even make them dance. This state of being also manifests itself as a long sought-after loving, soft hand that can soothe and bring peaceful dreams to anyone who comes into contact with the magic carpets. This passage further emphasises the significance of the connection both with nomadic ancestry and matriarch of her family in shaping Esma's strength and independence.

Esma's case also mirrors Croutier's own transcultural positioning, as her power also stems from her "difference" and her refusal to sever her ties to her ancestors. As Croutier herself states, "It's an odd position and in a way difficult, because I don't belong anywhere" (cited in Stone, 2006, 179). This resonates with Epstein's observation that those who "[have] turned their back on their past, become prisoners of a newly acquired culture. Only a small number of people, when acceding to two or several cultures, succeed in integrating them and thus are able to keep their freedom from any of them" (1999, 330). Croutier thus succeeds in keeping herself free from each of the cultures to which she has been exposed and in creating a transcultural palimpsest.

Another instance where Croutier draws from Eastern traditions is the reference to the transcendental love story of Layla and Macnun and Sufi spirituality. Esma not only manages to live on her own at the fin de siècle but also has a transcendental love affair with Süleyman Bey, the tutor of her sons. This relationship, transcending physical desire, becomes a source of spiritual sustenance for her. When her brother attempts to intervene and kill Süleyman during one of his

nocturnal visits, Esma's response is not one of overt confrontation but a prolonged silence. Her preference for silence may sound like a passive retreat and the result of a submissive attitude, yet this reading would be unfair to such a strong woman. Her silence can be read as a deliberate choice of defying to "enter masculine verbal space," recalling Clara in *the House of Spirits* (Ronie 1994, 189) and Wendy Faris' contention that women are keen to build a pre-Oedipal language register that links back to a relationship with the maternal (Faris 2004, 171).

During the heydays of the First World War, Esma, who is still inconsolable because she has lost Süleyman, does not know what to do when she suddenly sees him in her room. Croutier sets the stage for this pivotal moment with the following description:

> Down on earth, Esma unrolled her prayer rug, though it was past the prayer time; she peeled off her clothes just like in the hamam […]
> For hours and hours.
> Never a greater blessing.
> Never a more ardent prayer.
> Knowing it was the last.
> Before sunrise, Süleyman vanished.
> From that day on, Esma surrendered herself to prayer. It was like she's gone mad. (Croutier, 2003, 29)

This intertextual depiction of sexual desire and prayer may seem unsettling, yet for Esma, the sexual act was never a mere pleasure but an act of worship that reflects the devotion and utter bliss she experiences when praying. This transcendental love relationship between Esma and her lover Suleyman is reminiscent of the transcendental love of Layla and Macnun, which is a recurring motif in Sufi poetry. According to the Sufi understanding of love, when a man and a woman transcend their ordinary existence and reach a higher level of being, they draw closer to a divine experience (Khan, Mahmood, and Khan, 2022, 450). This concept reinforces the novel's exploration of spirituality and female empowerment, transforming sexual love from a solely physical act into a catalyst for spiritual growth.

Along with magical realism, Croutier employs palimpsestic layering as a critical narrative strategy. She points out on the very first page that the shores of the Aegean were home to a multitude of human civilisations, starting from the Olympian gods, Adonis, and Aphrodite, to Mother Mary, Homer, Anthony, and Cleopatra. "They all occupied the same land, along the same sea. The Aegean. The mirror of mirrors. […] To go back in time. Live past lives. Be other people. Some places store memory. This is one" (Croutier, 2003, 5-6). This emphasis on the different civilisations that lived on one and the same coast is reminiscent of palimpsestic parchment, where a later script is superimposed over the erased script but still bears the visible traces of the earlier script. Croutier extends this metaphor to the narrative structure itself, suggesting that the present unfolds upon a canvas of obscured histories. This is exemplified in the "Spinster Apartment," the third house featured in the novel, which becomes a vessel for revealing past narratives and hidden layers of time.

> Years later, when I was demolished, and they excavated the foundation, then workers uncovered terra cotta artifacts—Neolithic pots and pitchers, the remnants of six thousand years ago, way back from the matriarchal cultures that existed even before the Hittites. […] Little did anyone know that underneath, less than twenty meters, a whole ancient city lay not yet uncovered. So, after all, I was an old soul deep down. Despite the mask. (Croutier, 2003, 121)

Not only does Croutier evoke the palimpsestic stratification of human nature and the earth through archaeology, history, writing, and storytelling, but she also skilfully layers multiple disparate ideas

over one another without undermining any of them. In a way, it reveals the age-old reality that all human beings are, if looked at closely, transcultural beings as a culture cannot exist in a vacuum. Croutier sought to create a new creative medium by fusing all these attributes together to create a transcultural environment that could be both all and none simultaneously.

Chapter opening quotes are another example of palimpsestic technique. The use of quotes in every chapter, as she notes in one of her interviews, preserves the politics of the chapter by "capsulating each chapter's theme." "One should know beforehand that there will be in this book no terrible adventures, no extraordinary hunts, no discoveries, no dangers; nothing but the fancy of a slow walk, at the pace of a rocking camel, in the infinite bliss of the pink desert" (Croutier, 2003: 3). The strategic use of Pierre Loti's quote at the beginning of the novel not only "sets up the rhythm of the novel" but also foreshadows that male aesthetic standards are criticised throughout the novel. Croutier not only shifts the conventions of autobiography but also challenges and subverts the traditional male aesthetic, which valorises heroic events like wars and scientific breakthroughs as the only subjects worthy of great literature. Echoing Helene Cixous' remark that "the power and resources of femininity [...] can be reabsorbed, covered up in the ordinary" (1991, 31), Croutier writes about Esma's daily life but transforms it into a powerful magical tool, as discussed in the preceding section.

The second part of the book, entitled "The Prodigal Daughter's Return," opens with a quote from Medea: "You have navigated with a raging soul far from the paternal home, passing beyond the seas' double rocks and now you inhabit a foreign land" (Croutier, 2003, 193). This sets "the emotional landscape" for this section while encapsulating the novel's broader political and thematic concerns. Croutier simultaneously deconstructs established literary conventions and prompts reflection on the multifaceted nature of the human search for belonging, particularly the yearning for an irrecoverable past.

This tension between detachment and belonging mirrors Croutier's own life experiences. She acknowledges this recurring motif of "crossroads" in various interviews, stating, "crossroads intrigued me, and so I wrote something about the melancholy one felt of a road not taken. Little did I know then that the crossroads would be a paradigm for my life" (as cited in Döşkaya, 2022, p. 838). Similarly, she declares in another interview that "I would always be standing at the crossroads of East and West" (Stone, 2006, p. 178). Croutier's journey towards an authentic transcultural identity necessitates a reconciliation with her past, a process mirrored in the novel. As Judy Stone observes, "*Seven Houses* characterizes a prodigal daughter's return to Turkey as a moment of reconciliation with the past" (2006, p. 178). Croutier, like a prodigal daughter, navigates beyond geographical boundaries to achieve a sense of wholeness and reconcile her own internal conflicts.

This urge for reconciliation is achieved in the novel through a mixture of the spiritual and the everyday. The first chapter ends with the birth of Esma's granddaughter Amber (a surrogate mother for Croutier) and Esma's death. Through her spiritual connection, which transcends mortality, Esma is able to exercise power over her newborn granddaughter.

> Esma prayed, "Great God. Take my life instead. Let my grandson live. Take my soul. Take what you want from me." [...] Esma picked up the tiny little girl in her fragile arms and looked into her eyes—void as if she belonged to the soulless ones. She cut the chord. She licked the vernix. She breathed on the child's face. Within seconds, the baby's eyes became alert and inquisitive like a sea mammal [...] Esma perceived in her granddaughter the reflection of her own spirit ... as if they shared a great secret but felt herself swiftly expiring. (Croutier, 2003, 58)
> That night, in her sleep, she separated from her body. At dawn, Gonca came running upstairs.

> The sight of her mistress curled up on her prayer rug like a fava bean as in the old days of her passion. Brought tears to her eyes. She covered Esma. Then, she knew.
> A blue spirit floated over Esma's lifeless body; formless at first, it began to change like the clouds until a piece of it broke off and became a nightingale. The bird flew out the window, perched on the Adonis tree. The muezzin chanted the dawn prayer. The nightingale sang. And the baby began to cry. (Croutier, 2003, 59-60)

In the closing scene of the first chapter, Esma's regression to a pre-oedipal state, symbolised by the metaphor of "a fava bean," culminates in her transformation into a nightingale. This metamorphosis removes Esma from the symbolic material world, and she finds herself totally immersed in a spiritual, pre-oedipal state. This rather magical end of the first chapter indeed foreshadows Amber's (and by extension, Croutier's) need to reconcile with her cultural heritage and her grandmother. When Amber returns to her birthplace at the novel's end, it is as if she is responding to that earlier foreshadowing, actively seeking a reconciliation that feels both necessary and inevitable.

> Amber sat in front of the worn marble sink and poured a pitcher of cold water over her shoulders. Goosebumps spread all over her flesh. How lucky am I to have choices, she thought. How lucky. The muezzin's voice rose in the air. The nightingale sang a song of acceptance. A bus went by. (Croutier, 2003, 303)

The novel's end becomes reminiscent of the first chapter's ending. Amber, now possessing both the secret of her grandmother and the rational lens of Western education, finds herself in the hammam, a space symbolic of being reborn. As she poured cold water over her shoulders she thought how lucky she was to have choices. For Amber, the act of returning to her birthplace, coupled with the agency to choose her own path forward, creates a fertile ground for healing and self-discovery. Similarly, Croutier's transcultural identity allows her to embrace the paradoxical existence of being both and neither. As Croutier reveals in an interview with Judy Stone, "*Seven Houses* brought her closer to her Turkish heritage, making the theme of reconciliation very important to her" and adds, "It helped to free me to write about other things" (2006, 178).

Conclusion

Alev Croutier's *Seven Houses*, a semi-autobiographical narrative about Croutier's family, is a journey into the heart of a family. It offers a tale of two sides: East/West, spirituality/rationality, and magical realism/logic, which complement rather than cancel each other out. Analysing this centuries-old family saga is essential to understand not only how Croutier developed her transcultural feminist identity but also how she broke with the conventions of the Western novel and autobiography to create a new literary identity. In an era characterised by fluid identities that cannot be tied to specific cultures, Croutier transcended not only her maternal culture but also other cultures to which she was exposed. As a person split between two cultures and nations, Croutier needed to understand her grandmother in order to understand who she was. So Amber, the prodigal daughter, returns and buys her ancestral home in search of healing and a sense of belonging. Croutier, who stands at the crossroads of East and West, takes neither and walks a new path that corresponds to her transcultural identity. This third path becomes the narrative of *Seven Houses*.

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Fragmented Histories:
The Historiographic Metafiction of Walter Abish's "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity"

Parçalanmış Tarihler: Walter Abish'in "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" Eserinde Tarihyazımsal Üstkurmaca

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ABSTRACT

Walter Abish's "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" (1977) emerges as a significant narrative that intricately explores themes of memory, trauma, and the fragmentation of history, all articulated through the perspective of the character Jane. Jane's experiences within the narrative serve as a vital framework for interrogating the far-reaching themes inherent in historiographic metafiction, a defining characteristic of postmodern literature. This article examines Jane's journey as a reflection of the fragmented and subjective nature of historical representation, emphasizing how Abish critiques linear historical discourse while engaging with postmodernism's skepticism towards grand narratives. Through the employment of techniques such as narrative disjunction, unreliable memory, and the blending of fact with fiction, Abish uses Jane's fragmented narrative to examine the uncertainties surrounding historical representation and identity formation. This analysis situates these themes within the broader discourse of postmodern American fiction, demonstrating the ways in which Abish's work challenges conventional understandings of history and narrative.

Introduction

Walter Abish's "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" (1977) offers a multilayered narrative set in the United States. The enigmatic protagonist, Jane, symbolizes the personal aspect of engaging with history, embodying the ordinary person who struggles to come to terms with a national past marked by deep trauma. The story revolves around Jane's attempts to reconcile her fragmented memories with the historical events she has lived through or inherited, such as wars, political unrest, and cultural upheaval. The story thus appears to be a good example of historiographic metafiction, where history is not presented as an objective truth but as a subjective and constructed narrative.

Historiographic metafiction, as Linda Hutcheon puts forward in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, challenges the idea that only history holds a claim to truth. It does so by questioning the foundation

of this claim within historical writing and emphasizing that both history and fiction are forms of discourse. As human-made constructs and systems of meaning, they share a common basis for their truth claims, rooted in their constructed nature (p. 93). Postmodern theory puts emphasis on the fact that fiction does not serve as a mirror to reality but instead actively acknowledges its own artificiality. Rather than striving to represent an objective world, postmodern fiction foregrounds its constructed nature, often blurring the boundaries between reality and imagination. This self-awareness invites readers to question traditional notions of truth and authenticity, emphasizing that all narratives, whether fictional or factual, are shaped by subjective perspectives and cultural frameworks:

> Theorists of metafiction themselves argue that this fiction no longer attempts to mirror reality or to tell any truth about it... Fiction does not mirror reality; nor does it reproduce it. It cannot. There is no pretense of simplistic mimesis in historiographic metafiction. Instead, fiction is offered as another of the discourses by which we construct our versions of reality, and both the construction and the need for it are what are foregrounded in the postmodernist novel. (Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 40)

Abish's text situates Jane's personal history within the larger American context, showing how individual stories intersect with broader historical narratives. Through Jane's journey, Abish explores how history becomes mythologized and how personal memory frequently conflicts with the official narratives of history. This exploration highlights the inherent conflicts that arise when subjective experiences confront institutionalized accounts of history, highlighting the multiplicity of truths that coexist within the historical landscape. By portraying Jane's fragmented recollections and her struggles against the backdrop of larger historical forces, Abish not only critiques the notion of a singular historical truth but also illuminates the complexities of identity formation in a society shaped by diverse and often conflicting narratives. Thus, "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" becomes a powerful meditation on the intricate relationship between personal memory, historical representation, and the ongoing quest for meaning in a world marked by uncertainty.

"Ardor/Awe/Atrocity"

The text is made up of twenty-seven chapters, each titled with three unique words organized in alphabetical order. In the text, Walter Abish employs a distinctive method to restructure the narrative by deconstructing the traditional linear flow of the narrative. Through fragmentation, Abish unsettles the conventional order that can be found in multiple narratives, and instead he crafts an unconventional narrative flow. Abish introduces non-traditional frameworks to establish structure on the disorder he creates. His unique framing technique is evident through his organization of chapters in an alphabetical order, yet in a fragmented manner. Moreover, by including sequential superscripts in the chapter titles and highlighting particular words, he establishes an artificial sense of order. Thus, the alphabetical framework Abish employs in the story creates a sense of linearity that is disrupted by the fragmented narrative. Walter Abish, as Arias Misson Alain (1980) observes constructs a complex array of mechanisms involving "[c]ombinations, copulations, permutations, deletions, transferences, transgressions, substitutions, cross-references, doublings" and these intricately woven elements manifest as intellectual "puzzles - puzzles of sex, puzzles of minds, puzzles of death - and words and images, letters and numbers are the matter of a puzzle" (p. 115). Abish's work thus transforms language and imagery, as well as letters and numbers, into the fundamental building blocks of these multifaceted puzzles, blurring the boundaries between form and content in his exploration of these themes.

As mentioned above, Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction is crucial to understanding Abish's approach in "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity." In Hutcheon's view, historiographic

metafiction merges the historical and fictional, calling into question the truthfulness of both by exposing the process of narration itself (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 17). Abish's portrayal of Jane reflects this, as her story vacillates between what seems to be concrete memory and what turns out to be unreliable or fictive. Jane's personal history, set against the backdrop of modern U.S. events like the Vietnam War or the civil rights movement, becomes a microcosm for how national narratives are constructed and contested. Through Jane, Abish explores the intricacies of unreliable narration, a technique that gains prominence as Jane recalls specific incidents from her past - vivid, emotionally charged scenes that initially appear to be anchored in historical fact. Yet, as the narrative unfolds, these memories shift, with new details emerging or previous details contradicting themselves. This narrative instability mirrors the inherent unreliability of historical accounts, particularly those shaped and filtered through the lenses of personal or collective trauma. Jane's shifting memories, therefore, transcend the personal and act as a powerful metaphor for the unstable nature of historical truth itself. In doing so, Abish reflects how both memory and history are subjective, selective, and constantly in flux, questioning the very notion of an objective historical record.

Abish's exploration of the fluidity and subjectivity of memory and history resonates deeply with the core principles of postmodernism. By questioning the objectivity of historical records, postmodernism navigates a space that both acknowledges the power of historical narratives and simultaneously challenges their authority and permanence. Therefore, postmodernism, while resistant to any monolithic definition, is situated somewhere in between the reliance upon the history of narratives and the rejection of it. For an ideology that can be understood as, in Jean-Francois Lyotard's definition, "incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv), postmodern authors still need these grand narratives to communicate their messages. Linda Hutcheon, in her essay "Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and the Intertextuality of History," calls attention to the postmodern turn of parodying metanarratives, an act that forces readers to "look again at the connections between art and the "world" (p. 25). For Hutcheon, the combination in postmodern texts of historiography and metafiction employs the uncanny (*das unheimlich*) in a most Freudian sense; while the historiography half "work[s] to familiarize the unfamiliar through (very familiar) narrative structures (as Hayden White has argued ["The Historical Text," pp. 49-50]), ... its metafictional self-reflexivity works to render problematic any such familiarization" (Hutcheon, p. 10). Through a blending of metanarrative parody, a term that Hutcheon uses interchangeably with pastiche and a multilevel, metafictional self-awareness, "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" openly declares itself, in Hutcheon's terms, for postmodernism. The story exposes not only the ways that expectations and presuppositions guide the reader's interpretive process, but it also integrates this process into the narrative itself, causing a self-reflexive doubling effect, illuminating a challenge to and for postmodernism at its core.

Set against the well-documented landscape of Southern California, "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" opens with the story of Jane, a woman travelling to Los Angeles, who is later revealed to be an aspiring actress. The narrative, deeply embedded in the iconic geography of Southern California, invokes both the historical allure of the California Dream - where individuals from across the globe flocked to seek their fortunes during the Gold Rush - and the modern Hollywood Dream, symbolized by the aspiring entertainers drawn to Hollywood in pursuit of fame and success in television and film. The significance of the U.S. as the setting for this narrative is central to its engagement with postmodernism. Far from portraying the United States as a monolithic or cohesive entity, the novel presents the nation as a fractured and multifaceted landscape, mirroring the disintegration of Jane's own memory. As Jane moves through various American locales, from the meticulously planned suburban neighborhoods to the decaying and dilapidated urban centers, each space operates as a symbolic representation of different facets of the country's historical and cultural identity. This geographical fragmentation underscores the thematic undercurrents of

postmodernism, particularly in its critique of grand narratives and its exploration of identity as something fragmented and elusive.

The narrative structure employed by Abish further amplifies this theme of fragmentation. Through a non-linear narrative, Jane's story unfolds in a manner that defies conventional temporal progression, frequently shifting between past and present without clear or discernible transitions. This disjointed structure is emblematic of the postmodern interrogation of memory and identity, where recollections are not experienced as a coherent or continuous stream but rather as a series of disjointed and often contradictory fragments, shaped by emotional resonance, trauma, and external events. Jane's fragmented movement across the American landscape parallels the fragmentation of her personal identity, as she struggles to make sense of her place both within her personal history and within the broader historical and cultural narratives of the nation: "I move through spaces I no longer recognize. The map has changed; the territory eludes me" (p. 107). In this sense, Jane's journey becomes a profound metaphor for the postmodern condition, characterized by the impossibility of fully understanding or reconciling one's place in history or within any stable, unified sense of self.

