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Contents

Articles

Book Reviews

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"The City that Truly Counts" – the Meaningful Cityscape of Jim Crace's *Six*

Abstract. Jim Crace's ability to create both authentic and poetic geographic and topographic renderings has led critics to coin the term "Craceland" to denote these idiosyncratic settings that appear other and relatable at the same time. His narrative power lies in his ability to render places and spaces which, in spite of their wholly fictitious character, evoke a strong feeling of pl ausibility and familiarity. His milieux are never abstracted from the human element, and his stories examine the close link between his protagonists and the places they occupy or move through, thus emphasising the experiential and emotional dimension of space and place. *Six* (2003), his seventh novel, set in an unnamed imaginary present-day city, follows the fate of Lix Dern, a celebrated actor and a father of six children, in his life and career. Along with *Arcadia* (1992) and *The Melody* (2018), *Six* ranks among its author's urban novels which explore the diverse aspects of the interrelatedness between modern cityscape and its inhabitants' mental and physical existence. By using humanistic geography and phenomenological geocriticism as its theoretical points of departure, this paper attempts to analyse the roles the city assumes in conveying the novel's principal thematic concerns, as well as to demonstrate how *Six* differs from Crace's other two urban novels.

Keywords: Jim Crace, *Six*, experience, humanistic geography, mapping narrative, phenomenological geocriticism

1. Introduction

In each of his novels, Jim Crace has created an imaginary landscape or cityscape whose function transcends that of a mere background in which the story is set. Regardless of their historical and geographical disparateness, the milieux of his stories are easily conceivable and relatable for readers. The simultaneity of this familiarity and otherness is thus the idiosyncrasy of what has been labelled "Craceland" (Begley, "A Pilgrim in

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Craceland"), and although Crace himself is rather dismissive concerning this term, he admits to having an intense spatial sensibility and likes to refer to himself as a "landscape writer" (Guidarini, "An interview with Jim Crace"). The fact that by assuming a metaphorical role his settings are a constituent of his stories' meaning is reflected in that they are inherently endowed with the human element: in most cases they reflect the human content – qualities, experiences, moods, emotions – on a symbolic level, thus emphasising the fundamental interconnectedness between spaces/places and their occupants' states of mind. Moreover, such metaphoricity of the storyline always responds to acute present-day concerns by means of "provocative and complicated parallels with our own world" (Shaw and Aughterson 4).

Despite the above-mentioned diversity of locations and historical periods, it is possible to identify a small group of Crace's novels with a similar spatial and historical setting – those taking place in a modern city. *Arcadia* (1992), *Six* (2003) and *The Melody* (2018) are all urban novels set in the second half of the twentieth century and which depict typical aspects of modern city life, while also contemplating the transformations and resistances of their actual environment. By integrating the sociological and urbanistic perspectives into its narrative, the first explores the various consequences of the insertion of a shopping mall into the city centre planning for the cityscape as well as for the inhabitants. The latter also touches on the theme of insensitive and profit-seeking reconstruction of a traditional part of a town and its immediate psychological, socio-economic and environmental impacts on all the afflicted subjects. Both novels thus contain an indisputable political dimension in the sense of being concerned with acute social and ethical issues of globalized capitalism.[2]

Six, on the other hand, lacks this engagement as it primarily focuses on the personal and intimate history of its protagonist in his home city. Therefore, though it is not entirely devoid of the political element either, the fictitious urban space of the novel, with its external manifestations, rather serves as an ingenious mirror image of its protagonist's private and professional life and, in consequence, of his experience(s) and states of mind. With reference to the insights of experiential and phenomenological approaches to textual spatial representation of Yi-Fu Tuan, Robert T. Tally and Eric Prieto, this paper attempts to argue that in *Six*, more thoroughly and systematically than in *Arcadia* and *The Melody*, Crace draws a distinct parallel between a character's existence and the physical urban environment in which this existence takes place. By doing so, it also demonstrates how this experiential cityscape is made an integral part of the novel's thematic framework.

2 Being an unconcealed leftist, Crace professes the writings of George Orwell as "one of his major literary influences" (Battersby, "The Melody by Jim Crace").

2. Experiential and Phenomenological Conceptions of Space

Humanistic geography attempts to find a way of successful articulation of how human experience(s) affect our perception and interpretation of "space and place as images of complex – often ambivalent – feelings" (Tuan 7). Experience, as the humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan notes, is a "cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs reality," ranging from the direct sensory perception to the "indirect mode of symbolization" (8). As such, it comprises both emotion and cognition, which may not be as opposed as is commonly believed, but rather interlinked and complementary moments of an experiential continuum. Although experience connotes a degree of passivity in the sense of undergoing something that befalls one, it can also have a connotation of activity in the sense of overcoming obstacles and perils, of "ventur[ing] forth into the unfamiliar and experiment[ing] with the elusive and the uncertain" (Tuan 9). In either case, experience implies the process and ability to learn from what one has gone through.

At this point, a distinction between space and place should be drawn. Space is a more general and abstract notion. Place, on the other hand, is a particularised, localised and familiarised space; one which is endowed with meaning. Space is concretised into place by "being named" by the flows of power and negotiations of social relations of its occupants (Carter et al. xii), thus making place "a setting to which individuals are emotionally and culturally attached" (Altman and Low 5), a "calm centre of established values" (Tuan 54). While the enclosed and humanised place is associated with dwelling with its motionlessness and constancy, the more boundless space implies movement as the fundamental "ability to transcend the present condition" (Tuan 52). And so, the first invites personal or even intimate experience of a longer-term habitation, while the experience of the latter is given by the ability to move between and via the places and objects that compose it.

Open space may have ambiguous connotations – for some, it is a symbol of freedom, having enough room and opportunity for action; for others, it can be intimidating as they feel exposed and vulnerable in it, as well as uncertain due to the absence of fixed tracks and patterns of meaning. Spaces are not always spacious and unpopulated; their antithetical attribute is crowding. However, even the sense of crowding can be subjective and not directly proportional to population density – sometimes a city appears less crowded than a small town or village where one may suffer under the permanent surveillance of watchful neighbours. Also, the feeling of crowdedness tends to be frustrating and irritating, yet, under certain circumstances, being a part of a crowd can be thrilling and reassuring as well. Satisfactory human existence requires both the boundedness of space and constraint of place as it has the form of a "dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom" (Tuan 54). Although the direct experience

of place gives rise to a natural emotional bond with it, our ability of abstract thinking and symbol-making allows us to form a similarly strong attachment to enormous places and spaces with which our immediate experience is limited or even non-existent.

A more systematic literary critical approach to space is geocriticism, which explores how different recipients engage with the spaces and places that are formative for them, as well as how their spatial experience is translated into textual discourse and its interpretation. This originally geo-centred practice[3] focusing on real-life environments has gradually bred its more ego-centred variants which have turned their attention to psychological determinants of the experience of both actual and fictitious literary spaces. Robert T. Tally has developed the concept of "literary cartography" as a form of narrative which takes into consideration the social and psychological experience of space/place and the possibility of reflecting such spatial experience through a wholly imaginary literary environment. Such "mapping narratives" both map the spaces of human experience and are mapped by them, or, more precisely, by its interpretations and contexts through which they make sense to readers ("Introduction: mapping narratives" 3). Such practice can thus elucidate "how the ways in which we are situated in space determine the nature and quality of our existence in the world" (Tally, "On Geocriticism" 8) by examining narratives which render and reflect this situatedness.

Tally's approach is further developed by Eric Prieto's phenomenological geocriticism, which examines space/place as a manifestation of the dynamic interpretation of consciousness and world, as well as the impact the environmental constraints of space/place have on the human psyche ("Geocriticism, Geopoetics, Geophilosophy" 25). Central to his spatial analysis is the concept of the *entre-deux*, or in-between, places, which have assumed a particular significance in what he sees as the transitional character of the contemporary world of ongoing social, cultural, technological, demographic and environmental transformation. These *entre-deux* places that do not comply with our idea of well-established spatial categories, and are therefore often misunderstood, dismissed and overlooked as defective deviations from the norm, represent a viable trope for textual representation in that they contain a latent dynamic and productive potential for innovation and development (Prieto, "*Literature, Geography*" 1). These borderland, interstitial sites only amplify the inherently "contestatory and dialogical" (Prieto, "*Literature, Geography*" 14) value of place which comes into being as a result of the struggle between diverse, often contradictory, projections of discursive meanings based on the given historical, geographical or personal context of the contesting percipients' experience.

3 Developed at the beginning of the millennium by the French scholar Bertrand Westphal, geocriticism takes the actual spaces/places at the centre of debate and draws on their textual representations in order to grasp them more thoroughly.

3. The City of Balconies, Kisses, Mathematical Truth, and Light

Six tells the story of Felix Dern, a successful middle-aged actor, flamboyant and confident on the stage but shy, timid and reclusive in privacy, a man endowed with unfortunate fertility, thanks to which, as the novel's opening line says, "[e]very woman he dares to sleep with bears his child" (Crace[4] 1). Consequently, as it focuses on some twenty-two years (from 1979 till 2001) of his adult life and the relationships with the mothers of his six children – all of them in some sense unwanted – the narration is a contemplation on love in its diverse metamorphoses and with its paradoxical compound of robustness and fragility. Moreover, it is the story of the city in which the whole novel is set, and in which the protagonist was born and bred. All these three thematic layers – Felix's life, love, and the city – are intrinsically intertwined and thus generate corresponding combinations, from which those involving the latter one are of interest in this paper: Felix's life and the city, and the city and love. However, importantly for our purposes, *Six* also touches on the theme of the city as such, that is, abstracted from the other two thematic concerns, which links it with *Arcadia* and *The Melody*.

The unnamed present-day city in *Six*, like those in *Arcadia* and *The Melody*, is wholly fictitious, though its vivid descriptions, European-like layout and the fact that it lies in a country with an authoritative establishment may evoke in readers a feeling of familiarity. The narrator repeatedly implies that the city has experienced better times in the past, using phrases like "once famous" (*S* 3), "infuriating" (*S* 12), "dull" (*S* 18), "neglected and contented" (*S* 100), "lacklustre" (*S* 134), "regular and regulated" (*S* 138), "hazy and exhausting and unkind" (*S* 152) to describe its current nature and state of affairs. With its elegant historical architecture, the city used to be known as the "City of Balconies" (*S* 7), an alluring nickname allegedly given to it by Jean Jacques Rousseau. Its recent history, on the other hand, appears to have been rather unpromising due to the nature of the governing regime and its restrictive impacts on the city's development. One of its brighter moments occurred in 1979, when the tight civic atmosphere temporarily loosened, and people went out to fill the streets and public places to relish their unexpectedly gained freedom. By coincidence, the popular *Life* magazine organised their photographic project "Fifty Cities of the World" on one Sunday that fell within this short-term surveillance release, and so the photojournalist made a series of photos of happy people kissing one another, by which he caught the place's current spirit, yet the new, cheerful headline it gave it – the "City of Kisses" – could hardly be seen as fitting for the city in general.

Another moment of the city's international fame came towards the end of the year 2000, when its magistrates announced that the city would spectacularly welcome the new

4 All quotations from *Six* follow the Penguin edition of 2004 and are henceforth abbreviated in parentheses as *S*.

millennium mathematically correctly, that is on the night from 31 December to 1 January 2001, unlike the rest of the world, which had already done it, erroneously, a year before. The "city that truly counts" (*S* 183) hoped that such an occasion would draw crowds of visitors eager to spend their money there, but, in reality, only a few math enthusiasts, curiosity seekers and academicians arrived, showing little interest in tourist attractions, restaurants, bars and night-clubs, which is why the only palpable outcome of this event was yet another nickname, this time that of the "City of Mathematical Truth, the Capital of Calendar Authenticity" (*S* 183). And finally, in early 2001, the international *Geo* magazine launched another take on the Fifty Cities of the World project, this time aerially photographed from helicopters. As the photographer opted for the night perspective, the city's latest title is the "City of a Million Lights". And so, ironically, unlike the historical one, all the modern labels either misinterpret, disregard or simplify the city's actual character and *modus vivendi*, showing the popular culture industry's inability and reluctance to inquire into serious and complex issues.

4. The Political and the Personal City

Although far from being a political novel per se, *Six* possesses a distinct political undertone. Chronologically speaking, the story begins with the unexpected and short-lasting period of loosening the socio-political situation in 1979, "the year the post-war ban on public demonstrations of affection [...] was lifted" (*S* 8). Yet, the most intensive period of relief and thaw from the tight grip of the authorities' controlling measures came in 1989 during the so-called "Big Melt" or "The Laxity" when, having been satisfied with the capital the City of Kisses had gained from tourists and foreign companies over the past two years, the city governors for once concentrated on their life in luxury rather than on maintaining public order. The streets were suddenly full of life and energy, and soon turned into a boisterous spree when it was suddenly possible to walk freely without IDs, and to organise unrest and demonstrate without much fear of being "disappeared" (*S* 76, 78). The citizens are again driven onto the streets at the end of the story, twenty years later, but this time by the devaluating impacts of a financial crisis. During "the week of the Banking Riots" (*S* 2), massive demonstrations and the presence of the police and the army in the centre divided the city centre in two halves – the commercial and banking part on the east side of the river, where the largest protests took place, and whose boulevards were often reminiscent of a combat zone, and the historic quarters on the other side of the river, with their narrow streets, known as the Hives, which remained virtually untouched.

Even though these larger historical circumstances play a part in the novel, Crace's narration continuously fuses the political with the personal as each of these events is somehow linked with Felix's lived experience. In 1979, in the City of Kisses, the young Lix is, in accordance with *Life*'s portrayal of the city, kissing and making love to an

unknown woman he met in a bar during a one-night stand, resulting in his first child being conceived. Two years later, still a student, Lix discovers his unorthodox self when he suggests the abduction of the chairman of an American company which intends to donate seven million "dirty dollars … made from low wages in the Far East" (*S* 79) to the university to modernise its campus. However, rather than by the Big Melt and the leftist idealism of the young anarchists, he is motivated by his desire to impress Freda, the campus beauty and one of the most revolutionary students. And so, even though the abduction plan turns out to be a failure, Lix eventually gets what he longs for, yet by which he also begets his second child.

At the "proper" beginning of the millennium, on New Year's Eve 2000, Lix, in the city centre streets, decides to follow his later wife Mouetta so as to be close to her at the turn of the year, but gets caught up in the crowds, loses sight of her and, later that night, mildly drunk, has casual sex with a fellow actress right on the stage, an act resulting in his fifth child's conception. And, finally, during the 2001 Banking Riots, after a series of coincidences caused by police activities against demonstrators, Lix and Mouetta find themselves stuck in their car for a night in an empty carpark where, after their sleep-over, they engage in hasty lovemaking that produces his sixth, and last, child.

In *Six*, the (hi)story of the city coincides with that of Lix Dern's affairs and paternity. At the very beginning of the novel, metaphorically referring to the weather, the narrator suggests that the city may, in some cases, be an accomplice of the historical tumults taking place in it and, in consequence, a crucial mover behind some of its inhabitants' life-changing decisions and acts: "Sometimes our city …, with its deep parks, its balconies, and its prolific and disrupting river, like any other city, seems to have a climate of its own, a window of clear sky, perhaps, unshiftable for days, or more commonly a random storm attracted to the concrete and the bricks while all the countryside around is calm" (*S* 3). Indeed, for Lix's personal life, the city at times has had a special climate in which clear sky has taken turns with rapid storms, each of which, by different means, has resulted in his fathering of a child. Only one such occasion has a truly natural cause: when due to unceasing rains the river floods the city streets in 1987, and Lix with his newly-wed Alicja deliberately choose romantic confinement in their rented attic flat by refusing to get in a rescue boat, during which her first child is begotten. In terms of Tuan's conception of experience as comprising the elements of the passive, the active and the learnt, Lix's personal life manifests prevailingly the first two: things not only happen to him, but he is also able to strive hard and venture to tackle the risky and the unfamiliar so as to get what he longs for. The same, on the contrary, can hardly be said about the latter as he does not seem to learn a lesson from any of his paternal misfortunes and, when he finds himself in another situation of a similar kind, emotions and sexual desire rather than attained knowledge take control of his acts. His love life thus parallels the episodic yet all the more turbulent blasts of the city's climate, meteorological as well as social. He

thus may be cursed with looming potency, but the city with its whims is always there to allow it to take its course.

5. On Loving and Dwelling

The most apparent instance of the above interconnection between the city and the protagonist's personal life and, moreover, combined with the narration's following, or mapping, his psycho-spatial topographical movement around the cityspace, is the progression of Lix's places of residence, the most telling examples of the above definitions of place as a site of one's intense emotional and intimate attachment. These places, together with their location in the city, always parallel not only his current socio-economic status, but also his frame of mind. Because it traces both the geographic trajectory of Lix's habitation around the city and the mutual influence between these places and his experience in and of them, *Six* can be taken as an example of Tally's mapping narrative. Therefore, the narration makes use of showing how the protagonist mentally and socially settles in and identifies with these places of dwelling in order to better capture the then character of his being-in-the-world perception.

At the chronological beginning of the story, the young Lix occupies a "democratic modest fourth-floor room among the tenements down on the wharf, with not only skylight views across the newly named City of Kisses towards the river but also a narrow glimpsing view from his box kitchen into Cargo Street, where now there are boutiques and restaurants instead of groceries and bars and 'working folk'" (*S* 55). Although it is a tiny, cramped attic flat in what at that time was a low-class edge of the city, one an unmoneyed student can afford to rent, through the two limited window views it also reflects Lix's ambition and future achievements: the skylight view of the city with the river suggests that his dream of living in the historic centre in a balconied apartment overlooking the river is already "within his view," while the kitchen glimpsing view of a street that in the near future would be transformed into a fashionable avenue foreshadows his professional success as a famous actor.

This "old fourth-floor student room-'n'-kitchen near the wharf" (*S* 120) then witnessed the conceptions of Lix's first two children. Although the first occasion was accidental, it turned out more satisfactorily than the second, long intended and much wished-for one. And while in the first case the role of the city was rather conventional – that of a site of countless random and anonymous encounters of strangers desiring non-committal intimacy – in the second it served much more as an instrument of a quirk of fate. The whole incident is ironic and tragicomic from the start as Lix, a one-time reactionary out of love and lust, is in reality far less keen on committing crime in the name of leftist revolt than Freda, just as he is far keener on having sex with Freda than she is with him. On the one hand, by doing "its buttons up" and letting Freda down (*S* 104, 84) through the hostile weather and the Polish demonstrators causing a police blockade of the centre,

the city is merciful to him and saves him from having to abduct the chairman. On the other, it inadvertently throws him into a ridiculous short-lived romance with the zealous beauty who in a domineering manner uses his body for her own sexual pleasure while imagining a "real" hero from her favourite 1968 Prague Spring photograph, yet, which makes the surrogate Lix the father of her only child. Moreover, Alicja, one of the leaders of the Poles' riot which obstructs Freda's partisan schemes, later becomes the woman at Lix's side and the mother of his two succeeding children.

Lix's relationship with Alicja undergoes a progress from initial tenderness and mutuality to gradual emotional detachment, alienation and separation, which is also reflected in their places of living. As Alicja proudly refuses her father's money, the newly married couple, full of youthful idealism and sense of independence, have to content themselves with a modest and ill-kept unbalconied low-ceiling attic flat situated in a very busy part of the town. This flat is still far from an ideal one, yet it corresponds with the rising curve of Lix's personal and career prospects of a happy husband and aspiring actor, in love with his wife and his job: though hardly larger and cosier than his fourth-floor student apartment and with no river view either, it is closer to the centre, to "the grander embankment residences they'd aspired to" (*S* 120), and it also has a door onto the roof where they can relax and enjoy themselves in privacy, "[s]omewhere to be expansive and look out across the city" (*S* 120), a lookout bonus, metaphorically suggesting the broadening of Lix's life horizons, incomparable with the two narrow window views in his old place. It is also where their first child is conceived, a few years earlier than they had intended, but at least out of a loving wedlock.

Some five years later, however, the situation is completely different: the confident and successful Alicja, a working mother and an active local politician, is no longer dismissive of the "tainted Polish cash" (*S* 157) and so the family moves in the "Beyond," a new luxurious village-style extension of the suburbs on the east side of the city. For Lix, though also prospering professionally with his first Hollywood contract, the Beyond – a place without any spirit and very much unlike the home of his dreams – has ruined everything: not only is he profoundly unhappy there far away from his beloved theatre, friends and historic centre, but it also seems to have deepened their marital crises, making them two individuals living in divergent worlds of incompatible values and interests. And so, although they keep their little attic apartment as their "city centre pied-à-terre" (*S* 155), it is merely a feeble reminder of their better times as Lix uses it for sleepovers after late performances, and Alicja for meeting her lover. Yet, symptomatically, even the luxurious villa Lix detests becomes a *locus delicti* of his fertility when the burglary of their house wakes in the almost split couple a false momentary attraction which results in one final act of lovemaking, thanks to which the birth of their second child precedes their divorce.

Eventually, the middle-aged, celebrated actor Lix lives in the place of his dreams – a spacious apartment with a balcony with a direct river view "in the city's ancient heart

of squares and stone, and narrow streets and balconies" (*S* 199). However, blessed as he counts himself as an actor and dweller, his personal life is far from happy for ever since his divorce more than seven years before, he has led a solitary and celibate life, which has filled him with self-doubt and timidity. It is as if his mediocre love life was the price to pay for his gorgeous place of living, and the chain of subsequent events only confirms this ironic whim of fortune: it is only when he reluctantly leaves the comfort of his flat that he meets and falls in love with his future spouse Mouetta, it is outside the flat that his last two children are begotten, and, perhaps most importantly, when Mouetta finds out she is pregnant, she quickly admits that now she has all she has longed for and her "husband's feelings do not really matter anymore. His purpose has been served" (*S* 211), and it is not much of a promising outlook for a satisfactory married life for Lix, once again. And so, just like his shabby student room and the attic flat with the rooftop leisure zone, Lix's balconied river-view apartment may mirror his professional success and his optimistically shaded state of mind of a person "capable of love" (*S* 13), yet it is also likely to witness how such promise goes up in smoke under the pressure of love's complexity and capriciousness.

6. Experiencing the City's Altered Forms

Like Crace's other novels, *Six* assumes an experiential perspective concerning the rendered places/spaces, mainly when something unusual is happening in or with the city. In such cases, the narration echoes the two underlining principles of phenomenological geocriticism: first, how the depicted occasions, and their transformative impact on the cityscape in particular, affect the protagonist's mind, and, second, how the cityscape reflects the upheavals of its inhabitants' collective psyche. The two most elaborated upon events in this regard are the great flood of 1987 and the celebration of the numerically true new millennium. When the river overflows its banks into the streets and squares, almost all the citizens welcome this overnight violation of the fixed routines, enjoying "the city's altered forms" (*S* 131) that, despite their humid discomfort, seem "better fun than Dry and Safe and Unremarkable" (*S* 132). For the weary and regulated inhabitants, the calamity, though more menacing with each day, is seen as an "unexpected wonder, too rare and beautiful to miss" (*S* 132), one which lures them into the flooded streets rather than forcing them to stay in the safety of their homes. In the absence of any realistic prospect of political easing, the flood, which so unsettles the otherwise unflinching authorities, represents for the city a unique opportunity for release to some extent comparable with "The Big Melt."

On the fifth day, even Lix and Alicja hurry out of their apartment to enjoy this excitement and the spectacle of things going wrong. They walk down the streets full of people on an unplanned holiday, taking pleasure "in the drama of the streets with all the other addicts and devotees of the flood" (*S* 138), many of whom gleefully revelling in

watching the expensive and prominent parts of the city submerge. Lix soon realises that the flooding waters viewed from above from their rooftop sanctuary are more appealing and less threatening than in reality, where moving along the crowded streets and the high walkway, with their counter-flows of nervously shoving pedestrians and the swollen river only a few feet away, is much more risky and erratic. Yet, in spite of this tension and urgency, the atmosphere among those eagerly watching the scene from the footbridge is joyful, as if they have just found out that "the problems of the world were river-born and would be swept away and out of view" (*S* 138). Though not directly involved, Lix and Alicja become fascinated by the paradoxical festivity, as well as the sudden possibility to experience their hometown in its uncommon metamorphosis:

> The pedestrian bridge was still busy, though. The walkway was a perfect gallery for the city's enfants du paradis to observe the drama, feel the spray, even, watch the rare and disconcerting spectacle of traffic-free bridges. These were images of old. Pre-motor car. The walkway's ironwork, which earlier had groaned almost silently from the burden of so many workers, now creaked and grumbled out loud as it shrugged itself back into shape. It had never carried such a weight before or hosted such a cheerful party of sightseers. (S 139)

Eventually, it becomes obvious that even the walkway will soon have to be closed, too, and the city will remain paralysed and sliced into two parts by the river. Yet, it is not until a small incident happens – a woman's hat falls into the water – that the onlookers on the bridge leave their spot. It is as if the rapidity with which the hat disappears in the water and resurfaces fifty metres downstream brought the gapers back to senses and forced them to clear the most dangerous area.

Although the expected multitudes of foreigners do not appear to celebrate the mathematically correct new millennium in the Capital of Calendar Authenticity on New Year's Eve 2000, the streets are full enough with locals eager to enjoy the fireworks and other forms of amusement originally prepared for tourists. Still, Lix is not much drawn into the streets, toying rather with the idea of spending the night on his large, enclosed balcony, watching the fireworks. However, it is only until Freda, accompanied by her cousin Mouetta, spitefully approaches him with their son George after his evening performance, that the circumstances start to get out of his control. And so, after Freda, George and Mouetta leave the theatre, the embarrassed Lix quickly reconsiders his plan for a lonely night and, instead, sets out to follow the trio as they are making their way through the busy Hives towards the river front so as to rectify the impression he made on both George and Mouetta.

Once again, the city is not on Lix's side, being only twenty minutes before midnight and the crowds of people hurrying to the embankment to take the best places to relish the light and firework show, which is why he has to settle for the embankment steps

from which he can watch the three of them from afar. Yet, his disappointment does not last for long, as when the fireworks go off and the onlookers cheer up, he realises how comforting, exhilarating and liberating being a part of an anonymous city crowd can be under certain circumstances:

> The first cascade of light exploded like a drum solo. [...] Everybody smiled at once. That's what we come to cities for. Even Lix was animated now and happy in a complicated way. Whatever his personal turmoil, the turmoil of the old town was for the moment more insistent and exuberant. Being there amongst the crowd was more cheering than any Best View from a private balcony. Nobody bothered him. Nobody seemed to recognize his muffled face. Nobody asked for signatures. If anybody shook his hand, and many did, it was just the greeting of another wine-fuelled celebrant who'd shake the devil's hand and not care less. (*S* 205-206)

He is thus fully experiencing the city's paradoxical potential for providing the feeling of ease and recuperation despite the absence of intimate attachment to place and spaciousness, as these are provisionally substituted by engaging, though illusory, amiability and togetherness. Yet, for the hopeful Lix, with his positive attitude to life, this fleeting break from his gloom suffices to lift his spirit and endow him with new stimulus to turn his eyes to the future, for which he is immediately rewarded by catching sight of Mouetta's smile and a sympathetic glimpse in her eyes over the heads of the fellow-celebrants.

Although the novel does not present any public *entre-deux* places in Prieto's sense of the term, it does feature two examples of Lix's personal in-between places, which reflect different phases of his marriage with Alicja, and which are unalike also because one occurs to him by means of natural extremity, while the other is of his own making. The first is their flat during the great flood, which makes the garret a temporary islet of their young love separated from the rest of the town by high water. The precious character of this unexpected isolation is underlined by the ironic observation that thanks to the historical centre being swallowed by the flood their dwelling has, at least for a while, the wished-for river view. Thus, for a few days, the flat with its rooftop view assumes a liminal character: inside and outside the cityscape and its transformations, a calm and timeless sanctuary within the city's historical tumults. Later, the escapades of his life make Lix establish a different kind of in-between refuge where he could hide from the constraints of his professional career as well as from his marital troubles, in the form of the Debit Bar, his ever reliable "home-from-home" (*S* 213). Since he is no habitual drinker, the bar is for him a place in which he can momentarily forget his worries. After Alicja forces him to move to Beyond, he decides to retreat to this private zone even more intensely by hiring what is known as the Hesitation Room, the "windowless private cellar beneath the Debit's public areas" (*S* 157), where he organises informal meals for his friends from

the theatrical world, a much-welcome escape from his disliked snobbish residence and deteriorating relationship with Alicja. The importance of the Debit Bar for Lix is one more time demonstrated at the end of the story when Mouetta wants to celebrate her pregnancy, planning to try a new, fashionable bistro. However, although he loves his wife deeply and feels no impending crisis in their marriage, he still instinctively steers her to his favourite bar, as if he felt the need to keep the family affairs on his home territory so as to retain more control over them for a change.

7. Love and the City: Conclusion

What all three of Crace's urban novels share is the construction of a meaningful cityscape through an incessant intersection of its public and private dimensions. They present a story of a city, its historical development and somewhat disturbing status quo along with the personal history and psychophysical experience of its individual dwellers. However, *Six* differs from *Arcadia* and *The Melody* by its absence of an explicit political agenda. Although the political situation of and in the city determines much of its story's action, it is not the author's major concern. While the other two novels offer outspoken criticism of commercial and consumer capitalism through the depiction of its harmful impacts on the city's public areas and, in consequence, on the well-being of its inhabitants, *Six* focuses on the interconnectedness of the city and the protagonist's personal life. Paramount examples of this interconnectedness are the various parallels between the city's spatial properties and the course of the protagonist's life, and the corresponding rendering of some of the story's crucial scenes. As a result, the bounded place – defined by its occupants' appropriation and emotional attachment – rather than the space has been the central focus of this paper. However, the space, in the form of the city as such and its spatial manifestations, is never absent from the analysis either, as they always condition and, in return, are conditioned by the protagonist's lived experience. The novel thus exemplifies Tuan's persuasion that in order to be harmonious, human existence needs a satisfactory reconciliation between the two momentums of spatial experience: the enclosed and the spacious, the given and the unrestrained, the secure and the unpredictable.

By outlining the socio-political development of the city for more than twenty years, the story points out the ironic discrepancy between the pop-cultural and commercial labels the city has been attributed by the media and tourist industry and its actual reality. Neither kisses, nor mathematical truth or light metaphorically capture the spirit of the place, but rather turn out to be ready-made simplifications whose purpose is to sell an alluring image of a city that, in fact, does not exist. All the political or historically momentous happenings in the city, no matter how minutely depicted, are meaningful chiefly in connection with the twists of Lix's love life, particularly with his productivity of conception: no matter the variety of outcomes of such events, the outcome of his intimacies is thus always the same. Therefore, his experience, as depicted in the novel, is restrained to what befalls him and

how he struggles to surmount the unpleasant and undesired incidents he is exposed to, but not so much to his capacity to take away some useful lesson from the suffered mishaps. This is also the reason why the city is so rarely "on his side" but seems to add its "share" to his misfortunes. His unintended conceptions thus should be taken rather symbolically as one but seven "deadly wounds" inflicted upon him for his obstinate incorrigibility.

Another interesting instance of Crace's use of spatial poetics in the novel is the mapping narrative which explores the correlation between the trajectory of the protagonist's personal life and his places of residence as they always, more or less directly, reflect and are affected by the ups and downs of his current existence and experience. And last but not least, like in *Arcadia* and *The Melody*, this close link between uncommon events and the characters' emotions and states of mind allows Crace to employ an experiential approach to the rendering of such interconnectedness. However, unlike *Arcadia* and *The Melody*, as it does not deal with a forcible transformation of public space, *Six* does not feature any emerging and dynamic *entre-deux* places as Prieto defines them, but rather Lix's two private in-between hideaways – his and Alicja's first flat during the flood and his favourite bar – which manifest their transformative and transgressive potential only within his own personal life.

In spite of its solely urban setting and sensibility, *Six* is a novel in which the human element precedes other parameters of the cityscape. Unlike *Arcadia* and *The Melody*, which can be described as stories of a city through the fates of its selected inhabitants, *Six* tells a story of love through selected individuals on the background of the city they inhabit. It is a story of how the city draws those who seek love, just as it draws raptors in search of prey (*S* 214), in spite of such promise's frailty and uncertainty. And in the end, symptomatically for Crace, the actual city is of little importance as the narration assumes a more general perspective. When referring to the eloquence of the City of a Million Lights photographs in *Geo* magazine, the narrator observes that "[t]hey tell of people going home. They tell of love and love-making, of children, marriages and lives. You think, But this could happen anywhere. It does" (*S* 220). It certainly does, but there are not that many contemporary novelists capable of combining the personal and the spatial, the experiential and the topographic, the private and the public, the individual and the collective so as to address the nuances of the universal human condition like Jim Crace.

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Reimagining Nature in Selected Hawaiian Literature: An Indigenous Ecological Perspective

Abstract. This study analyzes four selected works of Hawaiian literature, focusing on the refiguration of nature, presenting it as an active and conscious subject. Contrary to Western anthropocentrism, which instrumentalized nature, Hawaiian literature underscores the profound interconnectedness shared between humanity and the more-than-human world. This distinctive environmental imagination permeates the narratives and rejects Western distinctions between the human and non-human realms by intertwining the supernatural and human agency. The reading of selected Hawaiian literature analyzes how nature is positioned as an active subject with its agency, not merely a passive, static setting. Personification in Hawaiian literature primarily focuses on female figures, *Pele* as the volcano goddess and various ancestral spirits known as *ʻaumakua*. This critique of anthropocentrism is deeply entrenched in Hawaiian cultural and spiritual traditions, where gods, goddesses, and ʻ*aumakua* personify various elements and forces within the environment. This reimagining invites us to consider a different environmental imagination, recognizing the active agency of the non-human world. In conclusion, this study highlights how the Native Hawaiians ecological discourse seeks to reorient humanity's relationship with the natural world.
Keywords: Anthropocentrism; environmental imagination; indigenous perspective; Hawaiian literature; personification of nature

1. Introduction: Indigenous Environmental Imagination

The term Anthropocene, coined by Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen in 2002, signifies the dawn of an epoch in which human activities wield a profound and global influence over the natural environment. This paradigm recognizes humanity as a substantial ecological force, fundamentally altering the world at a planetary scale. Riordan (326) observes that the Anthropocene ushers in a new geological era, where humans emerge as a globally

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transformative species driven by scientific, technological, and material advancements that irreversibly shape the environment. Within the context of the Anthropocene, the necessity of human/non-human relationships to be redefined is paramount. Environmental ethics, a systematic exploration of the moral bonds between humans and their natural surroundings, challenges the traditional boundaries of ethical considerations by advocating for the inclusion of non-human entities, a departure from prior anthropocentric perspectives (Desjardins 17; Thompson 114). This paradigm shift prompts a reevaluation of the conventional human-agent and nature-subject binary, advocating for a more ethically grounded relationship that acknowledges human and non-human realms' interconnectedness and moral obligations.

