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Contents

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The monstrous feminine:
Ungoliant, Shelob, and women in Tolkien's Middle-Earth[2]

Abstract. This article seeks to provide an analysis of Tolkien's portrayal of feminine figures by emphasizing the roles of Ungoliant and Shelob, the monstrous spiders which Tolkien codes female, and finding how these sexual and procreative beings fit into Tolkien's theological and gender essentialist views of women, and then how this reflects on other women within Tolkien's legendarium, arguing that far from any of Tolkien's women being empowered, they are instead always subservient to his essentialist understandings of women, that they are biologically and intellectually usually inferior to men and have specific gendered roles in Tolkien's very Catholic gender binary, and so his literary women are in fact not empowered but fit into his restrictive sense of gender roles between men and women.

Keywords: J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, Middle-Earth, women, femininity, Ungoliant, Shelob.

1. Introduction

The works of J.R.R. Tolkien have sparked numerous debates over various questionable aspects of their contents, leading to controversies from racism to sexism, and his depictions of women in particular have gained wide attention from various literary scholars (Reid 2015: 13-40). These issues largely stem from the often quite enigmatic depictions of women within his works, with defenders of Tolkien usually citing figures such as Éowyn and Yavanna, while those levying accusations of sexism have accused Tolkien's characters, even Éowyn, of being one-dimensional characters. As a result, a consensus on whether or not Tolkien could, or should, be considered to have been sexist or racist is nonexistent with academics being by and large divided into three primary camps: those who view Tolkien as a sexist (Hatcher 2007); those who view Tolkien as non-sexist (Flieger 2017: 90-99) or borderline feminist (Maddox 2018); and those who have argued that his portrayals of women border on ambiguous (Łaszkiewicz 2015).

In recent conversations on Tolkien's portrayal of women, however, the roles of Shelob and her mother Ungoliant have been quite often overlooked or relegated to only

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brief discussion, and discussion on the place which they occupy in Tolkien's Middle-Earth in regard to the feminine has been underdeveloped as a result.[3] However, they are still well worth exploring since they are the only examples of feminine evil within Tolkien's Middle-Earth, and so within *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* as a result. The fact that Ungoliant and Shelob are coded female, and their acts create an antithesis to Yavanna, the creator of the two Trees of Valinor. Their sexual reproduction is seen as a monstrous and hideous activity. Ungoliant and Shelob, as a result, are integral to the study of femininity and women's places within the world of Middle-Earth, as they stand in stark contrast to figures often discussed.

2. Terminology

In this discussion, I will be discussing the "monstrous feminine" and "women" broadly. The two terms will overlap and so it is prudent to first discuss what is meant by them. The "monstrous feminine" is the form a woman takes in Middle-Earth when they have exited and are not (or cannot be) rehabilitated into patriarchal gender roles of subservience, obedience, and docility. Ungoliant and Shelob, as will be discussed below, are not horrific by quality of them being spiders for Tolkien—he had no such qualms or inherent fears of spiders, contrary to some popular claims (Carpenter 2000: 217). Instead, their monstrosity is because of their sexual freedom, which violates the Tolkien's natural order. Their lack of subservience to men and their lack of strict monogamy makes them monstrous, not their outward appearance. As such, the monstrous feminine is a manifest instance of "woman" in Tolkien's work. It is the form the "evil woman" is embodied in, while the "proper woman" is defined by her acceptance of Catholic binary gender norms: subservience to the husband, monogamy, sexual restraint only for procreative activity, etc.

To be clear, women and the monstrous feminine are not separate beings. The monstrous feminine are women, Ungoliant and Shelob are women. But they are a specific form of women: they have fallen and are thus evil and monstrous in form. Notably, men do not become monstrous when polyamory or unacceptable relationships are taken up, nor are the women whom the men choose. It is only when the woman initiates sexual encounter, and when men fail to have power over her, that she becomes monstrous.

3. Sexuality, reproduction, and female spiders

Any discussion of the sexual nature of Shelob and Ungoliant is incomplete without first exploring Tolkien's own conceptions of sexuality and its place within the world. Tolkien was a devout Catholic, and the literature which has been written on how this influenced Middle-Earth is quite endless.[4] As far as sexual intercourse went, Tolkien was quite explicit in his letters and drafts that it was only acceptable within the confines of

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[3] The most intensive discussion of Shelob is Abbott's article "Tolkien's Monsters" (1989), though the ties to women and the feminine in this article only touch on the issue in relation to Grendel's mother. See also briefly Łaszkiewicz's discussion of Shelob (2015: 16-17).

[4] Richard Purtill's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Myth, Morality and Religion* (1984). Various other authors have also contributed on this matter in recent years (Kreeft 2005; Coutras 2016).

explicitly Christian marriage. In addressing C. S. Lewis' *Christian Behaviour* (1943), Tolkien wrote:

> There you will observe that you are really committed (with the Christian Church as a whole) to the view that *Christian marriage* – monogamous, permanent, rigidly 'faithful' – is in fact the truth about sexual behaviour for *all humanity*: this is the only road of total health (including sex in its proper place) for all men and women. (Carpenter 2000: 60) [italics original]

Thus, sexual intercourse was only an acceptable practice within the boundaries of a faithful Christian (specifically Catholic for Tolkien) marriage. This is made all the more explicit in a 1941 letter to Michael Tolkien, his son, wherein he further writes:

> In this fallen world the 'friendship' that should be possible between all human beings, is virtually impossible between man and woman. The devil is endlessly ingenious, and sex is his favourite subject. […] This 'friendship' has often been tried: one side or the other nearly always fails. Later in life when sex cools down, it may be possible. It may happen between saints. (Carpenter 2000: 48)

Even having a platonic friendship between men and women, for Tolkien, was near impossible due to the nature of sex and sexual attraction, and the desires for a non-sexual friendship between man and woman was an idealistic concept that "no one can count on" (Carpenter 2000, 48). As "sex is [the devil's/Satan's] favourite subject," it takes on a devilish or satanic undertone which then gives sex this sinister characteristic. Therefore, Tolkien's concept of sex is that it has an appropriate place, but only within a Christian marriage. Sex was permissible in that context, but outside it was something which impeded the ability of men and women to have friendships, and even more so, it was sinister due to the temptations it caused.

When thinking of Tolkien's idea of sex, then, the roles of Shelob and Ungoliant may be argued to represent a "monstrous feminine" in more ways than one. From his own Catholic worldview, they would take on a "monstrous" undertone from their sexual liberty, their freedom, which is in violation of Tolkien's view of how the righteous minded should carry themselves. In a more literal sense, the way that their sexual nature is described by Tolkien in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* is also monstrous. Tolkien writes of Ungoliant:

> With their [the Balrogs'] whips of flame they smote asunder the webs of Ungoliant, and she quailed, and turned to flight, belching black vapours to cover her; and fleeing from the north she went down into Beleriand, and dwelt beneath Ered Gorgoroth, in that dark valley that was after called Nan Dungortheb, the Valley of Dreadful Death, because of the horror that she bred there. For other foul creatures of spider form had dwelt there since the days of the delving of Angband, and she mated with them, and devoured them; and even after Ungoliant herself departed, and went whither she would into the forgotten south of the world, her offspring abode there and wove their hideous webs. Of the fate of Ungoliant no tale tells. Yet some have said that she ended long ago, when in her uttermost famine she devoured herself at last. (Tolkien 2001: 81)

Here the act of sexual reproduction itself is seen by Tolkien as this an horrific event in the history of Arda, as Ungoliant's mating with the other spiders then leads to the creation of horrible offspring, of which Shelob is one. Her offspring (the "horror that she bred") are the result of an improper union, one which then leads to evils throughout the world. This theme of improper union is consistent throughout the works of Tolkien, and they always have terrible results for those involved. For example, Finwë's dual marriages to Míriel and Indis lead to the rivalry and evils committed between his sons,

especially by Fëanor, whose displeasure with the marriage between Finwë and Fëanor's stepmother Indis is seen as an inciting event for the evils which Fëanor later commits (Tolkien 2001: 65). More overtly, the marriage between brother and sister Nienor and Túrin Turambar becomes the inciting incident for their final doom in *The Children of Húrin*, the most improper of unions (Tolkien 2007: 240-259). This parallel is more direct since Nienor was also then pregnant with a child of incest. The next example of improper union is that of Maeglin, who desires to have Idril and then betrays the location of Gondolin in the hopes that he could have her (Tolkien 2001: 241-245). The notion of improper sexual unions, be they outside of wedlock or from improper marriages, is a monstrous act. Monogamy, as the proper state of being for Tolkien, must be upheld and violations thereof alienate one from the natural order. In the case of these examples, most figures only have one improper union, while Shelob and Ungoliant have "many," which further alienates them.

In the case of Ungoliant, her offspring plague Middle-Earth from its beginnings until the end of the Third Age, when the Elves finally depart, and *The Lord of the Rings* closes. There are a few other occasions where Ungoliant's children and descendants are mentioned, and in all cases, they are described in various monstrous terms by virtue of being her offspring. They are her "foul offspring" (Tolkien 2001: 121), the "fell creatures of Ungoliant" (Tolkien 2001: 132) and in earlier manuscripts they are, again, her "foul offspring" (Tolkien 2002: 15), "foul broods" (Tolkien 2002: 194) or simply "foul brood" (Tolkien 2015a: 297). In earlier versions, her sexuality is still this act of horrific evil which leaves a terrible mark upon the history of Arda. The unbridled sexual intercourse and improper union of Ungoliant with other spiders is what grants her the qualities of being monstrous, as it alienates her from the proper order. She is not monogamous. It is not the mere fact that she has spider form, for her spider mates are pitied as "unfortunate." It is her sexuality that is the cause of this monstrosity.

When we next hear of Ungoliant's progeny in *The Silmarillion* in any major fashion, it is during Beren's journey to Doriath to reach Lúthien. To reach Doriath he travels through Nan Dungortheb and Ered Gorgoroth, and Ungoliant's brood is once again mentioned:

> Terrible was his [Beren's] southward journey. Sheer were the precipices of Ered Gorgoroth, and beneath their feet were shadows that were laid before the rising of the Moon. Beyond lay the wilderness of Dungortheb, where the sorcery of Sauron and the power of Melian came together, and horror and madness walked. There spiders of the fell race of Ungoliant abode, spinning their unseen webs in which all living things were snared; and monsters wandered there that were born in the long dark before the Sun, hunting silently with many eyes. (Tolkien 2001: 164)

What exactly happened within the Dungortheb is unknown in the legends, since Tolkien does not recount it in detail; however, *The Two Towers* at least gives one detail:

> There agelong she [Shelob] had dwelt, an evil thing in spider-form, even such as once of old had lived in the Land of the Elves in the West that is now under the Sea, such as Beren fought in the Mountains of Terror I Doriath, and so came to Lúthien upon the green sward amid the hemlocks in the moonlight long ago. (Tolkien 2004: 723).

The result of Ungoliant's sexual intercourse is something which leaves Beren with a post-traumatic stress disorder, wherein he cannot even fathom the thought of reliving his memories of her "brood" which he fought in the Dungortheb (Tolkien 2001: 164). Sexual intercourse of this "foul" kind in Middle-Earth (to use Tolkien's words) is

not withheld only to Ungoliant, but additionally to her daughter Shelob, for the reproduction by these feminine creatures only leads to more horrors in the world, through their polyamorous sexual relationships.

In *The Two Towers*, Shelob is notable for a number of reasons. Firstly, the construction of her name makes it clear what she is: a *she-spider* (English fem. prn. *she + lob* or "spider," from O.E. *loppe*). Shelob, in name and in physical nature, is defined by her femininity and monstrosity,[5] something which has prompted a comparison to Grendel's mother by some commentators (Abbott 1989: 42). Furthermore, she is defined by the fact that she is sexual and has children which, like Ungoliant's, haunt the world of Middle-Earth. Tolkien writes in *The Two Towers*:

> Far and wide, her lesser broods, bastards of the miserable mates, her own offspring, that she slew, spread from glen to glen, from the Ephel Dúath to the eastern hills, to Dol Guldur and the fastnesses of Mirkwood. But none could rival her, Shelob the Great, last child of Ungoliant to trouble the unhappy world. (Tolkien 2004: 723)

Again, her "broods" are the result of this improper sexual activity, "bastards of miserable mates" as Tolkien writes, and so the sexuality of Shelob, like her mother Ungoliant this act of horror. This echoes Tolkien's views on sex as improper outside of Roman Catholic monogamous marriage. The mere act of them engaging their natural bodily functions, like reproduction, is itself wrong because of this. It is the case that all those who have offspring in a "proper" fashion are always married in a monogamous relationship, even when there is little character development or romantic chemistry between the characters in question, as in the case of Éowyn and Faramir. The place of the woman is in an acceptable marriage, and then to give birth, but not to give birth outside of marriage.

This is further evidenced by another letter of Tolkien's where he writes, in talking about how "the sexual impulse makes women" more inclined to pursue men's interests in any attempt to be servient to men:

> No intent necessarily to deceive: sheer instinct: the servient, helpmeet instinct, generously warmed by desire and young blood. Under this impulse they can in fact often achieve very remarkable insight and understanding, even of things otherwise outside their natural range: for it is their gift to be receptive, stimulated, fertilized (in many other matters than the physical) by the male. (Carpenter 2000: 49)

So, the "proper" place of women in Middle-Earth then reflects this conception that their role is to be "fertilized" or "stimulated" in such fashion. As such, we see the courageous warrior Éowyn rather forcefully (by the author) placed into marriage with Faramir; similarly, Arwen is to marry Aragorn; Lúthien is to marry Beren; and Samwise is to marry Rosie Cotton; and these are only a few examples. There are not "friendships" between women and men, for that is unable to occur due to the nature of sexual attraction and its use by the "devil" as his "favourite subject," and so sexual intercourse in non-Catholic marriages (like Finwë's second marriage) or outside of wedlock to create "bastards of miserable mates" (like Ungoliant and Shelob) leads to the monstrous feminine in the world of Middle-Earth. Therefore, Shelob and Ungoliant thematically stand as warnings to those who are sexual but not within Christian marriage and of a

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[5] Tolkien seems to have decided on this name as early as 1944 when he consulted his son Christopher on the matter (Carpenter 2000: 81)

Christian morality.[6] Additionally, as feminine figures not receptive or servient to men, but instead dominant, they occupy more than just thematic warnings but positions of horror. They occupy what women should not be in Tolkien's Catholic worldview. That the women (and men for that matter) are sexual beings is something to be quite actively restricted in marriage in Middle-Earth. When, especially, the feminine have sexual intercourse outside of this, they become monstrous and their "broods" are monstrous, so that they plague the lands of Middle-Earth ever after, in ways which other evils do not. Morgoth and Sauron both leave their marks, but Ungoliant's *uncontrolled* feminine and sexual being[7] is so great that it leaves even Morgoth afraid (Tolkien 2001: 76). Their bodies are described in grotesque fashions and the act of their natural bodily functions is an evil.

4. The gender essentialism of the monstrous

Given the above notions of sexuality, womanhood, and the monstrous feminine we have seen in Tolkien's work, it is worth exploring one very notable juxtaposition between "evil" feminine beings in Middle-Earth and the "good" ones, specifically the thematic opposites of Ungoliant and Yavanna, since their roles both mirror each other in rather notable ways: primarily their being females and their primary roles being productive. As noted above, Tolkien was intensely gender essentialist, in that sex and gender are rather identical entities for Tolkien and carry biologically determined characteristics.[8] Frederick and McBride argue that Tolkien was "uncomfortable" in allowing women to occupy the space of evil within Middle-Earth (2001: 109), concluding this from what they deemed a lack of apparently evil women in his world. However, it does not appear that he was uncomfortable with their being in a thematic place of evil. Instead, it is that they occupy a specific place in his essentialist views of sex and gender. That his views on women cross into a biological essentialism is made clear by his own admission of deriving his thoughts from the work of Julian Huxley (in his draft letter responding to Lewis):

> From the biological-sociological point of view I gather (from Huxley and others) that monogamy is probably highly beneficial to a community. (Carpenter 2000: 62)

Here, Tolkien considers Huxley's arguments in comparison to other species, such as birds, suggesting that the human species should be adoptive of monogamy as "examples of proper relations" (Bartley 1995: 95). However, it is notable that Tolkien's writings to Lewis and Michael do not indicate his defense of equality among sexes, something which Huxley did emphasise (Bartley 1995: 99). However, Huxley's work and

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[6] As Tolkien writes to Lewis, "Christian marriage is not a prohibition of sexual intercourse, but the correct way of sexual temperance – in fact probably the best way of getting the most satisfying sexual *pleasure*, as alcoholic temperance is the best way of enjoying beer and wine." (Carpenter 2000: 60).

[7] It is worth noting that they are both beyond the powers Sauron and Morgoth. Of Shelob, Tolkien writes "*his cat* he [Sauron] calls her, but she owns him not" (2004: 724), "own" being used in the archaic sense to mean "acknowledges" here. In *The Silmarillion*, Ungoliant turns on Morgoth and binds him so that only his Balrogs could save him from his utter end (Tolkien 2001: 80-81).

[8] Gender Essentialism essentially holds that differences in social dynamics between people of differing genders is a result of an innate "nature" or biological/psychological "realities" of their being, meaning that these are intrinsic and immutable (Heyman and Giles 2006), aside from potentially evolutionary processes.

Tolkien's Catholic faith form a biological essentialist view of gender. There is a binary, man and woman, with specific roles to which they belong and to which sexual behavior belongs. Man and woman have sexual traits and attitudes which are specific to them, because of the nature of their biology. Thus, for Tolkien, "unspoiled" women are bound to want "to become [a] mother" (Carpenter 2000: 50). We can see how this essentialist view of gender plays out in Middle-Earth and how it relates to the monstrous feminine.

In *The Silmarillion*, Yavanna is portrayed as the creator of the Two Trees of Valinor, two of the greatest and most splendid creations in all of Arda, and they give light to the world. In addition, she gives life to all things which grow, plant-life, trees, and so on. Her role in his mythos is procreative in nature. Likewise, she is also properly wed, for her husband is the smith and maker Aulë, who creates the dwarves. In doing so, her creations likewise become servient to her husband's, as the dwarves will destroy her trees for timber. Yavanna is therefore the proper procreative and subservient wife. As she answers to Manwë and all answer to the male coded Eru, the god of the world and creator of the Valar, she is rightfully confined to her role as well.

Ungoliant stands as a stark contrast to her. She hates and consumes light, spinning forth webs of darkness, which light cannot enter, and she vomits up a black vapor. Again, in juxtaposition to Yavanna, Ungoliant was originally conceived of as the incarnation of a primeval spirit of the night called *Moru* (Tolkien 2015b: 151-152), and so stands as the primeval opposite of the trees and the light of Yavanna. Furthermore, Ungoliant answers to no man, and she is, in all ways, uncontrolled by them. It is notable and perhaps prudent to then draw attention to the fact that the Two Trees of Valinor are killed by Ungoliant's poisons, and their light is forever diminished: the uncontrolled sexual and grotesque feminine monster destroys the works of the "properly" married and therefore "properly" procreative woman. In this, we can parallel Tolkien's Christian conception of women in the fallen nature of the world. Tolkien wrote, once again in his letter to Michael:

> The woman is another fallen human-being with a soul in peril. But combined and harmonized with religion […] it can be very noble. / […] Before the young woman knows where she is (and while the romantic young man, when he exists, is still sighing) she may actually 'fall in love'. Which for her, an unspoiled natural young woman, means that she wants to become the mother of the young man's children, even if that desire is by no means clear to her or explicit. […] But they are instinctively, when uncorrupt, monogamous. (Carpenter 2000: 49-51)

Thus, Ungoliant and Shelob are therefore "corrupt" and "spoiled" women. They have not been "combined and harmonized with religion," and they embody the evil woman, who is uncontrolled and "unstimulated" by men. As such, they function as a counter to those women who do get married properly in Middle-Earth, those who do not have "bastard" offspring by "miserable mates." Ungoliant and Shelob have given into fallen natures, and denied what is natural in a righteous way, and become evil by way of their femininity. While Ungoliant stands in direct contrast to Yavanna, an anti-procreation to Yavanna's righteous procreation, Shelob is juxtaposed to figures such as Goldberry and Arwen: she too hates the light, lives in darkness and creates horrid offspring which trouble Mirkwood, all in mimicry of the acts of her mother. Goldberry and Arwen are bright, receptive to men, married, and servient.