Walter Abish's "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" is a striking example of postmodern experimentation with narrative form, employing fragmentation as a central technique to both deconstruct and reconstruct the framework of what could otherwise be a conventional story. This deliberate fragmentation operates on multiple levels, from the structural to the linguistic, creating a text that defies traditional storytelling conventions. Structurally, the narrative is non-linear, disorienting the reader by avoiding clear chronological progression and instead jumping across time and space in a way that mirrors the disjointed nature of memory and perception. Linguistically, Abish plays with language itself, destabilizing meaning through repetition, contradiction, and ambiguity, further challenging the reader's ability to grasp a coherent, singular truth. This multi-layered fragmentation serves not only to complicate the reader's engagement with the text but also to invite active interpretation, prompting readers to piece together disparate elements in their own attempt to construct meaning. In doing so, Abish foregrounds the act of storytelling as inherently unstable and subjective, questioning the reliability of both narrative and language. Ultimately, this postmodern approach disrupts the boundaries between form and content, reflecting the novel's broader themes of fractured identity, history, and reality. As Arias Misson Alain (1980) argues, the deliberately constructed and artificial aesthetic of the puzzle immediately conveys its primary function as a language rooted in artifice. The distribution of letters and numbers throughout the text operates like a system of coordinates, organizing events, fragments of events, and aspects of characters who exist elsewhere. As readers engage in the process of deciphering and assembling the puzzle, they inadvertently become collaborators with Walter Abish in "fixing" or "framing" the characters, evoking criminal undertones, as these figures remain unaware of their manipulated circumstances. This positions the reader in a superior, detached vantage point above the characters. The author's - and by extension, the reader's - self-detachment through the medium's cold formalism is counterbalanced by a lingering, almost spectral presence, permeating the text through the interplay of letters and numbers, creating an omnipresent influence over the narrative's unfolding (p. 122). The narrative thus resists closure, deliberately withholding the sense of resolution that traditional storytelling often provides. Instead of guiding the reader toward a definitive conclusion or a neatly tied-up plot, "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" invites an open-ended experience in which meaning remains elusive.

Walter Abish's text mirrors a radical separation from literary conventions, challenging readers' expectations of a unified coherence. He dismantles traditional frameworks of plot and character and features the instability and arbitrariness of the text. Walter Abish, as Irving Malin (2017) observes, is a subversive writer who challenges traditional notions of plot and character, as he

focuses less on these conventional elements and more on the linguistic structures that contain them. His narratives feature characters who are barely recognizable and engage in implausible actions, positioning him as an "anti-realist" writer. Abish's works suggest that reality itself is as arbitrary and devoid of inherent meaning as art. Attempting to summarize the plot of any of his stories is futile, as the act of retelling inherently distorts the narrative. Such retellings flatten the nuanced effects of his writing, rendering them absurd, chaotic, or unintentionally humorous (pp. 112-3). In the story, the narrative plays with the reader's and also the character's expectations based on clichéd situations, the hitchhiker in the middle of nowhere who "might try to wrench open the car door" (p. 9), the disposing of cars off of cliffs (pp. 106-7), common bank-robberies (p. 107), and the aspiring actress led through a life of sex, violence, and, eventually, her own death, mirroring the highly fictionalized "Black Dahlia" case, all scenes strongly coded within popular culture. By using these familiar but seemingly "low-culture" references, Abish observes that just like cultural imperatives and appetites, the respective metanarratives change too; whatever people digest *en masse* is or will become its own grand narrative, engrained into the cultural psyche as reality or truth.

Mannix the background television show that dominates the minds of Abish's Southern Californian residents, parodies the episodic crime dramas that saturate the real-world television schedule; shows that constantly rework tried and true formulas and themes that work their way into the fabric of the cultural perspective. The unabashed references to typical and mass-produced television are a postmodern turn from intertextuality to what Hutcheon dubs "interdiscursivity," the willingness to "draw upon any signifying practices it can find operative in a society. It wants to challenge those discourses and yet to milk them for all they are worth" (p. 16). Yet for all the interdiscursive references and historically charged expectations, Abish concludes very little in the narrative. He is more concerned with drawing to the attention of the reader the fact that they expect and presuppose in the first place and that they understand by way of previous texts. By creating a working example of historiographic metafiction, Abish can highlight the ways in which expectations are guided by history and the consequences that those representations or misrepresentations have.

At its most mimetic, postmodernist fiction, as Brian McHale (1987) argues, reflects the intricacies of everyday existence in late capitalist societies, where reality is deeply infiltrated by the "micro-escapism" offered by television and cinema. A multiplicity of ontologies shaped by media-saturated daily life is exemplified in Walter Abish's "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity". In this work, the omnipresent television, functioning as a self-contained reality within the broader fictional world, further disrupts an already fragmented and unstable narrative reality, emphasizing the fluidity and disorientation characteristic of postmodern experience (p. 128). In the story, Abish is able to make a postmodern argument for fiction's explicit involvement in the interpretation and perceived meanings of experience. That is to say, through the metafictional mirroring of Jane's interpretive experiences with the reader's own and the act of reading itself, Abish challenges "both any naive realist concept of representation and any equally naive textualist or formalist assertions of the total separation of art from the world" (Hutcheon, p. 6). The character and setting of *Mannix*, for instance, the eponymous hero and fictional TV show that pervades the background of the story, becomes the representation of the "real" Southern California for its viewers. Whether he is or not, *Mannix* stands in as the everyman, uniting the disparate population into a common identity or "public," those "who never are and never can be united in an actual situation or organization" (Kierkegaard, 1962, p. 60). Here Kierkegaard refers to the idea of public as an abstract and fragmented collective that lacks real unity or shared experience and thus it is an imagined construct that brings people together only superficially through the mediated representation of Mannix.

Similarly, but on a different level, the history of all narratives provides readers with the foreknowledge to make sense of any given text because, as Hutcheon argues, "a literary work can actually no longer be considered original; if it were, it could have no meaning for its reader. It is only as part of prior discourses that any text derives meaning and significance" (p. 7). Abish, however, does not wish to colour all representations equally nor does he excuse the inequalities. The history of gendered representations is weighed down by patriarchy and that has great consequences for gender identity. While Mannix is the representation of an idealized male experience, the "entrée to wealth and power in L.A. and San Diego" (p. 102), Jane is led to "accept the inherent femininity of her situation" (p. 103), relegated to the "seat next to the driver" (p. 102), the place for the passive, sexualized woman, the position of collateral damage where a "bullet that narrowly missed *Mannix* and hit his friend instead is accepted, with resignation, with foreknowledge" (p. 103). Since "we can only "know" (as opposed to "experience") the world through our narratives (past and present)" (Hutcheon, p. 9), metafictional texts such as "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" make the reader conscious of what and how we "know," such as the highly unbalanced gender tropes, and calls for a retrofitting of new representations or at least the destabilizing of old ones.

By incorporating *Mannix* into the narrative in a fragmented way, Abish disrupts the traditional linearity and formulaic structure associated with the crime series. In *Mannix*, the plotlines typically follow a clear trajectory, centered around a detective who methodically solves cases and brings resolution to the mystery at hand. This predictable structure stands in stark contrast to the fragmented and unresolved nature of "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity," where the lack of narrative closure challenges the reader's expectations of resolution. In this sense, *Mannix* functions as more than just a cultural reference or backdrop; it becomes a symbol of the novel's fractured narrative form. The episodic, action-driven nature of *Mannix* - with each episode offering a self-contained story - reflects the fragmentation that Abish employs throughout the novel, but its clean-cut resolutions are subverted. Instead of providing narrative cohesion or a sense of order, *Mannix* is broken down and recontextualized, further emphasizing the disconnection within Abish's story. This deliberate fragmentation of *Mannix* mirrors the broader theme of disjointed realities, particularly in the hyper-real, media-saturated environment of Southern California. Popular culture, as represented by *Mannix*, becomes a reflection of the fragmented, often superficial nature of contemporary life, where linear narratives and clear-cut truths are often replaced by a patchwork of mediated experiences and distorted realities. Abish's use of *Mannix* serves to critique how these narratives of popular culture offer an illusion of coherence, yet in the context of "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity," they are exposed as inadequate in fully capturing the complexity and fragmentation of real-life experiences. By deconstructing this familiar cultural icon, Abish not only critiques the oversimplified narratives of popular media but also highlights the ways in which cultural products both shape and mirror the fragmented realities of postmodern existence. As noted by Irving Malin (2017), Abish in the story presents a striking depiction of Southern California, where the landscape merges with the image of the television detective *Mannix*. California, much like an "alphabetical Africa," appears as an imagined world constructed from tangible yet imagined elements. Each new development - whether a shopping center, airport, or office complex - expands the boundaries of plausibility. Abish suggests that Southern California is less a tangible reality and more a conceptual idea, embodying a belief in earthly perfection. Through the deliberate repetition of words and the use of numerical cues, he compels the reader to engage with the text innocently, emphasizing that the idea of "California," rather than its physical existence, permeates the narrative (p. 113).

The use of superscripts within the text represents another layer of artificial order. Abish, in "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity," is much more concerned with how we read than what we read. Likewise, he, as a postmodernist, is more engaged with how one writes than what one writes. Any discussion of "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" would be incomplete without a look at the structure and the numerical

system within. These superscripts, scattered throughout the chapters, create cross-references between words and ideas, linking disparate parts of the narrative in a manner reminiscent of footnotes. However, these connections are tenuous and often obscure, as the superscripts do not lead to explanatory notes but rather to other fragmented sections of the text. This technique reinforces the sense of fragmentation by suggesting connections that, upon closer inspection, do not resolve into a coherent whole. The reader is left to navigate a labyrinth of disconnected references, further emphasizing the fragmented nature of the narrative. "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity," as Brian Mchale argues, at first glance seems to follow the abecedary format, reminiscent of Sorrentino's "Splendide-Hôtel" or Gangemi's "Volcanoes from Puebla." Each of its twenty-six brief fragments is introduced by three words starting with the same letter, ranging from "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" to "You/Yelled/Youthfulness" and "Zoo/Zodiac/Zero." However, the resemblance to alphabetically structured texts ends here, as these headings do not serve as key-words and lack any coherent connection to the corresponding textual fragments; their juxtaposition appears entirely arbitrary. Additionally, each head-word is assigned a superscript number from 1 to 78 - for example, "$Ardor^1$/Awe^2/$Atrocity^3$" and "$Buoyant^4$/Bob^5/$Body^6$." Whenever these head-words appear in the text, they retain the same superscript number, creating a cross-referencing system that links each occurrence of a word in both the headings and the main text (p. 158).

In the text, the use of superscripts serves as a formal device that highlights the fragmented nature of the narrative, repeatedly interrupting the reader's immersion and directing attention to other, often disconnected fragments. These references, however, never coalesce into a coherent whole, leaving the reader to navigate a web of disjointed pieces without providing a unified or linear narrative. This technique mirrors the broader thematic structure of "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity," where the interplay between interruption and enhancement reflects the reader's overall experience of the story. Just as the superscripts disrupt the flow, the narrative itself resists straightforward interpretation or closure, constantly evading fixed meaning. However, rather than simply frustrating the reader, these interruptions also invite deeper engagement with the text. By pointing to other fragments, the superscripts encourage the reader to seek connections between disparate elements, prompting an active process of meaning-making. This deliberate fragmentation not only challenges the reader to interpret the narrative in non-linear ways but also reflects the postmodern aesthetic of destabilizing conventional structures of storytelling.

Abish, in the text, creates a narrative that is both resistant to easy interpretation and yet rich with interpretive possibilities, emphasizing the notion that meaning is always contingent, partial, and constructed through the reader's interaction with the text. The superscripts, therefore, become a meta-commentary on the act of reading itself, emphasizing that interpretation is never a straightforward process, but one marked by constant shifts, disruptions, and re-evaluations. The cross-referencing system employed in the text, as Brian McHale observes, serves no discernible functional purpose, other than to emphasize certain recurring verbal motifs. As a result, the reader's attention is repeatedly diverted from the narrative world to the level of linguistic construction, driven by what can only be described as an overtly purposeless and vacuous formalism. This disrupts the syntactical flow, destabilizing the depicted world, which continuously disintegrates and is reconstructed, only to disintegrate once more. The effect is one of flickering instability. The reader experiences a form of cognitive dissonance, their focus fractured between the ontological realm of the narrative and the linguistic mechanics. This ontological tension is compounded by the nature of the text's subject matter. The piece titled "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" depicts a woman's deepening entanglement in sadomasochistic sexual behavior, leading to her eventual demise. The juxtaposition of this highly charged sexual content with an indifferent and arbitrary formal structure generates a profound sense of disorientation, creating a strange and unsettling experience for the reader (p. 158).

The superscript numbers that attach to each alphabetized section heading bring attention to its rigid structure and resist any imaginative slumber that can grip a reader in a straight-forward narrative, fighting against becoming a Jane-like passenger, complicit in an unwanted "scenario" (p. 103). But the numbers have a referential quality as well. They appear to signal footnotes or endnotes without a reference attached. This mimics a textual reference without an encoded meaning, a signifier without a signified. The line "Without *Mannix*, Southern California would be bereft of the distinction between ardor, awe, and atrocity" (p.105) highlights the symbolic role the television series plays in the narrative's depiction of the region. On one level, this statement reflects the idea that *Mannix* - with its intense action, emotional highs, and violent events - embodies the heightened emotional states that characterize Southern California. In a place where image and reality constantly blur, *Mannix* provides a narrative framework that differentiates between these emotional extremes, even if only superficially. In this sense, *Mannix* provides a lens through which Southern California's emotional extremes can be understood and categorized. The television show offers a framework for interpreting the region's contradictions - its beauty and its brutality, its superficial glamor and its underlying violence. The show functions as a cultural anchor, allowing audiences to navigate and make sense of the disorienting, fragmented reality of Southern California. This allows Abish to disorient the reader, placing them in Jane's position, Jane who relies on Mannix's experiences "for guidance", who, when without television and without a frame of reference, like the unconnected footnote, sees "*zero*" on the TV or emptiness and absence (p. 104). In this way, the referents, such as the superscript numbers and Mannix, become a "hyperreality," "a copy or image without reference to an original" (Aylesworth). These copies or simulacrum over time are ingested and regurgitated, changed and unchanged, and become "more real than the real" (Baudrillard, p. 96). Abish translates this into his short story as a denial of the individual experience and the acceptance of metanarrative. While Jane experiences the "bleakest and most desolate part of the Mojave Desert" (p. 99) and the many shades of "whites" in her hotel rooms (p. 101), only the "magnificent colors" make it into her "detailed description" of Southern California (p. 100). These descriptions and those like it, compounded, make their way into the discourse and metanarratives of Southern California and are then reiterated, making them a "reality" for the masses. Abish finishes his short-story with the narrator, appearing in the final section "Zoo[76]/Zodiac[77]/Zero[78]," describing his latest book set in Southern California, "a place [he's] never visited" (p. 110). This final metafictional element highlights the ability of fiction authors to recreate scenes and settings based on a hyperreality and the danger therein. The narrator's admission of having never visited Southern California thus calls into question the authenticity of the entire narrative. If the narrator has no direct experience of the setting, then the portrayal of Southern California - which had been central to the story - becomes suspect. The region, already depicted as fragmented and artificial, is now revealed to be a fictional construction of the narrator's imagination, shaped by cultural stereotypes and media representations. The difference between how Jane really experiences Southern California and how she describes it shows the divide between history and reality. "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" like all good historiographic metafiction, is "overtly and resolutely historical-though, admittedly, in an ironic and problematic way that acknowledges that history is not the transparent record of any sure "truth" (Hutcheon, p. 10).

Central to Jane's narrative in "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" is the figure of the unreliable narrator, a device through which Walter Abish explores the complexities of memory, storytelling, and historical truth. Throughout the novel, Jane's recollections are riddled with contradictions, as she frequently questions her own memories, sometimes acknowledging the possibility that she is misremembering or even fabricating certain aspects of her past. This self-reflexivity is a hallmark of historiographic metafiction, a genre that foregrounds the act of narration itself to emphasize the inherent subjectivity and instability of historical accounts. By portraying Jane as an unreliable

narrator, Abish highlights the subjective nature of all narratives, especially those that claim to recount history. Jane's personal history is never fixed; it is a constantly shifting version of events, shaped by her fluctuating memory and perspective: "She lives in language and image. Her life passes from 'awe' to 'atrocity' by way of 'ardor'" (p. 106). This fluidity reflects a broader postmodern critique of the grand narratives of modernity, which purport to offer objective, universal truths about history. Abish, however, suggests that history is not a singular, coherent narrative but rather a collection of competing, often contradictory stories, each shaped by the individual perspectives of those who tell them. Jane's unreliable narration underscores this multiplicity, demonstrating that there is no single, authoritative version of history; instead, history is a contested space, where meaning is continually negotiated and reinterpreted. Through Jane, Abish challenges the reader to recognize the limitations of any attempt to fully capture historical truth, as every narrative is inevitably shaped by subjectivity, memory, and the act of storytelling itself.

What "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" accomplishes is that it magnifies, albeit through pastiche and parody, how people communicate and are communicated to through metanarratives, those experiences or views that have made their way into the historical, spatial, and cultural discourse. Abish does not set out to criticize the materials that are consumed from popular culture nor does he try to revolutionize the way texts are written or interpreted. Instead, Abish uses a multilevel, metafictional connection to ensure that his message is made loud and clear, *Mannix* representing the generalized Southern California experience, Jane and other Southern Californians understanding only things in their world that they have seen through his eyes, and the reader experiences a similar mirroring effect, being jarred to reality each time a signifier has no signified. These all speak to the ways in which we engage with and interpret texts. Like "the Southern Californian[7] [that] convert[s] the world around him into the flatness that resembles a movie screen" (p. 105), only that which we can recall in texts or discourses, and that includes history, can hold meaning. But, as Hutcheon argues, the aim of the postmodernist is not easy and is not straightforward copying; "any simple mimesis is replaced by a problematized and complex set of interrelations at the level of discourse-that is, at the level of the way we talk about experience, literary or historical, present or past" (p. 25). The postmodernist understands the ability of the metanarrative to form, pervade, and influence generations and cultures. The progressive postmodernist, like Abish, utilizes these metanarratives in order to challenge them, and, for the particularly negative ones, they must recreate them in order to begin to destroy them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Walter Abish's "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" offers a compelling examination of historiographic metafiction through the fragmented experiences of Jane, set against the backdrop of the United States. By utilizing narrative techniques such as fragmentation, unreliable narration, and intertextuality, Abish challenges the notion of historical objectivity, revealing history to be not a singular, definitive record but a subjective, constructed narrative. Jane's fractured recollections and self-reflexive storytelling expose the inherent instability of memory and the act of narration itself, reflecting the postmodern critique of grand narratives that claim to offer universal truths. Her journey, filled with contradictions and shifting perspectives, mirrors broader postmodern concerns surrounding identity, the fluidity of memory, and the inherent limitations of ever fully capturing or representing historical truth. Through Jane's fragmented narrative, Abish underscores the idea that history is not a static or fixed entity but rather a fluid, constantly evolving and contested terrain. The stories we tell about ourselves and our collective pasts are not objective truths but are shaped by individual perspectives, subjective interpretations, and cultural contexts. By foregrounding the act of narration itself, "Ardor/Awe/Atrocity" emphasizes the constructed nature of all historical accounts, inviting readers to question the reliability of any narrative that

claims to represent the past. In doing so, Abish not only critiques traditional conceptions of history but also highlights the complex relationship between personal memory and broader historical events, suggesting that both are inevitably shaped by the stories we tell and the narratives we choose to construct. By reducing "things" to mere words and symbols, Walter Abish, as noted by Arias Misson Alain (1980), establishes a form of control over them, achieving this dominance through the intentional sacrifice of language's expressive or magical qualities. In relinquishing this expressive power, Abish paradoxically acquires an incantatory authority over the chaotic and unyielding nature of reality. Through the deconstruction of linguistic continuity into a fragmented array of letters and numbers, he performs an alchemical transformation of the distressing "everyday" world. By breaking this world down into its fundamental components, or "molecules," he opens up the potential for chemical recombination, as suggested by the interplay of letters and numbers. In Abish's work, the use of a degraded alphabet, coupled with the fragmented and alienating experience of extreme alienation - embodied in the doubling and disintegration of the self -serves not only as a critique of the contemporary condition but also hints at new possibilities and oppositions within it (p. 122).

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Literary Studies | research note

Beyond the Forgotten:
Cultural Memory and the Poetics of Gender in Dante's *Commedia*
Unutulanın Ötesinde: Dante'nin *İlahi Komedya*'sında Kültürel Bellek ve Cinsiyetin Poetikası

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ABSTRACT
The primary focus of this article is to investigate the *(in)visible* gendered constructs within Dante's *Commedia*. The article argues that due to the special emphasis on vice and virtue, *Commedia* lends itself to the archival purposes of cultural memory. The article explores how the cultural memory within the poem takes on a phallocentric perspective in its mechanics of socio-political affirmations doubled by Dante's poetic chiasm. Since the meticulous visibility of such a concept by itself reallocates our focus towards the imperatives of *silences* and *gaps*, the poem introduces a nuanced gendered interpretation far beyond the visible space. Therefore, this article employs a critical and deconstructive method to scrutinise the phallocentric dynamism of the poem's memory-dependent derivatives and its invisible underside by taking a gendered approach. Within this framework, this article aims to contribute to the literature on Dante's *Commedia* with an introduction of a new feminist lens that might enrich various readings of Dante's "poema sacro."

