This volume investigates the themes of movement and change in human societies. The chapters deal with spatial and temporal mobilities in language, literature, culture and society. The theme is addressed from theoretical, critical, historical and practical perspectives, through discussions of sometimes controversial issues such as political movements, identity, body image, sexuality, and violence. The volume includes chapters using multiple methodologies and apply them to a variety of materials. The underlying idea is that of understanding time and place as movement. Human societies and interaction are never static, and the volume helps us to see how the changing conditions determine the functioning of societies and human life.

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Movement and Change in Literature, Language, and Society
Table of Contents

Enigmas of Time and Place: Introduction to Movement and Change in Literature, Language, and Society 9
Joel Kuortti and Sirkku Ruokkeinen

Part I From Place to Place 19

Chapter 1
Mobility, Method and Textual Practice: Re-reading Thomas Hardy’s *The Woodlanders* 21
Lynne Pearce

Chapter 2
Music, Mobility, and Borderscapes in the Fiction of Jamal Mahjoub 47
Jopi Nyman

Chapter 3
Postcritical Erotic Intimacy: Engaging with Oral Sex in Caribbean Literature 63
Elina Valovirta

Chapter 4
Written on the Body: Representing Torture in *Waiting for the Barbarians* 89
Amin Beiranvand and Joel Kuortti

Chapter 5
From Dublin to London: Dermot O’Byrne, Arnold Bax, Pádraig Pearse, and the Music of Identity 109
Anthony W. Johnson
# Table of Contents

Chapter 6  
In Search of Identity: Terms Related to Emerging American Nationalism during the 1760s and 1770s  
Johanna Rastas  

131

Part II  
**From Time to Time**  

Chapter 7  
Hyperhybridism: Postmodernism Is Old but Not Old Fashioned  
Mehdi Ghasemi  

155

Chapter 8  
Movement in the Present: Poetry as a Mindfulness Project in Bernadette Mayer’s *Studying Hunger Journals*  
Elina Siltanen  

171

Chapter 9  
Reading and Translation in the Age of the Internet: Findings from a Case Study of a Terry Pratchett Novel Read in Finland  
Damon Tringham  

191

Chapter 10  
Fat Acceptance or Body Positivity? A Discourse-based Investigation of Plus-size Fashion Blogging and Social Movements  
Hanna Limatius  

211

Chapter 11  
Studying Forced Mobility: Critique as a Matter of Shifting Perspectives  
Erzsébet Barát  

233
# Table of Contents

*Part III  Between Times and Places* 247

Chapter 12
Where the Past and the Present Intersect: Memory and Regret in Doris Lessing’s *Going Home, Under My Skin* and *Alfred and Emily* 249

Lena Englund

Chapter 13
“I’ve been here before”: Ursula Todd’s Repeated Returns in Kate Atkinson’s *Life after Life* 267

Ira Hansen

Chapter 14
Babur and Rushdie: Negotiating Mughal Histories 279

Joel Kuortti

Chapter 15
Between Domestic and International: The Finnish Translation of Göhler’s *Orchesterkompositionen von Jean Sibelius* as an Image Builder 301

Turo Rautaoja

Contributors 315
Index 319
Enigmas of Time and Place: Introduction to Movement and Change in Literature, Language, and Society
– Joel Kuortti and Sirkku Ruokkeinen

Movement and Change in/as Human Life

In the study of culture – comprising, in the context of this volume, studies of literature, language, and society – the question of the interplay between time and place has an even longer history than in the natural sciences. Palaeolithic cave paintings – sort or prehistoric comics\(^1\) – from some 35,000 years\(^2\) back can be read as narratives that transfer knowledge – as well as images of the represented moving figures (i.e. running animals) – over time and space to next generations, whatever their original artistic intent and value may be. Already in these very early human expressions there is an understanding of time and place as movement.

Even if we discard the interpretational take on prehistoric traces, historical narrative ways of compressing and stretching times and distances are evident from the earliest known textual examples, like in the Sumerian text “The Instructions of Šuruppag”:

In those days, in those far remote days, in those nights, in those far-away nights, in those years, in those far remote years, at that time the wise one who knew how to speak in elaborate words lived in the Land; Šuruppag, the wise one, who knew how to speak with elaborate words lived in the Land.\(^3\)

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In this – allegedly antediluvian – text, written around 2600 BCE, Šuruppag gives advice to his son Zi-ud-sura based on his time-tested experience. The Mesopotamian realm of Sumer is usually defined as the first historical human civilization as the earliest known records of symbolic written language (in this case in cuneiform) are from that area. What Šuruppag expresses in this excerpt is a distinct sense of time – the “far remote years” – that give the present a perspective on how to arbitrate life choices.