On the wider topic of women in Tolkien's legendarium, Weronika Łaszkiewicz argues that Lobelia Sackville-Baggins and Éowyn stand as potential "examples of female

empowerment" (2015: 18), but in the light of Tolkien's writing on sex and gender, this does not seem to be the case. Lobelia's depiction in *The Lord of the Rings* is arguably not empowering, given the antagonistic role that she occupies in the narrative (specifically as antagonizing the male heroes Bilbo and Frodo). It is true that Éowyn takes up arms to defend her home and those whom she loves, but it must be recognized that her most empowering moment, the defeat of the Witch-King of Angmar, is only accomplished by Merry's aid in stabbing the Witch-King prior to her, allowing her to make the final blow. Arguably, this is not an example of female empowerment but a theme of hobbits being overlooked and ignored by evil forces, until they accomplish great feats, similar to Bilbo, Samwise, and Frodo. Likewise, Éowyn's ultimate fate is to become docile, placed into proper marriage with Faramir and to abandon those elements which violated her gender role as a woman. Łaszkiewicz also argues that the portrayals of Arwen, Galadriel, and Goldberry (as well as a few other figures) as wise and high-status figures are also empowered women (2015: 19). In the case of Galadriel, this seems strained, since she more accurately parallels Eve, as she is seeking redemption for having fallen, being tempted by the words of Fëanor. Notably, it is Galadriel's desire for power and to rule, specifically to have status, which is the cause of her remained exile (Tolkien 2001: 83-84). As such, Galadriel's seeking empowerment is a stain on her character, and so the fact that she "can humble herself for her husband" (Łaszkiewicz 2015: 19) is an acknowledgement that in her youth she should not have sought empowerment at all. And with Goldberry, she defers to the male authority of her husband in subservience. Arwen's fate, likewise, is dictated entirely by that of Aragorn's as well, and so the argument that she is an empowered figure is debatable. Furthermore, in Tolkien's work, women's fates are more often than not tied up with those of men. Melian, for example, goes into the west after Thingol's death being unable to cope without him, and because of this the enemies of Doriath are able to destroy the kingdom. And departed now, she spends her time in sorrow for Thingol. One can then also point to Arwen and Lúthien, who are prizes to be won by men after a great adventure. Their fates are dependent upon the deeds and fates of their soon-to-be husbands.

It is true that women can take on power and divine status, but it is only within the safe confines of their "proper" and very Catholic relations with men that this happens, otherwise this power or divinity is a fault in their character or unnatural in some fashion. Even when they perform daring actions it is for the sake of men. Éowyn fights the Witch King in order to defend her dying uncle, Théoden, son of Thengel (Tolkien 2004: 841), and it is also notable that part of her desire to fight is connected to her attachment to Aragorn. Here Arwen and Éowyn stand in juxtaposition to each other: Arwen patiently waits for Aragorn as a docile soon-to-be wife, while Éowyn is impatient, therefore defying the proper expectations of her gender. Furthermore, Éowyn, as Frederick and McBride point out, only accomplishes her feats by essentially becoming a man (2001: 113). This is not necessarily a case of gender-queerness,[9] as Éowyn is within Tolkien's

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[9] Arguably, the only case where this may occur is with Shelob, again, who possesses a stinger of some kind. One could see in this a phallic symbol. The stinger she has can be seen as a feminine phallus, being used to penetrate the male heroes. As such, being coded female with a penile organ, this may be argued to genderqueer in some fashion, but in this light being genderqueer would be something, too, horrific and encompassed by the monstrous feminine. The female has overtaken the role of the male. Whereas Tolkien wrote that the role of women was to be "receptive, stimulated, fertilized […] by the

very cis-normative legendarium. Instead, Éowyn must deceive men into thinking she is among them and defy her "natural" subservience to men in order to fight. For Tolkien (contra Hatcher 2007: 48-49) there are these specific gendered spaces and roles, and because Éowyn transgresses them, this means she must either reenter her natural roles or risk becoming one of the monstrous feminine or "evil women" like Ungoliant and Shelob.[10] Through the marriage of Faramir, she is able to be rehabilitated as a proper and docile Catholic woman. Her transgression of gender norms may have good outcomes, but it is still something which Tolkien sees the need to "correct" in a sense.

On the fallen but not quite monstrous side, there are other women in Tolkien's legendarium. The Numenorian queen Tar-Ancalimë does take power, but it is a reign which is entirely immoral in *The Silmarillion*, as she forsakes Gil-Galad and enters into a loveless marriage, purely out of political necessity.[11] It is one which produces an heir within wedlock, and then they separate. She is said to regularly throw off suitors. As such, it is unrighteous but still monogamous and sexually restrained. As such, she does not yet become the "evil woman" embodied in Shelob and Ungoliant, but she has approached it. Of similar note, Berúthiel, queen of Gondor, is portrayed as a sinister figure who watches over the men of Gondor and is so loathed that her husband sends her on a ship to Umbar (Tolkien 2020: 425). But she too is not yet monstrous, because men still have power over her.

This enforces Tolkien's gender essentialist view of women, which pervades Middle-Earth. Women are lesser than men. They are to be humbled and subservient in comparison. They are not to be sexual outside of a proper marriage, and that marriage must be carefully tempered in a Catholic fashion. The fates of "proper" women are bound up with those of men. But those who are not bound by the confines of male power, fate, and dominance, and are women of sexual freedom become the monstrous feminine. Those who seek empowerment, see Ungoliant and Shelob at the end of their journey.

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male" (Carpenter 2000: 49), here Shelob forces Frodo to become the receptive one. Thus, we can see Sam stabbing Shelob as she thrusts her body down upon him (again potentially sexual) as him asserting masculine dominance over her (Chance 1980: 111-113) and an abjection of queerness. Tolkien further described Shelob in notes to his publisher which were recently published, see Tolkien 2021: 196.

[10] Of note, in the recently published *The Nature of Middle-Earth* edited by Carl F. Hostetter, one of Tolkien's notes further elaborates that Melkor, like Ungoliant, became incapable of "extricating himself and finding scape in the vastness of Eä (Tolkien 2021: 344), which indicates that Ungoliant's horrible nature was something unavoidable to an extent as well. However, this note does contradict later published materials in *The Silmarillion* on a number of points and so should not be viewed as definitive of how Ungoliant was conceived in the more or less final versions of the mythology.

[11] It should be noted that also while Tar-Ancalimë is the "first" queen of Númenor, there were only ever three ruling queens in Númenor (Tar-Ancalimë, Tar-Telperiën and Tar-Vanimeldë). Almost nothing is said of Tar-Telperiën other than that she refused to get married or produce an heir, and Tolkien says nothing positive of her reign. It is also indicated that she refused to give up the sceptre of the rulers and it was not taken until she died, unlike Ancalimë (2020: 238). Tar-Vanimeldë was the last female ruler, but she, in fact, was ruler in name only as she left her duties to Herucalmo (Tolkien 2020: 240). Thus, Tolkien never presents any of the Queens of Númenor as positive role models. Their empowerment as rulers is presented as either negative or ambivalent. Notably, though, none of these women become monstrous. They are not manifestations of the monstrous feminine, because they are not sexual or still overpowered by men. Tar-Telperiën refuses to produce an heir, implying asexuality. Tar-Vanimeldë deferred to the power of her husband.

They are the result of the end state of a liberated (and therefore "evil") woman for Tolkien.

5. Conclusion

In light of the above, even the so-called "empowered" women of Middle-Earth are still the servants of men. If they seek to have power of their own (Galadriel, Ancalimë, Berúthiel), then it leads to all kinds of strife and hardship, and it is something that they are to repent of (as with Galadriel), and if they go beyond this, becoming sexually active with various mates, they become monsters. Tolkien does not, therefore, empower women, for even those who have an acceptable power are bound by the fate and wills of men, or are eventually put under men's dominion (such as with Éowyn). The highest of women figures in Middle-Earth is Yavanna, who is properly married, and she is acceptably procreative by nature, but even her creations are subject to the wills of men. Her opposite is Ungoliant, whose sexually charged being and independence makes her arguably the greatest foe in all of Middle-Earth.

Middle-Earth is gender and bio-essentialist in its nature, so that the roles of women are defined specifically by their biology and psychology. For Tolkien, the "unspoiled" woman is subservient to man as a natural reality, and all female figures within Middle-Earth tend to illustrate this patriarchal stance. Their sexual beings are to be restricted, something which is found quite notably in Tolkien's manuscript *The Laws and Customs of the Eldar*, wherein he explicitly describes the place and role of sex in quite a Catholic fashion, as practised by the Elves (Tolkien 2015a: 209-214). Women who express or insinuate sexual interest in men are repudiated in Middle-Earth,[12] but the men who show interest in women (Beren, Aragorn, Faramir and so on.) are not met with such judgment, unless such unions are found to be evil or unnatural in some fashion (as in the cases of Finwë, Maeglin, and Túrin). But in these male dominated relationships, no one becomes monstrous. Only in those dominated by the feminine.

Furthermore, one can look at the women who are in positions of power and find that their portrayals are either ambivalent or negative. In *The Silmarillion*, Galadriel's coming into Middle-Earth is a result of her pride and desire to rule there and is a character flaw of hers. The three queens of Númenor are all portrayed either negatively or ambivalently, and it is especially noteworthy that, in the exceptionally small amount that is written about them in *The Unfinished Tales*, their choices not to enter into marriage or have children are at the forefront. The last queen, Tar-Vanimeldë, is lacking in so much presence that she rules in name only, since her husband truly runs the kingdom.

Permissible aspects of sexuality and gender are strictly confined to specific gender roles in Middle-Earth. Some women (such as Éowyn) may stray from their roles and have positive effects on the world but must become confined to the subservient. Women who do not become more and more hideous, especially with their sexuality. In Tolkien's gender essentialist universe, women are not empowered but are controlled by

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[12] When Túrin saves a woman from being raped, the language she uses and which is later used about her indicates that she is sexually opening herself to Túrin, who casts her aside (Tolkien 2007: 104-106).

the will and fate of men. They find themselves either within a traditional gender role or occupying the space of the monstrous feminine, the evil woman.

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Biopolitical *Nomos* and "bare life" in Arundhati Roy's novels

Abstract. Biopolitics—the maneuvers and stratagems employed to regulate, manage and govern people—is one of the most contested theoretical paradigms, which deals with the relation between state politics and human lives. While Foucault links the biopolitical nomos with the oppressive practices which render the human body docile, Giorgio Agamben sheds light on the new biopolitical nomos, which applying the most draconian means, subdue people within the law. According to Agamben, the arbitrary use of such sovereign power not only robs of the constitutional rights of the individuals but also denies their rights to live. Agamben observes that under the new biopolitical nomos each individual is exposed to the threat of being treated as a Homo Sacer, whose life can be taken with impunity. Focusing on Foucault's concept of biopolitics and applying Agamben's concepts like "state of exception" and Homo Sacer, the present paper investigates into Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* to argue that in present-day India; the enactment of juridico-discursive power (communal riots, lynching, and violence to the lower caste) is not only denying the human rights of the minority groups but also exposing them to a "bare life."

Keywords: Biopolitics, *Homo Sacer,* State of exception, Riot, Arundhati Roy.

Biopolitics—one of the most contested theoretical paradigms—refers to those political actions which manipulate human lives through individualization, subjectivation, discipline and surveillance. Michel Foucault links the biopolitical *nomos* primarily with the methodological and the oppressive practices, which, establishing authoritarian relations between power and knowledge, tend to manipulate human bodies to make them docile, manageable and productive. Unlike Foucault, Georgio Agamben analyzes modern sovereignty—whose institutions are formed from the decay of monarchial rule—as a biopolitical project where sovereign power enforces its dominance "through the most draconian means, including murder of those whom it wishes to eliminate, while remaining nominally within the law" (Parfitt 2009: 41). Agamben argues that modern political regimes, in the name of democracy, development, and security, have radicalized the biopolitical *nomos* and became more repressive and violent over time. A central proposition of Agamben's argument is that modernity has led sovereign power to take ever-increasing recourse to the "state of exception"—a situation in which "the operation of the law is suspended while it remains nominally in force" (Parfitt 2009: 41). Those who are subjected to a state of exception are reduced to a situation that Agamben terms "bare life" in which any human rights or constitutional rights, they may have had, are rendered null, and each of them are treated as *Homo Sacer* whose "life can be taken with

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impunity" (Agamben 1998: 71). Agamben observes that the modern biopolitical projects through "exclusion from the community and deprivation of a voice" (Agamben 1998: 21) have reduced the minority and the marginalized people to "animal bare life." In *The God of Small Things* (1997), henceforth *TGST,* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), henceforth *TMUH* through Arundhati Roy's portrayal of the violent assertion of caste and class supremacy, rise of religious extremism, spread of communal violence, lynching of minority people, execution of state-sponsored violence, it gets apparent that even in present-day India the people of the lower class, lower caste and minority groups are exposed to an ambience of Agamben's "bare life." This paper is an attempt to argue that in postcolonial India the perpetuation of the juridico-discursive power and enactment of the repressive biopolitical *nomos* have left no option of living for the deprived and destitute people except a "bare life."

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, introducing the concept of biopolitics, Foucault accentuates the rise of the "juridico-discursive" model of power (Foucault 1979: 82). In this model, power is assumed to be exercised as "interdiction and repression in a framework of law (Lemke 2005: 3). In fact, in *TGST* the violent act of Kottayam police to the lower caste Velutha, is a definite indication of the enactment of the "state of exception", where the police exercised the authority that "does not need law to create law" (cited in Minca 2006: 389). For Agamben, the space of exception constitutes "the original *nomos*, the founding gesture of the political space of modernity, the ontological device that lies at the roots of the modern nation-state and its potential translation into a biopolitical machine" (Minca 2006: 390). Fahimeh Nazari & Hossein Pirnajmuddin in "Revisiting Colonial Legacy in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" remark that the way the Kottayam police executed Velutha without investigating the gravity of the charges brought against him by Baby Kochamma, that purposive action is indicative to "the forceful inflection of law" (Nazari & Pirnajmuddin 2013: 67). In fact, the violence perpetuated on Velutha has turned him into a *Homo Sacer.* Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, represents that *Homo Sacer* is the "originary figure of life taken into the sovereign ban, …in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide" (Agamben 1998: 83).

As Foucault explains, the execution of such homicidal law permits the perpetual instigation of new dominations and the staging of meticulously repeated scenes of violence. The violence over Velutha is the exhibition of the supremacy of the upper caste people, where Velutha becomes the victim of biopolitics. In *TGST,* Roy depicts how the police forces, Baby Kochamma, Comrade Pillai and the other upper caste people, as agents of "repressive state apparatus," instil hegemonic power to expand their spatial control over "what Touchables fear, the fear of losing privilege, of being dispossessed, of having one's purity and ascendancy questioned" (Passos 2008: 96). In fact, Velutha's affair with Ammu—the transgressor of love laws—is apprehended as an infringement in the Touchable world. This transgression of caste boundary arouses unredeemable fear, "civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness," (*TGST* 308) which needed to be exorcised violently in order to uphold the sanctity of caste hierarchy. In the process of this exorcism, in front of Rahel and Estha, Velutha is brutally beaten by six Touchable police officers. Rahel and Estha are the eyewitness of the perpetuation of extreme violence on Velutha. In that merciless police assault Velutha's

skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheekbones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow to his mouth had split open his upper lip and broken six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lip, hideously inverting his beautiful smile. Four of his ribs were splintered, one had pierced his left lung, which was what made him bleed from his mouth…His spine was damaged in two places, the concussion had paralyzed his right arm and resulted in a loss of control over his bladder and rectum. Both his kneecaps were shattered. (*TGST* 310)

Ghina M. Sumrain & Shadi S. Neimneh assert that in *TGST* "[t]he police as a reconstruct of the colonial hegemony represents India's oppressive colonial history" (Sumrain & Neimneh 2016: 66). Velutha's subalternity and subsequent death at the hands of the police officers result from the perpetuation of oppressive caste and class supremacy, which in dealing with the people of the lower caste and lower class, exercise biopower with the "sovereign right to kill…to kill anyone" (Foucault 2003: 260).

Although Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize winning first novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) brings forth the terrible consequences of the caste and class exploitation, its sorrows and agonies seem private. By contrast, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*— published in 2017—is about "India, the polity, during the past half-century or so, and its griefs are national" (Acocella 2017: 1). In *TMUH* Roy's narrative exposes those sites of abusive and exploitative power—communal riots, state-sponsored violence, deprivation of minority rights, and violation of human rights—which, apart from jeopardizing the lives of those afflicted, have exposed them to a "bare life." Somak Ghoshal, in his review, "A Far Cry from the Writer's Brilliant First," prefigures *TMUH* as "a gargantuan handbook to modern India and its injustices" (Ghoshal 2017: 1). In *TMUH*, telling those individual and collective stories, Roy takes "a panoramic view of violence, injustice, suffering over decades of India's history" (Ghoshal 2017: 1). In fact, Roy's writing is a counter-discourse to the official version of the "idea of India" that projects India as a stable democratic nation with unity, equality, and religious neutrality. Manoj S. in "Historicizing Fiction: Critiquing Contemporary India in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*" remarks that in *TMUH,* Roy sheds light on those events of Indian history which at times:

> failed the true spirit of democracy, since its inception with the Indo-Pak partition, spanning mainly the events of the last three or four decades. In the novel there are recurrent references to the rising tide of totalitarianism in the Indian governing system and the exclusion of the marginalized classes from the centers of power. (Manoj 2017: 113)

Suranjan Das argues in "The Nehru Years in Indian Politics" that in postcolonial India, "despite certain obvious outward changes in forms of governance or employment of new political hyperboles, the Indian government under Jawaharlal Nehru represented in many respects a continuation of British attitudes both in form and substance" (Das 2001: 7). This colonial attitude of exploitation and oppression was intensified during the imposition of Emergency by Indira Gandhi in 1975. Referring to the reign of Indira Gandhi's Emergency period, Roy in *TMUH* has pointed out the beginning of the "state of exception," which through bureaucratic governance achieved permanence in India's system of governance. The period of Emergency from 25th June 1975 to 21st March 1977 is considered "the darkest period of independent India" (Ghosh 2016: 2). Apart from the suspension of civil rights, violation of human rights and subversion of democracy, mass imprisonment of the dissenting voices became pervasive during the

Emergency period. In fact, in India the Emergency period is the systematic and administrative beginning of the institutionalization of hegemonic power.

During the Emergency period, the "state of exception" became the rule of law. During these twenty-one months of authoritarian rule, the police were empowered with the legal right to search homes without a warrant. The police were also given the power to arrest people without any specific allegation. In *TMUH*, the transgender woman Anjum's gruesome experience in a wedding party—where the host and three of his guests are violently beaten and arrested without a warrant—epitomizes the power and brutality the police exercised during the emergency period to spread fear and terror. Using state power and coercion, the opposing voices to authority were brutally suppressed in this period. During the Emergency period civil rights were suspended, newspapers were censored, and in the name of population control, thousands of men (mostly Muslim) were herded into camps and forcibly sterilized. A new law—the Maintenance of Internal Security Act—allowed the government to arrest anybody on a whim. Thus, Indira Gandhi's imposition of Emergency (from 25 June 1975 to 21 March 1977) has laid the foundation of a monarchical type of family rule, that spreading its tentacles, not only institutionalized the oppressive biopolitical *nomos* but also accentuated the enactment of the abuse of power.

Agamben argues that hegemonic power politics, locating itself "at the very margin of politics, turns out to be the solid basis of a political body that decides not simply over the life and death of human beings, but who will be recognized as a human being at all" (cited in Lemke 2005: 5). In *TMUH* Roy depicts that the rise of the dominant political ideology is the major catalyst behind the "living dead" condition of the minority Muslims in India. The graveyard symbolizes the threatened condition of the minority people in this novel. S. Manoj remarks, "[t]he metaphor of the graveyard equips Roy to explore the complex relationship between life and death in the context of contemporary Indian life" (Manoj 2017: 119). *TMUH* begins in the graveyard where Anjum—a transgender woman—starts to live after her deadly experience in Gujarat pogrom. Her near death experience in Gujarat massacre exposes the obnoxious political reality that perpetuates the evil practice of "domination, exploitation, expropriation and, in some cases, elimination of the vital existence of some or all subjects over whom it is exercised" (cited in Rinbow & Rose 2006: 198).

The Gujarat massacre originated from the burning of a coach of the Sabarmati train at Godhra on 27 February 2002. It was carrying nearly sixty Hindu pilgrims returning home from "a trip to Ayodhya where they had carried ceremonial bricks to lay in the foundations of a grand Hindu temple they wanted to construct at the site where an old mosque once stood" (*TMUH* 44). The circumstantial evidence could not form any acceptable proposition about the events, which culminated in the burning of the coach. However, the allegations were pointed directly to the Muslims and "the police arrested hundreds of Muslims… from the area around the railway station under the new terrorism law and threw them into prison" (*TMUH* 44).