Introduction

In the playful waltz of perception, there is a peculiar paradox: the closer one gazes into the eccentricities of a painting, the more elusive its idea becomes. Now take a step back and broaden the lens of scrutiny. Unexpectedly, the essence shows itself in the midst of confusion; the peripherical harmony of colours starts to gather in the bearer of the vision, and the overlooked figures at the edge of the canvas unite with the centre, making it a whole. Imagine, if you may, a reader immersed in the subsequent flow of words, leaning closer and closer, striving to decipher every stroke of the author's pen. Likewise, the intended meaning is lost and faded. Sometimes, to truly see and understand, one must take a step back to see the bigger picture. Such is the enigmatic story of vision, where proximity blurs and distance reveals.

In Virgil's counsel to our pilgrim in Canto 9 of *Inferno*, the caution against looking at Medusa's mesmerising gaze similarly serves as a poignant allegory for the perils of *close* reading. To James C. Kriesel, this striking scene, with the deployment of ocular remarks, connotes "the warning [that] implies we need to look carefully to avoid being blinded by the literal sense of a text" (2019, pp. 122–3). While staring closely at the mythical creature's mesmerising eyes turns the beholder to

stone, so does fixating surely on the surface of the meaning of a text risk petrifying one's understanding. In this article, I intend to explore *Commedia* by stepping back from the immediate text and widening the scope of analysis, through which I pay particular attention to the cultural memory, memory-dependent derivatives of the poem, and voices of gender by adopting a deconstructive method. I seek to shed new light on *Commedia*'s significance as not only a literary marvel but also as a reflection of societal perceptions towards gender dynamics immersed in cultural memory, where even the most seemingly random points in the poem could contribute to its metanarrative on gender. Within this framework, this article aims to contribute to the literature on Dante's *Commedia* with an introduction of a new critical lens associated with cultural memory that might enrich various readings of Dante's *poema sacro*.

Dante's *Commedia* intricately weaves a tapestry of contrasts, where vice contends with virtue and evil opposes good within the framework of distinct expressions of Hell and Heaven. Beyond these dichotomies lies an overarching context that I uphold to be associated with gendered dichotomies. In line with Simone de Beauvoir's observation in *The Second Sex*, what I am proposing is that the contextual framework of these dichotomies also extends to the cultural problem of the rigidly constructed cross-categorization of the female association with bad principles and, subversively, the male association with good principles (1956, p. 74), each of which has grown into the different expressions of Hell (bad principle) and Heaven (good principle). This ideological concern with gender superiority is not only manifested in social codes of virtue and vice but is also maintained through canonised and textualized validations of these practices in the symbolic space (p. 127). Although de Beauvoir's observations are centuries apart, they are still at home in discussions of traditional patriarchal contexts, which interestingly manifests this trope in Dante's contrasting depictions of hell and heaven. Charon, for instance, mistakes Dante and Virgil for sinners and thus articulates: "Never hope to see the sky: I come to lead you to the other shore, to the eternal shadows, to heat and freezing" (*Inferno,* 3.85–7).

Thus, Charon refers to a realm of chaos and darkness where light does not interfere. Heaven, on the other hand, is described as "the eternal light" (*Paradiso,* 33.124), which Dante's generous pen uses innumerably and falls into repetition in defining Heaven.[1] Beyond Dante's stylometric patterns, these catoptric descriptions of two distinct principles serve a deeper purpose, which is to consolidate dichotomic contexts beneath the veneer of moral propaganda inherent in medievalist supremacism.

As Laurence Hooper notes, the internal logic behind the poem's privileged gendered iconography could be explained by what might be termed an "ideological commitment to poetic subjectivity" (2019, p. 44). It is where the poem's semiotic space comes to the forefront and introduces us to the hitherto overlooked side of Dante's otherworldly journey. Dante's vision and the mediaeval mind come on par and feed off one another because, as Frances Yates observes, "the Middle Ages might think of figures of virtues and vices as memory images, formed according to the classical rules, or of the divisions of Dante's Hell as memory places" (1999, p. xii). Yet, the cultural memory of the mediaeval gaze at that time was highly maimed at the disfavour of women:

> Perhaps most obviously, *manhed* simply refers to the human condition, or the qualities of humanity writ large. As a signifier of that which counts as human, the term issues ethical demands, only some of which are gendered according to a recognizable binary logic. As a borrowing from the Latin tradition of *virtus*, *manhed* signifies masculine virtues, including strength, loyalty, and bravery. (Crocker, 2007, p. 10)

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[1] The phrase recurs in Cantos 5, 10, 11, 24, and 33, and it is noteworthy that the significance of the word "light" transcends a mere literal interpretation.

Virtue, in this context, equates to sufficient manliness,[2] And conversely, transgressions are linked to a lack of such manliness. This filter of virtue and vice, notably misogynistic, is embedded in the visible memory of the culture, reflecting an ideological bias that shapes and filters societal perceptions.

Willingly or unwillingly, we hereby acknowledge the sexual imbalance of mediaeval culture, designating females as potential sinners.[3] This recognition invites a nuanced exploration of cultural memory and Dante's conception of vice and virtue within the realms of hell and heaven through the lens of gender. Notably, Dante's pen does not overtly emphasise this aspect upon initial scrutiny. I aim to display this nuanced scrutiny in two distinct phases. In the first section, I will discuss how Dante's subjective filter lends itself to ideological attachment to cultural memory and forms a platform for the hearing of supremacist consciousness. In the second section, I will trace the semiotic space of the poem and unveil the subtle locations within Dante's vision where the feminine emphasis, despite being omitted from the visible sites of cultural memory, is located.

Commedia as an Archive: Dante and Cultural Memory

Before discussing the subject matter that will be handled in this section, I would like to emphasise the subjective narrativization of Dante's. In the introduction part of his work, *Singular Pasts: The I in Historiography*, Enzo Traverso gives Dante's *Commedia* as an example of subjectivity in narrativization to illuminate the same degree of subjectivity in archival historiography. The invasive idea of history as fiction, he says, wins out the refutation of historical objectivity in the process of *recollection* by the author. On a modest scale, the methodology here encompasses the interface between the individual and collective memory, which presupposes the prism of "the subjectivity of the author" or the poet (2022, p. 2) in their transmission of the "dominant order and its way of life" (p. 150). It is my conviction that we can expect no less from Dante, who is neither dreaming about the journey nor working with fictitious bodies; on the other hand, he engages with cultural and mythological references in life and works in a way a historian or an author of historiography does. Moreover, in the historiographical reflection of the social order, *Commedia*, with its iconographic dichotomy of punitive and rewarding codes within mediaeval *modus vivendi*, manifests a "socially constructed" archival observatory that "directs [Dante's] gaze [and] decision-making autonomy" (p. 150). Traverso's sceptical viewpoint not only inverts our focus into the solid influence of the mediaeval order on Dante's subjective perspective but also underscores Richard Kearney's claim that "[n]arrative memory is never innocent" (1999, p. 27), thus prompting us to re-evaluate Dante's poem from a different perspective that includes both personal and collective memories.

As the timeless Latin adage, *Verba volant scripta manent*,[4] encapsulates the enduring essence of written words, it also infers that the profound power of writing transcends temporal boundaries through which the textual material occupies a certain amount of memory places for archival purposes. It does not take a genius to deduce that *Commedia* seems to excel in it, not only in its literary merit but also in its archival function for the politics of societal and political norms. This assertion finds validation in Romberch's sixteenth-century treatise, where he praises the

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[2] The word "virtue" is derived from the Latin word *vir*, which means a man imbued with all masculine qualities.
[3] Dyan Elliott (2010) explores the close affiliation of societal corruption, witchcraft, and innate contamination within the female menstruation cycle, arguing that the mediaeval mind considered female menstruation as an inescapable ritual of active sinfulness (p. 16). For further misogynistic theology steeped in mediaeval cultural bias, the lines in Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale" in the *Canterbury Tales* are another epitome in this regard: "O Satan, ever envious since the day / On which they chased you out of Paradise, / Our heritage! How soon you found the way / Through Eve to woman! [...] Of woman you have made / The instrument by which we are betrayed" (lines 365–371).
[4] "The palest ink is stronger than the sharpest memory."

ingenious contributions of *Commedia* in etching the nature of sins and their punishments on the collective memory: "For this (that is for remembering the places of Hell) the ingenious invention of Virgil and Dante will help us much. That is for distinguishing the punishments according to the nature of the sins. Exactly." (as cited in Yates, 1999, p. 94). The cosmic order of the poem, with shocking images of sinful and virtuous experiences in order, gains archival status by appealing to the dictations of societal preferences set by orthodox beliefs. Romberch's words in *Congestorium Artificiose Memorie* in 1533 help us configure concurrence between *Commedia* and its archival content of the dominant ideology of the zeitgeist:

> And since the orthodox religion holds that the punishments of sins are in accordance with the nature of the crimes, here the Proud are crucified [...] there the Greedy, the Avaricious, the Angry, the Slothful, the Envious, the Luxurious (are punished) with sulphur, fire, pitch, and that kind of punishments. (as cited in Yates, 1999, p. 94)

The sins, each paired with various types of concomitant punishments in *Inferno*, and their counter-positivity in *Paradiso* unveil the memory system that maps out the extremities of mediaeval values, discourse, and society. The reason is that Dante, just like any individual, had a receptacle of memory that he drew his substance from. Using Maurice Halbwachs' comment, then, Dante's individual memory as a poet "is connected with thoughts that come from the social value" (1992, p. 57).

The interplay between the poet and the societal discourse is bound to a stiff causality, in which the literary material becomes the result of the memory system since, as Züleyha Çetiner-Öktem notes, the "individual memory of the poet and the collective memory of society pour into this receptacle we name literature where it brews and becomes an aspect of cultural heritage" (2022, p. 57). In other words, as much as writing enhances what one remembers, what one remembers also influences what one writes, and Dante's individual memory sustained by collective memory is no exception. In his retrospective narration, after having fulfilled his so-called otherworldly journey, Dante appeals to his personal memory: "O muses, O high wit, now help me; O memory that wrote down what I saw, here will your nobility appear" (*Inferno,* 2.7–9). The apparent invocation of the muses for retrospective narration turns out to be Dante's willingness to immerse himself in the realm of selective memory, which is a form of power imposition in a way that when the memory is at the stage, remembrance becomes the recreation of the past and the present.

Commedia, in this respect, becomes a cultural repository linked to cultural heritage by providing equilibrium to the trajectory of social identity. Through Dante's appraisal and management duty like an archivist, *Commedia* finds a stake in the role of appraisal and management, asserting control over what is included or excluded, and deemed superior or vice, thereby becoming a mechanism for management and control through Dante as a conduit. As Gülden Hatipoğlu (2023) also quotes from Joan M. Schwartz's observation:

> Certain stories are privileged, and others are marginalized. And archivists are an integral part of this storytelling [...] This represents enormous power over memory and identity, over the fundamental ways in which society seeks evidence of what its core values are and have been, where it has come from, and where it is going. (2006, p. 3)

Dante's narrativization and, thus, textualization of the discoursal elements incite *Commedia* as a metaphorical archive, such that Dante, in performing the duties of an archivist, not only captures cultural nuances but also actively participates in defining and shaping the very basis of the culmination of cultural values and experiences.

The archival authority bestowed on Dante to curate the past also renders a subjective gaze overlapped with his authorial privilege because Dante misleadingly refers to the objective line of

mnemonic narration. The manner and content of his storytelling are inherently subjective, so much so that "Dante inserts warnings to the reader, observations on the story's development, and comments on his own states of mind at the time of the narrative" (Pertile, 2019, p. 3). In this capacity, Dante controls and manipulates the past by using the *arcana imperii*, the unseen space of power (Wolfgand, 2004, p. 47) that confers societal consciousness. It is a qualitative attachment, for it enables personal memory, self-reference, and perhaps the socialised creativity at play; but most importantly, it makes room for *intentionality* and *perspectivism* because it is not a *camera obscura* situation; Dante himself is the true vehicle of the story as both narrator and protagonist.

Under this circumstance, Dante's poem finds its place within the prominent grand narratives through the dialogism between the reader and the Dante-narrator, who "has a didactic role in the poem" (Pertile, 2019, p. 5). The reader, caught in the oscillation between the roles of Dante-narrator and Dante-character, is abruptly confronted by the materiality of the poem; this encounter is coupled with Dante's deliberate interruptions of the subjective narrative operation designed to "involve the reader in the character's experiences" (p. 5). Following this, the reader is separated from the fictionality of the poem, negating the enjoyment of the experience while elevating them to the state of a vacuum that absorbs the narrator's *commandments* as Dante experiences and unfolds at the same time.

This narratological structure recalls parallels with the biblical tradition of *experiential dictation* through retrospective narrativization of occasions, which eventually codifies two alternatives of world orders based on virtue and vice. Therefore, I could argue that *Commedia* ranks among other cultural grand narratives following in the footsteps of the Bible in terms of the effective force of dictation. If this *poema sacro* was created by the very image of the Bible, then Dante-narrator was also created by the image of God. It is undeniably true insofar as we uphold the close association of the word author being derived from the word authority with the encompassing politics of authorship of any acts of narration and narrativization; then, the narrator Dante becomes a subset of the Author(ity) of God, both sharing an overlapped consensus of mindset regarding and hence *dictating* how life is understood and should be experienced within the *written material*, be they biblical or fictional (Benfell, 2011, p. 34). The dictates, unfortunately, subsist in only one perspective to the extent that Dante's "credibility, or interpretation of an event, sight, or statement is at stake" (Pertile, 2019, p. 5).

What is at stake actually leads to a nuanced gendered reading of Dante's *Commedia*, particularly in its resonance with the Bible and classical decorum, both of which have historically framed discussions around male privilege over women. To clarify this, Dante's journey begins with the maxim that life is a narrative, as implied by the opening words of the poem that dovetail the narrativization of *Commedia* and the organic life of humanity:

> In the middle of the journey of our life,
> I came to myself in a dark wood,
> for the straightway was lost. (*Inferno*, 1.1–3)

Yet, in the cultural consciousness, the narrative journey of life, too, falls into the hands of the sexual imbalance of culture. In the Biblical context, for instance, Eve is banished from the domain of knowledge and thus its practical vehicles, like writing and claiming the authority of life as a narrative. If not, then the Lilithian label comes to the forefront and goes as far as etching demonic attributes on female identity for transgression.[5] From a logical perspective, it becomes apparent

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[5] Here I follow my own deduction about the palimpsestic inability of females based on the biblical discourse associated with the white whale in *Moby Dick*: "First, that Eve has been banished from the domain of knowledge in the first place, thus rendering her deficient in knowledge's suggestive practices as well, i.e., writing, or claiming the author(ity) in her autonomy; secondly, backing on this biblical discourse, that the voiceless white

that God, too, employs a dialectical tone in delineating what is deemed suitable for the archival mindset. At this point, I interpret the inscription on the gates of hell, "ABANDON EVERY HOPE, YOU WHO ENTER" (*Inferno* 3.9), as an abstract representation of a robust lock. This lock, in essence, functions as an insurance policy safeguarding the meticulously organised archival phallocentric ideology. It symbolises a deliberate exclusionary mechanism that provides entry to those who challenge or deviate from the prevailing norms without an escape, reinforcing the patriarchal narrative that has historically marginalised the feminine perspective within cultural and religious discourse.

As for the androcentric meta-discourse in the poem, Dante's poetic vision is doubly maimed due to the image of antiquity that comes with the full baggage of proper images of manly virtues. No sooner has Dante started his journey, he positions himself in a compromised state by venerating Virgil as his guide and conferring heavily on Virgil's magnum opus, *Aeneid*:

> You are my master and my author, you alone are
> he from whom I have taken the pleasing style that
> has won me honor. (*Inferno*, 1.85–87)

The gist behind this veneration, however, extends beyond homage; it deeply pertains to a form of indoctrination. Much to our dismay, at the beginning of the journey in the Dark Wood, Dante exhibits himself as an impressionable person rather than an independent poet whose name would transgress centuries, opting for a humble and non-competitive demeanour. His admiration, furthermore, comes with the impression of his poetic identity; in other words, if Dante looks up to Virgil alongside the androcentric egotism of masculine principles as the main concern of Virgil's poem, then we could justify the fact that Dante is also indoctrinated in that way, influencing the poet's logic and verses.

The further explanation is highly irrelevant since the mediaeval era was characterised by the consolidation of classical and religious decorum of virtuous ideals through not only Jesus Christ himself with the influence of scholasticism but also Virgilian heroes renowned for showing excellence but not beyond the divine power (Rosenberg, 1999, p. 158). Therefore, in this master-apprentice relationship bound to "cultural patrimony" (Botterill, 2001, p. 309), Dante seems to be careful enough to strategically adopt the image of manhood with the appraisal of religious ethics appealing to the societal taste put in order by the Western Church in the fourteenth century. Therefore, Dante's *peoma sacro* recounts

> Dante's view of sin, judgement, damnation, purgation, redemption, and beatitude […] through closely reasoned arguments based on a theological tradition and through penetrating psychological examination of the working-out of theological ideas in the course of human lives. (p. 303)

Such a statement speaks to the patriarchal line of universality that is "distended to encompass memory and knowledge" together (Çetiner-Öktem, 2022, p. 73), and construes ideal male sovereignty both in ecclesiological and civilised memory.

As revealing as these cultural insights embedded in both personal and collective memory are, up until this point, my aim has been to illustrate how the systematic structure of Dante's *Commedia*

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whale with the baggage of Eve's incarnated aspects represents just as much deficiency for women in author(ity) in an altruistic gesture as in paper in its relation to pen; lastly, that knowledge has pertained to masculinity since then and hence manoeuvred into a Foucauldian insight of hegemonic power when utilized manipulatively. In this quasi-equality, when all cards seem to be laid out, feminine freedom in self-knowledge is confined to a deck of cards counting on the fingers of one hand, while the rest is preserved for manipulative tricks up the opponent's sleeve" (2024, p. 134–35).

might reflect the societal constructs of cultural and collective memory. Although the cultural positive disclosure related to Heaven and accordingly pejorative attachment to Hell may be referring to male / female dyad based on the artificial hierarchy of the civilization, with a logical rumination on masculine egotism infected to praise the theologically virtuous *vir*,[6] There exists a broader peripheral inheritance that debases the role of females in *Commedia*. Lynn MacKenzie (2013) has recently revealed that Dante does not call out to the general audience or man-as-human (*il solito impersonale*) but rather addresses strong masculine implications as society's *hows* and *whats* (Paradiso) in relation to its *nots* (Inferno) (p. 3). If Dante's ideological commitment is as robust as claimed by MacKenzie, Dante's personal memory takes up mainstream memory sites, relegating females to a position of degradation, even exile, to the extent that Dante actively "exploits" this stance (p. 3). In this methodological instrument conceived as identity-in-difference, in the following section, I intend to display how *Inferno*, as a symbolic space, embodies the aspects of *nots*—the societal leftovers made secondary and forgotten, echoing de Beauvoir's statement, specifically with regard to women.

Gender Semiotics Relocated in *Inferno*

Social construction has another relative in *Commedia*: the embodiment of morality at its best. While some may argue that Commedia delves into vices and virtues, the masculine perspective intricately interweaves the reality that Dante archives with the theological promises and cultural doctrines governing social orders within visible memory realms. Still, any kind of memory cannot be taken out of the *comfort of forgetting* with all the connotations of exclusion or omission, hiding through the repository of the unconscious but seeking a way to reverberate itself in the semiotic space, which certainly deserves a close interrogation of cultural omissions due to the poem's close affiliation with cultural memory and archival authority.

