

**THE POWER OF LANGUAGE  
IN TONI MORRISON'S *SONG OF SOLOMON***

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1. *Song of Solomon* (1977) is a rich artistic vision, an exciting story of self discovery, a search for self and African-American identity, a saga of a family whose geneology is rooted in the gloomy , mythological past.

The protagonist Milkman travels through space and time in order to 'know something about himself he did not know before', and this quest is not only of a physical dimension, but primarily of a spiritual one realized through linguistic discovery. It is not only that whatever we discover in life outside and inside ourselves is articulated and shared through language, but *Song of Solomon* is about discovering family and communal past through understanding and constructing meanings hidden in words, more significantly in proper names. The title itself is relevant in supporting this point, because *song* is a clear reference to an archaic text type, and combined with the proper name, Solomon, becomes even richer in intertextual links, least through obvious Biblical associations. The title also arouses expectations which place the forthcoming text within the rich context of Christian mythology and in the canon of the most ancient genre of sagas and songs.

Songs, similar to the one sung by the protagonists of the novel, pass down long-forgotten communal history, and yield meanings only to those listeners who have a sensitive and subtle enough perception to recover them. For Milkman, the protagonist of the novel, discovering life means discovering the linguistic richness embodied by names loaded with ambiguous meanings. Language is both a witness and recorder of history and a preserver of traditions. Its thorough understanding opens up complex ways of self understanding and becomes the only vehicle capable of constructing individual and group identity.

Morrison, by presenting Milkman's story, argues that Macon Dead's rational and materialistic world is counterbalanced by a spiritual one represented by Macon Dead's sister, Pilate. Access to the former is realized by money and the act of possessing. Access to the latter, is thorough understanding language and all those intellectual and spiritual traditions which are stored in it and can be recovered by it. Morrison argues

that without the conscious integration of material, spiritual and intellectual values accumulated throughout history and embodied in language, the individual cannot reach personal fulfilment. Initially, this truth is realized by Milkman in the process of understanding the deeper layers of meaning in both proper and place names.

2. Morrison is fascinated by names, which always reveal facts about the individual's or community's past. Name represents what others considered to be important about the individual and what the individual views as important about himself. To understand and accept one's name means to come to terms with oneself. „Nomen est omen” as the Latin saying goes, name is the person itself. In the following, by showing the significance of names in the *Song of Solomon*, I hope to shed light upon the essence of this masterpiece.

2. 1. The characters of the story of the *Song of Solomon* are the Deads and their friends: Macon Dead; his son, Macon Dead junior, called Milkman; Ruth Foster, Macon Dead's wife, Milkman's, Magdalena called Lena's and First Corinthians' mother, the daughter of the first black doctor in the town; Pilate, Macon Dead's sister; Pilate's daughter, Reba; Pilate's granddaughter and Reba's daughter, Hagar, who is also Milkman's lover; a group of seven terrorists fighting for the rights of the blacks called the Seven Days: Guitar Bains, Milkman's best friend, is one member of the Seven Days, along with Henry Porter, Corinthians' lover, Empire State, Hospital Tommy and Railroad Tommy. During Milkman's journey to the South, he meets Circe who once took care of his orphaned father and aunt, Reverend Cooper who still remembered Milkman's forefathers, Sweet, a helpful young woman in Shalimar. Finally, Milkman gets to know his ancestors and past from folk tradition and oral history: Sing Bird, the Indian foremother, Solomon or Shalimar who could fly and one of his twenty-one sons: Jake, Solomon's wife, Ryna, whom Solomon left when he flew away, and who became lovesick and lost her senses in consequence.

2. 2 Macon Dead, the illiterate slave forefather of the Deads, acquired his name by accident. The clerk who registered him in the Freedman's Bureau was drunk and mixed the line of the name with the line of the place of birth (Macon), and respectively the line of the surname with the entry asking about the person's father (Dead). Pilate draws far-reaching conclusions from this incident, which was typical of the social handicaps blacks, owing to their illiteracy, had to suffer long after their emancipation.

„Everything bad that ever happened to him happened because he couldn't read. Got his name messed up cause he couldn't read” (53).

Macon Dead's future wife, whom he met on the wagon while travelling South, was able to read and paradoxically liked the new name because *it was new and would wipe out the past. Wipe it all out* (54). To treat 'death' as the beginning of something new, reveals an organic and cyclic perception of the world.

Naming is all the more important for people who, like the majority of the blacks in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were illiterate. Macon Dead the first, who within sixteen years became an exemplary farmer, named his peach-orchard, President Lincoln, his foal Mary Todd, his cow Ulysses S. Grant, his hog, General Lee, after the Confederate general. Naming live-stock and property after historical personalities may seem odd, but in an illiterate, traditional oral culture it is an effective way of transmitting the memory of those events, personalities and incidents which were historically important. Thus, names are able to keep alive communal, racial and national history.

His father may have called their plow horse President Lincoln as a joke, but Macon always thought of Lincoln with fondness since he had loved him first as a strong, steady, gentle, and obedient horse (52).

**2. 3** The major female protagonist's name, Pilate, is also rich in connotations and is closely linked to family history. When Pilate was born, her mother died in childbirth, more precisely, her mother had died before Pilate was born, but she was strong enough to fight her way out from her mother's womb. In consequence, she had no navel, a handicap which isolated her from ordinary people and influenced her autonomous, independent way of life. Her paranormal qualities of a half human, half witch, endowed her with the capacity to communicate with her dead father.

Pilate, who never bothered anybody, was helpful to everybody, but who also was believed to have the power to step out of her skin, set a bush afire from fifty yards, and turn a man into a ripe rutabaga- all on account of the fact that she had no navel (94).

It is also notable that Pilate represents the close link to mother nature and to ancestry, the vital life force which struggles to maintain the family pedigree above all means. Yet, at the same time, she has the blackest complexion, which reminds everyone of the family's African roots. Morrison deliberately chooses the most powerful female character of her novel the blackest to represent 'The Negro is beautiful' ideology of the Harlem Renaissance.

Macon Dead, the illiterate father, randomly selected a name for his daughter from the Bible. His choice is motivated by the graphical appearance of the letters, which *seemed to him strong and handsome; saw in them a large figure that looked like a tree hanging in some princely but protective way over a row of smaller trees* (18). What the illiterate father read out from the shape and size of the letters became a predestination for Pilate, who grew into a protective force within the family. The fact that Pilate was the name of the Roman official who sentenced Jesus to death did not alter the father's decision. His choice was justified all the more by Pilate herself whose birth had led to her mother's death.

The act of naming is influenced by circumstances of subjective and objective nature. The selection of the name affirms the human free will, on the one hand, while being strongly motivated by family circumstances and incidents on the other. The choice of Pilate's name goes against the traditional practice of name-giving in black communities, where surnames were given by masters, and first names by some characteristic quality or a notable incident linked to the person. This latter practice is exemplified by the history and symbolic meanings of Milkman's name.

**2.4** Macon Dead junior was breast-fed by his mother till very late, a fact which was regarded unusual and scandalous after having been noticed by the janitor. The intimate practice of breast-feeding was a love substitute for Ruth, the mother who was utterly disregarded and constantly humiliated by her husband. Feeding her child, Ruth felt the illusion of interdependency and the existence of a secret bond between herself and her son, which was mythically symbolized by the maternal milk.

She had a distinct impression that his lips were pulling from her a thread of light. It was as though she were pulling a cauldron issuing spinning gold. (...) And that was the other part of the pleasure, a pleasure she hated to give up (13-14).

It is noteworthy that milk, the most natural substance engendering life is associated with light and gold, two entities which traditionally connote spiritual values and material richness. The intimate relationship between mother and son can also be interpreted as the manifestation of the Oedipus-complex, both an ancient and modern Freudian psycho-sexual phenomenon frowned upon by Macon Dead, the father. As a result, it is due to the uncertain origin of his son's nickname, that Macon Dead transfers the hatred felt towards his wife to his son, whilst the root of the hatred and repulsion between wife and husband is again to be found in the wife's suspected unhealthy, 'dirty relationship' with her own father, Doctor Foster.

It sounded dirty, intimate, and hot. He knew that whatever the name came from, it had something to do with his wife and was like the emotion he always felt when thinking of her, coated with disgust.

This disgust and the uneasiness with which he regarded his son affected everything he did in the city (15).

**2. 5** Naming is a central issue for Macon Dead as well. He mentions that his son's nickname *concerned him a good deal, for the giving of names in his family was always surrounded by what he believed to be monumental foolishness* (15). Macon Dead realizes that he knows nothing about the past of his ancestors or their real names, which he thinks, must be given and must be thought of *at birth with seriousness*.

A name that was not a joke, nor a disguise, nor a brand name.(...) His own parents, in some mood of perverseness or resignation, had agreed to abide by a naming done to them by somebody who could not have cared less. Agreed to take and pass on to all their issue this heavy name scrawled in perfect thoughtlessness by a drunken Yankee in the Union Army. A literal slip of the pen handed to his father on a piece of paper and which he handed on to his only son, and his son likewise handed on to his (18).

It is quite evident from the above quotation that if one knows somebody's name he knows his life story, his past and his present and also his aspirations and ideals.

Connected to the selection of his daughter's name, Macon Dead mentions that he was ignored when family decisions were taken. The only exception to this was the selection of his daughter's names: Magdalena called Lena and First Corinthians:

They (Ruth and her father Doctor Foster) let me do the naming by picking a word blind, but that was all" (71).

**2. 6** Not only proper names, but names of streets and establishments also reveal communal history. Macon Dead's office is called *Sonny's Shop*, after a previous business ran thirty years before at the same place. Seemingly, names live their own lives and have their own inertia which is opposed to change. The phenomenon is socio-psychologically explained: collective memory is difficult to change and meanings sanctified by names have long-lasting power:

In peeling gold letters arranged in a semicircle, his business establishment was declared to be Sonny's Shop. Scraping the previous owner's name off was hardly worth the trouble since he couldn't scrape in from anybody's mind. His storefront

office was never called anything but Sonny's Shop, although nobody now could remember thirty years back, when, presumably, Sonny did something or other there (17).

Not Doctor Street, the place where the Deads lived, used to be called Doctor Street in honour of the first black doctor in the community, who lived on that street. Later, due to a local ordinance, the street was given a new name and a notice stated that it was no longer Doctor Street. Hence, ironically the name was changed into Not Doctor Street by the stubborn popular practice, thus becoming richer in meaning, commemorating not only the doctor but also recalling the annihilatory act of authority concerning the usage of the name. Similarly, the rough part of the town was called Blood Bank *because blood flowed so freely there* (32).

Names are such a central issue for Morrison that the notion appears in phrases and idiomatic expressions as well: *I don't know what all your father has told you about me (...). But I know as well as I know my own name, that he told you only what was flattering to him* (124).

2.7 Guitar Bain's first name is also linked to a childhood incident when, as a baby, he cried for a guitar he saw in a shop. He is more attached to his first name Guitar, which characterises him and belongs to him more intimately than his surname, which was given by his slave master. Guitar seems to be the most conscious among the characters of the novel about the importance of names in general and of his own name in particular. It is Guitar who can pronounce the nickname Milkman in such a way that even Milkman's attitude becomes positive towards his formerly hated name. It is also Guitar, who is able to restore Milkman's self esteem and helps him to develop a healthy sense of individuality. The following dialogue between Milkman and Guitar is relevant to this process:

'What's the trouble? You don't like your name?

'No' (...) I don't like my name.

'Let me tell you somethin, baby. Niggers get their names the way they get everything else - the best way they can. The best way they can (88).

Due to Guitar, Milkman experiences a change of feelings and attitude regarding his own name and individual identity.

He (Milkman) wondered why he was suddenly so defensive - so possessive about his name. He had always hated that name, all of it, and until he and Guitar became friends, he had hated his nickname too. But in Guitar's mouth it sounded clever, grown up. Now he was behaving with this strange woman as though having the name was a matter of deep personal pride, as though she had tried to expel him

from a very special group, in which he not only belonged, but had exclusive rights (39).

Guitar's terrorist attacks upon innocent people out of love for his race is explained through mentioning the name of a Negro named X, (a clear hint to Malcolm X) whose chosen name suggests that he revolted against his name and the identity enforced upon him by an outside authority. Guitar is less concerned with names than he is with his status as a second-class citizen:

I don't give a shit what white people know or even think. Besides, I do accept it. It's part of who I am. Guitar is my name. Bains is the slave master's name. And I'm all of that. Slave names don't bother me; but slave status does (160).

**2. 8** The proper names of other minor characters are either taken from the Bible like that of Ruth, Reba, the shortened form of Rebecca, Solomon, Jake, or from ancient pagan mythology like the name of Circe, the woman who brought up the orphaned Pilate and Macon Dead for a while and thus became the embodiment of Christian love and philanthropy, Byrd Sing, or rather Singing Bird, the Indian ancestor. The link between Sing and the murdered father is evident, because the spirit of her father urges Pilate to sing, to perform the most ancient ritual activity and to reproduce the most ancient musical genres: songs. Milkman is also determined to find the meaning of the *Song of Solomon*, the song circulating in different versions in the family and in the land of the ancestors. He also has a duty to pass it on, to sing it to others.

**2. 9** Spiritual, mythic space represents one sphere of the novel; the other space is geographical, significantly marked by geographical names. Thus, the two major entities that philosophically define human culture; time and place, are significantly present in the novel. Pilate is obsessed by geography. She is fascinated by the geography book given to her by her teacher and she heads for Virginia with her geography book and a bag of bones and rocks. Geography books inspire the restlessness and wanderlust which symbolically express the archetypal yearning of mankind to roam and to know more about the world.

It was as if her geography book had marked her to roam the country, planting her feet in each pink, yellow, blue or green state. She left the island and began the wandering life that she kept up for the next twenty-some odd years, and stopped only after Reba had a baby (149).

Pilate's wanderings from South towards North , from Virginia to Michigan, are repeated by Milkman starting from the opposite direction in the search of the gold presumably hidden by Pilate in a cave thirty years back. The mythical and symbolical parallels of the search are obvious: Milkman, the miraculous hero, sets out, like the third son of the tales to find the golden fleece, which, - he believes -, will ensure material, paternal independence and his total freedom . He does not find gold ultimately, but, through the journey he discovers a value which becomes more precious than gold, the sense of belonging to a community. This awakening is linguistically realized by a conscious interpretation of place and peoples' names and by the ability to infer history from them. Coming home by Greyhound, he sees the names flashed on signboards and Milkman envisages the colourful Indian history of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan:

How many dead lives and fading memories were buried in and beneath the names of the places in this county. Under the recorded names were other names, just as 'Macon Dead', recorded for all time in some dusty file, hid from view the real names of people, places, and things. Names that had meaning. No wonder Pilate put hers in her ear. When you know your name, you should hang on to it, for unless it is noted down and remembered, it will die when you do (329).

*When you know your name, you should hang on to it*, says Milkman who had hated both his family and his nickname, until they give significance and meaning to him. Even Pilate's odd and weird habit of wearing her name in her ear in a brass, box-like earring makes sense eventually. Out of *gossips, legends and speculations* (323) Milkman realizes, or rather feels, the richness of the past, which cannot always be explained in rational terms. It is full of blanks and lacunae requiring to be filled with speculation and imagination. Taking into consideration the remoteness of the past, the hardships both Indians and Blacks underwent throughout the centuries, it is a *wonder anybody knows who anybody is* (324), as one of the characters points out.

When the scattered names start to form a clear and coherent past, where reality is mingled with myths and legends and each element obtains its place in the story of the Deads, Milkman speculates on the significance of names:

He closed his eyes and thought of the black men in Shalimar, Roanoke, Petersburg, Newport News, Danville, in the Blood Bank, on Darling Street, in the pool halls, the barbershops. Their names. Names they got from yearnings, gestures, flaws, events, mistakes, weaknesses. Names that bore witness. Macon Dead, Sing Byrd, Cromwell Byrd, Pilate, Reba, Hagar, Magdalene, First Corinthians, Milkman, Guitar, Railroad Tommy, Hospital Tommy, Empire State

(...), Small Boy, Sweet, Circe, Moon, Nero, Humpty-Dumpty, Blue Boy, Scandinavia, Quack-Quack, Jericho, Spoonbread, Ice Man, Dough Belly, Muddy Waters, Pinetop, Jelly Roll, Fats, Leadbelly, Bo Diddley, Cat-Iron, Peg-Leg, Son, Shortstuff, Smoky, Babe, Funny Papa, Bukka, Pink, Bull Moose, B.B., T-Bone, Black Ace, Lemon, Washboard, Gatemouth, Cleanhead, Tampa Red, Juke Boy, Shine, Staggerlee, Jim the Devil, Fuck-Up, and Dat Nigger (330).

This rich enumeration of names symbolically illuminates the importance of historical time and place for Milkman, and along with him, the reader also becomes conscious of the significance of names always bearing meanings. The revelation Milkman experiences supports the point according to which linguistic consciousness in interpreting names is identical with racial and communal consciousness, a value which is unarguably considered superior to material consciousness.

3. The analysis of names is only one aspect of the rich texture of the Morrisonian text. A subsequent paper in the following edition of the BAS Conference proceedings will be devoted to the motives and stylistical devices used by Toni Morrison in the *Song of Solomon* to show and to prove how Morrison's text characterises and narrates by using an overwhelming richness of motive, connotation and figurative language. Each significant element recalls, echoes, elicits further archetypal symbols and mythological elements, which obtain newer dimensions by being illuminated by genuine perspectives. Greek mythology, Christian traditions, typical American archetypal themes, black folk traditions, and characteristics of the alienated consumer society are all interwoven to form the texture of a classical postmodern novel, which is able to integrate universal human values and aspirations through the retelling and describing the particular black American experience.

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## DISCURSIVE STRUCTURES OF THE REGENERATION MOTIF IN IRISH LITERATURE

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This essay is a discussion of the regeneration motif and of its discursive structures in Irish literature.

By “discourse” I understand texts enacted either in speech through storytelling or in the reader’s mind. The text as such (not necessarily written) is a meaningful structure made alive (actualized – transposed into act) in discourse. Meaningful structures are appropriated by discourse to serve its purpose of conveying such meaning as the wider cultural and historical contexts dictate. A discourse establishes fluid relationships with the text and its contexts. It adapts structures of signification to its contexts, thus emerging as a living, all-inclusive entity which eventually becomes both carrier and producer of all meaning. Texts and contexts are structures of meaning but their meaning cannot be acquired except when it is conveyed through discourse. A text is a static meaningful structure while discourse is such structure made dynamic.

According to Michael Stubbs quoted in Hawthorne “a text may be written, while a discourse is spoken, a text may be non-interactive whereas a discourse is interactive (...) a text must be possessed of surface cohesion whereas a discourse must be possessed of deeper coherence (...) other theorists distinguish between abstract theoretical construct and pragmatic realization” (Hawthorne, 1992:189). And according to Benveniste (1971:110) language is “an instrument of communication, whose expression is discourse.”

*Collins Concise English Dictionary* (the 1988 edition) gives the term “discourse” the following primary definition: “verbal communication; talk, conversation;”. Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short point out that “Discourse is linguistic communication seen as a transaction between speaker and hearer, as an interpersonal activity whose form is determined by its social purpose” (cited in Hawthorn, 1992:189).

A certain theme, as is that of “regeneration”, names an area of the text (signification structure) falling under the cone of light of a certain perspective. The perspective thus illuminates certain fields of meaning that

can be brought forth (with which relationships of acquisition can be established) only through discourse.

### **1. Approach**

The regeneration motif is central to this discussion. The regeneration mythological motif is related to fertility rites and the May ceremonies. The conflict between Summer and Winter which it implies is part of a complex set of relationships between sexuality, fertility and wealth.

The antithetic characters of the regeneration pattern can be regarded as binary opposites (for instance Elcmar vs. Dagdae as Champion vs. Challenger - in "The Wooing of Étaín" translated by Jeffrey Gantz (1981) in *Early Irish Myths and Sagas*), and the Queen (Bóand, in the first section of this story, then Étaín) as their qualifier.

When the Queen (Bóand, Étaín) joins the Summer King (Dagdae, Mider) she asserts his central position while the Winter King (Elcmar, Echu) is marginalized. From a mythological perspective, the Queen – a goddess figure – presides over the wheel of the year. Her joining of either king is a metaphor of the changing of seasons. In a mythological reading Bóand's joining of Dagdae (or in the second section Étaín's joining of Mider) signifies the coming of spring. Such an approach is perhaps helpful in understanding the actual myth behind its textual expression, as an arch-writing. Its governing principle of play is embodied by the Queen, who establishes/cancels the ontology of seasons.

Not only the written texts themselves are relevant to this analysis, but also the way they interact with their audience and the texts' relationship with the cultural contexts which allowed for their production.

The regeneration motif underlies discursive structures emerging from the relationship between myth and its audience, assuming that the forms of enacting myth are storytelling (specific in the older times), performance (both in the old and modern times) and reading (in more recent times). This relationship can be explored through Eliade's (1992) dichotomy sacred/profane. The storytelling, performing or reading event has its specific meaning both in the space of the sacred and in the immediate reality (space of the profane). Eventually a network of signification based on which discourse is constituted emerges from the dynamic relationship between the myth-enacting event, the event it represents (explains) in the immediate reality and the sacred meaning of the mythical event.

Mythical thinking thus attributes a sacred signification to a mythical event, with an identified co-relation in the immediate, "tangible" world.

In more recent times the mode of expression of the regeneration theme underwent changes resulting from an alteration of mythical discourse by the cultural context, for instance that of the Anglo – Irish Revival. These changes effected new mythical signification within the romantic cultural paradigm and a perpetuation of archetypes in myth-making literary discourses such as is, foremost, W. B. Yeats's (1966) poetic discourse.

## **2. Discursive Structures of the Regeneration Motif in Early Irish Literature**

The mythological texts of early Irish literature are written versions of mythological stories delivered in speech. The relationship between such texts and their audience is established through the medium of spoken discourse. The relationship between storyteller and audience determines how discourse is constituted and qualified as myth. The storyteller brings structures of meaning into discourse. The semantic fields such structures generate are accessed by the audience according to their ability to relate to the profane and sacred spaces of signification.

At its structural level discourse avails of what could be called an index of relevant signifier units. These are key words or symbols, motifs, themes, etc. The regeneration motif achieves its signification in the cultural context that produced the original texts where it signifies *renewal*. *Renewal* refers to a semantic field; I will hereafter use italics whenever I refer to semantic fields.

The meaning conveyed through discourse depends on where the signified semantic field is placed:

In the profane space (space of “reality”) *renewal* indicates the coming of spring.

In the sacred space (space of myth) *renewal* indicates the re-creation of the world.

Such meaning is determined in the audience's mind by the nature of the relationship between audience and the spaces of signification. If the audience is profane the discourse of regeneration will serve to enhance the audience's joy felt with the coming of spring. If the audience is initiated and has access to the discourse's connections with the space of the sacred it will be understood that this joy is part of a larger cosmic event which may be perceived and understood through seeing the consequences of the coming of spring.

Besides the relationship between texts (manifested in discourse) and the two spaces of signification and that between audience and the spaces of

signification there is yet another relationship which establishes the meaning to be acquired through the discursive structure of the regeneration motif: the relationship between the space of the profane and that of the sacred.

If we should describe the sacred in the same terms that describe the profane we should say of the former that it is a space of fantasy, while the profane is the space of reality. Meaning in the discourse of the regeneration motif is also born from such relationships of tension as exist between reality and fantasy.

According to Jeffrey Gantz (1981):

“(…) Irish literature (…) exemplifies the tension between reality and fantasy that characterizes all Celtic art. (…). But this tension manifests itself most particularly in the literature of Ireland, and most particularly in the myths/sagas (…) that survive in Irish manuscripts dating back to the twelfth century.

There are many reasons why this should be so. To begin with, these stories originated in the mists of Irish prehistory (some elements must predate the arrival of the Celts in Ireland), and they developed through the course of centuries until reaching their present manuscript state; consequently, they manage to be both archaic and contemporary. Their setting is both historical Ireland (itself an elusive entity) and the mythic otherworld of the Síde (Ireland’s ‘faery people’, who live in burial mounds called ‘side’ and exhibit magical powers), and it is not always easy to tell one from the other. Many of the characters are partially euhemerized gods – that is, they are gods in the process of becoming mortals – so that, again, it is not easy to tell divine from human (…).

In these Irish stories, then, the pride and energy of reality are allied with the magic and beauty of fantasy (…).” (Gantz, 1981:1 – 3)

Indeed, mythological discourse emerges as a re-negotiation of the reality of historical and cultural contexts within the boundaries of the fantastic space of myth. The text of myth which provides for mythic discourse its structures of coherence and signification therefore partakes both in the profane (historical, cultural) world legitimated through the pressure of its contexts as reality, from where it draws its coherence - and in the sacred world legitimating new meaning within a realm of fantasy rather governed by feeling, emotion and ecstatic participation. The capability of mythological discourse to convey meaning depends on its audience’s competence to participate to this re-negotiation of reality, that is, to access the new semantic field such re-negotiation proposes via its co-relative in the surrounding realm of reality, through the medium of the mythological text.

Mythological discourse, then, emerges from a complex set of relationships established between audience, the mythological text which

provides the discourse's structurality and the nature of the semantic fields such structures uncover.

The audience acquires the meaning in mythological discourse by participating in a structure of signification based on a triad relationship: the signifier (written or spoken) – signified 1 (in the profane space) – signified 2 (in the space of the sacred). Eventually, signified 1 becomes signifier for signified 2.

The regeneration motif in “The Wooing of Étaín” follows the Champion – Challenger – Queen pattern: Mider woos Étaín and becomes her new companion.

In the cultural context of the ancient world Mider (male) is perceived by the audience as the fairy king, associated with summer and fertility.

Étaín (female) is perceived as the Queen of a province of Ireland.

The audience believes that if Mider will become Étaín's companion, that province will become fertile, but this can only happen at Beltinne when the two worlds (fairy world and world of mortals) can interact. Beltinne is on the first of May, the first day of the season favourable to agricultural activities, which marks the beginning of a new agricultural and vegetal cycle.

Mider's association with Étaín is perceived as an event associated with *renewal*.

This association underlies the discursive structure of the regeneration motif.

In the profane space the signified semantic field concerns the coming of spring (the concept of “renewal” in the mind of the audience is formed through an association between the sensuality of wooing and the sensuality of the new season, spring).

In the sacred space the signified semantic field concerns the re-creation of the World (the concept of “renewal” in the mind of the audience is formed through a sense of participation to the primordial event which took place *in illo tempore* when an entity who has the power to create the natural world has done so through an association with a goddess. The audience believes they are part of that process which is felt as an awesome mystery, a mystery that also brings joy, wealth and a new beginning).

The (re) creation of the World is an event taking place in the Otherworld (fairy world) where the union between Mider and Étaín takes place. The audience cannot go there to check if this is true but there is evidence of it in the accessible world: the trees have returned to life. The coming of spring (signified semantic field in the space of the profane) has

become a signifier of the recreation of the world (signified semantic field in the space of the sacred).

### **3. Discursive Structures of the Regeneration Motif in the Literature Of the Anglo – Irish Revival**

The discourse units of mythological discourse (key words/symbols, motifs, themes, etc.) acquire new meaning in the works of Revivalist Anglo-Irish writers. For instance discourse units in the stories of mythological substance of such writers become part of the grand narrative of Romanticism.

There is a shift in meaning from meaning in the mythical paradigm to meaning in a literary convention paradigm. In the case of the Revivalists mythological discourse units are recharged with meaning within the romantic paradigm.

The signified semantic field in a literary convention paradigm changes under the pressure of the new historical and cultural contexts. Regeneration is often equated with regaining freedom from British rule - in the Revival period – or its original, mythic meaning is lost and replaced with such as can be acquired from a classical romance type of discourse.

Sometimes the signified semantic field belongs entirely to the profane space; literature having dissociated from myth there is no sacred space of significance appropriate. The signifier discourse units of mythological discourse (key words/symbols, motifs, themes, etc.) associated with a semantic field of a literary convention paradigm constitute structures of signification within the text written in the literary convention approached while when this association is with a signified semantic field associated to the space of the sacred a mythological - poetic text is born.

The mythological discourse of modern poetry results from an attempt to re-create the sacred space of myth within a signification space bounded by the wider discourse of contemporary historical and cultural contexts, and using structures of signification borrowed both from the surrounding discourse and from the profane (written, textual) versions of myth.

Thus the poetic space becomes in its gesture of asserting its poetic universe and content a demand on the reader to participate to the re-creation of the world in a new paradigm with new meaning. Its structures of signification borrowed under pressure from the outer contextual discourses demand that such participation be meaningful through its association with a semantic field within the context's discourse. For instance a historical

discourse's demand on the discourse based on the mythological regeneration pattern is that regeneration signifies an effort to regain freedom (this is clearly so in the Revivalist movement). A cultural discourse born under the cultural paradigm of classicism rather emphasises on the wooing aspect of the regeneration pattern; therefore the regeneration discourse is ascribed to a semantic field associated with romance. The poetic discourse's structures of signification borrowed from earlier mythological textual versions underlie its narrative texture with a pattern of the kind that establishes relationships between such archetypes as are found in the triad Champion – Challenger – Queen.