The novel describes the event that the burnt bodies of the Hindu pilgrims are brought to Ahmedabad to be displayed so that the public can pay homage to the pilgrims' departed souls. The horrific sight of the burnt bodies of the Hindu pilgrims triggers the flame of hatred and instigates the desire for revenge in the Hindu polity. Moreover, the

hate speeches which officially held the Muslims responsible for those fatalities culminated in the brutal killing of the minority Muslims in Gujarat. Roy depicts that the butchering of the Muslims in Gujarat pogrom,

> went on for weeks and was not confined to cities alone. The mobs were armed with swords and tridents and wore saffron headbands. They had cadastral lists of Muslim homes, businesses and shops…When people who had been injured were taken to hospital, mobs attacked the hospitals. The police would not register murder cases. They said, quite reasonably, that they needed to see the corpses. The catch was that the police were often part of the mobs, and once the mobs had finished their business, the corpses no longer resembled corpses. (*TMUH* 45)

These merciless killings and violence are desperate attempts to create awe among the Muslim polity. From Roy's depiction, it can be inferred that in India the people of the Muslim community are living a 'bare life' like the *Homo Sacer* who might be

> killed by anyone without being condemned for homicide since he or she had been banned from the juridical-political community. While even a criminal could claim certain legal rights and formal procedures, this "sacred man" [read: a Muslim] was completely unprotected and reduced to mere physical existence. (cited in Lemke 2005: 5)

Roy puts forward that violence against the minority Muslims is not a unique phenomenon in India. In fact, in the politics of India, the rise of right-wing supremacy has culminated in the intensification of the hostility against the Muslims. The spread of hatred and violence against the Muslims have grave political significance. The criminalities and the unchallenged atrocities against the Muslims demonstrate the hegemony of the rule of majority over the minority. P. Sahadevan accentuates that in the status quo of the rule of the majority,

> The state behaves more as an agent of the dominant/majority ethnic community.…In many cases, [the minority] is virtually taken captive by the majority group to serve its ethnic interests while minority/weaker groups face a threat of those institutions on which they rely for protection, equity and justice....The relevant intermediary institutions [such as] bodies of popular representation (parliament) and adjudication (judiciary)…function like a mere rubber-stamp of the dominant/majority community. (Sahadevan 2013: 82)

According to Hardt and Negri, biopolitics is a form of power "expressed as a control that extends throughout the depths of the consciousnesses and bodies of the population" (Hardt & Negri 2000: 24). Staging of violence or riot is a strategy that evokes terror and fear.

Riot, in fact, is a mechanism of "Repressive State Apparatus" which through violence asserts the dominance of the powerful over the powerless and reestablishes the domination over the minority groups, rendering the message that the people of the minority groups are alive only because of the mercy of the majority. As depicted in *TMUH,* when these rioters were demolishing the Muslims' properties and mercilessly killing them, "thirty thousand saffron parakeets with steel talons and bloodied beaks, all [were] squawking together: Musslaman ka ek hi sthan! Qabristan ya Pakistan! (Only one place for the Mussalman! The Graveyard or Pakistan!") (*TMUH* 62). It appears that creating a reign of terror for the Muslims, these rioters are in a mission of making a monolithic, monolingual, mono-religious India whose idealogues have politicized that the proper place of the Muslims is either Pakistan or Qabristan (grave). The desperation of the right-wing fundamentalist group makes it apparent that India's secularist political ideology has come to a dead end and, therefore, the majority of the Hindus treat the

minority Muslims as *Homo Sacer.* At present, this violent ideology is gaining influence at an alarming pace. It is heart-rending that in a democratic country, Muslims are always prone to the threat of extermination by the extremist view of the majority. Roy emphasizes that it is the present-day political outcry that Muslims do not belong to India, and hence they cannot be offered anything more than a "bare life"—stripped of all individuating legal and political status and protection.

In *TMUH*, Roy underscores that, in present-day India, like the minority Muslims, the lives of the Dalits are also threatened and jeopardized. With the strengthening of the political dominance of the right-wing ideology, many incidents of lynching of lower caste people have taken place in India. Lynching exhibits the supremacy of the dominant religious groups over the minority. In those scattered incidents of lynching, lower caste people, especially the Dalits, are either killed or humiliated in the name of preserving the sanctity of the holy cow. In many places, cow protection groups (Gau Rakshak) are created to safeguard the cows from slaughter. To shed light on the dilapidated condition of the Dalits, Roy depicts Dayachand as a representative of the Dalit class. Dayachand belongs to the Chamar family—the Untouchables who collect the carcass, skin them, and turn the hide for their livelihood. On the day of Dussehra—a day of ceremonious celebration of the victory of Lord Rama (good) over Ravana (evil)—Dayachand, his father, and three of his father's friends had to collect a dead cow from a Brahmin's house. While returning home, at Dulina police station, they were blackmailed by the station-house officer, Sehrawat, for his commission. It has become an unwritten practice to give a certain amount of money to the police if the Chamars carry any carcass. On each carcass, Sehrawat usually demands a previously agreed-upon sum. However, on that day, he claimed nearly triple of the amount he used to take earlier, which means that the Chamars would have been losing money to skin that cow. Sehrawat was adamant and did not pay any heed to their pleading. Meanwhile, the dead cow that was collected from the Brahmin's house started to decompose in the tempo. Confining the Chamars, Sehrawat, in fact, tried to "take advantage of the political climate" (*TMUH* 88) which in the name of cow protection was openly dehumanizing the Dalits and the Muslims. When the poor Chamars expressed their inability to pay such a big amount, the police imprisoned them on the charge of cow slaughter. And kept them locked up in police custody without trial. It got apparent that Sehrawat, from his position, was abusing his power to exploit the poor Chamars.

With the passage of time, as the stink of the decomposed cow became unbearable, there spread a rumor that some cow killers were kept arrested in the police station. Eventually, the angry mob started gathering outside the police station. The dead cow in the Tempo, "stinking up the whole area, was proof enough for them" (*TMUH* 88). Moreover, the arrest amplified the severity of the incident. Unfortunately, the truth never reached the agitated mob that the Chamars had been taking a dead cow for skinning and been arrested for being unable to pay the desired commission to the station officer in charge. Gradually as the mob started shouting "Jai Shri Ram! and Vande Mataram! More and more joined in and it turned into a frenzy" (*TMUH* 88). In the heat of the moment, a group of "gau-rakshak" (cow protector) went inside the police station and handed the alleged cow-killers over the violent mob. At first, "[t]hey began to beat them…with their fists, and with shoes. But then someone brought a crowbar, someone else a carjack" (*TMUH* 88) and began to break their bones. In a frenzy, the mob, being "invigorated by

the Hindu ideology of 'Gau Rakhsha', butchered the men" (Mandal 2018: 126). It is heart-rending that everybody watched the killing, but nobody came forward to prevent it. As the mob finished its business, they "splashed through puddles of [Dayachand's] father's blood as if it were rainwater...[with blood] the road looked like a street in the old city on the day of Bakr-Eid" (*TMUH* 89). This case is not reported as murder because no dead body is found there. Whatever remains after the lynching no longer resembles a human body. Through this story of lynching, Roy has accentuated that despite the Constitutional protection Caste oppression is an ever-present phenomenon in India. The lynching of Dayachand's father and his fellow mates has brought to light not only the existential crisis of the low caste Chamars, but also the reality that in India these minority groups will survive only by living a "bare life" as long they are not killed in the name of restoring the sanctity of "holy cow".

In *TMUH*, Roy raises strong allegation against India's politicians. Roy criticizes them pointing out that in postcolonial India, the corrupted politicians manipulating the greater prospects of globalization—greater employment opportunity, eradication of hunger and poverty, and infrastructural development—have mercilessly exploited and dispossessed the poor, the marginalized, and the Adivasi people from their lands. In many of her essays, debunking the shining image of India Roy has exposed the real plights, sufferings, and challenges of Indian mass people. Challenging the justification of implementing the policies of globalization for Indian polity, Roy in "Shall We Leave it to the Experts" asks,

> What is globalization? Who is it for? What is it going to do to a country like India, in which social inequality has been institutionalized in the caste system for centuries? A country in which 700 million people live in rural areas. In which 80 percent of the landholdings are small farms. In which 300 million people are illiterate. Is the corporatization and globalization of agriculture, water supply, electricity and essential commodities going to pull India out of the stagnant morass of poverty, illiteracy and religious bigotry?... Is globalization going to close the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged, between the upper castes and the lower castes, between the educated and the illiterate? (Roy 2002: 1)

The questions have remained unanswered both from the sides of the politicians and the government. In practice, the arbitrary implementation of government projects like Narmada Project, Operation Green Hunt and many more projects like such has continued to uproot people from their land and habitat. Some have accepted this expulsion as their fate, some have resisted. Some have adopted the path of armed struggle to get their land back. In fact, the lack of land reformation activities and unjust allocation of land have made many Adivasi and tribals of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana launch armed militancy against the government forces in protest.

Roy in *TMUH* depicts Revathy as a victim of such a ruthless project of government—"operation green hunt". This project's enforcement had forcefully evicted countless Adivasis and tribal people from their living place and arable lands. However, "[p]eople in mass democracies are usually slow to recognize the nature of the undeclared wars conducted by their representatives" (Mishra 2001: 3). In *TMUH* Roy has depicted those Adivasi people who took arms to resist the government-sponsored aggression of the thousand of police and paramilitary who mercilessly killed unnumbered Adivasis and burned their villages to hand over this vast land to the petrochemical companies for mining. Revathy exclaims that during the time of the aggression of the government forces

the situation in the forest becomes very dangerous. At times police, Cobras, Greyhounds, Andhra Police launch massive attacks and kill the party workers mercilessly. Therefore, for safety, these Adivasis are forced to live in the forest. It is ironic that the victims who are fighting for reclaiming their land for living and farming are labeled as militants and treated as *Homo Sacer* whom the security forces have the right to kill with impunity. In Roy's remark, "[t]here is no terrorism like State terrorism" (Roy 'Democracy' 2002: 1)

From the story of Revathy, Roy sheds light not only on the plights, sufferings and the causes of the armed struggle of the marginalized people of Dandakaranya but also on the ruthlessness of the government agencies which are acting violently against the Adivasis. Being a victim of "Operation Green Hunt" and losing her habitat Revathy joins PLGA—the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army—to protect her people and to get their land back through armed struggle. She is the only literate woman among her fellow comrades. Hence, she is trusted with some confidential works by the party. To pursue those works, she has to go out of the forest very often. As Roy depicts, it is always risky for the party workers to stay out alone because usually the police keep many villagers and informers deployed to work against them. One day, while Revathy was returning to the camp from the city, she was abducted by the police. As usual, her arrest is not recorded. She is given chloroform and is taken to a desolate place. When she had regained consciousness, she found herself lying naked on a table and there were six police officers around her. She was brutally tortured by those police officers. Revathy delineates that horrendous experience stating that,

> One [started] cutting my skin with a knife-blade...If I closed my eyes they slap me. Two are holding my hands and two are holding legs...They are smoking and putting their cigarettes on me. I thought they would kill me like Padmakka and Laxmi but they said 'Don't worry Blackie we will let you go. You must go and tell them what we did to you. You are a great heroine. You supply them with bullets, malaria medicines, food, toothbrushes. All that we know. How many innocent girls have you sent to join your party? You are spoiling everyone'… They kept on burning me and cutting me. Then one man forced open my mouth and one man put his penis in my mouth. I could not breathe. I thought I would die. They kept putting water on my face. Then all raped me many times...I was bleeding everywhere. (*TMUH* 422-423)

Roy gives a disturbing graphic description of the torture and sexual violence perpetrated on Revathy to make the reader ponder on the horrific fact that this "is the experience of so many women in the forest" (*TMUH* 423). Revathy emphasizes "maximum hatred police had for women workers" (*TMUH* 423). She delineates the horrific killing of her fellow comrades stating that,

> Comrade Nirmalakka when she was killed they ripped her stomach and took out everything. Comrade Laxmi also they not simply killed, but cut, and removed eyes. For her there was big protest. One another Comrade Padmakka they captured and broken both her knees so she could not walk and beat her so she has kidney damage, liver damage, so much damage. (*TMUH* 421)

Fortunately, Revathy could escape from the police's den, but she could not evade the consequence of the rape. Revathy is not prevented from escaping to convey the message to her fellow comrades that a similar fate is in store for them. As a consequence of that gang-rape, Revathy becomes pregnant with the baby of one of the six police officers. The role of the state and police is depicted in a horrendous manner in this novel. Roy through her narrative accentuates that under the juridico-discursive power the police

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force instead of being a shield of the afflicted have turned into perpetrators. In the mission of creating terror among the revolutionaries, the police are involved in heinous unlawful activities. The arbitrary use of state power, by the law enforcement agencies, usually gets legitimation only in a "state of exception". *TMUH* exhibits that with the shelter of the state, extreme violence is perpetrated on the people who are engaged in armed struggle to reassert their right to the land of their ancestors. The causes that made the Adivasis and tribal people take arms to fight for their rights are neither taken into consideration by the media nor acknowledged by the state. Rather, they are allegedly termed as Maoists, anti-nationals above all—a threat to India's internal security. Focusing on such incidents of state sponsored violence, Roy asserts that by the state, the underprivileged and the minority sections of people are exposed to a 'bare life'— where they are rarely given any Constitutional protection. In "Trickledown Revolution" Roy remarks:

> If you pay attention to many of the struggles taking place in India, people are demanding no more than their Constitutional rights. But the Government of India no longer feels it needs to abide by the Indian Constitution, which is supposed to be the legal and moral framework on which our democracy rests. As Constitutions go, it is an enlightened document, but its enlightenment is not used to protect people. (Roy 2010: 1)

Both in *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* Roy has explicitly expressed the consequences of the assertion of oppressive power in familial, societal and political spheres. Situating the characters in the quagmire of class, caste, societal, political and state-sponsored oppression, Roy renders the message that in postcolonial India in any sphere the ruthless use of biopolitical power results in the death of mass people. In *TGST,* the upholding of caste supremacy, Baby Kochamma's hypocrisy and Pillai's political ambition have victimized four lives. Veutha is killed in police carnage, Ammu dies of fighting against the odds and the twins—Rahel and Estha—being traumatized by the violence perpetrated on Velutha turn into an emblem of living dead. In *TMUH* Anjum's premonition that Gujarat might come to Delhi any day, haunts the readers with the fear of confronting another gruesome riot until the end of the novel. Roy's horrific description of the burning and killing of the minority Muslims and lynching of Dayachand's father and his fellows—the lower caste Chamars—make us rethink of the matrix of power politics, in which no space is left for the minority people to exist. In Roy's depiction, it gets apparent that under the practice of juridico-discursive power, in present-day India, riots and lynching have become the license for extra judicial killing. Both are violent ways of enforcing power of the majority over the minority groups. Like the brutal colonial domination, these violent forms of killings, creating fear and terror, reassert the supremacy of the majority and powerful groups and make the lives of the minority more vulnerable. In her novels, Roy depicts that while police as an agent of repressive state apparatus take part in extrajudicial killings, the communal rioters—in the same manner—execute the persecution of the minority groups and lower caste people under the law of impunity and state protection. Stretching the narrative from imposition of emergency—by Indira government—to the crisis of Kasmir, Roy in her novels attempts to bring the myriad oppressed groups to visibility to emphasize that under the enforcement of hegemonic power and ruthless use of biopolitical *nomos,* people of the minority groups will live merely a "bare life" until the practice of caste supremacy,

communal hatred, religious bigotry, lynching and state-sponsored violence are "voluntarily abandoned as bad ideas" (Roy 'Democracy' 2002: 1).

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Theatricality of women's voice:
An Embarrassing Position by Kate Chopin

Abstract. The paper offers an analysis of *An Embarrassing Position,* the only extant and not very well-known theatre play by Kate Chopin. Even though it is only one-act-long, the play does not only contribute to the greatness of the artistry of the author, but it also subtly and wittily raises the question of societal imbalance and women's right to self-deciding. Hence, the aim of this paper is both to expose the theatricality of women's voice embedded in the play validating women's stance and foretelling women's emancipation, and to bring the play to the broader attention of academics as a unique, still underexamined, work of Chopin. In order to establish this light comedy play within a serious domain of women's rights struggle, as well as to inscribe this short piece of work into the long list of Chopin's writings which are pro-feminist in their overtone, the paper uses hermeneutic analysis with elements of Derrida's deconstructionist theory of *différance*, and employs Carl Jung's idea of *synchronicity*. Derrida's deconstruction serves to uncover the inner inconsistencies residing within the humorous lines of the play, whereas *synchronicity* provides the scaffold for the play's events that bonds the analysis elements into one meaningful whole.

Keywords: feminist discourse, the cult of domesticity, deconstruction, *différance,* synchronicity.

1. Introduction

Chopin has been unequivocally recognised as a prolific short story writer and skilful interpreter of women's lives, an author whose numerous short stories and two novels have been submitted to careful academic scrutiny. Yet besides Chopin's most appreciated works, there is one piece of writing that seems to have eluded scholarly attention, a one-act comedy play *An Embarrassing Position,* which, therefore, this study ventures to examine and, consequently, encourage academic discussion of the play.

The lack of scholarly interest in the play is an important reason but it is not the only motivation for the analysis. It is Chopin's linguistic artistry, which not only presents inconvenient truths about social imbalance and portrays women's emancipatory pursuits, but does it in a humorous and witty manner; it is straightforward but it simultaneously avoids controversy.

Since Chopin's language is simple and unassuming, but also well-articulate and crisp, in voicing deep meanings and constructing multilayered messages, it calls for equally nonconventional tools to uncover the hidden message of the play and to confirm

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the seriousness of Chopin's point, concealed underneath the humorous triviality. Therefore, this hermeneutical analysis resorts to two challenging analytical tools, Derrida's theory of deconstruction and Jung's concept of synchronicity, as these two seem to have the capacity to encompass and highlight the interpretative areas addressed by Chopin and, hence, to disclose the significance, and the prophetic message of the superficially cheerful and overt content of the play.

As far as deconstruction is concerned, the paper mainly draws from the literary aspect of the theory and focuses on the textual interpretation of Chopin's work. Hence, deconstruction is employed to follow the subtle traces of Chopin's radical ideas aimed at disruption of the rhetoric of power that reside beyond the primary concepts and basic meanings of words. Also, deconstruction serves an exposure of fine incongruities that lie at different layers of the play and thus enables one to establish a new language of the play with which Chopin's words can be read out as feministically inspiring. In the course of the analysis, besides the literary dimension, the philosophical dimension of deconstruction is also occasionally addressed, as the paper seeks to expose and subvert the binary oppositions present in the play and to reveal the repressed meanings which aim at changing the hierarchy of social inequality.

Regarding synchronicity, its well-recognised capacity to manifest hermeneutics and to explore the text will be addressed and thus, the foundations for the play's analysis will be established. The idea of synchronicity will connect the traces, meanings and concepts displayed by Derridean deconstruction and will generate these elements into one meaningful whole thus contributing to the exposure of the play's hidden overtone.

The paper begins with setting the scene for the 19th century social relationships and the introduction of the ideology of the cult of domesticity prevailing at that time to indicate the social unacceptability and inappropriateness of Eva's, the play's heroine, behaviour and thus, to provide the background for the further scrutiny of Eva's proceedings and ultimately, for the paper's conclusions. After that, the key concepts of the theory of deconstruction and the idea of synchronicity are introduced. Finally, the play's gene, the title, the time, the setting, the characters' names, the plot with particular attention devoted to binary oppositions as well as the play's lines are analyzed. The paper closes with the presentation of the results of the analysis and conclusions.

2. The cult of domesticity

Chopin's writings seem both to be shaped by and to encompass all the ground-breaking events of the 19th century, even though some of them happened either shortly before, or not long after Chopin's birth. Thus, the Civil War, the Suffragettes movement and the First Women's Rights Convention, either were echoed or directly addressed in her works. All these, however, were dealt with to picture the writer's primary concerns, women's freedom and women's right to self expression in all spheres of life, constrained at that time by the American cult of domesticity.

The cult of domesticity was a fossilized and unchallengeable construct which delineated the private and the public for the upper-middle class. It set the rules of conduct and solidified the roles of both a woman and a man, primarily the concepts of wife and

husband, but it delimited women only. At the core of the ideological postulates of the cult of domesticity rested the idea of the pure femininity, shaped by religious rigidity and the natural biological weakness of the female sex. The embodiment of the ideal femininity in real life was the true woman, also called the light of the home, or the flawless angel of the hearth.