Culture, more optimistically, is a mechanism of exclusion. Drawing from Kristeva's perspective, the evolution of cultural discourse, intertwined with social practices, orbits around the privilege of abjection—a privilege that denotes discomfort and disgust related to the unfitting symbolic codes. "[B]y way of abjection," writes Kristeva, "primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism" (1982, pp. 12–3). Kristeva's explanation lands on an umbrella term in the binary opposition of culture / nature dating back to the archaic memory of civilization, which contextually refers to the male / female dichotomies as mutually exclusive entities. For this very reason, "[i]n her thought," notes McAfee, "the reader can find a way to bring together biological and the cultural world we inhabit" (2004, p. 76). Thereby, as much as abjection is a "state of abjecting or rejecting what is other to oneself" (p. 45) which Kristeva conditions as the first principle of culture, then women are abjected as the "negative of men" within the memory places, "conjur[ing] up images of sexist classification of women as possible inferior to men" (p. 77).

While Dante's conceptualization of hell as an ideological repository for sinners addresses the human condition through fidelity to certain ethical principles, it also provides a domain to scrutinise societal standards, including those pertaining to women. In this construct of passing judgement both in the text and within the broader context it reflects, Dante, who works in a single way, becomes an arbiter of morality since "Dante's response to these situations, as both poet and *personaggio*, is likewise individually judged and enacted" (Botterill, 2001, p. 303).

Inferno, in this regard, discloses a gendered lens in interpreting the poem with a misogynistic imagination of women related to Dante's object of desire: Beatrice. Beatrice, beyond Dante's autobiographical acquaintance, pays respect to the sexist criteria of womanhood, embodying a familiar angel-in-the-house demeanour that is rewarded within Dante's poem. In a cultural sense,

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[6] See the introduction part.

the main topic is the infringement on female freedom with no retarding element but perpetual assent in collective activities expressed as female submission and loyalty to the paterfamilias. Dante becomes another pillar of that supremacist strength, thus granting Beatrice a place in the abode of God in the Empyrean in Heaven, alongside nine other female figures, with Eve positioned prominently at the front (*Paradiso*, 31). While Saint Bernard takes over the role of guiding Dante for the following last cantos, we are left with an image of a woman waiting for her prince charming,[7] A vision that ascends to his Maker in a privileged manner without her active presence.

As I mentioned earlier, God's dictations and Dante find a common ground of dichotomic contour; Eve has a countertype imbued with negative aspects known as Lilith, and Dante's proper image of womanhood operates in the same way through the tragic figure of Francesca, who represents the denial of feminine mystique and hence is located in the second circle of hell associated with lust and sex. Francesca's story revolves around adultery with poignant causality. In the second circle, as Dante approaches Francesca and Paolo, who are swept away by the violent blows of winds in a similar way to how they were swept away by their passions, Francesca takes hold of storytelling and unfolds her tragedy of lust:

> Love, which is swiftly kindled in the noble heart,
> seized this one for the lovely person that was taken
> from me; and the manner still injures me.
>
> Love, which pardons no one loved from loving in
> return, seized me for his beauty so strongly that, as
> you see, it still does not abandon me. (*Inferno*, 5.100–5)

While Freccero's interpretation attributes Dante's condemnation of Francesca to her reflexive portrayal as a passive victim of love (2009, p. 3), like Dido in Virgil's memorable epic poem, *Aeneid*: "Love led us on to one death" (*Inferno*, 5.106), it is crucial to recognise Francesca's emphasis on the aestheticized, or perhaps obsessively fetishized body related to virile sexuality coming with the anaphora on "Love." Although this depiction stands in stark contrast to Dante's love for Beatrice, Dante shows affectionate empathy for the couple, the corollary of which results in his sudden blackout towards the end of the canto.

I am of the opinion that Dante's instant blackout is misleading because it is not only sympathy present in the canto but also rectification. In this thought, Dante's faint becomes a symbolic death, a kind of rectification since Francesca "is the avatar of a persona that had been Dante's own" (Barolini, 2000, p. 27). For this very reason, we can say that Dante may have considered himself identical to Francesca's adulterous love affair and immersed himself in deep empathy. Yet, the obligatory self-tribute does not tarnish Dante but grants him dignity for a fresh start in such a way that Dante panders to societal whims and confronts himself to regain his proper sense by "chart[ing] the culture's voyeuristic response to such a female protagonist [Francesca]" (p. 8) and, without contrition, concedes her doom alongside her attitudes that could "disturb identity, system, and order" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4).

Dante's innocent way of exclusive system gains a deeper level of memory cooperation when I bring forth another layer of information so as to understand the underpinning incentive of patriarchal maintenance of the poem. I propose to look into the archaic memory of civilization and a futile quest for immortality, which is misogynistic and has so much to do with Dante's poem as will be shown. At around the neat archaic time of self-knowledge, the daunting image of death swarmed

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[7] Dante's love for Beatrice is often read as another type of courtly love; similarly, Beatrice, as a figurative body, is usually considered to be a courtly lady. See Frisardi, A. (2012). *The young Dante and the one love*. Temenos Academy.

to a place innately reserved for men, whereas women were physiologically safe from it. Prehistoric men grappled with a sense of incompleteness and deficiency in comparison to female reproductive abilities. More specifically, men realised that they did not share the same trait of glamoured sensibility of menstruation, which is identified as a logical marker of immortality, as the doctrinal heavy and sudden bleeding leaves out dying. This realisation culminated in male jealousy towards females, becoming the deepest wellspring of male dominance and female passivity in the historical and social context: "Not only did she constantly recover from her bouts with bleeding, but more significantly, she constantly reproduced herself—she had the key to immortality and he did not" (Donovan, 2000, p. 197). Deprived of this magical phenomenon dwelling in the archaic memory of haunting mortality, as also reflected in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the desire for masculine mastery was juxtaposed with self-inadequacy. Subduing the female, however, could not erase the unexpressed "fear and denial of the feminine" (p. 198) from the unconscious. Nor does the unconscious rhetoric work in that way; rather, the unconscious operates at the level of uncanny familiarity based on the unconscious repository of suppressed images and actions, promising a way out for the forgotten, suppressed, and abject eventually.

For this matter, our key greeting is the spatial quality of cold in *Inferno* because the symptomatic images of suppression or omission from the conscious memory highlight female references. I argue that the quality of coldness in *Inferno* is reserved for certain circles with subtle and (un)familiar feminine qualities. With respect to the archaic memory mentioned above, the coldness speaks volumes for male defence against the threat of female mysticism, for "[a]s a defence against annihilation, the traumatic memories remain frozen and inaccessible" buried in the unconscious (Amir, 2016, p. 620). On a material level, Dante resorts to glaciation in *Inferno* as a way of torture in definite circles; on a deeper level, those circles are cultural receptions of how cultural memory tries to forget those memories but can only push them to the unconscious repository, being *frozen* and immobile yet to remain there.

While not as widely acknowledged as the torment through flames, Dante introduces the concept of freezing cold as an alternative form of punishment in his depiction of Hell. As conveyed by Charon, the torments in *Inferno* are rooted in the dual elements of "heat and freezing" (*Inferno*, 3.85–86). Intriguingly, the nominal representation of heat and freezing carries gendered implications with symbolic significance. Drawing from the perspectives of late Roman intellectuals influenced by Aristotle's hierarchical views on gender in his *Politics*, the male embryo was believed to accumulate an excess of *heat* in the womb, and the degree of masculine identity was thought to be determined by this accumulation in men's bodies. This mindset, influenced by Aristotle's ideas, considered fertilisation through men's *warm* semen as a suitable explanation. (Brown, 1988, p. 10). Adhering to Aristotle's supremacism, women were deemed to naturally lack this heat and were associated with a sense of coldness, rendering them immobilised and paralysed.

It is here worth mentioning that the second circle's spatial quality of cold through whip-like winds in an unending cease could be referred to as Dante's supremacist memory-dependent derivative. This icy quality confluents with Francesca's presence and reinforces the association of coldness with the female identity, strategically positioned in the repository of cultural consciousness. It is significant to observe that the Circle of Lust is predominantly characterized by female figures, including Cleopatra and Helen of Troy. However, Francesca occupies a distinguished position within this realm, as she delivers one of the most extended monologues attributed to a female character in *Inferno*. In this context, while her punishment remains intertwined with a male counterpart, the prominence of the female voice within this circle emerges as particularly noteworthy.

Besides the second circle, there are two other circles in which Dante uses the biting cold to punish vile sinners and somewhat encourages a gendered contemplation through the spatial

representative of cold. On one hand, we have the third circle reserved for the gluttons constrained by a rubbishy slush generated by an unceasing cold rain:

> I am in the third circle, with the eternal, cursed,
> cold, and heavy rain; its rule and quality never
> change. (*Inferno*, 6.7–9)

In this circle, Dante happens to speak to a character known as Clacco the Pig, a representative body of a crapulous mass of overindulgence in the worldly pleasures of the damnable sin of the gullet (*Inferno*, 6.53). Clacco's pejorative characterization gains kinship with the freezing torture, and it obscures his individual narrative and leads us to explore the mediaeval perception of gluttony instead. The general reception of mediaeval denouncement recalls Chaucer's treatment of the Monk in the *Canterbury Tales*, portrayed as bald and excessively voracious due to worldly overindulgence. Both Chaucer and Dante's ignominy here "sounds like a formidable corrective of […] male microcosmos of pleasure-seeking activity" since gluttony in the mediaeval mind "is virtually always feminine […] and frequently errant part of God's creation" (Lindeboom, 2008, p. 348). Dante's poetic chiasmus between the glaciation and femininity through the gluttony in the third circle, in this regard, is not aleatory; it is wrapped up in an unconscious presumption of the *frozen* female threat instead.

On the other hand, we have another circle, perhaps more memorable than the third, that has grown into the aspect of glaciation. The readers of *Inferno* will remember the neatly designed and awe-inspiring moment when Dante has at last achieved to see Lucifer, saluting the most disgraceful sinners "stuck in ice," frozen to the extremities, and eventually courting testimonies to "the cold" (*Inferno*, 32.35, 38). Albeit the female association with this circle would remain in obscurity at first glance, I suggest taking Lucifer etymologically to reveal an intriguing perspective. Considering the PIE root (Proto-Indo-European morpheme) for the word Lucifer, in old English, Lucifer literally translates to "light-bringing" from the roots of *leuk- and *ferre*. Notably, the "bringing" aspect in this phrase derives from the verb *ferre*, which was also used to signify "to bear children." This is the reason why Lucifer was used as "an epithet or name of Diana."[8] In this condensed exploration of Lucifer, entrenched in female undertones by the depiction of being "issued from the ice at the mid-point of his breast" (*Inferno*, 34.28–29), two universal approaches come to the fore: (1) females have been seen as a threat due to their reproductive abilities; (2) females are seen as the originators of sin, starting with figures like Lilith. In either interpretation, the strong link between *Inferno* and primordial femininity emerges, a facet of cultural memory often relegated to the periphery.

Before concluding the article, it is essential to highlight one more aspect. Kristeva introduces the term "abject" with a distinctive quality of confrontation as if suggesting a sense of remembrance: "There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable" (1982, p. 1). Kristeva's somewhat cryptic portrayal of abjection blurs the distinction between the subject and the abject. It signifies the moment of merging culture and primal repression, propelling cultural consciousness to be "powerless" against the abject (p. 2). The confrontation with the abject in the *Inferno* is reflected in the following quotation coming from our pilgrim as a mouthpiece:

> How then I became frozen and feeble, do not ask,
> reader, for I do not write it, and all speech would be
> insufficient.

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[8] Lucifer. (2023). In *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved from https://www.etymonline.com/word/Lucifer.

> I did not die and I did not remain alive: think
> now for yourself, if you have wit at all, what I
> became, deprived of both. (*Inferno*, 34.22–27)

In stark contrast to a moment earlier when our pilgrim was trying to forcefully take the name of a shade, Bocca, by grabbing a handful of the sinner's hair (*Inferno*, 32), he now feels insignificant and utterly crushed against Lucifer. The most striking element of this occurrence is Dante's inability to articulate his experience, reminiscent of a momentary tongue-tie, so much so that we could argue the abjection "draws [Dante] towards the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). In this instance, I daresay that Dante's phallocentric cultural assumptions are shattered in a momentary compression of uncanny remembrance. In the aftermath, our pilgrim sees the light again, setting the way for his Maker, but with a crucial realisation: perhaps all that is *frozen* may not have melted into the air, but eventually it will.

Conclusion

Through this deconstructive exploration, Dante's *Commedia* unfolds as a metaphorical archive, creating a dialogic intersection between Dante's individual memory and the collective memory of mediaeval society. Memory, as could be seen in this article, is treated as a hermeneutical tool for power with its oscillation between "remembrance" and "forgetting". As the initial part of this discourse indicates, *Commedia* does not merely serve as an intellectual exercise in the poetic landscape; it emerges as a tangible memory site profoundly shaped by theological promises and cultural doctrines, acting as focal points within the phallocentric cultural consciousness. This dynamic collides with Dante's authoritative gaze as he evaluates sins and rewards. Hence, this visible part of the poem connotes the "remembrance" part.

However, as anticipated, the dual composition of memory coexists with a concealed realm of the forgotten, omitted, or even annihilated, introducing a tension between the visible and invisible, symbolic and semiotic spaces within Dante's *poema sacro*. This aspect takes centre stage in the second section of this article, where female rhetoric is posited as an excluded principle from cultural memory due to the female-nature association against the male-civilization dyad. *Inferno*'s genuinely reserved spatial aspect of coldness for the specific circles, based on the Aristotelian label of heat as the male principle, is interpreted as the "forgotten" female energy in memory places. Just as what is frozen eventually melts and unravels what is inside, Dante's poem, however culturally compliant and common sensical, finds a way to relocate (m)otherness in his poem, reflecting the so-called strictly sealed cultural pillar that is built on a slippery ground of disillusionment.

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Disclosure Statement

Literary Studies | research note

Legitimacy and Usurpation:
Shattering of the Social Walls in Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*
Meşruiyet ve Gasp:
Stendhal'in *Kırmızı ve Siyah* Adlı Romanında Sosyal Duvarların Yıkılması

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ABSTRACT

Napoleon's rise to the French throne in the 1800s paved the way for a huge shift in the social structure that was dominant in many of the European countries and even throughout the whole world. Social circles started to change their shapes and their representatives now that more and more people started to move from the lower classes to the upper ones. French author Stendhal (1783-1842) focuses on this substantial change in French society in his novel *The Red and the Black* (1830), in which he depicts a life full of scandals and social moves of a young and ambitious Julien Sorel. Julien's fast but precarious rise from the bottom of the social status to the upper one flows through love affairs, affection, respect, pangs of conscience, and betrayal. Julien's sole aim was to get to the top either by the legitimate ways or by usurpation. This study aims to analyse the protagonist's hazardous climbing up the social ladder and his targets. The study will also point out whether Julien has the rights to get these targets, or he gets them by force.

Introduction

The 1830s have become the epoch of post-Napoleonic chaos bringing about the paradox of existence for the French; although the country "was on the threshold of a great age of peace and plenty" (Turnell, 1962, p. 153), it was mentally shattered and eventually gained a brand-new understanding of a society in general. Coming from minor Italian nobility, but nonetheless, becoming an emperor, Napoleon hugely influenced the unprivileged class by his magnificent rise. A person's skills have overweighed the hitherto stable social hierarchy. The rigid and concrete walls between human beings were shattered. And this challenge has become one of the main canons in world literature. Many literary works focus on such a transgression of barriers between the social classes. One of these works is Stendhal's novel *The Red and the Black* (1830).

Julien Sorel, a protagonist of Stendhal's novel *The Red and the Black*, is a handsome young man with feminine traits and delicate physical appearance. When he is nineteen, Julien – from a small provincial town Verrières – becomes a tutor to the three children of mayor de Rênal. While

working at the de Rênals, Julien seduces Mme Rênal; and when this affair breaks out, Curé Chélan, a member of the Church, helps him enter a seminary. At the seminary, Julien meets Abbé Pirard, who becomes his spiritual father figure. Later Pirard's influence lands Julien – as a private secretary – into an aristocratic family of Marquis de La Mole in Paris. Julien has a love affair with Marquis' daughter Mathilde and when Marquis learns about Mathilde's pregnancy, he accepts Julien as his legitimate son-in-law. Yet, Mme Rênal's letter to Marquis de La Mole, which uncovers Julien's ambitious acts and aspirations, drives Julien to the murder of Mme Rênal.

The Red and the Black is a novel about Julien Sorel, who, like Napoleon, moves through the social classes upwards. It is a novel of a sensual transformation, a huge shift that Kete explains as "the moment when ambition becomes insanity" (2005, p. 472). It is a novel of challenge and transgression. Julien Sorel "rises through the ranks of society, is ennobled, and marries the daughter of a Marquis. Julien Sorel's spectacular career has been perceived as the very embodiment of 19th century aspirations: success due to personal talent" (Rand, 1989, p. 391). Julien's aim is to withdraw himself from his familial, social, and financial background that does not promise him anything in his social career. Julien, whom Platt (2018) calls "little Napoleon" (p. 7) comes from a peasant family, the members of which – father and brothers – provoke outrage in him by meeting everything he does with hoots of derision: his defective style of working at the mill, his interest in religious matters, his reading. And it is precisely his reading, as Mörte Alling (2018) claims, "inspire him to transgress the limit of the countryside and other geographical and social limits, . . . [and] give him the strength and power to achieve these transgressions" (p. 202). Julien's ability to like reading and learning is his main skill and power, which move him towards his aims.

Julien is displaced and homeless in his own family. It is either because of his ambitious aspirations or because of his brilliant learning skills. As Steven Sands (1975) suggests, all Julien's "actions are prompted by two feelings: anxiety at having no place in his own world and a consciousness of his genius" (p. 337). So, the novel is a portrayal of anxiety, struggle, and sometimes madness. According to Duncan (1988), Sorel's physical appearance, specifically his eyes, suggests his ambition and "psychological passion" (pp. 45-46). Kete even goes further and claims: "Stendhal's novel parallels the drama of the psychiatric case study" (2005, pp. 469-470). Kete adds that Stendhal has been closely interested in the medical science of psychiatry, which, obviously, enriched Julien's characterisation. As a result, the novel is sensually and emotionally rich and variant.

It can be argued that Stendhal's novel mainly focuses on Julien's aim to rise in a social hierarchy, which he eventually gets. The author portrays two substantial ways for the protagonist to get to the top: legitimacy and usurpation. Julien either gets what he wants by means of his legitimate rights or by usurping somebody else's rights. This study analyses these two strategies and puts forth an argument that such transgression of the class boundaries seems fruitless and futile. Julien's subconscious seeking for a motherly or a fatherly hand in his social, physical, spiritual, and psychological development can be analysed in terms of the concept of legitimacy. As regards his usurpation process, he manages to penetrate the Rênals' house in the role of a husband and a father and to obtain an aristocratic status by employing his genuine skills of manipulation, role-playing, and planning. Yet, all his attempts end up in a disaster.

Legitimacy

The definition of "legitimacy" in *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries* (accessed January 2023) is 1) the quality of being based on a fair or acceptable reason, and 2) the quality of being allowed and acceptable according to the law. Both definitions can be applied to Julien's actions, which he performs to get what he should have had, like having a mother and a father figure. Julien's conscious and subconscious search for parental support in other characters can be based on a fair

and acceptable reason within the frames of the law.

Paradoxically though, Julien must challenge and overcome his biological father. The fact that Julien Sorel does not have a mother and is psychologically, physically and mentally remote from his father bears a close affinity with Stendhal's situation in his own family. Both hate their fathers and try to undermine their authority (Zhang, 2023, p. 1052). Julien's father is depicted as an authoritative man, who wants Julien to be the same with the other members of the family. Julien rejects this framing and fixing of his subjectivity. Moreover, the absence of a mother figure obviously creates a traumatic perspective for the protagonist (Zhang, 2023, p. 1049). The gap created by the mother's absence is not filled in; it is, on the contrary, has been made deeper and deeper. Thus, Julien must have a minor parental support in order to mature healthily and he needs to legitimise himself as a son (Sands, 1975, p. 340).

When Julien starts working as a tutor in M. de Rênal's house, the mother figure appears in the characterisation of Mme de Rênal, M. de Rênal's wife: "Julien was forced to scold her, for she allowed herself the same intimate gestures with him as with her children. This was because there were times when she was under the illusion that she loved him like one of her children" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 107).

There is a hidden, subconscious link of a mother and a son between Mme de Rênal and Julien, since the former's behaviour toward young Julien encompasses the rudiments of motherhood. The psychological emptiness created by the loss of a mother makes Julien succumb to the symptoms of motherhood; Julien is attracted to Mme de Rênal. For example, as Sands (1975) argues, Mme de Rênal has a craving for dressing Julien as she pleases (p. 341). Another thing that Mme de Rênal does for Julien and which goes beyond the circumscribed behaviour of an employer is the honour that she provides for Julien by securing a place in the guard when the king comes to their small town. These places are normally given to the sons of the bourgeoisie (Sands, 1975, p. 341). In this way, Julien, who was deprived of his mother both psychologically and physically, finds for himself a potential, legitimate mother figure in Mme de Rênal.

