Pamukkale Üniversitesi
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi
Pamukkale University Journal of Social Sciences Institute
ISSN1308-2922 EISSN2147-6985

Article Info/Makale Bilgisi
√Received/Geliş:09.01.2020 **√Accepted/Kabul:**11.02.2020
DOİ: 10.30794/pausbed.672731
Araştırma Makalesi/ Research Article

Yazıcıoğlu, S. (2020). ""This Bloomin' Country's A Fraud": Musical Commodification and Westward Expansion in Sharon Pollock's *Walsh*" *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, sayı 39, Denizli, s. 293-306.

"THIS BLOOMIN' COUNTRY'S A FRAUD": MUSICAL COMMODIFICATION AND WESTWARD EXPANSION IN SHARON POLLOCK'S *WALSH*

Sinem YAZICIOĞLU*

Abstract

Canadian playwright Sharon Pollock's *Walsh* (1973) revisits the aftermath of the Battle of Little Big Horn (1876) when Sitting Bull led the Sioux to cross the Canadian border for seeking refuge, befriended Major John Walsh of the North West Mounted Police and yet was forced to surrender to the American forces despite diplomatic exchanges. Since the play roughly coincides with the centennial celebrations in Canada and marks a renewed interest in Canadian drama for national topics, it has been studied in terms of its critical perspective to official historiography and its metadramatic treatment of the mentioned historical events. However, less scholarly attention has been spared to the use of songs in the play. Prioritizing the song form in its musical structure, *Walsh* integrates the history of westward expansion with the emerging economy and technology of music, resulting in the commodification of music at the turn of the twentieth century.

Keywords: *Sharon pollock, Walsh, Historiographic metadrama, Song form, Musical commodification.*

"BU GELİŞEN ÜLKE BİR ALDATMACA": SHARON POLLOCK'IN *WALSH* ADLI OYUNUNDA MÜZİĞİN METALAŞMASI VE BATIYA GENİŞLEME

Özet

Kanadalı oyun yazarı Sharon Pollock'ın *Walsh* (1973) adlı oyunu, Little Big Horn Savaşı'nın (1876) ardından gelen ve Oturan Boğa'nın sığınma talebiyle Sioux'ların Kanada sınırından geçişine önderlik ettiği, Kuzey Batı Atlı Polisleri arasından Binbaşı John Walsh ile dostluk kurduğu ancak diplomatik görüşmelere karşın Amerikan güçlerine teslim olmak zorunda bırakıldığı tarihsel dönemi ele alır. Oyun, Kanada'nın yüzüncü kuruluş yılı kutlamalarına denk geldiği ve Kanada tiyatrosunda ulusal konulara karşı canlanan bir ilgiyi örneklendirdiği için akademik çalışmalarda resmi tarihe eleştirel bakış açısı ve söz konusu tarihsel olaylara metadramatik yaklaşımı açısından ele alınmıştır. Ancak oyundaki şarkıların kullanılma biçimi üzerine çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Müzik yapısında şarkı formuna öncelik verilen *Walsh*, Amerika Birleşik Devletlerinin batıya genişlemesinin son yıllarıyla aynı zamanlarda gelişen ve yirminci yüzyılın başında müziğin metalaşmasıyla sonuçlanan müzik ekonomisini ve teknolojisini bir araya getirmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Sharon Pollock, Walsh, Tarihyazımsal metadrama, Şarkı formu, Müziğin metalaşması.*

*Assistant Professor, Istanbul University, Department of American Culture and Literature, ISTANBUL.
e-mail: sinemyaz@istanbul.edu.tr (orcid.org/0000-0003-4092-3152)

1. INTRODUCTION

In Canada, a hundred years after the establishment of the Confederation (1867), which is considered the date of Canada's formation as a state, Canadian playwrights started to turn to national topics. At a time of revaluating and celebrating what is culturally Canadian, however, the theatrical stage provided space for a critical reconsideration of Canadian history. Amidst the thrust of cultural nationalism evident in Canada's interventionist cultural policies[1] and the influential thematic criticism of Northrop Frye and Margaret Atwood[2], Canadian plays questioned the very national symbols and myths that have been embraced by cultural policies. As an alternative to the prevalent cultural environment, Canadian drama produced numerous plays which deconstructed not only the long established national myths, but also the illusion created by representational theatre. Richard Paul Knowles comments that the Canadian plays of the period used the metadramatic and presentational device "to re-present the making and re-making history as a necessarily ongoing process (230). Accordingly, Knowles calls such plays as "historiographic metadrama" (241), adopting Linda Hutcheon's theory of "historiographic metafiction". Plays such as Ken Mitchell's *Medicine Line* (1976), Carol Bolt's *Gabe* (1973), and the subject of this study, namely Sharon Pollock's *Walsh* (1973) turn specifically to the history of the Canadian West in order to question official history.

In *Walsh*, Pollock revisits an important event in which Canadian and American histories overlap: the migration of the Sioux to Canada after the Sioux's feat in the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. The events preceding and following the battle are equally significant: In Canada, the establishment of the Confederation could only be possible by promising the provinces, particularly British Columbia, a transcontinental railway; under those circumstances, president John A. MacDonald started a determined campaign to acquire western territories through treaties, which met resistance from the indigenous peoples, such as the Métis, whose leader Louis Riel was tried and sentenced to death in 1885. In the United States, Abraham Lincoln had signed the Homestead Act in 1862, which enabled new immigrants to settle in the unclaimed lands in the West; furthermore, the end of the Civil War had witnessed an unprecedented wave of settlements in the western territories. In other words, for these three nations, the westward expansion was gradually transforming the entire North America by the American occupation and Canadian acquisition of traditionally indigenous territories. In this context, a coalition of indigenous tribes attempted to halt the American expansion to the West with the Battle of Little Big Horn; however, the decimation of the American seventh cavalry and the death of General George Armstrong Custer, who led the troops and whose "last stand" had been iconic for American history, incited the American army to capture the natives, who had already sought to take refuge in Canada in 1877. In a network of power relations between Washington and Ottawa, John Walsh, the superintendent of the North West Mounted Police in the region, befriended Sitting Bull yet also let him surrender to the American forces in 1881, which led the Sioux chief first to the military prison at Fort Randall and then to the reservation, where he would be killed by the police in 1890.