The concept of the true woman made 19th century females submissive and obedient prisoners of social appropriateness. "If anyone, male or female, dared to temper with the complex of the virtues which made up True Womanhood he was dammed immediately as an enemy of God, of the civilisation and of the Republic" (Walter 1966: 152). The true woman had to follow four core rules in order to earn social acceptance, esteem, and respect, namely: the rule of piety, the rule of purity, the rule of submissiveness, and that of domesticity.

Piety was believed to be "the most fundamental of all women's virtues and the source of women's strength. (...) It belonged to a woman by divine right, [and it was] a gift of God and nature" (Welter 1966: 152). By the virtue of piety, women bore the single responsibility for "throw[ing heavenly] beams into the naughty world of men" (Welter 1966: 152). Thus, whereas a man could indulge into the materialistic pursuits offered by the boosting economy of the industrialisation era, his wife became "a hostage [left behind] to all the values which he held so dear and treated so lightly" (Welter 1966: 151).

The purity rule was as important as the rule of piety. Women were obliged to keep the virtue of chastity until their marriage, and throughout their whole life warned against any undue familiarity with men. "[E]ven such trifle events as sitting with another man in a place that [was] too narrow; read[ing] out of the same book [showing] eagerness to see anything" (Welter 1966: 155), were viewed highly improper and might have condemned a woman to social marginalization. "[A]bsence of purity was unnatural and unfeminine. Without it she was, in fact, no woman at all, but a member of some low order" (Welter 1966: 154), a fallen woman.

The next rule that was of help in guiding women's proper behaviour, and in shaping it in line with societal demands, was the rule of submission. Submission, like the piety and purity, was considered a solely feminine characteristic, divinely instilled in women by God. By the virtue of submission women were supposed to follow men's whims both in private and social spheres, even when they had to act against their own will. Mrs. Elizabeth Poole Sandford attempted to define women's role in terms of submissiveness in the following way: "A really sensible woman feels her dependence. She does what she can, but she is conscious of inferiority" (Welter 1966: 159), whereas another author of manuals of women's conduct, Clarissa Packard, reminded a woman that she should work in silence, suppress "her talents to her husband's good" and revere "his wishes even when [she] does not his opinions" (Packard in Welter 1966: 160).

The fourth of the set of rules of the true woman, the rule of domesticity, upheld the contemporary state-of-the art restricting the area of women's activity to family and her home, thus artfully excluding women from all, traditionally-viewed as men's, spheres of civil and political life. A woman had to find "her true dignity and beauty" in household chores in her home, where she was secured "not only from the world, but from delusions and errors of every kind" (Welter 1966: 162).

For the whole 19th century, the prolific prescriptive literature addressed to women maintained these highly idealised and much unattainable standards, of socially acceptable womanhood, even though they deprived women of their individuality, and hindered their pursuits for subjectivity. Every 19th-century woman was expected to judge herself by the four core rules of the cult of domesticity and also was subject to the scornful judgement by others through being faithful to them. Without the rules "everything was ashes, with them [a true woman] was promised happiness and power" (Welter 1966: 152).

All the above mentioned standards of the ideology of the cult of domesticity amount to a fine litmus paper of the analysis, and thus are applicable to detecting how far-fetched, in terms of social acceptability and the 19th century convenance Eve's behaviour is, and how much Chopin challenges the social order. A night visit of a young single woman paid to a young bachelor seems to push the limits of the 19th century appropriateness and could not be otherwise delivered but in the comedy form, hence the assumption adopted in the present paper that the unduly behaviour of the heroine is not merely a misbehaviour of an inexperienced, childish young girl, yet to the contrary, it is the result of a skilful plan of the author to veil the unacceptable and render it in an amusing form.

3. Deconstruction

Derrida's deconstruction belongs to the classics of the contemporary philosophy and literary theory, and as such it has been one of the most thoroughly examined, described, both appreciated and challenged, phenomenon in the academic world. Bearing in mind that nowadays, it appears to have been past its prime, the paper refers to deconstruction as "mature" and a bit "outmoded" theory, yet the one, which still has not said its last word (see: Burzyńska 2013: 13).

Hence, it is the unquestionable power of the textual analysis of deconstruction which exposes the text for multilayered and versatile interpretation that drives the hitherto analysis. The textual demystification and exposure of instability of meaning, tracing the residing within texts inconsistencies, exploring the textual margins, questioning the literal message, reevaluating and provoking, help to reread the text of the play and to establish it both within and beyond the feminist perspective, in Jungian realm of numinous synchronicities.

Apart from the literary aspect of deconstruction, the paper also draws from the philosophical dimension of deconstruction, and thus is concerned with questioning metaphysics of presence and challenging the system of dualistic oppositions that lie at the heart of the metaphysical philosophy. Deconstruction aids the analysis conducted in this paper by disclosing the imbalance residing within the metaphysical system of binaries in order to subvert the unjust dichotomy which has always favored one element over the other.

The major Derridean tool to the practice of deconstruction, the concept of *différance,* is implemented to undermine the literal meaning of the text and to create the variety of possibilities, as well as to announce inherent disparities owing to which the meaning can grow to "a potentially endless chain of signifiers – polysemous, intertextual,

subject to infinite linkages (…), always differential and deferred, never present (…) original unity" (Venuti 2003: 238).

Also, since Chopin assumed the position of an objective, non-marginalizing, and careful observer, deconstruction in the analysis does not aim at questioning Chopin's statements and message, yet rather at reaching deep down to the layers in which the author could safely convey her message, without being accused of the overt challenge of the ideology of the cult of domesticity, which would have equalled to challenging God's order. Hence, the analysis ventures to call into question the superficial triviality of the play and to highlight Chopin's covert message instead, rather than Chopin's standpoint, and consequently, to make this paper a catalyst for further academic analyses.

4. Synchronicity – "mutual attraction of related objects"

Carol Jung, a German psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, the founder of analytical psychology and author of a number of major psychological concepts, coined the term *synchronicity* in order to give the name to the phenomenon of mutual attraction of the related objects, also known as an "acausal connecting principle", to describe an energy-based connection between an individual psyche and the external world (see: Jung 1973).

The concept draws from the assumption that an idea, or conviction born in one's psyche can be materialized in real world owing to the human's unconstrained power of creativity. It also implies that human psyche is capable of exerting its will over the matter, and further that both psychic and physical can meet, as they are not susceptible to the three-dimensional world limitations. Hence, one of the basic premises of synchronicity is the psychic relativity of time and distance, which assumes that both the psyche and the material world are primarily two different forms of energy and therefore, they do not need to depend on time or space to occur. What they, however, need to rely on, is a person's unconscious psychological processes that trigger off the events which then get materialized in the outer world.

Another important assumption of synchronicity is the idea of an undividable unity of matter. According to Jung (1973: 103), matter is not merely a material substance but a compound of interconnected energy fields organized by a pre-existent psyche. Furthermore, both the matter and the spirit co-create the so called *unus mundus*, or the One World, the superordinate level of reality, in which everything pursues harmony. This "unitary domain outside the human categories of space and time, and beyond [human] division of reality into matter and spirit" (van Erkelens 1990: 201), presupposes the existence of a balance force in the universe that strives for stability (see: Main online). Moreover, since synchronicity assumes "the parallelism of time and meaning between psychic and psychophysical events" (Jung 1973: 115), *the divine cosmos*, as *unus mundus* is also called, challenges the commonly-accepted "pre-established harmony, which [always existed] as a universal [natural] order" (Jung 1973: 126) and arises as an empirical manifestation of its universal balance force instead.

In terms of the formal foundations, synchronicity rests on the idea of collective unconscious (see: Jung 1973: 33). As defined by Jung, collective unconscious is a reservoir of the human psyche containing its decisive inherited elements called

archetypes. Archetypes, called also "patterns of behaviours", are a set of shared concepts existing beyond a person's unconscious that emerge as the themes or characters of dreams, and which also manifest as beliefs, patterns of thinking, signs, myths, and legends (see: Jung 1973: 20).

The collective unconscious can only be accessed through the unconsciousness hence it only becomes available in the states of oblivion, such as dreams, mediation, or periods of emotional agitation. Furthermore, as it is by means of affects that "a particular content [is allowed] to a supernormal degree of luminosity", which gives "the unconscious a favorable opportunity to slip into the space vacated" (Jung 1973: 29), the phenomenon of synchronicity requires the co-occurrence of two factors: "an unconscious image that comes into consciousness either directly (i.e., literally) or indirectly (symbolized or suggested), in the form of a dream, idea, or premonition, and an objective situation, which coincides with this content – the one (…) as puzzling as the other" (Jung 1973: 40). Thus the notion of synchronicity emerges as an extreme exemplification of the circumstantiality, whose essence can only be grasped through the subjective personal experience, the one which, however, evades any scientifical explanation.

Indeed, for years, the idea of synchronicity has confused scholars as resisting to scientific proof, and extended "the Western world's core conceptions of nature and the psyche" (Cambray 2009: intro.) to the limits of acceptability The claims poised by synchronicity have been viewed as lacking scientific standards and deprived of academic ground. However, the situation has changed due to discoveries of the 20th century quantum physics, which both confirmed the core premises of Jung's concept and put synchronicity in a broader frame (see: Cambray 2009, intro.).

Quantum physicists have posited that as it is the energy that creates the basis for the whole material world, things resolve in energetic fields first and only then do they acquire their material form. Moreover, since everything in the universe is interconnected through energetic fields, hence the matter is an indivisible and interrelated tissue, which objects any divisions, and which always pursues unity.

Apart from the quantum physics findings, most recent research in the field of psychology also confirm scientificity of synchronicity, although they challenge the phenomenon's core, once-mystical, premises. Instead of the mystic numinosity of the co-occurring events new psychodynamic theories postulate the natural background of the phenomenon and associate synchronicity with "significant psychological change—transformation, transcendence, and an expansion of consciousness" (Williams 2010: ix).

The so called naturalistic theories of synchronicities of Faber (1998) and Williams (2010), rest on "the naturalistic understanding of the intricate psychological process assumed to produce (...) seemingly acausal events" (Williams 2010: 108). Faber (in: Williams 2010: 108) posits that "[i]n synchronicities we see (experience) the return of the repressed." For Williams (2010: 108), "synchronicities function as progressive events arising out of the need for human beings to continually resolve inevitable life problems of being, doing, and becoming by connecting to their idiosyncratic creative process."

Essentially, in both views, "synchronicities are intimately associated with an individual's need to provide essential answers to ultimate questions such as who am I, what do I really want, how do I acquire such knowledge, and how best do I put it to use?"

(Williams 2010:112) and as such revolve around the key notions pertinent to human's worldly experience. Hence also, they not only take synchronicity beyond the contested realm of occultism, but they also support the impact of synchronicity on shaping an individual's experience and enhancing an individual's progress both in psychical and social dimensions.

Thus it can be said that both quantum physics as well as synchronicity theories posited by the naturalist lay firm foundations for the scientificity of the phenomenon of synchronicity and facilitate its relevance to the present analysis. Hence, the phenomenon of synchronicity seems applicable in the analysis twofold, on the plot plane, to found an acausal relationship between the events of the play, and further, on the semiotic plane, to establish a connection between the results of the deconstruction analysis and the reflection on Chopin's message. Moreover, even though there may still be voices claiming the lack of academic verifiability of the notion of synchronicity, quantum physics theories, naturalistic synchronicities theories as well as an inexhaustible spontaneity of the intuitive experience and the dynamic of the psyche involved in the act of synchronicities alike, prove the notion useful for the purposes of the present paper.

5. The hermeneutic analysis of Kate Chopin's comedy play, *An Embarrassing Position*

5.1. The play – main information

An Embarrassing Position is a one-act play written by Chopin Oct. 15-22, 1891 for the New York Herald drama competition. Its "[e]arlier titles are: *A Little Comedy at Parkhams*; *An Evening at Parkhams*; *A Social Dilemma*; *An Embarrassing Situation. Drama in One Act and One Scene*" (Seyersted (ed.) 2006: 1009). Although the play did not win any award, it was published in the St. Louis *Mirror* magazine in the December 19, 1895. Before that, the play had been rejected by publishers five times and as such it inscribes on the long list of Chopin's works discarded by her contemporaries. Ever since, it has also been viewed as Chopin's minor work unable to compete with the author's most appreciated works.

The play was published on request since its publisher was a long-time admirer of Chopin (see: Shaker 2003: 97). In fact, "Chopin was virtually guaranteed of Reedy's support many years before she called on it, and she might have used *the Mirror* (...) to showcase the unorthodox politics enacted in her more daring fiction" (Shaker 2003: 97).

In the 1970s, along with the rediscovery of Chopin as a writer, the play was published by the Library of America in the collection, *Kate Chopin Complete Novels and Stories* and although Chopin's biographers did not devote much of their attention to the play – Per Seyersted does not even include the play in the listing in his first biography of Chopin, *Kate Chopin A Critical Biography,* 1980 – Emily Toth, situates it in a rather thought-provoking context.

The biographer first mentions the play as Chopin's unsuccessful attempt to receive some feedback from her first literary model, William Dean Howells, yet after that Toth includes a commentary referring to unconventionality of Chopin's works for which "[l]iterary moralists and censors always offended Kate – and they dogged her from the

very beginning of her career" (Toth 1990: 192). Therefore, I would dare to claim that the low interest of scholars does not merely relate to the lack of the incentive content, or the low literary value, of the play, but it is rather an effect of the mainstream focus on Chopin's works, which naturally restricts its analyses to a limited number of short stories and two novels, predominantly to *The Awakening*.

To support the view of the value of the play as an unappreciated and deserving more insightful approach piece of Chopin's writing, it is worth mentioning that in 2010, a famous American composer, Dan Shore, adapted the play as a 30-minute-long comic opera, which turned immediate success. Apart from receiving favorable reviews as "[o]ne of the most utterly charming pieces [of the] year", the play also received a Big Easy Entertainment Award, 2011, and won National Opera Association Chamber Opera Competition, 2013 (Mahne 2013: online).

5.2. *An Embarrassing Position* – genre

An Embarrassing Position is a one-act comedy of manners, whose compact form hides a stirring content. The choice of the genre, the plot of the play as well as its length seem to be driven by the author's major purpose of creating a favorable space for an unpopular idea, promoting women's unconstrained right to self-determination and individual freedom, to be announced in a humorous and concise way.

As a comedy of manners the play is "witty [and] cerebral in form (...) [It] depicts and (...) satirizes the manners (...) of a contemporary society. (...) [It] is concerned with social usage and the question of whether or not characters meet (...) social standards", and the play's plot, referred to a "scandalous matter, is subordinate to the play's brittle atmosphere, [and] witty dialogue" (Britannica: online).

In the play, the author privileges the voice of women over the voice of men and plays as much on the appearances as with appearances. Thus on the one hand it is the main heroine's socially improper behaviour that needs correction; however, as the plot develops, the superficial naivety of the main heroine, Eva, reveals unexpected wisdom, whereas seemingly mature experience of the main male character, Willis, discloses nothing but shameful craftiness.

The fact that Chopin voices feminist concerns by and large makes the work also fall into the characteristic of a comedy as advocated by George Meredith, the author of the most extensive debate over the comic genre of the 19th century, and thus Chopin's play can be described in Meredith's words as a related to women's status "humor of the mind" and "a corrective laughter" used both as a means of women's advancement and an instrument aimed at shaping a progressive society (Meredith 1897: online gutenberg.org).

As far as the length of the play is considered, the comedy is only one act, and as such, it does not require much time to follow, but it allows enough time to voice doubts concerning the true face of social appropriateness and to promote women's freedoms. At the end of the play, untypically for the comedy of manners, yet typically for Chopin, the author restrains herself from any pungent commentary or punch line, which could be too limiting for the play's feministic overtone, but leaves the audience in a quandary. The play ends, but the subtle impression of a certain incongruence as for the equality of the

two sexes stays with the audience. The discrepancy between what is felt and what is believed grows to gradually undermine the basics of what has been viewed as socially proper and appropriate thus paving the way for the true recognition of the equality of the two sexes.

5.3. The summary of the plot

The plot of the comedy play is set in New Orleans in the 1890s in the snuggery of the suburban residence of Willis Parkham, a young and wealthy American bachelor, who is running for a political office.

At 11:30 pm, after the "political meeting", which Parkham allegedly organized, he is visited by Eva Artless, a young cheerful and witty daughter of one of his friends, an army officer, Mr. Artless. The heroine, Eva, brought up by her eccentric father "on unconventional and startling lines" (Chopin in: Seyersted (ed.) 2006: 164) invades Mr. Parkham's privacy in the least convenient moment, since soon after her arrival, Parkham has another unexpected guest. The unanticipated visitor is the reporter for the Paul Pry, a newspaper journalist critically commenting on the latest political affairs and sniffing about for gossips. Even though Parkham does his utmost to conceal the presence of Eva, his efforts fall through. The scandal is about to break, so the panicky young gentleman resolves to save his political career and proposes to Eva. Surprisingly enough, he gets rejected, as the seemingly naive young lady has her own will and is not eager to resign from the precious freedom and self-determination about her own future. Willis's proposal immediately gets Eva's riposte, smart and reasonable:

> And this is an offer of marriage! I never had one before! I never want one again! So Mr. Willis Parkham, you think that my future happiness depends upon becoming your wife. Well, permit me to inform you, that you are making a curious mistake. The idea of being your wife has never entered my mind. And so little does my future happiness depend upon your society, that I intend to quit it just as soon as I can (Chopin in: Seyersted (ed.) 2006: 173).

Paradoxically for the 19th century contemporaries, in the play it is the female character, who resolves the situation, or rather leaves it unresolved, against the main hero's wish. It is also Eva, who is attributed with the fine qualities of the mind, whereas Parkham arises as an emotionally unstable and indecisive individual with "varying moods", and as a changeable person whose distractedness and feverish agitation result in excessive maladroitness. Eva observes his incoherence closely, yet also empathically, and "faces him, seriously and resolutely", with an unwavering dignity and common sense. Indeed, Willis's clumsiness and lack of certain graces, juxtaposed with Eva's wit and intelligence, expressed in sharp, but not harsh, verbal agility, leave no illusions as for Chopin's standpoint. Chopin advocates for women and questions social order founded on hypocrisy with the same ease and wit with which Eva rejects Willis's ridiculous offer.

5.4. The title of the play

The etymology of the word *embarrass*, which appears in the title of the play, is as follows: "1670s, 'perplex', throw into doubt, from French *embarrasser* (16c.), literally 'to block,' from Italian *imbarrazzo,* from *imbarrare*, 'to bar,' assimilated form of *in-*

'into, upon' + Vulgar Latin *barra* 'bar'- anything which holds, obstructs, impedes. Meaning 'to hamper, hinder' is from 1680s. Meaning "make someone feel awkward" first recorded 1828" (etymonline.com). The noun *position* comes "from Latin *positionem* (nominative *positio*)", "act or fact of placing, situation, position, affirmation", "to settle, dwell, be home". The meaning "proper place occupied by a person or thing" is from 1540s" (etymonline.com).

From the above dictionary entries of the words *embarrass* and *position*, the title of the play can be interpreted as a referral to the presupposed, righteous situation in which the characters of the play shall inevitably meet. As it can be drawn from the meanings of the words, even though the plot of the play superficially implies the loss of dignity and honor, and makes the event of the get-together in question socially frowned upon, or at least ridiculed (a woman visits a man in the middle of the night), it indeed draws on a natural behavior of a self-constituting adult to freely choose their place of stay. Also, as the etymology of the word "embarrass" suggests, the position, though socially discarded, is not morally wrong, and taking into consideration that in fact a night visit can be objectively puzzling, it seems to skillfully support Chopin's subversive plan to make a fissure in the shell of the fossilized 19th century social system for women's stance to be announced, and consequently, discerned.

5.5. The analysis of the setting – Willis Parkham's snuggery

According to a dictionary definition, snuggery is a "neat comfortable place, a small secluded room; to be snug [means:] to be close, to be slyly and comfortably concealed" (yourdictionary.com). Thus, as the referential meaning of the word indicates, a snuggery is a place of concealment, comfortable yet, restricted and secluded. The designation of the place of concealment is to hide something that an individual wants to keep secret. However, as deconstruction prompts, the innate quality of the hidden is exposure, which implies that the hidden only makes sense, when juxtaposed with the unveiled.

Chopin seemingly uses the snuggery to introduce and to emphasize the concept of concealment vs. disclosure as the semantic dominant of the play: in the snuggery Willis's nature is revealed, and so is Eva's self-determining standpoint, Cato's simple wisdom is never listened to and thus remains unrevealed, whereas allegedly discovered by the prying reporter scandal, throws the light on the leading theme of the play, women's social inequality.