The redefinition of nature from a passive object into active object underscores the imperative of finding alternative forms of environmental imagination. In the face of the ongoing ecological crisis, Lawrence Buell's concept of the "crisis of the imagination" becomes a pivotal point of discussion, highlighting the necessity to confront not only the tangible environmental challenges but also the cultural and imaginative facets of this predicament. Central to this reform is the critique of the deep-seated anthropocentric perspective within the Western philosophical tradition. Lynn White's article "The Historical Root of Our Ecological Crisis" underscores how the Judeo-Christian worldview, serving as the bedrock of Western thought, has historically endorsed human dominance over all life forms on Earth (6–8). Despite White's call for reform concerning this anthropocentric viewpoint, he remains doubtful about embracing alternative perspectives, like Zen Buddhism, and his call for reform remains rooted within the Western philosophical outlook. In contrast, Buell vehemently advocates for a reevaluation of Western ethical discourse:

> If, as environmental philosophers contend, western metaphysics and ethics need revision before we can address today's ecological problems, then environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination, the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imagining nature and humanity's relation to it. (2)

Buell's argument asserts that the contemporary environmental crisis is intimately intertwined with a problem of imagination. This crisis of the imagination necessitates alternative avenues for depicting and engaging with the natural world. His idea expands the role of the humanities to foster a more ethical way of perceiving and interacting with nature. While nature writing has traditionally been a prominent genre within literature, it has long been dominated by the Anglo-American discourse, exemplified by canonical works such as the *Norton Book of Nature Writing* (1990), which prominently featured white authors. Many influential authors in the development of environmental literature, such as Emerson, Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, and Rachel Carson, were primarily of white

descent. The emphasis on nonfiction nature writing limited its recognition of authors exploring environmental themes in other genres, such as poetry and fiction, especially for non-Western writers (Kerridge 376; Marland 850). Glotfelty identifies how ecocriticism, initially dominated by white voices, can diversify by integrating environmental concerns with social justice issues and welcoming diverse perspectives (xxv). The pursuit of alternative environmental views intersects with the paradigms offered by indigenous communities, presenting an opportunity for a more inclusive and holistic approach to reimagining humanity's relationship with the environment.

Recent academic discourse on the environment has accommodated indigenous perspectives on the natural world, acknowledging the rich knowledge developed by these communities through their dynamic interactions with the non-human. Indigenous epistemologies, criticized as representing non-Western cultural backwardness, are now considered sustainable frameworks for reimagining humanity's place within the broader ecosystem (Buell et al. 467). Including indigenous voices such as Native Americans, First Nations, Aborigines, and Pacific Islanders incorporates insights and alternative narratives that challenge traditional Western environmental views (Kana'iaupuni and Malone; Williams and Gonzalez; Lyons). The sanctity of nature is underscored through an epistemology that highlights the interconnectedness of all entities:

> For Native peoples, ecology is the cosmology of interrelatedness. This interdependent orientation includes all things within the ecosphere (planet) and above and outside of it (sun, moon, stars, planets, spirits, and ancestors). Within the material realm, there are humans and non-humans such as plants, minerals, and animals—what we call 'nature'. (Machiorlatti 65)

As previously highlighted, the cosmos and the natural world are viewed as interconnected entities forming a vast familial network within indigenous cosmology. In this perspective, human beings are regarded as just one constituent link within a larger familial structure. Representation of the natural world in indigenous cosmology vividly highlights the profound interconnectedness, revealing the kinship binding humans to the broader web of existence.

In indigenous literature, a transformative shift reimagines nature from a passive commodity/setting to an active subject, challenging conventional portrayals and refiguring the conception of nature. Regionally specific indigenous movements have traditionally revolved around the belief that the Earth embodies itself as 'lesser beings' like mountains, rivers, and lakes, transcending their material existence to signify culture-nature entities where humans and other-than-human entities coexist (Adamson 183). This perspective reflects a profound reverence for the environment and an understanding of nature as an active participant in the holistic sphere. Trask argues how "nature was not objectified

but personified, resulting in an extraordinary respect for the life of the sea, the heavens, and the earth" (18). The relationship between cultural practices and the environment is reciprocal; the arts and languages of indigenous peoples both underpin and are shaped by their distinct connection to the natural world. In this context, culture and ecology are inherently intertwined, a phenomenon also practiced by the Native Hawaiians (*Kānaka*).

The culture of Hawai'i's indigenous people, *Kānaka,* centers around nature as the fundamental cornerstone of their beliefs and way of life. Their cultural beliefs, epistemology, and philosophy place nature in high regard, imbuing it with a deep sanctity. Nature is the source of wisdom and the very foundation of *Kānaka* culture, encompassing local wisdom, prohibitions (*kapu*), genealogy, traditional knowledge, oral literature (orature), and written literature (Williams 45). The native Hawaiians and broader Polynesian communities hold deep-seated beliefs in the existence of the supernatural, superstitions, spirituality, mysticism, and the occult. The indigenous communities reject the dualism between the human world and the realm of the mystical, spiritual, and superstitious, perceiving that spirits also reside in the tangible world (Buell et al. 239). These beliefs serve as interpretive frameworks to make sense of natural phenomena that transcend conventional rational explanations. Rooted in profound reverence, awe, and respect for the enigmatic forces of nature, this Polynesian worldview underlines the intrinsic connection between culture and the environment (Armstrong 56). Personifying natural elements with human-like characteristics is viewed as one of the ways these ethnic groups illustrate their closeness to the surrounding environment.

The Hawaiian polytheistic belief system encompasses the presence of both pantheistic deities and family gods/goddesses worshipped individually or collectively. These two aspects underscore the close relationship of Hawaii's indigenous population with the surrounding environment. It is rooted in the belief that these deities, as personifications of nature, exist in the spiritual and tangible realms, coexisting with humans. The polytheistic religions of the *Kānaka* derive from the endeavor to interpret natural phenomena through the personification of deities as revered figures.

> The Polynesians believed that super-normal powers pervaded nature. These powers were personified into gods, who were given certain names and particular attributes. This indigenous knowledge is not unique to Hawaiians but is shared by most indigenous peoples throughout the world. (Buck 64)

Every god and goddess are associated with specific natural forces, such as volcanic eruptions linked to the goddess *Pele* or the bestowing of rainfall by the god *Lono*. According to Malo & Emerson (135), the Hawaiian islands are believed to host an untold number of gods and goddesses, reflecting the practice of naming every natural event within the Hawaiian ethnic group. Moreover, *'aumakua* is also an integral part of Hawaiian traditions,

serving as a means through which the *Kānaka* expresses reverence for the natural world. Within their belief system, every deceased family member is believed to merge with the surrounding environment, fostering a holistic connection and motivating the indigenous Hawaiians to preserve and care for the environment in homage to their ancestors.

This study explores the portrayal of natural forces, deity personifications, and aumakua in selected Hawaiian literature, shedding light on these narratives' profound cultural and ecological connections. The representation of Hawaiian gods and goddesses as personifications exemplifies the emotional proximity of indigenous Hawaiians to nature, challenging the Western dichotomy between nature and culture rooted in a reductionist and instrumentalist perspective on the non-human world (Plumwood, "Nature as Agency and the Prospects for a Progressive Naturalism" 3). The objects of study are literature written by both *Kānaka* and white (*haole*) authors, aligning with the definition of Hawaiian literature based on either geographically based or thematic[2]. The novels analyzed include James Michener's *Hawaii* (1959), O.A. Bushnell's *Ka'a'awa* (1972), Davenport's *Shark Dialogues* (1995), and Alan Brennert's *Moloka'i* (2004). The recurring depiction of natural forces in Hawaiian literature, irrespective of historical periods and author backgrounds, underscores the central theme of reimagining nature as an active subject in Hawaiian literary discourse.

Several studies have been conducted on Hawaiian literature. Miller-Davenport examines the integration of the Hawaiian Islands as a U.S. state. By analyzing Michener's *Hawaii*, Miller-Davenport interpreted the novel as an allegory for Hawaii's political development. Miller-Davenport sees Hawaii's integration into America as a contradiction, where Hawaii becomes economically better but loses elements such as traditions and monarchy that were distinctive aspects of Hawaiian culture (817). Wyatt (126) discusses the socio-cultural transformations since the arrival of white settlers in Hawaii, with the novel *Shark Dialogues* portraying the protagonist Pono's connection to the land and the ocean as a symbol of the continuity of native Hawaiian traditions. In contrast to previous research, this study focuses on how personification, actively embodying natural forces with agency, challenges Western anthropocentrism, commodifying nature.

2 Defining Hawaiian literature is a subject of ongoing debate. Ho'omanawanui (227–28) suggests it can be geographical, including works by authors in Hawaii, or thematic, focusing on Hawaiian societal issues. However, this classification based on ethnicity is contested by Luangphinith, who argues that it oversimplifies the interconnected nature of Hawaii's population (220). Newman (46) supports this idea, stating that Hawaiian literature encompasses authors from diverse backgrounds, including *Kānaka,* white Americans, and Asian Americans.

2. Cultural Narratives of Nature: Personification in Hawaiian Literature

Hawaiian literature reimagines nature as an active, conscious agent, thus opposing Western anthropocentrism that has traditionally reduced nature to a mere commodity. This conception challenges how the representation of nature in language is often seen as a manifestation of an anthropocentric, human-oriented perspective (Oppermann 4). The linguistic portrayal of nature, whether through romanticized depictions or the untouched wilderness, is rooted in the use of language that situates humans outside the realm of nature, based on the Western culture/nature dichotomy. In other words, the representation of nature through language serves as a means for humans to position themselves as subjects and nature as an object. Similarly, Plumwood highlights the boundary between humans and nature by exposing that "anthropocentric culture often endorses a view of the human as outside, and apart from, a plastic, passive and 'dead' nature, which lacks agency and meaning ("Decolonizing Relationships with Nature" 54)." This dichotomy underscores the prevailing paradigm positioning humans as active subjects and nature as passive objects.

The refiguration of nature as a subject in Hawaiian literature is intrinsically tied to an epistemological concept in Hawaiian culture known as *mana*, which can be understood as a force present in every entity (Becket and Singer 25–27). Native Hawaiians believe that every being, whether biotic or abiotic, possesses *mana*, albeit in varying amounts. Places formed by natural phenomena like cracks in the earth, caves, volcanic craters, or frozen lava are regarded as areas with substantial *mana,* and thus viewed as sacred or hallowed. As David and Wilson states,

> So-called "power" locations were those where the carving of a petroglyph appears to have been a means of gaining mana (spiritual power) or conferring a blessing. Usually associated with openings in the earth (caves, cracks, or collapsed lava tubes), these locales may be considered as a connection to the underworld and its residing spirits. (81)

This agency of matters, articulated by Iovino and Oppermann (77), further underscores the inherent agency within all entities, emphasizing that the narrative of the world encompasses not just human life but also the vital materiality of all living beings. It further acknowledges the experiences of non-human entities, illustrating that they actively shape the unfolding story of our interconnected existence. Nature is reconceptualized, not as an object of observation or interpretation, but as an active agent in its own right

Personification is a literary technique employed by Hawaiian authors to convincingly convey the holistic interconnectedness of entities through emotional connectedness (Moore 22). This personification of natural elements originated in the polytheistic beliefs of the Hawaiian people, where each deity symbolizes a specific natural force. *Kānaka* articulates their emotional and spiritual connection to the environment by attributing human-like

traits to aspects of nature. In the Hawaiian worldview, deities, as personifications of nature, inhabit both the spiritual and physical realms, coexisting with humans. This is an avenue for telling personal stories, shared cultural memory and societal ties (Dewi and Indriyanto 688). Within the imaginative realms manifested by Hawaiian authors, natural forces take on human-like forms and interact directly with other characters, affirming the concept of *kino lau* (many bodies) in Hawaiian tradition. This belief holds that the Hawaiian deities exist both in the spiritual realm and the tangible world, as Trask posits:

> the cosmos, like the natural world, was a universe of familial relations. And human beings were but one constituent link in the larger family. Thus, gods had human and animal forms, and human ancestors inhabited different physical forms after death. (18)

The analysis of selected Hawaiian literature reveals that personification predominantly centers around a female figure, *Pele* as the volcano goddess. This female personification articulates women and nature as active, agentic entities, unlike the Western perspective, which often positions them as parallel passive objects. Swanson expresses that "the image of female deities was celebrated as an example of the closeness of the female to nature and as an ecological symbol of women's empowerment (255)." *Pele* is believed to be the spirit responsible for volcanic eruptions and lava flows in the Hawaiian Islands, particularly in Mount *Kīlauea* and other volcanoes (Mitchell 74). Indigenous Hawaiians perceive the blazing tongues of fire and the billowing clouds of volcanic smoke as manifestations of *Pele* in the tangible world (Lafrance 3). *Pele* is not only regarded as a deity (*Akua*) but also as an ancestor (*kupuna*), specifically, a grandmother (*tutu)* within the Hawaiian kinship system. This phenomenon underscores the Hawaiian belief that their reverence for the personification of nature is rooted in familial connections. *Pele* is believed to be the elder of the *Kānaka* extended family (*ohana*), representing a holistic and inseparable unity.

> Pele has great significance in Hawaiian culture, representing all the phenomena related to volcanoes—the magma, steam, ash, acid rain. Her primary form is the lava, not necessarily that she is a female, human person. But the image of her function is creation, which happens to be a very feminine image. Hawaiians call her Tutu Pele, using the word for a grandparent, because deities are more ancient than the Kānaka are. (Jones 3)

3. *Pele's* Personification: Refiguring Nature in Selected Hawaiian Literature

In this subsection, the study argues that the personification of natural forces, exemplified by the goddess *Pele* and family aumakua, represents the refiguration of the relationship between humans and nature in alignment with the *Kānaka* perspective. The

representation of *Pele* in Hawaiian literature symbolizes the rejection of the exploitation of sacred places in the Hawaiian Islands. Concerning aumakua, the argument focuses on the storyline related to the names given in dreams by family aumakua, known as *na inoa,* as a rejection of the imposition of biblical characters on the people of Hawaii. This highlights these narratives' cultural and ecological significance in redefining humanity's connection with the natural world.

Pele's personification in Hawaiian literature can be found in the works of both white (*haole*) and *Kānaka* authors, with disparities in her portrayal, reflecting the cultural and narrative distinctions between these ethnic perspectives. Indigenous authors such as Kiana Davenport, employ *Pele*'s personification as symbols of resistance against the exploitative actions of the American military in sacred Hawaiian locations (*wahi pana*). In this context, the representation of *Pele* in indigenous Hawaiian novels is intrinsically tied to the political aspirations of the *Kānaka* to regain autonomy and sovereignty under American domination. The eruptions and pyroclastic flows on the Big Island of Hawaii symbolize *Pele*'s anger at the seizure of Native Hawaiians sacred places, such as graves and places of worship. Conversely, her portrayal in *haole* works does not carry such political overtones.

In James Michener's novel *Hawaii* (1959), the representation of the goddess *Pele* as a personification of volcanic forces, as discussed earlier, is depicted as a woman adorned in a silk robe. Her appearance is imagined through conversation with a Hawaiian chief (*ali'i*) named Kelolo and is portrayed as a sign of an impending volcanic eruption.

> they met, for the last time on earth, the silent, delicate form of Pele, keeper of the volcanoes, dressed in silken robes, with strange glasslike hair standing out in the night breeze. She paused dramatically, raised her left hand and pointed south, directly through the Keala-i-kahiki Channel and onto Keala-i-kahiki Point, and she stood thus for some minutes as if commanding Kelolo with her fiery yet consoling eyes. (Michener 340)

In the prior passage, *Pele* is represented as the embodiment of volcanic forces taking on the form of a woman. *Hawaii* presents *Pele* as the "keeper of the volcanoes," a portrayal intrinsically tied to the prevalence of volcanic phenomena in the Hawaiian Islands. Through *Pele*'s interaction with a Hawaiian chief, Michener underscores the paramount importance of genealogy in Hawaiian tradition. A chief, tracing their lineage back to the divine union of *Papa* and *Wakea,* is believed to possess a more profound connection to the natural world due to their abundance of *mana* (K. Silva 86). *Pele* serves as the guardian of the Hawaiian people, particularly in the context of volcanic eruptions, underscoring her cultural significance and pivotal role in safeguarding the populace from volcanic calamities.

Hawaii presents a conflict between Hawaii and the West regarding the personification of nature in the form of the goddess *Pele*, epitomized by the rejection of white

people's character regarding *Pele*'s existence. This perspective is rooted in the Western positivistic epistemology, which assumes everything can be scientifically explained (Pretty et al. 7–9). Abner Hale, a missionary from New England, underscores the Western skepticism toward native Hawaiian beliefs as mere superstition. Hale's rejection of the existence of *Pele* as the ruler of volcanoes is evident in the quote, "The island stories of *Pele* were nonsense, volcanoes were the result of natural forces whose eruption could almost be predicted scientifically (Michener 407)." When Western science fails to predict when eruptions will occur or to halt the devastating pyroclastic flows that engulf settlements, Michener depicts the success of the chiefess, Noelani, in calming *Pele*'s volcanic wrath:

> she was a daughter of Pele, one in whose family the very being of the goddess had resided, and now, returning to the suzerainty of the fire goddess, Noelani planted her feet before the on-surging lava and decided that here she would stand and if need be, die. Holding the sacred rock of Pele aloft, she cried, "Pele! Great goddess! You are destroying the town of those who love you! I pray you to halt! (408)

Prior narration affirms the Hawaiian cosmological perspective on the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world, exemplified through the narrative. Within the hierarchical structure of ancient Hawaii, the lineage of chieftains was blessed with an abundance of *mana,* symbolizing a closer connection to nature. Through his narration, Michener asserts how nature remains the dominant force in the relationship between humans and non-humans, essentially portraying it as a subject. This sentiment is evident in the phrase "returning to the suzerainty of the fire goddess," affirming nature's agency and humans' dependence on natural forces. Michener's portrayal underlines his efforts to reconfigure the relationship between humans and nature through the personification of *Pele.* This representation challenges Western anthropocentrism and provides an alternative environmental imagination of natural forces.

The representation of volcanic forces through *Pele*'s personification is also evident in Kiana Davenport's *Shark Dialogues* (1995). While Michener envisions the encounter with *Pele* as a warning of impending disasters, Davenport describes the manifestation of natural forces, mainly volcanoes, in the form of *Pele*. The billowing hot smoke emanating from the Kilauea crater is depicted as a sign that *Pele* resides on Mount *Kilauea,* and her fury could lead to a volcanic eruption at any moment:

> strong taint of sulfur in the air, and wisps of steam rising from cracked earth, a reminder that the volcanoes were alive, that Pele was seething, gathering subterranean forces. (Davenport 125)

Davenport's depiction alludes to the native Hawaiian belief in volcanoes as living entities and the existence of *Pele,* who safeguards these volcanic landscapes, evident in the phrase "a reminder that the volcanoes were alive." Natural signs such as the scent of sulfur and smoke from the craters signify the presence or manifestation of the volcanic goddess within the living environment. Western influences and colonial discourse viewed nature as passive and exploitable, a perspective challenged in Davenport's *Shark Dialogues. Pele's* representation as a female figure further critiques Western perspectives that often exoticize and sensualize the Hawaiian landscape due to its tropical climate (Indriyanto 82–83). Depicting *Pele* as a raging fire empowers both nature and women as active entities with their agency in the Hawaiian context.

Davenport represents volcanic eruptions through *Pele*'s personification as a symbol of nature's wrath against the ongoing American military presence in Hawaii. Her narrative places volcanic eruptions on the island of Hawai'i as they coincide with the American military's seizure of sacred lands around the Kilauea volcano. This event is depicted in the following passage:

> news came that, on the Big Island, the U.S. Army had turned the Ka'u Desert near Kilauea Crater into a training ground. Tanks crunched across volcano beds, graves of ancient warriors were obliterated by machine guns and mortar firing. There were rumblings from Pele. Flames shot from her fire pit at night. (Davenport 88)

In Davenport's narrative, she draws parallels between the volcanic eruptions at Kilauea and the intrusion of the American military, which resulted in the desecration of sacred Hawaiian lands. The eruption of Kilauea symbolizes *Pele*'s wrath in response to the confiscation of these holy sites on the Big Island of Hawai'i for American military purposes. It underscores the familial bond between the indigenous Hawaiians and the natural forces, personified through *Pele*'s portrayal. Inglis explores how all Hawaiians have to *mālama 'āina* (care for the land) and, in return, the *'āina* will *mālama* the Hawaiians (11). In this context, Davenport contextualizes how volcanic eruptions serve to represent *Pele*'s anger toward the encroachments of foreign forces in Hawaiians' *wahi pana*.

This section contextualizes how *Pele*'s representation within Hawaiian literature reconfigures nature as an active subject. Similar with Michener's *Hawaii, Shark Dialogues* positions nature as a dynamic and conscious entity, challenging Western conceptions that instrumentalize nature as a passive object. Differently, Davenport, as a *Kānaka* author, situates her representation as a form of critique toward American militarism and empowering indigenous agency. The subsequent part focuses more on the personification of nature in the form of *'aumakua*.

4. Environmental Imagination of *'aumakua* in Selected Hawaiian Literature

Apart from the representation of *Pele*, the personification of nature in Hawaiian literature can also be observed through the depiction of ancestral spirits, known as *'aumakua*. Pukui and Elbert (32) define *'aumakua* as ancestral spirits revered in the forms of animals, plants, rocks, and clouds. Unlike the collective beliefs in Hawaiian deities, *'aumakua* is a more private/specific communal belief since each family worships its specific *'aumakua*. As previously discussed, the representation of *'aumakua* aims to emphasize the holistic connection of the *Kānaka* with their environment. This belief is based on the notion that deceased family members persist in their presence as spirit animals in the surroundings.

In *Moloka'i* (2004), Alan Brennert envisions the presence of *'aumakua* as a site of contestation between Hawaii and the West regarding the ancestral practice of naming. The existence of *'aumakua* is seen through Rachel, a *Kānaka* character, as her ancestors impart a traditional Hawaiian name, *inoa po*, in a dream. Rachel, originally given a biblical name, is symbolically bestowed with the Hawaiian title *Aouli*:

> the sky above us was blue forever, and I looked up at it and thought: Aouli. 'Blue vault of heaven.' It just came into my head: "Aouli." To the puzzled children, he explained, "A 'night name'—a name found in a dream. It comes from the next world, and once the name is spoken, it must be bestowed on the child. (Brennert 33)

The above quote refers to Hawaii's belief in the significance of naming to preserve history, tradition, and genealogy for younger generations. Brennert's narrative positions the arrival of white settlers and the naming policies based on biblical figures as disrupting this Hawaiian tradition. This conflict is reflected through the character of Dorothy, Rachel's mother, a devout Christian who views all aspects of Hawaiian culture as heretical:

> The old ways, the old language. She wanted all our children to have Christian names, to celebrate Jehovah." Dorothy pointed out, defensively, "It's the law. The king decreed that every child have a Christian name! (Brennert 39)

The success of colonial discourse manifests through the use of biblical names as symbols of Western modernity over the original names bestowed by *'aumakua*. Dorothy's rejection of Hawaiian cultural traditions is evident in her use of the terms "old ways" and "old language". These derogative phrases emphasize how Hawaiian customs and the Hawaiian language are viewed as irrelevant compared to Western culture and Christianity. The characterization of paganism and the stigma attached to ancient beliefs contribute to the abandonment of native Hawaiian traditions, exemplified through the naming bestowed by *'aumakua*.

Moloka'i affirms the native Hawaiian belief regarding *'aumakua*, indicating that these *'aumakua* are believed to exist in two realms: the spiritual and the tangible world, both of which persist on the small island of Moloka'i. Similar to the depictions of Hawaiian gods and goddesses believed to have various physical forms (*kino lau*), *'aumakua* also exist in these dual realms. The novel illustrates how *'aumakua*, besides being believed to manifest in the dreams of family members, also take the form of spirit animals in the real world:

> Our 'aumakua often look after us here on earth. Some take the form of sharks, and if a descendant is drowning in the sea, the shark may offer up its fin to pull them to shore. Other spirits become owls, fish, lizards, or whatever permits them to watch over their family. "There is an old prayer: "Aumakua of the night, watch over your offspring, enfold them in the belt of light. (Brennert 139)

Brennert's exposition underscores the native Hawaiian belief that deceased family members remain near the *ohana* in different forms. He describes how *'aumakua* are believed to take on the forms of sharks, owls, fish in the ocean, and other animals. Brennert articulates the indigenous Hawaiians belief that *'aumakua*, appearing in the form of animals, will assist the *Kānaka* in times of trouble. The portrayal of *'aumakua* actively participating in the narrative demonstrates how *Moloka'i* reconfigures nature as an active subject.

Representations of *'aumakua* as a personification of nature are also addressed by O.A. Bushnell in the novel *Ka'a'awa* (1972). The character of Hiram Nihoa, a *Kānaka*, affirms the native Hawaiian belief in the existence of *'aumakua* and deities within various entities. Nihoa's character is depicted as an individual who believes in the presence of spirits in the surroundings, as evident in the following quotation:

> to this visible tribute, I added a brief prayer, asking the protection of all the gods, great and small, and most especially of the flying fish, my family's totem spirit. (Bushnell 119)

The narrative underscores the dual aspects of pantheism in Hawaiian culture, which are integral to their spiritual and cultural worldview. There is the collective belief in deities, the gods and goddesses, who collectively represent a vast array of natural forces, celestial bodies, and aspects of the environment. On the other hand, the individual belief in *'aumakua* reflects a deeply personal and familial connection to nature. Each *'aumakua* is unique to an individual or family, often as an animal, plant, or even an elemental force like the wind or ocean. *Ka'a'awa* articulates the indigenous Hawaiian belief in spiritual and mystical elements from nature's central role in Hawaiian tradition. The phrase "all the gods, great and small," underscores the Hawaiian people's belief in the existence of *mana*, the inherent power within every entity, forming a holistic unity.

The portrayal of *'aumakua* emphasizes the significance of naming and the obstacles posed by the arrival of Western influences in preserving this tradition. In line with Brennert's interpretation of *inoa po,* the name bestowed by *'aumakua* in dreams, Bushnell illustrates the vital role of names in preserving history, especially in the context of genealogy. In *Ka'a'awa,* this narrative is depicted in the following passage: "It was the boy's now, the *mana* of his line, given from his ancestor to him, for him to keep as long as he should live" (Bushnell 127). As a society that passes down history orally, names play a crucial role in Hawaiian genealogy. As found by Pukui, Harertig & Lee "the most precious personal possession in ancient Hawaii was each man's most personal possession, his name (94)." Names are considered a primary means of preserving Hawaii's inhabitants' history, traditions, and genealogical records.

Bushnell highlights that the belief in the importance of names in the context of historical heritage began to erode with the arrival of white settlers and the Christian religion. One illustration of the influence of Western culture on Hawaiian naming is the regulation that mandated the bestowal of a biblical name upon a newborn baby (Green and Beckwith 233). Hiram Nihoa himself is named "Hiram," a reference to Biblical figure. Bushnell argues that, unlike names given by *'aumakua,* which carry meaning and serve as a means of passing down history, names following Western culture do not possess specific significance.

> the chief of the missionary preachers at that time was called Hiram Bingham. Being a smart man by then, I took his name and pleased her and him. But, to tell you the truth, I do not know what it means. These foreign names, I have learned, have no meanings: they are just strange noises, even to foreigners. Would you believe it? (Bushnell 140)

Unlike the naming of *inoa po* by the family *'aumakua*, which symbolizes the preservation of tradition and genealogy, Biblical names do not carry their meanings. As highlighted earlier, names are vital in safeguarding Hawaiian traditions, especially within an oral culture. In contrast, Biblical names are deemed meaningless as an imported cultural element.

5. Preserving Traditions: The Enduring Cultural Practices of Native Hawaiians

The articulation of native Hawaiian beliefs regarding the personification of nature, whether in the form of deities or *'aumakua*, is vividly depicted in Hawaiian literature. Hawaiian authors' imaginative works underscore nature's active role and significance in the narratives they present. The portrayal of nature as both human and spirit animals, as reflected in the depictions of the goddess *Pele* and the various forms of *'aumakua,* signifies a holistic unity between humans and the environment. In contrast to the Western

division of humans and non-humans into separate realms, Hawaiian polytheistic beliefs in literature highlight the profound connection between native Hawaiians and the surrounding natural world. As Herman summarizes, the thoughts of the *Kānaka* emphasize the holistic relationship between deities (*akua*), humans, and *ʻaumakua*:

> Gods become nature, and humans become demigods, which in turn become nature. The circle between divinity, humanity, and nature is complete, and their boundaries are permeable. (1999, 82)

The native Hawaiians' belief in the existence of gods, goddesses, and *ʻaumakua* as embodiments of nature continues to thrive in the modern era. Particularly in regions prone to natural disasters, like near volcanoes, the goddess *Pele* remains a prominent figure of worship among the *Kānaka* community. Acts of reverence and devotion towards *Pele* are prevalent on the Big Island of Hawai'i, especially in areas such as Puna and Ka'u, home to several active volcanoes (Becket and Singer 175; Kawai'ae'a et al. 12; Kodama-Nishimoto et al. 142). This enduring belief in the presence of *Pele* as the guardian of volcanoes on the Big Island has been well-documented, as revealed in Leathers' dissertation (2014), which examined the perceptions of residents living in the vicinity of Mount Kilauea. The research findings from Leathers concluded that out of 257 respondents, 167 of them, or approximately 65%, believed in the existence of *Pele* as the ruler of the volcanoes (88–92). This exposition underscores the persistence of polytheistic beliefs among the native Hawaiians and manifests their profound respect for the natural world.

Similar to their polytheistic beliefs regarding gods and goddesses, the belief in *ʻaumakua* as a marker of individual spirituality continues to be embraced by native Hawaiians in the contemporary era. Cordova asserts that "'*aumakua* remains worshipped, not merely a relic of a bygone era; it is a present deity in Hawaiian belief (15)." The persistence of '*aumakua* belief as a form of honoring departed ancestors is closely intertwined with the acculturation of Christianity, which is the predominant religion in Hawai'i today. Kane argues that Christian doctrine, emphasizing God as the Father, and the commandment to "honor your father and mother, (2)" is an area of acculturation between Western teachings and the family values of Polynesian communities. The enduring belief in *ʻaumakua* is documented by Silva (2019) in her dissertation, which examined a community in the Wai'anae Valley on the eastern side of O'ahu. Silva discovered the continuity of rituals through prayers (*pule*) offered to '*aumakua* seeking protection for the community from various calamities.

> It is said that a pule (prayer) was offered to the spirit and ʻaumakua (gods) in each of the four directions before and after being on the ʻāina, so the people were blessed in turn, and their crops were safeguarded both from natural disaster and wild boars. Even today, we continue with our pule to our spirit and ʻaumakua before we step into the lo ʻi kalo and

other cultivations. We deeply respect the land and kalo because we know it is then that we are blessed with abundant food. (63–64)

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, analysis of selected Hawaiian literature contextualizes the intricate interplay between culture and nature within the Native Hawaiian epistemology. Throughout the study of literary works by both native and non-native authors, a consistent theme emerges: the profound connection between humans and the environment, framed through the lens of traditional Hawaiian cosmology. This framework personifies nature, embodying the close emotional connection manifested through the narratives of Hawaiian literature. Nature is personified as an active character in the description, where the concept of *kino lau* manifests in both the metaphysical realm and worldly form. This alternative environmental imagination enriches our understanding of the human/non-human discourse. Moreover, it also underscores the resilience of Native Hawaiian cultural practices despite historical and contemporary challenges like colonization and modernization.

Hawaiian literature reimagines nature as an active subject, challenging Western anthropocentrism by highlighting the interconnectedness between humans and the more-than-human world. Within these narratives, authors' environmental imagination blurs the rigid boundaries that typically separate humanity from the natural world, emphasizing fluidity and coexistence. This reinterpretation aligns with Hawaiian cultural and spiritual traditions, where gods, goddesses, and *'aumakua* embody diverse aspects of the environment. In conclusion, the environmental imagination of Hawaiian authors posits one avenue to reconceptualize humanity's position within the broader ecosystems.

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Reconnecting with the Non-human World: Loss and Uncertainty in Esther Woolfson's *Field Notes from a Hidden City: An Urban Nature Diary*

Abstract. The article focuses on the issue of reconnecting with the non-human world of animals and plants that can be encountered in the city, as presented in Esther Woolfson's book *Field Notes from a Hidden City: An Urban Nature Diary*. Even though it deals with an urban environment, the book can be treated as an instance of nature writing, more specifically British new nature writing. By focusing on non-human beings living in the city, Woolfson makes them more salient in the readers' minds, demonstrating that direct contact with nature is not limited to the wilderness or the countryside and is accessible to anyone, regardless of where they live. At the same time, her diary reveals underlying sorrow connected with the gradual loss of species, populations, habitats, and familiar weather patterns, as well as uncertainty as to what can and should be done to protect the environment and the living beings that inhabit it.

Keywords: Esther Woolfson, new nature writing, urban nature, city, animals, environment, ecology

1. Introduction

The article aims to investigate Esther Woolfson's book *Field Notes from a Hidden City: An Urban Nature Diary* as an attempt to explore human connections with the natural world and non-human beings in an urban environment. While the wilderness, national parks, or the countryside receive much attention from environmentalists and nature lovers alike, urban environments are frequently underappreciated, forgotten, or ignored. Thus, Woolfson's book contributes to increasing the salience of urban nature in readers' minds. At the same time, it reveals the losses that the non-human world has suffered,

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both in cities and elsewhere, and uncertainty about how to care for the environment and its inhabitants.

The article begins with discussing Woolfson's book in the context of nature writing, specifically British new nature writing. The concept of salience and its application in investigating nature writing is also introduced. The next section is devoted to the issue of nature writing as a way to face loss and uncertainty, which is then explored throughout the article. The following part offers an analysis of selected passages from the book which focus on different non-human beings in cities and various environmental issues connected with them. In general, it is argued that Woolfson's diary is an attempt to make urban nature more salient and to foster connections between humans and non-human beings. Simultaneously, it expresses sorrow over the losses and uncertainty about the fate of the natural world and its inhabitants.

2. Esther Woolfson's Book as an Instance of Nature Writing

Field Notes from a Hidden City: An Urban Nature Diary is not a typical instance of nature writing as it deals with nature in the city. The majority of nature writers, especially those living in America, describe their excursions or their stay in some kind of wilderness, such as a national park, a desert, mountains, or their daily walks in local countryside, in areas such as woods, fields and meadows, and sometimes their life on a farm. As a result, readers who live in urban areas and have no opportunity and no financial resources to travel to the places those writers present (or to similar ones) may find it difficult to understand or to relate to such texts, as pointed out by, for example, Michael P. Branch in his article on teaching nature writing to students.

In contrast, Woolfson, who lives in the city of Aberdeen on the east coast of Scotland, describes her experience of nature in that place over the span of one year. She searches for a connection with nature wherever she can find it: in a park, on the river bank, on the beach, in her own back garden. Even though some of those places are close to the city centre, they appear remote and retain their natural beauty and calm, offering a respite for the inhabitants of the city. She devotes her free time to walking, gardening, feeding birds, watching the sky at night, and observing weather phenomena. In her diary she focuses on many common species of animals found in cities, especially different kinds of birds, but also rodents, and even slugs and snails, as well as her numerous pets, past and present. As a result, most readers can easily relate to her experience no matter where they live, even though not all of them may own gardens or live on the coast, as she does.