Although Pollock depicts a historical event in *Walsh*, the play starts years after the Sioux refugee crisis and at the heyday of the Klondike Gold Rush and is set in Dawson, Yukon. The Prologue is meant to be the present of the narrative and demonstrates the consequences of westward expansion by Canada and the United States. Heidi Holder writes "the entire play proper can be seen as an extended flashback in the older Walsh's mind" (140), emphasizing Pollock's preference for alternative perspectives to official history. Holder's argument is based on the fact that Walsh in the Prologue is haunted by the moral responsibility of his past action implemented due to the government's orders. Several issues in the following two acts appear in this section as a covert foreshadowing of characters and events since the same characters in Act One perform different characters in the Prologue. For example, the Lakota chief Crow Eagle is a harmonica player named Billy, playing "Garryowen", the well-known

1 An earlier attempt for such policies is the Royal Commission's Massey Report dated 1951, which endorsed the development and establishment of several institutions for arts and culture, such as the National Library, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and the Canada Council for the Arts. Similar policies pursued in the following decades include the granting of literary awards and prizes, the introduction of Canadian literature courses to university-level English programs, and financial support to the publishers of Canadian literature. W. H. New notes that such investment in national culture between the years 1960 and 1985 resulted in "the geometric increase" (214) of published Canadian authors.

2 Northrop Frye's "Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada" (1965) aimed to find a uniquely Canadian theme which marks Canadian literature. As his student, Margaret Atwood followed a similar path, and penned *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (1972)*, which claimed that Canadian literature is based on the theme of survival.

American marching song and the choice of General Custer for his seventh cavalry; the Prologue therefore shows an earlier hint that the Sioux already surrendered to the American forces and had already been Americanized by the time the occupation of the entire North America was complete. Furthermore, Sitting Bull in the Prologue is a nameless prospector, who begs Walsh for money for Joeie, who is in fact Crowfoot, Sitting Bull's son; in a particular dialogue, Walsh replies to him "I can give you nothing" (Pollock, 1986: 15), which he repeats later in the play in the context of rejecting the Sioux's demand for refuge.

The main narrative of the historical event covers Act One and Act Two, and starts at a time when the Sioux are about to cross the border. After their arrival, several conflicts start to surface, such as Ottawa's policy of turning the indigenous peoples into farmers, the adaptability of the Sioux to Canada, their refugee status, as well as national and diplomatic concerns as to how the situation should be resolved. During the time of the Sioux's stay, Walsh not only befriends Sitting Bull, but also treats him and his fictional wife, Pretty Plume as equals to him and the American general, and welcomes them in diplomatic exchanges. However, the diplomatic crisis is resolved towards the end, when Walsh, the official representative of law and order in the region, is totally incapacitated due to the orders from Ottawa and the demands from the United States, and withdraws his support. As a result, Sitting Bull and the Sioux are handed to the American forces at the border. However, the linear temporality of the historical events is once more interrupted when, short after the surrender, the officers of the NWMP learn that Sitting Bull was killed by the police, despite the nine-year period between his surrender and death. The play ends with a return to Sitting Bull's memory on stage as he delivers a speech regarding the inevitability of human life cycle.

Since Sharon Pollock's *Walsh* is a historiographic metadrama, it has mostly been studied in terms of its critical perspective to official history and its dramatic treatment of a specific historical event, whose narration has propagated the power and influence of the NWMP, the representative of the political and administrative order in the Canadian West during the nineteenth century. In other words, the critics of the play have sought to investigate the dramatic innovations Pollock brought to Canadian drama and her critique of the glorified figures in Canadian history; furthermore, since the play was written and performed at the time of a renewed national interest in history, it encouraged historicist critics to scrutinize the connections between the politics of the past and the present. Pollock has herself asserted in the interview by R. H. Thompson that she "write[s] the same play over and over and over again," and for all of her plays she is "interested in authority, who has the voice of authority, and what does an individual do when confronted with it." In the same line, Anne Nothof writes that one of the myths Pollock shatters in her plays is "that of Canada's growth as a democratic nation, freely welcoming immigrants from around the world across its borders, and balancing conflicting regional, racial, and economic pressures, in contrast to the violent revolutions and wars bred by intolerance in the United States" (83). As a result, she concludes that Pollock undermines the "myth of Canadian moral superiority" (ibid.), since "the consequences of Canadian government policy toward the Sioux in the North West territories are the same in fact as in fiction: virtual genocide. Whereas the American government had used weapons and warfare to exterminate the Sioux, the Canadian government used starvation" (84).

Despite the scholarly interest in Pollock's treatment of history, less critical attention has been diverted to the use of music in the play. To specify, Pollock integrates the popular hits and folk songs of the late nineteenth century to the body of the play, and in all acts several minor characters either sing or play a song on stage, without an accompanying orchestra. The significance of Pollock's treatment is threefold: Firstly, except a limited use of instrumentally performed tunes, the song form dominates the musical structure in *Walsh*, documenting the commodification of music at the turn of the twentieth century. Secondly, none of these songs are performed by Walsh himself, which makes him musically a minor character. Thirdly, these songs represent the existing popular culture against the imagined and invented North American West. Representing the entire North American cultural landscape, the songs in *Walsh* function as the evolutionary transmitters of social and historical antagonisms although they are known today as the sounds of the imagined west.

This study argues that, textually and musically, the songs in *Walsh* incorporate layers of historical subtexts for the commodification of the North American West. As Immanuel Wallerstein remarks, "the historical development of capitalism has involved the thrust towards the commodification of everything" (16); due to

the rapid mechanization and industrialization during the nineteenth century, the North American West has witnessed the commodification of nature, labour, the native population and entertainment (Kaplan, 2005: 80; Trachtenberg, 1987: 19, 21, 38-9, 197). In this context, Walsh's individual mind or the government's particular policies regarding the Sioux would only offer partial readings for the play. From this perspective, the songs in *Walsh* will be considered social and historical texts whose form resurfaces the neutralization of the commodified West. Accordingly, the essay will address the treatment of the song form, the singing characters and the singing medium in their socio-historical contexts to show the political unconscious in Pollock's *Walsh*.