The signification process appears therefore as a dynamic process of constituting fluid relationships between elements of mythological, poetic, historical and cultural discourses.

The meaning of the regeneration motif conveyed by the early texts (written), through discourse (told or performed) has changed by comparison to that conveyed by texts (written) of the Anglo-Irish Revival period.

Discourse elements shifted their meaning by being caught in a signification process defined itself as having shifted its parameters of inclusion of the sacred and the profane.

The grand narrative of Romanticism began as a deviation from classical discourse perceived as monotonous and oppressive. It was in its first phases a liberation movement. It used as a resource, among other, the literary unexplored "well of folklore". The folkloric motifs discovered by the romantics, however, were used in a frame devised to subvert the established classical conventions. For the romantic poets "renewal" meant "revolution". In the case of writers of the Anglo – Irish Revival, the regeneration motif was sometimes associated with the idea of liberation from British rule, other times the wooing lost its renewal connotation gaining significance as part of a historical romance.

For Lady Wilde (1971), for instance, the case of Étaín's wooing is a political case: Ireland has been the setting of glorious events in the past. Lady Wilde (1971) knows that for her ancestors Étaín was a symbol of welfare and happiness. Étaín has brought it to her people in what the writer perceives as a motherly gesture. This and Étaín's association with the land leads to her being identified with Ireland; Ireland is thus personified.

The process of renewal according to the mythological regeneration discourse gains under external historical and cultural pressure political and revolutionary connotations. In the romantic Revivalist cultural paradigm the

sacred relationship between the audience and the text established through discourse had been corrupted to some extent.

In the mythological paradigm the significance of the regeneration motif is of sensual joy (in the profane space) and sensual participation to a divine mystery – a hierophany – (in the space of the sacred).

For the writers of the Revivalist group liberation from British rule would be equal to the joy felt with the coming of spring. Regaining of freedom is associated with the mystery of rebirth and recreation, the promise of a new beginning. However, the semantic field generated by the regeneration motif does not include the recreation of the whole universe and all life, but of a single nation. The mythical significance has been lost to make room for political significance.

But this is not always the case with all the literary productions of the Revival.

In some other stories by Lady Wilde (1971), Étaín (now Edain or Eodain) and Mider (now Midar) are characters in a romance story of classical type. Midar's association with Edain is perceived as enforced by the faery king, presented here as a demon rather than a godly character of great importance. Midar and his fairies are eventually punished by the Christian God and Edain returns to her king proudly, with her faith in their love unmoved. And this is also the morale, of classical stock. Midar's wooing of Edain has lost its mythical substance, but perhaps Midar's demonic character is a remainder of the pagan rite as much as it is an anticipation of a romantic archetype. The wooing now signifies *challenge*. Edain is challenged to keep her integrity under difficult circumstances. The semantic field generated here by the regeneration motif exposes a rejection of the value of pagan rites (in a strong Catholic environment that is Ireland's). The newly generated semantic field builds on the associations between the regeneration pattern and the semantic field it originally generated (sensual joy) through a process of denial, under the pressures of a different cultural context (dominated by Christian and classical values). The audience doesn't partake of a great mystery of creation but learns a lesson of morality.

The romantic or classical reinterpretation of the mythological discourse is nevertheless a version of it. The characteristics of this version are to be found in those circumstances leading to the appearance of such literary conventions. Romanticism proposes a reading consumable so as to institute a code of behaviour that opposes another. The revivalist writers' audience is not the common folk concerned with crops and rejoicing with

the rebirth of nature, but an audience concerned with re-teaching values to the common folk so as to enlighten them and enable them to participate in what is romantically perceived as a better world.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The discursive structures of the regeneration motif in Irish literature emerge from the relationship between the wider historical and cultural contexts, the audience and the spaces of signification within which these structures generate meaning.

The wider, external contexts provide discourse with its structures of coherence, thus enabling it to convey meaning within a set of (literary) conventions. The semantic fields discourse generates are situated within a space of signification which can be accessed (and thus meaning can be acquired) on two different levels: the space of the profane (which gives mythological discourse its historical dimension and its story-ness) and the space of the sacred (which gives mythological discourse its a-historical dimension, a kind of ability to signify synchronically through a process which requires the audience's emotional participation and demands its situation in a realm outside history – the actual realm of myth – the Other-world).

The semantic field indicated by discourse in the profane space partakes of a historical field of signification. It is historically organised thus indicating events in the legitimated reality whose meaning includes dialectic. It therefore establishes itself a relationship of signification with the semantic field situated in the space of the sacred which accounts for the interstices of the organised structure. Mythological discourse borrows structures of coherence and signification from its external contexts and its legitimacy as a structural organisation from that which ensures structurality: dialectic. The mythical meaning such structures convey besides dialectic and historicity is the meaning acquired in the space of the sacred.

Since, in order to be available, such sacred meaning needs to be organised along the crystal like lines of a structure, its essence within gains expression according to the structural organising principles dictated by historical and cultural contexts. It is defined and explainable according to these principles, yet itself remains as such within the sacred space.

Regeneration as semantic field gains expression as a sequence of events in a regeneration pattern appropriated by a literary (or artistic) text, situated in a definable relationship with its contexts. The process of acquiring the text's meaning - be that not of historicity and dialectic,

wrapped up within the folds of contexts, which provide historical and cultural perspective - is a process of participation in the mythical event of Creation, of partaking of the Creation's very essence.

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## NADINE GORDIMER: THE ROAD BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE ARABIAN WORLD

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Nadine Gordimer is the novelist who has been playing a leading part in writing South African history ever since the publication of her first short stories. In her entire work she has protested against apartheid, and, after its abolition, against the attacks of both white and black military groups on civil population. I have chosen three of her novels to present the situation in South Africa before and after 1991 (which is the year when all the apartheid laws were abolished): *July's People*, *None to Accompany Me* and *The Pickup*. to illustrate Gordimer's change of focus from the African to the Arabian world. The first two novels clearly present South Africa and its towns or villages whereas *The Pickup* illustrates Gordimer's change of focus from the African to the Arabian world but she does not situate its characters in a specific Arabian country: any country having a desert and a Muslim people could represent the setting of her novel.

In this respect, I shall analyse some differences and similarities between the situations in the two worlds as presented by Gordimer, the impact that white people have on the two societies and the influence of these societies on Gordimer's characters (in order to be able to 'trace' the road that I have mentioned in the title of my paper).

*July's People* was published in 1981 and it explores the effects of the civil war on an ordinary white family, who is forced to take up the status of 'refugee' at their black servant's village. It seems that the topic of this novel was influenced by the events that started in Soweto in 1976. The riots in this South African town, which was built during apartheid to house African people who lived in an area designated for white settlement, were caused by the government's decision to impose education in Afrikaans rather than English or one of the African languages. The riots then extended to all large towns in the country. There is an explanation for the riots in the novel relating the strikes of 1980 not with industrial chaos but with people's feelings and state: the black workers were 'hungry, angry and workless' before and after the strikes. It is a continuous state and an endless situation related to other past riots and inevitable future ones: "since the pass-burning

of the Fifties, since Sharpeville, since Soweto '76, since Elsie's River 1980 it seemed that all was quietening down again." (Gordimer, 1982:8)

Maureen and Bamford Smales, the main characters in *July's People*, are too frightened to fly away to another country as they have heard rumours that planes are targeted by different military/ paramilitary forces without taking into account whether they carry civilians or not. The Smales and their three children are accompanied by July, a black servant, who is taking them to his village.

Nadine Gordimer brilliantly analyses the marital and family relationships in harsh circumstances when the world, as the characters know it, collapses and the struggle for survival becomes life itself. Food and water are more important than children's upbringing and the sexual relationship between the spouses is reduced to a single act triggered by the joy of having fresh meat instead of mealie-meal for dinner. Although life in the city is also a continuous struggle, living deprived of usual objects (such as toilet paper) or finding other objects useless or meaningless (such as the gadget for taking labels off clothes when brought from the dry-cleaners' without breaking your nails) makes the white family be aware of the black community that they tolerated by ignorance. Under the influence of the new society, Maureen's character transforms from a careful and loving city-mother to a refugee and then to an individualistic survivor. As a refugee she understands that she cannot control what happens around her and she has to accept everything as it comes. The huts that form July's village are a 'dump' for her and, despite reality, her desire is to keep her children away from the 'dump'. She is disappointed seeing them adopting the other children's behaviour and language and asks herself if they could remember their previous education and behave differently when they are brought back to town.

The moment when her daughter comes with a baby on her back, imitating the African women, scares Maureen although she is no racist. The white woman has always tolerated and tried to integrate 'the other' in her world and she remembers having given presents to July- useless things for her, in fact, having allowed him to bring his mistress into his own room, provided by her. All these small things counted when July let the white family in his own world, in the 'other' world as Maureen sees it; nevertheless, it is her world, which she considered superior, that is conquered little by little by 'the other'.

The change of power that has taken place - the white society is no longer 'the master'- is brought forward by another episode when the

younger white boy asks his parents to stop the other children from playing with and destroying his favourite toy. The parents cannot do anything but laugh and remember they cannot speak the 'other' language. Thus, the powerful tool they had in the city – English- is of no use here, as few of the inhabitants of the huts can speak English or Afrikaans and they are not by any means interested in learning them.

The fact that the black community tries to teach them neither their language nor any useful survival techniques shows that they will not change their position of refugees. July's wife, for example, lets Maureen believe that the plants they are gathering at a certain moment are for eating although they are for thatching the roof. Their decision to come to July's village is difficult to understand especially for July's wife who knows that "white people must have their own people somewhere. Aren't they living everywhere in this world?" (Gordimer, 1982:19) These are her thoughts translated for the reader by the narrator, because the two women, Maureen and July's wife, speak different languages and they do not make the slightest effort to understand each other.

Not even the fact that Bam Smales shoots down some hogs counts for the black community. Bam might have done it to gain respect or because his primary hunting instincts surfaced. Either way he achieves no more than bringing fresh meat to his family.

The white family had had a much bigger impact on the black community before they entered it, before they revealed to 'the other' that they are as powerless as they are in liminal situations. The people living in huts realised that things and technology could be removed and that the whites- the colonizers – are left similar with the colonized. It is only a matter of who has control of technology. For example, when Bam's car and gun disappear, the Smales can do nothing but blame each other and hope that things would come back to normality; they do not dare to do anything as they do not know what the result of reversing powers might be.

That is why, in the end of the novel, when Maureen hears the sound of a helicopter, she runs towards it not taking into account the fact that it might belong to opposite black forces and that she could be killed- but thinking of technology as the powerful instrument which enables white people to feel comfortable.

In *None to Accompany Me*, published in 1994, the apartheid regime has given way to a new kind of society: the one in which terrorist groups organise attacks on civilians in order to attract the attention of the government. "The effects of Apartheid are felt in *None to Accompany Me* in

the violence which is always a threat at the periphery of the characters' lives." (Şora; 2000:95) The civil war from *July's People* and the constant fear of being found guilty has changed into sporadic and unexpected bomb or grenade attacks. The fear of being hunted down has been transformed into the hope that what you see on TV or read in the newspapers will not happen to you and your family.

The center of the novel is again a marital relationship, as it is in all the three novels I have chosen, but under the post-apartheid circumstances it has a distinctive development, different from the relationship between Maureen and Bam Smales. However, the love relationships presented by Gordimer are not the main concern of this paper, although Kathryn Wagner has stated: "Gordimer's novels are, at bottom, middle-class romances". (Şora; 2000:105) There is more to be found in these novels than a mere soap-opera plot.

Vera Stark- a lawyer at the "Legal Foundation"- helps black people with land ownership; unlike Maureen, who is forced out of her family and becomes individualistic because of external factors, Vera decides for herself that there is no one to accompany her throughout her life. If Maureen has changed status from a colonizer to a refugee, Vera does not consider herself as belonging to the colonizer class. Not only does she help black people obtain land, but she also has as friends a black couple who has been forced into exile.

The "post-apartheid obsession with crime" (Şora, 2000:103) is reflected both in outside and inside events, the reference point being Vera Stark's life. One account is of a terrorist attack at a party in the Suburbs and another has Vera Stark as a central character: after a short visit to her black colleague's village, where his wife and children live, Vera and Oupa (her colleague) are attacked and robbed by armed men. They feel like "castaways in the immensity of the sky" (Gordimer, 1995:197) and the whole scene is summarized in a few words: "Tears and blood"; the same words that could be applied to any war-like conflict.

Vera is confronted with bloody events not only in her personal life but also at work. A white farmer, whom she has been trying to persuade to sell his land to black people, entered the houses where they lived without paying rent, 'the squatters' houses' as he calls them and started shooting. However, the white man's attack does not capture the attention of the newspapers.

One of the outside events which makes Vera understand how random these attacks are occurs when the Starks give a party to celebrate

their daughter's return, just to find out the next day that there was another wine-tasting party and the participants were attacked with "hand grenades and automatic rifles. Four revellers were killed, others injured," reads the newspaper (147). The news appears in all the newspapers, unlike the white farmer's attack upon the squatters. The Starks wonder if it could have been them thinking that a bishop declared it could have happened in the middle of a mass or anywhere else. The only disappointing thing is that "the whole outcry [was] merely because the victims were White." (148)

In *July's People* the Blacks are servants, while in *None to Accompany Me* they are employees and providers. Oupa's village resembles the huts from *July's People*- full of women and children waiting for the fathers to bring home food and clothes from the city: "These shelters provided for by men absent in cities fill up with women; in the all-purpose room were several and a baby or two, flies, heat coming from a polished coal stove." (193) The black society has always had an unwritten rule of women and children working together to feed their children and perpetuate the species. With the white society imposing its rules, men assume the role of providers who must go into the unknown land of the white towns and become like July or Oupa, servants or employees, or after the apartheid period, employers. July's wife was considered by Maureen a simple child-bearer without any other distinctive features; Oupa's wife is perceived by Vera as a lonely woman: "His wife stood aside- displaced by an arrival without a letter, without warning in the life she held together by herself; in her stance, the way her full neck rose, she alone, of all the other women, in possession of him; lonely. That was how Vera saw her and did not know she would never forget her." (194)

Nadine Gordimer's latest novel is *The Pickup* published in 2001. The beginning of the novel is set in post-apartheid South Africa but there is a quiet and more relaxed atmosphere than that from *None to Accompany Me*, that is, from the 1990s. A new element is introduced in the novel: the immigrant; and its introduction is neither for the sake of obtaining a controversial love relationship nor for the sake of exploring a new kind of romance. It is because the post-colonial and post-apartheid period made South Africa regenerate. This regeneration is taken for granted by people from less developed countries and for them South Africa is a habitat offering better working conditions and decent residence.

The plot is a romance: Julie Summers meets Abdu, falls in love with him and decides to follow him back to his country when his work permit expires. If the love story is simple, the presentation of the two countries is

elaborate; Gordimer characterizes them using her characters' thoughts and feelings and the events that take place in the characters' lives either as citizens or as immigrants. Both Julie and Abdu change identities from resident to emigrant and immigrant (Julie goes from South Africa to the Arabian country, Abdu from the Arabian country to South Africa, then back to his homeland and then, away from it, to America).

South Africa itself has changed identity: from a country as a battlefield to a country where people want to settle and whose customs and language they are ready to adopt.

In Abdu's eyes, South Africa is a land of freedom where everything can be accomplished if one works hard enough. He appreciates the fact that Julie and her friends can meet everyday at a café and talk to each other about anything (sex or AIDS) without taking into account the colour of their skin. However, there is a certain aversion towards Abdu's skin colour, although it is not formulated aloud by the characters. The narrator translates their thoughts and thus we learn that Abdu is seen as "black or some sort of black" (Gordimer, 2001:41). It is not easy to be neither black nor white in a country where inter-race marriages were permitted only a few years ago.

In *July's People* we were presented the black people's huts and their fight for food and water. In *None to Accompany Me* Vera's South Africa was the country where two races tried to reconcile and the whites had to make room for the blacks. In *The Pickup* Julie presents the Suburbs of South African towns, full of snobs receiving other nations or races because everybody else does it, without any real friends but living with the constant fear of being rejected by the social class they belong to. Julie Summers wants to leave the hypocrite society that surrounds her in order to find an ideal one.

As far as the Arabian country is concerned, Gordimer does not give any details for the reader to identify it. Abdu mentions two poets from the mediaeval period (Imru'al Qays and Antara), and they are considered as poets of Arabia and not belonging to a specific country. One reason could be that Arabian countries are generally seen as one world unified by religion, customs and traditionalism. Just as the African countries were once seen as a large territory for the colonizers to exploit, the Arabian world is now the playground for the colonizers' followers.

There is one quotation that best describes Gordimer's opinion about the Arabian countries, but it can also be applied to South Africa. Abdu's country is "one of those partitioned by colonial powers on their departure, or seceded from federations cobbled together to fill the vacuums of

powerlessness against the regrouping of those old colonial powers under acronyms that still brandname the world for themselves. One of those countries where you can't tell religion apart from politics, their forms of persecution from the persecution of poverty, as the reason for getting out and going wherever they'll let you in" (12), " a desert, corrupt government, religious oppression, cross-border conflict composite." (14)

The first thing that strikes Julie on her arrival in the Arab world is not the compulsoriness for women to wear a scarf on their head or to be accompanied every time they go out; it is the desert that fascinates her and that plays an important part in her decision to stay with her Arab family when her husband obtains the visa for the U.S.A. For Abdu the desert represents nothingness and the English-speaking countries are 'where the world is'. For Julie, the desert and the ghostly woman pasturing her goats in the middle of the immensity of sand become an obsession. She dreams of green and of buying a small part in an oasis where she can grow rice. She dreams of changing the place but she does not understand that the desert is eternal. Her husband tries to force her back into reality and tells her that the real money in the Arabian countries is made from selling and buying weapons. However, the violent side of the Arabian world is not presented in this novel.

Another similarity that can be found between the two worlds is the role of women, which is that of child-bearers and mothers. The image of African women carrying their babies on their backs or holding white children's hands on their way back from school overlaps with the image of the Arabian women gathered inside the house under the leadership of their mother-in-law waiting for their sons to be born and trying to find the best man/ provider for their daughters. The men from both cultures are at work- the Africans either in the mines or in towns as servants, the Arabs on the oil fields or abroad. The only apparent difference between the two cultures is the leader of the community: an older man in the case of South Africa, an older woman in the case of the Arabian countries.

The main topic of *The Pickup* is emigration or as Julie Summers calls it "relocation": "to locate: to discover the exact location of a person or a thing; 'to enter, take possession of'. To discover the exact location of a 'thing' is a simple matter of factual research. To discover the exact location of a person where to locate the self?" (47) 'To relocate' is the euphemism that people from the suburbs use in order not to see her as the emigrant who goes away because of political reasons or poverty, as her husband did.

Nevertheless, Julie understands emigration as an adventure and as a challenge to prove her love.

On the other hand, Abdu sees himself in South Africa as a “a burden on the state because he’ll steal someone else’s job, he will accept smaller payment than local men.” (19) Although he has an Economics degree he considers himself equal to the prostitutes coming from Congo or Senegal and ‘working’ in the café where Julie meets her friends.

His answer when he is asked what he does for a living is “many things, different countries” because this is the way of the immigrant: “if they don’t want you, say it’s not your country. You have no country.” (12)

The main problem of the immigrant, as well as that of the refugee is the impossibility to speak the language at all or the impossibility to speak it properly. Maureen, on the one hand, does not bother to learn the black people’s language; Abdu, on the other hand, tries very hard to speak English correctly. However, he feels helpless in front of the officials because he can communicate his ideas but he cannot pass the barrier of legalese and establish a real conversation with the authorities without Julie’s support as a translator.

Julie gives English lessons to the girls in the Arabian village in exchange for Arabic lessons. Although she does not know from the beginning of her arrival that she wants to remain there, she feels it as her duty and as a way of paying respect to the community that hosts her. The Arab girls are also interested in speaking English as they perceive the new language not as an intruder and a possible menace to their own language and culture but as a form of education, of learning more about the world outside their house, beyond the desert. Julie realizes it is difficult to understand the emphatic and metaphoric language of her mother-in-law, just as her husband has had difficulties with official English.

As a conclusion, the road between South Africa and the Arabian world is the emigrant’s road to another country away from conflict and war; it is the road between the diamond mines and the oil fields. It is either the road of the emigrant or the road of the refugee depending on the point of reference we have. It is the road between the colonized English-speaking and Christianized territory and the new, not-yet globalised Muslim territory. It is the road to anywhere else, there “where the world is” (230) as Abdu defines his America.

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## **BROTHERHOOD OF POETS**

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### **Walt Whitman**

As I ponder'd in silence,  
Returning upon my poems, considering, lingering long,  
A Phantom arose before me with distrustful aspects,  
Terrible in beauty, age, and power,  
The genius of poets of old lands,  
As to me directing like flame its eyes,  
With finger pointing to many immortal songs,  
And menacing voice, *What singest thou?* it said [. . .]

This is what Walt Whitman wrote in his verse “As I Ponder’d in Silence” (1995:3), as if he had wanted to give a classic example of what later Harold Bloom (1973) called the “anxiety of influence.” The menacing shadow hovering above the poet is nothing but the spirit of precursors, the great poets of the past. Their genius is a powerful challenge to the belated author, since the finger pointing to immortal songs of the past, and the question concerning the later poet’s literary activity in the present signal not only a possible direction to follow but also a kind of distrust. In Bloom’s (1973) theory of poetry the relationship between the “presursor” and the “belated” poet is based on the Freudian Oedipus complex that is the relation between father and son. Thus the precursor poet takes the role of the castrating father who does not only love his son but experiences envy, fear or even hatred towards him, while the belated poet, the son, who feels oppressed, is both a rival to the father, and a rebel against him.

Among the several American poets influenced by Whitman’s heritage, it is probably Allen Ginsberg who best represents this scenario. In his poem “A Supermarket in California” he addresses Whitman, “Ah, dear father, graybeard,” while he is trying to defy him: “What thought I have of you, Walt Whitman [. . .] I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old grubber, poking among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery

boys” (Vadon 1995:406). He is following Whitman in the supermarket rather doubtfully: “Where are we going, Walt Whitman? [. . .] Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past [. . .]? [. . .] lonely old courage-teacher, what America did you have when Charon quit polling his ferry [. . .]?” (407). Ginsberg’s mocking and impertinent voice certainly has its own complex reasons, namely the contradictions between the America promised and foreseen by Whitman, and the America experienced by the disillusioned and frustrated Ginsberg himself, but his criticism of his father/precursor poet is obvious.

In the following, however, I would like to concentrate on another kind of organizing force between the precursor and the belated poet, a connection that seems to be missing from Bloom’s (1973) theory. In this relationship, the most significant motif is not the negative experience of anxiety but, to the contrary, the positive feeling of desire. The belated poet’s attitude to his precursor is determined not by patriarchal oppression or the fight against it, but by mutual eroticism that cannot be interpreted within the Oedipal paradigm of the family romance.

As it was demonstrated above, Whitman was well aware of the burden that precursors put on their successors’ shoulders. That is why he turned to his followers,

Poets to come! orators, singers, musicians to come!  
Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for,  
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, [. . .]  
Arouse! for you must justify me.  
I myself but write one or two indicative words for the future, [. . .]  
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,  
Expecting the main things from you. (“Poets to Come” 1995:13)

Whitman has nothing to do with the role of the menacing father here, to the contrary, he has confidence in his followers, what is more, he encourages them to continue and surpass him. In “Starting from Paumanok” he recalls his own anxiety of influence again, “I conn’d old times, / I sat studying at the feet of the great masters, / [. . .] Dead poets [. . .]” (Whitman 1995:16), then declares that he will “make a song for these States,” “will sing the song of comradeship,” “the ideal of manly love,” “will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love,” and “will be the poet of comrades” (17). For decades, Whitman’s emphasis on comradeship and solidarity was explained only in light of his democratic vision of America in which these factors are certainly of central significance. For traditional criticism, this democratic and patriotic aspect was the only possible way of interpretation and

validation of Whitman's ideas about "manly love" and "adhesiveness." Besides, it can also be the binding force among artists or poets as well. Whitman envisions his precursors and successors—in his words "offsprings"—as a line or chain of brothers whose brotherhood is welded by love: "And you precedents, connect lovingly with them, for they connect lovingly with you" ("Starting from Paumanok" 16). However, there is a point in his poem where the depth of brotherhood goes beyond familial ties and reaches the level of intimacy and sultry eroticism which cannot be explained simply by democratic attachment among brethren. He turns to his follower again, "What are you doing young man?" (18) / [. . .] / What do you seek so pensive and silent? / What do you need camerado? Dear son do you think it is love?" (19). In the final stanza a strong erotic bond is established between the two men with such an exclusion of the outside world that goes straight against the idea of democratic brotherhood in the social or political sense.

O camerado close! O you and me at last, and us two only.  
O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly!  
O something ecstatic and undemonstrable! O music wild!  
O now I triumph—and you shall also;  
O hand in hand—O wholesome pleasure—O one more desirer and lover!  
O to haste firm holding—to haste, haste on with me. (26)

This ecstatic and "undemonstrable" relationship results in mutual pleasure. The "word" mentioned in the text may refer to the lovers' common interest, poetry, the art of words, which is destined to clear their path ahead of their immortality. But the "word," which clears the "path ahead," may as well be interpreted as the consenting word leading to the consummation of their love. In the first *Calamus* poem ("In Paths Untrodden") the path leads to a "secluded spot" where "manly attachment," "types of athletic love" can be celebrated, where body and soul "rejoices in comrades" (106). Writing and sexuality are closely related in Whitman as well as in his followers. As Thomas Yingling remarks, "the homosexual may become the homotextual" (1990:215). In his poem "So Long" Whitman offers his body in the form of his volume of poetry.

Camerado, this is no book,  
Who touches this touches a man,  
(Is it night? are we here together alone?)  
It is I you hold and who holds you,  
I spring from the pages into your arms—[. . .]

O how your finger drowse me,  
Your breath falls around me like dew, your pulse lulls the  
tympan of my ears,  
I feel immersed from head to foot,  
Delicious, enough. (452)

This is real love-making between the poet and his beloved (be it a common reader or another poet); the allusion to darkness and the pseudo-worried question “are we here together alone?” ironically recall the habit of secrecy and concealment. All of them are logically relevant only if the nature of this relationship is sexual, since reading a book of poetry at night would hardly need tactics like these. As he formulates it “In Paths Untrodden” his goal is “To tell the secret of [his] nights and days, / To celebrate the need of comrades” (106). If he had considered the notion of comradeship and brotherhood to be a strictly social/political issue, he would hardly have needed to connect it to secrecy, or to celebrate it in secluded spots “away from the clank of the world” (106). What is more, in “Song of Myself,” Whitman tries to seduce his follower by inviting him to spend the night together so that he could pass his poetic craft to him, “Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems? / Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems, [ . . . ] (27). This interpretation of passing the knowledge of the older poet to the younger one—the *eleve* (for Whitman) or the *ephebe* (for Bloom)—was characteristic of Greek love where education (Latin root: *e-ducere*) and seduction (*se-ducere*) were closely related to each other. In the Greek model of the educational pederastic relationship the adult lover acted as inspirer (*eispenelas*) and his adolescent beloved responded as hearer (*aĩtas*). This educational, “Socratic dialogue” between inspirer and hearer was an institution between a grown man and a boy, and may have led to intimacy on the adults’s part while the boy usually remained passive. Xenophon went as far as to speak of *breathing* love into beautiful boys in order to strengthen their modesty and self-control (Woods 1998:20-21). Whitman consciously takes the Greek pederast’s role in “Song of Myself” when he declares, “I am the teacher of athletes.” He talks about “[t]he boy I love” (80), while his instructing method is strikingly similar to that of Xenophon’s, “My words itch at your ears till you understand them” (81). In “To a Western Boy” he promises, “Many a things to absorb I teach to help you become *eleve* of mine; / Yet if blood like mine circle not in your veins, / If you be not silently selected by lovers and do not silently select lovers, / Of what use is it that you seek to become *eleve* of mine?” (124).