Woolfson's diary can be considered as an instance of nature writing, more specifically the recent trend of so-called British new nature writing. Nature writing is usually autobiographical writing in which the natural world plays a significant role, often in the form of a collection of essays, a diary, a journal, an excursion narrative, or a travel

narrative (for an overview of typical forms and themes, see, for example, Lyon). New nature writers often combine "autobiography, travelogue, natural history and popular science" (Hubbard and Wilkinson 254) in their works, which are frequently "thematically wide-ranging and stylistically digressive, combining personal reflection with natural history, cultural history, psychogeography, travel and topographical writing, folklore and prose poetry" (Moran 49). As a result, there is no general agreement on whether nature writing should be treated as a genre with different subgenres (which is the most common approach) or perhaps as a literary tradition that can find its expression through different genres (see Smith, "New Nature Writing" 267).

Nature writing differs significantly from professional scientific accounts of the natural world and even from many popular science books about nature. In nature writing, the narrator and his/her/their activities, reactions, thoughts, and emotions play an important role, offering a characteristic combination of scientific and poetic language, of scientific knowledge and personal reflections, "stretching and complicating the scientific in inviting ways" (Smith, "New Nature Writing" 268). Scott Slovic argues that many nature writers focus not only on the natural world itself but also on the ways in which their minds interact with it, especially on their heightened awareness, which is partly a consequence of trying to articulate their experience and combining aesthetic appreciation and scientific understanding of natural phenomena, so characteristic of nature writing in general (3–4). As Joe Moran claims, contemporary nature writers are convinced that trying to describe and make sense of nature through language "increases our attentiveness to it and potential for caring for it" (61).

Although the term "new nature writing" was used for the first time in 2008 by Jason Cowley, Jos Smith in his book *The New Nature Writing* argues that the beginnings of the trend date back to the early 1970s, a period of increased concern about the condition of the natural world, and the development of environmental activism in Britain (4). However, it was only at the beginning of the twenty-first century that new nature writing gained popularity (11). New nature writers tend to concentrate on specific places and local areas, while at the same time being conscious of connections between local and global issues; they are concerned about the destruction of the environment and its roots in society and the economy, aware of the fact that nowadays all landscapes and ecosystems are to some degree modified by humans, and conscious of numerous connections between people and other living beings (Abberley et al. 198).

British new nature writing is distinct from American nature writing in general, since it deals with landscapes heavily modified by human culture and civilisation, as opposed to the seemingly pristine wilderness celebrated by many American nature writers, who are often not aware of or familiar with its former native inhabitants and their cultures. In contrast, the British variety is much more focused on cultural elements and the cultural history of the described places (see Smith, "Archipelagic Literature" 6–7). Phil

Hubbard and Eleanor Wilkinson observe that most nature writers in Britain attempt to overcome the opposition between nature and culture, and explore interconnections between the land and the lives of its human inhabitants (253). Thus, contemporary British nature writing frequently concentrates on "the mutual entanglement of the human and the nonhuman and the profoundly cultural attitudes and assumptions embedded in the natural world" (Abberley et al. 201).

New nature writing is also distinct from earlier British nature writing in several ways. Contemporary writers are primarily interested "not in the rare or exotic but in our everyday connections with the non-human natural world," in "small-scale and quotidian encounters with nature, often in unpromising surroundings" (Moran 50). Consequently, they explore quite ordinary places, often halfway between the city and the countryside or affected in the past by industrialisation, and their works emphasise the significance of such places for the wellbeing of their human and non-human inhabitants (Hubbard and Wilkinson 254). Thus, this kind of literature questions the way people have traditionally evaluated landscapes in the past, giving preference to the countryside or to the mountains. Finally, new nature writing differs from earlier British texts in its rejection of pastoral and romantic traditions as well as "the conservative tradition of a nationalistic landscape aesthetic" in favour of a broader and more contemporary perspective on global environmental issues (Smith, "New Nature Writing" 270).

Arran Stibbe argues that British new nature writing is a genre that makes nature more salient in readers' minds. He defines salience as "a story in people's minds that an area of life is important or worthy of attention" (162). Certain salience patterns can be used to provide "a linguistic or visual representation of an area of life as worthy of attention through concrete, specific and vivid depictions" (Stibbe 162). He enumerates many different strategies employed by new nature writers to increase salience, including the following: (1) personalisation of animals achieved, for example, by using the pronouns "he" or "she" rather than "it", and "who" rather than "which" to refer to animals, or by presenting animals as unique, irreplaceable individuals rather than as a mass or as typical representatives of a given species identical to one another; (2) presenting animals as agents (active participants doing something in the world) or as sensers (conscious beings that think, feel, and perceive their surroundings with their senses); (3) employing vocabulary referring to basic level categories (the names of specific species, the level at which it is easiest to imagine animals) rather than to abstract superordinate categories (such as "fauna" or "mammal"); (4) using sense images (subjective descriptions of nature referring to multiple senses to help the reader to imagine a given scene vividly), which frequently involve employing metaphors and similes (see Stibbe 174–180).

The opposite of making something salient is its erasure from a text. According to Stibbe (146), erasure can be defined as "a story in people's minds that an area of life is unimportant or unworthy of consideration". The use of various erasure patterns results

in "a linguistic representation of an area of life as irrelevant, marginal or unimportant through its systematic absence, backgrounding or distortion in texts" (146). Obviously, erasure of unimportant details is an unavoidable process in creating any text. It becomes meaningful or even problematic only if something that is deemed important by the analyst is repeatedly omitted, ignored, or just mentioned briefly, when "something which is present in reality, and could possibly have been represented, has been excluded" (Stibbe 149).

It can be observed that Esther Woolfson's book has many characteristics of new nature writing. It combines the form of a diary with dated entries with interspersed essays on specific animals and environmental issues. Reported scientific findings are intermingled with accounts of personal experiences and reflections. Like some recent nature writing, the book focuses on ordinary landscapes and animals, in this case found in a city. Finally, like many other new nature writers, Woolfson pays attention to broader environmental concerns and issues, without giving any simple answer or suggesting easy solutions.

As far as salience and erasure are concerned, one can observe that while the non-human world of animals and plants is given salience in Woolfson's diary by being presented in detail by means of all the strategies mentioned above, the world of humans is to some extent erased, except for the narrator herself and her actions. She devotes a lot of attention to animals and plants surrounding her, to her memories of her former pets or wild birds she once tried to rescue, and to scientific studies of animals she has read. Humans, on the other hand, are absent from the text or backgrounded, lacking individualisation. For example, her adult daughters, who no longer live with her, are only briefly mentioned in her memories, while animals play the main part in them and are described in detail. The reader gets the impression that she lives alone in her house and works alone in her garden. It is not until the last part of the book ("September 7th") that her husband suddenly appears in a description of their walk together, and even then she devotes more attention to a dead shrew that they encounter than to him. Other people, if they appear at all, are presented only as unnamed walking companions or anonymous members of an organised trip. As a result of the partial erasure and backgrounding of humans, non-human beings become even more salient in the text.

3. Nature Writing as a Way to Face Loss and Uncertainty

Even though the human element is downplayed, nature writing can still be considered a special type of life writing. Mark Allister, in his study of nature writing as a kind of autobiography, focuses on several books that follow a similar pattern: "All are books of mourning. All begin with the writers recounting a recent trauma and describing their initial despair and subsequent depression. All the books end with the writer announcing that they have moved—tentatively, awkwardly, mysteriously—through the mourning process" (1). As he observes, what helps those writers to deal with their grief is focusing on and writing about

the non-human world surrounding them, which starts a healing process for them. While Allister focuses on examples from American literature, a good instance of this kind of book among representatives of British new nature writing could be *Nature Cure* by Richard Mabey, originally published in 2005, which recounts the author's attempts to overcome his depression through, among other things, direct contact with nature and writing about it.

While Esther Woolfson's book is different in many ways, as it is a fragmentary diary rather than an autobiography, and since there is no definite initial trauma or depression that she attempts to heal through her writing, the awareness of losses and the feelings of sorrow, uncertainty, and helplessness surface throughout the diary. Over the year, her attempts to reconnect with the non-human inhabitants of her immediate environment appear to offer some kind of comfort, even if only the comfort of community and common fate.

One source of her sadness appears to be the unavoidable passage of time and transience of all things. Her diary is interspersed with memories of the past: her family, including her little daughters, who are now grown up and have left their home, all her past pets, now buried in the garden, and all those wild animals that she brought home over time and tried to rescue. As she contemplates a photo of her small daughter in the bare garden, now overgrown with all kinds of plants, she observes: "Everything has changed and grown: the tree, the empty flowerbeds, the small girl on the grass" ("March 1st"). Both the human and the non-human world are unified in transience and constant change. Her present loneliness without her daughters and pets is coupled with a sense of inability to protect and save the ones she cares about. She can feed animals in her garden, but she cannot protect them from predators or from other people outside. She can bring injured or sick birds home, but she cannot always save them. This vulnerability as well as her helplessness extend across all beings, ranging from birds to her offspring, as she observes in the entry from May 10th: "I cannot save anything in this world. I cannot defend anything from anything. (Child-rearing is the most ambitious enterprise in this direction that I have endeavoured.)" Placing both animals and her children in the same sentence, she emphasises the unity of their fate and their precarious position in the external world beyond her control and protection.

Another source of her sorrow seems to be the realisation that despite all available scientific knowledge about the natural world, or perhaps because of its vastness and complexity, it is still uncertain how to properly care for and protect the environment and the beings living in it, humans included. The uncertainty about the future of the world and the feeling of grief follow from the awareness of loss: the loss of entire extinct species, the loss of whole populations of animals once inhabiting her city or her country, and finally even the loss of familiar weather patterns as a result of climate change.

The last loss is the impulse that leads her to start keeping her diary, as she explains in the Introduction: "It may have been the winter, the worst many people had ever experienced which, in its startling and prolonged severity, had brought an atmosphere of strangeness,

a feeling of closing in and uncertainty, that had encouraged me to feel reflective." The hard winter also made her acutely aware of "the effects of weather, the ways in which we all live with it in precarious dependence," conscious of the vulnerability of both humans and non-human beings inhabiting the same environment: a young, injured pigeon found in the snow and brought home "seemed to symbolise the fragility that suddenly I felt was there, at the heart of everything" ("Introduction"). It is the disappearance of predictable weather patterns, then, that makes her realise the loss of stability and safety, and start her diary.

As she observes in the Introduction: "It seemed a year designed to test every certainty, to bring the stirrings of disquiet, to make you wonder what might be next and when." In addition to the unusual snow and frost, she enumerates other natural disasters and anomalies that were concentrated in that year all over the world, such as heavy rains and floods, or extreme heat, earthquakes and ash clouds from volcano eruptions. One result of those circumstances was limitations imposed on travelling, both by plane because of the ash clouds, and by train or car because of the heavy snow, which made her cancel her trips, change her plans, and stay at home. Consequently, she decided to focus on her immediate environment, "a world in miniature" ("November 24th").

For the contemporary reader, her descriptions and reflections from that period are reminiscent of the shock and uncertainty of the year 2020, the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns in cities, and restrictions on travelling, which also increased people's appreciation of local nature. Her descriptions of life in the city during the heavy snow and severe cold especially evoke associations with the lockdowns that later emptied city streets during the pandemic: "everything seems to have shrunk to the possible or just the necessary. … It's a city silence, weighty and unnerving, all sudden, unexpected absence" ("November 27th"). The feeling of unusual loneliness pervades the few short walks she takes during that period: "I'm often the only person in the street. Traffic's sparse. … very few cars pass and I'm alone. It makes me think of wars, disasters, prolonged sieges, but it's only snow" ("November 28th"). It appears that all kinds of unusual and unexpected disasters that disrupt familiar routine make people realise their vulnerability and the fragility of their civilisation, their ways of life, their plans, and their future, questioning the stability of their world, which they have taken for granted. In times of uncertainty, they may turn to the local natural world for solace, as Woolfson does. Even if nature is threatened too, at least a sense of community with non-human beings may emerge, which in turn may change attitudes and improve the ways in which those beings are treated.

4. Reconnecting with Non-human Inhabitants of Aberdeen

Esther Woolfson's diary presents different encounters with animals in the city. There are vivid descriptions of animals and their behaviour, which frequently offer a starting point for more general reflections on various environmental issues. She emphasises similarities

and connections between human and non-human beings and their intertwined lives in a common urban environment. While the book makes urban nature more salient in the minds of the readers, which can emphasise its importance and contribute to its greater appreciation, at the same time it reveals her uncertainty about what one could or should do in the face of all the losses of individual beings, populations, species, and locations crucial for their wellbeing or their very existence.

In the introduction to her "urban nature diary" Woolfson signals one of the main themes of her book: "In one city, there are more cities than we know, hidden cities inhabited by those with whom we share everything we rely on: food and light and air. In differing degrees, we share our vulnerability to the elements that shape and dominate our lives: cold or heat, wind and rain" ("Introduction"). Throughout the book she emphasises commonalities between human and non-human inhabitants of the city, demonstrates how their existence is intertwined, how animals enrich the lives of humans, how people's decisions and actions affect, intentionally or not, the lives of other creatures around them in positive or negative ways, but also how both human and non-human beings alike are affected by unfavourable weather conditions or by spreading urbanisation.

She begins her diary with the story of a young, injured pigeon that she rescued and brought home one cold winter night. Like humans, pigeons are common city dwellers, familiar with and adapted to their urban environment. When the bird recovers, she decides to return him "to the wild", that is to the place he comes from and where other members of his species live. She observes that in this case, "the wild" will be the nearby neo-Gothic church and streets with Victorian villas not far from the city centre. Yet "this was a wild bird – a wild, city bird although the words 'wild' and 'city' seemed difficult to reconcile" ("Introduction").

Extending the sense and use of the word "wild" to places and animals usually not considered wild is a characteristic of new nature writing in general. As Graham Huggan observes: "The wild means different things to different people: a quality of self, a relation to the world, an atavistic memory. The 'new nature writing' explores the broken connections between these" (165). Wildness is understood by British nature writers differently than by many American ones,[2] since it is hard to encounter truly wild places in such a small country which has been civilised for centuries (Abberley et al. 206). As a result, British writers, such as Robert Macfarlane in *The Wild Places*, separate the idea of wildness from the concept of wilderness, with its connotations of a vast, uninhabited

2 However, this contrast is not universal. For instance, Henry David Thoreau, one of the fathers of nature writing in America, was aware of the distinction between the wilderness and wildness, and demonstrated in his writings that the quality of wildness does not depend on a particular location and can be encountered anywhere, even in places modified by human civilisation (see Suchostawska 45–46).

area, and are able to perceive wildness in "everyday experience in a 'hybrid world' that is neither social nor natural, but both of these things, and in multiple possible variations" (Abberley et al. 206). In contrast to the notion of wilderness, referring to an area apparently unchanged by human activity, the concept of wildness is less dependent on a particular location, since it may refer to the quality of any being "resistant to human control, prediction or understanding" (Clark 33).

Woolfson wonders if perhaps people regard feral animals that live in the city as "less wild" than animals living in forests or mountains, as "a lesser part of nature". As she points out: "Their presence may be the only contact many urban people have with the natural world but our relationship with them seems changed by proximity, diminished by the very fact of their being here among us" ("Introduction"). She fears that human inhabitants of cities might be perceived similarly by people living in the country, not as part of nature but as those who are alienated from it and who contribute more to the exploitation and pollution of the environment. In another place she wonders why in Scotland walking in the city is generally less valued than walking in the countryside, just by virtue of its location: "to walk in the hills is worthy, to walk in town isn't" ("April 7th"), even though it is the same type of activity. When local nature is protected, "wilder" places are more salient and attract more attention than urban locations and their dwellers. Woolfson's goal is to give greater salience to the latter.

Yet despite the fact that cities are teeming with animals and comprise semi-natural areas, such as parks or river banks, which offer a retreat for humans and animals alike, these green spaces are sometimes under threat of disappearing. Alternatively, access to them may be denied to the public, as when a green area becomes surrounded by houses on all sides and accessible only to their owners through their private back gardens. Woolfson describes a beautiful old public garden on the river bank close to the busiest road, a place where people come with their children to rest and play and where, high in the old trees, rooks have lived for as long as she can remember and probably much longer. As she reports, there are plans to convert the area into a shopping centre and a parking lot. The rooks will lose their home, and the human inhabitants of the city will lose an opportunity to encounter nature: "Where will they [the rooks] go? Where will people without gardens sit on the warm days of summer?" ("July 28th"). Both animal and human city dwellers need such places, and both groups will suffer from this loss. Moreover, as she points out, studies have shown that crows remember their favourite places for generations and keep returning to those locations, now turned into shopping centres and car parks, just for this reason. Many birds, including migratory ones, are characterised by so-called philopatry or place fidelity, the affinity they have for locations that they were born in, to which they return every year to build nests. Yet those places are often thoughtlessly destroyed. Such devastation can negatively impact a particular bird population and their number in a given area.

Throughout her diary Woolfson observes how people value rare or endangered animals, which become salient in people's minds because of their status as threatened with extinction, more than common and familiar ones, like, for instance, a woman interested in songbirds who openly expressed her hatred of pigeons. Large ubiquitous birds, such as pigeons, crows, or seagulls, are often perceived by inhabitants of cities as a nuisance, as unpleasant creatures that cause disorder and pollution, even though people have contributed to the problem themselves. For example, as she points out in her entry from August 11th, both overfishing of the seas and the increase of edible food leftovers in rubbish bins have caused seagulls to leave their natural environment and move into coastal cities. When one day she observes a woman sitting in front of a building and sharing her breakfast with a gull and talking to the bird, she thinks that perhaps the woman comes from a place where seagulls are rare, and that the creature is new to her, since inhabitants of Aberdeen generally treat them with indifference or complain about the disorder and noise they make. She asks: "Does it take unfamiliar eyes to value what we have?" ("August 22nd"). To counter this attitude of indifference, Woolfson provides her readers with vivid descriptions of common city birds, their behaviour and habits, emphasising their intelligence and their family and social links with other members of their species. Thus, she defamiliarizes those birds to some extent, making them appear interesting, attractive, and exceptional, increasing their salience in readers' minds. If certain species are perceived as common, ordinary, unworthy of attention, there is a danger that some of them may become nearly extinct, and it will be only then that people will start to notice, value, and protect them, which may already be too late. An example of such a situation may be the fate of herring gulls, starlings, and sparrows, once common birds that have become endangered in Britain: "They are 'red list' birds, ones we forgot to value or didn't know how to, ones we didn't know we needed to protect" ("Flying through the Storm"). The fate of British sparrows in particular reflects this common pattern of a paradoxical evaluation of animals: once they were so widespread that they were treated as pests by farmers and killed on a massive scale; now they are rare and protected.

Starlings, once present in large numbers in Aberdeen, are disappearing, too. Woolfson relates her memories of large clouds of starlings in the evening sky, "darting urban commuters making their way across the city to their meeting point", with crowds of spectators watching from the streets the spectacle which "transformed the sky, the city, the lives of the observers with the inexplicable mystery of their precision and grace" ("January 29th"). She wonders if, from the point of view of starlings, their human spectators also appeared to them a unified mass on the ground, "if they looked down from their elevated high-flying towards those of us watching from the pavement, and see only undifferentiated members of another species" ("January 29th"). Since individualisation and personalisation increase the salience of a given being in people's minds, it requires a personal relationship with an individual representative of another species to appreciate

his or her uniqueness, exceptionality, and worth. Woolfson recalls her relationship with a particular starling called Max, who lived with her in her house, and how this relationship, in turn, changed and enriched her perception of the cloud of anonymous birds.

The crowds of starlings over the city have disappeared, though, as a result of human decisions. The town council decided to put a net over the bridge where the starlings gathered for the night, because of the accumulating dirt that had to be regularly removed. However, she believes that it was a small price to pay for retaining their habitat and their presence. Nowadays, the sky is empty and quiet as few starlings remain in Aberdeen: "They look lost, disembodied, as if they've been broken off something larger, something whole." The council's decision has affected in a negative way not only the birds but also the present and future inhabitants of the city: "I wonder how future generations will learn about the value of the life around them, of birds such as starlings. How will they know what they've lost or are losing?" ("January 29th"). One of the reasons for such removals of non-human dwellers of cities is the argument that animals such as birds and rats may carry dangerous diseases. However, according to Woolfson, such a threat is largely exaggerated. Moreover, she points out that every being, including humans, may spread a disease: "Condemned as disease carriers, they are only as we all are or might be, as many other animals and birds are" ("Fellow Travellers"). She observes that members of our species are perhaps the most likely to spread diseases all over the world due to increasing mass tourism and global trade, as the recent COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated.

Not only birds attract her attention, though. For instance, she devotes a whole chapter to squirrels. As she observes, squirrels are not only clever, intelligent storers of food, which they hide from other animals in many carefully selected places that they remember, but also inquisitive, curious creatures. She recalls how one day she noticed a squirrel on the other side of her kitchen window, peering through the glass at the humans and their pets gathered inside "with the half-alarmed, half-fascinated look of a small child at a zoo, … peering in at the assembled company, nose and tiny paws pressed against the pane" ("The Fugitive in the Garden"). In this passage, the usual subject-object relationship is reversed and, instead of the typical scene of a human subject observing animals, there is a squirrel subject watching the way humans live.

As usual, Woolfson intermingles descriptions of her particular encounters with individual squirrels with broader reflections on their fate and the changing ways in which they (and other species, including plants) are labelled and judged. She recounts the story of red and grey squirrels in Britain. American grey squirrels were introduced in the nineteenth century and they have almost replaced the native population of red squirrels in Scotland, being more resistant to a disease which they also spread. As a result, the rare "native" red squirrels are now welcome, while grey squirrels are regarded as an invasive species, persecuted, trapped, and killed. Consequently, even the fact that a grey squirrel comes to her garden to eat bird food makes her feel as if she is "harbouring a fugitive", and she fears that

others may consider her tolerant attitude as "subversive". She reflects on how using certain words, such as "invader", "invasion", "invasive" species, words that trigger the frame[3] of war and conquest, changes our attitude to certain animals and plants. Paradoxically, the now admired red squirrels were once so numerous that they were regarded as pests and killed in large numbers until the beginning of the twentieth century, which also contributed to their drastic decline. Watching a red squirrel, she observes: "It is as lovely, as delicate a creature as it would have been while it was being persecuted as a 'pest.' As I watch it, it occurs to me that all that changes is human perception" ("The Fugitive in the Garden"). Labels and attitudes to species evolve over time. To a person facing an individual animal in an unprejudiced way, representatives of both species are equally admirable. Each of them is simply another being that wants to live. The question is whether people have a right (or even an obligation) to kill an animal just because it belongs to a specific species considered "invasive" or a "pest" when this creature actually poses no threat to them.

The controversy over squirrels in Britain is just one instance of a broader conflict between two distinct approaches to living creatures, namely ecology and the animal rights movement. As Greg Garrard points out, many animal liberationists argue that it is immoral to cause pain to any sentient being, whereas environmentalists consider the suffering of an individual animal as an inevitable aspect of natural life (139–140). Consequently, as Timothy Clark observes, animal liberationists tend to treat "the animal as an individual existence, more in the way in which a person is considered" (179). Ecologists, on the other hand, "esteem a species in terms of its place in an ecosystem: value lies in the ecosystem as a whole, not in the individual", which leads to debates between the two groups, for example concerning ethical aspects of exterminating a growing population of invasive species (Clark 180–181).

Woolfson comments that "invasions" of foreign species of animals and plants, caused either by humans importing and introducing them, intentionally or not, or by animals spreading to new localities, are quite common and have always taken place. While some populations are really detrimental to local species and habitats, it is not entirely clear what should be done about them. Others, however, may pose no significant threat, so there is little point in trying to extirpate them, "waging war against an enemy that is, perhaps, no enemy at all" ("The Fugitive in the Garden"). For instance, as she reads more on the subject of invasive species, it turns out that she has an invasive species of rose in her garden. She wonders if she should remove and destroy the beautiful plant or let it grow there and enchant the inhabitants and passers-by alike, as it used to in the past, when the concept of invasive species was unknown.

As usual, the questions remain unanswered, and the reader is confronted with a large body of references to other texts and invited to reflect on the issue, as well as on the others tackled throughout the book. Woolfson often poses thought-provoking questions

3 For a discussion of the notions of frames and framing in texts about the environment, see Stibbe (46–62).

which the readers are invited to ponder and then come up with their own responses, as she refrains from giving any straightforward and decisive answers. Her unwillingness, or perhaps inability, to answer the questions she raises reveals her uncertainty about what should be done to protect nature, as well as the accompanying realisation of the limited scale of a single person's influence on the world. This uncertainty is not lessened with the growth of scientific knowledge, and perhaps even heightened because of its complexity, as scientists and society in general are faced with more and more facts and contradictory interpretations and opinions. Coupled with that uncertainty is the awareness of the unavoidable loss of species, habitats, environments, and familiar weather conditions, a feeling of loss of stability and predictability of the world.

5. Conclusion

Esther Woolfson's book is an unusual example of nature writing in that it does not deal with life or travels in the wilderness or in the countryside. Instead, the book is an account of one year she spent at home in her city, giving salience to urban nature and urban environments with their non-human inhabitants. The diary demonstrates that it is possible to seek and find a connection with the natural world even in one's home city. Small areas scattered in the middle of the urban landscape, such as parks, river banks, or back gardens, are teeming with wildlife, not to mention various species kept as pets. Thus, it is possible to observe and interact with a number of animals, as well as plants, regardless of where one lives. The fact that Woolfson deals with urban nature makes it easy for most readers, even those who live in cities, to relate to the text. Reading her account may make them more attentive and sympathetic to urban nature, animals, plants and green areas, and to appreciate and care for them to a greater extent than before.

Moreover, her diary emphasises that human and non-human beings alike form a community of inhabitants of the city, dependent on the same environment, sharing the same space, and enjoying or suffering the same weather conditions, so people should learn how to coexist with non-human inhabitants of their cities and think about their decisions and actions, which may have a strong positive or negative influence on other beings' existence. Thus, while the feeling of community with non-human beings can give comfort and joy to people, it cannot be forgotten that the community is threatened, that certain losses are already unavoidable, and that there is still no agreement on the best course of action to protect and save the world from further losses.

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American Southern Great Chain of Being in Yusef Komunyakaa's *Magic City*

Abstract. This paper reviews the various modes of racist, sexist, classist, ageist, and interspecific oppression as well as occasional transgressions in the city of Bogalusa, Louisiana, as they are dramatized in the poetry of Yusef Komunyakaa, particularly in his 1992 memoirist volume *Magic City*. More than anything else, Komunyakaa remembers from his childhood days the discourses and practices of violence and control aimed at maintaining a rigid hierarchical structure regulating order between all forms of life and preserving the sense of identity of many. It is a realm of unrelenting terror in which all creatures must succumb to a regime bringing to mind the medieval great chain of being. Komunyakaa investigates thoroughly Southern morals to determine the extent of psychological and epistemic damage they cause.
Keywords: Yusef Komunyakaa, Louisiana, racism, existentialism, chain of being

1. Introduction

The Mississippi Delta is the largest marshland in the world.[2] South of the town of Bogalusa, Louisiana, where Yusef Komunyakaa (b. 1947) comes from, the land was wrenched by the local population from the enormous masses of water flowing from North America, diverging into hundreds of outlets and the Gulf of Mexico. Over the past 300 years, first the French and then Americans have systematically dredged the Mississippi and other smaller rivers of the delta, including the nearby Bogalusa Pearl River. Swamps were drained; embankments separated rivers and wetlands from inhabited areas.

Populated areas here are always in danger of lapsing back into their original state, which was powerfully brought home to the locals by hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005.

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The hurricanes broke many embankments, flooding again huge tracts of land, including Bogalusa. The town's name comes from the expression *Bogue Lusa,* which in the language of the Choctaw tribe means "black waters" (Read 19). The inhabitants live in the vicinity of marshes, where everything is in chaos. Thousand-year-old cypress trees grow in water, and their roots climb upwards, looking like the trunks themselves. Creatures at different stages of evolutionary development wallow together in murky waters. The muds are as hot as air; the air is soupy. What is torn from nature quickly returns to it. In Komunyakaa's volume *Magic City* (1992) we see overgrown yards, car wrecks covered with vines (22, 46).[3] Each hole in a deck board provides an opening for the flora to re-emerge. Everything is wrapped in a rich mix of the scent and stench of multiple flowers, excrement, and rapidly decaying matter.

Such conditions have shaped the imagination of the inhabitants of southern Louisiana—a mentality marked by an obsession with separating, differentiating, isolating, and hierarchizing. The continuity of matter and the unity of creation in the Mississippi Delta threaten everyone's sense of identity and dignity. The fear of dissipation has fed into the socially shared craving for distinctions, separations, and hierarchies imposed on all living things. Komunyakaa offers a rich record of the violence, both physical and epistemic, this culture inflicts on races, sexes, classes, age groups, and species to perpetuate traditional order and to protect identities.

2. Thesis: Bogalusa's Great Chain of Being

Komunyakaa's poetry shows Southerners, Black and white, constantly defining themselves by negating others. From the day-to-day interactions of the town community an entire classification system arises, a version of the medieval great chain of being or of the Linnaeus taxonomy. Plato and Aristotle wrote about such an order covering the whole of creation, but Christians perfected it and have cemented it in the Western discourse (the history of the concept was recalled, in the 1930s, by Arthur O. Lovejoy). Among its most memorable visualizations is a drawing from 1579 from Diego Valadés's book, *Rhetoric Christian,* resembling a Christmas tree (insert between pp. 220–21). It is a vertical classification of all creatures, from God Himself (never Themselves!), through angels, who are hierarchical themselves, then people divided into class, racial, sexual and age categories, down to animals led by the lion, to plants, rocks and elements. It is the concept of a great order that describes the entire universe as understood in the spirit of Ptolemy, that is, with the Earth at its center but actually extending from the heavens, from the sphere of God and the beings closest to Him, to the vilest creatures, in which the percentage of the divine element is the lowest and which are closest to the fires of hell at the very center of our planet. It was this tradition, continued with some modifications by eighteenth-century

3 Hereinafter, this main source will be cited parenthetically as *MC* followed by the page number.

ethnologists, that gave rise to the theory of races (Fredrickson 57; Jordan 482–512). Aristotle did not write about races, and only mentions slaves as ranking just above the animal kingdom (6). Carl Linnaeus did not stop at ranking crustaceans, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals: he divided the human species itself into *Americanus, Asiaticus, Africanus,* and *Europeanus* (Charmantier). Of course, it was always somehow assumed that God was quantitatively most fully expressed in the latter, though less than in the angels.

Komunyakaa examines the echelons, the dynamics, and the occasional disruptions of the Southern great chain of being. African American men, women, children, and animals are subjected to its oppressive power, but also perpetrate related modes of oppression themselves on all the creatures beneath them. Importantly, in *Magic City,* the poet also tries to break down this ideological regime into its various components to understand its complexity and comprehensiveness. Komunyakaa once said that poetry is an activity that allows us to retrace the formation of our ideas about human life (Hass et al. 22); and that he belonged to those who "attempt to refashion [their] inherited landscape through consciousness" and bring themselves "an awareness of what has shaped" them (Komunyakaa, "More" 163). He also often claimed that he had actually learned poetry from his father, a carpenter, who would encourage him to dismantle defective objects and put all the elements back together so that an error could be detected (Mitrano and Komunyakaa 522). This seems to be the purpose of these poems: it is a detailed analysis of various forms of violence by ancient Christian discourses that have chopped up our world in a very specific way.

3. Existentialism

The illusory nature of all such distinctions was Komunyakaa's childhood realization. In one of his interviews, his interlocutor told him that the inhabitants of "Magic City" seemed strongly connected with nature; hence the author himself must have felt part of the natural world if he can write so well about animals and insects. Komunyakaa's recollection is mixed: he admitted that life in Bogalusa "was a semi-bucolic existence,"

> but when I was there it was sheer hell in many ways. But I remember venturing out into the woods. Often I would. I liked being alone, and it was a kind of meditation on that landscape, but also almost a clinical look at the landscape because I wanted to know the rituals of animals. I wanted to know the rituals of insects. Consequently, in a way, for me those rituals came to parallel the rituals of people around me. It was a way of seeing for the most part. (Derricotte and Komunyakaa 515)

The bliss of being part of nature was mixed with the horror of the same, horror that gave beginning to the imagination of the great chain of being.

In his adult life, Komunyakaa's perspective has been resolutely existentialist. The poet often talks about how much he was influenced by the art of Alberto Giacometti and more

widely by existentialism (Mitrano and Komunyakaa 522). There is certainly a parallel between Komunyakaa's vision and the existentialism of the sculptor's renowned friend, Jean Paul Sartre. Man in Komunyakaa is part of nature in a world without God; he has nothing in his essence that would make him unique. Like anti-Semitism in Sartre, however, classism, racism, childism, and speciesism are forms of bad faith, an escape from a more rational analysis of one's own situation and from the awareness of the randomness of one's own existence. In the very volume in question, in the poem "Knights of the White Camellia & Deacons of Defense," Komunyakaa invokes Sartre's *The Respectful Prostitute* (1946), a short play exploring the hypocrisy of white supremacists from the South, convinced that they are the norm of humanity (*MC* 54). They are Sartre's *salauds*, unaware of their nonessentialism and blind to their own corruption.

Racism, of course, was what triggered Komunyakaa to reflect on the systemic subjugation of all creatures in Bogalusa—not only minorities on the basis of various identity markers but animals as well. Racism was in great demand among white workers who built their lives around the belief in their uniqueness. In bad faith, they evade realizing their sharing life with the rest of creation and their material misery. Indeed, this working-class town is an important site in the history of racially motivated lynchings. In 1959, an African American truck driver, Mack Charles Parker, accused of raping a white pregnant woman in the presence of her little daughter, was dragged by a masked lynch mob from Pearl River County Jail in neighboring Poplarsville, Mississippi, tortured, and shot. His body was weighted down and tossed over the railing of the Pearl River, two and a half miles from where the poet grew up (Smead 50–56). In 1965, when Komunyakaa was eighteen, in Bogalusa's nearby village of Varnado, an African American, O'Neal Moore, a newly appointed deputy sheriff, was ambushed and shot dead (Nelson 8–10). A year later, another Black resident of Bogalusa was slain by KKK nightriders—an African American bricklayer, Clarence Triggs, who was seen in a civil rights march for the Black vote. Racial conflicts became so serious that a civil Black guard, Deacons for Defense and Justice, was set up to defend the African American community, especially civil rights activists, from increasing attacks by the Ku Klux Klan (Hill 2–9).

4. Bogalusa's Hell

But the brutal treatment of African Americans is only one form of oppression in the town; actually, all the residents are engaged in brutal practices and rituals intended to battle everything they find less than human or beneath them. Before World War II, Bogalusa was the home of the largest sawmill in the world, the Great Southern Lumber Company, which seems to have established the town's culture of subjugation. Following the war, the sawmill morphed into a giant papermill, but that did little to moderate the culture of warring against all life. As Komunyakaa remembers it, even into the 1950s big pines were continually felled, stripped of bark, and cut into planks. More broadly,

it was a culture of constant warfare against all elements. In the volume, even children's kites, made of reeds whittled with penknives and "shanks of glass," are then armed with razorblades to slash the air (*MC* 6–7); automobiles' chrome tailfins are described as busy "gutt[ing] the night" (*MC* 53).