2. THE SOCIOLOLOGY AND HISTORICITY OF THE SONG FORM

Zeynep Bilge, in *An Alternative Mode of Communication: Songs and Singing in Shakespeare's Tragedies*, offers a reading of the songs performed by the marginalized characters in Shakespeare's plays by focusing on the communicative function of singing amidst the highly structured social hierarchy and patriarchal order. In this context, the songs in Shakespearean tragedies are marked by the contradiction between music and words in that they provide a covert communication instead of a practical verbal dialogue. For Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Bilge writes "On the one hand, the musical aspect of her personal communicative medium creates a distance between what she says and what she means. On the other hand, the verbal language that is inserted into music suggests some sort of a meaning that could easily remain in the background" (Bilge, 2008: 67). Bilge's comment on the oblique, indirect yet needed communication via songs is equally relevant to the use of songs in Pollock's *Walsh*. Performed diegetically, the songs in the play draw attention to the addresser and the medium as the elements of communication. Furthermore, despite Pollock's presentation, dramatization and reconstruction of the historical resources as *Walsh's* primary national context, music's being a symbolic system different from language and performance foregrounds an abstraction transgressing any specific nationality, thus making it possible to reproduce songs in diverse contexts, forms and variations. The songs in *Walsh* are, therefore, significant in two ways: On the one hand, given that music directly affects the human body and perception, music in fiction and drama would be expected to "unveil the potential of communication and emotions" (Bilge, 2016: 54) whenever they are lacking in the depicted context; on the other hand, the songs in *Walsh* are folk songs or popular hits with a specific historicity. Consequently, the contradiction between communicating emotions and documenting history constitutes *Walsh's* musical structure, since the emotions delivered in these songs are history-bound.

The songs in *Walsh* include a miner song ("Carmack"), a popular hit ("Break the News to Mother"), two marching songs ("Garryowen" and "The Girl I Left Behind"), a ragtime tune, a paddling song ("En roulant ma boule roulant"), two indigenous songs and a folk song ("Life in a Prairie Shack") in the given order. Not originally composed for the play, these songs were already known to the audience in 1973, when the play was first performed. However, by that time, they were no longer the same historical texts as their originals but still bore the complexities of gradually acquired significations due to their reproductions. Except "Break the News to Mother", whose sheet music and recording were released at the time of its production, the folk songs in the play had been commodified from the time they were first collected and recorded. As early as 1893, American folklorist Alice Cunningham Fletcher notes the mutually experienced difficulties of hearing and appreciating Sioux music, particularly her distress with the "screaming downward movement" (237) to the sound of beating drums, and the natives' estrangement from Fletcher's performance of their own music on the piano. In his "Collector's Note" to *Cowboy Songs and Other Ballads* (1910), John A. Lomax explains his method of collecting songs as "selecting and putting together what seemed to be the best lines from different versions, all telling the same story", adding that "some of the strong adjectives and nouns have been softened". Briefly, earlier ethnomusicologists are from today's standpoint questioned for their appropriation of folk music to Western and/or commercial forms.

Early twentieth century witnessed a dramatic change in sound technologies with the invention of the phonograph and the radio; their introduction to the North American household presented to families a medium for listening to the professional and aesthetic renditions of popular music (Gordon, 2017: 204). In other words, the savagery and vulgarity Fletcher and Lomax had implied with regards to Sioux and cowboy songs respectively were replaced by orchestrated compositions, trained vocals and a particular taste for the song form by the twentieth century. Modern responses to this development of sound technologies and the subsequent transformation of musical forms were exposed by the debate on artistic reproduction between Walter Benjamin and Theodor

Adorno. The opposite arguments of this debate mainly constitute Benjamin's optimism about the rise of popular art as a result of the modern decay of the bourgeoise aura in the advent of photography and film, and Adorno's defense of the avant-garde and his skepticism on Benjamin's over-valuing of popular culture. Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" focuses on the modern shift in the perception of the visual art work; however, it is Adorno's response to him which relates the debate to the changes in modern music. In his essay "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening", Adorno problematizes the commodification of music by illustrating the ways in which music industry has shifted the form and function of music for commercial purposes. To complete his description of this commodification process, Adorno argues that music has been transformed into a standardized commodity serving the sense of immediacy and the short attention span of the now-individualized listener, who passively consumes music based on his choice of familiarity and commercial success. Adorno contends that the commodification and standardization of music obscures mediation in that listeners are constantly exposed to the familiarized form, which results in the mode of distracted listening. As opposed to Benjamin's proposition that the distracted audience develops a critical perspective, Adorno's conceptualization of distraction describes the listener as an "acquiescent purchaser" (32). As Adorno writes, "no longer do the partial moments serve as critique of that whole; instead, they suspend the critique which the successful aesthetic totality exerts against the flawed one of society" (ibid.).

Adorno's propositions on the musical commodification are also echoed in Clement Greenberg's "Avant-Garde and Kitsch", with a specific emphasis on popular forms. In this essay, Greenberg deems the popular song as kitsch, echoing Adorno's use of the term "fetish" for music as commercial mass-product. For Greenberg, contrary to the modern avant-garde's "imitation of imitating" (7), or drawing inspiration from the very artistic processes by which common objects or experiences are mediated, kitsch diverts attention from the process and "imitates [art's] effects" (15), making its own form transparent. Greenberg relates the modern rise of kitsch to the historical context of increasing urban population by the immigration of peasants who were subject to basic literacy yet unable to enjoy urban culture. Greenberg writes, "losing, nevertheless, their taste for the folk culture whose background for the countryside, and discovering a new capacity for boredom at the same time, the new urban masses set up a pressure on society to provide them with a kind of culture fit for their own consumption" (10). Consequently, Greenberg's formulation indicates a transition from an appreciation of folk and local art to the demand for tradable and consumable forms. Such forms, as he explains, have bridged the traditional gap between formal culture and folk culture, creating what he calls a "universal culture" (12) which has consequently weakened both.