Some powerful male figures in the novel often serve as the father figures for Julien. Sorel's biological father does not provide any substantial support for his son even when Julien falls into profound troubles (Zhang, 2023, p. 1050). Yet, Julien encounters two religious men, who guide him and provide him with some tangible support. Even though Julien reveals his enmity and complete disbelief in God throughout the novel, the first father figure for him becomes a member of the church, Curé Chélan. "To win over the old Curé Chélan, on whom he clearly saw his lot in life to depend, he had learned by heart the whole of the Latin New Testament; he also knew M. De Maistre's book *Du Pape* and believed in one as little as the other" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 28). Curé Chélan's interest in Julien and his deliberate participation in Julien's life are not without a reason; Julien proves his brilliant capacity in religious matters, though it is without belief. Curé Chélan, "good old man, marvelling at his progress, spent whole evenings teaching him theology" (Stendhal, 2002, pp. 31-32) because Julien could easily say that he wants to become a priest or he could show himself working hard at his father's sawmill and "learning by heart the Latin Bible the Curé had lent him" (Stendhal, 2002, pp. 31-32). In other words, Julien's aim to employ the Curé's social power should be justified and based on a solid ground. If Julien moves one step up on a social ladder with the help of the Curé, he should deserve it in a legitimate way. It is precisely Curé Chélan, who finds Julien a job as a tutor at M. de Rênal's house.

Another father figure, whom Julien encounters, is Abbé Pirard, who is a director of the seminary at Besançon. Albeit heinous at the beginning, Abbé Pirard becomes the protecting father figure for Julien during the latter's stay at the seminary: "I've become fond of you. Heaven knows, it's in spite of myself" (Stendhal, 2002, pp. 209-210). Surely, the strategies that Julien has used with the Curé

previously work with Abbé Pirard as well. Julien is a hardworking fellow, whom Pirard appoints as a tutor. "It had been so long since Julien had heard a friendly voice – his weakness must be forgiven: he melted into tears. Abbé Pirard opened his arms to him; the moment was a comfort for both of them" (Stendhal, 2002, pp. 209-210). Julien's comfort is permeated by his satisfaction of wining over another powerful figure, which can help him move forward. Consequently, in addition to the promotion as a tutor at the seminary, Pirard finds Julien a job in Marquis de La Mole's house as a private secretary and warns him against probable hapless situations in the house (Stendhal, 2002, p. 249). Julien's relentless movement forward on a social ladder is going to become a huge leap because the Marquis is a member of aristocracy.

The last father figure for Julien is the Marquis de La Mole. Giving him a blue coat, in which Julien can communicate with Marquis as a son, has less importance than Marquis's giving him permission to dream about his being a son of a Duke, Marquis's friend (Sands, 1975, p. 343). Moreover, M. de La Mole contrasts Julien with his son, which strengthens Julien's subconscious ambitions to legitimise himself as a son of Marquis. M. de La Mole also gives Julien a cross which Norbert, Marquis's son, always wanted and he even confesses to himself that he loves Julien as a son: "One can become very fond of a beautiful spaniel, said the Marquis to himself, why should I be so ashamed of becoming fond of this little Abbé? – he's an original. I treat him like a son; very well! where's the harm in that?" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 290) Marquis' choice of words – spaniel, this little Abbé – undermines Julien's subjectivity, but, nonetheless, does not prevent Marquis from accepting Julien in his circle. Furthermore, when Mathilde, Marquis's daughter, becomes pregnant during the relationship with Julien, M. de La Mole arranges a noble name and income for Julien to support his daughter. Julien immaturely finds a legitimate reason for his so-called aristocratic background: "Can it really be possible, … that I am the natural son of some grand seigneur, … ? Every moment the idea seemed to him less preposterous" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 467). He childishly appreciates his new identity and the "success of his ambition to legitimise himself and to find new parents" (Sands, 1975, p. 345).

Usurpation

According to the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* (accessed January, 2023), "usurpation" is the act of taking somebody's position and/or power without having the right to do so. Here in Stendhal's novel, it goes like legitimacy versus usurpation. While Julien legitimately deserves the support, he gets from the mother and the father figures, his forbidden love affair with Mme de Rênal, his aim to get her children's attachment, and his accurate plan to make Marquis' daughter Mathilde to fall in love with him are the examples of the usurpation.

Stendhal's novel depicts an image of a hero using his genius to overcome his sense of displacement by means of usurpation. Julien is aware of his abilities and uses them to invade the society of the higher class. Subconsciously he has been ready for an attack for a long time since the books that he has read emphasise the greatness of his ambitions to progress in society. Turnell (1962) names two books – *Memorial de Sainte-Helene* and *Tartuffe* – which prepare the young boy to the severe struggle: in the first book the main character attains his highest goals and in the second book there are means to attain these goals (p. 155). Thus, Julien is supplied with the goals and the means: obtaining a good place in a higher society and the ways to do it.

Throughout the novel Stendhal presents Julien's portrayal as a fighter in a severe battle. Julien's ideas and thoughts about his situation and the people around him emphasise his significance as a character designed to get the things that he does not have the right to have. Julien Sorel, a fighter from the unprivileged society, tends towards the invention of a new character out of his own; and this character is challenging because it resembles Napoleon, the great usurper: "For many years, scarcely an hour of Julien's life passed without his telling himself that Bonaparte, an obscure and

penniless lieutenant, had made himself master of the world with his sword" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 32).

Julien is engrossed in his ambitions, even though they require him to behave insincerely and secretly. Firstly, Julien usurps the position of the Mayor as a husband; Julien approaches Mme de Rênal, who does not fail to fall in love with the young tutor. Yet, the process of getting her deserves attention. Julien – young Napoleon – conquers Mme de Rênal step by step (Stendhal, 2002, pp. 60-61).

Julien's infantile aspirations and childish strategies to get a woman, specifically his ambition to touch her hand, which for Platt (2018) bears the signs of Don Quixote or Emma Bovary's irony (p. 10-11), add some humour into the novel. Yet, the humour is not of a pleasurable type because Julien's approach is not sincere. He wants power and he wants to get it by usurping the Mayor's place of a husband and a lover. Throughout the events happening at the Mayor's house it is possible to notice the easiness of Julien's victory (Stendhal, 2002, p. 62).

These detailed accounts of the growing relationship between Mme de Rênal and Julien signify the future success of the affair and Julien's victory in the possession of Mme de Rênal. The first part of the novel is replete with Julien's thoughts about the details of his plans to conquer Mme de Rênal. After so many attempts at making her love him Julien enters her private world as her lover. As a consequence of Mme de Rênal's love affair with Julien, she starts to hate her husband: "she felt disgusted with her husband and hid her face in her hands" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 49). So, the process of usurpation of a position of a husband finishes successfully.

The novel also reflects Julien's process of usurping the place of a father in M. de Rênal's house. Unlike the real father, who can leave an ill son and go to sleep, Julien focuses on the inner and tender relationship with the children of Mme de Rênal. And this facilitates his reaching his aim; he becomes the master of Mme de Rênal and the careful father for her children. The children, in turn, become attached to Julien more and more (Stendhal, 2002, p. 155).

The naïveté of the children does not prevent Julien from his relentless progress. On the contrary, he employs it to ensure his status in the house. Eventually, the usurper's presence starts to irritate the real father: "Yes, yes! I know, he makes me seem disagreeable to my own children; ... In these days everything tends to throw discredit on the *legitimate* authority. Poor France!" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 156) Mayor, who can be accepted as Stendhal's mouthpiece, draws a parallel between Napoleon and Julien, his home and the whole France. He suggests that the legitimate owners of a status have lost their positions because of the usurpers.

Lastly, Julien usurps a membership of an aristocratic family in Paris. His aim is to be Marquis' son-in-law. Although there is a stark difference between Julien's approach to Mme de Rênal and Mathilde, he seems to have similar tactics to conquer them. Yet, Mathilde is a higher-level task for Julien. As Martin (1992) puts forward, "she is the most vital prospect Paris has to offer" (p. 48). So, Julien must accomplish a hard job to get her: "1. Every day you must see Mme ... don't seem to her to be cold or hurt ... do the opposite of what's expected. 2. you see her every day; 3. you pay court to some other woman in the same set" (Stendhal, 2002, pp. 410-411). These are the steps Julien must follow in order to get Mathilde. Julien moves by plans rather than by passion or temperament. Mathilde becomes the tool of his usurpation process, and he succeeds as Mathilde implies her love in a letter: "Your departure obliges me to speak ... It would be beyond my capability to see you no more" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 337). The intensity of Julien's feelings at this victory makes him feel like a God (Stendhal, 2002, p. 341).

After M. de La Mole becomes acquainted with the details of Mathilde and Julien's love affair and learns about his daughter's pregnancy, he becomes obliged to provide a good name and income

for Julien (Stendhal, 2002, p. 463). Julien is happy because of his success: "my romance is at an end – and credit to me alone. I have been able to make myself loved by this monstrously proud being, he added, glancing at Mathilde; her father cannot live without her, nor she without me" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 465). And when he learns the details about his conned high birth background, "he saw himself as having been acknowledged" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 467). Julien grabs a status of a noble man for himself and cosily accommodates himself in an aristocratic circle.

As it was mentioned at the beginning, the epoch was the period of Napoleonic ambition and mentality. It was the time when usurpation was accepted as legitimacy. And Julien-the-usurper is not alone. What is more, it would not be correct to claim that people from lower classes are the only ones who tend to usurp anything. The members of the privileged community also transgress the limits and take what they want by force. M. de Rênal, for example, "obtained the permission" for a territory that he needed for his business easily (Stendhal, 2002, p. 13).

Keeping up pretence of performing useful deed for the environment, the Mayor constructs a big wall, which brings him substantial advantages (Turnell, 1962, p. 151). In this way, M. de Rênal usurps the public territory to enlarge his territory. Obviously, he is not the only one. Julien's thoughts related to the income of the privileged society provide hints to the source of their money: "I bet he's even profited from the funds meant for foundlings, for those poor things whose misery is even more sacred than that of the others! Oh! monsters! monsters!" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 43)

The power of the privileged lets them manipulate the money and by doing this they can perform any illegal activity and escape the punishment. M. de La Mole's use of his power to get some privilege for his children also bears the sign of usurpation: "A rank can be obtained. Ten years in a garrison, or a relative in the War Ministry, and a man becomes head of a squadron like Norbert. A great fortune!" (Stendhal, 2002, p. 302) However, there is a huge difference between this kind of usurpation and Julien's process of usurpation. Power, money, connections legitimise the usurpation of the higher classes, while people like Julien break out in the first opportunity. Their success does not last long. As Turnell (1962) states, Julien is executed not because he tries to kill one of the members of the higher society, but because he tries to usurp its privileges (p. 152).

Conclusion

Stendhal's novel about Julien Sorel, who resembles Dickens' Pip with his great expectations, presents a vivid picture of a lively and passionate, but a dangerous life of a dreamer. Set in a post-Napoleonic period in a French society, the novel presents a picture of a traumatic and complicated subjectivity bent under the hard pressure of the contemporary society. Julien's ambition to legitimise himself as a son and his ability to penetrate the higher society by force allows the reader to analyse the novel in terms of the concept of legitimacy and usurpation. Julien is a brilliant mind that takes in everything it sees; if needed he learns the Bible by heart so that he obtains a chance to be promoted at a seminary. In other words, he gets a legitimate access to some circles, and he finds himself a father and a mother figure in this way. When it comes to getting a status in a higher society, he usurps it. The characters whom he employs on his way forward vary from naïve children, desperate housewives, and hopeful young ladies to experienced Curé, Mayor, Abbé, and even Marquis. And none of them can stop him.

To conclude, Stendhal's novel *The Red and the Black* not only depicts the main character, Julien Sorel as a young Napoleon, whose illusions come true for a short period of time, but also reminds the reader about the facts of the world and its stable norms. Penetration into unfamiliar atmospheres is possible, but a healthy existence there is not quite possible. The high-class circle may seem vulnerable at first, but it is strong enough to fight against the usurpers. Mme de Rênal's letter is an obvious example for this. Notwithstanding her tender and loving attitude towards Julien, she harshly cuts his attempt at climbing up. Stendhal's aim in writing such a novel was to

procure a vivid and clear way of showing the relentless way of the world that is divided into social classes. And these social classes are impenetrable, although Napoleon's example shows the opposite.

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Alienation in Maryse Condé's *Le Cœur à Rire et à Pleurer*

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ABSTRACT
Postcolonialism is a theoretical framework that problematizes the legacy of colonialism through the lenses of sociology, psychology, and literature. Postcolonial literature, exploring the enduring impact of colonialism on literary works addresses themes such as identity, exile, and alienation. Frantz Fanon was one of the most prominent thinkers of the 20th century with his anti-colonial works, which dealt with the problems created by colonialism on both an individual and a cultural level. Fanon, exploring the alienation of colonized peoples from their own origins, asserts that true freedom can be attained when individuals liberate themselves from this imposed sense of otherness. Maryse Condé, one of the leading figures of French postcolonial literature, delves into the search for identity among those who have endured the experiences of slavery, colonialism, and exile. The aim of this study is to analyze the concept of alienation in Maryse Condé's autobiographical storybook, *Le Cœur à Rire et à Pleurer,* within the framework of Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory.

Introduction

Postcolonialism, encompassing the period from the second half of the 20th century to the present, is a movement and a way of thinking that examines the political, economic, and cultural effects left behind by colonialism through philosophical, sociological, psychological, and literary theories. Postcolonial literature refers to works written by authors from formerly colonized regions about the people living in those regions. The 1950s and 1960s, when European colonies in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean gained their independence, constitute a significant part of postcolonial literature. Alienation, a recurring theme in this literature, is represented through the content and form of the works. Postcolonial novelists place alienated postcolonials in various places and settings within historical and fictional frameworks, exploring the search for identity between tradition and modernity in their works.

The work of American sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s, especially the studies of psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, contributed to the spread of the concept of "alienation." Having theorized the alienation caused by colonial oppression in *Peau noire, masques blancs* in 1952 and *Les damnés de la Terre* in 1961, Fanon is now considered one of the leading thinkers of anti-colonialism today. According to Fanon, alienation is essentially a result of internalized oppression, a fragmentation

arising from the gap between a person's self-defined identity and the identity imposed upon them by society. Characters who encounter the Other or the Westerner also try to hide their 'black skin' with a 'white mask' by imitating this Other" (1961, p. 19).

Fanon (1952) analyzes the alienation of the colonized, especially the Black Western Indians. The Martinican thinker states that this alienation is inherent in the colonial system, and the colonized individual eventually internalizes derogatory and stigmatizing discourses, leading them to belittle their own culture, language, and people, ultimately desiring only to imitate and resemble the colonizer. As a result, the colonized rejects the Creole language[1] and adopts French, which is the language of the colonizer. The hostility of Black people towards other blacks is characteristic of alienation and they internalize this colonial system by seeing whites as very superior. In other words, "black is not human" and "wants to be white." All these thoughts are actually a sign of their alienation. A Black person will only become a fully realized individual when liberated from this alienation that has dehumanized them.

With a similar thought, Irèle points out that alienation is a well-known and frequently discussed phenomenon in the field of African culture and invites to reflect on the liberating potential of this term (1989, pp. 46-58). Similarly, living in exile and returning to one's own country is hardly a new phenomenon in the world of African literature. Postcolonial writers also address the issue of alienation in addition to the colonial problem during childhood.

Maryse Condé, a French novelist, critic, and playwright from Guadeloupe, has become one of the most important figures in postcolonial literature in terms of the themes of racism, otherness, alienation, and womanhood in her works. As a novelist who particularly investigates the African diaspora resulting from slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean in her works, she unmasks the control mechanisms of patriarchal and colonial systems as refusing to obey them. In addition, the author, who thinks that social transformation takes place through women's voices, tries not to subjugate men in her works, but to completely destroy this hierarchy and dichotomy (Klingele 2013, p. 4).

The Author Identity of Maryse Condé

Born in Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, in 1934, Maryse Condé comes from a black bourgeois family. Her father was a founder of a cooperative fund, and her mother was among the first teachers of her generation. Condé, at the age of 16, left her country and went to Paris to begin her studies at Fénelon High School. There, she discovered writers who wrote novels about the Black race, and in particular, Aimé Césaire's discourse on colonialism. In 1959, she married African actor Mamadou Condé and taught in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana, and Senegal. In 1970, she decided to return to France to study French literature at the Sorbonne and also worked at the *Pan-African* magazine founded by Alioune Diop. In 1975, she completed her doctorate in literature with a thesis on stereotypes about Black people in West Indian literature. Between 1975 and 2002, she taught at numerous French and American universities. With *Moi, Tituba Sorcière* in 1986, she won the *Grand Prix Littéraire de la Femme*, and with *La Vie Scélérate*, she received the *Académie française* award in 1987. In 1993, she became the first woman to win the *Putterbaugh* award, given to a Francophone writer in the United States. Condé's novels, read all over the world, explore the memories of slavery and colonialism, and the identity search of exiles.

In 2002, Condé ended her teaching career at Columbia University, where she is known as the founder of the Francophone Studies department. Today, the author lacks manual dexterity due to a neurological disease that affects her mobility and coordination. Her latest novel, *Le Fabuleux et Triste Destin d'Ivan et d'Ivana* (2017), was brought to light with the help of her second husband,

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[1]It is a language consisting of a mixture of several languages that develops according to the region and person.

writer, and translator Richard Philcox, who transcribed the entire novel for her. The author passed away in 2004.

Condé was a writer with a powerful voice. The author's struggle with various forms of oppression is the result of past experiences, perception, a resilient life lived in a colonized and patriarchal society. In many of her works, such as *Ségou* (1987) and *Moi, Tituba, Ciel Noir de Salem* (1986), Condé examines the effects of white colonialism on Black people and gradually constructs a collective female identity (Simplice, 2022, p. 3). The author's inspiring journey is also based on her ability to openly criticize issues previously concealed by men and hegemonic ideals. On the other hand, in the novels *La Traversée de la Mangrove* (1989) and *Les Derniers Rois Mages* (1992), the author focuses on male characters. However, inspired by one of her most important works, *Ségou* (1985), especially from Mali, Condé writes extensively about globalization, which is a way for West Indians to participate in the new world order and enables enrichment between countries, and depicts nations beyond linguistic and cultural borders in these works (Simplice, 2022, p. 13).

According to Condé, the purpose of literature is to become concerned, to encourage thinking, and to express existential anxiety (2004, p. 155). Literature alone cannot change the world, but it can play a dominant role in the process of change. Condé also describes her own experience in which transformation is triggered. The tool that allowed her to do this and break free from imposed frameworks was language.

In her book, Condé tells her readers about her memories spent in Guadeloupe. The work is her first autobiographical story, in which she recounts her youth in the region in the 1950s, her tumultuous relationship with her mother, her confrontations with death, racism, and romantic disillusionment, and her dreams of freedom and autonomy. These memories allow readers to go to the sources of the author's inspiration to write novels. For the author, the biographical element is very important because this Caribbean childhood greatly influenced her writings. This is also true of other postcolonial writers, as geography and parochialism are central to postcolonial Caribbean literature.

In the book, Maryse Condé talks about her childhood in Guadeloupe with educated parents who were proud to be French. The theme of culture is essential here. Her family, who lived in Paris, the city of art, and spent most of their time visiting museums, turned their backs on the Creole language and spoke French. As the last child of a large family, Maryse, who grew up alone with parents who are arrogant and proud of their social achievements, she rejected authority. She is too outspoken for the tastes of adults and her peers, so one may already see the strength of the author's character, her political and feminist values.

As Simplice, points out, the greatest contemporary power of Maryse Condé's work is that it depicts conflicts between countries and cultures without errors and exceptions. Thus, the author provides a better view of what binds and separates people in these intercultural conflicts. From her early works, Condé places herself among this new generation of writers by demonstrating the problematic nature of Césairian and Senghorian Blackness, and in her works, she repeatedly explores the theme of identity, often embodied in characters of West Indian origin from her own homeland (2022, p. 2).