The permanent war waged against the Louisiana forests and air is driven by the same psychological mechanisms as cruelty to animals, women, and children. Everyone in Bogalusa must know their place, and the lines of division are reestablished by force every day. In Komunyakaa's poems, cats are bullied by children, police dogs choke on short leashes, and circus animals are trained with whips. While white boys shoot at Blacks with slingshots (*MC* 9), Black boys in turn target animals when they inadvertently approach *their* territories—for instance, birds sitting on high-voltage transmission lines. Pigs and goats are slaughtered not just for meat but for the preservation of human identities. Many animals are hung on trees and subjected to torture as if they were not even sentient creatures. Most crimes seem redolent of others, against other oppressed groups, even other species. The scenes of animals being butchered bring to mind images of lynched bodies of African Americans, captured in thousands of macabre postcards and memorial photos once very popular in the South, and they seem to have a similar function. Men, including the protagonist's father, maintain their status by beating their wives (*MC* 43), while Black youths become men by abusing girls belted into car seats (*MC* 53). Resisting, opposing or simply standing in the way of ordinary, widely accepted and systemic violence is dangerous. Symbolically, a cow that strays onto the railroad tracks dividing the town is smashed by a train (*MC* 1). A pig getting her hooves into the trough confirms its piggy nature and therefore dies at the hands of humans (*MC* 19).

In his poem "The Smokehouse," for example, Blacks seem resigned to the domination of whites, but jealously protect their own relatively favored place within the natural world to which whites have relegated them. In the slaughter of a pig, they seek confirmation of their distinctiveness and separateness from still lower echelons of being.

> The hog had been sectioned,
> A map scored into skin;
> Opened like love,
> From snout to tail,
> The goodness
> No longer true to each bone.
> I was a wizard
> In that hazy world,
> & knew I could cut
> Slivers of meat till my heart
> Grew more human & flawed. (*MC* 21)

The "map" on the pork carcass that denies "goodness" "to each bone" probably reveals latent distinctions between the mind and the body, reason and passion, that underlie the chain of being and inform the butcher's practice. In Plato's *Timaeus*, the head symbolizes the "most divine part of us" (35). Is the cut severing the head from the rest of the body driven by the traditional elevation of creatures following the dictates of reason over those more susceptible to emotions? The chest stands for impulsiveness, proneness to anger and "choleric" disposition, which Linnaeus, for instance, identifies with the red-skinned *Americanus* (Charmantier). The area of the "diaphragm" is a zone of passions that, if dominant, make people lustful, where the soul succumbs to the whims of the body (Plato 69). Paradoxically, the pig's carcass has been thoroughly hierarchized by African Americans themselves in accordance with the discourse that has kept them in subjugation.

The above passage also illustrates the dangers of identity based on the duality of matter and spirit (Dowdy 815). Since in Bogalusa the human heart is shaped by being carved out of what is not its essence in the Christian discourse—what is not the soul itself—there is a risk that the whole heart will be chopped. A person who completely dissociates from their body, in a sense, ceases to live. In the Voodoo religion practiced on the margins of Christianity in Bogalusa, a soul without a body is nothing but a zombie. A radically pared heart, even if it survives, is much smaller in terms of imagination. Man carved out of nature in accordance to the values of the Christian tradition is a failure of the imagination.

In another poem, "Immolatus," a porker being slaughtered by Black men is a female, a sow, devoid of pigment (*MC* 19). The butchery performed by African Americans is richly suggestive—presumably also to the men themselves—of unhindered possession, free enjoyment, if not of gang rape and murder of a white woman. The poem's final ten lines read as follows:

> Soon her naked whiteness,
> Was a silence to split
> Between helpers & owner.
> Liver, heart, & head
> Flung to a foot tub.
> They smiled as she passed
> Through their hands. Next day
> I tracked blood in a circle
> Across dead grass, while fat
> Boiled down to lye soap. (*MC* 19)

The fantasized transgression compensates for the terror that Black men are subjected to on a daily basis at the hands of white women and their men.

As a boy, the protagonist does not participate directly in such rituals: he is allowed, indeed supposed, only to look and carry water to wash. Decades of his growing up and socialization are compressed into a few lines; imperceptibly, the little helper turns into an adult butcher himself. The boy blends into his elders and, gradually assuming more and more responsibilities, takes over their ritual: "They splashed hot water / & shaved her with blades / That weighed less each year" (*MC* 19). Black teenagers grow up following in the footsteps of Black men who build their manly identities by rehearsing their unlimited control over a body that eerily stands in lieu of a body that is forbidden to them.

In the poem "Salomé," the protagonist, concealed in the bushes with a fishing rod, accidentally witnesses a white girl bathing (*MC* 47). He understands he has found himself in great danger; Black men accused of spying on white women in the nude were often lynched.[4] He cowers in terror of being discovered, and blends in with the surrounding greenery.

> I had seen her
> Before, nearly hidden
> Behind those fiery branches
> As she dove nude
> Into the creek.
> This white girl
> Who moved with ease
> On her side of the world
> As if she were the only
> Living thing. Her breasts
> Rose like swamp orchids (*MC* 47)

Significantly, the poet describes the girl as coming into view from behind "fiery branches." The Biblical allusion is unmistakable: like Moses, the boy is terrified because he caught the sight of a being from higher echelons than his. Moses was warned against wanting to see the face of God Himself (Exodus 3:5), and even the sight of the burning bush was disturbing to him. The boy could end up like other luckless men—John the Baptist, or Actaeon from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*—who unwarily caught glimpses of blue-blooded or divine beings and paid the highest price (Mark 6: 21–28; Ovid 97). One person he fears the most is Salome's brother, Cleanth, whom he remembered as torturing a cat once. Cleanth's sadism toward the animal bode ill for the boy as well.

4 Komunyakaa's story in the poem is an interesting inversion of Richard Wright's 1938 story "Big Boy Leaves Home" in *Uncle Tom's Children* (25–66). In Wright, Black boys fear for their lives because, after they were swimming in a hole, they were seen naked by a white woman.

I knew
Salomé's brother, Cleanth,
Hung our cat with a boot lace
From a crooked fencepost—
Knew he pulled on the cat's
Hind legs, a smile on his face,
& it wouldn't be long before
He would join her in the creek
& they'd hold each other
Like Siamese twins at the State Fair,
Swimmers trapped under
A tyranny of roots, born
With one heart. (*MC* 47)

In a moment of oblivion, white Salome, immersed in water, seems to blend in with the natural world. The imagery is strongly reminiscent of Ophelia from the painting by the Pre-Raphaelite John Everett Millais, drowning among flowers, passive, united with the vegetation. The Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics is relevant here because it represents a precise contradiction of the logic underlying all emotions in Bogalusa. With that canvas, Millais responded to John Ruskin's call to finally "go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning [. . .], rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing" (Ruskin 178). Eddies and currents, including the subconscious ones, draw Salome to the invisible Black boy and the rest of the creation in a world where no being is privileged. But the men of her family, like Laertes and Polonius, guard her "dignity." Salome is balanced between horizontal unity with the whole of nature and the vertical order of her ancestors. Cleanth, entering the water, feels the same power of attraction. Holding hands, the siblings must support each other so as not to succumb to that natural power.

The temptation is great because nature surrounding the African American is full of splendor; "Tall greenness" around him is contrasted with a "stunted oak," with nature classified, subject to Christian symbolism, or tamed by lumbermen. In this poem is also a suggestion that people who isolate themselves from all creation are deformed (one is reminded of James Baldwin's adage, "As long as you think you are white, there is no hope for you") (Baldwin 90–92): Salome and Cleanth, with their awareness of belonging to the highest caste, are ultimately freaks of nature, "Siamese twins at the State Fair" (*MC* 47).

The great chain of being also determines order within families, the order dictated by age and gender hierarchies. The father is the head of the family, the wife, more susceptible to emotions, ranks below him. Children swarm at the lowest level, stirred by momentary desires. The generational divisions are reflected in the spatial structure of

the protagonist's house: ceilings and walls are the physical embodiment of these barriers. Boys spend a lot of time in cellars, whereas dogs and cats live in burrows dug under the foundations. Within the limits set by the whites, the boy's parents try to cultivate their dignity by denying their children access to them during serious discussions or, as in the poem "Sunday Afternoons," during lovemaking (*MC* 24). Keeping children away for the sake of conventional decency and dignity is one of the rituals in which they manifest their separateness from the animal world to which they were relegated in slavery. One is reminded of Josiah Henson's recollection of slavery days in his memoir *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life* (London, 1877): "In a single room were huddled, like cattle, ten or a dozen persons, men, women, and children. All ideas of refinement and decency were, of course, out of the question" (23).

The respectable divisions within African American families are tenuous, impermanent, and constantly in danger of being compromised. The walls separating the parents from their children are often made of paper; the door is transparent or replaced with a frame with an insect screen; the windows are covered with shabby blinds. Even a whisper intended only for adults' ears penetrates the ceilings, ruining family order, parental authority, and children's innocence. While playing in the cellars, the boy repeatedly overhears conversations and noises not meant for him.

The hierarchies of the South are performed through, or manifest in, the unequal distribution of privilege to make noise or to be heard. The whistle of a locomotive spreads fear among local animals. Black boys, who quickly learn the rules of domination and submission, mock the dogs for whimpering at the trains' noise; they claim superiority over dogs by walking up to the tracks dangerously close (*MC* 1, 3–6, 55). The local sawmill's shift whistles dominate the area and regulate the lives of all working-class residents, Black and white; it is "the melody / Men & women built lives around, / Sonorous as the queen bee's fat / Hum drawing worker from flowers, / Back to the colonized heart" (*MC* 3). But only the voices of whites and the noises of their machines and institutions can cross the racial dividing lines and set the tone for the entire town. When, for example, the speaker of "History Lessons" lashes out in anger against a white supremacist—when "hot words / Swarmed out of my mouth like African bees"—he strikes other Black men as doomed, courting death at the hands of whites (*MC* 31). Black women are more careful when whispering (*MC* 4, 42). Loretta Lynn's country music can resound in whites' pickup trucks, but Satchmo often can be played only in the minds (*MC* 3, 12). As Komunyakaa writes, in "Happiness," "Silence belonged to gods" (*MC* 12).

This motif of the privilege of noisemaking or being heard is partly rooted in the story of Emmett Till. Komunyakaa likes to say that he grew up "near the time Emmett Till was murdered in Mississippi" ("More" 163), and in the poem "History Lessons" he alludes to the story by mentioning a white man heard to have said that "Emmett Till had begged for it / With his damn wolf whistle" (*MC* 30). Growing up in Chicago, Emmett, a boy of fourteen

in 1955, was unfamiliar with the rules of segregation in the postwar South where—in the town of Money in the Mississippi Delta—he visited his uncle on vacation. One day he was hanging out with friends at a store. To the dismay of everyone, Black and white, the boy flirtatiously wolf-whistled at a white woman behind the cash register (Tyson 2). Two days later, the woman's husband and his half-brother massacred the boy in a manner reminiscent of the scenes of animals' slaughter by Komunyakaa: they cut off his tongue—as if to silence the whistle—and split his head with an ax as if to strip him of his human face (Tyson 71). The boy's bound body was weighted down and thrown into the local Tallahatchie River.

Most relevantly, Emmett Till's wolf whistle ran counter to all the accepted rules of noisemaking in the South. In the medieval chain of being, the voice could travel only in one direction, from top to bottom; angels announced God's will with trumpets, and preachers regularly thundered at the faithful from the pulpit. Emmett's boisterous whistle went in exactly the opposite direction.

But happiness needs more than freedom of expression in a secluded place. It is about setting the tone for the environment and being in a position to silence creatures beneath you. With Satchmo's music in their minds, African Americans slaughter and silence a bleating goat after polishing a knife on its throat. Komunyakaa offers a comprehensive review of what has a voice in Bogalusa; through poetic means, he maps a territory similar to Gayatri Spivak's in *Can the Subaltern Speak?*

While Komunyakaa reveals the conventionality of the great chain of being, he shows that most attempts at transgression are ruthlessly punished. In the poem "The Steel Plate," a WWII Black veteran, Mister Dan, goes outside on the street one night at a moment of excessive inebriation and joy to dance. There was also something inspired about him: he could often be heard singing, and that night he was "pulled like a moon / Pulls water." That night, found disturbing the peace, he is cudgeled by the police to the ground: "His impression in the dirt / Heavier than any white line" (*MC* 22). Mister Dan's aspiration, imagination, or simply his refusal to stay put was symbolized by a steel plate he had installed in his head. He had a bone defect in his skull, resulting from a wound sustained during the war. It was covered with a shiny plate that symbolically and transgressively reflected the sun and the blue of the sky—as if he had aimed higher than others, even over the heads of those above him. Finally, the police pounded him to the ground until his sphincter gave in. "The next morning / A rain of crushed blossoms / Just wasn't enough to cover / The vaporous smell of human / Feces outside his gate" (*MC* 22). The stench of excrement must have finally seemed to the police to be a confirmation of Dan's belonging to the horizontal lowest life. The funeral parlor staff made every effort to cover the shiny plaque with dark powder and hair, all of which—the speaker remembers—was nevertheless powerless to "to stop or hide / The sun's gleamy, blue search" (*MC* 23).

The protagonist of "Fleshing-out the Season" may be an exception in that he both evades the ruling ideology and avoids violent death (*MC* 26): everyone knew he lived in

two houses—in one with his white wife, and, in another, with a Black one who previously had been his and his white wife's maid. He was the son of a wealthy planter and politician from Jackson, Mississippi, so the Ku Klux Klan did not dare touch him even though his lifestyle was an outrage. If that were not enough, both women were good friends; they hugged each other heartily goodbye, and fully accepted the resulting triangle. The African American woman's house was identical to his white wife's, nothing short of being a "replica" of the other, albeit a "scaled-down" one. Most tellingly, like Mister Dan, they both allow their backyards and paths to be completely overgrown with azaleas, bougainvillea, and clover (*MC* 26). The man himself was deemed a freak: curiously, not only because he hung out with Blacks but also because he didn't bother to suppress in himself childish whims. In the summer, people could often see him gorge on raspberry ice cream. On Mardi Gras Day, he would take both women to New Orleans, where he would dance with them "in a circle of flambeaus" (as in the poem "Temples of Smoke," fire is a symbol of the impermanence of the human order, of which racial divisions are apart [*MC* 32]). He had two sons—a white boy and a Black one—one with each of the wives. In the evenings, he would read Blake's poems to both of them. Presumably, among them was "Little Black Boy" from *Songs of Innocence,* which ended with a picture of two boys of different races sitting on the lap of God the Father (Blake 58). The British Romantic's poem not only questions racial divisions as an illusion; it also suggests that time in the heavens also passes, and God is simply the sun that, even in the afterlife, gradually destroys and burns the dead.

After the man's death, the women split his ashes. The funeral was an insult to all rules of conventional decency. The women refused to indulge in forms and rituals keeping up the pretense that death was not what it was. In southern Louisiana, floods often send coffins and lighter concrete mausoleums afloat (which was also the case in 2005 after the floods caused by Hurricane Katrina) (Koppel). The region is known for the so-called "Cities of the dead": old, beautiful cemeteries, where rich, white people buried their loved ones in special concrete or stone mausoleums unnaturally high above the ground. Distinctions based on race, age and species are part and parcel of the desire to preserve the shreds of civility for the dead. But in "Fleshing-out the Season" neither the bigamist nor his wives succumbed to such delusions. As was his wish, one scattered the ashes in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and the other dumped them on the flower beds, then used the flowers that grew on them to adorn her hair. Blatantly contradicting the great chain of being, the man united with the whole of creation.

5. Conclusions

Komunyakaa investigates the mechanisms of, and the occasional challenges to, the discourse that has scrupulously categorized all humans on a continuum "between angels and monsters," as it is put in one of the poems' titles. The great chain of being in the

American South is predicated on the most sterile vision of humanity, the denial of the body and emotions, and the epistemic silencing of pretty much everyone except white men. He unflinchingly describes the terrors and the devastation, both physical and psychological, caused by the ideology. He not only lays bare its ruinous workings, but from time to time counters it with instances of an alternative imagination—far more at ease with all beings, the unity of all nature, and a thoroughly secular worldview.

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The Consequences of Crossing the Color Line: Identity and Racial Passing in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half*

Abstract. The article explores the concept of identity and the notion of transgressing the color line in Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half*. Racial passing, in which light-skinned African Americans lived their lives as white people, is a trope present in numerous African American novels, notably Nella Larsen's *Passing*. Brit Bennett's novel returns to the once-popular trope of transgressing the color line in the second half of the twentieth century in the United States. Although Bennett subverts the trope as no tragedy befalls those who cross the line of the racial divide, the novel presents how one's race, circumstance, and choices shape not only one's own identity but also how they impact the next generation. Through the return to the past, Bennett's novel emphasizes the continued divide within American society. Based on the historical and cultural backdrop of the United States, as well as through the application of affect theory, the article explores to what degree one's race, choices, experienced violence, and society's stereotypes and prejudice impact how characters feel, behave, and define themselves. The focal point of the analysis is the exploration of two generations of women from one family and the examination of how differently their racial identities have been shaped.

Keywords: identity, race, transgressions, African Americans, racial passing

If we consider national collective identity in the United States from a historical perspective, for a long time only white people could be considered "true" Americans. People of color were not citizens with full rights, and even to this day, when they have equal legal rights, their skin color and heritage, which classify them as a minority, seem to challenge their identity within the national context as they are frequently referred to as African Americans or Asian Americans, and not simply Americans. Racial identity is a significant element of how individuals perceive themselves and how others perceive them.

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W.E.B. DuBois asserted that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line" (3). Although DuBois made the aforementioned statement more than a century ago, one need not wonder whether it continues to ring true, whether the issue of the color line is still pertinent, since the biological arguments behind racial divisions have been largely discredited and social origins are more vital in the discussion of race or racism. The persisting importance of the color line seems clear as numerous books and movies continue to spread awareness about the issue that for so long has been a part of the unacknowledged or dismissed history of black Americans. Not only already well-known books concerning the racial past are experiencing the renewed interest of the public (for example, Nella Larsen's *Passing* and its recent Netflix adaptation), but also numerous new works are exploring the topic, including *The Vanishing Half* penned by Brit Bennett. Bennett's novel shines a light on the (in)visible lines which divided American society in the past and how transgressing those lines altered not only the lives of individuals but also future generations, as well as how one person's decision to pass as white impacts the identities of others. This paper aims to briefly introduce the phenomenon of racial passing, as well as to explore how race, the affect of contempt and the process of identification influence the formation and alterations of identity in Bennett's novel, which illustrates this socially relevant (historical) phenomenon.

In the second half of the twentieth century the American psychologist Silvan S. Tomkins remarked on what he referred to as "the American problem of identity". He observed that:

> the increased preoccupation with identity problems arises in part from the multiplicity of kinds of achievement and the multiplicity of criteria which are a consequence of both the heterogeneity within a modern complex society and its rapid rate of change. The modern American is engaged in a quest for his identity because of an embarrassment of riches in his possible identities. (Tomkins 503)

Tomkins points to a multiplicity of possible identities as the source of modern Americans' issues with identification. However, if one considers the problem of selecting a singular, coherent identity in the context of African Americans, then it becomes clear that a similar problem predates what Tomkins refers to as 'modern society'. African Americans' struggle with multiple racial or ethnic identities reaches as far back as the first Africans brought to America.

Due to the complexity of the problem, African American identity has long been a topic of academic discussion. One of the most recognized voices in the debate on African American identity is W.E.B. DuBois. DuBois emphasized the dual nature of African American identity:

> [T]he Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only

> lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (8)

Although DuBois refers to the internal struggle of black Americans, this struggle also has a more external side. This duality places African Americans between two cultural identities, leaving them with a choice as to which cultural traditions to follow and identify with, or the challenge of balancing the two sides to one's identity. Despite the fact that the concept of identity is fluid and multiple types of identity exist, some types are more easily categorized.

Laura Browder points out that because race is often associated with biological features and ethnicity with culture, racial identity is a more widely recognized category than ethnic identity. (8) The prevalence of the topic of racial identity in the US seems to support Browder's observations. Nevertheless, ethnicity is often a vital part of African American identity, at least for some individuals. African American individuals whose families have maintained the traditions of their African ancestors have links to the African part of their identity. Those, however, who have only vague knowledge, or none at all, of their African predecessors and their culture, may feel mainly American, and identifying as part African might prove more challenging. Nowadays, with the rise of multiculturalism the choice of how one identifies belongs to the individual. Moreover, an identity once chosen may be redefined without the need to change one's whole life.

Marcia Alesan Dawkins notes that "[i]ncreasing discomfort with racial identification suggests that some declarations of multicultural identities could really be the latest incarnations of passing. What is more, growing color-blindness and 'color-mute'-ness could indicate a growing hostility toward any use of racial identification" (2–3). Although the changing society may assign less importance to adhering to once strict definitions regarding identification, identity—whether it be sexual, ethnic, racial or otherwise—remains an important part of life, both the internal emotional life and the external life within communities. In the past, however, the identity of black Americans was, to some extent, predefined by their lineage and society. If one had African ancestors, even very distant, they were automatically classified as African American, even though they might not have identified as such. This classification, this assignment of identity, had far-reaching consequences which varied depending on the time period: from forced slavery, to the lawfully-enforced use of separate substandard facilities, to open discrimination and violence.

No wonder then that some African Americans chose to hide their origins when an opportunity arose, to be classified as a white American and don the identity which came with the classification. Sika A. Dagbovie-Mullins observes that "[w]hile both whites and blacks subsumed mixedness into blackness, both also considered mixed-race a distinctive racial 'other'" (14). Thus, light-skinned African Americans seemed to have been standing on the color line dividing American society, never truly belonging on either side, always transgressing the racial line wherever they were. Passing, whether for white or black (although the former was overwhelmingly more frequent), has long been a part of American society. Allyson Hobbs explains:

> the phenomenon of passing was reshaped in each historical period, the meaning and significance of passing also transformed. At times, passing was an act of rebellion against the racial regime; on other occasions, it was a challenge to African Americans' struggle to shape and nurture group identities and communities (8).

The mentioned changes often coincided with the existence of political and cultural movements. For example, during the Jim Crow era passers "deftly maneuver[ed] an increasingly restrictive and despairing racial climate", and during the "Harlem Renaissance … [which] raised more questions about identity and racial categories than it could answer" passing seemed even more controversial from the white as well as the black perspective. (Hobbs 121, 214)

No matter the era, passing was always something that was to be kept secret. "Family members and friends were likely to keep matters in confidence, but on rare occasions, blacks betrayed those who were passing" (Hobbs 164). One could hypothesize why some chose to betray the passers; however, the more important question seems to be why the majority kept the secrets of strangers. Hobbs postulates that "[p]erhaps it was a larger sense of racial solidarity that compelled blacks to protect the identities of those who lived 'on the other side'" (164). No matter the reasons, because of the secrecy, which was a significant part of the phenomenon, the true scale of racial passing at any given time is impossible to be accurately assessed, especially because different types of passing exist.

G. Reginald Daniel observes: "Continuous passing, which involves a complete break with the African American community, has been the most sensational sort of crossing over" (51). Although discontinued (or part-time) passing could bring similar benefits to the passer when "positions of wealth, power, privilege, and prestige normally barred to individuals of African descent" were concerned, it did not involve complete separation from one's family and friends. (Daniel 53) Despite the high emotional price individuals had to pay in order to pass permanently, some did it to avoid the negative emotions linked to their mixed racial heritage. Daniel posits that some light-skinned individuals used "continuous passing … [as] a way of escaping the social stigma and taunts of African

Americans who view[ed] them as less than black" (53). Regardless of the reasons and the gains, according to Elaine K. Ginsberg, "passing is about identities: their creation or imposition, their adoption or rejection, their accompanying rewards or penalties. Passing is also about the boundaries established between identity categories and about individual and cultural anxieties induced by boundary crossing" (2). The phenomenon also has two sides: "the visible and the invisible, the seen and the unseen", which makes it challenging to analyze from the outside, and thus its literary portrayals can be useful for its understanding. (Ginsberg 2)

As in life, so in literature, stories of passing are stories of a character's struggles with identity. Steven J. Belluscio explains what can be expected from forms of literature concerned with racial passing:

> In the *racial passing narrative*, a character attempts (successfully or not) to shed all overt evidence of racial difference and imperceptibly enter mainstream society. From the perspective of the author, this involves depicting one or more characters in such a manner that all discourses of racial difference (especially ones that would easily be read by other characters) are overwritten by discourses of American civic nationalism. … Of course, literary passing involves a certain amount of dramatic irony that precludes the total erasure of racial discourse. …The reader is almost always made aware of it [the passing], and very typically, the character's ostensible racial difference reemerges periodically throughout the text. Thus, literary passing is never absolute. (13, italics in original)

One could argue that passing is also never absolute in real life since the passer is unable to rid him- or herself of the memories of the past. The exception would be those who are unaware of their passing, the second-generation passers who do not know about their parents' past – a notion explored in Bennett's novel. In works of literature concerned with slavery, readers meet light-skinned slaves trying to reach freedom in the North and passing as white on their way. "In literature of the Harlem Renaissance, the popular theme of passing featured mixed-race women entangled in the complex world of racial masquerade" (Dagbovie-Mullins 21). Although the narratives may change throughout history, they will inevitably have common aspects. Brooke Kroeger observed that "[d]espite the different plot twists, the moral in each version of the story is the same. Passing, if not altogether bad, is at least a really bad idea, and society, or life itself, will punish the 'passer' for breaking the rules" (2). The punishment may vary from being caught and facing the consequences of the act, through the emotional turmoil of continuous passing, to even tragic death, as Nella Larsen's *Passing* illustrates.

Simply a cursory look at African American literature reveals that the concept of racial passing is not new. Although in African American literature racial passing is illustrated as early as in the first slave narratives, the time period in which the examples abound is

the 1900s. Some notable examples are Charles W. Chesnutt's *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900), James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929), and George Schuyler's *Black No More* (1931). Racial passing as a theme is not limited to works of black authors, which is visible, for example, in Fannie Hurst's *Imitation of Life* (1933) or Danzy Senna's *Caucasia* (1998). What differentiates Bennett's novel from numerous others, however, is the fact that she gives voice to generations who must live with the consequences of the passing of their family members. She also introduces a subplot concerning gender passing, which was often intertwined with racial passing. Bennett, however, separates the two not only through the use of different characters but also by separating the different types of passing by decades. Although gender passing is not the main thread of the plot, it becomes significant to the life of one of the main characters. Perhaps the author wanted to illustrate the fact that yearning to become someone else did not only concern race, even in the past.

The Vanishing Half, set between the 1960s and 1980s, focuses on the story of twin sisters, one, to use DuBois' phrasing, living as 'an American' and the other 'as a Negro'. Stella and Desiree Vignes spent their childhood and part of their adolescence in Mallard – a small southern town founded by their ancestor and inhabited by African Americans with very light complexion. Mallard, since its founding, was supposed to be a safe haven for mixed race African Americans. Alphonse Decuir was himself a light-skinned black man, whose complexion became his burden, separating him from other black people, and thus he dreamed of Mallard: "A town for men like him, who would never be accepted as white but refused to be treated like Negroes. A third place" (Bennett 6). The concept of such a town was difficult to grasp for outsiders:

> Colored people whispered about it, wondered about it. White people couldn't believe it even existed. When St. Catherine's was built in 1938, the diocese sent over a young priest from Dublin who arrived certain that he was lost. Didn't the bishop tell him that Mallard was a colored town? Well, who were these people walking about? Fair and blonde and redheaded, the darkest ones no swarthier than a Greek? Was this who counted for colored in America, who whites wanted to keep separate? Well, how could they even tell the difference? (Bennett 6)

Mallard was a town filled with people who could easily pass for white but did not. Within their town they were themselves: neither white nor black, neither superior nor inferior because of their skin color. The reaction of the priest is illustrative of the race problem in America; although the differences may be invisible, they were present and felt. The last question of the quote is also illustrative of the difficulty in recognizing racial passers solely on their looks. Mallard is symbolic of the color line existing in American society. On either side mixed-race African Americans are pigeonholed into identity categories

that are not suitable for them; they belong only on the color line in places like Mallard. However, just as the color line is a concept, in the novel Mallard also does not officially exist. Although everyone knew about it and recognized it, with progress and changing times even Mallard, like the concept of the color line, was altered, as it could no longer exist in the state of in-between. "By 1981, Mallard no longer existed, or at least, it was no longer Mallard. The town had never actually been a town at all. .... And although the residents may have created their own boundaries, a place has no legal borders. .... Mallard had always been more of an idea than a place, and an idea couldn't be redefined by geographical terms" (Bennett 323). Similarly to race and identity, which elude precise definitions, Mallard was for the longest time an undefined place, and just like the mentioned terms people knew about it and created its borders, recognized by many without any official statements.

Stella and Desiree grew up in Mallard, but they always resented the place and the responsibilities it meant for them as the founding family. What is more, despite the notion that Mallard could be considered a safe haven for light-skinned African Americans when their identity was concerned, it could not protect them from white violence. The twins' father was attacked in his home and later killed, and the girls witnessed it. The traumatic experience could also be the reason why the twins wanted to escape the town, but what really seemed to prompt their escape was the fact that Mallard presented them with a life in which neither Stella nor Desiree saw themselves happy, a life of working for whites as their help. Therefore, in 1968, at the age of sixteen, under cover of the night they left Mallard for New Orleans.

Leaving Mallard meant that the girls left a place in which their race constricted them in regard to opportunities but allowed them not to stand out as 'the other' among other black people due to their lightness. New Orleans was a place where Stella and Desiree were anonymous and could define themselves, unlike in Mallard where they were known from birth as the Vignes twins: always considered together and playing the pre-assigned role of the founding family. For the first time in their lives the girls had a chance to see themselves as individuals.

Stella's racial passing in New Orleans was Desiree's idea. When the twins lost their jobs Desiree prompted her sister to apply for a position as a secretary. "An office like that would never hire a colored girl, but they needed the money, living in the city and all, and why should the twins starve because Stella, perfectly capable of typing, became unfit as soon as anyone learned she was colored? It wasn't lying, she told Stella. How was it her fault if they thought she was white when they hired her?" (Bennett 65) Just like so many other African Americans, material needs led to Stella's passing. Desiree's justification of the act points to the notion that Stella was apprehensive and needed to be convinced that the act was not something to feel guilty about. Although it was more in Desiree's nature to fool the people around her, she did not possess the skills needed for the job and

thus it was Stella who was to become white at work, to pass part-time. Despite Desiree's assurances about how easy and profitable passing would be, Stella saw it from a different perspective. She saw her own possible vulnerabilities: "If she was hired, she would have to be white every day, and if she couldn't sit in this waiting room without her hands shaking, how could she ever manage that?" (Bennett 195) Despite her apprehension, when Stella was hired she listened to her sister and treated her passing as acting, so at that time she did not alter her identity but performed a role during her working hours, as if playing the role of a young white woman was part of her job description.

> At work Stella became Miss Vignes or, as Desiree called her, White Stella. Desiree always giggled after, as if she found the very idea preposterous, which irritated Stella. She wanted Desiree to see how convincingly she played her role, but she was living a performance where there could be no audience. Only a person who knew her real identity would appreciate her acting, and nobody at work could ever know. At the same time, Desiree could never meet Miss Vignes. Stella could only be her when Desiree was not around. In the morning, during her ride to Maison Blanche, she closed her eyes and slowly became her. She imagined another life, another past. .... She let her mind go blank, her whole life vanishing until she became new and clean as a baby. (Bennett 197)

The description of Stella's process of becoming Miss Vignes seems similar to an actor preparing for a role, but as Stella herself notes, she is acting for no audience, so at what point does acting become lying? Desiree seems to have treated her sister's passing as a game, something funny, but what is she laughing at? At the naivety of white people, or at her sister's new identity? Stella's irritation with Desiree's attitude shows that she did not treat passing as a game. The gravity of the situation in which she put herself every day never seemed to escape her. The part-time passing included forgetting about her family and her past for the better part of the week, which means that even though she was passing only part-time, she spent more time assuming her new identity than being herself. Stella's preparations to become Miss Vignes resemble a complete erasure of her current identity and the creation of a new one; however, this seems impossible because she had to maintain certain facts that she shared with others while passing. Her identity transformation during the part-time passing could be seen as transgressing a line in the sand that she imagined separated her two identities. The line is vital because it needs to divide the aspects of identity which would identify a person as African American or white, but it is not an impermeable line because Stella's personality does not change; she is who she always has been personality-wise; only her background and racial association have changed.

It seems that at some point Stella no longer assumed her second identity but permanently possessed two identities. Miss Vignes stopped emerging only during her working

hours and became a feature of Stella's private life. "She didn't like to think about Miss Vignes when she wasn't her, although, sometimes, the other girl appeared suddenly, the way you might think about an old friend" (Bennett 199). With those appearances, Stella comes to wonder whether the role of Miss Vignes is a role or a long-hidden part of her identity: "Sometimes she wondered if Miss Vignes was a separate person altogether. Maybe she wasn't a mask Stella put on. Maybe Miss Vignes was already a part of her, as if she had been split in half. She could be whichever woman she decided, whichever side of her face she tilted to the light" (Bennett 199). The idea of splitting into two separate halves seems to exemplify the nature of mixed-race African Americans: half white and half black, and some being able to move from one side of the color line to the other with ease. Possessing two identities, however, could also be seen as dissociative identity disorder, but whereas in the disorder one has no control over which identity they assume at any given point, Stella could choose which identity she presented to the world, a practice characteristic of racial passers. Although Stella hints at her power over the choice of her identities, the intrusions of the identity of Miss Vignes point to the fact that she either did not have the process under control or that she preferred to be Miss Vignes, and that the positive feelings that accompanied the identity made her want to be the white secretary more than the black Stella. The time spent as a white woman combined with the treatment she received led to a change in her. The Stella of the past became more of a memory and a new Stella was born – a woman who needed things she could have only if she was white.

Despite all of the material gains that Stella's passing brought her, the decision to pass permanently was based on emotions. She fell in love with a white man, and the only way to be with him was to sever her ties with her past – which included her sister.

> "Just say yes," he said, and the word tasted like cherries, sweet and tart and easy, Yes, and just like that, she could become Miss Vignes for good. She didn't give herself a chance to second-guess. .... For the first time in her life, she didn't worry about any of the practical details when she told Blake Sanders yes. The hardest part about becoming someone else was deciding to. The rest was only logistics. (Bennett 208)

Despite her initial apprehensions about passing for work, Stella fit very well in the world of white people. Perhaps this was due to her personality and the fact she was raised in Mallard, that she does not feel out of place, that moving through the color line does not change anything significant about her. What is more, readers learn that her racial passing in New Orleans was not her first time passing as white. When she was a child, she accidentally passed for white when she entered a shop, and became very discontented with the notion that passing, even though she did not do it purposefully, was perceived as something wrong. She could not understand then that there was an imaginary line

separating American society. Even though individuals may look similar, their heritage decides whether they are white or black, whether they are privileged or disadvantaged. This notion that Stella had already passed in the past, although briefly, hints at the fact that for her being perceived as white was not a new concept and perhaps came more easily than explaining that despite her looks she was classified as black or that for Stella race was not an essential part of her identity.