No wonder if—in “Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand”—Whitman addresses would-be poets as “the candidates for [his] love” (110), among whom he hopes to find his beloved as well: “Who is that would become my follower? / Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections?” (108). He wants to seal their attachment by offering himself, “Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you, / With the comrade’s long-dwelling kiss or the new husband’s kiss / For I am the new husband and I am the comrade” (109). His obsession to find a poet-lover is an ever-present motif in his poetry:

Camerado, I give you my hand!  
I give you my love more precise than money,  
I give you myself before preaching or law;  
Will you give me yourself? will you come to travel with me?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

(“Song of the Open Road” 146)

Traditional criticism (Ivor Winters, Allan Tate, R.W.B. Lewis, and others) has always downplayed the homoerotic element in Whitman’s work; it was only in the 1970s that a pioneering book of gay criticism, Robert K. Martin’s *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry* (1979) offered a sensitive analysis of this aspect. As Martin pointed out, Whitman’s heritage “is literally a call to join hands in fellowship and love,” he “repeatedly uses the hand to symbolize the act of friendship, the physical joining-forces of two men who shall remain comrades and lovers” (1979:161). Providing a voice for the homosexual in America, Whitman soon became an iconic figure for his successors, especially for those who could identify with him in this respect. This is why among gay poets Whitman’s work established a sense of gay community much earlier than this potential of his oeuvre was discovered by critics. As Martin observes, “The homosexual poet seeks poetic ‘fathers’ who in some sense offer a validation of his sexual nature. [. . .] The choice of a model like Whitman is, therefore, an important element of self-identification, an act of declaring one’s sexual identity and of placing himself in a tradition” (1979:148).

### **Hart Crane**

The poet who first took Whitman’s extended hand and followed in his footsteps was Hart Crane, who also repeatedly used the image of the hand when thinking of—and responding to—Whitman. The epigraph to “Cape Hatteras,” his homage to Whitman and a love poem at the same time,



him: "Come, I will take you down underneath this impassive exterior, I will tell you what to say of me" (Whitman 1995:114). In this poem Whitman portrays himself and his lover "wandering hand in hand, they twain apart from other men" (114), a vision internalized by Crane. What is more, he considers Whitman's heritage, "a pact, new bound, of living brotherhood" (39), as something "signalled to our hands" (41). Thus hands, together with the gaze and the rainbow, become the signifier of homosexuality. These motifs, and the apparent reference to lovemaking ("to bind us throbbing with one voice" [41]), convey the message that the literary brotherhood of poets (Whitman the muse) opens up the perspective of homosexual brotherhood (Whitman the lover) as well.

Much has been written about the fact that Crane followed in Whitman's footsteps as regards his effort to create a modernist vision of America in *The Bridge* (1930), an ambition clearly based on Whitman's legacy. He wanted to create a mystical synthesis of the United States "picking up where Walt Whitman had left off" (Robbins 1). In this sense, Martin is right when he points out that "Crane's relationship to Whitman might fall within Harold Bloom's category of tessera [a revisionary ratio in the poetic father-son relationship in Bloom's theory]. Crane completes [. . .] Whitman. That is to say, he makes Whitman into Crane" (1979:163). His identification, however, cannot be restricted only to the "sublimated," social/political/poetical level. As Martin contends, "Crane holds out his hand to Whitman and thereby forms a bridge of flesh" as well (161). His response to Whitman is a deep personal commitment; he takes his hand because he finds spiritual transcendence in homoerotic desire. Their relationship is not that of a father and son but just the opposite, an egalitarian form of affection tied to Whitman's democratic vision at the personal level as well. As Jeffrey Weeks puts it, "far from being a product of the Oedipus complex, as some Freudians imply," male homosexuality "constitutes a totally different mode of social relationships, no longer vertical, but horizontal" (qtd. in Yingling 1990:54), just as the bridge is "an image of horizontal organization" (Yingling 54).

This horizontality is the organizing force of brotherhood among those poets who accepted Whitman's or Crane's extended hands. Crane takes the hand of Whitman, Robert "Duncan [. . .] takes both their hands," as Martin observes in connection with the echoes of Whitman and Crane in Duncan's poetry (1979:175). Since "Whitman remains the most persuasive model for any gay poet writing in America" (Martin 1979:173), the line of those who responded to his call for brotherhood is long enough to be called

a tradition (Hart Crane, Fitz-Greene Halleck, Bayard Taylor, George Santayana, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Duncan, Thom Gunn, Edward Field, Richard Howard, James Merrill, Alfred Corn, just to mention those listed in Martin's book).

### **Tennessee Williams**

In the following, however, I would like to choose a name not mentioned in any kind of tradition of American poetry probably because of his canonical place in another genre, drama. Tennessee Williams's strong attachment to Crane contradicts the theory that the precursor's influence on the younger author is always burdened with anxiety, envy, conscious or unconscious rivalry. It also contradicts Martin's statement that "Crane [. . .] had little direct influence on the poets who followed him (1979:164), since in Williams's lesser known poetry Crane is of central significance.

Although he never met the poet in person, Williams kept the framed photograph of Crane (Rader 1985:256), and his fan sent him by Crane's mother (Brown 1974:267) in his room as his most precious memorabilia. In this respect he seemed to follow Whitman's instruction formulated in "Recorders Ages Hence": "hang up my picture as that of the tenderest lover" (Whitman 1995:114). He also carried Crane's slim works with himself everywhere, he often used citations from his poems as epigraphs to his dramas (e.g., *A Streetcar Named Desire*); references to his idol poet pop up again and again all through his oeuvre. His obsession with Crane culminated in his one-act play, "Steps Must Be Gentle," based on Crane's life, death, and relationship with his mother, Grace (see Dankó 2003). No wonder if Crane's influence can be detected in his own poetry which has always been considered "esoteric," a charge often brought up against Crane as well.

Williams thought of Crane as "a tremendous and yet fragile artist" (1975:3), "at his best [. . .] better than Whitman" (Brown 1974:267). He was first and foremost interested in his fellow poet's suffering. In *The Night of the Iguana*, for example, Hannah is trying to draw Shannon's portrait and complains what a difficult subject he is. Then she tells the story of the Mexican painter, Siqueiros, who had to paint Crane's portrait with closed eyes because "he could not paint his eyes open—there was too much suffering in them and he couldn't paint it" (1976:267). In his verse "Lament for the Moth" Williams depicts the sufferings of the sensitive. He announces that a plague has stricken the "velvety" and "lovely" moths, they are dying: "an invisible evil takes them away," since the "enemies of the delicate" are

everywhere. The poet makes a plea to the “mother of moths” with a troubled heart to give them strength “to enter the heavy world again, / for delicate were the moths and badly wanted / here in a world by mammoth figures haunted!” (1964:31). The images of both the moth and the mammoth figure are taken from Crane’s poems, in fact Crane often identified himself with the moth (Martin 1979:129). In his dramas, Williams was also haunted by the tragic fate of the fragile, many of his characters are such creatures destroyed by the harsh realities of the world (Blanche, Laura, Alma, and so on). The moth, however, can be interpreted as an image of not only the fragile spirit (in general), but also that of the persecuted homosexual. As Jacob Stockinger observed, “for the homosexual [. . .] a dialectical tension with a hostile environment is established, and studies concur that this conflict between self-denial and self-affirmation is the most marked feature of homosexual life” (1978:137). Crane tended to regard his homosexuality as a problem, he had guilty feelings about it, and was finally driven to suicide. Williams could deeply identify with this dilemma since he ironically characterized himself as “the most goddamn fucking puritan” (Jennings 1973:232). In this respect both of them differ from Whitman, who was able to experience his homosexuality in a healthy, bucolic way, as a kind of “rustic vagabondage” (Stockinger 1978:144).

There is, indeed, anxiety in Crane and Williams, although it is not that of influence but rather the mutual anxiety of homosexual desire. Probably this is why Williams was so obsessed with Crane’s suicide, “the daring aerial leap and outcry of Crane,” as he referred to it in his poem “Evening” (1977:42). His longing for Crane was demonstrated in his last will, too, namely that he also wanted to be buried at sea, as close as possible to the point where Crane jumped overboard (a request later neglected by his relatives). A codicil in his will meticulously provided for the disposition of his body: “Sewn up in a clean white sack and dropped over board, twelve hours north of Havana, so that my bones may rest not too far from those of Hart Crane . . .” (1975:117). His wish is far from mere biographical curiosity since its implications are much more complex.

As Stockinger observes, “one might trace the network of allusions among ‘homotexts’ ” (1978:146). Liquidity might as well be added to his list of common motifs: the constant references to rivers, sea, ocean, blood, semen, can equally be detected in Whitman, Crane, Williams, and other gay poets. In “Recorders Ages Hence,” for example, Whitman characterized himself as a person who “was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless *ocean of love* within him, and freely pour’d it forth” (1995:114, emphasis

added), but several other examples could be cited where love appears in the form of allusions to liquidity in Whitman's poems. The sexual imagery in Crane's "River," "Repose of Rivers," "Voyages," and other poems has also been analyzed by Martin and Yingling. In the latter's opinion, in gay poetry the sea is of special significance because of "the fantasy that life at sea represents [. . .] freedom and movement, an exotic space where male union might even be the norm" (Yingling 1990:208). Bathhouses, movie-theatres, islands, or other planets have similar function in Williams's gay utopia, just like Whitman's secluded spots "in paths untrodden," they are potential sites of gay desire and escape from the world. If we consider the sea as the locus of gay desire and union, Williams's encounter with Crane under the sea gains a new dimension. His annihilation is the consummation of love at the same time, a moment of both suffering and ecstasy, love and death or death-love according to the good old American tradition, as Leslie Fiedler pointed out in his book on the American novel (1966). In fact Williams's long row of tortured (beaten, burnt, castrated, lynched, torn apart, eaten, etc.) characters may probably be traced back to Williams's muse, Crane, in whom "sexual utopian fantasy is often figured [. . .] as death or ecstatic dismemberment" (Yingling 1990:43). But Williams's symbolic search for Crane at the bottom of the sea can be interpreted in the opposite way as well, as his quest for (sexual) union with his Platonic self, a restoration of lost twinship, "twin shadowed halves," or "brother[s] in the half"—a motif in Crane's "Recitative" (1958:95).

At the same time, the sea is not only the site of union but also the site of uncertainty for Williams. His quest for Crane is the quest for his homosexual self as well. In "The Diving Bell" he declares, "I want to go under the sea in a diving bell and return to the surface with ominous wonders to tell / I want to be able to say: 'The base is unstable'" (1977:68). His statement is strikingly resonant with Stockinger's assumption that because of the dilemma of identity conflict (affirming or denying homosexual identity), "[b]y need and by nature, the psycho-dynamic of the homosexual is fluid and could be called transformational" (1978:139). Although Yingling questions the naiveté of Stockinger's conception of the fundamental instability of the homosexual condition, or the decentered quality of homosexual identity—something that Guy Hocquenghem traces back to polyvocal desire—Williams's observation is in accordance with it: "No matter how deep you go / there's not very much below / the deceptive shimmer and glow / which is all for show" (1977:69).

As I have alluded to it, Crane and Williams basically differ from Whitman's boisterous view of manly attachment. One of the reasons why Williams was obsessed with Crane may have been that he found his own doubts and dilemmas justified by Crane's fate and ideas. In "Androgyne, Mon Amour" Williams portrays himself as a clown, Pierrot (whose figure often appears in Crane as well), an aging homosexual cruising in gay bars, lamenting on the dessicating experience of homosexuality: "And, frankly, well, they'd laugh at me, / thick of belly, thin of shank, / spectacle of long neglect, tragedian to public mirth" (1977:17). The poem seems to be inspired by Crane's "Cutty Sark," in the first part of which the poet meets a drunken sailor, a rootless and disillusioned homosexual, who expresses his adherence to the sea and liquid (water or semen?) in general: "O life's a geyser—beautiful—my lungs— / No—I can't live on land—!" (1958:30). Williams recalls this incident but, with a characteristic twist, he turns it into parody, as if he ironically wanted to summarize gay metaphysics, " 'Life!' the gob exclaimed to Crane, / 'Oh, life's a geyser!' / Oui, d'accord— / from the rectum of the earth." (1977:17). It is also a parody of Whitman's "The Base of All Metaphysics," in which "the basis of philosophy is the love of beauty, as Plato put it, and that the beautiful is best incarnated in a young man" (Martin 1979:88).

As Stockinger suggests, gay intertextuality offers a wide range of parallel motifs in "homotexts," a topic that goes well beyond the scope of this study. For example, references to eyes—the organs of the (gay) male gaze—are strikingly frequent due to their role in identifying other homosexuals and finding partners. The poems of Whitman, Crane, and Williams also abound in allusions to flame and fire as the sources of spirit and desire, and the means of purification. Similarly, the motif of orgasm as religion can easily be detected in all three of them. Hands and fingers are important expressive means of gay desire. They can give signals while cruising (hands in pocket repeatedly appear), hands can treat the wounds of soldiers or young men. Whitman's "Drum-Taps" may have inspired Crane's "Episode of Hands," which concludes with the mystical union of two men ("as the bandage knot was tightened / The two men smiled into each other's eyes" [Weber 1984:127]), and both of them may have influenced Williams's "Those Who Ignore the Appropriate Time of Their Going" (in which we can witness a similar scene when somebody is "gently, gently folding a bandage over the mouth of a wound" [1964:40]), but several other parallels could be cited.

Interestingly enough, Williams the poet, who has always been accused of internalized homophobia as a dramatist, was much more sensitive to the revolutionary flavour of Whitman's poetry, a motif that is missing from Crane. What is more, later he goes beyond Whitmanesque clichés and declarations like "the boys . . . I sing of these" ("One Hand in Space" 1977:29), or "I created comrades out of air" ("The couple" 1977:35), so as to present the more subversive nature of homosocial bonds. In the intimate genre of poetry, where he did not have to meet the requirements of censorship or satisfy the taste of Broadway directors and audience, Williams did visualize the gay revolution. In "The Dangerous Painters" he sets out from the situation of the closeted homosexual:

[ . . . ] and there would be always  
the goatlike cry of "Brother!"  
The cry of "Brother!"  
is worse than the shouting of "Fire!", contains more danger.  
For centuries now it has been struck out of our language  
except for private usage, in soundproof walls. (1964:64)

Brotherhood is certainly interpreted here as the solidarity of closeted homosexuals, the very existence of whom means "danger" to society according to popular belief:

These paintings, I said, would prove an excitation,  
a chance that could startle this fierce, intolerable cry  
[ . . . ] The paintings would be  
a kind of formicary, a racial hive  
[ . . . ] the materials of it, the stuff of hunger,  
the matrix of human longing that licks with flame (1964:64)

Then he talks about the outcast nature of his rebels, who, in another poem appear as "freaks of the cosmic circus" ("Caroussel Tune" 1964:95)

These men, I said, are quiet and dangerous persons,  
[ . . . ] their eyes assess the value of your jewels  
What do they fit? Not one convenient label (1964:66)

He draws the conclusion that

[r]evolution only needs good dreamers.  
At night they will start, pressing thumbs to their ears,  
sensing the imminence of their dream's explosion!  
Do you want that?

He smiled and said, I came for no other reason! (1964:67)

Williams's revolutionary fervour may sound surprising especially if we consider that he wrote this poem in 1943, quarter of a century before the Stonewall riot and the beginning of the gay liberation movement. His non-canonical place as a poet may be blamed for the fact that this tone of his voice remained unnoticed at the time and, as a matter of fact, has been neglected ever since. Accordingly, Yingling's following conclusion could also be modified, "Not until Ginsberg took up the question of Whitman's utopian vision in the mid-1950s (in *Howl* especially) did the question of sexual experience come again to the fore of American thought in its relation to utopian energy and social critique" (1990:214).

### **Conclusion**

Although not elaborating upon it, Bloom tells us that poetic influence is "a destruction of desire," since the grandeur of the precursor ominously hovers above the belated poet and inhibits him in a way that he cannot realize his creative potential. Towards the end of his book, however, even Bloom seems to be puzzled when he observes a phenomenon diametrically opposed to his theory, namely that "Whitman appears at times too enraptured by Hart Crane" (1973:154). In this case his observation is acute: the intimate relationship of Whitman, Crane, and Williams shows that poetic influence may be based on desire, mutual longing and affection, and "brotherhood" can mysteriously connect poets through decades or even centuries.

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## DISTURBING VISION: THE NOVELS OF JANICE GALLOWAY

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Janice Galloway's vision is disturbing, to the same extent to which Galloway can be said to be disturbing vision: on the one hand, she consciously and programmatically perturbs our habits of looking at a text – in both the narrow sense (that of *vision* as optical perception) and the wider sense (*vision* as perspective, set of ideas about the world). On the other hand, her vision is *disturbing* due to the fact that Galloway's view of the world, thus perturbed, often becomes acutely unsettling, sometimes by depth and acuteness of sensation, other times by deliberately deranging and upsetting our categories.

Surprisingly perhaps, most readings of Galloway's novels fall into two main directions: one 'postmodern' and textualist, discussing issues of fragmentation suggested by the writer's experimental technique, and one 'political', focusing on such themes as Scottishness, femaleness, and woman's predicament in patriarchal Scotland. Marshall Walker, for instance, speaks of Galloway as part of the "tradition of Scottish feminist moral fiction" (Walker, 1996:218). What this paper proposes is a close reading of Galloway's first two novels (*The Trick is to Keep Breathing* and *Foreign Parts*) in an attempt to examine the degree to which the experimentation with the structures of the text and its visual quality functions as an intrinsic part of the novel to enhance its effect, or floats on the surface of the text in a merely decorative manner. The concept of graphological deviation, as discussed by Short (1996) and Simpson (1997), will be used to explicate the ways in which the text re-constructs meaning by using visual means, and correlated with other strategies of manipulating *vision*.

In a 2000 interview, Galloway defines the roots of her experimentalism as an attempt to construct a new voice defined as *perspective, way of seeing*: "My work is to ask 'What is it like to be an intelligent woman coping with the late twentieth century?' That's it. I want to write as though having a female perspective is *normal* which is a damn sight harder than it sounds. I don't think people tend to regard "women's priorities" as in any way normal: so-called *women's issues* are still regarded as deviant, add-on, extra. Not the Big Picture. Women have written a lot of

novels of course - that's the traditional way for women to try and record their truths, in the subterfuge, if you like, of novels. The structures and *normal* practices of both politics and the law make it difficult for women to speak as women directly because there's little accommodation for a female way of seeing. I think women's traditional attraction to fiction is just that - a go at reconstructing the structures" (Galloway, in Leigh March, 2000:1).

Thus, Galloway's experiments are mostly experiments in manipulating *vision* and *perspective*. Both *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* and *Foreign Parts* focus on female characters who are usually silent, but who have acute sensorial (mostly tactile and visual) experiences. They make sense of the world by looking around, by watching TV, by reading and writing, and are shaped by the way in which they perceive the world. In *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* we are presented with the first person narrative of a young woman (Joy) who suffers a nervous breakdown after the death of her partner in a swimming accident and desperately tries to reorganise the world around her by resorting to reading columns in popular magazines, making lists of the things she is supposed to do, and lists of the things she can do to fill her time. *Foreign Parts* is the story of two friends on a holiday in France, who look at the foreign world with their own (female and culturally determined) eyes, but whose perception is shaped by regular readings from a guidebook which seldom proves of any use. In both these cases, looking at the world (or reading the world) is equated with interpreting, ordering, making sense of reality, and coping with its constant refusal to make sense.

Textual experimentation encodes a similar experience for the reader (also turned into a viewer) by means of graphological deviations. The text is made to offer a visual spectacle which forces the reader to reconstitute the characters' experience, and plays with the very position of the reader within the text by using shifts in point of view and narrative voice.

Both novels begin in disturbance, with the reader exposed to alienation and invited to construct his own schemata that will help him or her make sense of the fictional world. The opening of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* breaks the text across rows in mid-sentence, in an attempt to emphasise defamiliarisation, and the character's sense of being estranged from herself and disembodied (Galloway, 1991:7):

I watch myself from the corner of the room sitting in the armchair, at the foot of the stairwell."
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In what follows, we watch alongside with Joy her body turning into an almost Gothic and entirely uncontrollable otherness, which the character feels has to be annihilated by any available means – hence the recurring symptoms of anorexia, and the imagery related to invisibility. To add to the disruption of reading habits, the reader also has to gradually make sense of the alternation of two registers and to ultimately identify one as retrospective and explanatory. In *Foreign Parts* the reader has to cope with three different registers over the first five pages, and is invited to undertake the same forbidding task of finding patterns and meanings in a text which refuses to readily yield them. In both novels there are two main registers (one which develops the main narrative stream and one which consists of flashbacks of the main character), clearly differentiated graphologically (and in *Foreign Parts* also ‘clarified’ by shifting between the first person and the third person). Galloway actually manages the improbable task of creating tension by the alternation of narrative registers and by the gradual revelation of the background and psychology of her characters. A device which is not unlikely to confuse turns into one that creates momentum, as the reader is made to speculate about the link between the main narrative thread and the register of flashbacks which may, or may not explain what is happening, and is forced by the uncertainty of the text into a more fluid, less rigid type of response.

The challenges Galloway poses to the reader’s visual habits seem to have the same purpose. Perhaps the most telling illustration of the character’s state in the first pages of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* is visual (Galloway, 1991:14):

The first time we came, there were two sets of numbers on the door; one large and black; the other brass and much smaller. Like this:	
<i>13</i>	13
We laughed and left them on, wondering if the previous tenants had been amnesiacs or phobics. When I came back alone, I took both sets off. There are four little holes on the door where they used to be	
:	:

The numbers (charged with potentially misleading meaning, but doubly definite) are replaced by the semicolons, exquisitely indefinite, a graphic suggestion of inbetweenness, of an absence which promises a

presence, of something which is to follow, but is not yet quite there – much the same state that Joy is in.

Joy's habits of looking are mostly passive in nature. She watches television and reads the advice columns in women's magazines, in search of something to shape her from the outside, as she feels powerless to shape anything from the inside. Rather than her perspective on the world, this inert vision is a suicide of the intelligence, a means to conjure up and amplify numbness. When Joy does surrender to her own perception of the world, it is amplified to grotesqueness. She gives obsessive 'slow motion' accounts of the very concrete, mundane world around her, made up mostly of the ingredients of everyday life and the home, upon which Joy projects her own fears: the carpet bleeds and sucks at her soles, a biscuit wrapper can turn into a monster and threaten to creep out of the dustbin to attack her, in an epitome of anorexia.

The best she can do is write lists, in an attempt at ordering the chaos and setting herself in motion by the illusion of a content (Galloway, 1991: 40):

I watch the ceiling till it's light enough to make lists. Sunday Mornings I make a lot of lists.
---

The quotation is typical of Galloway's use of graphological deviation. The capitalisation in 'Sunday Mornings' suggests the way in which the institution of 'Sunday Mornings' shapes lives, and requires a certain type of approach to existence: sitting in bed, reading newspapers, cooking (although Joy never eats), making lists of things to do (although she has nothing to do and nothing to look forward to).

Joy is a drama teacher, and she feels the pressure of having to define herself by her status as a teacher, a notion she is trying to make sense of by making yet another list (Galloway, 1991: 12):

I teach children. I teach them: 1. routine 2. when to keep their mouths shut 3. how to put up with boredom and unfairness 4. how to sublimate anger politely 5. not to go into teaching That isn't true. And then again, it is. I am never sure what it is I do.
---

Tension in the fragment once again arises from the very use of graphological deviation. The contrast between the systematic and matter-of-

fact form and the ambiguous, detached-but-emotional content suggests that trying to shape and explicate experience is both cynical and slightly ridiculous, and yet a necessity vital to any human being.

Towards the end of novel, Joy is forced into several acts of self-reflexiveness, ultimately resulting in a sense of hope. One of these is dramatised by a very effective use of a switch in point of view (Galloway, 1991:191):

A mirror spread out behind the space where he had been. There was a woman in the frame, gawping, the fountain bubbling up at her back. She was listening to a distant kiddy-ride playing Scotland the Brave. Her coat was buttoned up wrong so the collar didn't sit right, the boots scuffed and parting from the sole. The hair needed washed and combed and my eyes were purple. I looked like a crazy-woman/ wino/ raddled old whore.

The reader is made to participate in the character's alienation and self-discovery by the shift in perspective, as Joy's gaze seems to slowly acquire a sense of objectivity and stability.

*Foreign Parts* is pervaded by the same sense of inadequacy in making sense of the world, this time not the result of a nervous breakdown, but of life itself. Galloway's travellers just 'run about like hell SEEING things' (1995:135), as Cassie says at one time. They look at things, are made and taught to look at things, they try to freeze them in snapshots, but they are never initiated into anything: they stay painfully the same, stuck with their own culturally shaped perspective. In both books, the lives of the characters seem pre-written by the things they read or watch, by the things their culture teaches them to look at, and the way their culture teaches people to look at them. In *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* the magazines and horoscopes seem to make invasive attempts at shaping Joy's existence. In *Foreign Parts*, Cassie and Rona's moves are dictated by their guidebook. However, the reader is not left with a sense of an oppressive, prescriptive force, but rather with the sensation that life is too fluid to be formed by any pre-encoded perspective. The two women's visit to Chartres is preceded by the ritual of reading the guidebook – quite obviously a translation from French –, set apart as a register in its own right by graphological means (the text is framed by a border, indented more than the other registers, and abounds in capitalisations for the purpose of emphasis) (Galloway, 1995: 76):

Medieval CHARTRES and the lower town, its humpback bridges spanning the river Eure has charm and an unselfconscious ease with itself seldom found in the modern world. For above all, CHARTRES is its cathedral: a massive, uncompromising yet serene structure which rises heart-stoppingly out of the surrounding arable plains. Indefinable, indefatigable, CHARTRES cathedral comes close to the impossible ideal of perfection.

What the two travellers actually record are glimpses of ordinary life: “The odd soul running with a loaf under an arm, people pulling curtains”. To Cassie Chartres looks like Edinburgh, whose “stretched stone people” and empty streets refuse interaction, refuse to make an existential impact on the traveller, and are “indifferent to being happened upon” (Galloway, 1995: 77). The text of the guidebook is as irrelevant to, and distinct from the characters’ actual experience as the two appear on the printed page.

When, finally, inside the cathedral, the sight of the huge stained glass windows proves overwhelming, the experience is re-enacted for the reader via graphological means: the word ‘glass’ is repeated in a tall column along a whole page (Galloway, 1995:99). This re-enactment of experience is what the reader is made to undergo throughout the novel. The beginning of Chapter 3, for instance, reconstitutes by manipulating the aspect of the text what (and how) the characters see as they are driving towards Paris (Galloway, 1995:29):

<b>COCA COLA</b>		
KODAK		
	AKAI	NIKON
SIEMENS		LEVIS
Well?	Beside a line of cars not moving, the ringroad sign. Rona held the wheel,	
waiting.	Well? D'you want a look at Paris or not?	

Thus, the fragmentariness of the text echoes the fragmentariness of the world, while graphological deviation is turned into a mechanism of mimesis.

In the same time, the various registers are not ascribed to one narrative thread only. Once a pattern begins to emerge, linking one graphological register to one level of the narrative, Galloway resorts to internal deviation and plays with connections between plans (for instance, dreams are at a certain point printed in a graphic key normally ascribed to

the register of the flashback, suggesting an overlap of the two). In *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, the register that normally occupies the margin of the page, containing words which seem to slip off the printed page, usually suggests feelings and thoughts pushed back into the subconscious; towards the end of the novel these thoughts gain centrality on the page, as they gain centrality in the consciousness of the main character. Vision as a way of looking at the text goes hand in hand with vision as a way of looking at the world.

Thus, with all its experimentalism and challenge to literary norms, Galloway's writing is pervaded by a strong sense of commitment to the idea of being relevant to 'the world out there' – the world outside the literary text. Galloway's stance is not a textualist one, which is perhaps why she is usually classified with the militant, missionary, agenda-driven writers (feminist, nationalist etc). Whatever the case may be, she is imperative about the fact that her fiction is firmly anchored in life and experience, and does not aim at gratuitous textual experimentation. As she says in a review, placing emphasis on the words 'true' and 'real', "It is only then, through being true to what you feel to be real through the skin, the soles of your feet and the voice that issues from your mouth, being true to your emotional and linguistic place on the landscape, that there is the vaguest hope of reaching and touching other people" (Galloway, 1995). She defines her own feminist and nationalist stance as a mere result of her commitment to rendering life sincerely, that is not as a moralising attempt at modifying extra-textual realities, but as a humble recognition that these realities are bound to shape the text.

Galloway's experimentation is thus not as much deconstructive, as constructive, subordinated to aesthetic effect and intrinsic to the novels' approach to the world, as the novel reconstitutes an experience of reality which the reader is coaxed, and occasionally forced to re-enact in its complexity, inconsistency, and refusal to be labelled.

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## HUNGRY FOR STORYTELLING - TONI MORRISON'S *BELLOVED*

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What surprised me most on reading Toni Morrison's *Beloved* was the ambiguity of Beloved's status and the author's skill of maintaining it while giving clues for the reader to interpret at the same time. These clues place Beloved either in the realm of reality or in that of the fantastic. But most readers give prevalence to one and ignore the other. This paper analyses three narrative threads that guide the reader and illustrates how the symbol of *hunger* supports each of them.