Since Adorno and Greenberg, Marxist music scholars have addressed the problem of music's commodification for establishing connections between society and musical forms. Peter Manuel, for example, centers his work on the historical development of shorter musical forms, particularly the song form. Manuel argues that the relationship between the emergence of capitalist economy and bourgeois aesthetics is encapsulated with the earlier sonata form and the modern song form. He writes, "this class of forms uses techniques of symmetry, recapitulation, and internal development to achieve dramatic climax and clear closure" (47), enabled by the invention of mechanical chronometers and timepieces. In contrast to these forms are pre-modern, open ended, collective and variative forms found in folk tunes. Despite the waning of the folkloric collective songs, Manuel relates their persistence to the sense of nostalgia and cultural nationalism. The modern return to the folk forms in music, however, does not simply function for reproducing the traditional musical structures, but develops a new musical sensibility for its integration to the modern experience, as in the examples of jazz and ragtime. In this sense, the modernized folk song would, for Manuel, work as a symbolic act for "*immanent* critiques largely from *within* modern capitalism itself" (59).

Echoing the debates on the commodification of music, and taking their cue from urban sociology, Dyndahl et al. have coined the term "musical gentrification" (41) for the metaphorical description of a cultural phenomenon through which "musics that originally hold lower social, cultural and aesthetic status become objects of interest and investment from cultural operators who possess higher status" (53). Similar to the transformation of the lower-class neighbourhoods by the middle-class settlements, the term is used to explain how vernacular and folk music have been appropriated for the aesthetic norms and values of the middle-class. In this sense, they write "what characterises the original musical traditions and cultures in question can be weakened or even

broken for some of the initial participants" (ibid.). As in the aforementioned urban transformation, vernacular and folk music have been likewise dislocated from their historical contexts by the consequent removal of the social antagonism they once contained.

Sharon Pollock's critical treatment of history corresponds to her use of folk and popular songs in that music in the play is used diegetically, without orchestration and in selected parts. Similar to her use of historical resources, Pollock reconstructs the musical history of the depicted period; therefore, Pollock's specific choice of the song form is significant because firstly the history of musical commodification comes in the form of song, and secondly the form integrates music and text. Since these two aspects in *Walsh* converge on Pollock's retextualization of the past, the music in the play will be analyzed here in parallel to Fredric Jameson's approach to history. Jameson formulates history as Jacques Lacan's "the Real", for it resists any signification in the symbolic order, and hence cannot be grasped fully and without mediation by human consciousness. Therefore, history for Jameson is "inaccessible to us except in textual form" (82). The song form in *Walsh* provides this textual form through which history is musically accessed and apprehended. In other words, songs are social texts which encapsulate historical contradictions and antagonisms in a commodified musical form.

3. THE TREATMENT OF MUSIC IN THE PLAY

The beginning of the play, the Prologue, has the highest number of songs and is set in a bar in Yukon, where a bar singer and a harmonica player perform on stage. As a preliminary sketch on the mechanism of Pollock's reconstruction of history, the characters in the play perform alternative characters to reveal the consequences of past events. The use of music in the Prologue, therefore, serves for the play's metadramatic mechanism of disturbing national myth-making by prioritizing the presentation of the songs, similar to the metadramatic effect of emphasizing the theatricality of historical events. For this reason, Pollock starts the Prologue with music and particularly with a song whose history illustrates this myth-making mechanism. Here, Jennie, the bar singer, performs "The Carmack Song", an anonymous miner song about the first person who found gold in Yukon:

JENNIE: *singing*

George Carmack on Bonanza Creek went out to look for gold,
I wonder why, I wonder why.
Oldtimers said it was no use, the water was too cold.
I wonder why, I wonder why. (10)

Referring to this song in a news article from 1919, E. Ward Smith writes "So great was the surprise caused by the discovery of gold there that a bard of the Yukon […] wrote a verse that I often heard sung around Dawson" (30). Ward's wording highlights the instant and natural composition of the song, but does not notice its epic narrative. Here, the lyrics voice the baffled responses to Carmack's unintelligible motivation to look for gold despite the wisdom of the old and the harshness of nature, and consequently portray him as a mythical figure. Jennie also sings the second stanza, "They said he might search the creek until the world did end,/ But not enough gold he'd find a postage stamp to send" (11), further strengthening the Carmack myth; however, Pollock makes her sing only the first two stanzas, and does not let her proceed to the third, limiting the possible variations of the musical form. In 1898, Virgil Moore provides the lyrics of the song with the same first two stanzas, and the rest of the words intensify the gallantry ("Carmack roamed the Yukon from Dyea to Behring Sea") and spirituality ("Twas Providence directed him") in Carmack's search for gold. Additionally, Paul Roseland, who collected and transcribed the song from an Alaskan resident in 1960s states that "the first two verses and part of the chorus are collected as they were sung […] around 1898" (qtd. in Cohen, 2008: 697), yet the lack of information on the following verses he transcribes discredits the originality of these lyrics (ibid.). The next three stanzas attributed to Roseland provide a social commentary and includes the contribution of two indigenous people, Tagish Charlie and Skookum Jim to Carmack's discovery of gold. Skookum's name is doubly omitted from the history of Klondike: Although it is known that Carmack, Skookum and Charlie searched for gold together in the same location, it was Carmack who wrote the notice of claim "by right of discovery" (Coates and Morrison, 2005: 82). Yet Coates and Morrison note that Skookum claimed later it was him who discovered gold, but considering the racial tensions, thought it would be wiser if Carmack, the white man in the group, claimed the discovery (ibid.).

Douglas Fetherling also mentions Skookum's claim, but adds that the gold-rich location was originally discovered by a Canadian prospector, Robert Henderson, who met Carmack and informed him about the creek (128). In this sense, "The Carmack Song" in *Walsh* functions as the reproducible model for constructing national or regional myths by adding, suppressing or omitting information crucial for understanding history, and provides a musical text whose gaps hold contested significations.