Having passed permanently, Stella learnt that with it came unexpected emotional consequences. The fear of discovery was constant, and it was made stronger by the fact that she had once already been caught: "Did she look as nervous as she felt? Would anybody be able to tell? A colored family in the neighborhood. .... She tried to steady the flutter in her stomach but she couldn't. She'd been caught before. Only once, the second time she'd ever pretended to be white" (Bennett 155). Tomkins observed that fear aids in shaping the avoidance behavior which was common for racial passers. The permanent state of fear led Stella to avoid other black people, and she masked her fear with contempt, a common affect applied in the social hierarchy "in order to maintain distance between individuals, classes and nations" (Tomkins 363). Her derision towards black people became part of her new identity; it was a protective mechanism to distance herself from those who could reveal her secret; however, its intensity was sometimes so striking that it did not pass unnoticed by her husband. It seems that in times of strong fear Stella's contempt became heightened.

Not only were contempt and fear her constant companions, but also her lying became second nature. Questions about her past and family became more frequent as her daughter Kennedy grew older and was curious about her mother's side of family. When Kennedy was very small, Stella shared a fact about her past with Kennedy because she thought it was safe to tell it to a small child: "She'd been, for the first and final time, completely honest with her daughter, only because she knew the girl was too young to remember. Later, Stella would lie" (Bennett 158). Sharing information about the past must have been very hard, especially because those moments were only a brief reprieve from lying, and the emotions they must have awakened could linger. Talking about her past also meant altering the facts because most of her memories involved Desiree, who Stella told everyone had died. Thus, what she told others was a balancing act between truth and lies, managing not to cross the boundary between reality and fantasy too often. Stella herself admitted that those difficulties were linked to her lack of friends. She observed: "A lonely past, a lonely present" (Bennett 183). Passing was in fact a lonely process; one could never completely share their whole selves with others if they wanted to maintain their new identities.

When Desiree talked about Stella's possible return to the family she said: "Even if she comes back. She's already gone" (Bennett 103). This emphasizes the change in Stella's identity. Even if she were to return to live in Mallard, she would not be the same person.

Stella frequently thinks about her racial identity. It seems that passing does not allow a person to treat it as an inconsequential part of their individual identity; it is always at the forefront. Long-term passing had its impact: "Stella had lived white for half her life now, and maybe acting for that long ceased to be acting altogether. Maybe pretending to be white eventually made it so" (Bennett 74). The fact that Stella is unsure of her racial identity emphasizes the notion that one does not completely control their own identity, that they are affected by how society perceives them and by the marks the past has left on them. One could also argue that, for some individuals, abandoned racial identity and past life can be like an amputated limb – they are aware of it, once it was a part of them, but they have now learned to live without it. However, for some, phantom limb syndrome occurs; the missing part reminds individuals about itself in a painful way: for limbs the pain manifests physically, but for missing identity it can be intense fear, sadness, loneliness, or guilt – emotional pain. For Stella, this seems to occur whenever she is faced with reminders of the life she abandoned: when a black family moves across the street and her initial fear transforms into a longing for real interpersonal connections, and guilt for hiding her relationship with the black neighbor from her white acquaintances and even her own husband, or when Jude, Desiree's daughter, confronts her and she feels her current way of life is being threatened. Whenever such situations occur Stella reacts with contempt towards individuals in order to distance herself and suppress the emotional pain.

Stella is only one of the twins but it seems that her racial passing is what triggers all of what later happens within her family. One could also assume that the title refers to her—the "vanishing half"—the twin that vanished without a trace or the part of identity that vanishes once an individual decides to pass. The other half and the other twin is Desiree, who is suddenly left all alone in New Orleans when Stella leaves the city with Blake and disappears leaving behind only a note. Desiree deeply grieves Stella abandoning her. She seems lost without her sister, as if Stella was a part of whom Desiree was—without her she has to redefine herself so she attempts to leave her misery behind her. "In D.C., she tried to bury her grief. …. Desiree told herself that she was starting over but she thought of Stella even more now, wondering what she would make of this city. She'd left New Orleans to escape the memory of her but she still couldn't fall asleep without rolling over to feel for Stella in bed beside her" (Bennett 19–20). For a long time Desiree could not escape the feeling of loss, but eventually she learned to live without Stella's presence—a presence that for most of Desiree's life had a significant impact on shaping who she was. What helped Desiree to redefine herself was a new job and falling in love with Sam, who became her husband and abuser.

Desiree's relationship with Sam would not have been easily accepted in Mallard; it clashed with everything that the town stood for because Sam was a dark-skinned African American. The town's reaction to Desiree's choice of husband is visible once she returns

to Mallard with her child. "In Mallard, nobody married dark. Nobody left either, but Desiree had already done that. Marrying a dark man and dragging his blueblack child all over town was one step too far" (Bennett 5). One could postulate that Desiree's choice could have been influenced by trying to do the opposite of what was expected of her in her hometown – after all, she had escaped it partly due to the burden of those expectations—or to do the opposite of what Stella did, which was to fall in love with a white man. Desiree's mother has her own view of why Sam married Desiree, and her assumptions point to the reasons for Sam's abuse. The mother perceives it in the following manner: "A dark man would trample her beauty. He'd love it at first but like anything he desired and could never attain, he would soon grow to resent it. Now he was punishing her for it" (Bennett 39). The mother's concerns prove to be valid, but one could wonder how the mother knows to expect what happened. Perhaps her assumptions are based on personal experiences that are not revealed, or she uses the racial history of the United States as the precursor of her daughter's relationship.

The mother's assumptions come true when Sam starts abusing Desiree. At times, Desiree attempts to justify his violence by blaming it on herself whenever she said something that triggered him, and on the violence and prejudice against colored people. "She'd wounded him while he was still grieving. [Martin Luther King Jr.'s death] .... Who could blame him, living in a world that refused to respect him as a man? She didn't have to be so mouthy" (Bennett 28). Desiree tries to paint the abuser as a victim of the social circumstances, but she exists in the same reality. Her justifications referring to the racial situation in the US should also refer to her own sense of identity, her not being treated as equal, but she does not refer to that because even when she lives in a black community she is mistaken for white by other black people; it seems that she does not share the same racial identity as Sam. Sam, like white Stella towards black people, exhibits contempt to express his racial superiority over Desiree due to the difference in their skin pigmentation. Whereas Stella's contempt was supposed to prove her whiteness, Sam's contempt shows his pride in being black, his superior racial identity over Desiree's mulatto status. His feelings of superiority lead to outbursts of anger whenever Desiree is, in his view, not adequately emphasizing her inferiority. He may even be disgusted with her because, as Tomkins claims, disgust is "the response of disenchantment" (395), and Sam becomes disenchanted with Desiree's light skin, which becomes a point of contempt despite it having been insignificant earlier. When Sam becomes violent, Desiree's light complexion becomes the target of his verbal abuse: "his hands curled into fists, before he called her *uppity yellow bitch* or *crazy as your sister* or *off thinkin you white*" (Bennett 23, italics in the original). Sam's behavior seems to point to the notion that a light-skinned African American could never be treated the same by other black people as someone dark-skinned, that they do not have the same racial identity because their suffering would never be as deep and their escape across the color line too easy. It seems that contempt

was part of the lives of light-skinned African Americans no matter if they transgressed the color line or not: they either exhibit it or are at its receiving end. Because of Sam's abuse, Desiree goes back to Mallard where she is no longer too light, but her daughter now faces the challenge of being too black in a town inhabited by African Americans.

Whereas Stella's choice to pass as white and separate herself from her family directly impacted her and her sister, its impact on the next generation is indirect and the result of the choices the twins made after Stella's passing. Jude's life was impacted by her family racial background twofold. First, her own unusually dark complexion was the reason for how her grandmother and the community in Mallard treated her, and it thus affected her identity development. Second, Stella's absence from Desiree and Jude's life created a hole in the family that Jude was desperate to fill. She felt the need to know her aunt who chose to live as a white woman, who escaped Mallard for good, something of which Jude also dreamed.

Living in Mallard proved challenging for Jude. From her arrival in early childhood to her leaving in adolescence she was stigmatized due to her blackness. Mallard was a community that did not easily accept dark-skinned people:

> They weren't used to having a dark child amongst them and were surprised by how much it upset them. Each time that girl passed by, no hat or nothing, they were galled as when Thomas Richard returned from the war, half a leg lighter, and walked around town with one pant leg pinned back so that everyone could see his loss. If nothing could be done about ugliness, you ought to at least look like you were trying to hide it. (Bennett 69)

Citizens of Mallard saw Jude's blackness as a type of impairment, as the above quote points to. Erving Goffman notes that among different types of stigmas there is that which is highly visible but not intrusive. (49) One could assume that Jude's skin color would be classified as such because although everyone noticed it, she is no different than any other girl in Mallard in other aspects. However, the treatment she received due to her blackness seemed to impair her ability to live fully in the small town, to have friends, to find love, to shape her identity without the constant negative impact of others stigmatizing her looks. That stigmatization took different forms, from exclusion from daily activities all the other children partook in, to verbal ridicule, which stayed with her long after she left Mallard: "They made up lots of jokes, and once, well into her forties, she would recite a litany of them at a dinner party in San Francisco" (Bennett 88). The fact that she remembered all the jokes so long after being bullied suggests their lasting impact on her, but the openness with which she seems to refer to them, as an anecdote at a party, shows that although they are part of her identity, they are not one of its defining elements.

It was not only the community which influenced Jude's self-worth and perception but also her grandma, who attempted to make her complexion lighter. She "tried to keep her

[Jude] out of the sun" but those attempts did not bring the desired result. (Bennett 88) All that treatment made Jude uncomfortable in her skin and desperate to change, as she would look for ways to become at least a little less dark: "She tried to lighten her skin once, … She wasn't foolish enough to hope that someday she might be light, but a deep brown maybe, anything better than this endless black" (Bennett 110). Her need to fit in was met with understanding from her grandmother, who attempted to help with different kinds of beauty potions but to no avail. Her mother's attitude towards Jude's feelings and her stigmatization leaned towards advice about ignoring others' attitudes and being herself. It seems peculiar that Desiree did not show more understanding towards her daughter's struggles when she herself had experienced verbal abuse from Sam for being too light-skinned.

Tomkins wrote that a vital part of a child's development is the process of identification. "By identification we mean the wish to be like someone else in some or all respects, for example, to think as the other does, to act as he does, to feel as he does, to look as he looks, and so on" (Tomkins 244). It seems then that Jude's need to look more like others in Mallard, and especially her mother, may not have been linked strictly with wanting to avoid stigmatization, but had also been a normal part of a child's development, which was to a degree impaired due to the lack of individuals who looked like Jude. Other children commented on the lack of resemblance between Jude and Desiree, and at some point Jude began providing fictitious answers that would halt the unwanted questions. "'We don't believe you,' Louisa said. 'About that bein your mama. She too pretty to be your mama.' 'She's not,' Jude said. 'My real mama's somewhere else.' 'Where at?' 'I don't know. Somewhere. I haven't found her yet.' She was thinking, somehow, of Stella – a woman who resembled her just a little but would be a better version of her mother" (Bennett 92). It is interesting that Jude would choose Stella as the alternative to her mother. Desiree and Stella are almost identical twins, so if someone claims that Jude does not resemble Desiree, she also does not look like Stella. Nevertheless, this does not prevent Jude from forming an emotional connection to the aunt whom she never met.

Due to the lack of an individual who she could identify with, Jude selected a missing member of the family she could mold to her liking in her imagination and imitate the way she thought Stella would behave. The need to be part of the unit was important to Jude even before she arrived in Mallard. When her father told her that Desiree thought herself better than them due to her skin color and background, Jude thought: "She didn't understand exactly what he meant, but she liked being part of an us. People thought that being one of a kind made you special. No, it just made you lonely. What was special was belonging with someone else" (Bennett 92–93). The need to be a part of the group, part of a collective identity, seems natural, but Jude was deprived of this opportunity for most of her life, always too dark to fit with others in Mallard and later marred with the past stigmatization and thus skeptical of creating new bonds. The fact that being "one of

a kind" made her lonely links her to Stella, who, due to concealing her real racial identity, was also lonely. The same feeling caused by racial identity but a contrasting source: one could not hide or change her race and the other could not reveal it. No wonder then that Stella became a haunting presence in Jude's life. "For years, Stella drifted through her dreams. .... Always Stella, never her mother, as if, even asleep, she could tell the difference. .... she imagined bumping into her. .... Stella everywhere, always, and nowhere at the same time" (Bennett 222, 224). This haunting presence could have had an emotional impact on Jude and might have, to some extent, influenced Jude's decision to move away and stay away from Mallard. Stella was a ghostly presence in Jude's life; thus, it is not surprising that when an opportunity arose to meet the ever-absent aunt, Jude seized it.

When Jude meets Kennedy, Stella's daughter, it finally affords her an opportunity to find her aunt. The reunion, however, is not a pleasant one:

> She'd met Stella but Stella didn't want to know her. It shouldn't have been surprising. She hadn't wanted anything to do with the family for decades, so nothing had changed. But why did Jude feel as if she'd lost someone? Again she saw herself reaching toward Stella, Stella pushing her away. She felt as if she'd reached for her mother and only felt her shove her back. (Bennett 267)

Stella's rejection seems to have its source in her fear of her passing coming to light. For Jude, whose dream finally comes true, the rejection is like severing another link to her family. She could not identify with other members of the Vignes family and Stella rejected her, thus she was all alone once again, no common collective identity to share. Tomkins states: "Individuation and achievement of identity require that the individual tolerate his loneliness, his aloneness and his uniqueness" (457). It seems then that Stella's rejection might have brought Jude towards shaping her own identity, and with Reese's (a transsexual man with whom she fell in love) unyielding support she was finally able to accept her differences, to admit that what was stigmatized in Mallard does not make her worse than others but simply is a part of her.

Kennedy also seems to suffer from an inadequate model for identification, not because Stella does not look like her but because her mother refuses to share any personal details about herself. This lack of details is the result of Stella's racial passing and her fear of her daughter's reaction if the truth were to come out: "She [Kennedy] was white; she would never think of herself as anything else. If she ever learned the truth, she would hate her mother for deceiving her" (Bennett 184). The mentioned possible hatred is one of the reasons for Stella's never-ending lies, which lead to the deterioration of the mother-daughter relationship between her and Kennedy. Kennedy eventually learns her mother's secret and that brings a crisis of identity, but she is unable to define herself even earlier. "'Why can't you just be yourself?' Stella asked once. 'Maybe I don't know who that is,' her daughter

shot back. .... Maybe something in the girl was unsettled, a small part of her realizing that her life wasn't right. As if she'd gotten older and started touching the trees, only to find that they were all cardboard sets" (Bennett 240). Kennedy's identity problems do not have a clear racial connection as she never knew herself as anything other than white. Her problems seem to be rooted in her mother's secrets and the manner in which she behaves due to them, an issue that is linked with racial identity.

For Kennedy the only element of life that is artificial is her mother's past and her own racial past. Unaware of the fact, Kennedy is passing as white. Although she never shed any part of her racial identity, her mother's actions led to her identity confusion and later her racial ambivalence. It seems that although she is oblivious of the truth, she feels that part of her identity is missing. Finding out about her mother's passing and that she has black family members does not aid Kennedy with shaping a coherent sense of identity. Initially, she could not believe it to be possible: "She would know, she decided. You couldn't go through your whole life not knowing something so fundamental about yourself. She would feel it somehow. She would see it in the faces of other blacks, some sort of connection" (Bennett 291–292). Kennedy's musings point to the notion that racial identity is something internal, but the fact that once she learns about her racial background, she does not feel any different points to the notion of racial identity being a social construct—she was treated as white and behaved as white her whole life, therefore she is white. The missing piece of identity she is constantly searching for may be interpreted as the missing racial heritage. Still, it could also be the connection to her mother that is missing, caused by racial passing but not connected to race as much as to emotional distancing.

Kennedy feels she has the right to decide on her racial or otherwise identity. When Jude points out that Kennedy is a Negro because her mother is one, Kennedy does not think about her identity in the same terms as it is defined by law or perceived by society at the time.

> It wasn't a race thing. She just hated the idea of anyone telling her who she had to be. She was like her mother in that way. If she'd been born black, she would have been perfectly happy about it. But she wasn't and who was Jude to tell her that she was somebody that she was not? Nothing had changed, really. .... A single detail had been moved and replaced. Swapping out one brick wouldn't change a house into a fire station. She was still herself. (Bennett 315)

The metaphor of one brick can refer to the one-drop rule, which defined the race of individuals in the United States for centuries. Kennedy's denial of the rule suggests that one should not be determined by the past. Only one's life and choices should define their identity, and one should be able to decide to which collective identity one ascribes; no one

else can do that for an individual. Stella's secret coming to light does not help Kennedy define herself. Kennedy continues to search for her identity, trying out new ones while she travels: "All the stories she knew were fiction, so she began to create new ones. .... She was white, she was black, she became a new person as soon as she crossed a border. She was always inventing her life" (Bennett 317). Assuming new identities does not help Kennedy forge one she is entirely comfortable with, and she never seems completely happy with herself.

The story of the Vignes twins seems to show that shaping one's identity hinges upon many aspects of one's life. Being mixed race, as well as the phenomenon of racial passing, seems to complicate the forming of one's identity because the choice of whether to transgress the color line was a decision that had far-reaching consequences, and not only for the individual who infringed the existing racial order. In the novel, Stella's racial passing not only creates emotional problems she must live with but also impacts her relationship with her whole family, no matter if they know she is passing or not. Her transgressing the color line also influences the shaping of her daughter's identity, something that Kennedy cannot fix herself no matter how hard she tries. Racial identity is also shown as highly variable within the same racial minority: the shades of black are shown to matter, as Desiree and Jude's stories illustrate. Racial passing disturbed the coherence of identity for numerous Americans in the past. As Bennett's novel *The Vanishing Half* shows, those who do not identify as part of a minority may belong to one. With individuals redefining themselves, the concept of national collective identity is also constantly changing. The story illustrates how the choices of one's ancestors affect the development of one's identity. Still, it demonstrates that despite many disadvantages, people can reclaim their lives and choose who they identify as. However, as illustrated, that choice does not always change how one feels or lives. Kennedy decided to keep identifying as white despite knowing her mother's heritage and society's view of racial identity. That choice, however, did not aid her in finding the missing identity she was always seeking. On the other hand, Desiree exemplifies the idea that one can find happiness outside racial identity struggles. Once Desiree returns to Mallard, she remains there for almost twenty years. Having discarded all the preconceived notions of who others saw her as, Desiree is finally content with who she becomes, finding herself in small-town life and her role as a mother, a life in which race does not play a significant role. Even when she leaves Mallard, she does not concern herself with the racial issues and continues to be content with herself and her life. Unlike in many stories, the individual who trespasses onto the territory of the racial other is not directly "punished." Instead, the price in Bennett's book seems to concern the identity problems of the next generation. The physical violence linked to race is reserved for those who do not transgress the color line: the father of the Vignes twins or Desiree. That can illustrate that racial violence is unprovoked, and the anger exhibited by the perpetrators may not be personal but built upon preconceived notions

concerning race. For example, in Desiree's situation, this notion would be how dark an African American should be to be perceived as part of the black community. Moreover, the fact that the Vignes bloodline ends, as neither Jude nor Kennedy have children, might metaphorically illustrate that racial identity is vital to maintaining families, especially if one considers Kennedy's character. For the contemporary reader, the story also illustrates what a privilege it is to live in times when one's identity—racial or otherwise—is beginning to be seen as a personal matter and not dictated by law or society.

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Self-sculpting in Ernest Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden*

Abstract. Ernest Hemingway's posthumously published novel *The Garden of Eden* features arguably the strongest and most transgressive heroine in the writer's work. Catherine Bourne replays a fear present in other novels by Hemingway and in his view of the Fitzgeralds' marriage: she is the rich and controlling wife of a writer, whose masculinity is threatened by her financial position. Additionally, Catherine starts a series of experiments connected to gender and sexuality, testing her and her husband's limits, and ultimately putting at risk their relationship. The paper discusses Catherine's gender-bending practices as a form of self-expression and self-sculpting, looking for an identity beyond the limitations imposed on her by society. Her transgression is analyzed both as an aim in itself and as a means in the process of self-fashioning, in which Catherine is more determined not only than Hemingway's other female protagonists but also than her husband David.

Keywords: transgression; Hemingway; *Garden of Eden*; gender; identity

The Garden of Eden may be seen as Ernest Hemingway's most unusual book, both in terms of its content and the history of its publication. Hemingway began writing it in 1946 but never got to finish it: the manuscript grew to over 1500 pages, which were cut to 200 only after Hemingway's death by Scribner's editor Tom Jenks before the book's publication in 1986. The story that has remained is one of a newlywed couple, David and Catherine Bourne, spending their honeymoon in France and Spain. Catherine is an incarnation of a fear present in Hemingway's own life and in his view of the Fitzgeralds' marriage: she is the rich and controlling wife of a writer, whose masculinity is threatened by her financial position. The real problems for the couple, however, start when Catherine begins to experiment with gender: she cuts her hair short, and introduces a reversal of roles into the bedroom. Finally, she brings home a beautiful young friend called Marita, who becomes the lover of both Bournes. With time, Catherine gets more and more emotionally unstable and ends up leaving David, while Marita enters the role of a supportive and obedient wife.

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What makes the novel's status controversial as a Hemingway text is the degree of changes introduced by the editor. For instance, the part left out by Jenks includes a whole other subplot of another gender-bending couple: the painters Nick and Barbara, and Barbara's lover Andrew. Most significantly, the ending envisaged by Hemingway was not David being "handed over" from Catherine to Marita (herself a more complex character in the manuscript), but a darker turn of events, with David and Catherine (who has undergone psychiatric treatment) returning to the French Riviera and reflecting on their past. Regardless of Hemingway's intentions, however, this paper will focus on the published text, making references to the manuscript only when necessary: firstly, because for better or for worse the novel exists in its 1986 shape as a self-contained whole, and secondly, because most of the points I intend to make are visible, albeit more subtly, in Jenks's version as well.[2]

Given the unusually open treatment of gender in *The Garden of Eden,* many readings of the novel focus on a biographical level: starting with Kenneth Lynn's influential biography of Hemingway, through Mark Spilka's *Hemingway's Quarrel with Androgyny,* to Carl P. Eby's *Hemingway's Fetishism*. Critics have been pointing to Hemingway's childhood, when his mother dressed him in his older sister's clothes, which may have resulted in his gender anxieties, as well as to his marriages to Hadley and to Pauline, and the unconventional sexual arrangements possibly involved in the transition from one wife to the other. I am not, however, interested in following this path: firstly, as Valerie Rohy points out, such readings are problematic since they tend to label Hemingway's behaviors or interests as "pathological" (Rohy 149). Secondly, and more importantly, they seem to be an interpretive cul-de-sac, taking away from the reader the freedom to see literature as literature, and instead making him/her into a detective or the writer's psychopathologist. What I would argue *Garden of Eden* portrays is infinitely more interesting, since more universal, than Hemingway's own gender identification. It is a text about becoming oneself, creativity, and the dangers of crossing one's own boundaries.

However, gender identity – not Hemingway's, but the characters' – is one of the most obvious tropes present in the novel. This is why, in this article, I rely upon readings of *Garden* focusing on the book's gender and queer aspects – by Nancy and Robert Scholes, and by Gerald J. Kennedy among others. At the same time, this is not my only (or even main) methodology, since, vital as the gender aspect is, I do not believe it to be the essence of Catherine Bourne's experiment, as I will discuss further on. Instead, I adapt an eclectic approach combining said gender studies elements with psychoanalytic ones and building upon the heterogeneous reading of Hemmingway's text by Arnold Weinstein.

2 For a discussion of the differences between the manuscript and the published novel, see for example Fleming's "The Endings of Hemingway's *Garden of Eden*" and Peters's "The Thematic Integrity of *The Garden of Eden*."

Finally, I use Mehdi Belhaj Kacem's and Chris Jenks's works on the nature of transgressive acts to explore the broader dimension of Catherine's experiment, which I see not as a search for gender identity but identity *tout court*, a project which I call after Weinstein "self-sculpting."

What is the eponymous Garden of Eden? The first possibility is to see the early life of the newlyweds as paradise: they eat, they make love, they talk. The Edenic innocence is present in the directness of their experiences: it is "a realm of touch and taste, where things have their plenitude" (Weinstein 190); "a world in which the pleasures of the body are not complicated by the ills of the soul" (Comley and Scholes 53). David and Catherine live in a bubble, as if time has stopped and all they can do is enjoy the present moment, savor it and satisfy their appetites: the one for food and the one for sex, defining the rhythm of their honeymoon, giving way one to the other or metonymically standing in for one another. In this interpretation, the fall from innocence happens when Catherine begins her experiments with gender, disrupting the idyll and complicating the Bournes' life beyond repair. Performing the function of both Eve and the serpent, she tempts her Adam to explore forbidden regions, granting him knowledge thanks to which he will never be the same again.

The second option is to see Catherine's endeavor as an attempt at constructing her own Eden: one where the two of them, and her especially, may live beyond the limitations of gender. From the start, David and Catherine look like brother and sister; she wants to blur the boundary between them even more. J. Gerald Kennedy invokes Eliade's interpretation of androgyny as expressing Edenic original wholeness (Kennedy 202), which allows one to see Catherine as not causing the couple's expulsion from Eden, but rather as engaged in a search for it. That the initial stages of the honeymoon are not the true Eden is suggested by Rohy, who points at the way language is used in the novel. According to the critic, the Biblical Eden is characterized by a literalness where words correspond directly to objects, and figurative language appears only with the Fall. Seen in this light, Catherine and David's relationship is from the start anything but Eden; it is a space where "nothing is unambiguous and anything may have a second meaning" (Rohy 157). Eden is not given to them simply through the enjoyment of physical pleasure; it must be sought for if it is to emerge. Therefore, Arnold Weinstein sees in Catherine's endeavor "a voyage to … some essentially dark, originary self.… seeking a knowledge that might, miraculously, be a higher innocence" (Weinstein 195). Her transgression may be interpreted in the light of Mehdi Belhaj Kacem's views, according to which the real transgression is man's appropriation of the Laws of Nature by instituting the rules of social life (Kacem 185). Therefore, what we usually term as transgressive, the violation of those rules, in fact returns us to the primary, animal state. In a similar sense, Catherine, by acting against social norms, does not step into the 'abnormal' or 'unnatural' but strives for a return to the primitive, pre-social, pre-divided; in her case: pre-gender.

As a result of these two interpretive possibilities of what Eden is, the novel may be read as one about "expulsion from the Garden and return to the Garden, loss of innocence and recovery of innocence" (Weinstein 206).

What is, then, Catherine's experiment? The most noticeable change that she undergoes is cutting her hair shorter and shorter, dyeing it a pearl-like color, and talking David into the same hairdo, which is accompanied by a reversal of roles in the bedroom. Thus, she joins the litany of Hemingway's female characters, who are "most erotic when most boylike": the wife in "Cat in the Rain," Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises*, Maria in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* – yet Catherine is the only one for whom cutting her hair is a veritable project, loaded with serious consequences (Weinstein 193). She refers to the day spent having her hair colored as "arduous," which reveals her sense of the whole enterprise as labor (Hemingway 85). The outcome is scandalous not because it flouts the fashion and what is considered appropriate at the time, but because, as Nancy R. Comley and Robert Scholes point out, it is a public sign of private transgression, making visible a deeper transition that Catherine is undergoing (Comley and Scholes 65). The public nature of Catherine's transformation is perhaps what bothers David most: his initial impulse is to insist on a shorter haircut in order to retain (for himself? for others?) a sense of manliness. How threatening the simple haircut may be is testified to by the fact that Catherine's new look becomes the talk of the town and overshadows David's success at catching an exceptionally large sea bass – it is one facet of the rivalry between them, which will be discussed further in this paper.

Another way in which the internal change is reflected on the outside is Catherine's desire to get as dark as possible, which "links this new eroticism to fantasies of miscegenation" (Comley and Scholes 90). This reveals that Catherine's project is broader than gender reversal: she is searching for something, a new identity, and she can get there only by transgressing existing boundaries, be they sexual or racial. The primary impulse behind Catherine's project may be not her gender identification, but gender experiments may be simply a means in the search for something more general: identity, or creativity. On the one hand, it is easy to see that Catherine does not feel comfortable in the traditionally feminine role: she complains about her inability to get pregnant, which might be read as an experience of inadequacy pushing her to look for a different field in which she could realize herself. On the other hand, Rose Marie Burwell warns that Catherine's possible sterility is a red herring, since the manuscript makes clear that being a mother is not her interest anyway (Burwell 202). What is more, Catherine's definition of femininity entails "Scenes, hysteria, false accusations, temperament" (Hemingway 70) – little wonder then that she finds being a woman unappealing.

Being a girl is to her "a god damned bore" (Hemingway 70), and even inhabiting the female body is unexciting: this is why she wants David to focus on her haircut rather than her breasts, which she calls her "dowry": an inherited piece of flesh, which she

finds tedious because it is not a result of her own choice or creation, but merely a gift of biological chance (Hemingway 17). In fact, boredom seems to be one of the key factors behind Catherine's experiment. The honeymoon starts with a polite routine of eating and lovemaking, which begins to feel oppressive in its inescapable hedonism.[3] The cinematic details of the abundance of food on the initial pages contrast with the fact that Catherine and David are always hungry: what they have is not enough right from the start, even if it seems perfect. When Catherine declares: "Don't we have wonderful simple fun?" (Hemingway 10) she seems to mean it in earnest, but the very fact that she voices it may already be read as a sign of upcoming dissatisfaction. Even David's proficiency – as a connoisseur of drinks, a swimmer, a lover – becomes "dull," being part of the same perfect superficiality that characterizes their marriage from the start (Hemingway 191). If the honeymoon on the Riviera is to be Eden, then Eden is hell.

Catherine's sexuality is not seen by her as her primary motivation in seeking the ménage à trois. She claims that she was never interested in women, despite their advances, and even when she brings Marita home she initially does not seem to plan to sleep with her (Hemingway 91, 105). When she comes to the conclusion that she needs to have sex with Marita, she thinks of it as something to "go through with" and "get rid of" – a necessary stage of her quest rather than a goal in itself resulting from desire (Hemingway 105). On the other hand, she later claims that sleeping with a woman was what she wanted all her life (Hemingway 120) – this, however, happens at a phase when Catherine becomes emotionally less and less stable, alternating between the feeling that sex with Marita was a mistake, that she "loved it," and that she should sleep with another woman to see why Marita has not satisfied her after all (Hemingway 192). She becomes more and more restless, seeing clearly that neither the gender-bending practices with David nor same-sex intercourse with Marita have given her the answer she was looking for.

Especially that Catherine does not know what it is she is searching for, and this is what makes her character particularly heartbreaking. It is clear that she is in pain, trying to satisfy both David and herself, but to no avail. "Do you want me to wrench myself around and tear myself in two because you can't make up your mind?" she asks David, but she is equally responsible (or equally not responsible) for the torture she feels, since she too does not know what it is she wants so much (Hemingway 70). Burwell identifies in Catherine's project three stages: first, she makes sure that David will write about her; then, in what the critic terms "the feminist phase," she defies conventions and liberates herself from the limitations of being a "girl," and finally enters a phase of female creativity, looking for illustrators for David's book (Burwell 204–5). However, seeing Catherine

3 At the same time Mark Spilka points out that the published version does not do justice to the fact that the novel's "claustrophobic concentration" on those trivial activities is meant to show them as means of an inner journey (Spilka 34).

as a feminist is rather the critic's wishful thinking, since the character's insistence on womanhood being boring is hardly a feminist stance. What is more, this classification makes Catherine's experience more neat than it is or even should be: in fact, so many factors are intertwined in her project that it is virtually impossible to disentangle them into a linear process. On the one hand, by the end of the book Catherine does feel like her identity-building project has led to something: after having slept with Marita, she feels "grown up" (Hemingway 120), to the extent that she no longer needs either Marita or David (Hemingway 191). On the other hand, the book presents her final state as "madness,"[4] and Catherine herself declares: "now I'm nothing," which does not sound like a successful end of individuation (Hemingway 192).

Certainly, Catherine no longer wishes to be a girl because as a boy she "can do anything and anything and anything" (Hemingway 15). As Comley and Scholes point out, this means to her "social enablement" (Comley and Scholes 61), but it is also freedom in a more general sense, both in bed and in life. She does not simply become a boy, but "a boy too" – a person who unifies within her both genders, escaping the limitations usually connected to being assigned to only one of them. It allows her to explore a completely new territory, and at least at times be in control: she tells David that she has not changed back into a girl during lunch (Hemingway 66), which does not refer to any external actions but her inner feelings; she can also go back to being a woman when David wants it, which probably means returning to a more passive sexual role (Hemingway 67). There are, however, things which she cannot control: the effects the whole experience has on their marriage. When David contemplates the possibility of "go[ing] back where we started," Catherine reassures him: "Of course we can and we will," but the reality is precisely the opposite (Hemingway 69). Like the couple in Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants," the Bournes can no longer have everything, and much later in the novel, after having slept with Marita, Catherine states: "I wish I could remember what it was we lost.... It's just gone whatever it was" (Hemingway 118).

There is, too, something narcissistic about Catherine's project: when they switch roles in bed, she becomes another man, a "Peter," but David is to become Catherine (Hemingway 17); she is "finally consummating the sex act with herself, an act achievable only through the agency of David as 'go-between'" (Weinstein 197). And since it is roleplay, the configurations multiply: Catherine makes love to David-as-Catherine, experiencing lesbian sex even before her encounter with Marita and being able to both be herself and have a cubist look at herself, from two perspectives at a time; Catherine-as-Peter makes love to David-as-Catherine, allowing both of them to experience a full reversal

4 I use the term "madness" not to denote any specific type of mental illness but rather a literary trope entailing a sense of loss of mental control.

of agency and power; then, Catherine-as-Peter makes love to David, which is an act of male homosexual intercourse and the aspect which most scares David.

An undeniably important – perhaps the most important – level of Catherine's exploration is creativity. Since David is the writer in the marriage, and since in Hemingway's world there is no real space for female artists, Catherine finds a way to express herself differently. She makes David write the story of their love, calling it "our project," and establishing her role as the book's publisher, looking for artists who would illustrate it and controlling David's process of writing, or – putting "a little order into it" when he becomes "difficult" (Hemingway 188–90). But the more important project is the one she realizes through living, or furnishing materials for David's narrative: a project of "self-sculpting" through sex, which allows her to treat "the human body as artistic material" (Weinstein 194). As the manuscript makes clear, her inspiration for sexual experimentation comes from a work of art: Rodin's sculpture "Damned Women," depicting an act of lesbian lovemaking. Constituting a part of his *Gate of Hell*, it is a warning against homosexuality, alluding to Dante's vision of punishment for those overcome by lust, and to Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal* (Comley and Scholes 54–55) – thus, Catherine's project situates itself within a rich cultural background of works of art dealing with transgression. That her creativity realizes itself most fully through an act of crossing social boundaries is not surprising; as Kacem points out, "since Sade, art has overwhelmingly been the art of a heroism of Transgression" (Kacem 184), and it is this transgressive urge that makes Weinstein compare her to Rimbaud (Weinstein 200).

Female creativity is for Hemingway, however, impossible, or at least dangerous. The final effect of Catherine's exploration of the liminal is madness. While David ultimately becomes a better writer thanks to having explored the taboo (despite his initial worries that Catherine endangers also his work, it turns out that the writer, in Hemingway, needs a little corruption), Catherine, like other women in the eyes of the modernists, "lack[s] something essential to genius," which results in the deterioration of her mental condition (Comley and Scholes 65, 66). And it is the "male-bodied boys" who get to define "what is psychotic, and what is sane" (Rohy 168), and impose their interpretations on Catherine. The critic Rose Marie Burwell sees Catherine as expressing not madness but "healthy anger" (205), yet Catherine agrees that she may be getting "crazy" (Hemingway 100).