Even if the importation of slaves to the United States was banned in 1807, historical research suggests that violations extended well into the 1850s and 1860s. The first realistic explanation for Beloved's presence in the novel is that she is an actual survivor of the Middle Passage, and Toni Morrison includes details that sustain this possibility.

When Denver asks Beloved about the world "over there," and Beloved responds: "I'm small in that place. I'm like this here.' She raised her head off the bed, lay down on her side and curled up[...] 'Hot. Nothing to breathe down there and no room to move in[...] A lot of people is down here. Some is dead'" (75), the reader finds it difficult to decide whether Beloved is talking about death, the Middle Passage, or both.

Beloved's voice is described as having a cadence "not like Denver's and Sethe's"(60), possibility indicating an African accent. Her forehead is marked with fine lines that Sethe interprets as "fingernail prints" (202) from when she held the child, but that could also be African tribal marks of identification. Furthermore, in her inner monologue (210-13), Beloved describes a number of details congruent with the Middle Passage: crouching in the hold of a ship next to dying bodies, bodies thrown overboard, starvation and dehydration, sexual abuse, and finally the loss of a woman who looks like her own mother. If we read Beloved as an actual survivor of the Middle Passage who mistakes Sethe for her long lost mother, then statements like "I don't have nobody" (65) and her accusation that Sethe "never waved goodbye or even looked her way before running away from her" (242) have a certain logic. Throughout the novel, Denver, one of the main focalisers, sees these recollections as a commentary on the afterlife. The two possible interpretations mingle in the mind of the reader.

Another realistic explanation overlapping with the previous is Beloved's status as a sexually abused woman kept prisoner all her life by a white man. This possibility is suggested by her statement that "she knew one whiteman", which Sethe interprets as her having "been locked up by some whiteman for his own purposes, and never let out the door" (119). Beloved seems to describe sexual abuse when she tells Sethe that "one of them [a white man] was in the house I was in. He hurt me" (215). It is interesting to notice how the supernatural dimension dominates, even if this realistic thread is followed up to the final section of the novel when Stamp Paid informs Paul D. that there "was a girl locked up in the house with a whiteman over by Deer Creek. Found him dead last summer and the girl gone. Maybe that's her. Folks say he had her in there since she was a pup" (235). If Beloved is this girl, a number of troubling textual details are explained: her repeated descriptions of what seems to be sexual abuse, her fear of men like Paul D., her child-like vocabulary, and her emotions of abandonment.

In what way does hunger support this first hypothesis?

Sugar invokes the history of slavery, having been one of the main products of slave plantations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The name of the farm where Beloved is born, Sweet Home, acts as a reminder of this, and the knowledge that many slaves were bred to work on sugar plantations reveals a painful irony in the line "It was as though sweet things were what she was born for" (55).

Beloved is characterized by insatiability, she is always craving for sweets, which become a parodic expression for her personal bitterness. Her hunger mirrors the hunger suffered by almost all the other characters in the book, thus suggesting that she is a representation of cultural discontent. On the farm, the slaves are made to hunger physically, sexually, and psychologically, and Sethe recalls that she was deprived of her own mother's milk, fed by a wet nurse only after she had finished feeding white babies. The hunger that Baby Suggs has had to repress in order to survive as a slave erupts on the day she is freed, when she suddenly feels "hungrier than she had ever been in her life" (144). Although she has food as a free woman, she dies "starved for color"

The second lead in the novel takes the reader into the realm of the fantastic. Beloved appears to possess information that only Sethe's deceased child could know. For example, she speaks of Sethe's lost earrings, and she sings a song Sethe claims she had made up and taught to her own children. Beloved has a scar beneath her chin identical to the one Sethe marked her child with on killing it. Beloved has somehow the same name as Sethe's

child. Having “buried” her child before naming her, Sethe refers to her by using the capitalised adjective from her gravestone – “dearly beloved”. Beloved seems to have supernatural powers (to disappear, to move Paul D. from room to room or to choke Sethe from afar). As readers, we could find realistic explanations for these events (coincidence, hallucination, lust, self-mutilation), but as the text continues we do not. Morrison's own comments appear to support the idea that there are realistic and supernatural ways of reading this character. In an interview with Marsha Darling (1978:247), Morrison comments that Beloved should be read as both Sethe's dead child and a survivor/ghost of the Middle Passage. In a later interview with Angels Carabi (1995:43), Morrison posits that Beloved could either be “a ghost who has been exorcised or she's a real person pregnant by Paul D.” The point is, as Morrison says, that “when you see Beloved toward the end, you don't know”.

The symbol of hunger supports this supernatural interpretation if Beloved's insatiable desire for sweet foods is linked to her cannibalistic behaviour toward Sethe. After she rematerialises, Beloved devours such things as “Honey as well as the wax it came in, sugar sandwiches, the sludgy molasses gone hard and brutal in the can, lemonade, taffy and any type of dessert Sethe brought home from the restaurant” (55).

Ironically, when Sethe, Denver, and Paul D first meet Beloved, Sethe thinks that the young girl looks poorly fed, and when she decides to let her stay in her house, she explains to Paul D that “Feeding her is no trouble” (67). However, Denver knows that Beloved is “greedy” (209), and Sethe notes that the longing in her eyes is “bottomless” (58). But Beloved becomes voracious: “She took the best of everything first. The best chair, the biggest piece, the prettiest plate, the brightest ribbon for her hair” (241). Her desire is nevertheless impossible to quench and matched only by her craving for the sweetness of mother love. Her hunger for food and affection soon merge as she begins to devour Sethe metaphorically. Beloved cannot take her eyes off her mother: “Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved's eyes” (57). She grows “plumper by the day” (239), while her mother becomes physically and emotionally emaciated: “Beloved ate up her life, took it, swelled up with it, grew taller on it. And the older woman yielded it up without a murmur” (250).

Her touch, “no heavier than a feather”, is “loaded, nevertheless, with desire”, and her gaze contains a “bottomless longing” (58). Ignoring the other family members' attempts to enforce their domestic norms, Beloved pursues a kind of symbiosis with Sethe, a relationship that will ultimately eliminate all other contact. Sethe “is the one I need”, she tells Denver, “you

can go but she is the one I have to have" (76). 124, she says, is "the place I am" (123). In Beloved's infantile "romance", the figure of her mother reflects her vision of selfhood. Because her desire for Sethe is for an impossible reversal of loss and because her fragile sense of identity depends on the equation of Sethe-mother-self holding, she lives in constant danger of falling out of existence, a danger symbolised by her "two dreams: exploding, and being swallowed" and has "difficulty keeping her head on her neck, her legs attached to her hips when she is by herself" (133).

The third possibility of answering the question about who or what Beloved is, is put forward through the points of view of Paul D and Stamp Paid who say that she may be a double of those who are not at peace with themselves.

Stamp Paid confirms that initially Beloved is seen only by Sethe, Denver, Paul D, and himself, each of them having an enormous burden of guilt, shame, sadness, and fear. When Paul D tells Stamp that he doesn't know where Beloved comes from, Stamp Paid reveals Beloved's mercurial visibility: "*Huh. Look like you and me the only ones outside 124 lay eyes on her*" (234). When Paul D asks Denver about the identity of Beloved, "*you think she sure enough your sister?*" Denver responds, "*at times. At times I think she was more*" (266). Finally, Paul D. offers his rhetorical question as a solution "*but what if the girl was not a girl, but something in disguise?*" (127).

The novel's four soliloquy chapters (200-204, 205-209, 210-213, and 214-217), spoken in the voices of Sethe, Denver, Beloved, and a merged chapter containing both Beloved and Denver's voices, summon the most agonized memories of each of the characters as they journey through their actual and ancestral pasts, as each attempts to claim Beloved as a part of themselves, as each names her "mine".

Beloved is repeatedly described as fragmented, split off, shattered; unlike Sethe, Beloved has knowledge of the splitting self, which Morrison indicates when the narrator in the novel observes that "*among the things [Beloved] could not remember was when she first knew that she could wake up any day and find herself in pieces*" (133).

In fact, all the African American girls and women in the novel are versions of Beloved, and finally, so too are the men. Toni Morrison is explicit in describing Beloved as a projection of the thoughts and feelings of every character who actually sees her. After coming to terms with their burdens of the past, their sense of fragmentation disappears and Beloved's two recurrent dreams about exploding and being swallowed acquire a meaning, anticipating her disappearance.

“After they made up their tales, shaped and decorated them, those that saw her that day on the porch quickly and deliberately forgot her. It took longer for those who had spoken to her, lived with her, fallen in love with her, to forget, until they realized they couldn't remember or repeat a single thing she said, and began to believe that, other than what they themselves were thinking, she hadn't said anything at all. So, in the end, they forgot her too. Remembering seemed unwise”. (274)

The beginning of the novel suggests that Beloved is literally an aspect of Sethe. In the opening lines, the reader is told of a house that is haunted, a house that is “*full of a baby's venom*”, yet it is Sethe, not Beloved, who is later described as a poisonous snake: “*down in the grass, like the snake she believed she was, Sethe opened her mouth, and instead of fangs and a split tongue, out shot the truth*” (17). While fleeing Sweet Home, poised to strike an intruder who turns out to be Amy Denver, Sethe also specifically sees herself as “a snake. All jaws and hungry” (31). The symbolism here is not accidental. Beloved's arrival announces Sethe's rebirth. Beloved is that serpent aspect of Sethe who is magical, dangerous but necessary, and potentially healing.

Another clue to Beloved as a double for Sethe includes Beloved's incredible thirst, prefigured by Sethe. When Sethe is found by Stamp Paid within hours of Denver's birth, Stamp gives her some smoking hot eel, but thirst overtakes her, she refuses the food, and instead “*She begged him for water and he gave her some of the Ohio in a jar. Sethe drank it all and begged more*” (90), an act mirrored by Beloved, who, on arriving at 124, “*gulped water from a speckled tin cup and held it out for more*” (51).

Beloved is also an aspect of Denver. Denver attempts to displace her loneliness and her fear of her mother, whose violent act she is aware of, with silenced rage and thus finds herself “*long[ing] for a sign of spite from the baby ghost*” (12). After two years of hearing nothing at all, Denver's hearing returns when she hears “*close thunder crawling up the stairs*” (103), the imagined sound of the baby ghost's footsteps. With Beloved's arrival as a potentially even more spiteful presence than the ghost, Denver frees herself from the rage against spending her childhood afraid that Sethe would take a handsaw to her too, and at the community's rejection of the family. Denver inhales Beloved, breathes her in, loves her in a way that she has never allowed herself to love her mother; Beloved's return is the antidote to Denver's “original hunger”, the period in her life in which she is cut off from Lady Jones' schoolroom and the world outside 124 after Nelson Lord has told her what her mother has done:

“For anything is better than the original hunger, the time when, after a year of the wonderful little i sentences rolling out like pie dough and the company of other children, there was no sound coming through. Anything is better than the silence when she answered to hands gesturing and was indifferent to the movement of lips. When she saw every little thing and colors leaped smoldering into view. She will forgo the most violent of sunsets, stars as fat as dinner plates and all the blood of autumn and settle for the palest yellow if it comes from her Beloved”. (121)

Denver's terror in the cold house at the idea of losing Beloved again strongly suggests that Beloved functions as a double for Denver, that for Denver to lose Beloved is literally not just to lose a much loved sister but to lose her own physical, actual self. In the game they play in the darkness Denver is scared of losing her:

“Beloved is not there. There is no point in looking further, for everything in the place can be seen at first sight. Denver looks [for Beloved] anyway because the loss is ungovernable.... If she stumbles, she is not aware of it because she does not know where her body stops, which part of her is an arm, a foot or a knee. She feels like an ice cake torn away from the solid surface of the stream, floating on darkness, thick and crashing against the edges of things around it. Breakable, meltable and cold.... This is worse than when Paul D came to 124 and she cried helplessly into the stove. This is worse. Then it was for herself. Now she is crying because she has no self. Death is a skipped meal compared to this”. (122-23)

Denver's loneliness produces a metaphoric hunger, a longing for a “taste of a life” (120), the result of being ostracized by a community that is disgusted by her mother's actions. Beloved's presence nourishes her, and helps her forget “the old hunger...the before-Beloved hunger” (120) Despite the chaos Beloved brings, Beloved's arrival allows Denver to have compassion for Sethe. In telling the story of her birth to Beloved, Denver tells it to herself and experiences her first real feelings of empathy. Beloved's hunger for words prompts her to feed her with stories. She begins to imagine what Sethe must have felt, feared, experienced. She imagines Sethe not as an all-powerful figure who has claimed the right of God in choosing who shall live and who shall die, but as a terrified pregnant young woman who attempted, against all odds, to protect her family:

“Now, watching Beloved's alert and hungry face, how she took in every word, asking questions about the color of things and their size, her downright craving to know, Denver began to see what she was saying and not just to hear it: there is this nineteen-year-old slave girl, a year older than herself, walking through the dark woods to get to her children who are far away. She is tired, scared maybe, and maybe even lost. Most of all she is by herself and inside her is another baby she has to think about

too. Behind her dogs, perhaps; guns probably; and certainly mossy teeth. She is not so afraid at night because she is the color of it, but in the day every sound is a shot or a tracker's quiet step. Denver was seeing it now and feeling it through Beloved. Feeling how it must have felt to her mother". (77-78).

Beloved, whom Denver regards as a potential agent of revenge, becomes instead an agent of forgiveness and healing.

I have illustrated three possible interpretations of Beloved's presence in the novel. Hunger is only one of the metaphors or symbols that tilts the balance in favour of each, at different moments. However, the reader is more inclined to believe that Beloved is the ghost of Sethe's baby. Why does the supernatural layer prevail, when the realistic one is at least equally emphasised?

The narrative structure of the text causes readers to overlook the ambiguities the novel presents. The voice of the narrator is fragmented as multiple perspectives narrate the text, but Sethe and Denver's points of view most often predominate.

It is true, as Maggie Sale (1992:43) argues, that the text as a whole values "*the articulation of multiple perspectives*" and, as Linda Krumholz (1992:397) comments, that Beloved is supposed to act as a trickster figure "who defies narrative closure or categorization". Yet here we may need to make a distinction between what Peter Rabinowitz (1977:126) has called the **actual audience** and the **authorial audience**. While the authorial audience (the ideal reader) can still see the story through multiple points of view, the actual audience (real readers) may reduce the articulation of multiple perspectives to one (Sethe's or Denver's), thereby limiting the text's flexibility. Sethe remains convinced that Beloved was her dead child, her "best thing" (272), and when Paul D. asks Denver if she believes Beloved was her sister, Denver responds, "*At times. At times I think she was...more*" (266). Both of the book's central characters hesitate to raise questions about Beloved's status after she has disappeared, so the actual audience does not either and the answer is open ended.

Toni Morrison lends her voice to all the characters in the novel, giving the reader the freedom to interpret the clues she drops when her status as narrator is suspended. After the exorcism scene Sethe takes to her bed to die like Baby Suggs before her, but Paul D's intervention suggests that, with his support, she will rise once more. In particular, his desire to "*put his story next to hers*" (273) points to the importance of sharing stories. Denver weaves stories, constructing "*out of the string she had heard all her life a net to hold Beloved*" (76) and Toni Morrison's narrative technique is thus

echoed. The gaps and the riddles that appear in the process of storytelling multiply its meanings and stir the reader's appetite for what is left unsaid.

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## THE MOTIF OF THE ANCIENT ROMAN GOD VERTUMNUS IN BRITISH LITERATURE

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The article explores how the motif of Vertumnus, nowadays known chiefly as the ancient Roman god of vegetation and transformation, has been employed in select works of British literature from the Renaissance to the present. It traces the literary development of some of the functions ascribed to Vertumnus in antiquity, as well as the gradual emergence of new ones. The British works analysed are two epic poems, i.e. *Paradise Lost* by John Milton (1973) and *Endymion* by the Romantic poet John Keats (1944;1961); *Vertumnus sive Annus Recurrens* ("Vertumnus or the Recurring Year"), a Renaissance play in Latin written by Matthew Gwinne (1607;1983); and the contemporary science fiction story "The Coming of Vertumnus" by Ian Watson (1994).

According to ancient sources (*Elegy* 4.2 by Propertius (1952), which is an explanation of the god's origin and name spoken by the statue of Vertumnus himself, and *On the Latin Language* 5.46 by Varro (1951)), Vertumnus or Vortumnus was originally an Etruscan deity, honoured in Rome with a temple and a bronze statue. The latter, an object of local worship and a symbol of the neighbourhood, stood in a busy street teeming with small trade. Although Vertumnus is credited with four different functions by ancient writers, his original significance is uncertain. The reason is that the testimony of the Augustan poets (chiefly Propertius and Ovid) and later commentators seems to have been inspired by secondary considerations, namely by the appearance and location of the god's statue and by his name, derived by the ancients from the Latin verb *vertere* ("turn, change, repel"). If, however, the name is in fact Etruscan, the stories about the god's shape-shifting powers may be based on nothing more than false etymology, lacking all connection to his original significance.

Of the four functions attributed to Vertumnus in the ancient sources, two are evidently later additions, suggested by the name and location. According to Propertius (1952) 4.2.7–10 and Ovid (1996), *Fasti* 6.410, he is the god who turns back the flooding Tiber – an association probably triggered by the position of the statue, located approximately on the spot to which the Tiber rose on occasion. Moreover, he is considered the god of

trade or at least associated with it by several authors (the authors of commentaries on Horace and Cicero, as well as the prose writer and minor poet Columella and the playwright Plautus); again, the link was established later by the small trade which proliferated around the statue. These two functions, then, are clearly secondary, and they have left no mark on subsequent literature.

The two threads which have been continued to the present day, on the other hand, designate Vertumnus as:

1. the god of the turning year, or seasons (Propertius, 1952:4.2.11–18).

According to *Elegy* 4.2 by Propertius (1952), it was the custom to deck the statue with the flowers and fruits of the season, the latter being presented also as thanksgiving for a good crop (vv. 17–18). In the opinion of Eisenhut (1958, 1680–1681), it is precisely this aspect that is most likely to have been Vertumnus' original function, although both Propertius and Ovid attach the most importance to his powers of transformation.

2. the god of transformation.

In compliance with the local custom, people of various trades, such as fishermen, shepherds, tradesmen, or soldiers, appear to have hung on the statue their work implements and clothing as votive gifts. This may explain why Vertumnus is described by Roman poets as a god who can assume the shapes of persons (even gods, according to Propertius) of all ages and occupations. His shape-shifting is referred to in a number of sources: by Propertius in *Elegy* 4.2 as the only true significance of his name, in contrast to the associations with floods and the turning year, which are dismissed as "lying rumour" in v. 19; Ovid in the *Fasti* 6.409–410 (he mentions both the flood-turning etymology and the god's "diverse shapes") and, more importantly, in the *Metamorphoses* 14.623–771, which emphasise only this aspect of the god's powers; Tibullus 4.2.13–14; and Horace, who describes in his *Satires* 2.7.14 a changeable person as "born under hostile Vertumnuses, however many there are".

Propertius' list of shapes which can be assumed by the god contains as many as seventeen (vv. 21–48), including that of a silk-clad girl, a soldier, a litigant, two gods, a charioteer, a pedlar, and a number of guises related to farm work and hunting. Four of them are mentioned also by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* 14.623–771, namely in the tale of Vertumnus and the tree nymph Pomona, which may be either Ovid's own invention (Wissowa 1965, 220) or an Italian folk tale. The story runs as follows. Pomona, passionately given to tending her orchard, secludes herself from the amorous advances of all rural deities. Vertumnus attempts to move her by

visiting her in many different forms, mostly those related to farm work, but all to no avail; finally he appears as an old woman, who pleads Vertumnus' cause and tells Pomona a cautionary tale of the punishment meted out to a woman who spurned a love-sick youth. When everything fails, however, he doffs the disguise in despair and reveals himself in his true form, like the sun breaking through clouds. At this sight, Pomona is moved by love as well. – The story is important because it represents the single most important literary influence from antiquity on later literature.

From the perspective of the subsequent developments, the ancient legacy may be summarised as follows: on the one hand, there are the associations of Vertumnus with the turning year, including a link with vegetation, and with the power of transformation, either of himself or of other beings. On the other hand, there is the story of his love for Pomona. References to the latter are to be found in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Keats' *Endymion* (1818). Book 9 of *Paradise Lost* describes the fall of man and the circumstances which lead to it: Eve, anxious that she and Adam should accomplish as much work in the garden of Eden as possible, suggests that they tend it separately, so that they will not be distracted from work by each other's presence. Adam, fearing that she might be tricked by evil forces if left to herself (which indeed happens), is reluctant at first but finally concurs, and Eve, leaving to garden on her own, is compared by the poet to a number of ancient goddesses, among them Pomona:

To Pales, or Pomona, thus adorned,  
Likest she seemed, Pomona when she fled  
Vertumnus, ... ( 9.393–395)

What is notable is that all the goddesses evoked (9.385–396) are virginal: nymphs of the trees, mountains, and Delia's – i.e. Diana's – train; Diana herself; Pales, the Roman deity of pastures, of uncertain gender in Roman mythology; the shy Pomona; and Ceres, before she conceived by Jove. This feature is noted by Bulman, who argues in her essay (2002) that Eve's seduction by Satan is equated by Milton to a loss of virginity. Since in the scene presented above she is already on the brink of losing it, this virtue is emphasised: "Milton also notes the transience of virginity, for Pomona will soon cease to flee Vertumnus and Ceres will conceive Proserpina" (2002, 4). Thus Milton makes use of the sexual aspect of Ovid's tale, which is entirely lacking in other ancient sources about Vertumnus.

A reference to Ovid is found also in Book 2 of Keats' *Endymion*. The outline of the story (adapted from classical mythology) is the following.

Endymion, a Carian king, is visited by the Moon-goddess (Diana) in a dream, and henceforth pines with love for her. A water nymph leads him to the entrance to the underworld, telling him that he will have to wander far to reach immortality and be joined to his love (which eventually happens). Roaming through the underworld, Endymion chances upon a beautifully decorated chamber, where a lovely youth is asleep, with Cupids ministering to him. On Endymion's inquiry who the young man is, a Cupid playing the lyre explains that it is Adonis, who sleeps through winter but rises in summer-time. He also invites the king to partake of some refreshment:

"... So recline  
Upon these living flowers. Here is wine,  
Alive with sparkles – never, I aver,  
Since Ariadne was a vintager,  
So cool a purple: taste these juicy pears,  
Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears  
Were high about Pomona; ..." (2.440–446)

Again, the reference is to Ovid's story, although the link between Vertumnus and vegetation is established as well. The choice of this particular deity may be relevant in that Vertumnus' long unrequited pursuit of Pomona parallels Endymion's own quest for the Moon-goddess. The theme of the poem, i.e. unhappy love which ends well, is reinforced by the reference to Ariadne, who is deserted on an island by her lover Theseus but rescued, married and immortalised by the god Bacchus, and likewise by the story of Venus and Adonis. The latter spurned the goddess until his death, which she succeeded in changing to life interspersed with winter sleep; now, however, he apparently returns her love. Thus the Vertumnus and Pomona tale adds to the central theme of *Endymion*.

Apart from the specifically Ovidian story, the more general conception of Vertumnus as the god of the year – as well as vegetation – and transformation was continued as well in literary tradition. It found expression in the Renaissance, but with an additional element: the Renaissance belief in a principle of correspondences between macrocosm (the world in general) and microcosm (the world of man, or man himself). This philosophy underlies not only Gwinne's Latin play *Vertumnus sive Annus Recurrens* (1607), but also the portrait of the Hapsburg Emperor Rudolph II as *Vertumnus*, painted by Giuseppe Arcimboldo in 1590 or 91. The latter is important because it served in its own turn as the chief inspiration for Watson's science fiction story "The Coming of Vertumnus" (1994).

The comedy by Matthew Gwinne (a Fellow of St. John's College at Oxford and the first Professor of Physic at Gresham College in London, but also a minor writer in his own right) was written and staged in 1605, for the occasion of James I and Prince Henry's visit to Oxford. Essentially a piece of pageantry, it exploits the possibilities offered by the theme of the four seasons, at the same time reflecting several aspects of the ancient legacy about Vertumnus: the identification of the god with the year, his powers of transformation, and echoes of Ovid and other Roman poets. All this, however, is interwoven with the concept of parallelism between the seasons and man.

The play opens with Vertumnus, a silent character, propelling "Calendarius" onto the stage, where the Four Seasons are already waiting. They explain to the perplexed Calendarius that Vertumnus has heard of the approaching arrival of the king and brought them here to enact a comedy on the theme of the year or the life of Man. The initially reluctant Calendarius agrees to cooperate, but demands more actors, namely parasites who will act as servants to Microcosmus (Man). Autumn suggests the Four Humours: Blood, Bile, Black Bile, and Phlegm. When these appear, Calendarius explains to them that his and their masters (the Seasons) need their help to reveal what power they have over Microcosmus; to this end, each of the Humours should serve – and thereby influence – the latter at a certain age. Calendarius follows the suggestion of "Phantasticus" (Black Bile) that each should be equipped with a sign, deciding on a snake biting its tail as a symbol for Vertumnus (the ever-recurring Year), a butterfly for Blood (as a symbol of Spring, but also as emblematic of his character), a cicada for Bile (Summer), a bat for Black Bile (Autumn), and a dormouse for Phlegm (Winter, who only sleeps, eats, and drinks). He further urges them to paint a vivid picture of Man at different ages – as a calf in spring (in adolescence), a lion in summer (youth), an ape in autumn (manhood), and a pig in winter (old age).

The remaining four acts indeed show the story of Microcosmus at four stages of his life, each ruled by a different "humour" – as an adolescent he is insolent to his teacher Aesop and impatient of learning, overcredulous and quick to fall in love; as a youth he is passionate and resourceful in his attempts to win his beloved; as an adult man he falls prey to melancholy, empty fancies, and suspicion of his wife; and as an old man he becomes a hopeless miser, so that only the unexpected discovery of a family treasure can restore him to his senses and provide for a happy ending.

The play alludes to the ancient references to Vertumnus at several levels. On the one hand, he is equated with the Year: for example, he is the master of Calendarius, but also of the Four Humours, or passions, which he is indeed said to have created (1.1.71–72); he has 365 days (1.2.127–129), etc. On the other hand, his powers of transformation are repeatedly mentioned as well: he will help Calendarius organise the play by changing him and everyone else, including his own self, into all shapes (1.1.56–58); he will also change Microcosmus from one age to another (1.2.185–187), and Microcosmus, disguising himself to test his wife’s virtue, is confident in the success of his disguise because he relies on Vertumnus to give him any form (4.6.1155–1157).

Moreover, the play is teeming with allusions to relevant passages from Roman poetry. Although the Pomona story is not used as such, it is repeatedly evoked when Microcosmus approaches his beloved in a number of disguises (as a shepherd, reaper, and fisherman). All of them are present also in Propertius, whereas the emphasis on farm work is reminiscent of Ovid. Scattered through the text are also several quotations from Horace (*Satire* 2.7 and *Epistle* 1.20), referring to Vertumnus in various contexts.

At the same time, the play is permeated with the Renaissance concept of correspondences. Both the year and human life are described as rounded, like a ring (1.2.187); the use of the same image in Aesop’s warning that Microcosmus should not be changeable but rounded in himself (5.2.1439) yet reinforces the parallel between mankind and the year. Parallels occur at six levels. A given season corresponds to a certain age and humour; in addition, it is associated with two animals, one of which is used as its emblem; and, finally, the names of five minor female characters are derived from the Greek or Latin words for the seasons in which they appear on the stage. Spring is thus associated with adolescence, blood, a calf, a butterfly, and the nymphs Primavera and Earine (from the Greek *éar*, “spring”); summer with youth, bile, a lion, a cicada, and the nymph Therine (from the Greek *théros*, “summer”); autumn with maturity, black bile, an ape, a bat, and the nymph Oporine (from the Greek *opóra*, “late summer” or “autumn”); and winter with old age, phlegm, a pig, a dormouse, and Microcosmus’ old nurse, Chimerine (from the Greek *cheimón*, “winter”). The parallels between the seasons, ages, and humours are also explicitly stressed both in the author’s dedicatory letter to Prince Henry and in two of his colleagues’ gratulatory poems which are prefixed to the play.

A similar philosophy appears to underlie the paintings by Arcimboldo. Apart from the portrait of Rudolph II (*Vertumnus*), which

presents the monarch as consisting of fruits, flowers, and vegetables of all seasons, the artist painted several series representing the four seasons and the four elements. All of these are portraits in profile, made up entirely of items belonging to a given season or element (e.g. fruits and corn for summer, fish for water). This technique has been interpreted in diverse ways: as comedy or satire, as mannerism, or as influenced by Platonism. However, according to the interpretation expounded by Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann (1978) and summarised in Kriegeskorte (2000, 36–52), the pictures are allegories of the Hapsburgs' imperial power, based on a system of correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm. This view is primarily founded on the poem *The Paintings of the Four Seasons and the Four Elements by the Imperial Painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo*, written by Arcimboldo's assistant Giovanni Battista Fonteo.