The second song, "Break the News to Mother" is not sung, but mentioned as Walsh's unfulfilled song request from Jennie. The song's lyrics tell the story of a soldier who risks his life by volunteering to pick up the fallen flag in the battlefield. The song's title is taken from the first line of the chorus section, which voices the dying soldier's last words to his mother. Released in 1897, it was popular during the Spanish-American War, which originated in the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain, and consequently ended the Spanish colonial rule in the Americas. Given that Klondike Gold Rush started in 1896 and continued into 1899, Walsh's memory of the song in the Prologue is clearly linked to the Spanish-American War. However, the song was revived during the World War I for the British audience. During this period, Canada's foreign affairs were maintained by Britain, since the Dominion of Canada was a colony of the British Empire. As a result, when Britain declared war against Germany, Canada automatically joined the allied forces alongside Britain and its other colonies. Considering the time when the play was written and first performed, the context of World War I is more relevant for the audience, if not for Walsh himself. Besides, the war had been an important moment for Canada in several issues: the Imperial War Conference in 1917 declared the Empire's new constitution recognizing Canada as an autonomous nation; by the end of the war, Canada became one of the founding members of the League of Nations. In other words, the Great War lend recognition to Canada as a nation in the international community.

The first two songs mentioned in the Prologue introduce Pollock's approach to musical commodification in that they illustrate the different modes of transition in the history of modern music. "The Carmack Song" is originally a folk song with disputed origins; since it is a collective folk song, its composer and lyricist are anonymous, and its length and lyrics are variable. However, the late nineteenth century is also a time when early American and Canadian ethnomusicologists travelled the entire continent to document the last remnants of vanishing musical heritage amidst the force of urbanization and industrialization. For this reason, folk songs like "The Carmack Song" have been collected, transcribed and recorded for the sake of conservation, yet in this process transformed into a fixed and closed musical structure. In contrast, "Break the News to Mother" is a modern song, and exemplifies the commodified musical form. The song was written by the American composer Charles Kassel Harris, and its sheet music was subsequently published. For this reason, and also as the product of late nineteenth century song-writing, the song embodies the characteristics of the commercial music industry starting with the Tin Pan Alley era. The major transformation in this period was the commodification of the traditional verse-chorus formula as a reproducible musical form, the mass-production of such songs performed by recruited singers particularly in vaudevilles, and the publication of their sheet music, which would enable amateurs to reproduce the songs. In addition, the mass-production of musical instruments, especially the piano, gave way to their entry to the middle class households in which they could be performed at home. Harris's own songwriting guide titled *How to Write a Popular Song* (1906) epitomizes the booming music industry and the standardization of music due to the growing demand.

The next song in the Prologue, "Garryowen" is played on harmonica by Billy and is an iconic American patriotic tune. It is originally an Irish tune, and was adapted firstly by the British army as a drinking song, and then as the marching song of General George Armstrong Custer's seventh cavalry from the Civil War to its decimation in the Battle of Little Big Horn. In Raoul Walsh's film *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941), the song is introduced in a bar scene, where the Britain-born lieutenant Butler plays the tune and all the cadets as well as Custer joyfully join his performance. The film also depicts how the joyful brotherhood embraces a sense of solidarity when a senior lieutenant belittles the cadets for their frivolous behaviour as he enters the bar and Custer confronts him. In addition, the film implies that "Garryowen"'s transition from an entertaining folk tune to an American army song depends on the personal choice of Custer, who believes it is catchy and hence suitable as a marching song. The treatment of the song in a 1941 Hollywood production proves that "Garryowen" is the quintessential American army song, which reflects the camaraderie among American soldiers. For this reason, the song, similar to another briefly mentioned song in *Walsh*, "The Girl I Left Behind", has been used as the soundtrack of many westerns

before the play's production, such as John Ford's *Fort Apache* (1948), *She Wore a Blue Ribbon* (1949) and *The Searchers* (1956); in Arthur Penn's *Little Big Man* (1970) the tune is heard at the time of Custer's arrival at the Little Big Horn. In his direct address to the audience about the historical background of the Sioux immigration, the American wagon master Harry mentions that "Garryowen" provided "a kinda festive at-mos-phere to a Custer attack" (Pollock, 1986: 17) and "Custer liked to charge to music" (ibid.). In other words, the tune has been identified with American westward expansion and territorial conflicts, and is reproduced to consolidate the image of the American West in iconic Hollywood productions.

Since "Garryowen" is the musical signification of American westward expansion, the fact that Billy performs it suggests the resulting suppression and Americanization of the indigenous peoples. In the Prologue, Billy's playing the tune baffles Harry, as he asks "Where'd you hear that song? You a Yankee fella? You a cavalry man?" (12), to which Billy replies "Don't have to be a cavalry man to know a song, mister" (ibid.). This dialogue demonstrates Billy's and the natives' adoption of colonial discourse. In addition, Billy is in fact Crow Eagle, a Lakota chief and a close friend of Sitting Bull, with whom he joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West show the 1884-1885 season. The show is known to stage an exotic depiction of the American west, with performers of indigenous origins and costumes related to Western Americana. Riding, shooting and roping performances as well as dramatizations like attacks to a stagecoach were regular parts of the show. The native Americans who performed in the show used their own languages and performed rituals such as the buffalo dance and the ghost dance. In this sense, the show functioned as a mediation through which western stereotypes were reproduced even more strongly than the Atlantic media, since the show traveled not only around North America, but also to some major cities in Europe. Therefore, paradoxically, the Americanization of the West and the western extravaganza depended on the commodification of native American culture.

Although the tunes in the Prologue are diegetically performed on harmonica by Billy, it is Jennie who is given the task of voicing them. However, Jennie's performance is limited due to her reluctance to sing despite her apparent knowledge of the songs (11), as in the case of "Break the News to Mother". Jennie, in this sense, is given the position to voice the musical heteroglossia of the nineteenth century, but also resists the commodification of the song form by either singing fragments of songs or remaining completely silent. In "The Carmack Song", her vocal reticence for the remaining lyrics indicates a discreet struggle for meaning; in "Break the News to Mother", her careful refusal to sing the song signifies a resistance to reproduce national myths. Therefore, Jennie's singing illustrates Pollock's historiographic playwriting: Avoiding the representational performance of such songs, the musical structure of the Prologue problematizes the historical and political conditions in which the songs were produced and received.