Regardless of the fact that Catherine in the end does not seem to get what she wanted, she does not question the direction in which she is going. This is not the case with David, who reluctantly accepts the experiment, but whose reservations persist on many levels. From the very start, when Catherine announces to him a surprise, he is far from thrilled: waiting for her return from the hairdresser's, he drinks alone for the first time, as Hemingway characters do when they feel uneasy (Hemingway 14). So far, he knows only that Catherine wants to change something, but this knowledge is uncomfortable enough, since the only change from their (according to him) perfect life can be a change for the worse.

Then, he is afraid of the pace at which things are developing: "What can there be that will not burn out in a fire that rages like that?" (Hemingway 21). He seems concerned for the future of their relationship and what will be left of it if Catherine keeps realizing her ideas. After the first role-switching in bed, David thinks to himself: "goodbye Catherine goodbye my lovely girl goodbye and good luck and goodbye" (Hemingway 18) – it is a goodbye to the Catherine he knew when he married her, but also to their relationship as he knew and wanted it. For David, this certainly is the moment of the fall from innocence. For Catherine, the turning point is her intercourse with Marita: it is then that she doubts whether she and David are still "us" and whether she was unfaithful (Hemingway 117–19).

However, David also has fears more specifically connected to him and his conception of masculinity. For instance, his condition of letting Catherine experiment in bed is a full reversal of roles: "Not if you're a boy and I'm a boy," he declares, disclosing a fear of homosexual associations (Hemingway 67). He enjoys being "brothers" when they start looking more and more alike, but not what it entails regarding his sexual identity. When he becomes a "girl," the situation is hardly more acceptable: it gives rise to a "fear of castration implied by assuming a feminine role" (Comley and Scholes 60). David's insecurity may be explained through Judith Butler's notion of performativity (Butler 33), according to which gender needs to be repeatedly performed to be reaffirmed, and R. W. Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity, which refers to men's occupying a dominant position in society – similarly to Butler's idea of gender, being not a permanent phenomenon but one requiring constant reassertion (Coles 40–41). David, in his relationship with Catherine, gets fewer and fewer chances to inhabit a conventionally "masculine" role.

Catherine's experiment is not only hers because it reflects on David, too; her change of gender identity entails his change as well. As a result, looking in the mirror he no longer knows who he is, or, to be more precise, "how" he is (Hemingway 85). By seeing "the image of his divided, androgynous twin – he understands that he has risked an irreparable breach of his own self-identity" (Kennedy 205). As Freud points out, one of the reasons that the breaking of a taboo is always punished is its "contagious" character: it causes "fear of an infectious example, of the temptation to imitate" (83). Similarly, David not only allows Catherine to explore forbidden territories, but is also afraid that he enjoys the possibility to accompany her. What is different in their approaches to the whole process is the fact that David experiences a "taboo sense of guilt" (Freud 78-79), which Catherine does not. He thinks of himself as not "respect[ing] the way [he] handles [his] life" (Hemingway 148), which is perhaps the contrary of what Catherine might have said, her being in the process of regaining her life on her own terms. What is more, Catherine's main interest is herself and her project of self-sculpting, while David seems to truly love both women, which is why the experience is harder for him to make sense of.

David's only way to oppose Catherine is through his art. From the start, one can see rivalry between their creative needs: even though it is David who is the writer, in the

manuscript version Marita notices that Catherine's mastery of words equals David's writing (Spilka 51). This is why Catherine hates David's collecting newspaper clippings containing favorable reviews of his book: they are proof of David's independent, pre-Catherine existence; additionally, they show that he cares about the opinion of others, which to her proves his lack of self-reliance (or of relying uniquely on her, one might add). This is also why she wants him to keep writing the narrative about their honeymoon, of which she is the main character, and for which she, through her actions, furnishes content, rather than the story about his boyhood in Africa. Finally, as Weinstein points out, the rivalry is one between her project of returning to innocence via gender bending, and his – through writing (Weinstein 208).

What is at stake is David's identity not only as a straight male, but also as an independent person, as well as his sense of control. Catherine is threatening because her sexuality fashions his, her creativity dictates what he must write, and her money finances their lifestyle, which is why David insists so much on the fact that his book has made money (Hemingway 25–26). He tries to regain control through such seemingly insignificant actions as his expert preparation of martinis (Weinstein 191), but mostly through reading, which allows him to escape the world organized by Catherine, and writing, even the honeymoon narrative, which gives him a sense of wholeness, since "he wrote from an inner core which could not be split nor even marked nor scratched" (Hemingway 183). However, it is especially the African story that allows him to return to this inner core; as Weinstein notes, the more unorthodox their sexual life becomes, the more David becomes engrossed in the African narrative (202).

The story about his boyhood in Africa, in which his father kills an elephant thanks to information he received from young David, is one whose writing he has been putting off for years (Hemingway 123) – now, however, is the time when he must face the truth about himself and who he is. If he does not want to lose his identity in Catherine's mire, he needs to go back to the very roots of his male self. The African story is about David's individuation through getting to know his father; like Nick Adams in Hemingway's "The Indian Camp," he must confront the idea that his father brings pain and even death, and come to terms with it. After Catherine burns the manuscript, correctly intuiting how threatening it is to her power over David, he miraculously manages to recreate it, feeling that the new version is even better. Burwell sees David's development from a protest against his father's violent nature to the appreciation of his complex personality as regression "to a position from which he no longer needs to judge his father's actions" through "the internalization of a vision that can tolerate nothing that is not unalloyedly masculine" (Burwell 205, 208, 213). However, the fact that writing the African story is David's act of resistance to Catherine is not tantamount to what Burwell sees as insulating himself from the feminine (Burwell 214); the book makes clear that David has become a better writer if not solely then at least also thanks to Catherine's experiment. His newly gained ability

to accept contradictions within human nature is by no means "unalloyedly masculine," just as there is nothing reductionist in it.

It is true that the African story gives David a stable ground when in real life everything shifts beneath his feet. When Catherine accuses him of escaping his duty by writing it (Hemingway 190), she is in a way right: he escapes through it to a time when his life was perhaps not simpler, but its elements were falling into place rather than apart. Contrary to his marriage, the story is "straight," which gives him back the feeling of control: "You have to make sense there. You don't make any in this other," he tells himself (Hemingway 146). It is also a story which teaches him that "the heart will betray us" (Weinstein 206) as well as that the true state of existence is loneliness. In Africa, the ten-year-old David learns to close himself off and protect his vulnerability: a lesson which he must relearn if he is to survive Catherine's influence.

Especially that outside the African story it is Catherine who is in control most of the time. Even though the text calls her a "girl" as opposed to David being a "man," he does not dominate in the relationship in any way other than his connoisseurship of alcohols and fishing. It is Catherine's actions that drive the plot of the novel, and their scope is never limited to herself: from the start it is clear that David is part of her project as well. When, before the first visit to the hairdresser's, she announces that she is going to change, she states: "It's for you. It's for me too" (Hemingway 12). When she brings Marita home, she again acts as if she did it for David (Hemingway 96). One may wonder whether she genuinely thinks that David is in need of a change, too, whether she simply needs his company not to explore the forbidden territory alone, or whether the very nature of her experiment requires the presence and cooperation of her man. With time, however, it becomes clear that David, like Marita, is an accessory whose opinions do not matter: the decisions to invite Marita or to swim together naked are made by Catherine without consulting him. She even tells Marita: "if he ever says no about anything … [i]t doesn't mean a thing" (Hemingway 188).

It is also David's passivity that makes this power relation so one-sided: he agrees to being handed over from Catherine to Marita (appropriately nicknamed "Heiress," as she literally inherits him from Catherine) like an object. So much easier it is for Catherine to be the puppet master of the whole show: there are moments when she meticulously directs the movements of her actors, for instance asking David to kiss Marita (though she does not seem happy to see her wish fulfilled, perhaps counting on David's disobedience (Hemingway 104)). Looking at Marita and David together, she tells them: "I feel as though I'd invented you" (Hemingway 191). Her creative project, therefore, is not only David's honeymoon narrative, nor herself, but also David and Marita's relationship. The latter allows her to leave David with a clear conscience, knowing that he will be "taken care of," but also to test her creative powers on other people, and mold them according to her own will. In this sense, Catherine Bourne is an extraordinary woman in the Hemingway

world: not the male fantasy whose main mission is to fulfill her man's desires, but "The woman-as-(desiring)-subject … even as he [Hemingway] punishes her act of hubris" with madness (Weinstein 209).

This allows us to return to the central question of the novel: what is it that Catherine wants? Are her actions motivated simply by a discomfort connected to her gender? I would argue that the gender experiment is to Catherine a means rather than an end in itself; from the start, she tells David: "I'm the destructive type.… And I'm going to destroy you" (Hemingway 5) – her chief goal is transgression itself and the thrill it provokes. As Susan Suleiman points out, "The characteristic feeling accompanying transgression is one of intense pleasure (at the exceeding of boundaries) and of intense anguish (at the full realization of the force of those boundaries)" – a feeling best achievable through sexual "perversions" (Suleiman 75). At the very least, it is a practice that can make one feel alive to the core. Another argument in favor of the thesis that gender-bending is not the essence of Catherine's experiment is how vaguely her and David's lovemaking is described. Of course, one may simply attribute this to Hemingway's modesty or to literary censorship; however, more important issues seem to be at stake as well. Spilka links this discretion to the fact that Hemingway refrains from describing Rodin's sculpture, the one that has inspired Catherine, as well, which allows the readers, just like the couple, to experience "disturbing sexual ambiguities" (Spilka 35). Rohy connects it to the writer's intention to show the "estrangement of gender from heteronormative conventions" and a "radical dissociation of gender from genital sex" (Rohy 148). On a more general level, the importance of what Catherine and David do lies not in how precisely the experiment proceeds, but in the act of transgression itself. And for the breaking of the taboo to retain its intended thrill, an element of mystery is necessary.

David is not as keen as Catherine on the transgression for a variety of reasons: first, as Comley and Scholes point out, it is clear in the manuscript version that the book's men in general are more cautious in experimenting and only follow women's lead (Comley and Scholes 59). Second, social rules are far less constricting to David, to the extent that he does not realize their presence, unlike Catherine, who feels oppressed by them (Hemingway 15). Since nothing is forbidden to David (or, at least, nothing which he would notice), he does not have the urge to reach for it, as only "The forbidden engenders the fruit of desire itself," and "carries with it a propulsion to desire in equal measure" (Jenks 45–46). Not experiencing the desire, he sees in Catherine's plan more of a danger than of an opportunity.

To an extent, he is right: boundaries are needed if we are to be able to live in society, and the more the action of the novel unveils, the more claustrophobic the atmosphere becomes, with David, Catherine, and Marita constituting a universe to themselves, willingly cutting themselves off from other social interactions. At the same time, though, he is wrong: transgression does not abolish boundaries, quite the contrary. As Jenks

states, "to transgress is … to announce and even laudate the commandment, the law, or the convention," as transgression draws attention to the law it breaks (Jenks 2). "Transgression is not the same as disorder; it opens up chaos and reminds us of the necessity of order"; "it shows a consciousness of limits not their absence" (Jenks 7, 95). Catherine keeps looking for new rules to break, probes for new opportunities for transgression, because she is in the process of self-making, thus of establishing her own boundaries. What the "necessity of order" means for both Bournes is different: for David, this is entering into a relationship with Marita precisely thanks to transgression, but soon after going back to traditional sexual practices; for Catherine, it could be an establishment of new identity, were it not for the fact that she becomes mad.

Transgression itself may be viewed as an exciting experiment, or it may acquire moral valuation. As Bataille puts it, "evil is not transgression, it is transgression condemned" (Bataille 127). David explains to himself: "a sin is what you feel bad after and you don't feel bad," but he immediately adds: "Not with the wine you don't feel bad … and what will you drink when the wine won't cover for you?" (Hemingway 21). His conscience needs to be numbed with alcohol, which implies that when sober, he does think of Catherine's experiments as not merely threatening but as evil. Comley and Scholes point to the fact that David and Catherine refer to their sexual activities using a "language of condemnation," perhaps to make the whole enterprise more attractive, but "it is not easy to say how deeply they share or how fully they might reject this discourse" (Comley and Scholes 56). One might be tempted to think that while David is tormented by the undertones, perhaps also the moral ones, of what they are doing, Catherine is virtually amoral, which is why it is easy for her to cross all boundaries. At the same time, though, Weinstein points to Catherine's reaction to David's African story ("It's bestial") and sees in it not only an expression of jealousy of her husband's creative self. The comment on "bestiality" refers specifically to David's father's sexual relations with African women, and Weinstein interprets this disapproval of miscegenation as a displaced moral judgement of Catherine and David's sexual experiments (Weinstein 209).

That Catherine also seems to have the sense of boundaries is paramount to her transgressive project's success: after all, "limits to our experience and the taboos that police them are never simply imposed from the outside; rather, limits to behavior are always personal responses to moral imperatives that stem from the inside," hence the inherent desire to transgress them (Jenks 7). Such a sense of boundaries stems from the fact that the taboo is "'sacred', 'consecrated', and on the other [hand] 'uncanny', 'dangerous', 'forbidden', 'unclean'" (Freud 21). The violation of the taboo depends precisely on those two meanings, of the sacred and the forbidden, and there is nothing which serves this purpose better than non-standard eroticism. Suleiman points to the fact that in eroticism, "limits of the self become unstable" and "everyday life becomes subordinated to the excessive, quasi-mystical state we associate with religious ecstasy and generally with the realm of

the sacred" (Suleiman 75). As a result, sex allows one to reach the truth – a principle that Comley and Scholes identify as a recurring motif in the whole Hemingway text (Comley and Scholes 77).

However, the truth which Hemingway means, the one that comes at the cost of transgression, is artistic truth (Comley and Scholes 89). Catherine, on the other hand, perhaps since she does not have any artistic outlet for her creative impulses, does not draw the line between art and life. Initially she promises David: "We won't let the night things come in the day" (Hemingway 22), but it soon turns out to be impossible: the "change" she undergoes at night happens also outside the bedroom. The first level of why this is troubling for David is the confusion of the private and the public, and thus the possibility of being judged by others. As Spilka notes, "it is not androgynous love per se that causes trouble … so much as its public expression through statues, hair styles, and conversations – especially as they convey controlling female power" (Spilka 36). Those public expressions have a castrating potential that makes Catherine's wishes especially threatening. The second level of David's (and the book's) fear of Catherine's experiment is connected to the confusion of different spheres of human experience. Transgression is seen as acceptable in art, but not in life, and "David is presented as aroused by the Rodin sculpture but damaged by an attempt to capture in life the stylized passion of that art" (Comley and Scholes 60).

Catherine does not understand the key distinction between art and life, and for that she gets punished. Freud points to a fear present among "primitive peoples" that "the violation of a taboo will be followed by a punishment" (83), and that punishment in Hemingway is usually madness (Comley and Scholes 59). In this respect, Catherine is very much reminiscent of a character from F.S. Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night:* the "eczema woman," a mysterious patient of the mental facility Dick Diver works at.[5] The novel implicates that she has tried to live "like a man," both in the sense of sexual and intellectual freedom, for which she is punished with a sexually transmitted disease, perhaps syphilis. She states that through her illness she is "sharing the fate of the women of [her] time who challenged men to battle" (Fitzgerald 233). Dick, unimpressed by her sense of mission, questions her feeling of having been at war and dryly concludes: "You've suffered, but many women suffered before they mistook themselves for men," and believes her simply to be not strong enough to explore "the frontiers of consciousness" (Fitzgerald 233;

5 Fitzgeraldian themes in the novel are seen also, among others, by Robert E. Fleming in "*The Garden of Eden* as a Response to *Tender is the Night,*" and Arnold Weinstein, for whom Catherine's madness parallels Nicole's in *Tender is the Night* (Weinstein 192). One could add to this another similarity: in both novels, the wife brings the husband down, and both texts have a similarly "hydraulic" view of couples: partners may stay afloat only at the cost of their loved ones, as if there was never enough life energy to serve them both.

234). Catherine too is punished by "madness": for her inability to keep the private and the public, art and life, apart, and for her unwillingness to inhabit her assigned gender.

One of the strengths of Hemingway's novel is that it eludes easy categorization; one can read it as a text about negotiating gender boundaries, but also about control, a search for identity, the meaning of transgression, and self-creation. Tempting as it is to look for a single key to understanding *Garden,* a neat resolution of the book's internal conflicts (such as seeing in Catherine a straightforwardly queer or feminist heroine) does a disservice to its complexity. Catherine's experiment may be seen as an external expression of internal processes which she undergoes, as an escape from the boredom of her seemingly perfect life, as a narcissistic attempt at making love to herself, as an expression of her creativity realized in life rather than in art, and as a quest for ultimate freedom. She tries to achieve it through an act of transgression, of breaking the taboo, and of going beyond the limits of biological sex, since "[t]o be sovereign it is necessary to make the choice to live rather than accept the burden of living that is placed above one" (Richardson qtd. in Jenks 108–9). It is clear that the story is not only about Catherine's becoming who she needs to be; David too, as a form of resistance to her all-encompassing ambitions, undergoes a sort of individuation through writing the African story. However, it is only Catherine's project, bought with pain as it is, that may be seen as what Weinstein terms "self-sculpting," as it is she that tries to consciously shape her life to an almost heroic degree: through plasticizing gender, race, and identity in general.

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Experiments in Narrative: Katherine Mansfield and the Close-up

Abstract. In the publications dedicated to Katherine Mansfield's oeuvre, the traces of the cinematic in her narratives and, in particular, the importance of close-up are duly noted. However, despite the fact that the writer's interest in close-up is earlier than her mature interest in cinema, the discussions do not devote much consideration to the beginnings of the technique visible in Mansfield's early works. The comparative analysis of two stories, i.e., "At 'Lehmann's'" and "The Little Governess," exemplifies, therefore, the development of Mansfield's close-up technique and, most importantly, describes how exactly the writer develops it. The essay points to the traces of this particular cinematic tool in the writer's pre-cinematic period and considers Mansfield's verbal close-ups with a close reading method. The analysis adds to the critical conversations over Mansfield's cinematic interests and their influence on her narrative technique. It demonstrates how the development of close-up enhances what is to become Mansfield's central point, i.e., the subject-object relationship, and how it influences the emotional reception of the character.
Keywords: close-up, narrative technique, cinematic, Katherine Mansfield

1. Katherine Mansfield and Cinema

The preoccupation with the new invention, namely film, was so great at the turn of the twentieth century that it influenced essentially all social classes and almost every aspect of human life. First cinemas offered entertainment which was not only new and modern but, above all, cheap. Everybody could afford to see a laconic show of the Lumiere brothers which consisted of a bunch of assorted scenes, the show that Tom Gunning (382) called "the cinema of attractions," and Béla Balázs (23) "a fairground sideshow." Such a cinema was based on "the ability to *show* something" (Gunning 382) and was often rooted in the popular and the well-known. With time, the shows composed of a few short films started to include one longer presentation. Yet, the footage was still of different type as well as

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quality. Subsequently, the scenes which appeared before the eyes of the viewers were ingrained in comedy (situational humour), drama (theatrical performance), travellers' stories (the foreign and the exotic) or vaudeville (dance) (Gunning 384). Nevertheless, for people like Georges Méliès or Edwin S. Porter, the pioneers of the fantastical-magical films, moving pictures, beside simple entertainment, generated a pass to the world of imagination, scientific experiment and artistic freedom (Gunning 1990, Kraceur 1992). As for the New Zealand Modernist writer Katherine Mansfield, she openly expressed her genuine fascination with the new invention. Her love of cinema can be evidenced in her private writings as well as her many film reviews and publications for *Atheneum*. What is more, she would eagerly broaden her knowledge about the medium of film by learning the details related to its production, scenography and props, or even by acting before a camera herself[2]. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that Mansfield's literary works reflect her passion for the cinematic. In her short stories one can observe the employment of the techniques clearly reminiscent of silent film[3]. Consequently, close reading of her texts allows for detecting the provenience of close-up shots, camera movements, montage, or the interfusion of time and space (the use of diaphragms). In other words, in Mansfieldian narratives such aspects as body language, gesture, face mimicry, light or framing play a crucial role. This impact of the cinematic on Mansfield's narrative technique has been duly noted by many scholars, with some of them devoting longer discussions to the topic (Kaplan 1991, Casertano 2001; Sandley 72–83; Thomas 64–82; Ascari 2014; Kimber 2015). And in the opinion of one of them, Mansfield was "among the earliest writers to understand how the methods of film might be applied to prose" (O'Sullivan xxii). Unquestionably, the cinematic in Mansfield's narratives added depth to the psychological portrayals of characters, thus openly inscribing the writer in the general tendency of the Modernist fiction which aimed at bestowing "new significance to the inner life of characters, to psychic complexity, thoughts, and feelings" (Hutcheon 56)[4].

Nevertheless, the considerations devoted to Mansfield's verbal incorporation of early filmic techniques seem to lack detailed analyses which would show how exactly this incorporation was made. Therefore, the present article is dedicated to the discussion of one of the filmic modes which Mansfield seems to employ quite frequently, namely a close shot. Following, the aim of the article is to demonstrate, by employing a method

2 As O'Sullivan (6) notes, the fact that "[s]he was an enthusiast for the cinema" and that "she acted in several movies" also impacted her private writings, for "her letters frequently took up such images as the months that 'stream by like a move picture' and threw out such phrases as 'I am sorry we only saw each other for an interrupted moment; it was like a cinema!'."

3 This constraint is due to the date of Katherine Mansfield's death. She died on 9 January 1923, so before the first "talkies" were released.

4 Interestingly, this feature of modernist writing Hutcheon (56) classifies as something that "exacerbated the division between print literature and Cinema."

of close reading, how the silent movie technique of zooming in was adapted by Mansfield to the verbal medium of literature. Additionally, the article is to establish the effects of such a technique on the reception of a character.

2. Cinematic Close-up

At the beginning of the 20th century, the development of the cinema was quite rapid, and as early as 1910 some filmic tools were already formulated. Consequently, they enabled the silent cinema directors/producers to structure a comprehensible narrative sequence and to establish an emotional link with the viewer (Sandley 67). The most important strategy used in cinematic productions was the close-up (75). Anne Friedberg (1), in her discussion related to early 20th century film, explains that the close-up was understood as "a technical term for magnification through a lens, but also – more metaphorically – it meant close analysis, scrutiny, an 'optic'." Further, Friedberg adds that the close-up played a crucial role since it offered "a wholly new visual rhetoric" (1). In practice, the new way of presenting or looking at a film character facilitated control over the viewer. Now, with the help of a camera, it was possible to control the attention and the emotions of the cinema audience. According to one of the most influential film theoreticians, Jean Epstein[5], the close-up not only limited and unconditionally directed the attention of the viewers, but also indicated their emotions (13). Other researchers, critics and theorists of cinema wrote about the function of the close-up in a similar vein. For instance, Béla Balázs, while considering Carl Theodor Dreyer's film *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, underlined the fact that the close-up, by focusing on the human face, causes that "we move in the spiritual dimension of facial expression alone. We neither see nor feel the space in which the scene is in reality enacted" (74). And Walter Benjamin would note that paradoxically "with the close-up, the space expands . . . . The enlargement of a snapshot . . . reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject" (60). However, the most significant discovery of the potential of that form of communication with the viewer was made by David W. Griffith, who indicated that the close up was responsible not only for enhancing dramaturgy and deepening the psychological portrayal of characters, giving them thus a realistic brush, but that this technique was also capable of narrating (Grieveson and Krämer 2004; Bordwell and Thompson 2006; Keil 2018).

Discussing the close-up in silent movies naturally calls for some comment on the importance of gestures. Briefly speaking, the already mentioned Balázs highlights the fact that our gestures convey the indescribable. He states that "many profound emotional

5 NB. Epstein was Polish by birth. His real name was Jan Stanisław Alfred Epstein; he was a filmmaker, a scriptwriter and a film theorist, but also a painter and a physician; he was born in Warsaw on 25 March 1887 and died in Paris on 2 April 1953 (Czeczot-Gawrak 5-8).

experiences can never be expressed in words at all" (Balázs 65)[6]. Such concerns are particularly exposed thanks to our body language and mimicry. Remarkably, in silent cinema especially, the gestures related to nervousness and the whole range of reflexes were particularly interesting to the viewer and highly revealing when it comes to both personality and the thoughts of a character (Epstein 13). Similar implications referring to gesture as such are to be found in the works of scholars whose field of interest is non-verbal communication. David McNeill (2), who, among other topics related to bodily movements, deals with gestures in film, is of the opinion that in gesture it is the imagistic aspect that is most essential. Another researcher focusing on human gesticulation, Adam Kendon (2010), compares gestures to a spoken language. In Kendon's view, gestures, in terms of their functionality, can stand for whole utterances (1). The scholar argues that a (body) movement is similar to a word and thus, by analogy, it should be regarded as an element of a language. Following, body motions are very important in shaping and decoding the utterance (7). And last but not least, in the context of the present article, the words of Sarah Friedland are particularly vital. In her publication she remarks that a specific type of gestures is created by close-up. In her words,

> the frame produces the gesturing potential of non-territorialized parts of the body. With the segmenting and focusing work of the cinematographic frame, any part of the body can attain the isolation and metonymy that the hand is seen as already possessing. The close-up endows the whole body as inherently (and through segmentation, necessarily) gestural; the metonymic function of gesture is amplified by the segmentation of the cinematic frame. Thus, gesture as such, is a cinematic construction. (Friedland 47)

Interestingly, in Mansfield's stories gestures are one of the most important elements of characterization. The slightest, seemingly insignificant, body expression of the character is laden with relevance when it comes to plot, and charged with emotions and symbolism when it comes to characters.

3. Case Study Material

In the article two stories, namely "At 'Lehmann's'" and "The Little Governess," will be analysed. There are two reasons behind such a choice. First, both stories revolve around a similar theme of the growing up of a young girl, where the liminal stage is marked with ignorance and the fear of the unknown, with seduction and deception. Moreover,

6 Earlier, on the same page, Balázs (65) writes that "[i]n the silent film facial expression, isolated from its surroundings, seemed to penetrate to a strange new dimension of the soul. It revealed to us a new world – the world of microphysiognomy which could not otherwise be seen with the naked eye or in everyday life."

in both stories the female characters are approached one day by a stranger (a young man in "At 'Lehmann's'" and an old man in "The Little Governess"). Second, the two narratives come from two different stages of Mansfield's writing career and therefore serve as excellent comparative material. "At 'Lehmann's'" was published for the first time in *New Age* magazine in 1910, so before Mansfield became a regular Cinema-goer (Sandley 74). A year later, the short story was included in *In a German Pension*, the collection which many critics regard as technically most feeble. Nevertheless, the stories already signal the direction in which Mansfield's narrative interests will develop. It is quite clear that even in her early works Mansfield begins to experiment with the cinematic, and that zooming-in is among her favourite techniques. As for "The Little Governess," it was ready in March 1915 and published in October the same year under the pseudonym Matilda Berry in *Signature*[7]. Thanks to the time span between their creation, the two short stories elucidate the progress of the application of the technique. Juxtaposing the two texts allows us to observe the change in Mansfield's awareness of the use of the filmic close-up – from somewhat shy and intuitive at the onset of her cinematic fascination to a fully mastered two-media experiment five years later.

4. "At 'Lehmann's'" (1910)

In "At 'Lehman's'" close-ups serve as a way to demonstrate, on the one hand, the innocence and naivety of the girl, and on the other, the lascivious behaviour of the man towards her. A series of momentary close-ups of hands, faces and hair tell a story of gullibility, of the awaking of desire, of growing up and seduction. The protagonist, Sabina, lives above the Lehmanns' coffee house in which she is employed. She shares a room with Anna, the cook, who is older than Sabina, more experienced and more resourceful. For instance, Anna 'generously' lets her naive roommate do a part of her duties. Curiously, the cook is more interested in the matters of life (births, to be more precise) rather than cooking. It is clear from what she says that she has already assisted at birth-giving a couple of times, and when Frau Lehmann's baby is due, Anna, who is generally lazy, suddenly becomes energetic and eager to act: "No complaints to-day. Importance – enthusiasm in Anna's whole bearing" (Mansfield, "At 'Lehmann's'" 5). This type of enthusiasm is completely foreign to Sabina. The girl cannot understand why the event of birth fascinates Anna so much. The lack of understanding partially stems from the fact that Sabina knows nothing about men-women relationships. Remarkably, it is not the question of where children come from ("Frau had a baby inside her, which had to come out – very painful indeed. One could not have one without a husband – that also she realised" (Mansfield, "At 'Lehmann's'" 2)), but rather "what had the man got to do with it?" that Sabina "wondered

7 A very short-lived journal established by D. H. Lawrence and John Middleton Murry, Mansfield's husband (McDonnel 80-81). The story was re-printed later in the collection *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920).

as she sat mending tea towels in the evening, head bent over her work, light shining on her brown curls" (Mansfield, "At 'Lehmann's'" 2). The scene of the girl sewing incudes one of the first close-ups of the girl in the story. It is very brief, yet compelling. Within a fleeting moment, focusing on Sabina's head, the narrator apparently manages to point to the fresh beauty of the girl. What is more, s/he emphasizes the loveliness of her hair and, simultaneously, the fact that the girl is not yet aware of her charms. Such a reading stems from the clash of voices and perspectives – Sabina's thoughts about birth, her focus on the towels, are juxtaposed with the narrator-observer's description of her neck and her hair. The narratorial remark about the color and type of Sabina's hair, as well as his/her noting the light dancing on it, ostensibly allude to the girl's awakening femininity. Additionally, the brief 'shiny' close-up of Sabina's hair can be treated as a metaphorical representation of the brief, revelatory moments Sabina sometimes experiences with reference to her looks (for example when glancing at herself in the mirror or while undressing).

The next close-up communicates Sabina's simple, uncomplicated world view. While trying to solve the puzzle of new life over old towels, Sabina suddenly remembers the picture of her late grandmother:

> Death – such a simple thing. She had a little picture of her dead grandmother dressed in a black silk frock, tired hands clasping the crucifix that dragged between her flattened breasts, mouth curiously tight, yet almost secretly smiling. But the grandmother had been born once – that was the important fact. (Mansfield, "At 'Lehmann's'" 2)

This time the zoom-in is on the description of the object the girl is thinking of. Interestingly, the itemized, precise description of the picture on the one hand makes the readers forget about the fact that Sabina is engaged in sewing, and on the other it draws their attention to the quality of her inner gaze: it is quite focused, the girl is concerned with the smallest details of both the dress and the body of her late grandmother. This type of verbal zoom-in is reminiscent of a filmic close-up – the background dissolves, the frames of the picture become the frames of the viewer's/reader's field of vision. The description acquires the atemporal quality. The time is as if suspended. Similarly to a prolonged close-up shot executed with a film camera, when the viewers are forced to linger over the shown object/body part, this intradiegetic description of the woman in the photograph forces the reader to pause and contemplate, together with Sabina, the nature of life and death. Furthermore, such a mode of presenting minimizes the distance between the reader and the character, and in turn results in the feeling of intimacy. The readers have an impression of both physical and psychological closeness with the character. The feeling of intimacy gets stronger once we realize how personal the photo is for Sabina. The emotional bond between her and the image (and, by analogy, between

her and the figure it represents) is expressed by her remarkable attention to detail. The girl remembers "tired hands," "flattened breasts" or "mouth curiously tight."

Further examples of cinematic-like close-ups demonstrate the gradual rise of self-awareness in Sabina. Her emotional change is triggered by the Young Man who one day comes into the café. At first Sabina is quite reluctant towards the customer. Yet, when the man starts to watch her, the girl realizes that she apparently enjoys his company. His gaze gives Sabina strange, unknown pleasure: "his restless gaze wandering over her face and figure gave her a curious thrill deep in her body, half pleasure, half pain" (Mansfield, "At 'Lehmann's'" 3). And when the man asks her name, Sabina's body reacts in a way that surprises her: "She blushed and looked up, hands quiet in her lap, looked across the empty tables and shook her head" (Mansfield, "At 'Lehmann's'" 3). Even in such short utterances, one can detect the influence of a film camera. The way the narrator renders the scene is through a series of rapid movements: s/he starts with the close-up on the blushing face of the girl. Next the focus moves onto the girl's motionless hands in the lap, and then it follows the glance of the girl over the tables and eventually centres on the head of the girl. The imposed order as well as the compactness of the presentation (suggested by the enumerative mode of the description) ends in the confusion experienced by the girl and felt by the reader. As a result, Mansfield manages to obtain a cinematic effect of dynamic change with verbal means. The depiction of the scene displaying Sabina's emotional perplexity is composed only of verbs: blushed, looked up, (kept) hands in the lap, looked across, shook (her head). Following, they heighten the impression of motion and, at the same time, they illustrate Sabina's feelings. Apart from that, the consecutive close-ups betray the feelings of the Young Man from whose perspective Sabina is shown. The way the man watches her and the elements of her body that arrest his attention evince his attitude towards the girl. While Sabina's look goes away from the Young Man, he, on the contrary, freely contemplates her. He seems to devour her with his gaze, which wanders ceaselessly over her face, her hair, her figure.

Later in the story, close-ups continue to monitor the process of Sabina's emotional awakening. One of them is particularly revealing. It is utilized in the scene in which the Young Man shows Sabina a picture with a naked woman.

> He opened the book, and Sabina saw a colored sketch of a naked girl sitting on the edge of a great, crumpled bed, a man's opera hat on the back of her head.
> He put his hand over the body, leaving only the face exposed, then scrutinised Sabina closely.
> "Well?"
> "What do you mean?" she asked, knowing perfectly well.
> "Why, it might be your own photograph—the face, I mean—that's as far as I can judge."
> "But the hair's done differently," said Sabina, laughing. She threw back her head, and the laughter bubbled in her round, white throat.

> "It's a rather nice picture, don't you think?" he asked. But she was looking at a curious ring he wore on the hand that covered the girl's body, and only nodded. (Mansfield, "At 'Lehmann's'" 3)

The above passage conspicuously recalls camera movements suggested by the changes of perspective. The narrator moves from one character to the other in order to show the difference between the world views of Sabina and her young companion, and the different stages of life they are at. The first close-up is of the picture the two are looking at. Then there is an extreme close-up of the man's hand "over the body," which immediately shifts the reader's attention to the man and his gaze (he "scrutinized Sabina closely"). Next, it is the movement of the girl's head and her "round, white throat" that become the focal point, hence the perspective of the man is preserved. After a brief moment the focus moves to the hand of the Young Man again, but this time it is presented from the point of view of Sabina (her genuine interest in the ring indicates the shift of focalization).