In fact, the meaning of the snuggery in the play's overall design may be interpreted as a symbolical representation of the falsity of the 19th century society construct, of its hypocrisy and two-facedness in which the double standards of the cult of domesticity concealed the violence, cruelty and negligence of women with the silent public approval at convenience of the beneficiaries of the practice, men. Hence, the association between the snuggery and the 19th century society seems to be Chopin's purposeful act aimed at focusing the public attention on the festering problem of women's social inequality.

5.6. The time of the play – 11.30 pm

Chopin carefully chooses the time of the play and sets the clock at 11.30 pm, at seemingly the most theatrical point of the time in terms of its division of cyclical time and in terms of its symbolical meaning.

The dramatic contrast between day and night is the moment when binary pairs are juxtaposed: darkness and light, life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness, reason and emotions, male and female. While in the metaphysical world of dualities, daytime is symbolically related to the masculine, active principle, and to the conscious state within mankind, nighttime is related to the feminine, passive and unconscious principle, associated with fertility and potentiality (see: Cirlot 2001: 228) Interestingly, it is darkness that "preexists the differentiation of matter. The dualism of light/darkness does not arise as a symbolic formula of morality until primordial darkness has been split up into light and dark. Hence, the pure concept of darkness (...) corresponds to primigenial chaos. It is also related to mystic nothingness, (...) a path leading back to the profound mystery of the Origin" (Cirlot 2001: 76-77).

In the play, Eve arrives at night, when the nightly mysterious concealment creates a favorable environment for synchronicity to occur. It is the night that lets Eve draw from the Jungian archetypal repository, otherwise inaccessible, since at night, as notices Frith Luton (a Zurich-trained Jungian analyst and psychotherapist) "[t]he world can speak to us in a completely new way. The rational, scientific *façade* of the world, though still present, becomes alive with the vibrancy of the presence of the numinous" (frithluton.com). The night prepares the unconscious for the moment of revelation and it is Eve, the mother of all life and the patron of oneness that directs her steps to Willis Parkham's house, where in the small microcosm of the snuggery, will decide on her own fate, and presumably, on the fate of all women.

5.7. The heroine's name and surname

Both the name and the surname of the heroine of the play are telling and also marked. The name associates with a mother figure and the surname, basically, with positive qualities of a person's character. Thus the name Eva – "[m]eaning: [l]ife, [s]ymbiosis" – connotes the mother of all life, "the biosphere; all living things" (Abarim Publications: online Biblical Dictionary) and the beginning of a new life. It also refers to the collectivity, and therefore can be broadly referred to other women, not merely to the heroine herself, which implies that the choices and the fate of the heroine can be recognised as representative for other females too. This fact is also meaningful as far as the heroine's choices are concerned. In the play, Eva can be read as the first woman to determine the female subjectivity and to voice the female's stance. Eva does not succumb to stereotypes and does not wish to commit her life to marriage. She is not an obedient girl, staying in her place, but a daring young woman who thinks for herself and who will rather look for new choices the life offers than choose marriage as a way to happiness. Furthermore, since the name Eva also designates the biosphere of all living things, the heroine seems to be innately compelled towards the universal balance and equity, the state in which none of the elements shall prevail.

The heroine's surname, Artless, refers essentially to the character's features and particularizes the heroine's mental and moral characteristics. Hence, the heroine can be viewed as a "person who is innocent of sin or evil", "ingenuous" and "noble in nature, high-minded; [and] honorably straightforward" (etymonline.com). Artless, meaning "innocent" but also "free-born", suggests that the very first female, is not going to resign from her freedom, and despite being characterized by the virtues of purity and simplicity, she is equipped with the sense of autonomy and determination to decide about herself and her life. Moreover, the surname, being the play of the two meanings, "uncontrived" and "lacking art, knowledge, or skill", implies that the heroine has a sincere disposition, deprived of cunning, and is a person who wishes to earnestly act towards the symbiotic co-existence.

Also in terms of binary oppositions, the heroine seems to be a uniting entity attributed with metaphysical qualities valorized both negatively and positively. She is simultaneously natural, uncultured, and ingenuous, as opposed to civilized, cultured, and artful, and as such she oscillates between the centre and the margin, capable of unifying the extremities and of merging the accepted and the scorned over alike.

5.8. Synchronicity of events

The play rests on the foundation of empirically materialized synchronicity displayed in the form of a set of spontaneous encounters and coincidences. Blizzard, an accident that caused obstruction on the road and delayed arrival of Eva's father, the startling decision of Eva not to stay at her own house for the night but stay at Parkham's instead, and the unseasonal visit of a haunting for a scandal inquisitive reporter relate to one another yet, simultaneously, defy any straightforward explanation in terms of their interrelatedness.

While the causal link between the blizzard and the accident on the road, and consequently, the hindered comeback of Eva's father can be drawn, it is hardly possible to establish the similar connection between Eva's decision to spend the night at Willis's house and the reporter's unseasonal visit, which timing is striking even nowadays. In fact both of the visits, Eva's and the reporter's, seem highly improbable, if not impossible, particularly when considered through the prism of the social rules of 19th century America. However, Jungian rule of synchronicity provides a valid explanation for the two, as well as for the rest of the plot's string of events.

The events become Jungian creative acts and "the continuous creation of a pattern that exists from all eternity, repeats itself sporadically and is not derivable from any known antecedents" (Jung 1973: 113). Chopin mirrors this continuous creation and makes the plot's events act like guideposts that "move [characters] forward [to] a new phase of their life" (Rowland 2019).

Characteristically for synchronicity, the events get linked to some emotionally stirring personal experience, with Eva's distress caused by her father's hindered arrival, and Willis's agitation caused by the reporter's undue visit. Eva becomes the focus and the trigger of the chain of the events, since, as a female, she is believed to be endowed with sensitivity often inaccessible for men. In a moment of emotional upheaval, the situation Eva never experienced before, when she can and should decide for herself, the heroine

gets access to the unconscious wisdom and triggers the synchronicities, which are both the results of her state and the "winks" from the universe confirming she is on the right path. At the same time Willis, threatened by the perspective of getting discredited, trashes in the net of societal expectations with no relevant conclusions as to his behavior. He is too cultured and thus too rational to contact the unconscious and contest the set rules.

Eva and Willis are subjects of the play, its hero and heroine; simultaneously they also become objects of a broader game of the universe, handy tools foretelling the inevitable transformations: Eva represents the female force that announces new relations, Willis embodies the outlived social construct to be revisited. Yet, whereas Eva follows the deeply ingrained in the synchronicity idea that there "is an energy directing [people] towards a meaningful and fulfilled life" (Rowland 2019), Willis remains oblivious to the signs of the universe and clings to the old structures. As a result, when the heroine releases the "creativity (…) located in the power of imagination, in the psyche, [in her] inner being (…) and [a] mysterious part of it known as the unconscious" (Rowland 2019) to voice her will, Willis remains stuck in social constraints.

However, the basic truth that lies at the heart of synchronicity says that the universe detests inequity, and hence one might assume that the process of penetrating the artificial construct of social biases already exists in the collective unconscious and what it only needs is materialization.

5.9. The plot analysis with elements of deconstruction

Even though very short and hilarious, the comedy comprises four major, "disturbing" moments which, when analyzed from deconstructionists' perspective, crack open and expose different that might be assumed content.

The first disquieting moment of the play is the introduction of the characters of the comedy, when Miss Eva Artless is described as "[b]rought up on unconventional and startling lines by eccentric father, a retired army officer" (Chopin in: Seyersted (ed.) 2006: 164). Following the paradigm of metaphysical binary oppositions, "unconventional and startling lines" seem to be juxtaposed with "an army order", and even though it is "order" which is privileged over the presumably disordered "unconventional and startling lines", the overtone of the play rather suggests the latter alternative to be valued higher. Moreover, it is "the startling lines", which shaped the heroine of the play into the outspoken and daring person who, with her unwavering approach as to who should decide about her future, opens the dispute over the broader issue of what women are and what they are not allowed to.

Chopin blurred the roles of women and men in an attempt to emphasize the equality of the sexes. Thus, an inexperienced, yet self-determined, young woman adamantly faces a mature man, who is shaken by the unexpected situation, and when the reporter arrives at Willis's house and discovers the presence of Eva, she decides resolutely, Willis is thrown into despair. The arrival of the reporter is the climax of the play and the last element of the chain of meaningful coincidences and also the event which most contributes to the emotional upsurge of the characters. From that moment, the plot events gather pace to find their open-ended finale.

As a result of the synchronicities, Parkham offers Eva marriage. The explanations and cover stories aimed at excusing and concealing Eva's presence in his house preceding his proposal cast a shadow on Parkham's decency. In fact, he comes over as a hypocrite and liar. By cunning and trying to trick Eva into believing that he is deeply devoted to her, Willis becomes the opposite of all good virtues characteristic of Eva. Thus also it is Parkham himself who subverts the metaphysical hierarchy disclosing the putridity of the centrality of the binary opposition man vs. woman, and little can do the explanations that he might have cared for his political career from which he had already resigned. Actually, as it happens in case of works of famous authors, Parkham's indecency clouds upon the moral condition of men in general, pointing at a hypocritical, double-standard disposition of a well-respected man.

When Eva declines Willis's proposal without hesitation, the question arises whether she is a naive or a wise young lady. Based on Chopin's allusion that the heroine has been "brought up on unconventional and startling lines," it seems more probable that Eva can be characterized as clever and self-reliant than dummy. Similarly, Eva's witty ripostes and bright dissection of the situation which she faces, not only testify of her intellectual skills, but they also contribute to the comedy's ease and grace, making the play a pleasurable performance. In either event, Eva's free way of expression is uncommon for 19th century women, who were supposed to be passive and obedient responders rather than high-lifted and intelligent interlocutors, and as such seems remarkable.

In reply to Parkham's clumsy proposal, Eva cries out she never wants to have a marriage offer again and she manifestly questions her future happiness as depending upon her becoming Parkham's wife. Still, Parkham insists on them getting married to-night. The old-fashioned spelling of "to-night", even though obviously not striking in Chopin's times, nowadays attracts attention and partially determines the direction of the following interpretation: Eva is submitted with a choice of marrying to-night or to-morrow and has to decide on her future. Marrying to night (n.): "the dark part of a day", also "absence of spiritual illumination, moral darkness, ignorance" (etymonline.com) does imply clinging to the stereotypes and deprived of true morality, traditional rules which Eva ventures to break. At the same time, night is symbolically related to the feminine, unconscious and fertile, thus Eva may draw from the night's supportive energy to make up her mind and usher in a new power balance within the society. Moreover, since the option of the to-morrow (a daytime symbolically points at the conscious activity related to the masculine) marriage is not presented to Eva as a valid one, but rather as a word play hence one may presume twofold, that Eva was *a priori* deprived of a legitimate choice, or that she does prefer to stick to her own instincts.

The final scene of the comedy, when the play should apparently resolve, but it does not, is the most deeply ingrained in deconstruction philosophy. Eva's decision gets suspended and superficially unresolved. The play does not close up like deconstruction does not give up to encapsulation, and since there is no ultimate meaning subscribed and no ultimate reality presented, all interpretations are legitimate and possible. If Eva chose to marry Willis, she would conform to the social rules; if she objected, she would set an example and pave the way for a new power dynamic. However, no matter which ending succeeds, the heroine emerges as the spokesperson for other women and the catalyst of

changes that are symbolically initiated in the play and which aim at the redefinition of the social relationships.

Actually, Eva is a genuine rebel from the very beginning of the play as she, one by one, violates all the four core rules of a true woman decalogue, without guilt or confusion. Firstly, she resolves to leave her house driven by her own judgment of the situation, even though a woman should not "feel and act for herself" (Welter 1966: 159), thus breaking the rule of domesticity. Secondly, she arrives in a man's house at night, which, according to the piety rule, amounts to the loss of her virtue and to the acquisition of a *fille de joie* status. Moreover, throughout the whole play Eva does not behave as a timid, submissive responder, but she acts as a man-equal, independent individual who relies more on her own guts than on another person's opinion, and a fortiori not on social convenance. With such a behavior Eva openly defies the "true feminine genius [which] is ever dependent" (Greenwood in: Welter 1966: 160), infringing "perhaps the most feminine virtue expected of women" (Welter 1966: 159), the virtue of submissiveness. Yet Eva was "brought up on unconventional and startling lines", hence the lesson taught to the 19th century American women, famous for their innocence and piety, that "in whatever situation of life a woman is placed from cradle to her grave, a spirit of obedience and submission, pliability of temper, and humility of mind, are required from her" (Welter 1966: 159) must have eluded her attention, or may be, it was never taught to her. This question cannot be answered yet, what can be observed is the fact that by violating the core rules of the cult of domesticity, Eva openly challenged the "stable order of society dependent upon her (woman) maintaining her traditional place in it" (Welter 1966: 174) and thus she also violated "the order of the Universe" (Welter 1966: 159). If not for the comedy play, Eva would be a tragic heroine doomed to ostracism and social condemnation. Comedy lets the public turn a blind eye on her revolt and muse over the festering problem of inequality of sexes within the safe seclusion of their domesticity.

6. Conclusions

The paper sought no final interpretation of the one-act comedy play *An Embarrassing Position* by a well-recognised American author, Kate Chopin, but it aimed to present the play to the broader audience as well as to expose the theatricality of the woman's voice in the play, and thus, to prove that via Eva, the heroine of the play, Chopin ventures to speak for women's rights and subtly, yet firmly, prompts the breakthrough of the societal relationship inequality.

Through the hermeneutic analysis of the play, which incorporated the elements of the deconstruction theory of Jacques Derrida and the basics of the concept of synchronicity as defined by Carl Gustav Jung, this paper has ventured to argue that Eva is an active agent of the chain of events of the play, able to verbalize her own standpoint and capable of voicing the women's stance. Also, this paper has hoped to show that the heroine is symbolically initiating the transformation of the anticipated change of the relationships between women and men.

The analysis has attempted to show that Chopin skillfully employed the genre of the comedy to expose the incongruities of the established social state-of-the-art and as a result, to subtly disrupt the imbalanced social rhetoric. It has also tried to prove that the

deprived of complexity, a few-event plot of the comedy combined with the length of the play and the choice of the genre set convenient foundations for a far more complex idea than it might be expected from a short comedy play.

The analysis has also endeavored to show that Chopin took a single opportunity to deftly advocate the views that were subversive, and as such, hardly acceptable for her contemporaries if put straightforwardly. Promoting women's advancement and prizing female smartness and eloquence as combined with forthrightness and decency arising from the genuine, unspoiled by social convenance moral fiber, the play scorns at the dubious plasticity of social appropriateness with wit and lightness of expression. Thus, when the author lets her audiences laugh at the superficial layer of the play, she simultaneously invites them to reach for the deeper, rebellious meaning of the comedy.

The elements of Derridean deconstruction implemented in the analysis aimed at revealing the equivocations and contradictions to be found in the text, whereas the concept of synchronicity has been introduced to provide an explanation for the chain of events of the plot and to enhance the overall message of the play. As a result, the heroine's figure can be viewed as a dynamic and active protagonist whose behaviour, even though questionable from the point of view of the contemporary social convenance, is a positive driving force of the play and of the predicted in the play social transformations alike.

As far as the plot of the play is concerned, it can be read as a message foreshadowing the transformation of the social inequitable relationships which has already germinated in energy fields of the universe and which seems to be inevitably heading for the desired symmetry until the symmetry has been reached, since the interconnectedness of the universe presupposed by synchronicity denotes that the balance already functions in human collective unconscious.

Concluding, taking into consideration that *An Embarrassing Position* is the only extant play of Chopin and considering the results of the analysis and the potentiality residing within the play, the paper dares to argue that *An Embarrassing Position* deserves its place within other Chopin's recognised and heavily anthologized works.

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Disruptive strangeness or domesticated exoticism?
Some challenges of cultural translation
in the Polish rendition of *Fury* by Salman Rushdie

Abstract. The unfolding hybridisation of cultures calls for a culture-oriented approach to translation that could respond to the needs and expectations of contemporary readership. The present paper is devoted to the concept of the cultural turn in translation studies and its practical implications on actual translations of contemporary literary works. To illustrate the complexities of translating cultural elements, the Polish translation of *Fury* reflecting the usual Rushdian blend of voices, plots, multi-cultural hybrid and culture references is used. The paper seeks to exemplify and discuss choices made by the translator striving to acquaint the target text reader with the complex universe of the novel to the similar extent as experienced by the source text reader. The principal strategy adopted by the Polish translator might be labelled as domesticated exoticism.

Keywords: cultural translation, domesticated exoticism, *Fury* by Salman Rushdie, contemporary literary translation, translation strategies.

1. The concept of cultural translation

Over the last decades, we have seen various translation scholars and practitioners articulate with force a strong need for a new approach to translation that in the age of growing hybridisation of cultures should be adjusted to expectations of contemporary readership. This cultural approach in Translation Studies or *cultural turn*, as the phenomenon was originally referred to by Mary Snell-Hornby (1990), is associated with the landmark work of Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere as editors, *Translation, History and Culture*, first published in 1990. It put forward a major change in the perspective, with linguistic approach serving but as a starting point to develop a culture-based standpoint:

> Now the questions have changed, the object of study has been redefined, what is studied is the text, embedded within its network of both source and target cultural signs and in this way Translation Studies has been able to utilize the linguistic approach and move out beyond it. (Bassnett & Lefevere 1990: 12)

As emphasised by Dorota Urbanek, their volume shifted the focus from language to culture, from translation regarded as operation on texts towards translation seen as operation on cultures (Urbanek 2010: 156). Since this potent paradigm shift, the

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perception of both the translation process itself and its product has been shaped by the emphasis on translation between cultures, respect for alterity and communication seen as cross-cultural dialogue. Basil Hatim recapitulates the *cultural turn* in translation by acknowledging that: "the general trend in translation studies is clearly towards cultural rather than linguistic transfer. This entails that the process be viewed not as a transcoding of products but as a process of communication" (Hatim 2001: 61).

As many scholars, including David Katan, argue, to achieve successful intercultural communication, a dialogue between two or more cultures needs to be initiated by the translator who facilitates understanding and acts a "cultural mediator" (Katan 1996: 3). The mediatory function of translation in the context of cross-cultural dialogue is discussed at length by Bożena Tokarz. According to Tokarz, internal connections between language, culture and the individual speaking become particularly visible in artistic translation as it is a creative process fulfilling a 'mediatory, informative and supplementary function'[2] (Tokarz 2006: 10). The mediatory function of translation enables the two cultures to come into contact and it is only possible when the balance between "the known" and "the unknown" is maintained. Tokarz observes that "the otherness" manifests itself at the level of lexis, morphology, syntax and style. Thus, as she argues, the occurrence in the source text (ST) of, among others, proper names and functional variants of language[3] should be preserved in the target text (TT). However, as the scholar notes, some linguistic phenomena[4] require individual solutions of the translator, who cannot violate the accepted linguistic norms. Hence the translator is often obliged to employ different linguistic structures than the ones used in the TT and as a cultural mediator has to make rational choices and to compromise (Tokarz 2006: 10-11). In her paper, Tokarz makes a fundamental assumption that unlike some translations performing colonising function by subordinating other language, culture and thought to their own, cultural translation acquaints the reader with another culture, a different set of beliefs, broadens their mental, aesthetic and intellectual horizons, teaches new sensibility and inspires them to challenge the existing culture-specific stereotypes (Tokarz 2006: 14). In other words, to avoid the colonising effect and to maintain the dialogue between two cultures, the translator is obliged to respect the otherness.

2. *Fury* by Salman Rushdie as a cultural translation challenge

In the light of the above assumption, the obvious questions arise as to what extent the translator is both able and allowed to preserve the otherness and traces of the source culture (SC) in the target text and what strategies or procedures best serve this purpose. To tackle these questions, it seems perfectly reasonable to use an existing rendition of a culture-loaded literary work that could illustrate some of the potential challenges and traps awaiting the translator. In this respect, one of works worth analysing is *Fury* by the India-born British author, Salman Rushdie. Rushdie's multifaceted identity and unique literary style coincide closely with the ideology behind cultural translation.

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[2] All translations are mine.

[3] Here, Tokarz refers to such functional variants of language as colloquial, official, sloppy, literary and professional language.

[4] To quote Tokarz, those are polysemous expressions, neologisms, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, forms of address and wordplay.

Often labelled as a postcolonial author and the "other" voice in English literature, Rushdie joins a host of contemporary British writers whose cultural backgrounds come from former colonies and who, to quote Tim Woods:

> [...] produce fictions that interrogate not only the colonial legacies in their cultural homelands, but also question and explore the implications of multiculturalism in the UK, or the cultural, social and political effects of being non-British and non-white within a contemporary pluralist society (Woods 2004: 741).