Fonteo draws a number of parallels relating to Arcimboldo's paintings: the harmony of the fruits or animals which make up a head symbolises the harmony under the Hapsburg rule; the harmony between the elements and the corresponding seasons symbolises the peace under the rule of Rudolph's father. The seasons and elements are linked and share the same properties, such as heat, dryness, cold, wetness; they are also portrayed symmetrically, with two heads of a series always facing left and two right. According to Fonteo, the representation of the Emperor as Vertumnus means his glorification, since it implies that he rules not only over the state and man (the microcosm) but – by analogy – also over the whole year, the seasons and elements (the macrocosm). Moreover, who rules the elements will also control the world, which consists of them; the four seasons, which return every year, stand at once for the eternity of nature and of the Hapsburg reign. – These views, as well as the motif of Arcimboldo's paintings themselves, recur more than 400 years later in the science fiction story "The Coming of Vertumnus".

The story is set in a London of the near future, marked by two opposing movements: political correctness accompanied by moral fastidiousness (e.g. an aversion to pornography) and well-nigh hysterical ecological awareness on the one hand, and a possibility of space exploration – and exploitation – on the other. The ecology lobby is opposed to flights into space, whereas the Star Club, a group of industrialists eager for more resources and energy, is trying to promote them. Part of the Green campaign are huge posters featuring Arcimboldo's flower-and-fruit portraits, including *Vertumnus*, with the slogan *WE ARE ALL PART OF NATURE*. These posters have been hanging all over Europe, America and elsewhere

for almost two years and become absorbed into people's consciousness; their miniature replicas are even worn as badges. Vertumnus himself is described by the narrator, an art critic named Jill Donaldson, as the "Roman god of fruit trees, of growth and transformation" (Watson, 1994:12). Thus he is associated with the two ancient functions which have survived in later tradition, except that his link with the change of seasons is played down and the vegetation aspect emphasised.

The narrator, whose rebelliousness against the exaggerated "ecopuritanism" shows in her writing, attracts the notice of Rumbold Wright, an American oil magnate and art collector, who is a member of the Star Club and anxious to undermine the public image of the Greens. He intends to accomplish this by exhibiting a dozen "Arcimboldo" forgeries of pornographic character, thus causing a scandal and discrediting the painter, who has become an icon of the Green movement. Jill is commissioned to write the introduction to an art book planned to accompany the exhibition.

The exhibition and book attain the desired publicity, but are followed by a series of disquieting events, culminating in Jill's being kidnapped in the street. She is brought to a house where she meets two men, one of them – according to his own words – the legitimate heir of the Hapsburgs and the other his "occultist". She is forced to drink an unknown concoction, and the Hapsburg heir explains that Arcimboldo's paintings have a metaphysical and political significance: the harmony of natural elements in *Vertumnus* and the other portrait heads symbolises the harmony which will reign under the rule of the Hapsburgs; their dynasty will be ever-present, like the elements themselves, and rule both microcosm (the political world) and macrocosm (nature); the paintings featuring the cycle of the seasons suggest that the Hapsburg rule will continue eternally in one everlasting season. (All these interpretations are evidently identical to the ones found in Fonteó's poem.) The time to reunite Europe is approaching, and Arcimboldo's (Hapsburg) heads, which feature so prominently in the Green campaign, are promoting the Hapsburgs' cause: the citizens of Europe already feel more and more strongly that the microcosm of man and the macrocosm of nature are a unity, but the ubiquitous heads are also instilling into them the subconscious expectation of a "head" to rule over the whole.

Jill falls into a trance and has a vision of herself as a diminutive statue lying for an eternity in a vaulted chamber filled with art works. The unbearable monotony is only brightened by the visits of the Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, as depicted by Arcimboldo; finally she is

visited by Rudolph-Vertumnus himself, but is roused from her trance by the arrival of the police, called by her former lover, who happened to witness the kidnapping.

Wright, on being told about her experience, explains that she must have been given a drug which will always trigger hallucinations at certain stimuli, for example in the event that her thoughts or actions conflict with the ideology of her kidnappers. Leaving his house for the kitchen garden to think about her situation, Jill suddenly has a vision of the vegetable garden transforming, pulsing, moving, trying to assemble itself into one giant body. On the one hand she is beginning to feel influenced by the ecological mentality which has been instilled into her; on the other hand she no longer knows what to believe. She wonders if her kidnapper was indeed a Hapsburg heir, or if the entire incident was staged by the Greens, intent on using such drugs to inject into people an orgiastic feeling of unity with nature – or even by the Star Club, which would use them in the hope of precisely the opposite effect: to plant into people a fear of nature and thus force them to seek refuge in space.

Jill, as well as the reader, never learns the true answer; she realises that events are like art, only potent imagery subject to interpretation. What she does learn is that her visions of nature as a unified body are gradually making her lose her consciousness of self, of her individuality, which is proper only to man and, in a sense, a biological anomaly. The narrative suddenly switches to the third person, and this is also the only way she is capable of talking about herself later.

She decides to flee to a woman friend living in an artistic commune, but on her way she receives a phone call from the occultist, who confirms her premonition of the pending annihilation of the ego and the union of all life under one ruler. Another call comes from Wright, claiming to have discovered that the Star Club had been behind everything. She has a vision of Rudolph-Vertumnus stepping from his poster, in other words, a vision of change and the coming of a new era. (On the other hand, of course, the approaching state of collective consciousness represents the return to a previous stage, since the self-awareness of humanity and the emphasis of the ego only developed later. Thus the story also includes the motif of a recurring cycle, which can be linked to the ancient association of Vertumnus with the cycle of the seasons.)

On arriving in the commune, Jill perceives that its members have developed an unconscious empathy, judging by the thematic harmony of their works. In the morning she has a vision of her friend being covered

with flowers like *Flora*, another famous painting by Arcimboldo. Her sense of identity is disintegrating, which is reflected also in the distortions of her name, occurring once as Jilldonaldson and finally as Jilldona. The story ends with her being taken away by the police; significantly, the driving-mirror of the police car is decorated with a pair of wax strawberries.

The fantastic character of the story is to be attributed to its being inspired by Arcimboldo's fanciful, surreal paintings, rather than the classical myth itself. Nevertheless, the associations of Vertumnus with cyclic repetition and vegetation on the one hand, and transformation on the other, stem from the ancient tradition. The story thus incorporates the heritage of both antiquity and the Renaissance.

It may be concluded that the motif of Vertumnus as employed in British literature has been influenced by three sources: two of the four functions ascribed to the god in antiquity (his links with the cycle of the seasons and vegetation, and with transformation); the story of his love for Pomona as described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; and the Renaissance theory of micro- and macrocosm. In the context of the latter, the art of Arcimboldo has been of particular significance. The motif of Vertumnus is to be found also in literatures other than British, e.g. in the poetry of the Nobel Prize winner Joseph Brodsky. This, however, is already outside the scope of the present discussion.

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## LORD OF THE FLIES – PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES

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Considered by many critics to be too far-fetched a vision on man, William Golding's exquisite piece of work can be regarded as a survey into the unfathomable psyche of man.

*"Man learnt that the world at large was not always so chaotic and unpredictable as it seemed, that there were patterns and relationships in nature (...)"* (Darling, 1989) This means that, as the left hemisphere began to focus on the practical concern, man finally realized what time meant and, perhaps, that death occurs someday.

Thus, we can say that, by forgetting to take care of the fire, the boys on the island receded on the involutive scale of humanity. They forgot about time and consequently, regressed into beasts who live for the present day.

The hunt is the ritual which links the dismal dawn of humanity to the reality on the island. The first contact with blood turns them into savage fiends as the first hunter and flesh-eater lost his innocence. The little community of fruit-pickers, the image of the Golden Age in the history of man, is split by the fierce remnants of some boys in the gang. The democratic order imposed by Piggy's brains and Ralph's strong will clashes with the *tyrannical law of the club* wielded by Jack. The latter group comes to regard any relationship in nature as that between predator and prey, an evidence being their groundless apprehension on being attacked. They consequently seclude themselves in a military fortress and imagine they are defending themselves.

It is quite obvious that there is a peculiar link between the words of the hunters' song and the death of Piggy: the sentence *Kill the pig!* Lay in their minds and entered so forcibly as if it had been a command and with the first opportunity Roger proceeds at the infamous mischief.

It is a disputable question whether the course of events would have been the same if there had not been any living prey on the island. One could provide explanations for the strange behaviour of Golding's characters with the help of an analysis of the individual, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the masses. The information regarding the psychological analysis of the characters is provided by the ideas of the well-known psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud (1992), Carl Jung (1994) and Gustave Le Bon (1991).

According to Jung, *persona* or the social archetype represents the way one behaves in society, it is one's mask and is seen as opposed to *the shadow*. Referring to the children on the island, their *persona* stands for what they are not, but what they and also the others believe them to be. *Persona* starts to be visible in the first phase of childhood as a necessity to adapt ourselves to the wishes and hopes of our parents, mates, teachers. thus, the accepted features, the positive ones, form our *persona*, while the unaccepted ones are hidden, forming our *shadow*. Regarding Golding's characters, as soon as they realize that the idea of behaving according to the social rules imposed by education is not a duty for them anymore, all the negative features forming their *shadow* come out, while their masks disappear. It is important to mention that this change is most visible at one of the leaders, that is Jack, as he does not have to submit to anyone from the very beginning and he even rejects the idea of accepting Ralph as the leader of the other group. Jack could be the destructive leader of the masses, while Ralph would be the moral one. The former thinks only of the present, the latter's thoughts and plans are directed towards a safer future. Jack turns into a cruel tribe leader. All the archetypal features of the primordial warrior emerge surprisingly fast. They are unconceivably deep enrooted, as the tribal phase of humanity – according to anthropological theories – was the longest period, compared to which the modern civilization is merely a split second.

Considering the moral complex of the necessity to hide our *shadow* from the eyes of the others, Jung asserts that if such a moral complex had not existed, the normal human state would be the anarchy. Therefore, the apparent order on the island and the attempt to establish rules are only illusions.

We remember Golding's children having nightmares in which a certain monster threatens and scares them. These children do not make a clear distinction between dream and reality at night and expect the monster to come indeed. Our *shadow* tends to appear in our dreams, taking the form of a horrible character. This could be, in Jung's opinion, the archetype of *the enemy*, of *the robber* or of *the bad stranger*. In our case, it represents *the bad stranger*, as the children must have been advised by their parents not to talk to strangers. The monster could be the children's own *shadow*, their own image which gathers the negative impulses.

On the other hand, the behaviour of the children as a group can be analysed when referring to the moment of the crime, when Simon is killed. At that moment, the boys' minds have nothing rational and the beast they

see in Simon is actually what they want to see. They project their own *shadows* upon him, unconsciously, and thus Simon becomes the “scapegoat” or the “whipping boy”. Therefore, further on our paper dwells on the analysis of the respective chapter, “A View to a Death”.

All the boys on the island, except for Piggy, Ralph, Simon and the two tending the pig, were grouped on the turf. They were laughing, singing, lying, squatting, or standing on the grass, holding food in their hands. (...) Before the party had started a great log had been dragged into the centre of the lawn and Jack, painted and garlanded, sat there like an idol. (Golding, 1997:183)

According to Le Bon (1991), the masses feel the instinctive necessity to submit a leader: “*It is not the need for freedom that always dominates the soul of the masses, but the need for servitude*” (1991:80), as “*the masses are a herd which could not do without a master.*” (1991:77) The boys accept Jack as their leader, because he appears powerful. Jack is cruel and rough, impulsive and self-sufficient; however, he is preferred to Ralph and immediately accepted as a good leader. Le Bon writes about a peculiar feature of the masses: “*Their regard has never been directed towards the lenient leaders, but towards the tyrants who vigorously dominate them.*” (1991:35)

All the boys need is an impulse coming from their leader. Without him they are confused, they have no will and no power to discern. The masses are “*the slave of the impulses received by them.*” (1991:23) Jack sees the boys *swaying and moving aimlessly* and he gives them a direction by means of giving them an order and repeating it. Repetition is actually, according to Le Bon, a means of persuading the masses to behave or act as the leader wants them to, that is, of manipulating them: *Do our dance! Come on! Dance!* (Golding, 1997:187) The masses would perform whatever they are asked or ordered to, as they have “*the tendency to immediately transform the suggested ideas into action*” (Freud, 1992:166-167) – *and the boys followed him, clamorously.* (Golding, 1997:187)

The boys start playing a game in which they should be the hunters, and Roger – the hunted pig. Spears, spits and clubs of fire-wood are used to make the game seem real. Then *a circling movement developed and a chant* (Golding, 1997:187). The circle makes all the hunters equal, there are no differences between them. Thus, the soul of the masses is very strong. The feeling is even more intense as *Roger mimed the terror of the pig.* (Golding, 1997: 187)

The chant is very important, due to both its negative content and to its frequent repetition: *Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!* (Golding, 1997:187) The importance of the chant is that it helps their instincts be released. Firstly, the repetition of the chant in the new circumstances “allow them to diminish the repression of their unconscious instinctual tendencies” (Freud, 1992:164). Secondly, it intensifies “the tendency to immediately transform into action the suggested ideas.” (1992:166-167)

Regarding the term “the soul of the masses”, used by Le Bon to express and define them as a singular being, it represents the barbarian state in which the people act as one primitive human being, the intellectual capacity of the masses being much “beyond that of the individual” (1991:171). “All the individual restraints disappear, and the cruel, brutal, destructive instincts that sleep deep down within the individual – genuine residues of the primitive epoch- are awakened in order to be freely satisfied.” (1991:171)

The boys are as one, as everyone’s conscious personality disappears, “will and discrimination are abolished” (1991:166). They all do the same thing, as if they had been hypnotised, being under the power of an intense suggestion. But it is not the leader who brings the suggestion or, at least, it is not clear who initiates it, it may be one member of the group as well. They are all subjected by the message brought by the words: *The movement became regular while the chant lost its first superficial excitement and began to beat like a steady pulse.* (Golding, 1997:187) Roger also becomes a hunter and *there was the throb and stamp of a single organism.* (Golding, 1997:187)

As Roger stops playing the pig, a major change occurs in the feelings and behaviour of the group. They are all hunters; but there is no real prey for them, even the fake one has disappeared, so the only thing for them is to search for one. Instead of making the feeling disappear, the non-existence of a prey causes exactly the opposite psychological process – the thirst for blood increases and a victim is needed to *unload* the negative energy which, under the given circumstances, cannot be repressed. The imagination of the masses is sufficient to replace the missing prey. According to Le Bon’s study, the imagination of the masses is “liable to be deeply impressed. The masses are somehow in the situation of the one who is sleeping, whose reason, temporarily suspended, lets images of an extreme intensity burst out. Being capable neither of reflection, nor of reasoning, the masses do not know the impossible.” (1991:44) Once they are suggested an idea and start to believe in it or start the procedure to bring it to an end,

nothing could stop them. Moreover, *“the non-reality is for them as important as the reality. The masses have an obvious tendency to make no difference between them.”* (1991:45)

The atmosphere is as terrifying as the images which take shape into the boys’ minds. The thunders cause terror and the screams of the *littluns* remind the fact that the future criminals are nothing but some children, which makes it all even terrifying.

As Simon appears, the group is ready to project the images in their mind upon him. As the masses *“think in images that call one another through the process of association and they neither doubt anything, nor hesitate”* (1992:169), they choose Simon to be their prey, as he is an outsider at that moment, coming out of the forest. Le Bon also mentions the fact that *“certain ideas and feelings only appear and objectify with the members of a group.”* (1991:162) There is, of course, somebody who sees Simon coming and who lets everybody know that: *...and one of them broke the ring of biguns in his terror. “Him! Him!”* (Golding, 1997:188) At this point the writer uses a certain device in order to make the reader perceive Simon as if he were a member of the group too, sharing their vision. Therefore, Golding presents Simon as if he really were the beast; he becomes *a thing, a beast, it: A thing was crawling out of the forest. It came darkly, uncertainly. (...) The beast stumbled into the horseshoe.* (1997:188) Nevertheless, the writer lets the reader remember that the beast is a human being: *Simon was crying out something about a dead man on a hill.* (1997:188) Regarding the wrong perception of reality in a group, Le Bon comes with the idea of contagion causing the distorted way of perceiving the outer world: *“Being a consequence of a contagion, the distortions have the same nature and meaning for all the individuals of a group. The first distortion perceived by one of them makes up the nucleus of the contagious suggestion.”* (1991:26) Le Bon also notices the fact that *“from the moment of being part of the masses, both the illiterate and the learned man become incapable of reflection.”* (1991:27) There is a tendency within the human beings – *“of taking over somebody’s state of mind when the respective person visibly expresses it.”* (Freud, 1992:186) These theories explain the behaviour of the boys in the group, that is, their attitude towards the one whom they take for a beast. The murder committed by the group is vividly presented, terrible images coming fast one by one, rapidly succeeding one another. There are two characters involved – the crowd and the beast: *The sticks fell and the mouth of the new circle crunched and screamed. The beast was on its knees in the centre, its arms folded over its face. It was crying out against the abominable noise something about a body on the hill.*

*The beast struggled forward, broke the ring and fell over the steep edge of the rock to the sand by the water. At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws. (1997:188)*

There is a strong opposition between the term *beast* and *its arms folded over its face*, as there is also a clear-cut distinction between the so-called *beast* – a helpless boy and the crowd – the prototype of the primitive tribe. Le Bon notices the fact that “*by simply being a part of a crowd, the human being takes a few steps down on the scale of civilisation (...) He has, on the one hand, the spontaneity, the violence and the ferocity and, on the other hand, the enthusiasm and the heroism of the primitive beings.*” (1991:168)

The main feature of the masses is that they “*would rather behave like an ill-bred child or like a passionate savage in an unfamiliar situation. In unsupervised, extreme cases, his behaviour would rather bear a likeness to that of a savage pack than to that of some human beings.*” (1991:182)

Le Bon gives an original explanation for the crimes committed by the masses. In his opinion the masses could not be deemed as criminal, as their case differs much from that of the common killer: “*The crimes of the masses are usually a result of an intense suggestion, and the individuals who took part in committing them are subsequently convinced that they listened to the voice of duty (...)*” (1991:105)

As the victim is annihilated, the group immediately calms down: *Presently the heap broke up and figures staggered away.* (Golding, 1997:189) It turns into individuals, each having his own personality. They are, however, still unable of observation or reflection: *Even in the rain they could see how small a beast it was (...)* (1997:189) and they do not identify the victim. Le Bon also makes a pictorial description of the masses which are “*very much like the leaves lifted by the hurricane, spread all over and finally let fall down again.*” (1991:24)

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**“MAN OR WOMAN - A TOSS UP” OR IN SEARCH OF VIVIE  
WARREN’S IDENTITY**

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When in the last act of G.B. Shaw’s play *Mrs Warren’s Profession* one of its two main female characters, Vivie, dashes off, as if running for dear life, to her long-desired destination, Chancery Lane, London, to settle herself down in a newly founded accounting office, and when we see the nonchalance with which she, symbolically, tears and disposes of her ex-boyfriend’s message and the joy and self-satisfaction with which she immerses herself into the world of figures, we are only too ready to conclude that, finally, we have encountered a realistic, unbiased and ungrudging dramatic representation of the “new woman.” Not only do we find her happy and smiling, but we also have every reason to perceive her as a fulfilled and fully content person. Quite an untypical and remarkable ending indeed, even more so in the light of the fact that the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the play was written, abounded in stereotypical literary endings (novelistic and dramatic alike) which either shifted the “new woman” back into her traditional role of mother and wife or saw her defeated and punished for her departure from the prescribed code of female behaviour. Shaw breaks away from the cliché applied even by himself in his five novels preceding his dramatic oeuvre: Vivie persists in her adherence to professional life and, more importantly, does not get punished for that. Still, does this ending in itself provide us with the key to the issue of her identity?

In order to be able to answer the question we must go back to the beginning of the play. What we find on the very first pages strikes us as the author’s determination to depict a typical “new woman,” a product of the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who was a prominent and frequent subject of heated debates on the topic of the “women’s question” in various journals and who, at the same time, surfaced as the central figure in the abundance of literary works. One of the real-life representatives of the “new woman,” the Fabian society activist Beatrice Web, served as a model for his portrayal of the main protagonist. As a matter of fact, it was her who suggested that Shaw should write a play of a “real, modern, unromantic, hard-working woman.” and that he, in his courting manner, intended to please by, as he

said, "... introducing to the stage the Vivie Warren type of modern girl and dramatizing a strong social and economic subject..."

He starts off with a description of the scenography dominated by a woman's bicycle and a pile of books and writing paper, quite a convenient ambience for a young woman who, lying comfortably in a hammock, reads and makes notes. Even to the mind of the not too informed or perceptive reader these two marked symbols will suffice to signalize the type introduced - a fine and typical specimen of the emancipated "new woman" at the turn of the century. Not less indicative are the direct, straightforward, denuded, rather curt and unladylike speech and manner by which, in the exchange of the several first disharmonious lines between a Young Gentleman and this still unnamed Young Lady, she responds to the gentleman's highly courteous and gentlemanly demeanour. Just as this dissonance appears to be a metaphor for the newly developed discrepancy between the sexes in an era of women's emancipation, the author's description of the now duely named heroine, rather than contributing to her individualisation, comes across as a typified description of the concept of the "new woman" itself: "She is an attractive specimen of the sensible, able, highly-educated young middle-class Englishwoman... Prompt, strong, confident, self-possessed." What the description also offers as a rather typical feature is her clothes, one of the unfailing objects of Shaw's attention. Namely, Vivie is dressed in a "plain, business-like dress...", with a fountain-pen and a paper-knife hung on a chatelaine at her belt. This is by no means the only time that Shaw, being fully aware of the powerful impact clothes have on social relations and, again, in an attempt to demonstrate his progressiveness, dresses his heroines unconventionally, that is simply and comfortably.

Shaw's determination to follow a consistently radical pattern throughout the play is equally confirmed by the rough and clearly defined strokes by which he sketches the inner traits of her personality. Her strong will and realism, her unyielding and decisive character are demonstrated through various means, particularly through her relations with other characters. Her boyfriend Frank, so proud of his smart girl who, as we shall find him boasting, he teaches to shoot and who, as he himself is convinced, is to become his wife, gets mercilessly and unhesitatingly rebuffed: "Poor Frank! I shall have to get rid of him; but I shall feel sorry for him, though he's not worth it." Vivie does not yield to the pressure embodied in the offer of a stereotypically romantic marriage alliance.

It is with the same ease that Vivie dismisses Crofts, the epitome of the rottenness and corruption of the Victorian society. This slimy and sordid old bachelor, co-owning a chain of brothels with her mother, swoops down upon her like a hawk, feeling that the social structure and her private circumstances are on his side. However, the blatant cynicism with which he proposes to her is exceeded by her directness: "I am much obliged to you for being so definite and business-like. I quite appreciate the offer: the money, the position, Lady Crofts and so on. But I think I will say no, if you dont mind. I'd rather not."

Not more susceptible does she appear in her relationship with her mother. Quite indifferent, in her conversation with Pread, she reveals the reasons for her curt and unemotional attitude toward her: she grew up in boarding houses, with infrequent encounters with her mother who she hardly knows. In her final talk to her mother, she displays the ultimate proof of her emancipation - she has repudiated her duty to everyone but to herself. She has resisted all the pressures of prescribed roles imposed by the society:

"My duty as a daughter!... Now once for all, mother, you want a daughter and Frank wants a wife. I dont want a mother; and I dont want a husband. I have spared neither Frank nor myself in sending him about his business. Do you think I will spare you?"

All this unmistakably recalls views from the author's essay on "The Womanly Woman," published in the substantial volume *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, making us to conclude that Vivie presents the embodiment of the ideal "unwomanly woman" depicted in the essay. For, if we summarize what we have presented, we get the picture of an independent woman, a woman of profession which she has highly educated herself for, a woman with her own aim in life not dependent on anyone in particular and, last but not least, a woman who has rejected the superfluous "female" mechanism of behaviour. However, as inevitably as this, the overall representation of the character, definitely rounded by the last scene, brings to mind yet another picture, a cartoon published in 1880 in the well-known British magazine *Punch*, which graphically depicts the prototype of the "New Woman" of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As stated in a paper by Elsie Adams (1974), the cartoon shows a woman with very short, or severely pulled back hair, wearing a white shirt, a tie and a simply cut suit (resembling a man's), while the editorial comment, given as the title, says "Man or Woman? - A Toss Up"

Viewed in the light of the time when it appeared, the cartoon does not strike us as a surprise. Men, as well as women loyal to the deeply rooted

values, were struggling to maintain centuries-old gender imbalance and thus caricatures served only as a vehicle for making a mockery of career women. However, when a proclaimed friend of women's and an ardent advocate of equality between the sexes creates a character who irresistibly resembles such a cartoon, than it is, to say the least, a disappointment. And Vivie truly and to a disappointingly great extent reminds of a man.

A great number of her characteristics make a case for this line of thinking. Accentuation, or even better, exaggeration with which Shaw draws the ideal "unwomanly woman" and which is reflected in nearly every mechanism of her personality, questions the author's conscious or unconscious motives. Her mannish behaviour is maybe the most visible manifestation of the exaggeration. The manner in which she overcomes physical obstacles, carries her fountain-pen and paper-knife on a chain and cripples hands with her handshake are only part of the masculine iconography which surrounds her. Not less indicative is her statement as to how she spends her free time: *"I like working and getting paid for it. When I'm tired of working, I like a comfortable chair, a cigar, a little whisky, and a novel with a good detective story in it."* Even among the things which irritate her, Shaw chooses to ascribe to her those associated with men. While confronting her mother for the first time, when Mrs Warren, in a surge of utter helplessness before her daughter's aggressive demeanour, bursts into tears, Vivie jumps up to say, *"Now pray dont begin to cry. Anything but that. I really cannot stand whimpering. I will go out of the room if you do."* And when, in her new office, she ignores Frank's slightly provocative question, *"Why dont you employ a woman, and give your sex a chance?"* we may ask ourselves which, in fact, *is* her sex.

If Vivie is a woman, then we cannot but get an impression that she is a woman who pretends to be a man. And if she really does so, then her identity is rather problematic. Pretending usually means fleeing from something, in this case fleeing from her female being. For, her behaviour does not only mean breaking free from superfluous machinery imposed on women, but also breaking free from everything that makes woman a woman. Moreover, she extremely enjoys the process of defeminization in which, among other things, through a symbolic rejection of her eroticised mother, she also rejects mature female sexuality.

If Vivie's defeminization is complete, than we deal not with a woman pretending to be a man, but a man pretending to be a woman. Here

we touch upon the highly problematic “Freudian” view that accomplished women are sexually men, or trying to be, the standpoint which, as Carolyn Heilbrun (1979) nicely put it, has done more than any other misconception to doom women to fear of accomplishment and selfhood. If we now remember Shaw’s words saying that *“a woman is really only a man in petticoats, or, if you like, that a man is a woman without petticoats,”* we are struck by the sudden illumination of its hidden meaning, other than the one implied by its ultrafeminist readings, and that is that denuded human being is in fact male being. This at the same time means that human values are male values, which, again, is clearly expressed by Heilbrun (1979) at another place and in another context:

“Isn’t it natural and even desirable that a successful woman should move from involvement with the female condition to involvement with the human condition? To agree, however, is to overlook the unhappy fact that in all aspects of our culture, the feminine element has been so long ignored that movement toward apparently “human” concerns is in fact movement back into a cultural tradition still dominated by male-centered values.”

Read in these terms, Shaw’s Vivie presents a dramatic parody of the “new woman,” a representation according to which a woman who rejects the norms of the male world, with her accentuated male traits, is not recognized as a woman at all. Shaw’s answer to the women’s question, therefore, turns out to be no answer. Instead, it is as if he gets across a dangerous suggestion that in order to eliminate the problem, it is necessary for women to disappear.

The problem of Vivie’s identity does not end here. At another level, there arises a question of where she, actually, seeks and recognizes either her own or the identity of a woman in general. This turns out to be not merely her own problem, but her mother’s, too. At a most heated moment of their ferocious confrontation, Mrs Warren introduces the question:

Mrs Warren: (Again raising her voice angrily) Do you know who you’re speaking to, Miss?

Vivie: (looking across at her without raising her head from her book) No. Who are you? What are you?

Mrs Warren: (rising breathless) You young imp!

Vivie: Everybody knows my reputation, my social standing, and the profession I intend to pursue. I know nothing about you...