The colorful picture and its symbolism, instead of establishing some understanding between the two, plainly demonstrate how far apart they are. The girl by no means reads the nude picture as an invitation to the world of bodily pleasures. Rather, she perceives it as quite a literal representation of some woman, a hat, a bed, etc. This, in turn, points to her unawareness of the other, sensual reality. Her reaction to the picture only confirms that. Moreover, she finds the colored sketch very common and thus boring – "Oh, there's plenty of those funny ones in the illustrated papers" (Mansfield, "At 'Lehmann's'" 3). What she identifies as far more fascinating is "a curious ring" on the man's finger. Her lack of interest in the picture is also visible in her automatic nodding in response to the man's question. For her thoughts wander miles away from the pleasures that fill the mind of the Young Man. The close-up of the man's hand doubtlessly underlines Sabina's ignorance and naivety regarding men-women relations. However, it also points to the lascivious intentions of the stranger towards the girl. Additionally, his hand covering the shape of the model's body in the picture may serve as a foreshadowing of what is to happen later in the story, namely when the man kisses Sabina and puts his hands on her breasts. And when that happens, curiously, the girl does not protest. On the contrary, she likes it – the new sensation makes her feel as if she were drunk – "the room seemed to swim round Sabina" (Mansfield, "At 'Lehmann's'" 6). But suddenly the cry from upstairs, where Frau Lehmann is giving birth, disrupts Sabina's entrancement. For a moment, the girl neither knows nor remembers what is going on. Focusing on the man, or rather on the new peculiarly pleasant experience, she has forgotten about, in her words, the "ugly – ugly – ugly" reality of the upstairs (Mansfield, "At 'Lehmann's'"4). For a while she is as if suspended in time. Therefore, she asks in surprise: "'Who did that – who made that noise?'" (Mansfield, "At 'Lehmann's'"7). Without a doubt, Sabina intuitively realises that there is some link between what she experienced when the Young Man laid his hands

on her and the pregnancy of Frau Lehmann. In other words, for the time being, Sabina is uninterested in pursuing the strange, new pleasures stemming from contacts with men since she does not want to look and feel like her employer. This final scene of the story perhaps cannot be classified as a self-evident example of a close-up. Nevertheless, it plainly gestures towards it (suspension, atemporality, frequent shifts of focalization), as well as towards further experiments with a series of close-ups (the vertigo effect, soon to appear in many of Mansfield's stories, here foreshadowed by the distorted surroundings – the room swimming round Sabina)[8].

To conclude, the analysis shows that Mansfield's early story "At 'Lehmann's'" already manifests successful attempts of employing the cinematic zooming-in mode. Although they are merely blots in the narrative structure, they are, nevertheless, exploited with skill and precision. The close-ups already have a mesmerizing power over the reader who, together with the protagonist, is taken beyond the time and space of the narrative. The readers become immersed in the emotional ventures of the girl, in the moments of Sabina's enthralment, in her thoughts and her (newly experienced) cravings. The change of perspective and the shift of spacial-temporal planes are smooth and always structurally justified. Some of these first verbal close-ups seem to be underdeveloped, yet they serve as signposts of Mansfield's cinematic potential and of the direction of her experimentation with narrative construction.

5. "The Little Governess" (1915)

"The Little Governess," the short story classified by Sandley as an "episodic film vignette" (78), tells the story of a French girl who travels alone for the first time, and for the first time goes to a foreign country, namely Germany. The girl is very much afraid of this challenge but tries to raise her spirits by remembering that she knows German a little and that (theoretically) she knows how to behave while traveling on her own. As a matter of fact, she was told in the agency which had secured the post of governess for her that she should trust no-one. Yet, unfortunately, they did not make her aware of cultural differences. Later in the story, the lack of awareness of their existence proves quite tragic for the governess.

The most crucial turning point of the story takes place in the second part of her journey when, travelling by train, Little Governess meets an old man. The stranger gradually gains her trust by being caring, funny and well-mannered. He is every inch a gentleman and one that suggests the figure of a grandpa: "What a perfect grandfather he would make! Just like one out of a book!" (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 141). However, it will turn out soon that his grandfather-like, affectionate looks veil heartlessly evil

8 For an interesting discussion related to the usage of the vertigo effect by Mansfield in her stories, see Casertano 100-113.

intentions. The man will play the role of an amiable and sympathetic person until the moment he manages to lure the naive governess to his flat in Munich. There, the old man falls on her, thrusts her against the wall and kisses the governess on the mouth. Thus, finally, the scales fall from the girl's eyes. However, it is too late, for even though the girl manages to run away, she does not manage to keep the appointment with the lady who was to hire her for the job of a governess. As a consequence, she is alone in a big, foreign city, with neither money nor friends.

The story of the governess, her emotional states and traumatic experiences, as well as the falsity, hypocrisy and cruelty represented by her co-passenger are presented by Mansfield with the help of the same technique as in the previously discussed story. This time, however, the usage of the close-up is more frequent and more complex since the technique is now the basis of the whole text construction. Let us look at one of the very first descriptions of the girl. She is in her compartment alone, before the old man joins her:

> As she stood up to feel if the dress-basket was firm she caught sight of herself in the mirror, quite white, with big round eyes. She untied her "motor veil" and unbuttoned her green cape. 'But it's all over now', she said to the mirror face, feeling in some way that it was more frightened than she. (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 137)

The above scene is presented from the point of view of the girl. Her lack of experience and fear of the unknown are underlined by the diminishing of the distance between the reader and the protagonist. We have no choice but to be very close to the governess, almost touching her. With the use of the mirror frame, the narrator skilfully narrows the reader's perspective to that of the girl in the glass[9]. And what the reflection shows is fear: the apprehension felt by the girl makes the reader worry about her (her future). For although the Little Governess tries to behave like an adult (she checks the luggage, unties her "motor veil," unbuttons her cape and cheers herself up by saying: "it's all over now"), her face communicates something entirely different. Her "quite white" frightened face and "big round eyes" are reminiscent of a child rather than a grown person. This effect is additionally amplified by the colors of the scene, namely white and green, symbolically connoting innocence and hope. In such a context, the phrase "it's all over" is merely seemingly comforting and should be rather read as proclaiming the coming trouble.

9 It is worth noting the popularity of this framing device. The mirror was crucial in silent film productions, especially in German Expressionist cinema (Eisner 99-107), but also in English, French, Russian and American movies. The mirror was employed to expose psychological truths about the protagonists (Balázs 76-78). Its use in Mansfield's "The Little Governess," therefore, amplifies the associations with film. Also, the mirror was among those elements Mansfield would frequently exploit in many other of her narratives (Ascari 50).

Also, the act of untying her veil and unbuttoning her green cape, in the context of the whole story, gains a symbolic meaning. Subsequently, the close-up of her gestures emphasises the importance of the activities performed. They foreshadow the future events: soon the girl is to meet the cunning stranger to whom she will eventually entrust herself. Accordingly, showing her face and bare hands means exposing herself to danger. Before long, such an interpretation is confirmed by the plot since shortly an old man enters the compartment. At first the governess wants to protest (she does not realize that, due to a cultural misunderstanding, she is not in a compartment for single women travelers), yet, after a brief hesitation, she decides that to have such a good-looking co-traveller is only for the better – she will not be traveling alone and, as a result, she will feel safer.

One of the first close-ups of the man is from the Little Governess's perspective: "He looked very old. Ninety at least. He had a white moustache and big gold-rimmed spectacles with little blue eyes behind them and pink wrinkled cheeks. A nice face and charming the way he bent forward…" (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 138). The girl's innocent and naive perception is suggested first of all, by her exaggerated evaluation of her co-passenger's age, and second of all, by the details in focus: "a white moustache," "big gold-rimmed spectacles" with a pair of "little blue eyes" to match, plus the "pink wrinkled cheeks." All these colorful elements of the man's face allow her to quickly classify the stranger as nice and charming. This childish, because based on theory and fairy tales rather than experience, schematic perception continues in the close-ups that follow. Likewise, the child-like observer is revealed by the focal points and the simple, color-saturated language:

> a pearl pin stuck in his black tie and a ring with a dark red stone on his little finger; the tip of a white silk handkerchief showed in the pocket of his double-breasted jacket. Somehow, altogether, he was really nice to look at…his cheeks were so pink and his moustache so very white. (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 138)

The more relaxed she feels in the company of the man, the more details about him she notices. However, these are still quite perfunctory features, indicative of the social standing of the man but not necessarily of his (true) personality. The zooming-in descriptions of the bust, the face, the specific parts of the body (hands) of the man are characterized by the employment of the limited range of vocabulary, short words, repetitions and an unvarying color scale. The spotlessly dressed man who is "really nice to look at" affirmed her naïve belief that he is genuinely good and friendly. What is also important is that the colors white, pink and blue re-appear within the course of the story. However, their symbolic meaning undergoes modifications in accordance with the emotional dynamics of the narrative.

In the following series of close-ups, the perspective of the girl is juxtaposed with the perspectives of the man and of the narrator, respectively. The first close-up to be

discussed is that of the girl's face, which notes her reaction to the question she is asked by the man. Specifically, the moment he asks the governess about her knowledge of German, her cheeks become crimson: "she was blushing a deep pink color that spread slowly over her cheeks and made her blue eyes look almost black" (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 138–139). The narrator draws our attention to this very emotional response of the girl's body. It displays her lack of linguistic experience (of German) as well as her bashfulness caused by the possibility of entering into a conversation with a real German (male) person. The close-up focuses on the eyes of the girl and her cheeks. Their colors once more evoke positive feelings, and the adverb "dark" merely intensifies the associations with the world of children and innocence. Moreover, the colors seemingly unite the two characters – they both have blue eyes and pink cheeks. Thus, by analogy, the colors misleadingly suggest that the two passengers are equally nice.

The next two close-ups provide, respectively, the perception of the old man by the narrator and the perception of the governess by the man. At some point the seemingly kind man asks the girl if she would like to look through the illustrated papers he has on him. The Little Governess eagerly accepts the offer and starts to study the pages with childlike attention.

> [She] sat down again, more comfortably this time, her feet crossed, the papers on her lap. How kindly the old man in the corner watched her bare little hand turning over the big white pages, watched her lips moving as she pronounced the long words to herself, rested upon her hair that fairly blazed under the light. Alas! how tragic for a little governess to possess hair that made one think of tangerines and marigolds, of apricots and tortoiseshell cats and champagne! Perhaps that was what the old man was thinking as he gazed and gazed, and that not even the dark ugly clothes could disguise her soft beauty. Perhaps the flush that licked his cheeks and lips was a flush of rage that anyone so young and tender should have to travel alone and unprotected through the night. (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 139)

This time the description of the old man belongs to the narrator. In his/her view, the cheeks of the man sharing the compartment with the governess lack a friendly pink shade and instead they are marked by an unhealthily looking red flush sprawling all over his face. Importantly, the focus is on the very act of looking – the repetitions of "watched" and "gazed," the use of the ambiguous word "rested," which also suggests physical contact (here, it might be the man's intention of touching the girl's hair). The old man is noticeably attracted by the looks of the little passenger, ignoring entirely her emotional state. Such a physical approach towards the girl informs the reader about the true nature of the man. He is interested in her young, still childlike, body. The narratorial comment also gestures to the fact that the man is not oblivious to the governess's low

social status. The rude remark about her "dark ugly clothes" shows the focalizer's attitude towards the girl and merely underlines the lascivious character of his affection for her. The man's consumptive approach towards the girl is further suggested by the mentioning of fruit and champagne. However, what is even more important is the repetition of the word "flush" and the employment of the word "lick." Both lexical items have negative connotations and imply almost animalistic desire glowing on the face of the man. In addition, the word "flush" is in stark contrast to the word "blush," previously used by the narrator to illustrate the emotional state of the girl. "Blush" evokes positive associations – it rings of pink color and childish shyness. Next, the length of the above description of a series of close-ups, as well as the fact that the figure of the girl is excluded from the scene (the reader follows the gaze of the narrator, who is observing the old man who, in turn, is watching the reading girl), forces the reader to focus for quite a while on the lewd passenger. Yet, surprisingly, our thoughts during the close-up go over to the little governess. The narrative strategy employed here by Mansfield is reminiscent of a cinematic eye-level close-up, and likewise, it touches upon the most intensive emotions of the readers. As a result, the recipients of the text feel like warning the credulous young character against the f(r)iend who shares the compartment with her.

The shrinking of the distance visible in the discussed passage happens not only between the reader and the man (when the narratorial 'camera' brings us close to his face), but also between the girl and the man (due to his gaze). Furthermore, such a narratorial situation, namely the vividly suggested closeness between the two characters as well as between the reader and the characters, on the one hand highlights the indecency of the kind-looking man, and on the other it puts the reader into an emotionally uneasy state. The whole situation becomes more startling once we realize the helplessness of the female character. Yet the reader is powerless as s/he is merely in the position of an inactive observer – the victim, the oppressor and the witness (as if) locked together in the cramped space of the compartment. As a result, the ambience of the story becomes heavy and disheartening, almost physically unbearable. Additionally, the suffocating atmosphere and oppressive tension are strengthened by the silence of the scene. Mansfield's way of constructing the spatial situation is analogical to the cameraman's choosing a particular set-up and a particular angle which "can make things hateful, lovable, terrifying, or ridiculous at will" (Balázs 92).

In Mansfield's story, every change of focus induces an emotional turning point. For that reason, the ambience of the narrative situation changes when the girl re-appears within the frames of a close-up:

> Little sounds made themselves heard; steps in the corridor, doors opening and shutting – a murmur of voices – whistling . . . Then the window was pricked with long needles of rain . . . But it did not matter . . . it was outside . . . and she had her umbrella . . . she pouted, opened and shut her hands once and fell fast asleep.

> "Pardon! Pardon!" The sliding back of the carriage door woke her with a start. What had happened? Someone had come in and gone out again. The old man sat in his corner, more upright than ever, his hands in the pockets of his coat, frowning heavily[10]. (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 140)

This time the presented space seems to be larger, and this is thanks to the noises coming from the corridor. Yet, in the reality of the compartment the girl is in, these are but a collection of detached sounds (the door opening/shutting, the rain, the voices, the whistling). Curiously, their role corresponds to the function of the filmic off-screen diegetic sounds, namely those which only imply certain elements of a story, like places, objects, people, and therefore add extra space to the narrative. In the case of Mansfield's short story, the sounds allow the reader to remember that the compartment the governess is in belongs to a larger world presented. However, the realisation does not result in the possibility of leaving the claustrophobic location. The close-ups keep both the young female character and the reader within the four walls of the compartment. Throughout the story, the narrator ceaselessly moves his/her watchful gaze from one passenger to the other, as if recording a silent conversation between the two characters, who are mentally in two separate worlds – the Little Governess nervously falls asleep (she pouted, opened and shut her hands) while the old man is awake as if on guard (in case someone wants to walk into 'their' compartment). The moment (its duration) when the governess slowly and nervously falls asleep under the watchful eye of the old man, as well as the passing of time are additionally suggested by ellipses and by the division of the scene description into two paragraphs. Such a treatment resembles a cinematic montage, the technique allowing for, among other things, condensing time. The ellipses cover for the moments when the girl closes her eyes and gradually stops registering what is going on around her, while the continuation of the scene in the next paragraph (whose dynamics *nota bene* contrast with the previous one, which is silent and sleepy) clearly points to the passing of time.

One of the most important verbal close-ups in the short story under consideration is the scene with strawberries[11]. During the said scene the fate of the girl is finally and irrevocably determined. On the symbolic level, it happens when the governess accepts a present from the cunning old man, namely sweet, juicy strawberries she had been dreaming of. This is also the moment when the girl eventually decides to trust the stranger utterly. The act of accepting foreshadows her tragic end. The following passage shows the girl eating the fruit:

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10 The ellipses in this quotation are an integral part of the text and thus do not stand for abbreviated fragments.

11 For a more detailed analysis and discussion related to the symbolism of strawberries in this particular scene as well as in other short stories by Katherine Mansfield, see Kwiatkowska 101-113.

> Timidly and charmingly her hand hovered. They [strawberries] were so big and juicy she had to take two bites to them – the juice ran all down her fingers – and it was while she munched the berries that she first thought of the old man as a grandfather. . . . The sun came out, the pink clouds in the sky, the strawberry clouds were eaten by the blue. "Are they good?" asked the old man. "As good as they look?" (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 141–142)

The scene begins with an extreme close-up of the girl's hand. The narrator dutifully registers its movement and the juice running down its fingers. The verbally sketched picture is seemingly serene and innocent. For looking closely, it turns out that this simple scene of fruit eating is a comment on a far more complex issue of consumption. Apparently, the process of eating takes place on three different levels. First, there is the governess happily engrossed in munching the strawberries. Second, there is the old man, who is devouring the young girl with his eyes, and third, as if to match, outside the train, above their heads, pink clouds are "eaten by the blue." But of this celestial feast the two passengers are oblivious. Yet, the sky close-up foreshadows the future events. Its color scheme matches the one used earlier for the description of the faces of the two characters (their pink cheeks and blue eyes). In other words, the color of the sky together with the devouring taking place there are to underscore the vile, consumptive intensions of the blue-eyed man. Following, the sky serves as an illustration of the mental states of the characters. It reflects the innocence of the girl (pink clouds) and the lewd intentions of the man (the blue[12] devouring the clouds). Thus, the close-up from the train compartment enters into a dialogue with the close-up of the sky – a seemingly unimportant backdrop becomes the comment on the events and acts as their enhancement.

The above-mentioned colors are referred to again in two more close-ups at the very end of the story. While having a walk with the governess in Munich, the old man treats the girl, among other things, to some beer ("which he told her wasn't intoxicating, wasn't at all like English beer" (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 143)). Later in the day, when the governess starts to feel overexcited with all the pleasures showered on her by the ostensibly kind man, the alcohol only fuels her childish, youthful excitement.

> After lunch they went to a café to hear a gypsy band, but she did not like that at all. Ugh! such horrible men were there with heads like eggs and cuts on their faces, so she turned her chair and cupped her burning cheeks in her hands and watched her old friend instead . . .[13] (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 143)

12 Remarkably, the color blue expresses sadness, lewdness or even pornography. The first records of 'blue' used in association with sex appeared in Scotland around 1824 (for instance, MacTaggart 446).

13 The ellipsis in this quotation is an integral part of the text and thus does not stand for abbreviated fragments.

For a very short moment the narrator shows us the faces of other people (the members of a gypsy band). This quick scrutiny is done from the perspective of the girl. This conclusion can be drawn, for example, from the childish and simplistic comment (about "horrible men" with "heads like eggs and cuts on their faces"). They look ugly to her, especially in comparison with her companion. Immediately, after the brisk presentation of the surroundings, the narrator focuses on the author of the comment: a child-like figure with its back turned to "the horrible men," with the head charmingly "cupped" in her hands and with "burning cheeks" (the pink transformed now into fiery red) watching her "old friend" with true admiration. Technically speaking, this close-up is analogous to the one encountered earlier, that is when the man was watching the girl with similar eagerness earlier on the train. As in the compartment scene, the object of the admiration is not included within the (verbally) presented picture. The presence of the man is suggested by the behaviour of the girl but no details as to the man's reaction / facial expression are supplied. Interestingly, throughout the story, almost all close-ups related to the old man focus predominantly on the elements of his apparel (the coat, the pockets, the cloak, the buttons of his vest, the gloves, etc.). His body is meticulously covered as if guarded against the eyes of both the girl and the reader. Even his eyes are shielded with glasses. On the symbolic level, such focus communicates the sly and duplicitous nature of the man as well as the silliness of the Little Governess. Paradoxically, although the two characters think of each other in a shallow, physical manner, each of them has something different in mind: the girl focuses on his gentlemanly manners, his wealth, and above all his grandpa looks, whereas the man focuses on her beauty.

The last example refers to the scene of a physical assault the man inflicts on the girl in his flat. The scene is composed of two consecutive close-ups. The first one centres on the face of the man:

> "No, no, no!" she stammered, struggling out of his hands. "One little kiss. A kiss. What is it? Just a kiss, dear little Fräulein. A kiss." He pushed his face forward, his lips smiling broadly; and how his little blue eyes gleamed behind the spectacles! (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 145)

The above description evokes the close-ups of faces and heads from the films by Griffith. The figure of a kind, pink-cheeked, grandpa-like elderly man suddenly disappears, and Mansfield's protagonist is confronted with a horrifyingly huge mouth "smiling broadly," accompanied by a pair of little, unhealthily gleaming blue eyes ("behind the spectacles"). This almost surreal scene emanates brutal force and fear. Due to the extreme close-up of the man's face, the mood of the narrative suddenly changes into openly scary and horrifying, and the distance between the victim and the oppressor shrinks drastically. Subsequently, the reader also almost physically feels the strength of the assailant, the

strength of his grip and, simultaneously, the shock and vulnerability of the governess, who cannot escape and, what is even worse, has no-where to escape to. The prophesy about the big blue devouring the pink clouds is just being realized in the second close-up:

> he held her against the wall, pressed against her his hard old body and his twitching knee, and though she shook her head from side to side, distracted, kissed her on the mouth. On the mouth! Where not a soul who wasn't a near relation had ever kissed her before . . .[14] (Mansfield, "The Little Governess" 145)

Based on the description, the image conjured in the reader's mind is quite fragmentary and somewhat chaotic. As a result, his/her reaction is emotional rather than visual. In other words, the reader is forced to feel rather than 'see' the fear of the girl caught between the wall and the brutal man. The elements of the description are presented as if in separation, which creates an impression that they are in motion: the "twitching knee" of the old man, the head of the girl moving "from side to side," the girl's mouth. The narrator very quickly moves from one point of attention to another. Also, it is difficult to say where exactly the observer of the scene is. Moreover, the dynamics of the ongoing scene are underlined by the style of report, which is based largely on verbs and (grammatically) unfinished units. The description as if gains speed: the verbs start to appear one after another (shook, distracted, kissed) and the grammatical structure gets simplified. The thoughts are merely suggested, underdeveloped and discontinued, but in a constant flow. The verbal expresses the emotional – it renders the point of highest tension – the moment of the forced kiss. Obviously, Mansfield not only makes use of the filmic-like close up, but she also manages to render the camera-like motion.

The above presented passages from "The Little Governess" markedly illustrate Mansfield's usage of the silent movie technique of the close-up in a manner which recalls Griffith and/or Balázs. The writer manipulates the readers' emotions the way silent film makers manipulated their audiences, that is by riveting the attention of the recipients on carefully selected and framed spatial details. The structure of the story, built on fragmented zooming-in, is additionally redolent of German Expressionist film makers, who "dissected the integrity of the time-space continuum of the world, cutting it up into fragments" (Stam 76).

6. Conclusions

The above analyses show that Katherine Mansfield, from the early stage of her writing, quite deliberately employed the technique of the filmic close-up to infuse her narratives with tangible emotions. As might have been expected, it seems that at the beginning her

14 The ellipsis in this quotation is an integral part of the text and thus does not stand for abbreviated fragments.

new method was used more intuitively, as if the writer did not know how to realize its full potential. Therefore, in "At 'Lehmann's'" the first close-ups tend to be heavily shrouded in conventional, Modernist, narrative modes. The brief and sporadic, yet emotionally compelling, zoom-ins quickly dissolve into scenes in which such techniques as interior monologue, dialogue, and description take over. But within the five years that elapsed between "At 'Lehmann's'" and "The Little Governess," the technique of close-up visibly evolved and gained importance in Mansfield's narratives. For in "The Little Governess," the readers are presented with a whole range of close-ups which form the base of the entire narrative structure. Compact and perfectly constructed, Mansfield's film-like zooming-in becomes exceedingly significant and telling when it comes to characterization. Like film makers, Mansfield uses the technique of close-up to endow her protagonists with psychological depth and make them (emotionally) true to life. Furthermore, the zooming-in, which in the cinema frequently creates the feeling of "psychological intimacy" (Hutcheon 58–59), in Mansfield's stories results also in establishing an emotional relationship between the reader and the character. In addition, her verbal close-ups often appear in succession. The transition between them is very smooth and natural. The reader, following the narrator, as if moves his/her eyes from one point/character to another. Consequently, in both short stories under consideration the perspective of the presented events/characters and the point of view constantly shift, creating thus an impression of movement. At the same time, the distance between the characters, as well as between the reader and the described scene, is reduced. Moreover, Mansfield communicates most significantly through silence – the scenes devoid of dialogue but rich in gestures and facial expressions speak volumes about the protagonists and their respective (inner) worlds.

Similarly to a cameraman who, according to Balázs, injects his "subjective viewpoint and mood into the picture of the object" (185), the narrator in Mansfield's stories, through the constricted, carefully selected scenes, acts as a silent observer and commentator of the depicted events. Like a cameraman, the Mansfieldian narrator gestures to those elements of the 'verbal plane' which are important for the story being told, and to those parts/gestures of characters which render their emotional states best. Remarkably, this fragmentariness results in a very vivid, psychologically alluring and physically tangible image of the presented world.

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Miłosz as a Translator of Literary Roughness in Herbert's Poetry

Abstract. The aim of the work is the analysis of translations of Herbert's poems into English by Miłosz with a focus on preserving the so-called roughness of his style. This term encompasses non-obvious and awkward structures, which, according to Miłosz, were one of the most important elements of Herbert's style and, therefore, needed to be present in the English versions. The text contains a comparative analysis of two poems by Herbert: "Elegy of Fortinbras" and "Apollo and Marsyas," with their translations into English. The translations were compared with the originals, taking into account their general form, the vocabulary, and the syntax. The analysis of vocabulary and syntax showed that to maintain the style of the original, the translator changed places where literary roughness was present. The translations into English were also more conventional and rooted more in European culture (while Polish contexts were moved to the background). One can thus conclude that the idea of spreading Polish literature across other cultures was more important for Miłosz than the translation of literary roughness.

Keywords: translation, translator studies, translation of poetry, translation of Polish poetry into English, Miłosz, Herbert

1. Introduction

Some say that literary translation is a "self-effacing re-creation in one language of a text produced in another, expressing the supposed idea that the original author's voice will emerge intact […]" (Polizotti 1). It means, in brief, that it should share similarities with the original, such as the thought or the style, but with the words, syntax and cultural allusions, and other means available in a different language. One has to add that translating poetry adds another layer to the issue of literary translation, as poetic texts themselves are characterized by a high level of individuality, and therefore, their reception is synonymous with their interpretation. This interpretation, in turn, depends on the interpreters themselves (Gadamer 178). There is not one, foolproof way to translate a poem. However, successful translators agree that some elements are universally required. A translator must distinguish what the most

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important element of the poem is and what, therefore, must be conveyed by the translation. Barańczak called it the "part that needs to be saved" in translation through choices made during the process (18). At the same time, a translator of poetry should be aware of the "foreign" aspect of each translated text. Internalizing the fact that some aspects of poems are "foreign" and, therefore, will most likely be lost when transplanted into another language and another culture (Skibińska 12) allows translators to make conscious choices, which then, in turn, allow for the existence of a certain literary text in a different language and culture.

In his thoughts on translation, Karl Dedecius compared a translator to someone who builds a bridge connecting two cultures (Czechowska 19). This pictorial comparison presents a translator on a par with a craftsman – someone whose work is visible and used by most, yet he himself is barely present. This so-called invisibility of the translator was one of the most common ways of looking at translations from the theoretical point of view throughout the 20th century and before but has been since called into question by the "personal movement" in translation studies (Heydel 28).

Translators rose from the author's shadows, the niche where the former had been placed for centuries. That is not to say that the visible translator is a new invention. However, the visibility of the translator has stopped being perceived in a negative light and has attracted the curiosity of theoreticians. Mark Polizzotti, in his text "Sympathy for the Traitor", mentions the "lost in translation" fallacy as a fruitless outlook that has plagued translation studies for centuries. In his manifesto, he portrays it as an inevitable process that should be approached not with a binary, gain-loss valuation but with attention being paid to a possible outcome. In his own words, the most fundamental thing is deciding whether one "should side with the original" or "source" text, or with the sometimes-conflicting needs of the target-language recreation (Polizzotti 3).

This suggests that the target language and its culture should, in the modern take on translation, be equally important as the "source." Modern translation theory tends to gravitate more toward a translation model that subtracts and adds in terms of vocabulary, meaning, and cultural connotations. An interesting idea on that topic was suggested by Itamar Even-Zohar, who observes that

> To say that translated literature maintains a central position in the literary polysystem means that it participates actively in shaping the center of the polysystem. In such a situation it is by and large an integral part of innovatory forces, and as such likely to be identified with major events in literary history while these are taking place. This implies that in this situation no clear-cut distinction is maintained between "original" and "translated" writings, and that often it is the leading writers (or members of the avant-garde who are about to become leading writers) who produce the most conspicuous or appreciated translations. Moreover, in such a state when new literary models are emerging, translation is likely to become one of the means of elaborating the new repertoire. (46-47)

In this light, the case of Miłosz, a man who was first and foremost a representative of the avant-garde of his native language (Polish) and secondly a translator, seems to extend the above-mentioned theory. Analyzing his work as both creator (poet) and re-creator (translator) provides a middle ground for considering the source texts as malleable material rather than as unmovable monoliths.

2. Czesław Miłosz as a Translator

To tackle the topic of Miłosz as a translator, one has to acknowledge that his work in this field cannot be analyzed separately from his work as a writer, promoter of Polish literature and culture abroad, and university lecturer (Heydel 10), who translated texts and authors, selected in accordance to his needs, including his own works. Miłosz incorporated references to foreign literary texts in his essays and poetry, and at the same time, tried to make Polish poetry (his own and his colleagues') leave a lasting impression on English-language (specifically American) culture. His issues with the West became especially visible in the 1960s and 1970s when he continued his emigration from Poland and took up a job as a Professor at Berkeley. His struggle and partially antagonistic outlook on the target language culture was more of a creative struggle rather than a destructive one, as Miłosz wanted to enrich it with Polish poetry rather than place one type of literature in opposition to the other. This, paired with his idea of arbitrarily picking texts for translation, has interesting repercussions when considering the theory of "second authorship." The visible "translator," perceived as the "second author" and an "editor," can thus change some aspects of the originals, starting from the contexts in which they appear. This can be clearly seen in the case of Miłosz, who intended to be a speaking party in all his texts, including those originally written in somebody else's hand.

In his translations, Miłosz often had a native speaker supervisor, such as Dale Scott, who helped him with, e.g., the translations of Zbigniew Herbert into English. It is worth noting that Dale Scott considered Herbert's literary works valuable both as pieces of literature and as a new perspective, complementary to the literature of the West. His reasons for collaborating with Miłosz can be summarized as follows:

> [Herbert's poems] were composed according to trains of thought rather than language, these poems seemed more cosmopolitan than some Polish poetry, without paying the price of being abstract or commonplace. Their delineation of a poetic world stripped of mediocre illusions, in which irony , could nonetheless prevail without loss of sensitivity or order, seemed far more incisive than that of analogous Western poets. (Miłosz & Scott 16)

Dale Scott mentioned another important quality that made Herbert an easily translatable poet. In his opinion, Herbert is seemingly a cosmopolitan author, and as such, can be understood by a wider audience despite tackling fairly culture-specific Polish topics (such

as the political situation under the Communist regime in Poland). The most important question thus remains: what was it specifically in Herbert's poetry that Miłosz found worth transferring into English? Miłosz himself can provide the answer:

> In general we were trying to keep the casual and withdrawn feeling of the original, so as not to raise the lowered voice. We also had to remember about the syntax, which Herbert devoted a lot of thought to, by often placing surprises and epiphanies at the ends of sentences. We were trying to keep the deliberate awkwardness or roughness of certain verses in which the poet uses spoken language and its clichés. (Miłosz & Scott 159)

Based on this quote and the previous one by Dale Scott, one can assume that the translation aimed to show Herbert's works and their unique perspective to Western readers. At the same time, his poems were considered cosmopolitan, which may be a factor that allowed their easier transfer from one language to the other. The elements of his style deemed of the utmost importance were "the withdrawn feeling and the lowered voice," the syntax, specifically inversion, and the deliberate awkwardness or roughness of certain passages. The latter, as the vaguest of all of these concepts, needs further explanation: it is the deliberate choice of words and phrases, as well as sentence structures, which do not fit within the norms of the proper style of the Polish language. This can be well presented on the basis of the translations of Herbert's "Elegy of Fortinbras" and "Apollo and Marsyas." In this paper, the author will refer to the specificity of Herbert's literary style in short, described as "literary roughness." This term refers to the above-mentioned features of Herbert's texts (the withdrawn feeling, lowered voice, and awkward or rough passages) as defined by Miłosz and Dale Scott in their commentaries outlining the aim of their translations.

3. Translating Texts and Translating Cultures – "Elegy of Fortinbras"

The first poem, "Elegy of Fortinbras," is situated in a very interesting place in the intertextual net. On one hand, it is a modern poem with no features of an elegy. On the other, its content: "the mourning of an important figure (literally and metatextually) suggests a deep connection with the aforementioned tradition". According to Janusz Sławiński, the poem is an "appropriation of the elegy genre" (41), as Fortinbras, the speaker, chooses to insult and bring Hamlet down in his speech, rather than praise him for his deeds.

The discussion of the elegy as a genre also plays a big part in the translation of the poem. Its original title, "Tren Fortynbrasa," is a clear reference to the cycle of mourning poems by Jan Kochanowski. Those poems are, however, referred to as "laments" in all English analyses and translations. To keep the connection between the works by the two authors, one would have to translate the poem's title as "Lament of Fortinbras." Miłosz, however, decided

to title it "Elegy of Fortinbras," straying from the intertextual reference. Whatever the reason behind this choice, the outcome seems more universal (since "laments" are not a typical English genre and do not refer to a specific literary work, as they do in Polish literature).

The English translation of "Elegy of Fortinbras" uses its intertextuality by playing on Shakespearian vocabulary. The most notable example of this is the following passage:

> Żegnaj książę czeka na mnie projekt kanalizacji
> Which was translated into English as:
> Adieu prince I have tasks a sewer project

The word "adieu" is a loan word from French, and as such, it has the connotation of being used in a higher register. Thus, it fits the sentence context, which requires a word in a higher register. At the same time, it is a clear reference to the abundant usage of that word and other French loan words and mock foreign expressions by Shakespeare himself (Crystal & Crystal 69). Thus, one might conclude that Miłosz consciously chose to play up the connection of "Elegy of Fortinbras" with Shakespeare. This interpretative approach to the original text can also be seen in further parts of the poem.

> Nigdy nie mogłem myśleć o twoich dłoniach bez uśmiechu
> I teraz kiedy leżą na kamieniu jak strącone gniazda
> Są tak samo bezbronne jak przedtem

Fortinbras comments on Hamlet's hands, and how "he could not think of them without smiling", pointing out that Hamlet's gestures must have been perceived as funny in some way. The meaning of the first line is quite clear on the surface level. However, as the subject of the following two lines are the "hands," one could also read the Polish original as "Fortinbras could not think of Hamlet's hands. Those hands were deprived of a smile". That is because the object in the sentence can also be seen as a modifier of the word hands. In that case, the text might point to the seriousness of Hamlet's actions, which Fortinbras did not want to consider. The translator clearly picked an interpretation and decided to translate this passage in a way that points to a more straightforward meaning.

> I could never think of your hands without smiling
> and now that they lie on the stone like fallen nests
> they are as defenceless as before

There is a possibility that those changes were made to make the poem flow more smoothly. If that was the case, however, that very change would go against everything that Miłosz said he found most important in Herbert's poetry, i.e., the overall roughness of the text.

Moreover, as Miłosz stated in his analysis of Herbert's poetry, the endings of sentences are most important.

> Herbert is easier to translate than those poets who experiment with syntax and metre (...). We are aware of how much is lost from his careful handling of Polish idioms. (...) We also think of the wit of Herbert's word order, whenever a surprise was held back for the end of the passage. (Miłosz & Scott 17)

In spite of that statement, Miłosz translates the verse as follows:

> Są tak samo bezbronne jak przedtem To jest właśnie koniec
> they are as defenceless as before The end is exactly this

A sentence formed in such a way, by extension, underlines the importance of the phrase "exactly this". Such a translation, however, seems to deviate from the original, since the topic of death is the one that should be prominent both in the Polish and English verses. Interestingly, the following passage seems to partly make up for this change.