Billy's second appropriation of American musical culture is his performance of a ragtime tune on his harmonica. Although its origins are subject to debate, the genre ragtime is known as a hybrid form which integrates black musical tradition with Western forms, hence carries racial tensions, firstly because music was "the backbone of the slaves' political cultures" in Paul Gilroy's words (57), and secondly due to the genre's syncopated, or "broken" rhythm, with the use of off-beat accents to create an irregular yet elaborate sound. In this sense, as a "paradoxical art form" and "a racially ambiguous commodity" (Jasen and Tichenor, 1978: 1), ragtime was itself an appropriation of black American culture into mainstream and national culture. Edward Berlin writes, "ragtime as an exoticism, as a quaint music from the fringes of society, was replaced by ragtime the white American popular music" (123). This transformation does not only depend on the popularization and commercialization of ragtime (especially due to its becoming a staple in dance halls), but also its appropriation to the World War I context. For example, "When Alexander Takes his Ragtime Band to France" (1918) dramatized the arrival of the Southern all-black ragtime band from Irving Berlin's popular 1911 song "Alexander's Ragtime Band" in Europe during WWI. The lyrics of the song promised the audience "those ragtime tunes will put the Germans in a trance/ They'll throw their guns away" (Bryan et al., 1918: 3). After a transition process from black folk culture to the American mainstream to the extent of being considered "undeniably representative of a certain aspect of American character" (Mason, 1918: 324) and "the one true American music" (Moderwell, 1915: 286), ragtime has been further gentrified by classical composers, such as Antonin Dvorak and Igor Stravinsky[3] . The use of ragtime in the play echoes the genre's process of commodification and gentrification, and adds a new layer of

3 The mentioned pieces here are Dvorak's "New World Symphony"(1893) and Stravinsky's "Ragtime" (1918).

hybridity to the music since the performer is Native American. Furthermore, the tune is played immediately after Walsh mentions Custer's name, signifying a musically uncanny reaction by the ragged flow of ragtime's rhythmic structure.

The only French song in the play is sung by Louis, the Métis scout employed by the NWMP, and hence shows the consequences of colonial rivalry in the Canadian West. The song, performed by Louis in Act One and known as "En roulant ma boule" [While rolling my ball], or alternately as "Trois beaux canards" [Three beautiful ducks], is a Quebecois song from the French explorers, and was traditionally sung as an accompaniment to the rhythm of paddling[4] . In her memoirs from 1830, Juliette Augusta Kinzie notes "The Canadian boatmen always sing while rowing, or paddling, and nothing encourages them so much as to hear the 'bourgeois' take the lead in the music" (28) and adds that such songs were "calculated to produce a spirited, sometimes an uproarious chorus" (29). That is to say, the song itself follows the master-slave dialectic, having the peddler repeat the chief explorer's words. However, Louis sings from the beginning of the verse, and not simply the chorus line. In this sense, Louis's singing gives him an unaccustomed power and authority, since he is Métis, employed as a scout by the NWMP and also sings in French. Recalling his namesake Louis Riel, Louis the scout is a Métis, meaning half indigenous and half French, therefore he voices the French colonial presence in Canada; due to the relocation of the Métis into western territories after the Red River Rebellion led by Riel in 1869-1870, he is in Fort Walsh. As a result, Pollock makes Louis voice a hybrid perspective throughout the play. His ambivalent representation of the indigenous, the British and the French destabilizes the power relations in the play, as observed in his dialogue with Walsh:

> WALSH: Must be…what…two miles away? What would you say, Louis?
>
> LOUIS: *smiling*
>
> Louis say you damn good pupil.
>
> WALSH: *smiling*
>
> Louis damn good teacher. (41)

As the translator and guide for the NWMP, Louis has gained the trust and respect of the acting local authority due to his knowledge and judgement, which once more destabilizes the master-slave dialectic like his singing. Here, Walsh not only trusts Louis's opinion and acknowledges his own learning process, but also mimics the way Louis speaks. In this sense, the dialogue reverses the mimicry associated with the colonized, hence forms a hybrid discourse which destabilizes the supposedly one-directional cultural hegemony from Europe to the New World. Consequently, Louis's singing the song displays his trickster qualities: As an indigenous character, he disrupts the conventions of singing a French colonial song by taking the lead and appropriating it for a location outside the Quebec province. However, as the singing medium suggests, this hybrid discourse is challenged by ethnocentric bias, resulting in the cultural branding of the indigenous population. Immediately after the song is sung, Louis's two fellow NWMP officers approach him outside the Sioux tepee where food is served in bowls and without spoons. While the white officers despise the food and the way it was served, upon a brief consideration for leaving their food untouched, one of them, McCutcheon explains they should finish the food, because "men have been known to lose their scalps over such an insult" (50). Associating bodily mutilation in the West with the natives, McCutcheon's discourse illustrates not only cultural stereotyping, but also the misrepresentation of indigenous culture, since scalping had been practiced by the Europeans as well for the trading of Native American scalps for trophies (Smith, R.A., 1964: 5-6; Ball, 2013: 4-7). In this sense, the native American is commodified firstly because they are stereotyped and culturally branded, and secondly because their mutilated body parts are traded as commodities.

The only indigenous songs in the play are the eagle song by Sitting Bull and Pretty Plume's lullaby. Sitting Bull's song is heard after the refugee crisis of the Nez Percés, another tribe searching for refuge and asking for the help of Sitting Bull to cross the Canadian border. Since Sitting Bull was in the process of negotiating with the American general Terry, Walsh advises him to refuse their demands, to which Sitting Bull complies. However, the devastation and wailing of the Nez Percés at the border trouble Walsh and his younger officers, who set out to

4 The song dates back to the fifteenth century France, and was originally a juggler's song (Fowke, 1954: 57). The lyrics provided in the play as "En roulant ma boule roulant, en roulant ma boule/Derrier chez nous, y'a-t'un e-tang [étang], en roulant ma boule/Trois beaux canards s'en vont baignant, en roulant ma boule" can be roughly translated as "While rolling my ball, while rolling my ball/Behind our house, there is a pond, while rolling my ball/Three beautiful ducks are bathing there, while rolling my ball" [my translation].

help them but soon find out their situation is beyond remedy. To find a solution to the crisis, Sitting Bull forms a medicine wheel after singing his song. The song is heard from Louis's mouth, therefore Louis is assumedly translating Sitting Bull's words:

LOUIS: My father has given me this nation.
In protecting it,
A hard time I have.