However, Rushdie himself prefers to be referred to as "a sort of multinational hybrid," sharing the sense that many writers have of belonging to *both* cultures, which, as Homi Bhabha argues, subverts the narratives of colonial power and dominant culture (Bhabha 1994: 85). Unfortunately, the infamous *fatwa,* imposed on the author in 1989 by Ayatollah Khomeini following publication of his fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses,* proves somehow that different vantage points and cultural dissimilarities can be the reason for grave misunderstandings and that the process of merging and intercultural dialogue is still deeply flawed.

Most of Rushdie's novels are reflective of the metafictional trend in contemporary literary writing. The author is well known for intermingling historical facts with fictitious narration, claiming thus the right to interpret history as a subjective selection of unascertainable memories and not so much as a series of verifiable facts. His writings abound in intertextuality, cross-referenced names, vivid images and allusions to both classical works of art and mass entertainment creations. According to Michael Wood, other features of Rushdie's style are "garrulousness," "melodrama," "hyperbole" and "writing in pictures" (Wood in Di Mauro 2000: 117). Paired with extensive commentaries, lengthy digressions, and erudite reflections found in Rushdie's works, the above characteristics of his style require both a very attentive and patient reader, let alone the translator endeavouring to elicit the same response in the TT reader.

Having in mind the usual oriental setting of Rushdie's novels, one may be surprised by the distinctiveness of *Fury* with most of the novel set in New York, viewed through British-Indian lenses of the protagonist and the main narrator of the story in one – Malik Solanka. This fifty-five-year-old Indian professor of philosophy and a historian of ideas turned a sophisticated doll maker and, eventually, a Web designer is torn apart by his internal struggle. Mysterious, unaccountable feelings of rage disrupt his otherwise peaceful existence. When his obsessions escalate into an outright fit of fury and a narrowly prevented act of violence against his perfect wife and his beloved son, he decides to flee his comfortable London life to seek refuge and much desired redemption in New York. In the novel, the city is viewed as a potent symbol of America that "insults the rest of the planet" (Rushdie 2002: 6), represents imperial wealth and excess, houses debasement of moral values and encapsulates contemporary vanities and fears. It therefore proves to be a perfect setting for Rushdie's central theme of the book – fury – which in narrator's own words "drives us to our finest heights and coarsest depths" (Rushdie 2002: 30). The main protagonist's fate is intertwined with the one of Greek goddesses of vengeance, the *Erinnyes*, i.e. the Furies. They are embodied in three women of Solanka's adult life – his wife, Eleanor, and his two New York lovers, the Serbian Mila and the Indian Neela. Regardless of whether this literary depiction of *furia* is naively overromantic and brought to an unconvincing denouement for some, it accurately

reflects typically Rushdian inventive blend of plots, voices, views, digressions, tales, myths, allegories, puns, magic realism, multi-cultural hybrid and historical and pop culture references.

As such this multifaceted universe of *Fury* constitutes a real challenge for the translator wishing to render the novel into Polish. Jerzy Kozłowski took up the challenge and strived to tackle most of the translation problems of the source text. The final outcome, the Polish rendition of *Fury*, is definitely worth scrutinising to investigate the degree to which the intricate network of intertextual relations and polyphonic diversity present in the source text has been preserved in the target text and to discover what and why has been lost.

3. Various approaches to rendition of cultural elements: different degrees of exoticism

The primary questions to be asked while approaching the cultural elements present in the source text are whether they constitute authentic realia and whether they exist in translator's native context. The answers to these questions should determine translator's decisions about solutions to be adopted. The cultural perspective from which the translation of *Fury* should be analysed entails that the process be viewed also with reference to the already deep-rooted in most translation scholars' minds notions of foreignisation and domestication, popularised by Lawrence Venuti. The foreignisation/domestication model, as Nathalie Ramière notes, "has been acclaimed as a powerful tool to conceptualise the interface between the source culture – seen as the 'Self' – and the target culture (TC) – seen as the 'Other' – but has also sparked wide debate in the field" (Ramière 2006). Different terms such as "naturalisation," "assimilation," or "exotisation" have been coined later on to name the two extremes of the translation spectrum (Ramière 2006). To untangle this fundamental issue, it seems pertinent to consider Piotr Kwieciński's interesting view on the foreignisation/domestication scale (F/D scale). Kwieciński perceives it not as an objective, binary and static division, but as a gradable scale highly dependent on skopos, co-text, context and individual subjective sensibilities. He offers his own definition of foreignisation as "a translation strategy which results in a target-text profile that is disruptive, alien and/or obscure vis-à-vis prevailing target-culture norms," while domestication is defined by him as "the accommodation of the target text to established TL/TC norms and conventions" (Kwieciński 2004: 30). Having modified Venuti's definitions, Kwieciński suggests that the F/D strategies, together with all the intermediate grades of the scale, are not related exclusively to the choice of translation procedures ranging from borrowing to cultural substitution. Quite the opposite, in his work, he proves that the F/D scales interact dynamically, producing a host of different configurations. For the sake of clarity, Kwieciński adopts the terms exotisation and assimilation as complementary, yet different from foreignisation and domestication. According to Kwieciński, the latter two are strictly target-based.

Further, Kwieciński distinguishes three groups of procedures. They are as follows: a) exoticising procedures such as borrowing, calque/semantic extension/coinage (or a combination of them), b) intermediate procedures divided into rich explanatory

categories (different combinations of exoticising procedures with intratextual or extratextual glosses) and recognised (canonical) exoticism, and finally c) assimilative procedures, for example, normalisation, deletion, covert cultural substitution, overt cultural substitution, covert/overt acculturation (Kwieciński 2004: 32-33). Drawing on his own investigation and in-depth analysis of various examples, Kwieciński shows that one can achieve instances of domesticated exoticism, foreignised exoticism or even foreignised assimilation**.** It may be concluded that Kwieciński tries to present a more pragmatic and less distorted image of otherness, arguing that intelligible exoticism cannot be confused with disruptive strangeness. His approach seems to respond to Ramière's doubts over the applicability of foreignisation/domestication model in practice. Ramière holds the view that, in fact, the rigid taxonomies placing certain translation procedures on one or another pole of the spectrum are highly decontextualised and thus ineffective. In her own words: "it follows that most procedures are not assimilating or exoticising in and of themselves but that these potential characteristics – if relevant at all – can only be determined in context" (Ramière 2006). Her argument leads to the statement that the translator does not decide once and for all on how they will tackle such culture-specific items, but they make a new decision for each individual item in every single act of translating. And again, as stated earlier in this paper, the translator is allowed to work as a mediator between two cultures, negotiating Self and Other from their middle-ground position (Ramière 2006). Seen in this light, the most frequent translation procedures employed in *Fury* will be discussed predicated on the assumption that to preserve the original allusions without hampering their target reception different shades of exoticism are the sensible approach to favour. The selection of examples was made so as to illustrate all the major translation challenges present in the novel.

4. Case study: selected translation problems and solutions

The first few excerpts from the novel contain names with references to music and cinema, i.e. two industries deeply rooted in American culture. The main source of the translation problems is the probable divergence between degrees of cultural relevance of certain cultural phenomena to the SC and TC audiences. Consider the following extracts from the novel together with their Polish translations:

Table 1

"Thanks to her," he raged at Eleanor, "I saw ***L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1a)** three times in one day. […] I'm stuck here in the blasted *couloirs* **(1b)** of French fiction and she's in a Jil Sander power suit in a forty-ninth-floor corner office on Sixth Avenue […]" (*Fury*, 25)	Dzięki niej – żalił się Eleanor – obejrzałem ***Zeszłego roku w Marienbadzie*** trzy razy w ciągu dnia. […] Ja tkwię tutaj w cholernych *couloirs* francuskiej literatury, a ona siedzi w garsonce od Jil Sander w gabinecie na czterdziestym dziewiątym piętrze biurowca przy Szóstej Alei […] (*Furia*, 37)
Malik Solanka, strolling alone **toward a late-night Kieslowski double bill (2a)** at the Lincoln Plaza, tried to imagine his own life as **a *Dekalog* movie (2b)**. A Short Film	Malik Solanka, zdążając samotnie **na późny pokaz dwóch filmów Kieślowskiego** w Lincoln Plaza, próbował wyobrazić sobie własne życie **w filmie z cyklu *Dekalog*.**

About Desertion. (*Fury*, 26)	Krótki film o porzuceniu. (*Furia*, 37)
There would be a Broadway show – she was in discussion with all the major players in the musical game, **dear Tim and dear Elton and dear Cameron and of course dear, dear Andrew (3)** – and a new, big-budget movie was also planned. (*Fury*, 78)	Miał powstać musical na Broadwayu – trwały rozmowy ze wszystkimi sławami świata musicalu, **drogim Timem, drogim Eltonem, drogim Cameronem i oczywiście drogim, kochanym Andrew** – planowano też nowy wysokobudżetowy film. (*Furia*, 101)
Five-foot-nine, stacked, spoke six languages, reminded everyone of **Christie Brinkley as the Uptown Girl (4)**, loved big hats and high fashion, could've walked for anyone Jean-Paul, Donatella, Dries had all *begged* her… (*Fury*, 58)	Metr siedemdziesiąt pięć, zmysłowe kształty, władała sześcioma językami, przypominała wszystkim **Christie Brinkley jako *Uptown Girl*,** uwielbiała wielkie kapelusze i haute couture, mogła pracować na wybiegu dla każdego – Jean-Paul, Donatella, Dries, wszyscy ją błagali… (*Furia*, 75)

The first problem (1a) refers to a 1961 French film directed by Alain Resnais, written by an acknowledged *nouveau roman* author, Alain Robbe-Grillet, found controversial due to its experimental fragmentation of both temporal and spatial linearity. Although there were two official translations of the title into English, namely *Last Year in Marienbad* in the UK and *Last Year at Marienbad* in North America, in *Fury* it appears in its original French version. However, presumably to spare the TT readers the sense of confusion and to help them identify the film more easily, Kozłowski replaced the French title with the Polish one, *Zeszłego roku w Marienbadzie* ('last year in Marienbad')*,* which might have dismissed, to a certain extent, the author's original intention. The passage in question serves to complement a description of the main protagonist's ex-wife, Sara, who out of fascination for English and French literature wrote her thesis on the French *nouveau roman*, whose influences marked the narrative construction of the film in question. It may be assumed that the title was left in the source text in French to foreground Sara's French bias and, at the same time, to emphasise Solanka's feeling of alienation when being with her. Given the solution adopted by the translator, this nuance seems more difficult to fully grasp when reading the target text. In the next example (1b), the author used another French term *couloirs*, corresponding to English 'corridors, passages'. Unlike in the first example, Kozłowski retained the ST French tinge by leaving the term untranslated in the TT. It can be argued that compared with the ST recipient, the Polish reader seems more privileged as the French borrowing *kuluary* ('lobby', 'backroom') has been in common usage in Polish, which obviously facilitates understanding rendering the term more transparent for the TT reader.

The second set of examples relates again to the European cinema and, more precisely, to the Polish director and screenwriter – Krzysztof Kieślowski. In *Fury*, the titles of his films are used to exemplify art-house intellectual cinema and might be unfamiliar to the majority of Americans, exposed mainly to their home productions. Being closer to the "cognitive base" of the author, the Polish recipient of the novel is thus

again more privileged compared to the ST readers. The problem is therefore not so much the danger of imposing foreign elements, as finding an adequate rendition of the entire expression: *a late-night Kieslowski double bill*. It is indeed impossible to render equally concisely into Polish the compact English term *double bill*, meaning "a cinema, theatre, concert etc performance in which you can see two films, plays etc, one after the other" (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*). Kozłowski chose to translate it as *późny pokaz dwóch filmów Kieślowskiego* ('a late-night screening of two Kieślowski's films'). Long as it may appear, the translation still provides a good indication of the cultural particularity in question. Next (2b), Krzysztof Kieślowski's *Dekalog* TV cycle is mentioned and the expression *A Short Film About Desertion* at the end of the extract refers clearly to the titles of two feature films from the cycle, i.e. *Krótki film o miłości* and *Krótki film o zabijaniu* and their international English equivalents, *A Short Film About Love*, and *A Short Film About Killing*. The films serve as an illustration of two biblical commandments: "thou shalt not kill" and "thou shalt not commit adultery," and in the novel A *Short Film About Desertion* comes to the main protagonist's mind and provokes his pangs of conscience because of abandoning his family. Yet again the allusion is clearer to the TT reader than to the ST one. This somehow reverses the ubiquitous situation with originals and translations in which the otherness is above all experienced by the TT reader.

The following excerpt (3) includes allusions to a number of musical and music celebrities. However, to suggest his ironic attitude, the narrator of *Fury* mentions their first names only in diminutive forms. Admittedly, the ST reader seems to have much easier a task of deciphering what famous person corresponds to each name while it may be assumed that they are much less recognisable in Poland, presumably except for *Elton* standing for Elton John. The rest: Tim Rice, a prominent lyricist, author of songs to, among others, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Evita* and *the Lion King*, his collaborator, Andrew Llyod Weber, a successful British composer of musicals, and Cameron Mackintosh, according to New York Time, "the most successful, influential and powerful producer (of musicals) of our time,"[5] are not at all obvious referents to an average TT reader. Therefore, in this case, the sense of the "Other" is much stronger in translation, which should not, however, entail a different, more straightforwardly "domesticating" translation strategy than the one applied by Kozłowski. He preserved the original culture-specific item and motivated an inquiring reader to trace the original links. Additionally, based on the Kwieciński's framework, it may be argued that owing to the self-explanatory co-text (*all the major players in the musical game*, *Fury*: 78) and the context of the passage, the plain borrowing of the ST names employed in the Polish rendition without any additional glosses or intratextual explanations results indeed in "fairly domesticated exoticism" (Kwieciński 2004: 34) rather than "impenetrable and disruptive strangeness" (Kwieciński 2004: 41).

When considering the subsequent example (4), it may be reiterated that the translator's choice was to stay in line with the original content and to preserve the SC references, however illegible they might be to the Polish recipient. The example in question refers to Christie Brinkley, a symbol of American success and beauty. This American super model appeared on over 500 magazine covers around the world, had

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[5] https://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/09/magazine/the-musical-is-money-to-his-ears.html

been lending her face for 20 years to the famous in the US make-up line Cover Girl, hosted the most profitable infomercial, wrote a fitness book and even launched her own perfume. She was often labelled by the media as "an Uptown Girl" because of her appearance in the music video to *Uptown Girl*, a huge hit song by Billy Joel, her soon-to-be husband. This immediate connection, obvious to the ST reader, is by no means clear to the TT reader with more effort and research required on his part to decode the reference. Unlike in the source text, Kozłowski italicised the name *Uptown Girl* to indicate that it is some kind of a title. Regardless of the fact that this cultural link might not be easily recognisable in the target culture and retaining the name without any sort of explanation would be normally considered overt foreignisation, based on Kwieciński's approach, one may postulate that the co-text together with the italics serve as a significant explanatory tool thanks to which the translation itself becomes a "domesticated exoticism". Thus, instead of being fully incomprehensible, it becomes accessibly foreign or exotic.

Another set of examples to be quoted includes overt references to both low-brow and high-brow entertainment, abundant in the narrative of *Fury*.

Table 2

You still living like a guru in an ice cave? **Or a castaway on *Big Brother is Not Watching You*? (5)** (*Fury*, 111)	Cały czas żyjesz jak guru w lodowej jaskini? **Albo rozbitek z jakiegoś reality show?** (*Furia*, 138)
This is **the Oxbridge way of speech (6)** (…) (*Fury*, 13)	**Mowa akademików z Oksfordu i Cambridge** (…) (*Furia*, 13)
Malik Solanka lived in a second-floor apartment in a building called **Noor Ville on Methwold's Estate off Warden Road (7).** (*Fury*, 65)	Malik Solanka mieszkał w mieszkaniu na piętrze w budynku **Nur Ville na Methwold's Estate** przy **Warden Road.** (*Furia*, 84)
(…) she preferred to quote the cartoon sex **bomb Jessica Rabbit. "I'm not bad,"** she liked demurely to purr. **"I'm just drawn that way." (8)** (*Fury*, 163)	(…) wolała cytować animowaną seksbombę **Jessicę Rabbit**. **„Nie jestem zła** – lubiła mruczeć wstydliwie – **tylko ciągnie mnie do tego".** (*Furia*, 203)

In the first example listed in Table 2, it is surprising to see how the Polish translator substituted the ST exact reference (5) for a generic term denoting the original phenomenon, that is *rozbitek z jakiegoś reality show* ('a castaway on some reality television show'). It should be remembered that the very idea of Big Brother rule together with the expression, "Big Brother is Watching You" comes from George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The significance of words and the underlying principle of Orwell's universe – the complete surveillance over inhabitants – were transplanted a few decades later into a commercialised context constituting a base for the reality television show, *Big Brother*. Broadcast for the first time in the Netherlands, the programme spread to dozens of countries, including Poland. In this light, the reference in *Fury* could be easily preserved paraphrasing the famous one-liner "Wielki Brat patrzy" ('Big Brother is watching you') and thus fully respecting the original intention of the passage.

The following expression, *the Oxbridge way of speech* (6), was used in the novel to comment on Solanka's fellow students' manner of speaking, which he himself adopted perceiving it yet as artificial and pompous. In this particular case, as much as the formal faithfulness and exact rendition of *Oxbridge*, standing for the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, conveys the original cultural reference, the exact wording of the Polish version might be somewhat ambiguous. Unlike the ST term, Kozłowski's rendition into *mowa akademików z Oxfordu i Cambridge* ('parlance of academics from Oxford and Cambridge [University]') appears rather unnatural and verbose in Polish. The use in the translation of the Polish term *mowa akademików* ('parlance of academics') does not convey the ST meaning referring to the way Solanka's peers used to speak. Instead, the original flow, clarity and logic of the scene has been unintentionally distorted in the target text.

The next case (7) is particularly interesting due to the twofold provenance, both real-life and fictional, of the proper names in question. Firstly, it was the author himself who grew up on Warden Road, which as a result of decolonising of names became Bhulabhai Desai Road. Secondly, Malik Solanka's boyhood address, mentioned in the extract, also coincides with yet another protagonist's home address, namely Saleem's home on Methwold's Estate off Warden Road, as featured in Rushdie's earlier novel, *Midnight's Children*. As a recurrent theme, Rushdie re-introduced the Warden Road setting also to his later novel, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. There is no doubt that this semi-autobiographical turned fictional setting should be preserved in the translation. The translator of *Fury* retained the ST address yet for a reason difficult to account for he chose to alter the original spelling of *Noor Ville*. His decision to retain the English *Methwold's Estate* seems easier to explain in the light of "foreignisation"/ "exotisation" strategy he consistently applied in his Polish rendition of the novel. It is worth mentioning, however, that in the existing Polish translation of *Midnight's Children*, "Methwold's Estate" is fully rendered into Polish as "Posiadłość Methwolda przy Warden Road"[6] ('Methwold's estate/property off Warden Road') without preserving the English part of the name, i.e. estate. Therefore, on the one hand this intertextual literary allusion might be more difficult to decode for the TT reader, but on the other thanks to retaining the English proper name Kozłowski' translation aptly transmits the actual sense of the passage. Looking at the larger context, the term *estate* is used in *Fury* in its modern sense, to denote a residential area instead of "a large area of land in the country, usually with one large house on it and one owner" (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*), as found in *Midnight's Children*. As in Polish it would not be possible to convey the double allusion contained in the name *Methwold's Estate* without breaking the logic of the passage, Kozłowski's solution seems fair.

Similarly, in the last example (8), where the lead female character of the noir comedy-thriller *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, representing a hybrid genre in itself, is cited, the original reference seems distorted in the target text. Since its release in Poland in 1990, Polish TV channels have repeatedly aired the film and the sultry animated Jessica Rabbit with her femme fatale style and murmuring manner of speaking has been recognised as one of pop culture pin-up girls. In the film, she is the embodiment of both a hypersexualised film noir classic dame and her pastiche. Kozłowski's quite infelicitous

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[6] As translated in "Dzieci północy" (orig. "Midnight's Children") by Anna Kołyszko.

translation of Jessica's famous catchphrase: "I'm not bad, I'm just drawn that way" into *Nie jestem zła, tylko ciągnie mnie do tego* ('I'm not bad, I'm just drawn to that') spoils the intended effect and misrepresents the logic behind the original culture-specific item. In the book, it is the main protagonist's head-turning wife, politically committed Neela, who resorts to quoting Jessica Rabbit to comment on people's perception of her standing in total contrast to her own moral sense. In the Polish translation of the film, the phrase was rendered, and probably well remembered by many viewers, as *Nie jestem zła, tylko mnie taką rysują* ('I'm not bad, I'm just drawn that way/ they just draw me like that'). To let the ST reader track the reference and grasp the actual meaning of the passage, a more justified solution would be to use the existing and already canonical translation and keep it unaltered in the Polish version of the novel. This would also guarantee greater cohesion of the TT passage, which proves how much Neela, who purposely keeps using the quotation, is aware of her good looks and tries, perversely, to justify and distance herself from this fact.