Due to societal pressures to adapt to mainstream culture, both men and women have the capacity to actively maintain this system of inequality. However, Condé's stories of exploitation place the responsibility on women to question their beliefs. Since the author grew up in a culture where patriarchal values are consumed, she does not witness the power of women's voices. Condé, thus, presents her early childhood doubts and questions to invite women to reflect on their own experiences and write their own stories (Klingele, 2013, p. 2).

On the other hand, Condé tells women that writing is not useless, but rather full of creativity, while giving them the opportunity to expand their knowledge and ideas about the essence of self-expression. Only then will the world progress toward equality (Nesbitt, 2003, p. 403). For this reason, the author states that women should act as primary aggressors, as they have to struggle with the tradition of official language culture or the European language developed by male suppressors (Hodge, 1998, p. 47). According to Condé, a woman's voice is full of creative literary talents beyond the reach of men and colonizers. In this context, Condé's thoughts on women reveal her role in challenging the deeply rooted patriarchal world (Klingele, 2013, p. 3). Undoubtedly, according to Condé, writing and speaking are tools that put women at the same level as men. Thus, while outlining the meaning of the brave new world, Condé points to the difficulty of women proclaiming their authenticity in a repressive environment.

Traversée de la Mangrove (1985) and *Hérémakhonon* (1976) are also works of Condé's stance on the desire to change the mindset of women. These writings also present the origins of Condé's inspiration to challenge the discriminatory world that is prevalent in her life. Each reflects the importance of identity development, and the character's experiences parallel the author's own childhood. In this context, Condé's writings go a step further in terms of postcolonial and feminist discourses, as evidenced by her novels. While encouraging women and oppressed countries to act in terms of making their voices heard, she also aims to eliminate competition completely (Klingele, 2013, pp. 4-6). As can be seen from her aforementioned works, Condé's past is an effort to destroy the dominant tradition. Accordingly, a thorough understanding of the transition from obedience to subversion requires an analysis of the author's autobiographical text.

The Phenomenon of "Alienation" in *Le Cœur à Rire et à Pleurer*

The last decade of the 20th century was a period when autobiographical works, especially childhood and women's narratives, were common (Cooper 2016, pp. 26, 34). Accordingly, many women writers decide to leave the patronage of men and present their own writings to the world. In 1999, Maryse Condé published her autobiographical work *Le Cœur à Rire et à Pleurer*. The work is a collection of true stories from the author's childhood that question the dynamism that formed her own identity and culminate in resistance against the mechanisms of oppression she encountered along the way (Klingele, 2013, p. 1).

Le Cœur à Rire et à Pleurer is significant for the reader as it reflects the traces left by dramatic events on local cultures and the postcolonial conflicts that still affect the continent. Like Guadeloupe, which is highly valued by Maryse Condé, Africa always holds an important place in her stories where the identity search of West Indians is questioned (Chancé, 2009, pp. 66-77). Therefore, although this literary genre focused on the experience of a white-bourgeois character and men, black women decided to embrace it, rewrite the history of the postcolonial subject and adapt it for their own purposes (Xiuxia, 2008, p. 9).

Condé's novels, filled with humor and irony, explore questions about race, gender, and culture. Some of her novels are shaped by her personal experiences, disappointments, setbacks, and travels, and often incorporate current events, history, and politics. Her stories, particularly those featuring images of Creole societies, touch on many recurring themes of contemporary postcolonial literature such as the complexity of family relationships, the figure of the traveler, the postcolonial past, creolization, and globalization (Simplice, 2022, pp. 3-4). Condé's historical fiction describes the African family, which is on the verge of losing its traditions and history due to modernization and is overwhelmed by modernity.

The book is dedicated to his mother, who died a long time ago. Her mother was a wounded woman who had a bad marriage. Maryse Condé does not forgive her, but when the young girl goes to France, she feels the farewells with a painful tenderness, as if an instinct warns her that they will

never see each other again (Rüf, 1999). Thus, she recalls these memories that gave her back her family's love, especially the last night she lost her mother.

Condé uses variable point-of-view techniques to present the reader with a Guadeloupean society divided along racial and social status lines. She is the only writer who uses the possessive pronoun "my" in the title "My Childhood" (Condé, 1999), suggesting a secure sense of ownership of her past. The author uses indirect expressions to evoke painful memories. The fact that she used "oxymoron," that is, the contradictory concepts of "laughing" and "crying" together to write the title of her novel, is the result of a well-managed life after many setbacks related to the desire to tell the truth (Jatoe-Kaleo, 2013, pp. 352-353).

Maryse creates a chasm between herself and her family by portraying her parents as timid black people who are fully assimilated into French culture. She not only recounts these facts after the events of her upbringing but also from the time of her birth. The author's use of possessive pronouns in relation to her parents, brothers, and sisters places her in the context of a stranger: "Because my father was a former civil servant and my mother was employed, they regularly took advantage of the leave from the French mainland with their children."[2] (Condé, 1999, p. 11). However, Maryse underlines her parents' pride and loyalty to Paris: "For them, France was in no way the center of colonial power. The only thing that really shed light on their existence was the homeland and the City of Light, Paris." (Condé, 1999, p. 11).

On the other hand, narratives about colonialism, otherness, and alienation, family, and patriarchal society shed light on the birth of Condé's character. The traditional image of the Creole woman implies a matriarchal figure occupied by the family and serving as the pillar of her community (Cooper, 2016, pp. 37-38). However, Condé does not rely on these stereotypes and refuses to create a woman who can be reduced to a historical object. Condé refuses to be categorized as a black slave/victim because this would limit her potential and creative power that could lead to social transformation.

Although her own origins were not French, her mother's admiration for that nation emphasized that this race had developed thanks to herself and other blacks. Thus, throughout the narrative, Maryse draws attention to the power of women in society, based on the power of her mother: "At the same time, neither of them felt the slightest inferiority complex because of their color. They believed themselves to be the brightest, most intelligent proof of the progress of the Great Black Races" (Condé, 1999, p. 18).

However, Maryse also describes her father's indifference to his wife's situation; the person who was uncomfortable with his wife's attitude: "He felt liberated around two o'clock in the afternoon when he could escape from all these disgusting things. Periods, pregnancies, births, menopauses! [...]" (Condé, 1999, p. 22). The use of free indirect discourse here to describe her father's reaction shows Maryse's uncertainty about her father's feelings and the fragmentation of his identity: "Indifferent and somewhat impatient with his wife's sulks, he was nevertheless happy to be a man. He puffed out his chest as he passed Place de la Victoire." (Condé, 1999, p. 22).

In the story, Condé also reveals the difference between classes economically. Madonne's son threatening Maryse reveals the tension between the rich and the poor. At the end of the *Class Struggle* chapter in the story, Maryse's parents make an explanation about the hostility she faced: "Fashion was divided into two classes: a well-dressed, well-shoe children's class that went to school to learn and be a good person. The other class consisted of scoundrels and jealous people who only wanted to harm them." (Condé, 1999, p. 35). Maryse, who admires the beauty of a woman she sees on the street, tells her mother about her contentment. However, the fact that the woman

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[2]All quotations in the work have been translated into English by me.

is white causes criticism from her mother:

> In a way, I guessed my mother was right. At the same time, I wasn't guilty either. I didn't admire Amélie because she was white. Yes, but her pink skin, light eyes, and wavy hair were an integral part of this combination that I admired so much. All of this was beyond my understanding. The next Sunday, out of the corner of my eye, I saw Amélie kneeling and pulling out a cross at the entrance of her bench. I didn't turn my head towards her. I realized that her beauty was forbidden to me. (Condé, 1999, pp. 93-94)

Maryse becomes alienated like her parents but cannot identify with them. She feels suffocated by her parents and their obsession with France. At sixteen, Maryse discovers that she knows almost nothing about Guadeloupe beyond her limited experience. An escape into a fantasy world, a thirst for knowledge, dreams of autonomy and freedom lead her towards her destiny as a writer. "Staying at Dolé-les-Bains made me want to open the cage where I had been locked up since I was born. I realized I didn't know my country. I realized that I only knew a narrow quadrilateral about La Pointe" (Condé, 1999, p. 129). According to Condé, the root of the problem is actually alienation, and her family is also making efforts in this direction:

> They were constantly trying to control something hidden within them, something that could escape from them at any moment and cause greater damage. Because of this effort, they were never natural. [...] My mother and father were alienated. I felt that I was getting to the core of the problem. (Condé, 1999, p. 127)

Conclusion

Postcolonialism is an intellectual and political movement that emerged from the mid-20th century onwards, analyzing the history of European colonialism. Therefore, literary works characterized as postcolonial often deal with themes such as identity, exile, cultural alienation, racial mixing, and racism. The 21st-century literary critic and theorist of postcolonialism, Frantz Fanon, discusses the colonized in his work, particularly the phenomenon of alienation of the Black Western Indians. Fanon, who theorized alienation, states that this situation arises from the difference between an individual's self-defined identity and the identity attributed to them by society.

Maryse Condé, one of the important novelists of postmodern literature, draws attention to the fact that she questions slavery, colonialism, and the identity search of exiles in her works. The author, who investigates the effects of white colonialism on black races, also addresses female identity in her works. In her autobiographical storybook, *Le Cœur à Rire et à Pleurer*, Condé tells her memories from Guadeloupe, especially her parents' alienation from their own roots. Condé's parents became alienated due to their passion for France, a country that did not reciprocate their attachment. On the other hand, although Maryse grew up in Guadeloupe, she never identified herself with either the Guadeloupean or French heritage. She spends most of her childhood and adolescence trying to find her true identity. However, Johnson (2008, p. 16) emphasizes that Condé does not feel sadness for this lost home in neither her fiction nor her autobiography (2008, p. 16). Although being detached from their roots caused a painful alienation for Maryse's parents, Maryse decides to fight against it by accepting her roots and telling her story (Čepo, 2020, p. 158).

As a native of Guadeloupe, a French citizen, and also a United States citizen, Condé analyzes a society that distinguishes itself as "inferior" and "superior" (Nesbitt, 2003, p. 391). This alienating dilemma becomes personal for Condé because conforming to such rhetoric leads to the erosion of identity and consequently, the loss of her voice. In this context, Condé's writings are an effort to defend all universal societies that have succumbed to injustice. The author fights for absolute freedom.

Through Maryse's free and indirect speech, it is possible to understand the complexity of a

multicultural, multiracial, and highly hierarchical society. The portrait of her mother allows Pointe to see the perspectives of this hierarchical multicultural society's memory. Maryse, coming from a mother who could not read or write, also draws a portrait of an enigmatic and hermetic individual (Jatoe-Kaleo, 2013, p. 354).

On the other hand, Condé, through her stories, wants to break free from the chains of the patriarchal system and colonial culture, find her voice, liberate her body, and show that women's place is not condemned to eternal silence. The author states that identity is formed as a dynamic that is shaped in relation to the Other, and the reflection of this allows the individual to draw their own image (Klingele, 2013). She believes that the best way to solve such injustice problems is to completely eliminate the concept of "an inferior entity" and instead support a universe that includes the concepts of race, nationality, identity, and language that have long divided people, and searches for new expressions in her works (Condé, 2004, pp. 154-159).

Finally, Condé's writings are part of a lineage of postcolonial writing since she comes from a previously colonized country. As a witness to independence, the author writes texts that denounce the traumatic injustices of the colonial and postcolonial periods as well as socio-political issues. Maryse Condé's characters are not always satisfied with life and are often in search of happiness, which becomes a recurring theme in her novels; therefore, Black people must take on their own cultural polyphony in the aftermath of colonialism (Simplice, 2022, p. 11).

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Transgressing the Border of Gender in Sheeba Shah's *The Other Queen*

Sheeba Shah'ın *The Other Queen* Adlı Eserinde Toplumsal Cinsiyet

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ABSTRACT

The Other Queen documents the actions and activities of King Rajendra Bir Bikram Shah (1816-1847 BS) and his queens Samrajya Laxmi and Rajya Laxmi, which resulted in the unbalanced power sharing of the nation. Shah stresses that the main cause behind this is the crossing of the gender boundary between the King and the Queen. In the selected text, the king disobeys to stick to the image of an authoritative valor, so he appears as a subservient coward. Queens are self-confident and powermongers; they deny performing the roles of submissive and self-sacrificing women. Thus, this article analyzes the motives behind the disobedience of conventional gender image by the major characters. It also showcases the results caused by trespassing and the gender confinement by the characters. To address this objective, Butler's concept of gender performativity has been used as she claims that the 'performances of gender' are not natural; they are imposed on an individual through the script prepared by society. She views that an individual creates one's gender by performing the scripted gender roles continually; nevertheless, s/he finds the space to repeat the acts differently. Hence, one gets options within those constraints to break them. Moreover, gender is constantly reconstructed in response to socio-political changes. The implication of this article is to observe how the Queens seize power from the king, and dismantle the role of submissive women. It concludes that in *The Other Queen*, the characters contest the stereotyped gender roles, and they recurrently cross the gender confinement.

Introduction: Gender as a Key Issue in Nepali Novels

The Nepali authors engage their literary narratives with gender issues rigorously after the people's movement in 2005-6. However, female issues have already been addressed in Rudraraj Pande's *Rupmati*, as the novel depicts a society that confines females to conventional gender roles. In this novel, Pandey displays the pain and anguish of female characters. This novel provides a true picture of the then Nepali society and the condition of females. Whereas Gyanu Pandey believes that though Rudraraj Pandey has exposed the miserable condition of females in his novel, he is not a feminist writer because he has not advocated for the rights and equality of females. Rather, he has endorsed the inferior place for women in *Rupmati.* He applauds the female character for tolerating the injustice mutely (28). Similarly, Indra Bahadur Rai argues that Nepali authors portray the characters in a conventional way. In their novels, characters appear in stereotyped

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gender roles because they believe that for the establishment of an ideal society, both males and females should be restricted to conventional gender images (25). In the same line of argument, Rajendra Subedi claims that the novelists present the female characters as the weaker sex because people of the then society treated females as the "other sex." So, in society, females never enjoy equality, rights, and justice as their male counterparts (68). These critics believe that acquiring feminine traits is a must for females as the female characters are idyllic.

After the 1930s, Nepali novelists showed their concern for gender equality and deployed gender equality as a major theme in their literary creations. Baral observes that during the 1930s, the novel became a prime medium to inculcate the idea of gender equality among the people (398). In the same way, Baral and Atom observe that Nepali novelists have presented gender issues immensely in their literary narratives (94). These novelists provide the changing gender status of the people in Nepali society. Likewise, gender becomes one of the major themes of Nepali literature, particularly after the Maoist movement, because significant political changes in Nepal, along with the promulgation of the new constitution, brought awareness to the authors regarding gender equality (Baral, 87). Baral points out that due to the effect of the People's Movement, the novelists deploy new themes such as gender, ethnicity, environment, and the like. Among them, they use gender as a prime subject in their novels. These novels depict the characters' struggle for equality and identity based on gender. Similarly, in Acharya's perception, influenced by the changed scenario of the nation, authors focus their writing on gender issues. Moreover, gender has been used to deploy the gender issue in novels as gender becomes a common social issue (para. 12). Consequently, Sheeba Shah also focuses her writing on gender issues in her novel *The Other Queen.*

Disobedience of Gender Roles in Shah's Literary Narratives

Mostly, in Sheeba Shah's novels, the female characters appear intolerant towards the injustice done to them. In her female-centric novels, the female characters belong to an aristocratic family where they get a chance to exercise power like their male counterparts; therefore, they are vocal against any kind of disparity that is done to them. The article "Retailing the History" points out that in her novels, Shah has presented the story of women who are furiously passionate and daringly ambitious and who are brave to denounce society's repressions (par 3). In her novels, the female characters intend to achieve authority. Consequently, they are unhesitant to take part in the conflict and conspiracy that often happen in their family. Shah herself discloses that her novels portray the rebellious behavior of the female protagonist who belongs to a prosperous and oppressive class. She allows her female protagonists to dismantle the social barriers and set them free. Shah admits in the interview "Sumansanga" that in *Loyals of the Crown* and *The Other Queen,* she gets fascinated by the sagas about the rebellious nature of the Queen Rajendra Laxmi and makes it the subject of her novels (Interview). In her view, though society has constructed both attitudinal and behavioral barriers to constrain women's freedom, by their effort, they get liberated both psychologically and physically.

Similarly, Kathmandu Tribune mentions that, in her novel *Loyals of the Crown*, Shah has presented the story of women who are furiously passionate and daringly ambitious. In this novel, she has shown that the queen's rebellious fervor seems to be the product of the society's repressions (par. 7). Shah discloses that exploring the taboo areas of gender and sexuality, she has rebelled against the restricted themes assigned to the female writers by the society. In her novels, she provides agency to her female protagonist who trespasses the social restrictions imposed on women. Her female characters rebel against atrocities, violence, and oppression meted out by male members to women.

In her novels, Shah delves into how female characters rebel to bring an end to the domination,

torture, and assault of males. In Devi Raman Pandit's view, her first novel, *Loyals of the Crown*, revolves around the rebellion of Kanchhi Maharani. Likewise, her third publication, *Facing My Phantoms*, depicts the rebellious zeal of the protagonist Sanjeevani (12). Set in one of the most turbulent times in Nepal's political history, against the backdrop of political turmoil, she depicts several upheavals faced by the protagonist, Sanjeevani. In *Facing My Phantoms*, the major characters break the gender confinement. She denies to follow the values prescribed for females. Her behaviors and attitude, what the standard society would call transgressions, constitute the major portion of the narrative.

In the same way, Alisha Sijapati observes that in *The Other Queen*, Shah has explored the family history of the Shah dynasty and projects her female protagonist as a tough, independent, and courageous lady who is always ready to take steps against every kind of discrimination designed against her. According to Sijapati, in *The Other Queen*, Shah has used historical material and has imaginatively reconstructed the life of the Queen Rajendra Laxmi, who subverts the stereotypical image of women as demure, self-less, and weak. Rather, she appears as fearless and stubborn (par. 5). Similarly, Peter J Karthak claims that in *The Other Queen*, Shah equips her female character, Kanchhaa Maharani, with unrestrained passion and energy so that she can reflect the psychological state of the queen when she is left ignored by her husband (par. 3). Karthak points out that depicting her inclination towards Gagan and the initiation of passionate love affairs between these characters, Shah has presented *The Other Queen* as a bold and ruthless queen who does not hesitate to commit the massacre in the palace. She does so as revenge against the indifference shown to her by her husband, which reveals her rebellious nature. Thus, the critics have analyzed Shah's literary narratives as the rebellious zeal of the female protagonists. Still, the above mentioned critics have left the room for evaluating the gender issues of her novel *The Other Queen*. Therefore, the researcher explores the novel *The Other Queen* from the perspective of gender theory.

Crossing the Border of Socially Imposed Gender Image

The novel *The Other Queen*, centers on the queens', Samrajya Laxmi's and Rajendra Laxmi's, never-ending clandestine efforts to take agency. The novel's story revolves around the clash of two women to get the authority of the nation. Defying the socially imposed roles of a submissive wife, these female characters appear in the role of power mongers. In fact, while seeking the way toward the throne, they try to make the king their instrument at every turn. Not only the king, but the whole power structure of the country is set by the queens. Therefore, though King Rajendra runs the estate, his wives stay behind the wheel while he makes decisions for the country. Likewise, they show their incredible ability to uphold authority by converting the courtiers as well as people to their followers. Thus, the queens manage to throw off the restricted gender image imposed by society when they feel that they cannot be confined to the gender boundary in order to achieve authority.

In *The Other Queen*, both of the queens, Samarajya Laxmi and Rajendra Laxmi, break the gender confinement. Actually, they even seem to be completely negligent towards the socially imposed gender roles and identity. Both of the Queens persistently behave masculinely, confirming the claims of gender theorists that gender is an unstable entity, so it can change according to circumstances. Jenet T. Spence and Robert L. Helmereich provide constructive views on the shifting notion of gender. They believe that masculinity and feminity emerge not from the biology of an individual; rather, one's gender is a sociological process. In fact, an individual acquires through learning, adaptation, evolution, assimilation, and upbringing (87). Since gender behavior is not a biological process, the queens act in a so-called masculine way as they get a favorable environment to establish their agency.