Mrs Warren puts herself in a superior position on the basis of traditional family relations, ie. on the basis of her role in the relations - the

role of the mother. Vivie, on the other hand, refuses to recognize the formula and, in the spirit of her “modernity,” rejects her. However, what she refers to presents an even more specified and valid social formula, the formula of identity as a mere reflection of social standing. Both her own identity and that of her mother’s, she experiences through nothing but the category of the social position, that is through what they represent within the society. In this way, not only is her own identity questioned, but she also reveals her essential dependence upon respectability, the category standing extremely high in the Victorian list of priority values. It is the dependence that forces her into throwing her mother, so radically and definitively, out of her life. This is how the “new woman,” notwithstanding her external emancipation, emerges as a being whose essence, nonetheless, remains entrapped in the web of certain fundamental social norms and principles.

What all these, as well as many other aspects of Shaw’s representation of the “new woman” which are not mentioned here, reveal is a profound ambiguity in his attitude to women. Being by no means a unique phenomenon, but the one shared by the radical, so-called profeminist circles of the Victorian era the playwright himself belonged to, this ambiguity seem to emerge from the unconscious - from their common inner urge to, despite the outward progressiveness and embracement of feminism, maintain the imbalance between the sexes and separateness of male and female spheres and in that way, actually, preserve their own male identity.

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## HAMLET'S THEOLOGY

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*“But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?”* (I.ii.164) Hamlet enquires of his intimate friend and confidante, Horatio, as he returns from the University of Wittenberg. That Hamlet should be interested in activities at Wittenberg should come as no surprise because Hamlet himself once attended this famous University. As Claudius observes, “For your intent / In going back to school in Wittenberg / It is not retrograde to our desire” (I.ii.112-115). In fact, Hamlet was hastily recalled from there upon the unexpected death of his beloved father, the elder Hamlet. His mother even reminds him, *“Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet / I pray thee stay with us, go not [back] to Wittenberg”* (I.ii.118-119). Unfortunately, Hamlet heeds his mother; so she will not “lose her prayers” because he never returns to the University.

That Hamlet was a student at Wittenberg University is, of course, no surprise. However, to claim that Hamlet's procrastination regarding the avenging of his father's death may be directly attributable to his Wittenberg studies and experiences may be startling. Nonetheless, it is my contention that--current criticisms notwithstanding--Hamlet's hesitancy about revenge was due to his curriculum at Wittenberg University. Here he, no doubt, studied demonology, ethics, and morality, among other academic pursuits. This thesis, of course, does not rule out the complex, psychological nature of Hamlet's personality which might cause him to procrastinate; nor does it negate the Oedipal complex which Hamlet may have possessed. Nonetheless, his ultimate procrastination—his *hamartia*—resulted from the necessity to resolve, within his own mind, the issues with which he would have been confronted, while a student at Wittenberg University, and with which now he is forced to grapple.

And I am not alone in arguing that Hamlet's problem may have been a theological one. For example, Carroll Moulton (1981:114) claims, *“The prince postpones his revenge ostensibly because of a theological question [emphasis added]. . . .”* Furthermore, Rogers (1987:138) also implies that Hamlet's procrastination may have a theological basis when he states; *“The possibility that a man has been picked out to do a deed which society condemns but which a higher, divine authority sanctions is balanced against the possibility that the Ghost led Hamlet into delusion and error,*

and. . . 'bewildered him till he died.'" It is that "theological question"--or rather "questions"--that this paper proposes to address as we examine "a higher, divine authority" that approves the revenge that Hamlet is commissioned, by the Elder Hamlet's Ghost, to execute. That triple commission demands the cleansing of Denmark of "*foul and most unnatural murder*," the protection of Hamlet's own mother, and the purity of Hamlet's own mind (Cowan, 1998: 150-151). Consequently, the Prince must check his theology in order to keep an untainted mind.

Understandably, the context of *Hamlet* is set in 1200 A.D. when *Saxo Grammaticus'* Danish legends, as later compiled by Belleforest as *Histoires Tragiques* (1576), first appeared (Moulton, 1981:111). Quite obviously, though, Shakespeare himself has advanced his setting by at least some three-hundred years. I make this assertion for two reasons: first, cycle plays did not come into existence, in England, until the late Medieval Period and then extended into the Renaissance Era itself (Holman and Harmon, 1986: 315); and second, the University of Wittenberg was not founded until 1508 (Schaff, 1977:VII:132).

These cyclic plays, of course, were originally religious dramas based on biblical texts that ultimately--once expelled from within the Church--became movable pageants and the most important part of Western-European, Medieval Drama (Holman and Harmon, 1986:315). Following their departure from the Church, these so-called "Mystery Plays" were soon secularized and performed by the trade guilds, which were in competition with each other. These moveable stages (wagons) were transported so that the plays could be circulated from station to station.

Several of these cycle plays are still extant today, such as the following: the York; the Chester; the Coventry; and the Wakefield (or "Towneley") (Holman and Harmon, 1986:315). Of these four, cyclical dramas, the last one mentioned--the "Towneley"--is most important today in any understanding of dramatic development (Holman and Harmon, 1986:135). It would probably have been one of these very cycles that Shakespeare would have introduced into *Hamlet* to reenact "The Murder of Gonzago," which the Prince himself nicknamed "The Mouse Trap," and which play did, indeed, fulfill its mission and "trap" the guilty Claudius.

And Wittenberg University, which Hamlet attended, opened its doors on October 18, 1502, under Imperial Privilege and even with papal approbations (Hillerbrand, 1996:IV:199). Its founding "father" was Fredrick III ("The Wise"), the Elector of Saxony, who became ultimately the protector of the Reformation, as well as becoming the Protector of Martin

Luther. Paradoxically, Fredrick III was initially a devote Catholic and a patron of the Virgin Mary and St. Augustine (Schaff, 1977:VII:132). Granted, theology was the obvious first faculty to be established with Thomism, Scotism, and Ockhamism being emphasized; but law, medicine, and arts were soon added (Hillerbrand, 1996:IV:199) because Fredrick III was a great friend of liberal learning (Schaff, 1977:VII:132).

Under the leadership of Johannes von Staupitz, co-founder and first dean, an Augustine monastery was also established in Wittenberg (Schaff, 1977:VII:132). From this monastery the new university drew its first professors, the pious hermits who combined courses in monastic study with moral philosophy, which doubtlessly Hamlet would have assimilated years later, and biblical exegesis (Schaff, 1977:IV:199). Simultaneously, Franciscans provided a professorship in Scotism:

The doctrines of the Scholastic Duns Scotus which . . . proposes a separation of philosophy and theology . . . and is known especially for his voluntuism, logical realism and principle of haeccety [individualism]" (Webster's Third International Dictionary, 1986: 2037).

This type of individualism, as gleaned from Scotism's teachings, Hamlet, of course, exhibits throughout the drama as he grapples with theological issues.

And to Wittenberg University was sent one Martin Luther, in 1507, to teach moral philosophy; and even later he became professor of biblical studies (1512) at this newly-established university (Dowley and Others, 1995:366-368). Needless to say, with the nailing of his "Ninety-five Theses" to the door of the University's Castle Church (October 31, 1517), the Protestant Reformation had begun. Soon after 1517 the registrants at the University of Wittenberg came from practically every country in Europe, so much so that Melanchton heard as many as eleven different languages spoken at his dinner table at any given evening meal (Schaff, 1977:VII:135). Among these students would be numbered some even from as far removed as Denmark. Dowley (1995:385A) points out that Tausen and Jørgen Sadolin studied under Luther's tutelage. Subsequently, as Latourette (2000:735) notes, Christianity came to Denmark with Wittenberg University serving as the center for the Reformation's influence, even in Denmark. Coming from this kind of background, namely the tutelage of the great reformers at Wittenberg University and the consequent beginnings of Christianity within Denmark itself, through the University's influence, it should not be surprising that Hamlet's ultimate problem is a theological one.

So Hamlet's first theological concern would have been demonology—the validity of the Ghost. In this regard the Epicureans, in the Middle Ages, had taught that ghosts and spirits were but imaginations of mad men's minds (Lavater 1992, as qtd. by Hoy 113). Even though the Epicureans seemed to disallow the existence of any ghosts, the Papists did not but instead taught:

Hereunto. . .add that the spirits, as well of the good as the ill, do come and are sent unto men living, from hell; and that by the common law of justice, all men at the day of judgment shall come to their trial from hell. . . . Farther [sic] they teach that by God's license and dispensation, certain year before the day of judgement [sic], are permitted to come out of hell, and that not forever, but only for a season, for the instructing and terrifying of the living (Lavater 1992, as qtd. by Hoy 114).

In fact, these same Papists stressed that good spirits, or ghosts, could be discerned from the evil ones by the following four features: first, a good spirit would initially terrify men but then return to comfort them; second, an evil spirit would appear in the shape of a lion, bear, dog, toad, serpent, cat, or black ghost; third, a spirit (if good) would not utter anything contrary to Scripture or the teachings of the Church fathers; and fourth, a good spirit would exhibit humility or, at least, an “acknowledging or confessing of his sins and punishments, or whether we hear. . .any groaning, weeping, complaint, boasting, threatening, slander or blasphemy” (Lavater 1992, as qtd. by Hoy 115).

Interestingly enough, Martin Luther himself believed comparable concepts about spirits and may well have taught them at Wittenberg University. For example, Schaff comments: “Luther was brought up in all Medieval superstitions regarding demons, ghosts, witches, sorcerers” (Schaff, 1977:VII:335). Of all the evil spirits, the Devil, of course, was the worst one, being the personal embodiment of any evil and all mischief (Schaff, 1977:VII:335). What made the Devil even more fearsome was the fact that he could assume any visible form, such as a dog (as in Goethe's *Faust I*), a hog, a goat, or even flames, stars, or a horned man (Schaff, 1977:VII:336). Furthermore, the Devil—as an evil spirit—could be noisy and boisterous, coming, as Luther claimed, “*Ein Polter-und Rumpel-Geist* [A crash and rumble spirit]” (Schaff, 1977:VII:337).

The thinking of the Middle Ages, the teachings of the Papists, and the concepts of Martin Luther are entirely within the sphere of Scripture. The *Holy Bible* teaches that Jesus Christ Himself believed in and, in fact, exorcized demons, as for example when He cast the demon out of the Gaderene Demoniac (Luke 4:35). As Latourette (2000:41) observes, “He

[Christ] accepted Satan as an existent being, an enemy of God, and he addressed the demons whom he cast out not as delusions of sick minds, but as actual.” Furthermore, during the genesis of the Christian Church, whole families would often become Christians---accept Christ---because they heard testimonies of demon possession cured through the invocation of Christ’s name (Latourette, 2000:I:105). Then, too, the early Church fathers also held strong beliefs about demons, one of whom was Anthony for whom “*Demons and the Devil were very real . . . and he had many a bout with them*” (Latourette, 2000:I:226), not unlike Martin Luther’s throwing of an ink well at the Devil on one occasion, which spot, I understand, is still faintly visible in Luther’s museum-home. Even the initial Christians of Western Europe (950 – 1350 A.D.) believed that “*the unseen world of spirits was very real. The Devil and his hosts were believed to be the source of many and perhaps most of the ills which beset the human race*” (Latourette, 2000:I:535). So from early Church beliefs and teachings, as well as Middle-Age Papists and the Renaissance’s Martin Luther, a belief in spirits (ghosts) was very viable for Hamlet!

And he has imbibed this demonology at Wittenberg University, so much so that his very first concern is the validity of the Ghost’s manifestations: “*Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned (?)*” (I.iv.40). When “the thing” first appears, Marcellus cries out, “*Thou art a scholar, Speak to it, Horatio*” (I.i.42). Apparently, as in the Middle Ages and in Luther’s Day, only the learned were qualified to address seeming-evil spirits. Furthermore, as prescribed by the Papists, the Ghost initially terrifies Marcellus and Horatio and exits quickly (I.i.46-50) but then returns to confront (comfort) them. Then, too, as the Papists taught, this Ghost has not the shape of an animal and therefore may not be an evil one. Also, this Ghost utters no blasphemy nor teachings contrary to Scripture or even the Church fathers, although the ultimate exhortation to revenge might be construed as unscriptural. Consequently, it should be assumed to be a good spirit and not the Devil. Finally, a good spirit will speak in humility or contrition for its sins, in which conjunction the Ghost points out:

Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin  
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unaneled,  
No reck'ning made, but sent to my account  
With all my imperfections on my head  
O, horrible! O, horrible! Most horrible! (I.v.76-80)

Obviously, Hamlet may assume that this is a good spirit and should be trusted!

However, his Wittenberg theology had taught him that one must thoroughly test the spirits, even as Scripture tells us: “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (I John 4:1 KJV). After all, a ghost forebodes something sinister, something evil: “*A little ere the mightiest Julius fell, / The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead / Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets*” (I.i.114-116); or again we read, “*My father’s spirit in arms? All is not well/I doubt some foul play*” (I.i.251-252). Furthermore, Horatio cries out, upon the Ghost’s reentry, “*Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life/Extorted treasure in the womb of earth, / For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death*” (I.i.135-137). But because the Ghost now feels threatened and because the sunrise approaches—two things that spirits cannot abide—it disappears; and Horatio and Marcellus are left befuddled; and Hamlet is left bewildered--“Was this an evil spirit (of the Devil) or a good spirit (from God)?” With this theological issue Hamlet must grapple throughout most of the early scenes of the drama until he finally devises his “mouse trap”; and then he knows for certain that the Ghost was a good spirit. But why does he not act immediately?

He cannot yet act because he also has to deal with ethical issues—the incest of his mother and the betrayal by his friends. I am defining “ethical” here as conformity to accepted standards of communal conduct, which is to say behavior that is virtuous, honorable, and upright (*Webster’s Third International Dictionary*, 1986:780). Apparently Queen Gertrude’s hasty remarriage, following her previous husband’s unexpected death, was not within “communal conduct”. At any rate, it disturbed her son so much that he reflects:

That it should come to this,  
But two months dead, nay, not so much, not two. . . .  
. . . within a month—  
Let me not think on’t. Frailty, they name is woman—  
A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
With which she followed my poor father’s body  
Like Niobe, all tears, why she—  
O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason  
Would have mourned longer (I.ii.137-151).

But of greater concern than the all-too-hasty remarriage was the implication that his mother had even committed incest by marrying her own brother-in-law. As Hamlet observes:

. . . married with my uncle,  
My father's brother, but no more like my father  
Than I to Hercules. . . .  
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post  
'With such dexterity to incestuous sheets! (I.ii.151-157)

Why would Hamlet designate his mother's remarriage as "incestuous sheets"? After all, she did not marry a biological relative!

Frankly, Hamlet had probably been taught, at Wittenberg University, that incest was socially unacceptable. After all, under Constantine, the early Christian Church taught that marriage to cousins even thrice removed was strictly forbidden because it was incestuous; and certainly the conjugal union of a godparent and a godchild was incestuous because of the spiritual kinship (Schaff, 1977:III:112). This tenant was undoubtedly reinforced by the teachings of his Wittenberg professors when they stressed that incest—marriage between relatives—was definitely wrong and, hence, sinful. Certainly, in Shakespeare's Renaissance World, the marriage of immediate in-laws was considered to be incestuous, as Pasinetti (1992:I:2023n) points out, "*According to principles which Hamlet accepts, marrying one's brother's widow is incest.*"

And the incest issue comes to its climax when Hamlet confronts his mother, in her bedroom, and accuses her of incestuous ness:  
You are the queen, your husbands's brother's wife,  
And would it were not so, you are my mother [you incestuous woman] (III.iv.14-15);

.....  
A bloody deed [having just killed Polonius]? Almost as bad, good mother,  
As kill a king and marry with his brother (III. iv. 29-30).

Hamlet is obviously still grappling—almost to the point of obsession—with his mother's incest. However, he seems here to have resolved—perhaps even accepted—this ethical issue, as well as the betrayal by his friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern "*There's letters sealed, and my two school-fellows,/whom I will trust as I will adders fanged*" (III.iv.206-207). Time nor space, of course, will permit discussion of this latter ethical issue.

But Hamlet's ethical concerns now evolve into a moral morose as he realizes that his mother's transgression is much larger than mere incest. In fact, Bradley (1912:104), too, asserts that Hamlet is a "*tragedy of moral idealism.*" Consequently, Queen Gertrude's incest has now become adultery. At Wittenberg Hamlet would have learned—perhaps in Old Testament Studies—that adultery is always wrong because the Jewish "Pentateuch" stresses, as its seventh commandment, "*Do not commit adultery*" (Exodus 20:14*NLT*). Consequently, his professors at Wittenberg would also have underscored this commandment when Luther vigorously affirmed that naturalistic heterosexuality between a husband and his wife was the only legitimate sexuality between a man and a woman (Hillerbrand, 1996:51A). Furthermore, the reformers taught that adultery was the grossest sin and needed to be severely punished because it violated the mystical union of Christ (the groom) with his church (the bride) (Schaff, 1977:III:444).

And Hamlet knew about Claudius's and Gertrude's adultery from the Ghost's initial visitation:

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
With witchcraft of his wits, with traitorous gifts  
Won to his shameful lust  
The will of my most seeming virtuous queen (I.v.42-45).

Consequently, Hamlet knew about his mother's and his uncle's adulterous relationship from the very outset. In fact, some critics interpret this adulterous relationship as the cause of the elder Hamlet's murder—not its effect (Rose, 1992:263). Frankly, I once believed that Hamlet was not aware of the adultery, thereby making this aspect a dramatic irony; but Hamlet clearly must have been aware of it from the very outset. Hence, Hamlet was not only immediately perplexed by the issues of demonology and ethics; but morality even rears its ugly head. Consequently, once again, in that infamous bed-chamber scene, Hamlet can now personally confront his mother about her sinfulness, her adultery, when he accuses her as follows:

Such an act  
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty  
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,  
And sets a blister there, makes marriage-vows  
As false as dicers' oaths (III .iv. 42-46)

That Hamlet was initially aware of his mother's adultery is made even clearer by the cited passage; and he has resolved it in his own thinking to the extent that he commands his mother:

Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:  
Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed,  
Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse,  
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,  
Or paddling in your neck with his damned fingers (III.vi.185-189).

In other words, Hamlet is saying, in essence, "*Mother! You must stop this adulterous relationship.*" For all intents and purposes, his mother seemingly consents to abide by her son's wishes.

But Hamlet must yet face his biggest and most-complex moral issue, namely his committing murder in order to avenge another murder. After all, *The Holy Bible's* "Sixth Commandment" emphatically states, "Do not murder" (Exodus 20:13 NLT). Hamlet's professors at Wittenberg would certainly have reemphasized this tenet in his Old Testament Survey Courses! How, then, can one justify murder to recompense murder? Does Hamlet, in fact, have the right to take the law into his own hands? As Rogers (1987:138) points out, "A man has been picked out to do a deed which society [also the *Holy Bible*] condemns, but which a higher, divine authority sanctions" (138). Hamlet, of course, has felt this paradoxical obligation throughout the drama—to "*Revenge . . . foul and most unnatural murder*" (I.v.25). In fact, his earliest soliloquy "*O, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt, / Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew*" (I.ii.129-1300) already hints at the Atlas-like burden upon his young shoulders. Granted, this aside entertains suicidal thoughts; but it certainly portrays how keenly young Hamlet feels and wrestles with this theological issue. He further muses, "*The time is out of joint. O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right!*" (I. v. 187-188). In fact, every soliloquy by Hamlet can be-- either explicitly or, at least, implicitly--interpreted in terms of his grappling with "*To murder or not to murder.*" That *Hamlet* is about death (even by murder) is well argued by C.S. Lewis (1992:197), in his fine essay, "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem" wherein he claims, "*In Hamlet we are kept thinking about it [death] all the time, whether in terms of the soul's destiny or of the body's.*" Lewis is so right because no fewer than eight individuals—including Prince Hamlet—all are killed during the course of the play. Hamlet, of course, must die because the successful avenger forfeits his life due to condemnation by both the Church and the State (Pasinetti,

1992:I: 2013). However, none of the other victims is obviously as much obsessed with revengeful death as Hamlet himself. In fact, I occasionally muse whether his madness was all feigned or whether sometimes it was a manifestation of his over-wrought mind.

Nonetheless, from his Wittenberg teachings he, no doubt, also learned that the God of the Old Testament sometimes required the Israelites to be the instrument of divine justice by abolishing whole pagan nations. (In this regard see I Samuel 15:1-7 and Judges 6:11-17). Likewise, Hamlet must now become God's instrument of justice; and so Hamlet ultimately resolves this theological issue, too, and finally learns that he must see beyond reason and philosophy and exercise patience and trust in Providence (Rogers, 1987: 138). Consequently, he can now calmly assert, "*There's a divinity that shapes our ends. / Rough-hew them how we will*" (V. ii. 10-11). Having pondered and grappled with the issue of death--Claudius' as well as his own--he can now calmly assert:

... If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to  
come, it will be now; if it be not now yet it will come. Readiness is all. To  
leave betimes? Let be (V. ii. 195-197).

Having resolved the issues of demonology, of incest, of adultery, and, finally, of murder (for revenge), Hamlet submits himself to the will of God to be used by Him for whatever purposes He may intend. If that divine plan includes that Hamlet commit both fratricide and regicide(killing a king), namely Claudius, then "*The readiness is all*". As the curtain falls, Hamlet is indeed used by God to cleanse Denmark of an "*incestuous . . . adulterate beast.*"

Thus, Hamlet's continual procrastination may have resulted more from his theological dilemma, which produced intellectual and emotional turmoil within the young prince, than from a protagonist's *hamartia*, namely procrastination itself. Consequently, Horatio can eulogize, "*Now cracks a noble heart*" (V.ii.388). Hamlet has resolved his theological issues and is now at rest. His triple commission has been completed!

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## PETER ACKROYD'S *PLATO PAPERS*—A PARODY?

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Published in 1999, P. Ackroyd's latest piece of writing denounces its self-reflexivity from its kind of Dickensian title, *Plato Papers*, as well as from its subtitle, *A Novel*. The paratext sets the plot in the 37<sup>th</sup> century, the previous historical periods being labeled as 'The Age of Orpheus' (c. 3500 BC-c. 300 BC), 'The Age of the Apostles' (c. 300BC-c. AD 1500), 'The Age of Mouldwarp' (c. AD 1500-c. AD 2300), and 'The Age of Witspell' (c. AD 2300-c. AD 3400). Exploring the present as past, taking as a point of reference a present moment placed in the year 3700 is taken one step further: the writer envisages a sort of bibliographical references sorted in chronological order, starting with Roman Corvo's *New Theory of the Earth*, published in 2030 and ending with *Plato Papers*, an anonymous work published in 3705.

One may expect to encounter extraterrestrial beings as the main protagonists of this novel, given today's ubiquity of computer technology and advent of genetic engineering:

"The western imagination is (...) overflowing with fantastical, monstrous and alien beings whose ambivalent and/ or liminal status bears witness to a perennial fascination with both the outer limits of human identity and the ultimate potential of human creativity."(Graham, 2001:305)

However, Ackroyd's approaching the so called '*age of the post human*' is another attempt to explore the limits of fiction writing in a playful way. What Linda Hutcheon (1989:77), refers to as '*the fact-making and the meaning-granting processes*' are made overt in the paratextual insertion:

"It is sometimes considered wayward or importunate to paint a portrait of one man, yet we know from the pictures of parishioners lit upon the Wall of our great and glorious city that a single feature or glance may embody a fateful moment or an eventful transaction. So, I intend to conjure up a likeness of Plato, the great orator of London, in a similar fashion; like the displays of our actors continually before us, some events will be presented on a grand scale and other diminished. The conventions of spherical drama will be preserved from the beginning to the end; the revelations and lamentations, for example, will be in strict keeping with each other. By these means we may see his unhappily brief life in a continual search for truth. But will also be my duty faithfully to record Plato's final days in

the city and to ascertain how a cruel superstition exercised boundless domination over the most elevated and benevolent mind.  
Anon., *The Plato Papers*, 3705”

This paragraph stresses the artificiality of the text as well as the autocracy of the mimetic devices. This ‘document’, manages to subvert the archive by drawing attention to the textual nature of any representation. The parodic effect is granted, as everywhere in the novel, and it clearly emerges from the clash between the realistic intention and the aesthetic one (cf. Hutcheon, 1989:74)

Plato’s orations are in fact instances of critical discourse interpreting the ‘*condition of past ages*’. As all interpretation is re-reading and, therefore, subject to distortion, these lectures represent a set of erroneous assumptions acknowledged as such towards the end of the novel. For example, in one of them, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* is analyzed as a ‘remarkable’ novel attributed to Charles Dickens. Though, on the surface level, Plato’s second oration seems ludicrous, its overall effect is nothing but hilarious since it obviously mimics the traditional critical idiom:

“I will now speak of a novelist, Charles Dickens, who flourished in a period somewhere between the seventeen and the twentieth centuries of our earth.[...] The novel is entitled *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, by Charles D.(5) In the act of inventing this absurd fellow, this ‘naturalist’ travelling upon the extraordinarily named Beagle, he has managed indirectly to parody his own society. The subtitle of the novel itself suggests one of the objects of his satire—‘The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life’ refers to the Mould warp delusion that all human beings could be classified in terms of ‘race’, ‘gender’ or ‘class’. We find interesting evidence of this in the anecdotes of a comedian, Brother Marx, of whom I will speak at a later date.”(Ackroyd, 2000:6)

Plato’s archeology of knowledge is a process of distortion. Throughout the first section of the novel, the reader comes across scholarly glossary definitions which only show pieces of knowledge vitiated by the knower:

“*words-worth*: the patronymic of writers who had earned their high position.[...] Many Mouldwarp writers were compared to inorganic substances, such as Ore-well. Cole-ridge and Gold-smith. Some writers were considered sacred, as in Pope and Priestley.” (2000:26)

The classical dictum that “*naming is being*” finds itself being paralleled by practices of deconstruction and defamiliarization which have visible ironic forms.

Being an orator does no longer offer an empowering position. On the contrary, it means entertaining the audience, the sort of job a jester has to perform. Plato, the character, assumes his public assignment as an exterior imposition. Consequently, he has to put on the robe and the mask, here, some fake insignia of power, and to observe the rules established by the city custom. As a matter of fact, etymological doublets, ‘custom’ and ‘costume’ are part of one of the oldest metaphors of the human race—the clothes allegory. According to M. Irimia (1999:35), “*custom always addresses the world in the costume of its conventions*”.

Like Plato’s Socrate, the character bearing the philosopher’s name confesses his dilemmas to the Soul, originally thought of as “*the seat of consciousness, reasoning and moral decision*” (O’Grady, 1997: xiv). Unlike the Platonic Soul, Ackroyd’s version lacks the possibility to function as arbitrator and counselor: “*It’s no good asking me. I have nothing to do with knowledge, certain or uncertain*” (2000:64).

That is why this Soul cannot help Plato find the answer to his doubts concerning the truthfulness of his interpretation and that of the past: “*What if my interpretation of the books is false or misguided?*”; “*What if the past is all an invention or legend?*” (2000:52) In the end, the conclusion he reaches on his own is that knowledge of the past is purely conjectural, a question of representation, and not a matter of recording it objectively.

Projected into future, the city of London is, nevertheless, “*a bounded world full of boundaries*”, an authoritarian ‘conscious machine’, able to become a “*subject-producing space of the first order.*” (Pile, Thrift, 1995:377) The city endowed with the power of turning its inhabitants into docile bodies is not a new concept with Ackroyd and it is rendered very powerful once more:

“Ornatus: (...) We have all grown up together within the city. We have obeyed its injunctions. We have been instructed in its mysteries.[...] We spend our lives contemplating its goodness and beauty. We hear you expounding upon its inner harmonies.” (Ackroyd, 2000: 84)

Plato’s statement that “*Everything in our city’s history tells us that the first and original shape never dies*” (2000:62) recalls the philosophical theory of Forms which stated that things in the perceivable world are mere

imperfect copies of an archetypal essence or Form. As M. Irimia notes in her *Rise of Modern Evaluation*,

“Typical of classical thinking, the standard establishing the class is universal and never supposed to be bent. Typical of this is the force of founding hierarchies and taxonomies. This is the logic of classical ‘ideology’. It is content with stable, settled and accredited values, for it functions under the sign of securing stasis.”(1999:101)

What Plato attempts is to undermine the society which promotes such values— he concludes that history does not consist of a paradigmatic set of events. Instead, past and present are viewed as two different dimensions of a simultaneous order: “*all versions and visions of the world may coexist eternally*” (2000:100-1).

He goes on preaching how important accepting change and questioning ready-made ideas are:

“ I know that you have been taught the lives of gods and of heroes, of angels and of giants. But you have never heard the legends of those who stood alone against the world and [...] won the battles. Why not praise them as well as the leaders who have been chosen for you to study?” (2000:103)

In this speech to the children of London, the canon is no longer seen as “*a stipulated identity of inalienable constitution and contours observed and worshipped with religious veneration*”, but as “*a human construct of power, authority and hegemony.*” (Irimia, 1999:122)

No wonder that the title hero meets a Socratic fate and is put on trial for corrupting the young, both their accusations having to do with the political and religious subversiveness of their teaching.