> Ręce leżą osobno Szpada leży osobno Osobno głowa
> I nogi rycerza w miękkich pantoflach
> The hands lie apart The sword lies apart The head apart
> and the knight's feet in soft slippers

The word order has been altered compared with the original, following a more natural English syntax. However, it also allows for a "surprise" at the end of the verse, which was a crucial feature of Herbert's style. As Miłosz noted himself, Herbert was no stranger to awkwardly phrased sentences and weird structures, which may astonish even the Polish reader. An example can be found at the end of the third stanza.

> Nie umiałeś żadnej ludzkiej rzeczy nawet oddychać nie umiałeś

The beginning of the line looks like a sentence missing an extra verb, "robić." There is no such connotation in Polish as "umieć rzecz," or "to know a thing," but one can say "umieć robić rzecz," or "to know how to make a thing." The ellipsis of the verb "to make" makes this sentence stand out from the rest due to its peculiar syntax. It is an example of the "roughness" that Herbert's poetry was famous for. Miłosz chose, yet again, to pick the simplest English equivalent of the phrase.

> you knew no human thing you did not know even how to breathe

This version is definitely more rounded and regular than the awkward original, though it was allegedly Miłosz's point to keep all the rough elements of the poems in a form as close to the Polish version as possible.

As mentioned, "Elegy of Fortinbras" plays on two cultures: Polish culture, visible mostly in the language, and English culture, where the main topic and characters come from. The following lines from the last stanza of the poem show this perfectly.

> Teraz masz spokój Hamlecie zrobiłeś co do ciebie należało
> I masz spokój Reszta nie jest milczeniem ale należy do mnie

The first one uses the expression "zrobić co do ciebie należy," which literally means "to do what you have to." At the same time, the presence of the verb "należeć," "belong," allows for a play on words with the famous quote from Hamlet "the rest is silence," based on the ambiguity of the Polish word "należeć." In "Elegy of Fortinbras" the reader is thus presented with the following picture. By the end of the play, Hamlet had fulfilled all his duties (did all he had to do) and hoped for closure – silence after his own death. Fortinbras, Norway's warlord and crown prince, took the story from there and instilled his own order. Therefore, Fortinbras wins in the end, by taking away everything that belonged to Hamlet. He even overtakes his duties, which are the last things Hamlet has.

The English version refers more to the original text of Shakespeare's play than to the Polish poem.

> Now you have peace Hamlet you accomplished what you had to
> and you have peace The rest is not silence but belongs to me

Miłosz did not choose to alter the usual phrase "do what one has to" in an unorthodox way to include the verb "belong." The two verses from the poem's last stanza no longer mirror each other, since they include different verbs, and only the latter mentions the sense of possession. Therefore, one could say that the English version plays more on Shakespeare, whereas the Polish original uses word plays, which sometimes get lost in translation.

4. Universal Power Struggle – "Apollo and Marsyas"

"Apollo and Marsyas" is also an intertextual work that takes its main theme and topic from Greek mythos, specifically Ovid's Metamorphoses. It fits with Herbert's idea of non-political political poems—ones that, according to his own words, cannot escape reality yet should not directly tackle contemporary issues, such as political, social, or scientific matters (Kluba 450).

Using language rich in ellipses and metaphors to criticize the political power struggle is a quality Herbert could have learned from ancient authors. Herbert, who refused to

compromise his art by adapting to the precepts of socialist realism and published during the era of Stalinism, seems to have learned from his Roman predecessors how to encode political messages in the language of myth. His poems were described as fresh air since they stood out due to their artistic and intriguing character (Kosiński 259).

The themes of artistic autonomy, patronage, and freedom of speech are clearly traceable even in the Fasti, a work written simultaneously with the "Metamorphoses" and likely designed to please Augustus's demands for artworks supporting his principate. (Niżyńska 159)

Herbert's works repeatedly refer to the Roman and Greek classical tradition, and in doing so the author demonstrates how this tradition can be revived, transformed, and continued.

The poem itself centres around the punishment of Marsyas, which as Herbert points out, is the "real duel", so it stands to reason that it is also filled with sounds and their descriptors. The poem starts by describing the advantages of both sides:

(słuch absolutny
kontra ogromna skala)
which was translated as:
(absolute ear
versus immense range)

This passage includes an example of keeping original Polish expressions in an English text. This was done to keep Herbert's poetry's rough style. The phrase "absolute ear" can be understood in English but is not how "perfect pitch" is typically referred to. This choice marks an overall change to the text of "Apollo and Marsyas" in the translated version, which is less regular and less obvious than the Polish original.

One of the most crucial aspects of the poem is the choice of verbs. In the Polish original Marsyas "krzyczy", which is a verb describing a primarily human-made sound, which is a result of pain or sadness (*Wielki Słownik Ortograficzny PWN** krzyczeć) However, in the translation the sounds he makes are described as "howling" – a word most often used to describe an animalistic type of yelling (often in pain) ("Howl," n.d.). The change of the word greatly influences the character of the protagonist and the intensity of his pain.

According to Greek mythology, Marsyas was a satyr (Graves 77). His nature may suggest that although his deeds and actions were human, he had an animal element. Interestingly, one of the most popular books of Greek mythology in Poland, i.e., *Mythology*, written in 1950 by Jan Parandowski, lacks any description of Marsyas, except that he was a "flute player" (71). Other versions of Greek mythology in the Polish language include the fact that Marsyas was, in fact, a satyr, but this character may exist in the Polish mentality more often as a human rather than a fantastic creature with animalistic features. This

might have impacted Herbert's depiction of the character as someone rather human, hence the usage of the word "krzyczeć" in the opening verse of the poem. One could thus say that in the English version, the pain he is in made Marsyas lose his humanity even before the beginning of the poem, while in the Polish version, he still holds onto it for a while. The change happens in the tenth stanza, where in the Polish original, Marsyas "starts to howl":

żwirową aleją
wysadzaną bukszpanem
odchodzi zwycięzca
zastanawiając się
czy z wycia Marsjasza
nie powstanie z czasem
nowa gałąź
sztuki - powiedzmy – konkretnej

However, in the English version, there is no increase in Marsyas's agony, as the verb used in the tenth stanza is also "howling".

along a gravel path
hedged with box
the victor departs
wondering
whether out of Marsyas' howling
there will not some day arise
a new kind
of art—let us say—concrete

In this poem there is another layer to those two verbs in relation to each other. The text is told from an external, omniscient point of view. However, the tenth stanza seems to be told from Apollo's point of view. Although the third-person narration did not change in the text, the tenth stanza is separated from the rest of the text through an indentation. Moreover, it includes the only moment Apollo shares his thoughts with the reader. One might thus interpret the usage of the verb "wyć" – "howl" in this context not as a genuine description of what Marsyas is doing but as a form of belittling him through a comparison to an animal by Apollo.

The fact that the verb in the first and the tenth stanzas is identical in the English version also points to the narration remaining omniscient and aloof. No new point of view is introduced.

The same stanza includes an example of the "roughness" or "unconventionality" in the form of the following sentence:

zanim krzyk jego dojdzie
do jego wysokich uszu
which was translated as:
before the howl reaches his tall ears

The expression in question is "wysokie uszy," which Miłosz translated as "tall ears." Neither the Polish version nor the English one uses an existing phrase, which means that the "roughness" was kept intact in translating the original. It is possible that the original phrase "wysokie uszy" is supposed to express the power dynamic between "Apollo and Marsyas." The former is the god of art, and, therefore, may be associated with a ruler (or in this case a tyrant), who may be traditionally addressed as "Wasza Wysokość" – "Your highness." The latter is the subject, occupying an inferior place in the myth and the poem. If one assumes that this is the origin of the phrase "wysokie uszy," maybe it would be more accurate to translate the phrase as "high ears" instead of "tall ears," which would not remove the reference to the power dynamic between the two main characters of the poem.

The poem relies heavily on descriptions of audible stimuli, such as the aforementioned change from the word "krzyk" to the word "wycie" or "tall ears," which is also exemplified in the fourth stanza. The speaker mentions the letter "A". What is meant is both the letter, i.e., the visual symbol and the sound it denotes. In Polish phonetics, that sound would be /a/. The pronunciation of a single vowel can be easily extended into a scream, with the exact same pronunciation. An example of that can be seen in the 2008 musical interpretation of the poem by P. Gintrowski from his album "Tren" (*09 Apollo I Marsjasz Przemysław Gintrowski*) On the other hand, the letter "a" in English can be pronounced in many ways: The pronunciation of a single letter is [ei], which when extended does not evoke a feeling of listening to a scream. In that sense, one can agree with A. Valles' (Valles X) theory that the poem does not "sound" like a scream, since the possibility of the elongation of the single vowel "A" to create a scream of pain does not exist in that language. The approach of Miłosz was thus one that tried to emulate the sound of the original or the look of it. Therefore, he multiplied the letter A in the verse.

The eleventh stanza, on the other hand, shows an example of vocabulary enhancing the passage's original meaning.

nagle
pod nogi upada mu
skamieniały słowik

In the original, Apollo found a nightingale that had turned into stone at his feet. The image resonates with other mythical pictures, such as Medusa, who turned her victims into stone. It is also a light play on words since someone who is terrified (in this case of the horror that happened to Marsyas) can be described as "turned into stone." The English version evokes very similar connections but in a clearer and more seamless way.

suddenly
at his feet
falls a petrified nightingale

The word "petrified" (*Petrified | English meaning—Cambridge Dictionary)* entails all the above-mentioned connotations, but because of its common usage, it strengthens them compared to the original. On its own, the word can already mean "terrified," which means that the fear connotation is more natural in the English version.

Not all word choices are as fitting as this one in the translation, an example of which can be the following stanza.

odwraca głowę
i widzi
że drzewo do którego przywiązany był Marsjasz
jest siwe

The problem arises with the word "siwy" (*Wielki Słownik Ortograficzny PWN** siwy), which does not have a full equivalent in English. The word most commonly refers to the "white hair" of people, but it can also mean a white-bluish taint on plants, e.g., their bark or leaves. The image painted by the poet of a tree that becomes "white," "white bluish," or "silvery" is not just fully artistic, albeit it tonally closes the motif of petrification started with the nightingale. Not only are trees of this color a rather popular occurrence, but some plants can become "silvery blue." An example would be the pale poplar, a tree whose leaves are colored differently on either side and thus can become fully green or fully white depending on the wind. The image painted is not an abstract and solely poetic one. However, its English counterpart extends into the realm of the surreal:

he looks back
and sees
that the hair of the tree to which Marsyas was fastened
is white
completely

The translator decided to add "hair" to the tree, which creates a feeling of absurdity around a rather solemn and sad picture. Moreover, as explained, the word "siwy" in the original refers to the color of the tree. By fully translating "siwy" as "white of hair," one loses the reality of the lyrical situation and creates a picture that may destroy the final feeling of sadness and sombreness by the end of the poem.

The most important issue is, however, the ambiguity of the passage. There is no clear way of distinguishing the subject of the final stanza, and therefore both of the above-mentioned interpretations can be simultaneously true. English, however, does not allow zero subjects in clauses, so it is necessary to introduce a subject in the form of a pronoun. The translator made Apollo the subject, which is reflected in the stanza, starting with the pronoun "he." This means that only the first interpretation of the ending to the poem can be true in English. It is a typical example of the translation inevitably losing some of the meanings, in this case ambiguities, compared to the original.

Marcel Proust once said, "style is the transformation that the author's thought imposes on reality" (225). In the case of "Apollo and Marsyas," that is very clear. Herbert used unusual language to describe regular occurrences. The topic of the poem is a duel between a god and a mortal, but it is depicted as an act of violence happening in an unassuming place in the real world, somewhere under a tree next to a path. On the other hand, Miłosz's literal translation of those same passages changed the descriptions into surreal ones, leaving out the fact that they may be based on reality. Thus, one might say that the poem underwent a metamorphosis similar to Marsyas's body. Something real and accessible became uncanny, but also possibly not fully understandable. The poetic images used by Miłosz are further removed from reality; therefore, paradoxically, it is not a case of a translator simplifying a text for their reader, but rather complicating it by muddling the initial image created by the author.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of Herbert's poems translated by Miłosz and Scott Dale shows definitive signs of the translator's active presence in his texts. Miłosz and Scott Dale set out to achieve two goals: to translate Herbert with all his purposefully awkward phrases, as they saw them as a crucial element of his literary style, and to make the poet known to the Western (specifically US) reader through that translation. They did not start with the idea of utmost fidelity, but rather of conscious choice-making in the translation process. The visibility of the translator resulted in the presence of various, more or less minor inaccuracies in both analyzed texts when comparing the Polish originals with the English translations. The most important task while analyzing them is distinguishing between issues that stem from the obvious lack of parallels between the target and the source languages. Even though the translator noted that Herbert's style often relies on a surprise revealed at the end of a sentence, the translated texts often followed conventional

English syntax. The reason for this is that the English sentence structure is a lot more rigid than the Polish one, and thus, inversion can often look like a grammatical mistake rather than a poetic means of artistic expression.

On the other hand, fixed phrases such as: "słuch absolutny" were translated in a non-obvious way. Miłosz did not use their dictionary equivalents, opting for translating word for word, thus foreignizing phrases that could be translated more literally into English. It seems that, despite claiming that what makes Herbert special is his unusual, quiet style, often similar to the spoken language, the only places where it can be seen in the translated texts are the vocabulary and not the syntax, even though it appears in both spheres in the original texts. English may be less forgiving of syntactic changes than Polish, but it is not true that inversions and experiments in that area are unknown in English language literature. Following Herbert's syntax would, at least to a certain degree, be possible if it was not for the fact that in Miłosz's translation, a greater overall idea trumped his translation strategy. There is, of course, the need to disseminate Polish literature in English-speaking countries. Therefore, the translator decided to cross the thin line between attempting to recreate the loose style of the original and creating a text that would be generally acceptable to anyone who decided to read it in English. Literary "roughness" (i.e., the withdrawn feeling, lowered voice, and awkward or rough passages) was kept mostly in metaphors, but can rarely be found in sentence structures, since its inclusion might accidentally cause some passages to be considered weird or even badly written, instead of being seen as reflections of the author's style. One has to remember that Herbert's poetry in Polish uses unorthodox syntax, but never to the point of being grammatically incorrect. The translator did not want to make the poetry incomprehensible by following the exact sentence structure of the Polish poems.

On the other hand, there are examples of peculiar metaphors that became more unusual in English than they were in Polish (i.e., vide "white haired tree" in "Apollo and Marsyas"). The English metaphor is further detached from the reality in which the Polish one was anchored. This albeit unfortunate poetic picture (a tree with hair) does not disturb the flow of the whole text. It makes the poem more enigmatic and less understandable, but it still attempts to convey the same message as the original metaphor ("tree turned silvery blue"). Even though this translation can be a point of criticism towards Miłosz, who introduced unnecessary weirdness into an otherwise almost realistic picture, it is one of the very few fragments that ended up being "rougher' in English than in Polish. At this point, one can distinguish a tendency in Miłosz's translator's strategy. He attempted to keep rough around the edge parts of Herbert's vocabulary whenever he could, but in many cases, he chose to smooth out fragments that could be potentially unclear or unusual in English. Having Herbert's style in mind, he also attempted "Herbertisms" in places where they did not occur in the original texts. These are, however, a lot less common than the places where Miłosz used conventional English to translate slightly unconventional Polish.

Thus, everything in Miłosz's translation seems to be subordinate to the general will to disseminate Polish literature among Western readers at the cost of the culture-specific nuances they inherently contain. This can also be seen in other choices made in the translation. It is worth noting that what comes to the forefront of "Elegy of Fortinbras" is not its nonchalant spoken style (which in Polish clashes with the source material the poem is based on), but rather its references to Shakespeare's language. Fortinbras's colloquial mockery of Hamlet is dressed in quotes and poetic figures, as well as vocabulary is taken straight from Shakespeare's dictionary (albeit sparse). This, in turn, anchors the English version of the poem in the English literary tradition, which allows the Anglophone reader to find a common element in an otherwise foreign text. A similar case can be made for "Apollo and Marsyas". The poem, by the nature of its topic, as well as its general structure, is a very universal one, with strong references to Ovid's "Metamorphoses". Herbert's "cosmopolitan character" was mentioned as one of the factors that made him appealing to Anglophone readers, and it was clearly highlighted in the translations of his poems. Herbert's poetry relies heavily on various cultural references (ancient, Polish and otherwise), so showing one of them as a prevailing element is a sign of conscious choice in the interpretation rather than a misunderstanding or a lack of fidelity towards the source text. Moreover, the political struggles described in his poems (such as the ones alluded to in "Elegy of Fortinbras" and "Apollo and Marsyas") are usually depicted through an analogy (such as the struggle between Hamlet and Fortinbras or "Apollo and Marsyas"), which makes it possible to view them as more general than they were. Herbert's criticism thus often applied to very specific phenomena or events happening in Communist Poland, such as the oppression and censorship during the era of Stalinism (Uffelman 33), which could be viewed through a more general lens. This is also reflected in his reception:

> Firstly, the poet furthered our understanding of ancient civilisations and cultures and elaborated literary reflection on art from the Lascaux Cave paintings through early Renaissance Italian painting, to his favourite 17th-centuryDutch artists. [...] Thirdly, he blazed a trail in a brand of literature espousing compassion and loyalty, becoming the champion for "the upright position" in times of totalitarian oppression. (Ligęza 5)

After the fall of Communism in Europe, critics in the West and in Poland noted Herbert's universality, understanding of European culture, and strong opposition to totalitarianism. This opened the door to wider interpretations that were not solely based on the reality of Communist Poland. It was also the key to his successful reception as a translated author.

Going back to the model of the literary polysystem proposed by Even-Zohar, a translated work can become a part of the polysystem and shape the way the literature of a given language is written. According to his theory, it has to be good literature that offers

expansions to the literary system already known to a given culture. In order to expand something, one has to first anchor it. Introducing nothing but new ideas and writing styles can become futile if the only thing it has to offer is its alien and foreign feeling. One way of making foreign literature accessible is, of course, translation. That is also why the metaphor of translation as a bridge is so fitting. It shows both the general idea of cultural transfer, as well as its struggle. To meet on that bridge is to make compromises. Many of those can be seen in Miłosz's translations of Herbert. The English texts are not one-to-one recreations of the original. They opt to extenuate some features of the author's style (such as the quietness and roughness, the spoken style or trans-textual referencing), while hiding some other aspects (such as the "surprising" syntax or the political allusions). In his essays on translations, Sławek claimed the following when it comes to translation:

> The text states it thusly: the "translated" is something "new," and, therefore something "ours," which will,, in turn,, need further clarification, and further translation. It is not about equivalents of words, but about new words, sometimes drastically different, but somehow touching the original. (227)

This radical statement can be partially applied to Miłosz's translation of Herbert's poems. Although calling them drastically different from the originals would be an exaggeration, one cannot deny these are interpretations of the originals, which show not only a clear vision of Miłosz, but can also be regarded as separate entities which allow for new interpretations. It should be noted that English translations might be differently interpreted from their Polish counterparts. English Fortinbras is a lot more refined than the Polish one. At the same time, Polish Marsyas retains much more of his humanity through the suffering described in the poem than the English one. English Apollo also clearly takes a second glance at the atrocious act he just committed, while the Polish one may not have looked back. All of these changes allow a translatory comparison of the texts and a purely literary one. As mentioned previously, "lost in translation" is a fallacy many translation studies are guilty of, but it is clear that in studying good translations, one can just as easily discuss "gained in translation" as in the case of Herbert's poems translated by Miłosz, as illustrated with the aforementioned examples.

Fidelity is not an absolute virtue of a translator, as it is hard to define what it should apply to: the author, his words or the ideas behind them (or an approximation of them). What Miłosz believed in and what can be seen in his translations is rather the virtue of a translator's responsibility. It is especially prominent in the latest turns of the translator's studies:

> In this context the figure of the translator … gains the status of the subject of the intercultural communication given the power and responsibility and working under the influence of various complicated and nonobvious factors. (Heydel 28)

Perceiving the translator as an active and creative figure allows him to make conscious choices, as it is in his power to change the reception of a given translated text. This is connected with the responsibility towards the reader and the author of the source text. That is where the balance between writing good and faithful texts is needed, the latter being texts that attempt to recreate the original in terms of its content, form, and style. In one of his essays, Barańczak states, "Do not translate good poetry into bad poetry" (33). This very quotable sentence depicts what responsibility means. Miłosz translated good poetry – Herbert's poems, and as a fellow artist, his friend, and a professor of literature, he wanted to spread knowledge of Polish literature among English-speaking readers. He also felt obliged to make his translations accessible to the reader and, simultaneously, true to the originals. In other words, he had the moral obligation to repeat what Herbert already managed to achieve in Polish (and what he himself was capable of in his original works), this time with different tools and limitations. His translations are oddly brave in interpretation and yet safe in form. They are not the definitive versions of Herbert in English, but they are as good as they could be at spreading Herbert's poetry to the English-speaking world. Moreover, they also function as standalone pieces of English language literature – good enough to influence other authors and thus become a part of the literary polysystem of the English language. A proof of that can be the number of publications and re-translations of Herbert's poems into English over the years. Notably, his success is not limited to literary critics only, as his poems have been printed in major mainstream English-language newspapers, such as *Dissent*, *Encounter*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times* (Carpenter 8). They have been read and even re-translated into English with greater fidelity by other translators. The versions written by Miłosz allowed this to happen, as they introduced the English-speaking world to the "roughness and quietness" of one of the Polish post-war poets, even if they did so through a balance of literary gains and losses. One might say that from an author-translator like Miłosz, the only "lost in translation" that mattered were the texts, which English readers would not have discovered had they not been translated.

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Review of *East Central Europe Between the Colonial and the Postcolonial in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Dorota Kołodziejczyk and Siegfried Huigen, Palgrave/Macmillan, 2023, 265 pp. ISBN: 978-3-031-17486-5

The book opens with a thorough and lucid critical introduction entitled "East Central Europe Between the Colonial and the Postcolonial," written by its editors, Dorota Kołodziejczyk and Siegfried Huigen. This introduction outlines the historical, geographical, sociological, and mental "in-betweenness" of the region in which "insurrectionary" and "peripheral" nationalisms were constructed in synergy and friction with the "hegemonic," "Western" nationalisms. The key notion that informs Kołodziejczyk's and Huigen's introduction is the question of to what extent and to what goals the tools developed by postcolonial discourse have been and applied to the problems of the region. The introduction ends with a call to "mobilize the vigilance of critical thought" (23) to such uses of postcolonial theory "that serve to mainstream and normalize anti-liberal forms of governance" (23).

Kołodziejczyk's and Huigen's introduction is followed by Claudia Kraft's chapter "East Central Europe as a Historical and Conceptual Space: On the Production of Knowledge from a (Historical) Area Studies Perspective." It offers a solid and clear historical overview of East Central Europe as a subject of 'area studies.' Having outlined the vital influential trends and theories in the period between the two world wars, and the periods between

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1945 and 1989 and after 1989, she argues persuasively "[w]hy we still need relational history in a postcolonial Vein." (49)

Tomasz Zarycki's chapter "Polish Stereotypes of the East: Old and New Mechanisms of Orientalisation in the Regional and Transnational Dimensions" contains a recapitulation of the complex and varied applications of post-colonial discourse in the context of the issues connected with "east" and "eastness" in Poland (and in its eastern neighbors), both on the trans-national and regional levels (Zarycki himself has been active in this debate for two decades, a fact confirmed by his five articles/chapters, and a book in the bibliography included at the end of "Polish Stereotypes of the East"). Following Stein Rokkan's (1980) division of center-periphery relations into economic, political-state-legal, and cultural, Zarycki argues for their interdependence and shows how culturalist, psychological, and historical rhetoric has been used at various levels to support the stereotype of alleged eastern "backwardness." Zarycki agrees with Larry Wolff's claim made in *The Invention of Europe* (1994) that this negative Orientalist stereotype of Eastern Europe held in Western Europe was constructed in the period of the Enlightenment and has been reproduced ever since due to inertia but shows that these stereotypes have gone through ups and downs of reactivation or fading, the former connected with the periods of the region's not faring well, the latter with (shorter) periods of the region's condition improving. Zarycki summarizes the arguments and the implications of assumptions made by two main distinctive ways of conceptualizing Polish historical dependence on the West and the East, which may be branded as 'conservative' and 'liberal,' and shows that they blame each other for the region's backwardness. Both are unwilling to recognize Western European subjects as agents in this process. In the second part of his chapter Zarycki first sketches the ambivalences connected with the self-promotion of three Polish cities which are located on the Polish post-1945 "Eastern Wall": Białystok, Lublin and Rzeszów, and then shows how the new liberal, left-wing Polish discourse on the country's eastern borderlands, created by cultural activists like Krzysztof Czyżewski or writers like Andrzej Stasiuk and Ziemowit Szczerek, is not devoid of hierarchization putting the West over the East, and of Orientalist valorizations.

After three general, 'panoramic' chapters, seven focus on more particular phenomena connected with East Central European twentieth-century history.

In "Colonial Ambivalence and Its Aftermath: Colonialism and Anti-Colonialism in Independent Poland and Ireland," Róisín Healy manages to present and summarize the similarities as well as differences between Poland and Ireland as historically being exposed to processes of political, economic, and cultural dependence on a stronger neighbor, and the ambivalence connected with the application of the colonial discourse to analyze and compare the developments in these two countries/nations on two planes: in the long nineteenth century and over the last few decades where Irish, Polish as well as many other scholars have been applying tools of (post)colonial discourse, trying to account for these similarities

and differences. In the second part of her chapter, Róisín Healy argues convincingly that after Poland and Ireland (re)gained independence, respectively, at the end of the second and the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century, their politicians and cultural elites chose different state policies: anti-colonial in Ireland and, after an unsteady start in the nineteen-twenties, colonialist in Poland in the nineteen-thirties. Healy concludes that both the anti-colonial identification of the Irish state and the pro-colonialist one of the Polish state had little impact on Europe's overseas colonies and people living there.

Raul Cârstocea's chapter entitled "The Unbearable Virtues of Backwardness: Mircea Eliade's Conceptualisation of Colonialism and His Attraction to Romania's Interwar Fascist Movement" is not so much an apology as an empathetic summary of Mircea Eliade's (whom Cârstocea calls in the opening paragraph "arguably the Romanian intellectual who is best known internationally" (113)) views and statements from the period of his stay in India (1928-1931), and his subsequent return to Romania and involvement in "the Legion of the Archangel Michael," the Romanian fascist movement. Cârstocea argues that the reasons accounting for Eliade's "gradual 'conversion' to legionary ideology [...] were partly conjunctural" (127). Analysing Eliade's novel *Bengali Nights,* fragments from his diaries, and religious and political articles written in this period, but also later, Cârstocea shows, on the one hand, the complexity of the situation in Romania in the second half of the 1930s, and the connections Eliade was making between his Indian and Romanian experiences. I am an East European scholar and am not amused but puzzled by the flippant play on *The Unbearable Lightness of Being.*

Agnieszka Sadecka, in "Reportage from the (Post-)Contact Zone: Polish Travellers to Decolonised India (1950–1980)," analyses eight books of travel reportage written by Polish journalists and writers who visited India in the three decades between 1950 and 1980 as either reporters of Polish press agencies or members of Polish official delegations. Sadecka states that their publications, to be published, "had to pass through the Central Office for the Control of the Press, Publications and Performance" (144). Still, she does not differentiate the extent of the censorship into the period before 1956 and after it, nor does she speculate about the extent of both (self) censorship and official censorship that readings of these texts suggest. Sadecka juxtaposes the two texts: one, the earliest chronologically by Jerzy Ros (1957) and the latest by Jerzy Chociłowski (1977), to argue that the intensity of the critique of imperialism present in the texts under her scrutiny decreased with time, which she claimed reflected "the change in propaganda newspeak" (146). But otherwise, she homogenizes the eight texts under scrutiny. An interesting point made in this chapter, albeit only in passing, is that these texts "in some way anticipated the appearance of postcolonial critique, in a Marxist spirit" (148). I believe that this sentence could serve as an excellent starting point for research on 'socialist discourse' on the 'Third World' developed in East Europe in the period 1945-1989 as a pre-Saidian discourse.

Jagoda Wierzejska's chapter entitled "An East Central European 'Sahib' in a Former Colony: Andrzej Bobkowski in Guatemala (1948–1961)" analyses ambivalences, ambiguities, and contradictions in, on the one hand, Andrzej Bobkowski's works of fiction and non-fiction and, on the other, in his private correspondence. Using the essential tools of postcolonial discourse, Wierzejska unfolds vital elements and moments in Bobkowski's biography, concentrating on his decision to leave France for Guatemala in 1948, where Bobkowski lived with his wife manufacturing and selling model airplanes till his death in 1961. Wierzejska convincingly argues that Bobkowski's decision to leave France, and in more general terms, Western Europe in 1948, was the result of his staunch anti-communism, the lack of energy and will of Western societies to oppose Soviet expansionist politics, as well as his feeling that in France he was treated as a pariah, a dirty foreigner. Having presented the love/hate relationship of Bobkowski towards Guatemala, Wierzejska concludes that his self-construction as a white 'Sahib' living with people he considered inferior in the cultural sense was a form of compensation for "his complex of being regarded as a second-class European." (177)

In the first part of "Regained Landscapes: The Transfer of Power and Tradition in Polish Discourse of the Regained Territories," Kinga Siewior introduces Przemysław Czapliński's concept of 'the shift' used to describe the magnitude of changes Poland went through after World War II and states that she is going to analyse one (out of four) key aspect of this shift; namely the territorial changes Poland underwent as the result of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences in 1945: the loss (to the Soviet Union) of Poland's former 'wschodnie kresy' [Eastern borderlands] and the incorporation into Poland of territories which before 1945 had belonged to Germany: Silesia, Lower Silesia, the Lubusz Land, Pomerania and the southern part of East Prussia. These territories were labeled 'Ziemie Odzyskane' [the Regained Territories] by Polish (communist) authorities. Using elements of postcolonial discourse, Siewior presents the extent of the manipulation and construction of the new Polish identity and shows the tropes Polish communist authorities, as well as Polish writers and artists, relied upon to represent the Regained Territories. In the second part of her chapter Siewior focuses on the ways selected Polish writers used the notion of landscape in the 1970s and 1980s and explains how through Jan Bułhak, a Polish photographer who had introduced the theoretical concept of 'fotografia ojczysta' [translated here as 'Fatherland Photography program] before World War II, and how Bułhak's pro-Polish colonialist photos of the Polish Eastern Borderlands merged smoothly with post-War II Polish communist propaganda.

Emilia Kledzik's chapter "Between Pedagogy and Self-Articulation: Roma Necessary Fictions in East Central Europe" approaches three novels and a short story written by East Europeans, both Roma and non-Roma, about the life of Roma communities and Roma characters set in different periods between the 1920s and the present in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. First, Kledzik proposes to use Homi Bhabha's notion of 'necessary

fictions' to approach her four texts. Then, she presents the differences in the situation of Roma communities on the one hand in the countries of Western Europe, like Britain, France, or Germany, and on the other, in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. In the second part of her chapter, she critically summarizes and assesses her four texts and then proposes a table reminiscent of late 1960s structuralism, using the two criteria of the narrator and the narrative strategy. She offers to term this table "necessary fictions," and I would love to read a more thorough explanation of the connections between Bhabha's mostly ironic notion and East European Roma narratives.

Miriam Finkelstein, in "Soviet Colonialism Reloaded: Encounters Between Russians and East Central Europeans in Contemporary Literature," focuses on Berlin as a place in which Russian, Russian-Jewish, as well as East European writers, live, and explains – by analyzing novels, short stories and autobiographical essays – why the former write about the latter (and vice versa) rarely, and when they decide to do so, why they usually display a lack of understanding, reluctance and ignorance. She concludes that for both groups, this results from being at different ends of "Soviet colonialism reloaded."

I am convinced that *East Central Europe Between the Colonial and the Postcolonial in the Twentieth Century*, particularly Kołodziejczyk's and Huigen's "Critical Introduction" and the two 'overview' chapters by Claudia Kraft and Tomasz Zarycki, will become indispensable texts for all scholars approaching East Central European issues regardless of whether they consider their approach (post)colonial, (post)dependence, (post)communist, or something else.

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Review of *Japanese-American Literature through the Prism of Acculturation* by Małgorzata Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska, Routledge, 2023, 294 pp. ISBN: 9781032379203

Małgorzata Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska's *Japanese-American Literature through the Prism of Acculturation,* published by Routledge in 2023*,* is an impressive, engaging, erudite study of acculturation in Japanese American literature of the second half of the twentieth century. While the target reader of the monograph seems to be a scholar specializing in Asian American or American ethnic studies, the book should also be accessible to a lay-person in the field. Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska inscribes herself in the studies of Japanese American literature and culture pursued among others by such scholars as Henry Yu, Jinqi Ling, Traise Yamamoto, Gary Okihiro, King-Kok Cheung, Dominika Ferens, Stan Yogi, Russell Leong, all of whom shed light on slightly different aspects, participating in the discourse, yet in no way undermining or diminishing Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska's unique contribution to the field.

Japanese-American Literature through the Prism of Acculturation opens with an extensive exploration of acculturation theories and the genesis of culture studies, in which Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska cites such authors as Lawrence Grossberg, Colin Sparks, John Hartley, David Sam, Donald Goellnicht and Stephen Sumida. Special attention is devoted to the definition of culture and acculturation strategies developed by John Widdup Berry (42-54). In the rich theoretical overview of acculturation strategies, Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska places Japanese American acculturation in the broader context of Asian American

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acculturation. To her credit, in the section devoted to the history of Asian American literature, Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska cites the 1972 anthology by Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas, often overlooked as the first anthology of Asian American literature. Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska very effectively underscores the internal heterogeneity within the Japanese American community, distinguishing between the first generation (the Issei), the second generation (the Nisei), the third generation (the Sansei), the fourth generation (the Yonsei) and the fifth generation (the Gonsei), but still placing the Issei and the Nisei in the center of the book.

In the section dedicated to the analysis of acculturation in selected works of the second half of the twentieth-century Japanese American literature, Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska examines respective acculturation strategies, for example, marginalization, adaptation to the new environment, education, intergenerational communication, and communication outside one's immediate environment, the tension between individualism and collectivism, gender relations as well as patriarchy. The analytic part of the study shows that the author cogently applies earlier expounded theories to the explored works. As a New Historicist scholar, she also consistently attaches great importance to the socio-historical background. Małgorzata Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska's *Japanese-American Literature through the Prism of Acculturation* proposes a thorough, penetrating inquiry into acculturation strategies in selected works of Japanese American prose of the second half of the twentieth century, in particular in Yoshiko Uchida's *Picture Bride*, John Okada'a *No-No Boy*, Yoshiko Uchida's *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese American Family*, Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter,* Daniel Okimoto's *American in Disguise*, Bill Hosokawa's *Out of the Frying Pan: Reflections of a Japanese American*, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, and James Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar: A True Story of Japanese American Experience during and after the World War II Internment* and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Beyond Manzanar: Views of Asian-American Womanhood*.

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