Transgressing the socially imposed gender image, Queen Samrajya Laxmi, the eldest queen of King Rajendra, appears as a farsighted and rational lady. From a juvenile age, she plans to gain authority in the country. For that, she designs to hold the king completely in her grip. Her sister Rajendra Laxmi notices that Samrajya Laxmi learned to keep her husband under control from her juvenile age, and for that, she finds out her own way: she began to mother him. She helped him with his reading and learning. She cleaned his wounds when he was hurt and brushed his face when he came back from many excursions from the stables or the fields, smeared with mud and dust. She learned to comfort him when he was reprimanded by the regent queen (36). Samrajya Laxmi appears authoritatively because "gender is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a 'doing' rather than a 'being'" (Butler, 25). Hence, crossing the limited gender image set by society, Samrajya Laxmi constructs the image of a wise ruler. She knows that by becoming the ruler of her husband, she can easily rule over the nation.

Queen Samrajya Laxmi denies being restricted to the stereotyped female's image of an emotional and irrational being. Instead, she works on her personality and constructs the image of an authoritative lady. Through regular practice, she acquires all the qualities that are needed to become a queen. Samrajya Laxmi's actions support Bacchi and Eveline's claim that gender is just a social process. Bacchi and Eveline point out that: "gender is accomplished through the disciplining of bodies, actions, and language" (96). In their perception, it is not possible for an individual to exhibit the prescribed gender image all the time (96). Coping with the regent queen, she practices appearing authoritative. She laughs, talks, and walks like the regent queen because, with the same solemn grace, she aspires to be as eminent and as commanding as the regent queen.

Samrajya Laxmi never gets confined to the so-called feminine image of a docile woman. Rather, she acts assertively even though assertiveness is regarded as a masculine trait because "Regardless of one's sex, one's gender identity may consist of some combination of feminine and masculine behaviors"; therefore, both males and females may exhibit masculine and feminine traits in their personality (Tyson, 115). She regulates her younger sister's activities all the time. Likewise, she gives instructions to her sister to follow the protocol of a queen. She thinks that as a queen, one should not spend valuable time on a petty thing like makeup. So, when she notices Rajendra Laxmi is spending too much time in makeup, she rebukes Rajendra Laxmi for wasting her time on a useless thing. She expresses her dissatisfaction: "You waste too much time beautifying yourself, Rajendra Laxhmi! Festooning yourself with this and that" (25). Falsifying the cliché that women should look beautiful and for that, they have to spend pretty much time in it, Samarajya Laxmi presents a very different image of herself as she herself gets indulged in state affairs most of the time.

Samrajya Laxmi appears as a very astute person who always works on very carefully to take the agency over people. She recurrently imposes her authoritativeness on her sister, Rajendra Laxmi. She criticizes Rajendra Laxmi for becoming a liberal mistress towards her slave women and asks her to keep them under control. Doing her duty as an elder sister and the eldest queen of the nation, she gives her instruction to her younger sister Rajendra Laxmi: "Do not forget you are queen, and these are not your companions but your slaves, Rajendra Laxmi" (26)! Likewise, she very wisely creates a rift between the king and his beloved friend and wife Rajendra Laxmi when she notices their growing intimacy. She realizes that to get the power of the country in her hand, there should not be anybody's presence between the king and her.

Dismantling the image of a weaker sex, she displays courage in her deeds and actions. She fearlessly challenges the English regiment and decides to attack the English troops and small villages because she wants to expand Nepal's boundary further. Likewise, she wishes to straightly protest against any kind of interference in the nation's internal affairs. Displaying her courage, she

declares: "Hodgson is a fool if he thinks I will comply with his outrageous demands; I refuse to tolerate his meddling in my private affairs" (39). She is so clear and determined about her opinion regarding the independence of the nation that she believes that the king should take action against the British's interference. She restlessly opines that the maharaja cannot remain silent when an intruder such as Hodgson reproaches queen's words and commands over her jurisdiction. Her actions display that she performs the role that is expected to be done by the king as a male. As Butler claims: "Gender is not real; gender is revisable. So, what we take to be real, what we invoke as the naturalized knowledge of gender is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality" (xxiii). Samrajya Laxmi's thoughts and actions confirm that there is no obligatory relationship between one's body and one's gender.

Samrajya Laxmi takes the agency in the state's affairs. She gives instructions to the ministers and prime ministers on the issues of the nation. Showing her authority, she instructs the government officials and ministers to follow her will: "I am the queen of Nepal, and I insist that my government shall run as I dictate" (40). Butler points out that an individual can challenge the gender identity simply by reconstructing the gender identity or deviating from the prescribed gender temperaments while performing. Likewise, an individual can resist exhibiting stereotyped gender images by executing the gender role in an alternative way (as cited in Lloyd 65). The narrator highlights the so-called masculine attributes such as reason, gallantry, tactfulness, and the like of the queen: "Samrajya Devi Shah is not one to be led on by fickle talk. She needs assurances that are validated by facts and good reasoning" (42). Likewise, she persistently asks queries about the British's interest in the nation and decides to protest against their action.

Samrajya Laxmi hardly fits in the conventional gender image of an unambitious, tolerant, and passive woman because she is an ambitious woman fixated on the idea of ousting the British. For that, she is actively involved in several plans and plots. But when, out of hesitation and fear, the king refuses to take a stand supporting the queen's will, she feels insulted and gets enraged. Since she is an obstinate woman, she wants her plan to reach a successful end. So, when her implacable desire to rid the English of her domain has been put on hold by fearful misgivings of her own husband, she rages and desires to hurt her husband. Then furious queen warns the king: "They are not your allies, but are using you as a pawn. They merely encroached upon the territories. History is evidence" (115). Revealing Samrajya Laxmi's nature, Shah has confirmed that Samrajya Laxmi's image of a tolerant woman seems inappropriate. Her sister further highlights her so-called masculine traits: "Over the years, I have seen her arrogance become irrationally compulsive, forcefully assertive and extremely overbearing" (56). As Judith Halberstam rightly points out that, "female also can be masculine through her efforts and actions. Female masculinity is all about who feels themselves to be more masculine than feminine"; so, female masculinity is not the result of biology (xi). Since Samrajya Laxmi is a haughty, intolerant, and belligerent woman, she leaves the palace to put pressure on her husband. She decides not to return to the palace unless the king agrees to her plan.

Her mind remains active, reflecting and examining every possible way of throwing out British influence from her domain. She keeps on thinking: "What if we start a war? If General Amar Singh Thapa could do it, then what stops us now" (147)? As a skilled queen, she calculates the condition of the state and draws the conclusion that "We are better equipped now. Our soldiers have increased in numbers. They are well-trained guerrilla warfare, and the rugged mountainous terrain of my country will give my men an upper hand over the fingers soldiers" (147). She believes that what one needs to win the battle is courage and determination. So, having these qualities in her, she thinks that she can give command to the soldier to wage the war against the British. She dreams of signing a new treaty to take back the lost Garhwal and Kumaon in the Sugauli treaty.

Samrajya Laxmi develops herself as a wise leader who regulates the king's every move. Butler

argues that "An individual is constructed through repetition because gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (45). She insists the king to take a bold move against the British's interference. When she notices the king's weakness and fear, out of which he is unable to fulfill her wish, she urges the king: "This rajgaddi belongs to you, maharaja, not the British. Do not give in to their masquerades. They merely bide time" (115). The wise queen knows that if the king keeps on succumbing to the British government's will, they will make him weak and dependent and eventually seize the king's rights as well as territory and call it their own. As a farsighted queen, she tries a lot to save the nation from the interference of the British government in the nation. Ultimately, she dies while struggling to maintain the sovereignty of the country.

Like the eldest queen of the king Rajendra, his youngest Queen Rajendra Laxmi also grows as a bold ruler of the country. Whether it is a matter of the nation or of her life, she wants to take full authority into her own hands. Therefore, when, as a wife, she goes through utter indifference from her husband, she seeks a way out to keep her happiness and self-respect. Consequently, she gets closer to Gagan Thapa. In a patriarchal society, keeping a mistress is regarded as a male's part, but challenging the social practice, she declares Gagan Thapa as her lover. She spends her time in his company. Not only that, she provides valuable clothes, jewelry, food, and money as lures to Gagan's wives. Hence, she prioritizes her desires and wishes instead of suppressing them.

After the death of the eldest queen, being acquainted with the king's weak nature, Queen Rajendra Laxmi decides to hold the leash of the kingdom. Moreover, she designs to become a supreme power. As a result, she makes the king declare that he hands over the power to her: "Whatever you decide, Maharani Laxmi Devi, or suggest for the government and for the welfare of the kingdom will not be applicable to any option by me, the king, nor anyone else. This is my order" (220). Queen's activities show that she crosses the gender border of so-called femineity and enters the masculine zone, confirming that "masculinity and femineity are socially defined state; therefore, masculinity is not exclusive to males, neither are feminine traits exclusive to women. Women may be more or less masculine and men more or less feminine; it depends upon the situation" (Synnott, 12). After the king's declaration, she held full authority over the government. Coins are minted in her name, and one after another, men of worth and great accomplishments bow to receive her coin. In fact, she becomes a queen with power and a queen in command. She starts giving audiences and orders to powerful ministers and commanders like Chautaria Guru Prasad Shah, Kazi Ranjore Thapa, and Captain Jung Bahadur Rana.

Likewise, exhibiting her rational self, she moves forward a friendly hand towards the British. Since she realizes that king is not able to protest against the Britishers, she also decides to stand beside the king and to get the support of him as well as the British government. As a smart lady, she makes a smart decision and sends her message to the British regiment via Nepali personnel: "Make it clear to him that I esteem the English highly and am friend as long as they are mine. Make it very clear that my approach will be different from that of the previous queen, my dear departed sister" (222). By assuring the support of the British residents, she wants to maintain her authority.

Rajendra Laxmi is eager to acquire the agency. Her eagerness for power pulls apart the belief that females are self-sacrificing and she always prioritizes other's desires; rather, it confirms her so-called masculine gender image of self-centeredness. Judith Halberstam argues: "Feminity can be produced in the male body as well; likewise, masculinity can be produced by and across both male and female bodies; however, female masculinity has been blatantly ignored in the culture" (2). In order to reach power, she webs a plot, and to concretize her scheme, she develops a circle of supporters who shield her from every kind of problem. Following her plan, she appoints her closest friend, Junga Bahadur, and her lover, Gagan Singh, as ministers to the King's court. Hence,

she becomes more and more confident, as she reveals her growing confidence when she realizes that she is the prime factor behind the vicissitude of cabinet of ministers. Moreover, she becomes the cause of happiness and sorrow for everyone. She admits: "I am the designer and prime mover, and I am the queen supreme. At my will, I can make a man weep and laugh at the same time. I feel omnipotent" (237). She is desperate to obtain authority, and she succeeds in it.

Females are not supposed to be ambitious, but Rajendra Laxmi exhibits her ambition in her every action. In order to hold the supreme power, she designs a plan to remove the eldest prince, Surendra, from the line of protocol as the first successor and dreams of placing her son Ranendra on the throne. She instigates Junga Bahadur to file a complaint against Surendra for his atrocious and barbaric behavior towards his companions just for entertainment. She is well aware of his nuisance habits that unfit him to become a crown prince. So, she wants to use this weakness of the would-be crown prince against him.

Crossing the feminine gender territory set by the society, Queen Rajendra Laxmi wants to follow her free will. Following her free will, she plans to make her son the crown prince; likewise, she continues her extramarital affair with Gagan Singh. She makes Mathabar Singh Thapa the prime minister of the country so that he distracts the attention of the king and his council to other more important issues and allows her to continue her love affair without interference. Similarly, she knows that when she makes him the prime minister, out of gratitude towards her, he will remain her ever-willing servant, protecting thereby all her interests. She also knows that none of the ministers and courtiers will dare utter a word that will harm her when all of the ministers, including the prime minister, will be in her clasp.

Ultimately, Rajendra Laxmi makes all of the people effortlessly acknowledge her sovereignty. Consequently, every matter of the state is discussed with her. She reports her authority: every decision was taken after her consultation. Every commission of each kazi was received from her hands. Every command to the army given by the Sardar is first brought to her for consideration (275). The authoritative image of Rajendra Laxmi confirms that women also possess so-called masculine traits such as aggression and self-centeredness; moreover, they appear dominant and violent as well (Whitehead and Barrett, 16). From foreign affairs to religious and economic matters, not a single decision is made in her absence. She discloses her supreme power: "In a word, I am the law. The mukhtiyar and commander-in-chief, General Mathabar Singh Thapa, not only supports but endorses all my instructions without a furrow on his brow. Her utmost desire to get agency over the people, her rationality, courage, tactfulness, haughtiness, and self-centeredness are evident that she is not confined to the gender boundary set by society.

Later, though her illicit relationship with Gagan Singh is disclosed to the King Rajendra, she remains undistracted as she admits: "I never fought with my fears. Over time, I learned to play with them. I learnt to manipulate my fears to my advantage….My fears have fortified me" (288). She keeps on trying to influence the ministers to be involved in her plan of ousting Prince Surendra from the line of a crown prince. She still makes vicissitude in the ministers' cabinet. She appoints Jung Bahadur as the premier of the nation along with the rank of Major General and Gagan Singh as the chief commander of the army. Likewise, she unhesitatingly and cruelly punishes the people who come in her way to freedom and ambition.

Conclusion

In *The Other Queen*, both queens transgress the gender boundary set by society. Gender is a constructed phenomenon, so it is practicable to stay out of the restricted gender roles and gender images. Since the queens get a favorable environment to sabotage the socially imposed gender image, they freely appear in the so-called masculine image. Samrajya Laxmi all the time act boldly. She defies the stereotyped gender image of a self-sacrificing wife and acts as a haughty woman

who wants to fulfill her wish at all costs. She not only holds power over her husband and the nation, but she also recurrently exhibits her authority over the British government. She protests against the interference of the British government when she observes the British government's intrusion into the nation's internal affairs. Likewise, she encourages the king to return the territory of the country that had been lost to the British government in the past. As a rational leader, she also plans to reappraise the treatise done with the British government and to set the nation's equal status with that of the British government. In fact, as a determined lady, she refuses to compromise with her plans and desires. Moreover, she even sacrifices her life in order to materialize her dream.

Shah's novel unveils that though society confines the women to the conventional gender images. However, queen Rajendra Laxmi dismantle those images. She displays the attributes such as farsightedness, assertiveness, and even malice in her behavior. Since she is in a privileged position, the society cannot force her to remain in a so-called feminine image. Consequently, she transgresses the gender boundary and constructs the so-called masculine gender image through her actions and activities. She takes the authority of the nation into her own hands. She regulates not only her life but also all the state affairs. In fact, she constructs such a powerful image of her that all of the government officials, army generals, ministers, and prime minister of the nation accept her sovereignty. Hence, both of the queens violate the gender boundary and construct the socially restricted image of a bold, self-centered, rational, farsighted person. Through their actions and behaviors, they confirm that gender is a constructed entity. Gender can be constructed by both society and individuals, who can construct the gender image. In the novel, the queens defy the socially imposed gender and construct the one on their own.

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Literary Studies | research note

Shifting Ideological Conceptions of Gender and the Challenge of Characterisation in Nigerian Drama
Nijerya Dramasında Cinsiyete İlişkin Değişen İdeolojik Kavramlar ve Karakter

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ABSTRACT
Drama has, over the years, portrayed issues of gender inequality and agitations, from Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, J. P. Clark's *The Wives Revolt*, Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, Fred Agbeyegbe's *The King Must Dance Naked,* Tracie Uto's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, Irene Salami-Aguloye's *Sweet Revenge, More Than Dancing* to Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* by the Ghanaian writer. The list of plays x-raying gender and feminist issues is endless. Drama has thus portrayed gender issues in its complexities, limiting itself majorly to the male-female binary in gender discusses. Using the psychoanalytical theory, Feminism, Genderism and Postgenderism as critical paradigms, the paper interrogates contemporary Nigerian drama portrayal of discriminatory gender practices arising from the social-cultural construct of the dichotomy between the genders. It uses Ben Binebai's monodrama, *Karena's Cross*, as the primary text in a paradigmatic study of gender, male-female relationships, perceptions, presentations and portrayals of social roles in drama. The study identifies that over the years, drama has portrayed the female gender in stereotypical ways and presented socially constructed images of male-female relationship that reinforces the victim status of the female gender. The paper also identifies that Nigerian society is no more as traditional as it used to be. There is presently a transition from stereotypical gender understanding to an acceptance of western concepts of gender and gender roles. The paper concludes that Nigeria, and Africa, is presently experiencing a reversal of thought and perception of gender roles. The paper identifies that there is a nostalgic reliance on a past and fading culture in contemporary Nigerian drama presentation of gender issues, which reinforces archetypally held notions of gender.

Introduction

All forms of drama communicate images of the sexes, many of which reinforce or perpetuate stereotypical, unrealistic and sometimes limiting perceptions of gender. Feminist drama has thus tended to portray women as severely disadvantaged in the following areas: (1) As underrepresented in drama. This presents a false view that men determine the cultural standards by which women have to live, and so men deliberately make women invisible and unimportant as

an appendage of patriarchal desires and wills. (2) Gender is portrayed in stereotypical ways that presents the sexes at war with each other. The titles of this play either point to the fact that the woman is an endangered species or is in a form of bondage to which she must be liberated. (3) The relationship between the genders is presented in such a way that reinforces socially held notions. Violence against women is portrayed as a mode of advancing the plot and conflict of the dramas. Women are depicted as the victims and the men as perpetrators of oppression, suppression, silencing and brutalization of women. From the African ideological conception of gender, the idea of the woman as a victim seems to be taken with some reservation. As noted by Gboyega et al. in the preface to the edited book, *A Graceful Woman of Great Discerning: A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Mabel Evwierhoma*

> It is time to rid our usual selves of the skewed knowledge that women are hereditary victims of a perpetual patriarchal world. There is no evidence that supports it. From the primordial setting, women had been earning for themselves, by dint of tangible and intangible attainments, the prestige equal to that of men. Their accomplishments soared above human expectations such that some of them, at death, became subjects of deification and subsequent worship. Until the nineteenth century, the advent of the colonizer, this experience of women having equal opportunities as men to excel in their chosen trade was unhindered. (2020, p. i)

By dint of sharing a similar colonial history, the Nigerian experience (British West Africa) shares a similar colonial experience with India. India boasts of women in its history who have risen above philosophical and ideological appendages to chart new ways for the people and determine the course of history. Women like Anandibai Gopalrao Joshi, the first Indian female physician in 1887, Ahilhabai Holker, the philosopher queen of Malwa/Indore, and Indira Gandhi, among several pre-colonial and post-colonial Indian inspiring women who were not defined by the limits of social circumstances and the cultures of their times. Nigeria (Africa) equally shares names of great women achievers. Wangari Maathai, Miriam Makeba (Mama Africa), Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Queen Amina of Zaria, Emotan of Benin, Moremi of Ife, The Women soldiers of Dahomey, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala amongst several others past and present that enrich Africa and Nigeria's cultural history.

For centuries, the Western world has attempted to foist on the global south ideological conceptions of gender inequality and its attendant psychological inhibitions. This is not to say that women in India and Africa do not undergo cultural practices that tend to be unfair to them, rather, the idea of the woman as a perpetual victim and radical separationist philosophies of the West are alien to many cultures in the global south. In what follows, the study examines the portrayal of discriminatory gender practices in contemporary Nigerian drama. It uses Ben Binebai's monodrama, *Karena's Cross*, as the primary text in a paradigmatic study of gender, male-female relationships, perceptions, presentations and portrayals of social roles in drama.

Genderism and Postgenderism

Genderism as a philosophical construct presupposes the existence of only two genders-the male and female. It endorses the idea that gender roles are naturally assigned at birth. It thus excludes all other contemporary inclusions into the gender discussion, such as transgender and all forms of medical assisted and assigned gender roles. Genderism equally looks at the discrimination and prejudices held against all genders. Cisgenders are equally not left out in genderism discuses.

In one of my class lectures on characterization in drama, drained by the continuous reference to the gender binary, one of my students queried, "can't we just be human beings? Must there be reference to gender in defining character? Can't individual human character traits be discussed without reference to gender." Unknowingly, the student has hit at the very issues of concern to

postgenderism. Postgenderism as a theoretical cum critical construct is concerned with issues of physical character traits of the sexes. It is aimed at moving gender studies and discusses beyond the male-female binary towards a neuter understanding. It seeks to eliminate the man-woman dichotomy and consider characters as humans. The individual human character is thus the focus of analysis of human action. In post-gender discusses man is neither man nor woman. It considers humanity in neuter terms.