The final section of the novel, ‘The Judgment upon Plato’, shows him being acquitted and delivering his final speech. As he refuses to live in a world which will not grant him the freedom of movement in the physical, and, especially, in the spiritual sense, he sentences himself to perpetual exile.

Drawing on Platonic philosophy is meant as a pretence of objectivity which enables the writer to explore the limits of fiction writing: fragments of conversation that pastiche the Platonic dialogues, definitions that mimic dictionary entries and the lectures themselves make up the composite structure of the novel. This seems to be Ackroyd’s recipe designed to loosen the constraints of the novel as a literary genre.

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**THE HISTORY OF DORSET  
WRITING AS READING  
IN  
JOHN COWPER POWYS'S *WOLF SOLENT***

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For a reader interested in comparative literary studies John Cowper Powys's *Wolf Solent* seems to be a goldmine: once a mainstream Modernist, but today read mostly by enthusiastic fans, Powys sends his readers rambling in libraries to detect the source of his numerous more or less explicit allusions. However, the anxious reader might realise quite soon that s/he has undertaken a hopeless mission: similarly to the Joycean texts, s/he would have to be well-versed in the whole of the Western European literary tradition – let alone knowing the history of fine arts and Eastern philosophies – only to end up with a pile of controversial, often mutually exclusive references. Instead of contributing to anything even faintly resembling a coherent interpretation, they rather make the reader “lost in the funhouse” of intertextuality, hunting for possibly unnoticed references in a futile and almost paranoid manner. This is what has led me to posing the question in a different way: instead of finding and interpreting the possibly relevant aspects of the individual intertextual references I would like to examine how they function in the text in general. This issue is closely intertwined with some aspects of narration, such as perspective and tone, and with the “only” written text the main character, Wolf Solent, produces in the novel: his book, *The History of Dorset*. In my opinion the compilation of this *History*, which represents writing as basically reading and interpretation, mirrors the generation of texts in the narrative consciousness and for this reason sets a possible interpretative framework for the richly intertextual texture of the whole novel.

Let us see first why narration is problematic in *Wolf Solent*. Though third person narration is used in the novel, the story is told exclusively from one point of view, that of the main character. Ideally, it should provide a unified perspective, but this is far from the truth. As Janina Nordius points out in her study of Powys's major fiction:

A general poststructuralist awareness may also be useful in dealing with Powys's portrayal of the divided selves [...] in examining the division in the narrative

consciousness itself which is apparent in for instance *Wolf Solent*. (Nordius, 1997:6)

Taking this into consideration, the fact that “Outside [Wolf Solent’s] consciousness ‘[t]here is no author’s voice with knowledge of objective truth. There is no final authority’” (Nordius, 1997:46) seems to direct the reader’s attention to the main character’s identity itself.

And here a vicious circle is apparently closed: the text is generated by the narrative consciousness, but Wolf Solent’s identity is generated by the text itself. As Jacques Lacan points out, the subject is constructed by the entry into the Symbolic, that is, in Language.

What we teach the subject to recognise as his unconscious is his history – that is to say, we help him to perfect the contemporary historicisation of the facts which have already determined a certain number of historical “turning points” in his existence. (Lacan, 1981:23)

Partly relying on Lacan’s ideas, Peter Brooks (1984:33) claims that “[t]he question of identity, ... can be thought only in narrative terms”, whereas “it is in essence the desire to be heard, recognised, understood, which, never wholly satisfied or indeed satisfiable, continues to generate the desire to tell, the effort to enunciate a significant version of the life story in order to captivate a possible listener” (1984:54). However, Wolf Solent’s silence, his inability to tell “a significant version of his life story” and thus to establish his identity becomes apparent in the first sections of the novel. At the beginning of the story the thirty-five-year-old Solent is shown travelling home to his birthplace in Dorset after a twenty-five-year absence, sitting in an otherwise empty railway compartment and locked up in the ivory tower of his own consciousness, intentionally separating and defending himself from outside events, which appear as mere reflections and shadows – just like for the Lady of Shallot. The last twenty-five years of his life have been monotonous and uneventful; “he has lived peacefully under the despotic affection of his mother, with whom, when he was only a child of ten, he had left Dorsetshire, and along with Dorsetshire, all the agitating memories of his dead father” (Powys, 1964:14). He also seems to protect himself from his own hidden self, repressing traumatic experiences below the surface of his consciousness as uninterpreted metaphors. No wonder he has no history of his own to tell; as he himself points out, though he has worked for ten years as a history teacher, he has “never made any historical researches in [his] life. [He’s] only compiled wretched summaries from books that every one can get” (Powys, 1964:36).

By the end of the novel, however, he is forced to enter the Symbolic, to put together at least one story of his life: to write a book, *The History of Dorset*, which becomes his own story for several reasons. On the one hand, at the very beginning of the novel a metonymical relationship is established between Dorset and his dead father. Simultaneously with writing the *History*, Wolf, like a detective, tries to find out the hidden and “forgotten” story of his father “*through actively repeating and reworking [the] story in and by discourse*” (Brooks, 1984:25). His return to Dorset becomes a journey back in time, a tedious procedure of remembering and rediscovering his own origins. In Lacanian terms, the aim of his return seems to be a quest for the metaphor of the Name of the Father, to serve as the place where he could fly from his mother (Füzesséry, 1993:51). As Wolf claims: “*He had come to Dorset ... he knew it well enough now ... to escape from her, to mix with the spirit of his father in his own land*” (Powys, 1964:543). However, the quest leads to a paradox. According to Lacan (1981:41), “*It is in the name of the father that we must recognise the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law*”. Nevertheless, the story of the father, inseparably intertwined with his double, Redfern’s, once deciphered, turns out to be nothing else but breaking the law, its reading involves adultery, homosexual desires, suicidal urges and via the connection with an important minor character, Mr Malakite, incest – the most fundamental transgression the Name of the Father as law is supposed to protect from, probably the transgression Wolf is actually trying to escape from. On the other hand, partly in the course of working through his father’s and double’s story by repetition, Wolf is forced to come out of his ivory tower and act. He becomes Mr Urquhart’s secretary and finishes his book, which Redfern, his dead predecessor, failed to do. He tries to take care of his mother, his newly discovered step-sister and the eccentric poet Jason Otter by actively intervening in their lives for the first time. He marries a woman to whom he is primarily attracted sexually, and (almost) commits adultery with a woman who is not exactly feminine but very intellectual. Under the burden of all this pressure he finally contemplates committing suicide. Since Mr Urquhart plans the *History* to be a “Diary of the Dead” (Powys, 1964:62) from a “*perspective on human occurrences that the bedposts in brothels must come to possess – and the counters of bar-rooms – and the butlers’ pantries in old houses – and the muddy ditches in long-frequented lovers’ lanes*” (Powys, 1964:45-46), Wolf’s comment in the middle of the novel seems to be totally justified: “We might all be in Mr Urquhart’s book!” (Powys, 1964:282) Both Wolf and his father would be “eligible” for featuring in *The History of*

*Dorset*, because, as Peter Brooks (1984:86) claims, it is only through their “deviance and transgression” that their stories become “narratable”. Thus *The History of Dorset* becomes Wolf’s story in more than one sense: it is an image of his father’s story – and thus the story of his origin – and his own story, and since he compiles it, it becomes a model for how he generates texts and how he attempts to establish his identity.

There are three important aspects of Wolf’s writing procedure that seem to be most relevant from this respect. First of all, *The History of Dorset* is a compilation. Mr Urquhart describes it in the following way:

‘Our History will be an entirely new genre, [...] What I want to do is to isolate the particular portion of the earth’s surface called “Dorset”; as if it were possible to decipher there a palimpsest of successive strata, one inscribed below another, of human impression’. (Powys, 1964:45)

According to this, on the one hand the text will be put together out of the fragments of already existing texts, layered on each other, like in the case of a palimpsest. Thus it implies first of all the deciphering – the reading and interpreting – of probably blurred and partly damaged inscriptions covering (and thus modifying) each other. The impossibility of a “perfect” and “total” reading is emphasised by the tentative “as if”. On the other hand, the phrase “human impression” also implies utter subjectivity – as if it were the human (un)conscious that was to be read. Thus the writing procedure is based on a complicated reading procedure similar to that of psychoanalysis, while its aim is to “isolate” Dorset like a human individual by establishing its identity through its history. *The History of Dorset* has nothing to do with “objective” or scientific truth. It gives necessarily controversial and partial impressions of “*the ebb and flow of events*” (Powys, 1964:45), which may discredit and undermine each other, and since the deepest stratum is unreachable, it, “*like analyses, may in essence be interminable*” (Brooks, 1984:212).

Secondly, a compilation implies the selection of relevant material – a choice of similar elements from the greater paradigm of events that have taken place in Dorset. Since this selection is based on similarity, it can be associated with the metaphoric pole of language, to use Jakobson’s term, and is one of “*the aspects [in which] an individual exhibits his personal style*” (1971:1114). In the case of *The History of Dorset*, however, it is not Wolf who carries out the task of selection, but Mr Urquhart. On the one hand, he decides on the nature of the material to be included and he defines it in terms of a certain perspective that Wolf identifies as “Rabelaisian”

(Powys, 1964:46). It is characterised by a Protean nature, involving carnivalesque laughter, following the logic of inversion and giving a “bottom-view”, which is fundamentally opposed to the serious and officially accepted (Bahtyin, 1982: 17). It gives an outlet to such desires that must be repressed according to the norms of civilisation (Brooks, 1984). On the other hand, Mr Urquhart actually prepares notes for Wolf about the material that should be included. As a result, Wolf has to acquire a perspective that is not his own, has to deal with metaphors that he has intentionally excluded from his life, just like the Name of the Father, but metaphors, which forcefully return like the repressed (Brooks, 1984). He has to face the inevitable presence of already written texts which are parts of his own text that is just being written, independently from his will or acceptance.

The third important aspect of the writing procedure is closely connected to this method of selection: since “*the spiteful commentaries and floating fragments of wicked gossip gathered together by his employer*” (Powys, 1964:329) are given in note form, Wolf Solent has to provide the missing links in the text. There is only one concrete example in the novel to show the steps of this transformation. The original notes are the following:

Cerne Giant – real virginity unknown in Dorset – ‘cold maids’; a contradiction – Sir Walter’s disgust – His erudition – His platonic tastes – How he was misunderstood by a lewd person – (Powys, 1964:330)

Wolf’s task is to restore the logic and continuity of the text by adding mostly syntactic elements, in Jakobson’s (1971:1114) terms to combine the already given elements with the help of supplying the missing metonymical links. His writing procedure seems to demonstrate what Peter Brooks (1984:10-24) identifies as the main point in any story-telling: he “*order[s] the inexplicable and impossible situation as narrative [...] by taking the apparently meaningless metaphor [...] and unpacking it as metonymy [...] so that we accept the necessity of what cannot logically be understood*”. However, Wolf himself realises that he is not totally free in doing so: even these broken fragments imply a certain tone, reveal the basically rhetorical nature of all writing (de Man, 1999). As he exclaims, “*Good Lord! [...] I must be careful what I’m doing just here. The old demon has changed his tune. This isn’t garrulous history. This is special pleading*” (Powys, 1964:330). And the events that follow seem to justify him: Mr Urquhart feels haunted by Redfern, the previous secretary’s ghost and cannot find peace till he unearths and reburies his body to check whether he really lies in his grave. Though Redfern, an extremely handsome

man, died of pneumonia, Mr Urquhart has pangs of conscience because of his death: he was homosexually attracted to the young man, who fled his service and house in an apparently suicidal mood shortly before his death. His enigmatic story has to be put together by Wolf Solent, till it finally reveals the rhetorical purpose of the *History*: it is the narcissistic exposure of Mr Urquhart's shame and his pleading for forgiveness (de Man, 1999). Thus Wolf Solent becomes both confessor and analyst to Mr Urquhart through writing his story, while he cannot escape the need of identification with the story and thus with the analysand (Brooks, 1994) at the same time, since he has to enter the story to be able to unify it by creating its style. As he says:

This style had been his own contribution to the book; and though it had been evoked under external pressure, and in a sense had been a *tour de force*, it was in its essence the expression of Wolf's own soul – the only purely aesthetic expression that Destiny had ever permitted to his deeper nature. (Powys, 1964:330)

Thus *The History of Dorset* as a model for generating the text of the novel, shows the birth of narrative consciousness through writing, which is fundamentally the infinite reading and interpretation of already given texts. In the case of the *History*, the Rabelaisian perspective which Wolf Solent has to adopt and which determines the principle of selection, is not Wolf's own. It is set by a different consciousness and indirectly – as the term implies – by a literary work of art, François Rabelais's (1555) *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Thus the writing of the *History* becomes the reading of already existing texts in the interpretive context of a literary text. This fact leads back to the issue of narration, perspective and the narrator as a subject and their possible relationship with the phenomenon of intertextuality.

What are the implications of such a writing procedure concerning the generation of the text of the whole novel? Wolf Solent “compiles” the story of his life in a very similar manner, by “framing” (Powys, 1964:91) every event in the context of already written texts, reading his own self through already existing stories – the stories of fictional characters and characters in the novel whom he recognises as his own doubles. The interconnection between textuality, frames/mirrors and doubles (the *Doppelgänger*) has been pointed out and interpreted by both cultural semiotics and psychoanalysis. On the one hand, Yury Lotman (1992:112-117) points out how the text-within-the-text in literature, the mirror in fine arts and architecture and the appearance of doubles in fiction have a very similar function and effect: by adding an inverted perspective and reflection they undermine the distinction

between “reality” and “fiction” in an extremely playful manner. On the other hand, Jacques Lacan in his concept of the “mirror stage” ascribes outstanding importance to identification with the image and connects it with entering the Symbolic, that is, Language in the development of the individual (Lacan, 1993; Wilden, 1981). Thus it can be claimed that both the intertextual references and Wolf Solent’s doubles function as mirror images in the Lacanian concept: he enters Language, the Symbolic through identification with them. However, just like there are many strata in the “palimpsest” from which he compiles *The History of Dorset*, there is a chaotic abundance of fictional characters and doubles he identifies with. The novel is full his misreadings, his “visions and revisions”, dramatic reinterpretations of events, characters and his own identity, in the course of which Wolf usually manages to distance himself from them spatially and temporally, which is shown in a shift from pathetic and tragic to ironic. But the interpretative framework is always supplied by intertextuality. Wolf’s own “Protean” self undergoes an infinite series of transformations: his explicit metamorphoses include Greek mythological characters, such as Deucalion and Orion, the Biblical figures of both the snake and Christ, a Greek tragic or comic hero in general, Dante (2001) descending into Inferno, both the ghost and Hamlet from Shakespeare’s (1982) play to be followed by a “comic King Lear”, let alone Tristram Shandy (Sterne, 1967), Ivan Karamazov (Dostoievski, 1994) and last but not least the writer Swift (1985) himself – alternatively Gulliver as a Yahoo. He is surrounded by an abundance of [(inter)textual and personal] mirrors in the novel – some of them, like *The History of Dorset*, obviously showing an inverted image –, which create a sense of infinity in space by their mutual reflection. Wolf himself expresses this notion in the following way:

There is nothing but a mirror opposite a mirror, and a round crystal opposite a round crystal, and a sky in water opposite water in a sky. (Powys, 1964:325)

The endless interplay of reflections – intertexts, images in mirrors and doubles – form in the novel what Janina Nordius (1997:31) calls “a pluralistic ‘multiverse,’ with as many centres as there are individual consciousnesses, and where each consciousness [...] creates its own particular and individual reality”. In this case, however, the individual consciousness which should form the centre of at least its own “reality”, seems to be structured like this “pluralistic ‘multiverse’”, it is divided in itself being surrounded by a multitude of mirrors. Wolf Solent’s perspective and consciousness could be most easily represented by a cracked mirror

moving around and facing several mirrors simultaneously which also reflect each other.

His existence as a subject seems to be constantly endangered, which is reflected by Wolf's classic Gothic fear of losing his identity (Botting, 1996) and maybe losing his mind – it is not by chance that most of his literary alter egos share the feature of (feigned or real) mental disturbances. An excellent example for the clash of two mutually exclusive experiences and how he “finally” comes to terms with them is given on the very last pages of the novel: going home at sunset, he first sees a field which becomes a “*floating sea of liquid, shining gold*” (Powys, 1964:629) and then passes “*behind the pigsty*” (Powys, 1964:633). He would like to believe that the first one, this visionary “*epiphanic moment*” of “*self-abandoned transcendental solitude*”, to use Janina Nordius's terms (1997:41), is really his “*ultimate vision*” (Powys, 1964:630), the image that closes the tedious procedure of (mis)reading and rereading with a final word. However, the Rabelaisian inverted perspective provided by the angle of vision from behind the pigsty makes him realise that he has to resign himself to the basically paradoxical nature of his own consciousness and the “multiverse” he lives in. The image of the identity that might be able to cope with this situation is supplied in the text by the metaphor of the river:

...how different a thing the personality of a river is from the personality of a sea. [...] the water of a river is at every succeeding moment a completely different body. [...] Wolf tried to visualise the whole course of the Lunt, so as to win for it some sort of coherent personality. By thinking of *all its waters together*, [...] this unity could be achieved; for between the actual water before him now, [...] and the water of that tiny streamlet among the mid-Dorset hills from which it sprang, there was no spatial gap. The one flowed continuously into the other. They were as completely united as the head and tail of a snake! (Powys, 1964:109)

Personality and river. One of the possible meanings of Wolf Solent's name actually connects him to this very important image: The Solent, usually referred to as a river, is actually a channel between the Isle of Wight and the mainland. The metaphor seems to suggest an identity constantly in flight, on the flow, which is made possible by the nature of the linguistic sign itself and of the Symbolic order in which the subject is located (Lacan, 1972). It does not exclude other possible readings of the name “Solent” but rather includes them, suggesting that there might be an infinite number of metaphors hidden behind it. Applied to the interpretation of the novel it denies the possibility of a definitive closure – however much desirable it seems (Brooks, 1984) –, since the river does not actually “end”, it simply

flows into the sea. This reading of his name points toward a much more playful – and probably ironical – approach to the novel, suggesting not only the acceptance of the infinite play of signifiers as inevitable, but even faintly reminding the reader that it is actually enjoyable. Wolf realises it for the first time while he is writing *The History of Dorset*: ‘I must play with it, just as [Mr Urquhart is] playing with it’ (Powys, 1964:62).

At the beginning of my paper I claimed that the compilation of *The History of Dorset* mirrors the generation of texts in the narrative consciousness and for this reason sets a possible interpretative framework for the richly intertextual texture of the whole novel. If it really does so, it is by representing the writing procedure as basically an infinite succession of misreadings and an inevitably endless attempt of self-assertion in the course of which the already written text functions as a mirror image. But *The History of Dorset* is only one of them – a most conspicuous one, though, and thus an apparently easy target for analysis. The situation becomes much more complicated when the reader has to realise that this is only one of the mirrors in the text, an intricate texture of intertextual references and a number of doubles functioning in a similar way, and their mutual reflections actually make the analyst run almost the same circles. The time structure of the novel is completely cyclical, suggesting a possibility for infinite (compulsive) repetition (Brooks, 1984). The last page of the novel – what with elevated epiphanic moments of transcendental visions – leaves Wolf Solent standing at the gate of his house and with a sentence simply implying that the story must go on: “Well, I shall have a cup of tea” (Powys, 1964:634).

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## COOPER AND THE PROBLEM OF MISCEGENATION

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**Motto:** “*The greatest danger which flows from the presence of the negro in this country, is the certainty of the contamination of the races*”

(*Race and Mixed Race*: 119)

### Introduction

*The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) was written by J.F.Cooper just after *Lionel Lincoln* (1825) and was followed by *The Prairie* (1827), *The Red Rover* (1828), and *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* (1829). These books frame the beginning, in 1826, of Cooper’s seven-year expatriation, and bear directly on certain feelings stirred up in him by the desire to leave, for a while at least, his own country. The novels in this group revolve, in large part, around two themes: the relations of white America to white Europe, and those of white America to red America. More profoundly, they are concerned with the sense of guilt felt by Americans over the Revolution against the mother country and the expropriation of the Indians.

*The Random House Webster’s English Dictionary* defines the word **miscegenation** as:

1. *Marriage or cohabitation between a man and woman of different races; especially in the U.S.A., between a black and a white person.*
2. *interbreeding between members of different races.*

During the nineteenth century, miscegenation – sexual relations between people of different races – was against the law in the U.S.A. Not only was miscegenation illegal, it was also interpreted as a violation against God and the country. In 1867, Buckner Payne, a publisher in Nashville, wrote: “*The states and people that favor this equality and amalgamation of the white and black races, God will exterminate. A man cannot commit so great an offense against his race, against his country, against his God as to give his daughter in marriage to a negro – a – beast*” (Cited by Zack, N.:119).

In the years between the Revolution and the Civil War, as the question of black political rights was debated more and more vociferously, descriptions and pictorial representations of whites coupling with blacks proliferated in the North. Novelists, short-story writers, poets, journalists,

and political cartoonists imagined that political equality would be followed by widespread inter-racial sex and marriage. Legally possible, yet socially unthinkable, this “*amalgamation*” of the races would manifest itself in the perverse union of “*whites*” with “*blacks*”.

Elise Lemire in her article, “Miscegenation Making Race in America”, opens up new paths of inquiry into the invention of race and of whiteness, as well as into the history of love and sexual desire in the United States. Looking to the North, and to such texts as the Federalist poetry about Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, J.F.Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans*, E.A.Poe’s “Murders in the Rue Morgue”, and the 1863 pamphlet in which the word “miscegenation” was first used, Lemire examines the steps by which whiteness became a sexual category and same-race desire came to seem a biological imperative. As Werner Sollors from Harvard University remarks,

“Making love across the racial division between black and white thus came to appear as a contradiction in terms, since only making miscegenation was possible” (Lemire:2002)

Throughout his life and literary career, Cooper was much preoccupied by two questions: first, the struggle for a new continent; secondly, the relations between men of different races in the New World. According to Leslie Fiedler (1984:203), Cooper’s dilemma was:

“Has the flight from Europe and the expropriation of the Indians bound white man and red in such an inextricable knot of mutual interest and guilt that they must eventually blend into one (accursed!) race?”

Cooper’s answer to this question is obvious in the secret themes of the novels mentioned above, with special emphasis in *The Leatherstocking Tales* (*The Pioneers*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Prairie*, *The Pathfinder*, and *The Deerslayer*). The present paper demonstrates that Cooper, through his characters, is an exponent of racial purity. Mingling of races is not possible during life (through marriage); moreover, it is unthinkable even beyond death.

To understand better his aversion towards any type of mixing races or blood, we should make first a brief biographical incursion, and secondly, explain the meaning Cooper gave when he spoke about the “*frontier*” and his actual relationship to the wilderness that he made the setting of his most successful books.

Unlike Scott, Cooper guarded many details of his existence from public scrutiny. His childhood home was on the edge of the forest in space (near Lake Otsego in New York State), on the further margin of Indian-fighting days in time (1789 on). Despite living near the forest, he was not very familiar to it. The forest in his novels is not much trodden, it is more a concept of it, an “ideal” forest. Cooper mythicised the landscape, whose grandeur is often described in too many, quite unrealistic details.

His tendency towards mythicisation is noticeable in his delineation of characters, as well. Cooper’s family was made up of rich landowners, people who got rich on the lands opened up by the pioneers. These lands, we must not forget, were stolen from the Indians. Although there is no mention of ever taking the land by force, Cooper felt a bit guilt-ridden. Nevertheless, this sympathy towards the Indians is shown, by Cooper, for the Indian chief, and not for the Indian people in general. He was not very religious; however, he believed, unlike the Puritans, in man’s original innocence, and the unreality of evil. This belief was much enhanced by his happy marriage that made him accept the sacredness of womanhood. His seven-year trip to Europe made him aware of another civilization that he played out in terms of a confrontation of Europe and America.

Cooper created the image of the primitive as heroic. From W. Scott, whose disciple he was, Cooper learned to invest his projections of the primitive with the pathos of the lost cause, and to play out his action on the “*ideal boundary*” between two cultures, one “*civilized and cultivated*”, the other “*wild and lawless*”. The American name for that “*ideal boundary*” is, of course, the “*frontier*”, and the newly created continent provided limitless possibilities for moving such a frontier westward. Cooper replaced Scott’s romantic North (the Highlands) by his own romantic West. The “*American Scott*”, as he was called, found the incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the Western wilderness suitable to an American writer.

*Lionel Lincoln* tells the story of Lionel, an officer in the British Army, though a native of America, who is nearly converted to the Colonial cause. At the last minute, however, he discovers that the wise old patriot, who had nearly convinced him, is an escaped lunatic – for whom authority means the keeper, and freedom an opportunity to indulge his illusions.

Cooper’s unconscious doubts about the justice of the American War of Independence are even better expressed by his ambivalence towards the protagonist of *The Red Rover*. He is a Revolutionary pirate who has taken to a career of crime because the commander of a British ship on which he was serving had insulted America.

Both the lunatic from *Lionel Lincoln* and the pirate from *The Red Rover* stand, ironically and mockingly enough, for the first fighters for the Republic. They represent the people who are supposed to struggle for a new continent and Republic.

The beginnings of the American character take Cooper even beyond the period of the Revolutionary War, back to the original struggle for the American land. From this struggle, The French and Indian War seems to be the best moment Cooper chooses to present in *The Last of the Mohicans*.

Besides the theme of the struggle for a New World, Cooper seems to be even more fascinated by another theme, that of miscegenation, i.e. the relations between men of different races in the New World.

In *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*, an Indian boy, Conanchet, captured by whites, is recaptured by an Indian raiding party, who take along with him a girl child of the family which has kept him in captivity. When they are both adults, he makes the white girl, who presumably loves him, his squaw (an American Indian woman, especially a wife). When he discovers that her parents are still alive, he surrenders her to them, and gives himself up to his Indian enemies. In the end, he dies by the hand of Uncas. Despite our expectations, it is not Uncas, remote ancestor of the handsome and brave Uncas of *The Last of the Mohicans*, who plays this role. The true Uncas role is played by Conanchet, who is described as the last Indian chief of the broken and dispersed tribes of the Narrangansett (American Indians of Rhode Island)

The contrast of color between Conanchet (“*dark glittering eyes*”, “*dark visage*”) and his wife, Narra-mattah (“*golden hair*”, “*azure eyes*”), is repeatedly emphasized by Cooper in favor of proving his ideas of miscegenation. Conanchet, Cooper’s spokesperson, tells Narra-Mattah’s father that the Great Spirit was angry when they grew together so they had to forget the dream among the trees. Conanchet’s final words to his wife, which are aimed only at preparing her for his death and her abandonment, urge her to give up the dream “*dreamt among the trees*”, and to return to the settlements of her people. Mixing of blood, so repugnant to Cooper and, implicitly, to Conanchet, is unacceptable to his wife. Seeing her so unhappy and unwilling to accept the terrible boundary between the white race and the red race, Conanchet leaves her with the hope of a possible reunion in heaven. There, and only there, racial prejudices and boundaries might be erased and interracial love and eventual marriage might win. However, he does not defend his point vehemently; deep down in his heart, as he is

supposed to embody the good Indian, he approves of the mixture of cultures, Christian and pagan, of the mingling of alien bloods.

On the other hand, the imaginary bad Indian is illustrated by Whittal-Nipset, a half-wit white boy, who has also been captured by the Indians and has emerged from his stay among them convinced that he is a redskin warrior. By using two Indians, Cooper manages to propagate his ambivalence toward the Indians, his inner quarrel about the side to choose: on the one hand, the Indians as exploited and deprived of their native lands; on the other hand, the Indians as Savages.

After the first anti-miscegenation novel, the second novel that we will consider in the same light is *The Last of the Mohicans*, the second novel of the five-novel series, entitled *The Leatherstocking Tales*. *The Leatherstocking Tales* derives its title from the nickname of the hero Natty Bumppo, so called because of his long deerskin leggings. With Natty Bumppo, Cooper introduces us to another character, the noble frontiersman. The hero is known by the following names: Natty Bumppo or Leather-Stocking in *The Pioneers*, Hawk-Eye in *The Last of the Mohicans*, “the trapper” in *Prairie*, Pathfinder in *The Pathfinder*, and Bumppo or Deerslayer in *The Deerslayer*. His character is strikingly consistent throughout the series, which treats his life and adventures from youth to old age and death. The perfect woodsman, who dislikes the restraints and destructiveness of settlements, he understands and loves the forest, and his moral qualities are as great as his understanding. Generous both to friends and to enemies, he possesses a simple, staunch morality and a cool nerve and never-failing resourcefulness. A typical American pioneer figure, he is a master of all the skills needed to live and hunt in the forest. He has an unusually deep love for nature and is afraid of destroying it. His sympathy for all people, including the Indians, is unusual.