Friends, hardships pursue me,
Fearless of them,
I live.
My chiefs of old are gone.
Myself, I shall take courage. (64)

The form of the eagle song epitomizes the critique of the modern commodified song due to its temporal ambivalence and lack of verse-chorus structure. It is even hard to classify it as an indigenous song, because it has no mention in the ethnomusicological records of the earlier twentieth century. The earliest mention to it is found in Stanley Vestal's *Sitting Bull: Champion of the Sioux* (1932), which is based on oral history rather than historically documented research. Despite the lack of historical evidence, Vestal justifies his method by a reference to Sitting Bull's nephew, who tells him "I do not care to hear the lies what white men have made about Sitting Bull. I will tell you the truth" (xiv). Informed by the nephew's narrative, Vestal shows that the song consists of three separate songs related to different instances in Sitting Bull's life. Vestal writes that the first three lines are related to Sitting Bull's earlier years, when he sees the impersonation of the eagle's spirit, who gives him this song. In his later years close to his death he remembers and finally makes sense of the song. The next three lines, as Vestal writes, are associated with Sitting Bull's journey to the Canadian border after the Battle of Little Big Horn, in times of distress. The remaining lines are from Sitting Bull's inauguration ceremony, when he was chosen as the chief of the entire Sioux nation. In other words, Pollock fuses the major events in Sitting Bull's life into one song. Pollock also does not refer to Sitting Bull's words as a song; the stage directions show that Sitting Bull steps forward and Louis "speaks" (64). Similarly, Vestal refers to Sitting Bull as a "poet" (208) and a "warrior-poet" (95), portraying him as a shamanic spiritual leader. Although Vestal named it "the eagle song", the mentioned music transgresses the modern song form since it cannot be received and consumed instantly, and has a lasting interpretation process throughout Sitting Bull's life. As a result, the use of this music as a translated poetic address rather than a song reverses the transformation of indigenous music into the commodified song form.

Pollock similarly reconstructs Vestal's account on the lullaby sung to Sitting Bull's son. In *Walsh*, the lullaby is sung by Pretty Plume, Sitting Bull's fictional wife.

PRETTY PLUME: Little One, Little One
Loved by everyone.
Little One speaks sweet words to everyone.
That is why, that is why,
Little One is loved by everyone. (104)

Although it is Pretty Plume who sings the lullaby in the play, Vestal writes that the lullaby was actually sung by Sitting Bull himself, who used to carry the child on his back. Besides, Pollock changes Pretty Plume's call to the child from "Only One" (Vestal, 1932: 208) to "Little One", moving him from his close-knit familial environment to a hybrid space in which he is addressed as such by the English-Canadian characters in the play and is socialized with them. Pollock also changes the singer from Sitting Bull to Pretty Plume, a character added to the play after its first performance. Having little space to build the character anew, Pollock associates two features to Pretty Plume: her political power and her motherhood. As part of the chief negotiator group in dialogue with

the American side, Pretty Plume is constructed as a strong minor character; besides, she is Pollock's invention to portray the Sioux as a matriarchal society against the patriarchal Victorian society, illustrated by Walsh's wife Mary. Unlike Pretty Plume, Pollock's Mary appears on the stage only with a ghostly presence, because she actually resides in Ontario and does not visit the Canadian West. As an example of historiographic metadrama, the play resolves the couple's physical distance by the dramatization of their correspondence on stage. In this sense, Mary does not represent an actual body; she is the typical angel in the house, encapsulating women's status in Victorian society. Mary's discourse in her letters also highlights her unquestioned acknowledgement of national myths. Unlike Pretty Plume's function as an active political figure, Mary functions as the voice for the Atlantic media coverage of the West, when she says "here in the East, we're always hearing grand tales of Major Walsh… how he's subdued the Sioux and Sitting Bull" (86). Although Mary is a passive receiver and consumer of westward expansion, Pretty Plume is portrayed as an active contributor to the resolution of a political crisis. By prioritizing eloquent diplomacy and inclusive politics in the lullaby's lyrics, Pretty Plume not only uses the folkloric form as a symbolic act for the crisis, but also leads the infant to a similar discourse, since the lullaby's oral form of matrilineal transmission enables Pretty Plume to project such qualities to her child.

The last song in the play, "Life in a Prairie Shack" is a final return to the subject of westward expansion. This Canadian homesteader song is also known in the United States as "Life in a Half-Breed Shack", and was first transcribed under this title in Lomax's *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* with different lyrics. The song is performed by the American wagon master Harry with the lyrics provided by Fowke (1962: 255) towards the end of Act Two, when it is decided that the Sioux should soon leave Canada and Walsh is temporarily called to Ontario:

HARRY: Oh, life in a prairie shack, when the rain begins to pour.

Drip, drip, it comes through the roof and I want to go home to my Ma-Maw.

Maw, Maw, I want to go home to my Maw.

This bloomin' country's a fraud and I want to go home to my Maw. (119)

The deliberate choice of the singing subject locates the song to the context of the Homestead Act in 1862, which opened the western territories to the public. Trachtenberg maintains that the bipartisan support for the act aimed "to provide an agricultural 'safety valve' for surplus or discontented urban workers, and a Western population base for an enlarged domestic market for manufactured goods" (21). Consequently, the uncontrolled flow from the east to the West created more demands for land and resources, which resulted in military action to the territories inhabited by indigenous peoples and their removal to reservations. For Trachtenberg, this historical process is the "conversion of 'nature' into 'raw material'" (30). In other words, ending the play's musical repertoire with a variative folk song depicting a homesteader's desperation emphasizes once more the commodification of the North American west. Here, Harry voices a disillusionment for the government's policies particularly in the final chorus line "This bloomin' country's a fraud", which directly mentions the contradiction between the imagined and the experienced West. Although the country is "blooming" due to its newly formed confederation, its suppression of indigenous rebellions, its westward expansion and transcontinental railway, the promise for opportunities does not correspond to reality. The singing subject and the song's form therefore coalesce into historical capitalism, transgressing national demarcations. Additionally, with Harry's singing, the variative and collective feature of the folk song evokes a reaction to American and Canadian policies and thus voices a desire for a change in the political order, encapsulated with the word "maw". Since Queen Victoria was known by the name "Great White Mother", and the characters in the play refer to Canada as "the country of the Great White Mother" (21), themselves as "the soldier of the Great White Mother" (43), and the law as "the Great White Mother's law" (34), the replacement of Queen Victoria by the poorly articulated "maw" for mother symbolically challenges the British colonial rule, and attempts to reverse the commodification of motherhood.