The major argument in post-gender discussion is that gender is a social construct. An arbitrary assignment and classification of humanity into two categories that limit human potential. It draws an argument from psychoanalysis. Embedded in psychoanalysis is the psychology of consciousness and the doctrine of unconscious motivation, psychosexual development and transference resistance as the basis for therapy in neurosis. It is, therefore, an argument for the erasure of gender. Postgenderism considers gender as an "accidental binary assignment" (Geary, 2006; Ridley, 2003). In *Postgenderism: Beyond the Gender Binary*, George Dvorsky and James Hughes argue that

> The gender binary has shaped the human condition, causing us to see the world through basic binary categories from our metaphysics to our linguistics. The biological bases of gendered cognition, gender identity and sexual preference impose limits on our capacity for communication and intersubjective understanding and empathy. Biological gender dimorphism is the most basic power dynamic in society, allowing men to coerce women with their stronger bodies and dominance-driven behaviour.
> Today, however, our Enlightenment values and emergent human potentials have come into conflict with the rigid gender binary. We have spent the last two hundred years in the West slowly dismantling the heritage of patriarchal power, culture and thought. Juridical equality, weapons and the police have reduced the determinative power of male physical coercion. Post-industrial production, contraception and abortion have eliminated most of the rationale for gendered social roles in work and the family, reducing the burden of patriarchal oppression on women. (2008, p. 2)

Dvorsky and Hughes (2023) state further that "Postgenderism confronts the limits of a social constructionist account of gender and sexuality and proposes that the transcending of gender by social and political means is now being complemented and completed by technological means" (p. 2). Postgenderism is supported by the existence of indeterminate or intersexed individuals like hermaphrodites, or other conditions of culturally and bio-medically disputed sex. Genitals are not considered to be determinants of human sex. Thus, gendering such individuals with such conditions may lead to psychological and sexual conflicts within such individuals that may limit their human capacity for self-exploration and development.

Ideological Conceptions of Gender

There is a growing gap in the social reality of how women see themselves, how men see themselves, how women see men and how men see women. This has led to the difficult to define psychological and social spaces of what either of the sexes thinks the other want. The divide within the circle of feminist agitations further buttresses this assumption and further indicates the complexity of gender discussions. The inability to bridge gaps of understanding and perceptions between the sexes has led to the institution of social cultures, relationship conflicts, social constructs, perceptions of the male-female body and several conflicts in family and workplace relationships.

The concept of gender itself is undergoing transition. The fluidity with which the term gender is used and the hardline that is most often drawn by the conservative right and liberal left on gender classification indicates ideological polarity. The concept of gender is currently undergoing changes

in society with the presence of LGBTQ2+ in the social space who are continuously self-asserting their presence in hitherto conservative space. It is obvious that future generations of humanity will have a different conception of the term gender than that held by the past and present generations. The transition between these two polarities has fuelled and is fuelling social, political, economic and economic conflicts. There are indications that these conflicts will continue to expand with the call for inclusiveness in framing gender identity and sexual preferences.

Several scholars have postulated on aggressive, vibrant, irritable, blindness, disputes, and fallacies that have characterized women's studies and, by extension, gender and the feminist movement (Scott 1997, 1998; Boxer, 2003; Skeggs, 1995). Although the idea of male strength and superiority has been perpetuated over the years in gender and feminist discussions and reinforced by media, literature and popular culture, scholars have equally interrogated the concept. In her *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir argues that the concept of female gender as other is a social construct borne out of social contrasting of male physical strength against female physical incapability. She argues that society has thus strengthened male dominance through certain structures that are disadvantageous to women. While acknowledging that there are biological differences between male and female gender, she insists that biological differences are not enough reason for the relegation of the female to the position of the other sex.

Chinweizu (1990) challenges the basic conception of feminism of women as weak, socially, and culturally disadvantaged. Chinweizu undertook a psychoanalytical and` eschatological dissection of the female power. According to him, "Men may rule the world, but women rule the men who rule the world". Thus, contrary to appearances, woman is boss, the overall boss of the world" (p. 12). Chinweizu describes man as being ruled by woman throughout his life. He divided the life cycle of a man as controlled by centers of female power into "motherpower, bridepower, and wifepower" (p. 14). Thus, throughout life, the man is ruled by woman. There are five conditions that enable women to control men which Chinweizu further refers to as the "five pillars of female power." The five pillars according to him are: "Women's control of the womb; women's control of the kitchen, women's control of the cradle; psychological immaturity of the man relative to the woman; and man's tendency to be deranged by his excited penis" (1990, pp. 14-15).

There are several drama texts that illustrate Chinweizu's theory. Aristophanes *Lysistrata* tells the story of women using sex (bridepower) as a weapon to force men to end the Peloponnesian war. In the story of the Trojan War, we learn of how the fight to possess a woman led to the destruction of Troy, a thriving city. J. P. Clark tells a similar story in *Wives Revolt* in which the women of Eruemukohwarien, a Niger Delta community whose elders, made up of only men, after receiving money paid as compensation for oil spillage decided on a sharing formula that was unfair to the women. Angered by the greed displayed by the men, the women protested by abandoning their domestic duties by going to a neighbouring community of Eyara to stay – "wifepower." Eyara is a community that is filled with diseases. The men are forced after a few days to plead with the women to return home because they could not handle domestic and sexual starvation. Thus, according to Chinweizu, it is the womb with the help of the "motherpower" that creates the gender ideal.

> Feminist propaganda and conventional knowledge notwithstanding, it seems prima facie odd to claim that women are powerless in society and, in particular, over men. What one wants, then women are far from powerless. Women do get, and always did get, what they want - be it riches, thrones, the head of John the Baptist, or routine exemption from hardships and risks which their male folk are obliged to endure. That women operate by methods which often differ from those available to men does not in any way mean that women are bereft of power. (Chinweizu, 1990, p. 16)

The conception of some feminist scholars that the woman is the man's "domestic servant, resident sexpot, childbearer, childrearer etc" (Chinweizu 1990, p. 46) is argued against by Chinweizu, who sees the reality of the relationship as the woman making the man her "nest slave" by exploiting male macho power to protect and provide for her and her offspring. The decision to enter into the contract of a relationship and the articles of the contract are entirely dependent on the woman's acceptance. Even in cases of arranged marriages, the man's ability to fulfill the obligations is scrutinized and considered by her representatives before the contract is contacted. The man must prove his loyalty and abilities, as well as economic, protective, and sexual competence, before she adopts him in the absence of better choices. No woman adopts a man who is inferior to what she is capable of capturing.

Theoretical Explication

Two theories were used in this study first, is the Psychoanalysis and second is Feminism. Psychoanalysis as a theoretical construct is a method of examining a text as a manifestation of the author's own state of neurosis. Individual characters in a text are equally examined as part of the author's neurosis conceived as in a dream state, which is seen as a fulfilment of the author's innate dreams and desires. Freud notes of the theory that

> The dream-thoughts which we first come across as we proceed with our analysis often strike us by the unusual form in which they are expressed; they are not clothed in the prosaic language usually employed by our thoughts but are, on the contrary, represented symbolically by means of similes and metaphors, in images resembling those of poetic speech (p. 26).

Psycho analysis also seeks to unearth symptoms of disunity within a literary work. It seeks signs and symbols of psychological conflict, unresolved conflicts and emotions and the likes in a literary work. It is concerned with what the author is unearthing, what the author has repressed in his work with his conscious literary mind. It is equally applied to character analysis in unearthing psycho-character motivation. Feminism, on the other hand, is a very difficult to define concept. It has become so malleable and embracing several ideological configurations that today, if you are not a feminist, your ideological learning becomes difficult to define, just like the terms feminism and gender. Feminism is rooted in the ideological conception that women are powerless against macho power. There is a need to liberate women from the stranglehold of patriarchy and patriarchal institutions that hold women hostage and deny them economic, political and cultural power. Feminists see most women as subalterns.

The Female Character in Binebai's *Karena's Cross*

Portrayal of the female character in drama has been consistent with social perception of what the society expects of her. Archetypally, the female has been portrayed as weak to reinforce socially conceived ideals. Although there are few iconoclastic portrayals of women in heroic and rebellious roles, the number of such roles are few compared to those characterizing her as dormant and docile. As noted by Eni (2018), "In Africa, there are patterns of ascribed gender-based social norms as dictated by behaviour. Accepted female behavioural patterns are not only judged by laws but by the idealized conception of what a woman should be and do" (p. 580). Thus, Julia (1997) marked female characterization in drama by the following stereotypical portrayal of gender. Drama has continued to represent men and women in traditional ways that limit the perception and possibilities of humanity. Rather than stress the humanity in the individual, ascribed gender roles in drama have been portrayed as determinants of social, economic, political, and cultural growth: "Typically, men are portrayed as active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive, and largely uninvolved in human relationships. Just as consistent with cultural views of gender are the depictions of women as sex objects" (p. 2). The relationship between men and women is also

portrayed as a stereotype; low or non-representation of non-aligned genders; women dependent on men syndrome; men's authority and women's incompetence; men as breadwinners and women as caregivers (pp. 3-7); pathologizing the human body in drama; beauty appropriated with slimness and youth, ugliness with fatness and old age. Thus, language like "old hag," "fat fool," "pretty young girl" are often used to pathologize the human body.

Karena's Cross is a monodrama written by Ben Binabai and published by Kraft books in 2022. The play chronicles the journey of the young Karena, who was betrothed to be married off by her father to a man old enough to be her father. Her attempt to run away from a forced marriage saw her struggling through several culturally and socially imposed conditions until she finally meets Mr. Daniels, who rescues her from being flown abroad as a sex slave. Mr. Daniels marries her and sends her to school. She returns to her community later with her husband, a medical doctor, to commission a hospital. Through her example, several perceptions and negative cultures are altered. In telling her story, she states:

> I now work in a famous law chamber
> And have given birth to two lovely
> Children, a boy and a girl-
> Daniel and Karena Jnr.
> My husband came into my life
> Like a virtuous prince and made
> Me feel complete. I met a man,
> Whose love for me is deep.

Karena paints the picture of the ideal man as one who is family centred. One who protects, cares, loves, and cherishes the woman. The ultimate success or achievement of a woman is, therefore, her ability to find the ideal man. The ultimate judge of the quality of a man rests solely on his ability to love, care, and protect the woman and her seeds. Any man who lacks these qualities that are not beneficial to the woman is a villain. Karena's travails are painted by the playwright as male induced. All her troubles are due to the fact that she is born a woman in a male dominated world. She has no hubris (the perfect feminist characterization). If there are flaws in her personality, it is because the men in her world had made her what she is. She has no choice in the negotiation of the spaces in which she finds herself. Her voice is entirely stifled by the men (interestingly, and women) in her world. She is a fragile, perfect female creation in a society dominated by demonic males except Daniel. The moment she finds the ideal male, all her troubles vanish, and she attains glorious heights. Psychoanalytically, Karena's quest through her developmental stages is to find the ideal man. Thus, in her id is deeply planted the idea that marriage to the ideal man, the man she loves, is the only route to a fulfilling life. She navigates her world as a victim until she conquers a nest slave. In essence, all characters in the narrative behave traditionally in the gender assigned roles.

Although, Mr. Daniel liberates Karena from her continuous state of helplessness and propels her to a position of strength, this is, at the same time, perpetuating traditional and archetypal conceptions of marriage and patriarchy. While purporting to advance the feminist cause, it is actually perpetuating patriarchal thinking. The idea that the girl child cannot survive in the present communal and social configuration without recourse to marriage to a providing man is in itself as inhibiting to the female psyche as the conditions that Karena had to go through before she met Mr. Daniel. Here, patriarchy is portrayed as the all-powerful force in society that determines the fate of the woman. When patriarchy desires, it bestows success on the woman through marriage to a providing male.

In the present global redefinition and the changing concept of gender roles in the society, this

thinking will find it hard to get a foothold. Today's generation of youths are more independent minded than communal. With the wide acceptance and involvement of the younger generation in LGBTQ+, there are indications that there is a growing generational gap in the conception and perception of gender and gender roles. It is therefore hard for the present generation to accept the traditional characterization as put forward in *Karena's Cross*. There is presently a shift in traditional thinking of gender.

Binebai's summation of gender roles in society is tilted towards female protection and male vilification. The brutalization of Karena by women, a typical pointer to the crises within the feminist fold, did not earn the angst of the victim. She narrated the event simply as orchestrated by the men. Karena speaks of her circumcision ordeal thus:

> The elderly woman took me to a bathroom for the circumcision. A woman with big buttocks carrying a weight I can't struggle to lift and throw away, sat on my chest. Two women held my two arms backwards and pressed them down while others held my two legs down with resolute force. The woman who did the circumcision sat on my abdomen. Six held me down to do the circumcision. I shouted madly, I bled and fainted several times. On the day I was discharged from the clinic, I was told to prepare for the post-circumcision ceremony and be married to my father's friend. (Ben, 2022, pp. 29-31)

Karena's limitations, therefore viewed from Postgenderism and Psychoanalysis theories, are self-imposed since gender and sexuality are social constructs. It is her inability to think beyond her sex that limits her potential and is not hindered by male dominance. Gendered spaces are negotiated rather than imposed. However, feminists tend to see the gendered spaces as imposed rather than negotiated. The idea that the woman was not part of the creation of the spaces is absurd. The argument that she had no choice in the process of the creation of the spaces is negated by the very narrative, which gives vent to her idea of victimhood. Viewed, therefore, from Chinweizu's analysis of female power, her perceived weakness is in itself a strategy of conquest.

Conclusion

The present state of gender studies has given rise to the re-thinking of political and social structures. From science to technology, humanities and the social sciences, new words and concepts are emerging that are reshaping our traditional conception of gender, particularly among Nigerian drama. Concepts like Technoscience, gendered ecology, provident economy, gendered spaces, etc., are becoming common lexis in Nigerian Drama. Making a change and transitioning to a new mode of thinking about gender is causing conflicts of acceptance and rejection. The dramatic characterization of gender has not helped society in making the needed transition.

Furthermore, gender reordering has further increased social divisions by fuelling female hegemony. It has almost become a taboo in academic circles to talk about female domination. Oppressively present today is feminists ideological push into spaces hitherto occupied by the male dramatist. These pushes and spatial contentions have further widened the gender divide. The rise of medically assisted gendering has gone further to complicate the male female dichotomy. Transgender, homosexuals, lesbians, she-males, transvestites, cross-dressers, neuters, gender dualism, and other forms of ideological re-orderings of gender realities have further made it difficult to dramatic characterization, social reality and acceptance. While altered gender ideologies are fairly widely accepted in the Western world, in the third world, gender thinking is still largely traditional and highly religiously modulated. Biological division of the sexes is still majorly the main understanding. Thus, favouring Ecofeminism, Biological Essentialism, Motherism and its twin principles of nature and nurture as gender/feminist ideological preferences.

Finally, while intersexed characterization is beginning to appear in film and popular culture, their characterization in drama, especially Nigerian drama, is still rare. In Africa and other third-world countries, the acceptance of neutered gender or intersexed individuals is still regarded highly as a taboo and a natural abnormality or a social dysfunction and is largely regarded as psychiatric cases which should be corrected. There are indications that Nigeria, Africa and the Third World may not be able to hold on to the traditional conception of gender any longer as there is presently a transition in thinking gender and gender variants are readily becoming more readily accepted.

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Disclosure Statement

Literary Studies | book review

Looking Back: *Turkish Literature as World Literature,*
eds. Burcu Alkan and Çimen Günay-Erkol. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021. pp. 264

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ABSTRACT
Recently, interesting and insightful books have been published both in the Anglo-American world and beyond that address this question and provide answers to the current state of the discipline. Burcu Alkan and Çimen Günay-Erkol have published a volume that provides an overview of the history of "Turkish Literature as World Literature." The edited volume aims not only to draw attention to the development of Turkish literature in the global world, but also to provide some useful insights into the significance of Turkish literature in the global literary context.

Looking Back: "Turkish Literature as World Literature"

The concept of "world literature" has become one of the key terms in literary studies, expanding the boundaries of comparative literature. The scope of the two disciplines - world literature and comparative literature - has not been clearly defined in the Anglo-American world. Goethe includes "world literature" in the field of comparative literature. Mathew Arnold includes "world literature" in comparative literature. The confusion becomes even more problematic when both terms are discussed in the context of world literature. In particular, much space is given to this conflict in Bernheimer's study of multiculturalism and in Saussy's "Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization." Such research and studies develop useful arguments but complicate the connection between national and international boundaries in cultural and literary studies, leading to less global and more local debates in scholarship. Recently, interesting and insightful books have been published both in the Anglo-American world and beyond that address this question and provide answers to the current state of the discipline. Burcu Alkan and Çimen Günay-Erkol have published a volume that provides an overview of the history of "Turkish Literature as World Literature." The edited volume aims not only to draw attention to the development of Turkish literature in the global world, but also to provide some useful insights into the significance of Turkish literature in the global literary context.

The book begins with the question "What is Turkish literature as world literature?" and discusses how Turkish literary traditions have actively contributed to world literature by overcoming long-

held Eurocentric assumptions and hierarchical frameworks. The argument is deepened by examples of how Turkish literature has been and continues to be influenced by transnational relations, while critiquing the center-periphery dynamics that is common in the study of world literature. This volume attempts to clarify the confusion of the discipline by building a bridge between scholarship in the field of cultural history, translation studies and comparative literature. The second chapter of the study examines the historical and cultural factors that have influenced the emergence of modern Turkish literature. Fatih Altuğ's chapter on "Cosmopolitanism" and "Nationalism" examines how Ottoman cosmopolitanism and multilingualism shaped early Turkish literary modernity. Altuğ argues that the literary field of 19th century Istanbul, where Armenian, Greek and Turkish literary traditions coexisted, serves as a microcosm for the complex dynamics of world literature. Similarly, Etienne E. Charrière examines the Ottoman script revolution of 1928 and shows how the changes in language and script policy affected the accessibility and global reception of Turkish literature. This discussion emphasizes how translation and transcription have traditionally facilitated the integration of Turkish literature into global literary discourse.

The authors of "Transnational Connections" explore the possible connections between Turkish and non-Turkish literature from different linguistic and national backgrounds. Taking into account the mutual influence of different literary and cultural traditions, "Transnational Connections" also examines how Turkish literature interacts with global literary movements and influences other traditions. Turkish writers and poets are also influenced and sometimes inspired by those in other countries. Such leading cross-cultural influences, adaptations or reinterpretations of ideas can be seen in Adıvar and Nazım. Şima İmşir and Anirudha Dhanawade analyze Halide Edip Adıvar's connections with Indian nationalist thought and highlight the importance of Turkish literature in creating cross-cultural discussions beyond the West. Three studies on Nâzım Hikmet examine his reception in many global contexts, including Greece and the Arab world. These contributions highlight the poet's transnational legacy as a symbol of socialist solidarity and cultural struggle, cementing his place as a cornerstone of Turkish literature's global reach. The study also examines the influence of contemporary Turkish writers on global literary marketing. Referring to Pamuk's works and point of view, Başak Çandar criticizes contemporary Turkish literature for relying too much on national identity when defining world literature. Simla Doğangün similarly examines the popularity of global literary markets in Şafak's work to discuss how her works market cultural hybridity to foreign readers.

Literature often transcends its origins and influences authors and readers around the world. Comparative literature studies how literary works are translated, altered or reinterpreted in other cultures, leading to new readings and interpretations of familiar writings. The emphasis on foreign literature in comparative literature helps to broaden the literary canon, which has generally focused on Western works. It challenges Eurocentric perspectives and recognizes the diversity of global literary traditions by including voices from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and indigenous cultures. Edited by Burcu Alkan and Çimen Günay-Erkols, the volume skillfully integrates diverse and competing perspectives on international and comparative literature in the Turkish literary milieu and offers readers a broader, more inclusive view of the human experience by acknowledging different voices and opinions from different cultural, historical and social contexts, overcoming the limitations of focusing on only one national or language tradition. The anthology addresses common themes in Turkish and world literature, focusing on global issues such as identity, migration, colonialism, gender and the human condition. This work focuses on comparative literature to examine how many cultural contexts and communities have influenced Turkish literary traditions. Readers also discover how the study of international literature can provide a broader, more inclusive perspective on human experience by recognizing multiple voices and opinions from different cultural, historical, and social situations. Comparative literature makes it possible to examine these issues in a variety of cultural contexts and to highlight the

different ways in which different communities grapple with and represent these challenges. Overall, world literature in comparative studies helps to undermine the concept of "literary isolation" and provides a broader, more dynamic and holistic perspective of literary history and human civilization.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s)