Race conflict – especially between Whites and Indians – was common in America until the end of the nineteenth century. Cooper makes that conflict a constant theme throughout the series. He fills his novels with battle scenes between Whites and Indians. Nevertheless, both the author and his character, Natty, clearly disapprove of those who are simply Indian haters. Such people are always seen as the worst sort of American, because they kill both animals and humans “for the sport of it”.

Cooper’s Indians, even the “bad” ones, are usually brave. In general, as previously mentioned, he divided Indians into two types. His “good” ones – like Uncas and Chingachgook (Natty’s best friend) – were loyal and affectionate. Some critics complain that they are too good and that Cooper

saw them, wrongly, as “*noble savages*”. The “*bad*” ones are filled with evil and cannot be trusted. Still, according to Hill (1997:34), there is always sadness in Cooper’s depiction of the Indians. They are a dying race, sacrificed to the warning of all the humanity that this could be the fate of other races.

However, he does not forget, for one minute, that he is not allowed to cross race lines by entering into another alliance (through marriage). First it is Cora and Uncas whom he forbids to be joined in marriage. Leslie Fiedler (1984:207) writes about Uncas:

“The last of the Mohicans is portrayed as the last, the Vanishing American shown to have vanished because (so Cooper at least believed) the color line is eternal and God-given”. And the critic goes on: “At the funeral of Cora, the Indian girls ... sing of her union ... with the gallant warrior who had preferred her” (The Last of the Mohicans: 208) “because she was of a blood purer and richer than the rest of her nation” (406)

Natty was aware of their simple creed; and when Colonel Munro, broken by his bereavement, urges the Scout Natty Bumppo to tell the female mourners that “*the time shall not be distant when we may assemble around His throne without distinction of sex, rank, or color,*” (411), he refuses. “*To tell them this,*”, he said, “*would be to tell them that the snows come not in the winter, or that the sun shines fiercest when the trees are stripped of their leaves*”. (411) Even beyond death, Cooper expresses bluntly and coldly his opinion about mixing of races.

The theme of miscegenation is often presented in the novel as a curse.

To the ancient Indian, Tamenund, Cora (whose mother was a Negro slave) declares, with “*burning*” blushes, “*Like thee and thine, venerable chief ... the curse of my ancestors has fallen heavily on their child*” (362)

Secondly, race lines cannot be crossed, not even by people with mixed blood. Natty has both white and Indian blood. He is handsome, good-hearted, saves everybody so has all the qualities in the world that would make him eligible for a husband. Still, he never marries. Partly, it is his class origins that prevent him from getting married. Then, it has also to do with his status of being a free man, whose only commitment ever made has been to Nature and the lonely life in the wilderness. His true bride has always been the forest, or more precisely, the Spirit that inhabits it. When he is asked if he has ever listened to the pleasant laughter of a girl, his answer comes straightforward:

“Lord bless you, gal – to me there is no music so sweet as the sighing of the wind in the treetops and the rippling of a stream... unless, indeed, it be the open mouth of a certain hound, when I’m on the trail of fat buck” (*The Deerslayer*: 154).

He might marry an Indian girl, but we must remember his insistence on his racial purity: “*I am white, have a white heart, and can’t in reason, love a red-skinned maiden*” (*The Deerslayer*: 96); the same pride of belonging to the white race is expressed in *The Last of The Mohicans*:

“I am not a prejudiced man, nor one who vaunts himself on his natural privileges, though the worst enemy I have on earth, and he is an Iroquois, daren’t deny that I am genuine white,” (35).

Moreover, he will not marry any woman, for the simple reason that he is afraid of losing his independence, which only the wilderness can offer him.

Obviously, two mythic figures have detached themselves from Cooper’s novels: Natty Bumppo, the hunter and enemy of cities; and Chingachgook, nature’s nobleman and Vanishing American. One is the Christian Noble Savage, while the other is the pagan Noble Savage. They confront each other across the “*ideal boundary*” (the frontier line). Two lonely men, one white-skinned, one dark-skinned, binded by love to each other and to the world of nature which they have preferred to civilization.

Living on the literal edge of society in Delaware Indian country, Natty is both frontiersman and Native American; part of both the white world and the land of savages. In other words, he represents the frontier in conflict with civilization and the law. Throughout *The Leatherstocking Tales*, Natty agrees with Cooper’s concept of a firmly class-structured society. He dislikes the French, the Iroquois, and Catholics, and shows disdain for miscegenation. Yet, he is full of contradictions. He longs for companionship, yet trusts no one, is used by all, yet owes nothing to anyone, and craves for traditional society while fearing and despising civilization.

The story of Natty Bumppo, as Albert Kaiser (1933:98) puts it, “*the renegade frontiersman is inextricably linked to Natty Bumppo the Indian, as Natty’s dual identity provides Cooper an opportunity to write about a subject he loved, yet knew little about*”

Cooper admittedly had little first-hand experience with Indians. For this reason, critics charge that Cooper’s portrayal of the Indian barely resemble any that could be found in life. In *Savagism and Civilization*, Roy

Pearce (1988:200) asserts that “*Cooper was interested in the Indian not for his own sake, but for the sake of his relationship to the civilized men who were destroying him.*” However, more interesting than his little contact with Indians, are his views about the Indians that he expressed in *Notions of the Americans*, published in 1852:

“In point of civilization, comforts, and character, the Indians, who remain near the coasts, are about on a level with the lowest classes of European peasantry. Perhaps, they are somewhat below the English, but I think not below the Irish peasants. They are much below the condition of the mass of the slaves.”

Where there is much intercourse between the very strong and very weak, there is always a tendency in the human mind to suspect abuses of power. I shall not descend into the secret impulses that give rise to these suspicions: but in this stage of the world, there is no necessity for suspecting a nation like this of any unprovoked wrongs against a people like the savages. The inroad of the whites of the United States has never been marked by the gross injustice and brutality that have distinguished similar inroads elsewhere. The Indians have never been slain except in battle, unless by lawless individuals; never hunted by blood-hounds, or in any manner aggrieved, except in the general, and, perhaps, in some degree, justifiable invasion of a territory that they did not want, nor could use. If the government of the United States was poor and necessitous, one might suspect it of an unjust propensity; but not only the facts, but the premises, would teach us to believe the reverse.

A great, humane, and, I think, rational project, is now in operation to bring the Indians within the pale of civilization”.

Faced with the task of spinning a tale around a people that he disdains, Cooper makes a conscientious choice in constructing Natty Bumppo. Orphaned as a child after Mingo Indians killed his family, Natty seems an unlikely source of a Native American archetype. With his deer-skin moccasins and long, wild hair, however, Natty represents the Indian foil; the rustic savage who kills in cold blood while celebrating nature. In *The Leatherstocking Tales*, Natty meets and befriends the Delaware Chief Chingachgook. As Natty’s alter ego, Chingachgook is the quintessential Romanced Indian, and, as the two men age together, Natty takes on the characteristics of his Indian friend.

Cooper uses two heroines in *The Last of the Mohicans*, Alice and Cora who, from the very beginning are presented so strikingly different in their appearance (despite having a father in common) that we immediately suspect the author of having some deeper intention. Alice, the “*most juvenile*” of the two has a “*dazzling complexion, fair golden hair and bright blue eyes*” (20-21). Her counter-part is the firm Cora, whose “*tresses ... were shiny and black like the plumage of a raven*”, while “*her complexion*

*was not brown, but it rather appeared charged with the color of the rich blood, that seemed ready to burst its bounds*" (21). Yet Cora, despite her bursting blood, envies the more pallid Alice: "*She is fair! Oh, surpassingly fair!*", Cora sighs. "*Her soul is pure and spotless as her skin.*" (30) The last lines reflect Cora's own doubt and shame about her multiracial heritage. She knows her soul is "*not quite spotless*". She reveals her belief that if any of them knew her "*true identity*", they "*would sicken*". Living with these feelings about herself is a direct result of confusion about her identity. This is her tragedy: to be respected and yet, to remain unsure of her own identity and place in her society.

The point Cooper wants us to make is clear: the difference between the two women lies in their character. Alice is weak, with no blood boiling in her veins. Cora is a passionate woman whose dark and primitive beauty can fully appeal to the primitive instincts of the Indians. Yet, she is not capable of stirring and responding to passion. She is corrupted, stained even before birth (through her black mother) with the blackness of the primitive and the passional. She represented all that nineteenth-century men privately dreamed of, but publicly denied of being eligible for wives.

It is for this reason that Major Heyward will not have Cora; though we know that she loves him and suspect that he responds a little. He says of Cora, at some point, that she was "*born at the south, where those unfortunate beings are considered of a race inferior ...*" (188). Major Heyward will not, however, admit the charge of Cora's father, "*You scorn to mingle the blood of the Heywards with one so degraded,*" (188) preferring to attribute his reluctance to the power exerted on him by the "*sweetness, the beauty, the witchery*" (188) of Alice. She is, conveniently enough, no daughter of a dark-skinned mother, but fit offspring of the Scottish "*suffering angel*", who had waited in her cold North for twenty years in perfect celibacy, until her husband's first wife had died. When Heyward proposes at last to the pure Alice, she responds, not with the proud warmth of Cora, but trembles and almost faints as is "*common to her sex*" (308).

Munro, Cora's father, and a prominent General in the army, is a caring man who obviously loves Cora dearly. His morals and ethics are ahead of his time, and yet, he still hides his daughter's true heritage from others. Undoubtedly, Cora had been told to do the same. When Munro reveals Cora's background to Heyward, his pain and embarrassment about his past miscegenistic relationships are revealed:

"There it was my lot to form a connection with one who in time became my wife and the Mother of Cora. She was the daughter of a gentleman of those isles by a

lady whose misfortune it was, if you will, said the old man proudly, to be descended, remotely, from that unfortunate class who are so basely enslaved to administer to the wants of a luxurious people” (The Last of the Mohicans: 187-188)]

In the above passage, Munro’s own confused thoughts on miscegenation are demonstrated. He disagrees with slavery and almost seems to support the idea of equality of sexes, and, yet, he knows that his society will not accept this fact. Therefore, Munro hides his daughter’s heritage and his own previous marriage. Cora’s family think highly of her, and yet, even this love and support are not enough to convince Cora that she is as valued as they are. The racism towards mixed race people is so strong that it is firmly established in her mind that she is “*a freak of nature*”.

Throughout the novel, Cora is complemented for her strength and courage, especially compared with that of her sister. During an enemy ambush, before Heyward is informed of her heritage, he addresses Cora:

“To you, Cora, I will urge no words of idle encouragement; your own fortitude and undisturbed reason will teach you all that may become your sex; but cannot we dry the tears of that trembling weeper on your bosom?” (99).

Hawkeye thinks so highly of her that he wishes he had “*a thousand men of brawny limbs and quick eyes, that feared death as little as you [Cora] do!*” (167). Yet, Cora still feels she is worthless compared to Alice. She is willing to trade her own life and freedom for that of her sister’s. “*Yonder is one who has never known the weight of heavens displeasure until now. She has many, very many to love her and delight in her and she is too good, much too precious to become victim to that villain*”. (362). This speech clearly indicates that Cora feels she is not precious enough to be saved from Magua. She feels she is a disappointment in the eyes of God, as the theories of the day suggested. It could be argued that Cora is simply an unrealistically good and loving sister, but she, herself, indicates that her life is useless and disposable due to her heritage. When begging the Delaware Elder for mercy, Cora says: “*For myself, I ask nothing; the curse of my ancestors has fallen heavily on their child*”. (362) The belief that she is a “*violation of nature*” is painfully embedded in Cora’s mind. Growing up in a white family and community, Cora is faced with many difficulties. She knows the way the community feels towards people of mixed race and the disgrace it would bring to her family if her heritage were known. She is often faced with uncomfortable situations that weigh heavily on her conscience when people around her make racist comments. In this sense,

we remember Cora's words of reproach when Alice does not trust their Native guide. One can sense her anger and frustration: "*Should we distrust this man because his manners are not our manners and that his skin is dark?*" (24)

### **Conclusions**

Although Cooper's *The Leatherstocking Tales* is obviously outdated in their reflection of Native American people, the depiction of Cora, a woman of mixed race, maintains its validity today. The novels provide valuable insight into race issues surrounding multiracial people that is still pertinent and important today. Cooper is extremely perceptive in showing how Cora's heritage affects her self-perception and causes her to judge herself and others in light of visible characteristics such as skin color. Cora's multiracial heritage causes her to feel that her life is of less value than her family and friends, in particular, her sister, Alice.

Cooper was writing during a period that saw the increasing ascendancy of Anglo-Saxonism within American discourses, and his text played a constitutive part, we would argue, in creating notions of white American identity in the early national period. Accordingly, our analysis of the novels should include both the images of Native Americans presented by Cooper as well as how he constructs whiteness as a racial identity, the values and characteristics he attaches to that identity, and his attitudes toward it. Practically, that would mean discussing each of the eight central characters as types carrying a larger symbolic importance. Cooper establishes racial categories: Magua and Chingachgook as representing "bad" and "good" Indians; David, Duncan and Alice as representing the values of civilization, white manhood, and white womanhood, respectively; and Hawkeye, Cora, and Uncas as characters who seem to straddle categories or elude firm boundaries. Hawkeye's refrains "*I'm a genuine white*" and "*I'm a man without a cross*" come in for particular scrutiny when we discuss hybrid identity and, of course, theories of racial identity during the period.

As to the issue of the possibilities for coexistence between white and American Indians, despite Cooper's clear intention of proving he was not in favor of mixing races and blood, we cannot say he was strikingly consistent in his attitude throughout the novels.

Last, but not least, *The Last of the Mohicans* can be used as a springboard for the discussion of the "*multi-culturalism*" of the United

States not as a new phenomenon, but one that has a long legacy which is given articulation in Cooper's novels.

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**“REMEMBERING” AND NARRATIVE IN ORWELL’S *COMING UP FOR AIR***

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A “nostalgic novel” is the term that has most frequently been used in connection with this novel of Orwell’s, written in 1939. In this work, the middle-class, middle-aged insurance salesman, George Bowling, on the threshold of the Second World War, having won seventeen pounds, sets out in secret to rediscover his hometown and his childhood. The trip eventually turns out to be a failure, since he is to find that Lower Binfield, the village where he grew up, “has been swallowed” and changed beyond recognition, and that his beloved pond in which he used to fish so much has been turned into a rubbish-dump. Therefore this novel can easily be seen as a record of nostalgia towards the Edwardian era generated by the historical burden of the impending war, and, according to Edward Thomas, as “*an attempt at the novel of passivity*” (1971:54). Besides being an obvious metaphor, the novel’s central organising motif, Bowling’s favourite pastime, fishing, can easily be interpreted, in the words of David Lodge, as a metonymic trope that stands for “*the healthier state of culture and society in those pre-World-War-I days*” (1979:192). George Bowling comes to be regarded as an epitome of the kind of man who frees himself from all the nervousness of the age and arrives at a position where he simply does not care after his failure to regain his past. Analysed with a historical awareness of the significance of the year when the novel was written, 1939, *Coming Up for Air* can easily fall into the category of mere historical illustration, a “prophetic book” announcing the outbreak of the war.

I want, however, to examine this novel not primarily in the context of nostalgia, but instead analyse the very conditions of remembering. What does remembering mean in the context of the work? How does the protagonist remember? Does he remember at all?

The novel goes through three major phases in presenting the workings of memory, these being remembering, repetition and supplementation. The present is characterised by fragmentation and what is conceived by the protagonist to be an authentic layer that stands for the past is under constant threat by the intruding present. Remembering (conceived as re-remembering) as a healing for this fragmentation proves not to be effective, since the fragmented state of things does not cease even after Bowling’s return to his native town. As an alternative to remembering,

repetition offers itself or rather is unwillingly chosen as a possibility to bridge the gap between the past and the present, indicating that remembering is not successful within the context of the novel. The problem occurs when it becomes manifest that fishing, the central motif, is not something that is repeated, but rather supplemented or completed, since it was not even originally successful. This completion can never come about, which results in an endless chain of repetition. I am going to discuss the central theme, fishing, in depth, trying to demonstrate that fishing serves a twofold purpose in that it can be seen as an allegory of remembering and forgetting at the same time. It is this paradoxical situation of remembering *as* forgetting that I explore at the end of the paper, finally arguing that the novel suggests the futility of all three options presented in the text: that of remembering, repetition and completion.

The inauthenticity of the present is illustrated by various metaphors in the text. The whole process of remembering begins right with the first sentence. *"The idea really came to me the day I got my false teeth"* (3). This false element can be seen as something artificial, constructed, intruding into what Bowling conceives to be his "authentic" body (interestingly, however, this is what initiates the process of remembering). The first chapter contains other metaphors of intrusion as well. For instance, he discovers that his neck is still soapy after washing: *"It gives you a disgusting sticky feeling, and the queer thing is that, however carefully you sponge it away, when you've once discovered that your neck is soapy you feel sticky for the rest of the day"* (7). Before that, one of his kids wants to enter the bathroom: *"Dadda! I want to come in!" "Well, you can't. Clear out!" "But, dadda! I wanna go somewhere!" "Go somewhere, else, then. Hop it. I'm having my bath." "Dad-da! I wanna go some-where!"* (6) So, even his own children are imagined as aliens and intruders. When Bowling enters a milk-bar and wants to eat a frankfurter, he discovers that it is filled partly with fish. *"Ersatz, they call it."* (27) Something alien is added to the original, apparently with the intention of making it somehow more "original". The genuine material has to be supplemented because seemingly the original is somehow not sufficient (which may lead to an endless chain of supplementation). Bowling says later: *"I've got something else inside me, chiefly a hangover from the past [...] I'm fat, but I'm thin inside. Has it ever struck you that there's a thin man inside every fat man, just as they say there's a statue inside every block of stone?"* (23) These metaphors of intrusion set up a binary structure of inside (the authentic) and outside (the alien, the other). What, in fact, is this "authentic" inside? These metaphors, which are connected to the body on the one hand (false teeth, soap), to space

on the other (bathroom) and contamination from outside (Ersatz) suggest that Bowling constructs a genuine, original core, which regularly comes under the threat of the intruding present.

It seems that this present is dominated by difference, and the task of remembering would be to get rid of or repress this difference and re-instate the original binary opposition of inside and outside (“genuine” and “false”). So, remembering, on the one hand, is conceived of as getting rid of the outer surface layer (which is the supplementary excess provided by the present), a kind of digging, carving out, reaching an “authentic” layer. These metaphors shed light on the logic of remembering in the novel: present is seen as an addition to the past, while remembering is conceived as subtraction.

On the other hand, the present as narrated by George Bowling appears hopelessly fragmented. In the newspaper he reads about a woman’s leg that was found wrapped in a brown-paper parcel in a railway waiting room. The spokesman in the Left Book Club talks about “*bestial atrocities ... hideous outbursts of sadism ... Rubber truncheons ... Concentration camps ... Iniquitous persecution of the Jews ... Back to the Dark Ages ... European civilisation ...*” (171) The present can only be represented as a montage of fragments, a heap of fixed, mechanistic slogans. Bowling himself likes speaking about himself as *part* of the modern world as well, thinking of himself as one of the little items of the montage. Ideally, remembering should give the promise of re-assembling, re-membering these fragments and provide the disintegrating ego with (the promise of some kind of) wholeness. But can remembering serve this purpose? Re-membering proves to be impossible even after Bowling’s return to Lower Binfield. At his parents’ grave he is unable to remember: “I don’t know what you ought to feel but I’ll tell you what I did feel and that was nothing” (224). Fragmentation as a metaphor of this impossibility of remembering features in the later sections of the novel as well: when Bowling is reading a fragmented text in the church and when a severed leg appears after a bombing scene in Lower Binfield. A house is bombed by the RAF in a way that it re-enacts the motif of intrusion as well: “*Its wall, the one that joined the greengrocer’s shop, was ripped off as neatly as if someone had done it with a knife. And what was extraordinary was that in the upstairs rooms nothing had been touched. It was just like looking into a doll’s house*” (264). Since remembering in this psychoanalytical sense (reconstructing the patient’s self from fragments and memories) is not possible, even after

Bowling's revisiting his scene of childhood, another structuring force in *Coming Up for Air* becomes repetition.

The introduction of the concept of repetition gains significance in a psychoanalytic perspective. According to the well-known concept of repetition in psychoanalysis, repetition occurs when remembering is blocked by the return of the painful repressed material during the analysis. In the classic Freudian theory, "*the patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten or repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as memory, but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it*" (1958:150). Remembering in the novel is structured by the logic of repetition on several levels. On one level, the novel itself is a repetition of the very painful experience of the loss of what Lower Binfield was before 1914, inasmuch as every nostalgic novel stages the loss as a result of which it comes about. Apart from repetition in this sense, the novel can be taken as the repetition of certain biblical stories, for instance the repetition or restaging of the narrative of the expulsion from the Paradise, or the Fall, and, surprisingly, the story of Jonah. When the possibility of return is denied, and Bowling has to realise that "*the old life is finished, and to go about looking for it is just a waste of time. There's no way back to Lower Binfield,*" he says, "*you can't put back Jonah into the whale [...]* And it was a queer thing I'd done by coming here" (267).

The story of Jonah calls attention to the ambiguous nature of Bowling's narrative logic of remembering as repeating. What does he want to return to, after all? To the "reality" of the past, something solid (cf. "*Fishing was the real thing*" [80]) as opposed to the fakery, sham and fragmentation of the present? Or, is the case just the opposite? It seems that he does not want to face the reality of the present (which is powerfully symbolised by the sinister presence of the bombers), and wants to regain something half-unreal, fictitious and fantastic ("*I am twelve years old, but I'm Donovan the Dauntless...and I can smell the dust and sainfoin and the cool plastery smell, and I'm up the Amazon, and it's bliss, pure bliss*" [105]). Thus the story of Jonah as an allegory becomes quite ambiguous: the impossibility of "putting Jonah back into the whale" can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, one cannot return to the world of illusion, one has to face the present; on the other hand, one cannot return to the "reality" of the past, bogged down in the absurdity and the chaos of the present.

In a similar way to that in which the present was dominated by difference and intrusion, Bowling himself becomes an intruder in his own past when he returns to Lower Binfield. When he visits his home town, the local people do not care about him, he becomes an intruder. He finds that he

is invisible, his former lover does not recognise him and he cannot find his way in the meaningless present. The local people cannot really help him. "Beg pardon", he asks, "can you tell me the way to the market-place?" "She 'couldn't tell'" "Then I saw a bloke in overalls with a bag of tools coming along and tried again [...] 'Market-place? Market-place? Lessee, now. Oh – you mean the Ole Market?' I supposed I did mean the Old Market" (215). He realises that he has become a ghost, something belonging to the past and the present at the same time, something subversive in the "normal" space of human life, a thing that is in-between, not dead, but not living anymore. This shows the basic ambiguity of the past, revealing that it is similarly an addition, intrusion, and something constructed. The problem with this kind of remembering rests in the very conception of somebody's past as part of oneself, yet profoundly alien. According to Paul Ricoeur (1998:54), revoking one's childhood is dominated by a strong feeling of alterity, but it does not destroy the relationship of the present and the past, the temporal continuity and the *Jemeinigkeit* of remembering. He says that another characteristic feature of the relationship to the past, namely that one's memories always belong to one's own consciousness, is just as radical as the relationship between oneself and one's body. One example of this kind of otherness via continuity is again Bowling's set of false teeth. In an emblematic moment during his stay in Lower Binfield he pauses and takes his teeth out: performing an act of subtraction, staging the whole process of his remembering. In this perspective, his set of false teeth may stand precisely for his own past, which is alien to him (and cannot be rediscovered), yet deeply a part of him. The paradoxical significance of this kind of remembering is that the past here is conceived as something added later, something constructed, yet the experience of which temporally precedes recollection. This addition of the past (remembering) subverts the present, and the past as addition is doomed to be forgotten or repressed: finally Bowling seems to come to terms with the situation, withdraws into quietism, and decides that he does not care.

The most powerful organising force which stages repetition is fishing. The problem with this is that it is not simply that the activity of angling is the primary object of remembering, but that Bowling wants to return to doing something, which he did not manage to carry out at all: the child Bowling is allowed to accompany, his peers and his acceptance by the others depends on his success in fishing. His attempt to catch the big fish, however, is only half-successful: though he "gave a terrific haul and the fish - a great huge silvery fish - came flying through the air," the next moment

*“there was old Brewer” – the owner of the pond – “standing over [them], and they “suddenly cowered like partridges when there’s a hawk overhead,” (72) after which they have to escape. The catching of the fish remains incomplete, and the fish ends up in a suspended position, left behind, “fallen into shallow water where he couldn’t turn over, and for perhaps a second he lay on his side helpless” (71). The fish ends up in a suspended position like Bowling himself, who is expelled from his private Paradise, and becomes a ghost, that is, neither living, nor dead. His maturation remains incomplete, and his development is arrested at this point, which will serve as a fertile ground for repetition. Fishing itself, the experience of it becomes non-narratable afterwards: “Is it any use talking about it, I wonder – the sort of fairy light that fish and fishing tackle have in a kid’s eyes? [...] It’s not a thing you can explain or rationalise, it’s merely magic” (66-67). It cannot be rationalised precisely because it was not mastered by Bowling – it is doomed to be repeated (completed?) again and again. Fishing is not “repressed” or forgotten, on the contrary, “every detail has stuck clear in [his] memory” (81). He attempts to catch his fish after this failure four times in his life, at the age of 14, 16, 24 and 45, but each attempt turns out to be a failure, creating a chain of attempts to finalise the action.*

As opposed to this sequence of deferral, Bowling outlines another narrative logic, namely that before the age of 16 he used to fish, after that he gave it up, and then attempted to return to Lower Binfield to fish again. But this is simply not true, for we have seen that fishing as a failed attempt keeps lingering on. The pattern of seemingly endless deferral undermines the logic of the sequence of past-present and future: deferral and substitution become constituent parts of both the past and the present. In this light, the construction of an “original” place, the “eternal summer” of his youth and the narrative linearity that Bowling imposes on his story are only necessary to repress the inherent difference that inhabits the present. Contrary to the suggested linear logic, the novel is structured around what in fact Bowling never managed to do. No firm point of origin exists in the novel, but only a series of failed attempts, therefore the construction of an original innocent place becomes highly illusory. The subject in search of the final unreachable object of desire goes through a sequence of metonymic signifiers none of which is able to name the desired object.

Apart from the fact that fishing serves not simply as the object of remembering, but also as a series of attempts to repeat – or rather complete – something, which in fact was not finalised, I want to argue that fishing can

also be conceived of as the allegory of the inability or the impossibility of remembering. Fishing is repeated four times with no success, just as remembering is doomed to fail both before and after Bowling's return to Lower Binfield. It is as if fishing acted out this failure of remembering, as far as repetition is conceived as the inability to remember. It seems, however, that the activity of fishing is even more contradictory than that. Bowling states that "*the fish I remembered best of all are the ones I didn't catch*" (85). According to this logic, the precondition of remembering (as the counterpart of forgetting) is leaving the fish where it is, that is the catching of the fish would mean forgetting about it. However, we find a logic diametrically opposed to this, when Bowling says: "*At some time this pool had been connected with the other, and then the stream dried up and the woods had closed round the small pool and it had just been forgotten. It's a thing that happens occasionally. A pool gets forgotten somehow, nobody fishes in it for years and decades and the fish grow to monstrous sizes*" (91). According to this logic, if people do not fish in a pool, that is, if it is not remembered, the fish in it tend to grow to huge sizes. The catching of the fish would mean the possibility of remembering: the fish would stop growing and the narrative could be closed down, but that is impossible within the context of the novel. We have arrived at a paradox: the catching of the fish would mean both an escape from forgetting, that is, remembering (Bowling wants to catch the huge carp that has been forgotten) *and* forgetting (the ceasing of the process of remembering), remembering *as* forgetting.

In my interpretation, it is this undecidability that structures the novel, as it is well illustrated by the title. What does "coming up for air" mean? Coming up for air from under the water that symbolises the absurdity of the present would be of healing effect, however, air is strongly connected to the sinister presence of the bombers and authority in the novel. Nor is it possible for Bowling to remain under the water of the past (as it is illustrated by the story of Jonah mentioned above: "You cannot put back Jonah into the whale"). He ends up in a suspended position just like the fish he did not manage to catch: he "had fallen into shallow water where he couldn't turn over, and for perhaps a second he lay on his side helpless", suspended between water and air. This uncertainty is reflected in the protagonist's relation to memory: it seems that he is neither able to remember, nor to repeat, nor to round off the suspended action. What kind of solution does the novel offer to this dilemma? We can perhaps answer this question by elevating Bowling's story to a historical level: the painful

solution for Europe whose problem was precisely this inability to forget and remember was what the novel is often considered to be a prophecy of - the Second World War. If I claimed at the beginning that the novel is not “prophetic” in the usual sense, I have to modify this and say that *Coming Up for Air* is a prophetic novel in the sense that it stages this crisis of memory, which was partly responsible for the outbreak of the war.

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