Polyphonic diversity constitutes another hallmark of style in *Fury* and presents a serious challenge for the translator who ventures to preserve it as a way of respecting the source linguistic and cultural diversity. Pieczyńska-Sulik stresses that the first thing to do when attempting to render linguistic variety of individual characters is to specify their "idiolectic dominant." The best way to render this dominant is to strive for functional equivalence which, to quote the scholar, "allows freedom in cases of interlingual incongruence" (Pieczyńska-Sulik 2005: 103-106). In other words, if the target language does not offer analogous means of expression to the ones existing in the source language, the translator is obliged to reproduce the original image with the use of other language structures that are available to them. In doing so they should analyse linguistic material of a given fictional idiolect taking into consideration its recurrence. Pieczyńska-Sulik recalls that to avoid treating literary characters as puppets one has to acknowledge their autonomy and translate in accordance with the "idiolectic dominant" (2005: 115). A problem inextricably linked with the above-mentioned idiolects is stylisation of language in *Fury*, reflected in colloquial and slang expressions employed by several characters of the novel. This peculiar blend of styles and registers poses a serious problem for the translator willing to convey both the message and the spirit of the book. Colloquial speech and different non-standard variants of language constitute an integral part of every national language and pose one of those problems in translation to which, as many concede, there is no truly satisfactory solution. One example of such a translation challenge is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

| (…) Rhinehart said, and moved into **his most exaggerated Uncle Remus manner. "And now yo' ole lady she done had de same idea. She puttin' de big squeeze on him, I reckon. Gwine en' up bein' dat well-fed heifer hersel'." (9)** (*Fury*, 112) | (…) wyjaśnił Rhinehart i zaczął naśladować **sposób mówienia prostego niewolnika. – A teraz twoja stara wpadła na pomysł identiko. Coś mi się zdaje, że się za niego wzięła i, dawaj, wyciskać. A że z niej dobrze wypasiona jałówka, to i dopnie swego.** (*Furia*, 140) |

The original English passage (9) includes a clear cultural link and refers to a very well-defined style of speaking. Rhinehart mimics, "the Gullah," the traditional deep southern Black dialect of Uncle Remus, fictional slave narrator of a collection of African American folktales complied in seven *The Uncle Remus Tales* books with animal stories, songs and oral folklore by Joel Chandler Harris. The reference was omitted in the Polish version of *Fury* as Kozłowski rendered *his most exaggerated Uncle Remus manner* into *sposób mówienia prostego niewolnika* ('a manner of speaking of a simple slave'). Given that in the novel there are several references to those famous tales, adapted into several featured films, retaining the intertextual link in the target text seems justified. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasising that only traces of non-standard character of the Rhinehart's manner of speaking could be reflected in the translation as according to Knauer, while the linguistic profiles of characters should be effectively retained in the TL text, the language employed to reflect the original specificity cannot be artificial nor unnatural. The scholar points out that in case of regional dialects used in the original, some translators opt for the use of the pan-Polish rural dialect. However, by doing so, they risk turning the text into an unintentionally comic and incomprehensible translation. Following this direction in translation might be both ineffective and linguistically unjustified and, the most important is that it could not pass the test for the authenticity and cultural competence (Knauer 1996: 88-92).

When analysing the translation of the excerpt in Table 3, it might be argued that Kozłowski tried to avoid this trap by mirroring, at least to a certain degree, the ST use of careless pronunciation and non-standard constructions, without resorting to the excessively rural Polish, or any other particularly strong and instantly recognised dialect, such as the Silesian or the highland dialect. As Knauer (1996: 87) rightly points out, such "false domestication" of the foreign language makes the Polish reader perceive it from the angle of their own emotional attitude towards some Polish dialects and this defeats the purpose of translation.

Although some might suggest that the existent translation of the passage could be improved and more suitable equivalents found, one has to realize that whatever linguistic tools are to be applied to convey the original content and spirit with reference to different idiolects present in the original text, the final outcome would always be its imperfect imitation devoid of the cultural flavour of the original.

5. Concluding remarks

As articulated with force by many theoreticians of translation, including Mary Snell-Hornby, Susan Bassnett, André Lefevere, or Tomislav Z. Longinovic, in the age of growing hybridisation of cultures, translations have to be adjusted to expectations of contemporary readership. Balancing deftly the domestic and the foreign in order to bring cultures closer constitutes one of primary obligations of today's translator aspiring to produce a valuable target text. Since the author of *Fury* is considered to be the "other" voice in English literature, being, in his own words, a multinational hybrid drawing on rich eastern and western traditions, the analysed novel abounds in various cultural references, which determines the culture-oriented approach the translator of the text is obliged to adopt. To achieve his/her goal and succeed in initiating a cultural dialogue,

s/he must act as a mediator who benefits from his/her extensive knowledge of the ST and the TT culture and language, individual experience and awareness of available strategies and methods to decide what elements of the original text should be retained and what could be modified and how the entire process of negotiating the degree of otherness introduced into the translated text, both in terms of its form and content should be managed.

The above selections of excerpts from *Fury* together with their Polish translations exemplify numerous instances of the ST culture-specific content that could possibly hamper the reception of the target text. In many cases in the Polish translation of *Fury*, the multilayered character of the original has been preserved in the translation thanks to conscious decisions taken by the translator. To deal with the culture-loaded items in the source text, Jerzy Kozłowski sought to respect the cultural unfamiliarity by preserving the traces of the unknown without resolving to "disruptive strangeness", to quote Kwieciński's concept. Examples cited in the paper prove that even in those instances when the task of mirroring the source connotations in the target text is not fully accomplished thus rendering the ideal of equal reception unreachable, the co-text, larger context and the very awareness of the reader can facilitate the understanding of cultural references to a great extent. As a result, the strangeness the target reader is exposed to often becomes "domesticated exoticism".

Nevertheless, as illustrated in the paper, in some passages eliciting similar response in the target reader proved an unattainable goal. Not all the original references could be tracked, occasionally intertextuality tends to be lost and the source linguistic and stylistic playfulness is no longer there, as it is often the case with translations of books inscribing themselves in the discourses of our contemporary culture. To some extent, the original spirit of the text is always more or less sacrificed for the sake of obtaining a coherent text that follows the inherent rules and limitations of the target language. Still translation driven by the cultural approach proves the most sensible choice as it allows for acquainting the contemporary TT reader with a great deal of novelty, which constitutes an intrinsic feature of an enriching cultural dialogue. The Polish rendition of *Fury* is one of many examples of contemporary translations which demonstrate that the cultural turn in translation is not a purely theoretical whim of translation scholars but actual response to the TT reader's willingness to get acquainted with the cultural specificity of the original and to explore it on their own terms.

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"To give form to what cannot be comprehended": Trauma in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow*

Abstract. The primary objective of this article is the analysis of trauma in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow*. It is argued that through the deployment of experimental literary techniques (particularly destabilized and non-linear narratives) these two novels offer valuable insights into the mechanisms of a traumatized mind and help to understand the uncertain sense of the self experienced by those who suffer from traumatic memories.

Keywords: Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow*, trauma, PTSD, war, 20th century.

The traumatic experiences of WWII and the Holocaust in particular, more acutely than ever before raised the questions concerning limits of literary representation. As the comprehension of these events has always been very problematic, writers are notoriously presented with two major challenges: how to express by means of writing something that is beyond human understanding, and what form and language could be adequate for such a task. What lies at the core of that confusion and inability to comprehend and articulate genocide is the experience of profound trauma. Indeed, as E. Ann Kaplan notes, trauma studies originally arose from the research about the Holocaust; so great was the magnitude of this genocide that it warranted the use of the term in its "classical" form (2005: 1).

The idea which is central to the theory of trauma is that an event "can be both experienced *and* forgotten," and therefore it "divides the mind not only from itself, but also splits it in time: there's a lag, a snatch, in the experience of the traumatized that pulls them out of linear chronology" (Stonebridge 2009: 196). This elusiveness of traumatic experience may be precisely what makes writing about war atrocities so challenging. Authors of fiction and non-fiction have long struggled in their search for a mode of expression adequate to the task of rendering the past too painful to be recollected and yet too formative to be ignored. Consequently, as Luckhurts suggests, they have been seeking forms which would be "experimental, fragmented, refusing the consolations of beautiful form, and suspicious of familiar representational and narrative conventions" (quoted in Gibbs 2014: 26).

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In the late 1960s, a radical form of literary response to the war coalesced, and it did so perhaps most compellingly in, among others, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five, or, The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* (1969) (Crosthwaite 2009: 5). The novel's non-linear, repetitive chronology mirrors the intricate mechanisms of trauma, which somehow disturb the flow of time and cause the sufferer to be stuck in an endless cycle of forgetting and re-experiencing the traumatic event. The influence of Vonnegut and other experimental writers of that period[2] continued to influence the literary generations that followed, and among the writers who in their works revisited the traumatic events of the 1940s is Martin Amis. With its destabilized, non-linear narrative, his 1991 novel *Time's Arrow, or The Nature of the Offence* embraces the tradition of postmodernist writing and continues its search for the mode of expression adequate to the task of representation of WWII. The novel takes as its subject the events of the Holocaust but, rather unconventionally, chooses to depict the perpetrator, not the victim, as a trauma sufferer. The main aim of this article is to analyze the ways in which the two novels – *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Time's Arrow* – approach the issue of trauma representation.

The word *trauma* (an English alteration of *trōma*) derives from Greek, and since it literally means "wound," it was originally used to refer to an injury inflicted on the body. It was only later that the psychoanalytic work of Freud popularized the use of it in its contemporary understanding, and suggested that the wound may be inflicted upon the mind, rather than the body (Caruth 1996: 3). This psychological wound, "the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world" (4), is not simple and healable damage comparable to a bodily injury, but rather an event which is "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (4). The first mention of trauma, or rather of a disorder called "traumatic hysteria," can be found in the volume *Studies on Hysteria* (first published in 1895), which Freud wrote in collaboration with Josef Breuer. The now-famous statement that "hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences," which appears in this essay (Breuer & Freud 1957: 7), already points to the fact that the symptoms of a distressful experience may be belated. According to Freud and Breuer, the memories of a traumatic event are not easily available to the patient, because, in contrast to ordinary memories, to encounter trauma is to encounter "a foreign body", an alien part of our psyche, which acts as a "contemporary agent . . . long after its forcible entrance" (221).

The fact that a traumatic event should impose itself on the mind of a traumatized person in the form of recurring nightmares and relivings is what perplexed Freud the most since, as he stated, these night horrors do not agree with the wish-fulfilling nature of dreams, which is so crucial to Freud's theory (1961: 24). It seems that the only possible explanation for the emergence of this pathology is the psyche's complete inability to cope with the traumatic experience and the fact that, since it defied comprehension, it had not been assigned any psychic meaning. As a result, the traumatic event forces the mind to compulsively relive the experience in order to understand it. Since traumatic events often involve a direct threat to one's life, the trauma may not necessarily be a response to these experiences, but rather to the perplexing act of survival (Caruth 1996: 60). Expanding

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[2] Consider, for example, the fragmented and destabilized narratives of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, or J.G. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition*.

Freud's assertion, Cathy Caruth defines trauma as "a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event" (1995: 4), once again bringing attention to the fact that a traumatic event is always incomplete since the psyche fails to sufficiently register it when it occurs – a person experiencing something traumatic is never fully conscious during the event's occurrence. And because it is never fully assimilated when it happens, the event may impose itself on the mind of the traumatized and be relived with great clarity in the form of intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, nightmares, or hallucinations. The assertion may at first sound somewhat paradoxical: how can the mind repeat in exact detail an event during which one was not completely conscious? As Caruth points out, "the literal registration of an event—the capacity to continually, in the flashback, reproduce it in exact detail—appears to be connected, in the traumatic experience, precisely with the way it escapes full consciousness as it occurs" (153). This perplexing contradiction stems from the fact that a traumatic recollection is not a simple memory, and it is not ordinarily encoded in the human brain (153). Such a theory seems to be confirmed by the research conducted by two psychiatrists – van der Kolk and van der Hart – who, working with neuroscientists, argue that trauma differs from an ordinary memory in that it "has affect only, not meaning" (Kaplan 2005: 34). It causes one to experience emotions such as fear or shock, but above all, it rives "the normal feeling of comfort" (34). That is so because only the amygdala, the sector of the brain responsible for sensation, is active during trauma; while the meaning-making sector, the cerebral cortex, which is responsible for cognitive processing and rational thought, remains shut down as the affect is too powerful to be registered cognitively in the brain (34). A traumatic event is never fully integrated into memory, and as psychiatrists state, it is "in a sense, timeless. It is not transformed into a story, placed in time, with a beginning, a middle and an end (which is characteristic for narrative memory)" (van der Kolk & van der Hart 1995: 177). A traumatized person is unable to treat the traumatic memory as an ordinary aspect of their life, as it does not fit with other experiences. This lack of integration, according to van der Kolk and van der Hart, results in dissociation. The idea that there may exist a breach, a lag in the experience of a traumatized person, which disengages him/her from linear chronology, is central to the present analysis of *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Time's Arrow*.

In a 1974 interview, asked about the incentive to write about the firebombing of Dresden, Vonnegut explained that he "came home in 1945, started writing about it, and wrote about it, and wrote about it, and WROTE ABOUT IT. This thin book [*Slaughterhouse-Five*] is about what it's like to write a book about a thing like that. [He] couldn't get much closer" (Bellamy 1988: 163). Yet, finishing the book proved to be more grueling than Vonnegut had expected, as it was not until twenty-four years, numerous false starts, and hundreds of pages of unpublished drafts later that the readers were finally endowed with his "famous Dresden book" (Vonnegut 2009: 4). In the oft-cited interview for *Playboy*, the author admits that "there was a complete blank where the bombing of Dresden took place", and that his "war buddies" did not remember it either (Standish 1988: 94). He also adds that "[t]here were all sorts of information surrounding the event, but as far as my memory bank was concerned, the center had been pulled right

out of the story. There was nothing up there to be recovered — or in the heads of my friends, either" (94).

The fact that Vonnegut's inability to write about Dresden stemmed in a large part from a difficulty with accessing that specific memory is consistent with symptoms exhibited by persons who endure a traumatic experience. Since during a traumatic event the meaning-making sector of the human brain, the cerebral cortex, remains shut down, such an event is never fully integrated into memory and cannot be accessed in the same way that an ordinary memory can (Kaplan 2005: 34). Likewise, Dresden became part of Vonnegut's unconscious memory, as an event both too painful to recollect and too formative to ignore. The urge to write his novel can be understood as a cathartic impulse that allowed Vonnegut to confront the trauma he had undergone, and act on that knowledge by attempting to narrate his traumatic experience. Such a claim seems to be confirmed by his own words as, after finishing the novel, he admits that "It was a therapeutic thing. I'm a different sort of person now. I got rid of a lot of crap" (quoted in Wicks 2014: 333). Arguably, Vonnegut's personal experiences allowed him to create a method of communicating traumatic memories that engages the reader on an empathic level.

The readers learn that *Slaughterhouse-Five's* protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, like Vonnegut (who shares the experiences of the book's narrator), is an ex-prisoner of war and survivor of the Dresden bombing. Vonnegut's struggle to define Billy's mental state becomes visible from the very first paragraphs of the narrative. As the title page suggests, it is a book written "somewhat in the telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales of the planet Tralfamadore" (Vonnegut 2009). Referencing schizophrenia is an obvious attempt to find the right words to describe Billy's condition, and Vonnegut's confusion must have been amplified by the fact that no medical discourse on PTSD existed yet, as it was only included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) in 1980. Billy experiences a range of symptoms consistent with PTSD, with the most striking one being his fractured perception of time, which he perceives as the condition of being "unstuck in time":

> Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.
>
> He says.
>
> Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun. (Vonnegut 2009: 29)

His being "spastic in time" actually refers to the fact that Billy has to relive the same traumatic events of the war over and over again. What is important is the information that "the trips aren't necessarily fun," which points to the involuntary nature of traumatic memory, a quality that imposes itself on the mind of a person suffering from PTSD.

On the level of narrative structure, Billy's time travels justify the novel's fragmented, non-linear chronology. Such a narrative organization seems to be adequate for the task of representing the uncertain and confused sense of the self as experienced by a traumatized person. Employing traditional narrative modes to represent trauma may

seem unsuitable, as trauma does not conform with the typical ways of organizing a story. The episodes of time travel, then, reproduce the workings of a traumatized psyche, which often involuntarily revisits the painful memories, and consequently metaphorize Billy's state of mind. Additionally, as Cacicedo notes, "Billy constantly circles around that central traumatic moment, almost recollecting it but, as is typical of traumatic memories, not quite managing to seize on the event" (2005: 363). Consequently, despite intrusive flashbacks, the exact moment of the Dresden bombing constitutes a "complete blank" in Billy's mind, to recall Vonnegut's phrase. Such a description aligns with the symptomatology of trauma described earlier; since the traumatic event was never fully comprehended in the first place, it creates a breach in one's mind and one's experience of time (Caruth 1996: 62).

It appears that Billy's time-travel episodes occur at random; in fact, repressed memories of the war are often triggered by events that somehow remind him of his past. For instance, the sight of an orange and black wedding tent, which is reminiscent of German trains that transported the prisoners of war (Vonnegut 2009: 88), causes Billy to return to that extremely distressing moment. Such a process of free association and hyperarousal is consistent with the mechanisms of a traumatic memory described by van der Kolk and van der Hart: "traumatic memory is evoked under particular conditions. It occurs automatically in situations that are reminiscent of the original traumatic situation. These circumstances trigger the traumatic memory" (1995: 163). Among other stressors triggering Billy's memory of Dresden are sounds, such as the sound of a siren, which Billy associates with air-raid alarms (Vonnegut 2009: 73), and certain colors (such as the aforementioned orange and black, or blue and ivory), as well as smells (mustard gas and roses). Another indication of Billy's trauma is his disordered sleeping patterns. A traumatic event often resurfaces in the traumatized person's dreams, forcing them to unwillingly relive the original experience. There are multiple passages in the novel which point to the fact that Billy suffers from sleep disturbances, ranging from narcolepsy to night terrors (71, 99-100). Billy's fellow prisoners-of-war are particularly aware of his condition; apparently, during sleep Billy "kicks, yells, and whimpers" (99). The readers also learn that "[n]early everybody, seemingly, had an atrocity story of something Billy Pilgrim had done to him in his sleep" (100).

The wide range of symptoms ultimately leads Billy to commit himself to a mental hospital, fearing that "he was going crazy" (Vonnegut 2009: 127). However, perhaps due to the fact that PTSD was not officially recognized as a mental disorder yet, the establishment fails Billy by neither providing an accurate diagnosis nor proposing any coping mechanisms (Vees-Gulani 2003: 298). Consequently, Billy needs to embark on his own path of "trying to reinvent [himself] and [his] universe" (Vonnegut 2009: 128), which he attempts to achieve through resorting to science-fiction. As it transpires, the genre provides Billy, as well as the novel's author with a sense-making tool, and offers a valuable insight into the challenging task of narrativizing trauma. As previously mentioned, Vonnegut struggled to find not only the right words to share his experience but also a form and method adequate for such a task. Theoretically, reporting skills, which he perfected during his work in journalism at both collegiate and professional levels, should have provided him with a clear entryway into Dresden, but soon he realized that in order to write about his experience, he had to find a method far less realistic (Wicks 2014: 334). Lacking the discourse capable of rendering trauma, the

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author and his protagonist resort to science fiction to find the vocabulary and subject matter needed.

As a genre, science fiction encompasses a number of styles and subject matters; in fact, as Carl Freedman notes "[n]o definitional consensus exists" with respect to science fiction (quoted in Wicks 2014: 334). Yet, it is without a doubt that the genre explores a wide range of topics that lie outside the bounds of ordinary human experience. Arguably, the definition of science fiction as "literature of cognitive estrangement" (1972: 372), put forward by Darko Suvin, proves to be of aid here. According to him, two opposite poles meet in science fiction: the "exact recreation of the author's empirical environment" and the "exclusive interest in a strange newness, a *novum*" (Suvin 1972: 373). The fusion of the two concepts results in "cognitive estrangement" which allows the writer to mediate their and their readers' empirical reality, and present that reality from a new and alienating perspective (374). In *Slaughterhouse-Five,* the cognitive estrangement is achieved through the fusion of Billy's mediated account of the Dresden bombing with the science fiction alien-abduction plot. That synthesis allows the writer, as well as the reader to remove themselves from their empirical reality and move towards the fantastic. For Vonnegut, the employment of science fiction elements presented an opportunity to distance himself from the horrors of Dresden and reclaim his objectivity. In a way, it enables him to create a safe space, in which he could access and verbalize his trauma.