4. CONCLUSION

Fredric Jameson develops his concept of the political unconscious for a literary theory that would encompass, in his words, "the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation" (1). Drawing from his theory of the political unconscious, my analysis of the songs in Sharon Pollock's *Walsh* aims for a reading of an overlooked aspect of the

play, and by so doing finds that Pollock's totalizing approach to retextualizing and rewriting history is determined by the integration of the dramatic, textual and musical forms. In the case of songs, which represent the entire North American heteroglossia, the diversity of their historical contexts and their formal transformations present a challenge for an overall perspective on their historicity; furthermore, given that the songs are part of a dramatic text, their co-textual significance such as the singing subject and the singing medium necessitates close reading practices. However, as Jameson writes, the issues in cultural history "can recover their original urgency for us only if they are retold within the unity of a single collective story" (3); in this sense, Pollock's playwriting totalizes the history of westward expansion with the emerging economy and technology of music production. As a musical form, the song embodies the social and political transformations at the turn of the twentieth century, and thus completes Pollock's historiographic metadrama. From this perspective, by depicting a historical period which gradually witnessed the rapid commodification of music, Sharon Pollock's *Walsh* illustrates the relationship between the commodification of the musical heteroglossia and westward expansion in the final chapter of North American colonization, at least within the geographical borders of the United States and Canada.

WORKS CITED

Adorno, T. (1991). "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening", *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, (Ed. J. M. Bernstein), Routledge, New York.

Ball, M.H.R.S. (2013). *Grim Commerce: Scalps, Bounties, and the Transformation of Trophy-Taking in the Early American Northeast*, 1450-1770. Unpublished dissertation, University of Colorado, Boulder.

Berlin, E. (1980). *Ragtime : A Musical and Cultural History*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Bilge, Z. (2008). *An Alternative Mode of Communication: Songs and Singing in Shakespeare's Tragedies*. Unpublished dissertation, Istanbul University, Istanbul.

Bilge, Z. (2016). "Voices from the Past: Music in The Ice People", *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 33/2, 53-62.

Bryan, A. et al. (1918). *When Alexander Takes His Ragtime Band to France*. Waterson, Berlin & Snyder, New York.

Coates, K. and Morrison, W. R. (2005). *Land of the Midnight Sun: A History of the Yukon*. McGill University Press, Montreal.

Cohen, N. (2008). *American Folk Songs: A Regional Encyclopedia*. Greenwood, Westport.

Dyndahl, P.; Karlsen, S.; Skarberd, O. and Nielsen S. G. (2014). "Cultural omnivorousness and musical gentrification", *Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education*, 13/1, 40-68.

Fowke, E. (1954). *Folk Songs of Canada*. Waterloo Music Company Limited, Waterloo, Ontario.

Fowke, E. (1962). "American Cowboy and Western Pioneer Songs in Canada", *Western Folklore*, 21/4, 247-256.

Fetherling, D. (1997). *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929*. Toronto University Press, Toronto.

Fletcher, Alice C. (1893). *A Study on Omaha Indian Music*. Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Gilroy, P. (1993). *The Black Atlantic*. Verso, London.

Gordon, R. J. (2017). *The Rise and Fall of American Growth*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Greenberg, C. (1965). "Avantgarde and Kitsch", *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*. Beacon Press, Boston.

Holder, J. H. (2000), "Broken Toys: The Destruction of the National Hero in the Early History Plays of Sharon

Pollock", *Sharon Pollock: Essays on Her Works* (Ed. A. F. Nothof), Guernica, Toronto.

Jameson, F. (1983). *The Political Unconscious*. Routledge, London.

Jasen, D. and Tichenor, T. J. (1978). *Rags and Ragtime: A Musical History*. Dover, New York.

Kaplan, A. (2005). *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Kinzie, J. A. [Mrs. John H. Kinzie]. (1856). *Wau-Bun, The Early Day in the North West*. Derby & Jackson, New York.

Knowles, R. P. (1987). "Replaying History: Canadian Historiographic Metadrama", *Dalhousie Review*, 67, 228-243.

Lomax, J. A. (1922). *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. MacMillan, New York.

Manuel, Peter. "Modernity and Musical Structure", *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics* (Ed. R. Burckhardt Qureshi), Routledge, New York and London.

Mason, D. G. (1918). "Folk-Song and American Music", *The Musical Quarterly*, 4/3, 323-332.

Moderwell, H. (1915). "Ragtime", *The New Republic*, October 16, 1915. (284-286).

Moore, Virgil. (1898). "George W. Carmack", *The Klondike News*, April 1.

New, W. H. (2001). *A History of Canadian Literature*. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal.

Nothof, A. F. (2000). "Crossing Borders: Sharon Pollock's Revisitation of the Canadian Frontiers", *Sharon Pollock: Essays on Her Works*, (Ed. A. F. Nothof), Guernica, Toronto.

Pollock, S. (1986). *Walsh.* Talon Books, Vancouver.

— interview by R. H. Thompson, Theatre Museum Canada. (July 6, 2012). *Sharon Pollock on writing history, the playwright's authority, and Kabloona Talk (Part 1 of 8) [Video file]*. Retreived from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_k7ddUUH3iE&list=PLCDA61BCFCC60B38F.

Smith, E. W. (1919). "Wild Miners I Have Met", *MacLean's*, XXXII/2, 30-31, 55-56.

Smith, R. A. (1964). "The Scalp Hunter in the Borderlands 1835-1850", *Arizona and the West*, 6/1, 5-22.

Trachtenberg, A. (1987). *The Incorporation of America*. Hill and Wang, New York.

Vestal, S. (1932). *Sitting Bull: Champion of the Sioux*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma.Love Letter to rs"