In "Diagnosing Billy Pilgrim," Susanne Vees-Gulani suggests that time travel episodes present in the novel exist as some kind of fantasy, providing a sort of mental escape for the protagonist: "[w]ith the help of his Tralfamadorian fantasy and his idea of time travel, Billy conquers his trauma in a way that enables him to function" (2003: 299). However, I choose to interpret these moments as something more than a mere fantasy and argue that Billy's travel episodes serve to literalize his condition and provide the readers with a better understanding of traumatic memory. As an experience that is not easily communicated, a traumatic event defies the bounds of a traditional narrative; the employment of time travel allows for an alternative way of representing and reproducing the traumatized mind. Therefore, as Amanda Wicks writes, "[b]y reading the time-travel episodes as literal experiences of traumatic memory rather than as Vees-Gulanian fantasies, readers gain a clearer understanding of a bewildering experience that cannot be shared easily through language" (2014: 337).

When Billy suffers a mental breakdown, he finds a plausible explanation of his psychological condition in the science fiction novels of a fictional author, Kilgore Trout. Trout's book *Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension* is "about people whose mental diseases couldn't be treated because the causes of the diseases were all in the fourth dimension, and three-dimensional Earthling doctors couldn't see those causes at all, or even imagine them" (Vonnegut 2009: 132). Wicks notes that "[w]hen read metaphorically, the fourth dimension symbolizes the mind in that whatever trauma has occurred cannot not be seen without the use of medical technology" (2014: 335). Therefore, when Billy restructures his painful memories of Dresden and begins imagining Tralfamadore instead of Germany, he clearly does so in order to regain some agency over his life; by reframing such memories as science fiction, Billy is able to reflect on these moments without feeling overwhelmed or suffering a nervous breakdown. Consequently, while the

psychiatric establishment and medical science ultimately fail Billy, science fiction offers a structure and language that allows him to comprehend his experiences.

Still, the employment of science fiction elements in the novel that concerns a topic as serious as the Dresden bombing may seem inappropriate to conservative readers. However, had the book consisted of the more somber moments, it would have worked against Vonnegut's staple literary style. The author had to find a way of communicating his traumatic experience in a way that would simultaneously invoke his distinctive dark sense of humor; as Vonnegut himself explained, "[h]umor is an almost physiological response to fear. ... I saw the destruction of Dresden. I saw the city before and then came out of an air-raid shelter and saw it afterward, and certainly, one response was laughter. God knows, that's the soul seeking some" (2005: 3). The genre of science fiction provided the writer with tools, which allowed him to process and represent his traumatic memory in a way he had been unable to thus far. Where more traditional literary modes of narration proved to be inadequate for such a purpose, science fiction moved closer to depicting and understanding a traumatic experience. With the aid of science fiction, Vonnegut and his hero are finally able to verbalize their trauma and integrate the painful memories into a coherent whole. Ultimately, I believe that by ceasing to transform an incomprehensible experience into the language of standard realist narrative and employing the devices and vocabulary of the science fiction genre instead, *Slaughterhouse-Five* offers a unique way of comprehending and narrating a traumatic experience in particular, as well as enriching our understanding of trauma in general.

Throughout history, most of the discussions revolving around the ethics and aesthetics of the Holocaust representation have been primarily concerned with a particular aspect of it – that of the portrayal of the victims' suffering and pain. Indeed, for decades after WWII, it has been considered standard and even natural to approach the topic of the Shoah from the victims' point of view. However, as Dominick LaCapra notes, due to the Holocaust's traumatic nature, there is an effect of belatedness in relation to it, that is, certain significant facets of the event become visible only after a period of latency since earlier they were simply too painful to be even considered (Lothe et al. 2012: 10). As a result, there now exist other aspects of the Holocaust representation which were previously obscured, and which are yet to be extensively analyzed. One such area is concerned with a literary depiction of the perpetrators. Quite understandably, in the years directly following the Second World War, any attempt at portraying the agents of the victims' suffering would be perceived as highly inappropriate since there existed a sense that "to focus critically on the perspective of the perpetrator would at best be unseemly and at worst a betrayal of the memory of the victims, surrounded by a particular sense of literary and cultural unease" (McGlothlin 2010: 213).

By the early 1990s, for reasons which possibly had to do with the shifting approach of a new generation of writers to the problem of the Holocaust representation, or perhaps due to "the hyper-mediated ethos of modern mass society" (Spargo 2010: 6), the anxiety about the depiction of the Holocaust, including aspects of it which had been previously obscured, began gradually to fade away. That atmosphere of change did not imply that the taboo of the perpetrator representation was suddenly lifted, but it certainly prompted more writers to consider a newly emerged kind of question: "how does one depict the correlative element of the atrocity, that of the perpetration of the suffering?" (McGlothlin

2010: 210). Among the writers who decided to tackle this challenge is Martin Amis. As though in a response to the common narrative, according to which Holocaust literature belongs exclusively to the victims, he comments:

> People say, legitimately in a way, what am I as an Aryan doing with this subject? But I'm writing about the perpetrators and they are my brothers, if you like. I feel a kind of responsibility in my Aryanness for what happened. This is my racial link with these events, not with the sufferers but with the perpetrators. (quoted in Martinez Alfaro 2008: 2)

The remark, as controversial as it may seem at first, signals a certain problem, namely, that the history of the perpetrators, whether they are authentic or else fictionalized, is embedded in the wider, collective history of Europe in the 20th century. Therefore, even if we choose to disregard the perpetrators in the belief that they had relinquished the right to our attention, it will not change the fact that they existed in the real life, and that they will continue to exist in the text, and therefore, must be accounted for (McGlothlin 2010: 214).

Every effort to depict the perpetrators raises some valid ethical and aesthetic concerns. What narrative techniques can a writer employ in order to avoid encouraging identification with the perpetrator? How to depict the acts of perpetration without de-emphasizing the victims' viewpoint and suffering? Or, in what ways can the writer attempt to transgress the taboo of applying notions such as trauma in the context of the perpetrators? In the following section, I examine the ways in which Martin Amis chose to address some of these pressing issues in his novel *Time's Arrow or the Nature of the Offense.*

Narrated in a reversed order, the novel recounts the life of a fictional Nazi doctor, Odilo Unverdorben, opening with the protagonist's death and concluding with his birth. All movements are therefore inverted and "in a poetic-justice version of the turning-back topos, the Holocaust itself is un-done, and Auschwitz turns out to be a place where humans are taken from the air and restored to bodies, families are brought together, and the Jews are returned to formerly *Judenrein* Europe" (Rosenfeld 2014: 124). There are several implications of Amis's technique of backward narration. The underlying suggestion seems to be that the Nazis' inverted logic inherently called for an inverted narrative. Indeed, the Nazis' paradoxical view of progress draws attention to the line between creation and destruction, as according to the Nazi doctrine, extermination of millions of people was supposed to lead to racial ("Aryan") revival, and violence constituted a justifiable means to that end (Harris 1999: 489). Therefore, by his choice of narrative method, Amis seems to be suggesting that to enter the world of Auschwitz is to enter the world of fundamentally reversed logic. Consequently, what transpired at the death camp can only begin to make sense if the entire process is inverted by the means of backward narration; in that way the form and content of *Time's Arrow* become inseparable. The inverted chronology requires the readers to participate actively in the process of correcting all of the reversals; it compels us to be active interpreters of the presented events and rectify all the misinterpretations which confuse cause and effect. As a result, such narration affects the readers' ethical response; even though in the novel the horror of the Holocaust is undone, the readers are aware that the same could not possibly happen in the real world (Martinez Alfaro 2008: 6).

The reversal of the novel's time's arrow may be indicating that trauma, as an experience inherently missed at the time of its occurring, has to be repeated in the psyche's desperate struggle to assign some meaning to it; hence the protagonist's compulsion to relive his life backwards. This point is perhaps nowhere more poignantly articulated than in the book's final paragraph:

> Look! Beyond, before the slope of pine, the lady archers are gathering with their targets and bows. Above, a failing-vision kind of light, with the sky fighting down its nausea. When Odilo closes his eyes, I see an arrow fly— but wrongly. Point first. Oh no, then. . .. We're away once more, over the field. Odilo Unverdorben and his eager heart. And I within, who came at the wrong time—either too soon, or after it was all too late. (Amis 1992: 165)

The fact that the narrator can see an arrow fly "point first", therefore, in a correct direction, and that he and Odilo should be "once more, over the field" seems to be suggesting that Odilo will be forced to relive his life once more, this time in chronological order. The narrator's sigh "[o]h no, then…" could be thus interpreted as a brief moment of realization that since time flow will no longer be reversed, it will not be possible to misread the relation between cause and effect any longer, as Odilo will repeat his atrocious actions and, inevitably, his trauma.

Yet, the reversed chronology is not the only key choice on Amis's part when it comes to his chosen narrative techniques. As the reader learns early in the story, aside from the "diseased" flow of time, the voice which is relating the events seems to be diseased as well. "Passenger or parasite" (Amis 1992: 8), the narrator occupies Odilo's body and although he has access to Unverdorben's feelings and nightmares, he is completely severed from Odilo's consciousness and has no way of communicating with him; what is more, Odilo seems to be unaware of the narrator's presence: "[w]e are in this together, absolutely. But it isn't good for him to be so alone. *His* isolation is complete. Because he doesn't know I'm here" (14). The narrative split in the consciousness of the main protagonist seems to allude to PTSD-induced psychological dissociation on one hand, and to the psychiatrist's Robert Jay Lifton's theory of psychological doubling on the other. In his research, Lifton was determined to discover the motives which prompted the physicians of the Third Reich to violate the Hippocratic Oath they originally swore and, ultimately, to become the backbone of the genocidal killing process at Auschwitz. The psychiatrist enumerated various such reasons, yet by far the most significant one seems to be concerned with the Nazis' biomedical vision, according to which the Aryan race was suffering from a "deadly racial disease" (Lifton 1986: 16), and the only solution consisted of the extermination of all Jewish people. Such extreme indoctrination allowed for the "medicalization of healing" (14), which led to the formation of what Lifton refers to as the "killing as a therapeutic imperative", that is, killing in the name of healing the Aryan race (15).

However, even the doctors most loyal to the Third Reich could not accede to the healing-killing reversal which occurred at Auschwitz without employing certain psychological protection mechanisms. Lifton describes how strenuous it was initially for the physicians to accept this paradox, and how in the process of acclimatization a split in the men's subjectivity occurred, ultimately allowing them to participate in the killing (422). The split resulted in the creation of two selves, both of which were employed at different times; in Lifton's words "[t]he individual Nazi doctor needed his Auschwitz self

to function psychologically in an environment so antithetical to his previous ethical standards. At the same time, he needed his prior self in order to continue to see himself as humane physician, husband, father" (419). Moreover, Lifton argues that a crucial part of the doubling process which ultimately allowed the doctors to avoid the feelings of guilt was what could be referred to as "the transfer of conscience": "[t]he requirements of conscience were transferred to the Auschwitz self, which placed it within its own criteria for good (duty, loyalty to the group, 'improving' Auschwitz conditions, etc.), thereby freeing the original self from responsibility for actions there" (421).

Time's Arrow could be argued to constitute an almost perfect fictional rendition of Lifton's idea of doubling: the narrator is clearly a part of Odilo's psyche, yet at the same time he is autonomous in his thoughts and seems not to remember his past; in Lifton's terms then, he is the prior self, and Odilo is the Auschwitz self. While Unverdorben seems to be experiencing guilt and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, as reflected through his nightmares and pervasive feelings of anxiety and fear, the narrator apparently does not comprehend these emotions. Most importantly though, as the story is unfolding backwards, and the readers are approaching the Auschwitz section of the book, the narrator is becoming visibly closer to Unverdorben, until finally, they merge together in Chapter 5, which covers Odilo's time at the camp:

> I, Odilo Unverdorben, arrived in Auschwitz Central somewhat precipitately and by motorbike, with a wide twirl or frill of slush and mud, shortly after the Bolsheviks had entrained their ignoble withdrawal. *Now.* Was there a secret passenger on the backseat of the bike, or in some imaginary sidecar? No. I was one. I was also in full uniform. . .. Auschwitz lay around me, miles and miles of it, like a somersaulted Vatican. Human life was all ripped and torn. But I was one now, fused for a preternatural purpose. (116)

Since the laws of time are inverted, it indeed seems like a moment of becoming whole again in the story; however, when the passage is analyzed in the correct order, one can understand that it was precisely during Unverdorben's work at Auschwitz that the doubling occurred.

Since the story progresses in the reversed order and the narrator is forced to relive his entire life backwards, the reader finds him constantly misreporting and misinterpreting events. The resulting misreading of the relations between cause and effect has major consequences when it comes to the interpretation of the events which take place during Odilo's past as a Nazi doctor. Whereas in reality Unverdorben actively participated in the project of mass murder of the Jewish people, in the reversed timeline he becomes a part of a drastically opposite grand plan which strives to bring millions of people back to life: "[o]ur preternatural purpose? To dream a race. To make a people from the weather. From thunder and from lightning. With gas, with electricity, with shit, with fire" (Amis 1992: 120). Perhaps unsurprisingly then, upon his arrival in Auschwitz the narrator informs the readers that "the world is going to start making sense… Now" (Amis 1992: 115). Yet, even though for the narrator/Odilo the time spent at Auschwitz seems like a moment in which everything finally begins "making sense" (115), we recognize that in fact this experience is about to scar him for life. The cost of Odilo's atrocious deeds at Auschwitz is highlighted through his dissociation of the self, and the fact that even during his postwar life, Odilo is unable to become whole again. The consequences of his actions haunt Unverdorben for the rest of his existence, resulting in a lifelong trauma, which he is unable to address since he remains in complete denial of his

own participation in the mass killings during the Holocaust. Yet, even though I believe that the inverted chronology of the story, as well as the psychological doubling of the main protagonist discussed above, serve as the most important indicators of Odilo's trauma, they are not the only ones, as there exist some additional points in terms of his trauma.

When Odilo is first introduced to the readers (although under the alias of Tod Friendly at this point), he has just been brought back to life and is now in a hospital bed surrounded by doctors. The atmosphere is that of extreme anxiety, and it seems to be connected precisely with the presence of the physicians in the room. The narrator straightforwardly comments on this fact, admitting that he "hate[s] doctors. Any doctors. All doctors," whom he considers to be "life's gatekeepers" (Amis 1992: 4). The emotions connected with the presence of doctors suggest that the sight of the physicians alone constitutes a powerful trigger for Unverdorben, and as such, sets the tone for the examination of his trauma. As has been mentioned earlier, one of the major symptoms of PTSD includes "increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli" relating to the traumatic event (Caruth 1995: 4). This symptom is prominently exhibited by Odilo, and even though he chooses to continue working as a physician after the war, his consciousness lets the readers know how uncomfortable hospital surroundings make him feel. The narrator reveals that in his private life "Tod doesn't use doctors; he doesn't go near doctors. 'You don't want to listen to doctors,' he tells Irene, coming as close as he ever does to talking and smiling at the same time. 'They'll try to get their knives in you. Don't ever let them get their knives in you.'" (Amis 1992: 57). What is more, the symbolic figure of the doctor repeatedly appears in Odilo's dreams which, as already mentioned, is another significant symptom of PTSD: "[t]he other people. . .. They're lucky. I bet they don't have the dream we have. The figure in the white coat and the black boots. In his wake, a blizzard of wind and sleet, like a storm of human souls" (8). The anxiety experienced in the presence of physicians on his deathbed, as well as the omnipresent fear of the doctor-figure in general, suggest that even though doubling provided him with a temporary protection mechanism, Odilo did not manage to cope with his past, and the consequences of his misdeeds remained with him for the rest of his life.

Another trigger that causes Odilo to have a strong emotional response is the sound of German. Clearly, the language subconsciously reminds Odilo of the past he is attempting to suppress. More importantly, it reminds him of who he is as a person. Even though Tod has successfully managed to blend in with the American society, Odilo cannot escape his German identity – an identity in which he once took so much pride. As mentioned earlier, the Nazi ideology was rooted in a belief which presupposed the superiority of the "Aryan" race; accordingly, the part of the novel which takes place during the war abounds in descriptions that underline Odilo's sense of supremacy. The narrator speaks proudly of his wife, the "German girl" (Amis 1992: 151), and his daughter whom he calls their "German baby" (138); he also mentions "the faint dampness of [his] German feet" (117). On more than one occasion, he marvels at the physical beauty of the German men, as well as his own physique: "we're perfect" (50). Evidently, whereas the sense of German identity constituted a source of Odilo's great pride in the past, after the war it became a major source of shame and guilt for him; a remnant of past atrocious deeds performed as a Nazi doctor.

Regarding other triggers, the narrator enumerates fire or, more specifically, the smell which he associates with it. Although at first the narrator is clueless when it comes to the interpretation of the source of Odilo's fire aversion, the readers may already begin to suspect what its origins are. Unverdorben's strong emotional response to the smell foreshadows his "terrible secret" (Amis 1992: 5), that is, his shameful role as a Nazi doctor in a concentration camp. This becomes clear, as during the Auschwitz part of the novel, the narrator frequently mentions that the camp's air was filled with an all-pervasive "sweet smell" (119, 134, 144). Clearly, at some point, even if only for a brief moment, Odilo must have acknowledged that he personally played a major role in the extermination of thousands of people, and the overwhelming feeling of guilt and shame over his actions left him traumatized for life.

I have already indicated that intrusive, repetitive dreams constitute a significant symptom of PTSD, and provided examples of the images that resurface in Odilo's nightmares. However, there is one more of Unverdorben's recurring dreams which is worth addressing – that of the "bomb baby". Throughout the novel, the narrator frequently mentions that, out of all of his dreams, this particular nightmare tends to incite the strongest emotional response in Odilo. The readers learn about the origins of the nightmare towards the end of the novel, that is, during the section of the book describing Unverdorben's life before Auschwitz. As it transpires, the original event concerned the time when Odilo, along with other SS men, discovered a group of Jewish people staying in one of the warehouses; the Jews were hiding behind a wall panel when their presence was betrayed by the cry of a baby – hence the name "bomb baby" (Amis 1992: 142). It was Odilo himself who uncovered the panel and found the hiding group; needless to say, the Jews were executed afterwards. Arguably, the fact that this event remained with Odilo for the rest of his life and continued to resurface in his nightmares over and over again indicates that he never fully assimilated the experience in the first place. Thus, the recurring dreams could be interpreted as Odilo's mental attempts at mastering the trauma retrospectively, since only through such mastery could he confront his abhorrent past.

As the above analysis has demonstrated, although Odilo is not a victim in the word's standard sense, he does exhibit symptoms that are consistent with the description of post-traumatic stress disorder. Unverdorben lives in a constant state of "fear and shame" (Amis 1992: 8) and is haunted by recurring nightmares which repeatedly bring him back to the moments of the original trauma. He experiences strong emotional responses to certain stimuli which act as triggers for his PTSD. It is crucial to note that Odilo's trauma does not absolve him from his actions; nor does it entail "a reconfiguration of the perpetrator as a victim" (Mohamed 2015: 1212). In Unverdorben's case, trauma is precisely the cost of his atrocious actions during WWII and, as the novel demonstrates, the psychological consequences of his misdeeds remain with him for the rest of his life. Nevertheless, by bringing attention to the issue of perpetrator trauma, *Time's Arrow* suggests that there exist areas of Holocaust representation that demand further inquiry. Among these areas are: finding an acceptable way of speaking about the perpetrators, as well as considering the applicability of such notions as trauma to them.

Concluding, the authors of the two novels found analogical ways of rendering the reality of trauma in literary discourse. By employing non-conventional, experimental modes of narration, both mimic the ways in which a traumatic event destabilizes one's

sense of the self and, as a result, bring us closer to understanding the nature of a traumatic experience. Vonnegut and Amis propose effective ways to confront the ethical and aesthetical challenges which inherently entail trauma representation. In an attempt to "give form to what cannot be comprehended" (Stonebridge 2009: 204), *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Time's Arrow* turn narrative conventions topsy-turvy, mimicking the ways trauma disrupts one's secure sense of the self. In such a way, both novels provide us with valuable insights into the minds possessed by traumatic experiences and invite the readers to think about trauma comprehensively, and empathetically.

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