Ever since Albert Einstein developed the early-twentieth-century post-Newtonian\textsuperscript{4} theory of special relativity and general theory of relativity,\textsuperscript{5} questions of time and place have acquired increasing prominence in modern scholarly theories about the universe. Further developed in quantum mechanics, the problematic of the conjunction of time and place have complicated their form and function. We are yet to see the advent of a unified field theory – i.e. the ‘theory of everything’ – and continuous advances in research do not forebode any quick answer to the issue. Therefore, studies of culture have an important say on the matter.

‘All things flow and nothing stands’

The general spatio–temporal perspective presented above provides a window for the present volume. In Heraclitian fashion, it can be said that movement and change are among the few constants of life, that “all things flow and nothing stands” (πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει).\textsuperscript{6} This means also that life cannot stand still as it is in constant motion. Whatever the astronomical or quantum physical theories say about the relativity of place and time, in the human scale time moves steadily forward and people are locat-

\textsuperscript{4} Isaac Newton published his theory of universal gravitation in his \textit{Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica} in 1687.


ed in one place at any given time. Their cultural representations, however, can take whatever forms people can imagine.

In their countless different manifestations, the phenomena of time and place affect individuals, societies, countries, and communities. Depending on the circumstances, their effects can be perceived as either welcome or undesirable – as promoting dynamic flexibility, for instance –, or as an instability with many attendant problems. Drawing on multidisciplinary insights from the fields of English linguistics, literary and cultural scholarship and translation studies, this volume, *Movement and Change in Literature, Language, and Society*, focuses on the element of movement and change in human life.

Our contributors observe the themes of the volume from temporal and spatial perspectives, as they are here considered joint phenomena manifesting movement and change in human societies. This approach is reflected in the structure of the volume, divided into three parts, each dealing with different types of movement and change in space and time. *Part I* focuses on the themes in relation to space, *Part II* explores temporal movement and change, and finally, *Part III* features considerations of the interaction of these aspects. While the parts are distinctive in their foci, the individual chapters reflect on the themes of place and time in many ways interchangeably. In this way, they articulate an open approach to these interdependent dimensions. In the following, the chapters are introduced briefly in their specific contexts.

**From Place to Place**

*Place*. What would be as simple as that? A place is a place, after all. However, when we probe the concept of place, we are soon involved in a long-term, winding debate over its definition. In his 1977 study *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Yi-Fu Tuan noted that in (then) recent ethological studies it had been found out “that nonhuman animals also have a sense of territory and of place. Spaces are marked off and defended against intruders. Places are centres of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation, are satisfied.”\(^7\) In the human context, then, marked spaces become places imbued with significance, “physical spaces that people naturalize through patterns, behaviour and

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\(^7\) Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. \(^8\)th printing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001 [1977]), 4.
communications.” The travel from an undifferentiated ‘space’ to a signified ‘place’ has no definite boundaries – a ‘location’ can become a site of for example abode, livelihood and/or worship due to a variety of reasons. In cultural studies, the symbolic sphere becomes a defining one for the human experience, because as far as we know, non-human species do not have a similar kind of a relation to places, although there are legends of elephants (and pre-homo sapiens humans like the Neanderthals) having human type of sense of place.

In the six chapters of Part I, place is considered in terms of mobility, location and identity. Place may form the context, or it may exist in relation to other places. These can be locales close to each other, gaining significance through their commonalities and differences, or nations far away from each other. Part I opens with two chapters on mobility in British literature. Lynne Pearce’s chapter “Mobility, Memory and Textual Practice: Re-reading Thomas Hardy’s Woodlanders” combines the mobility theories of social sciences to explore the theme of movement in physical space as an expression of romantic love and mourning in Thomas Hardy’s The Woodlanders. Jopi Nyman’s chapter, “Music, Mobility, and Borderscapes in the Fiction of Jamal Mahjoub” observes the theme of space on a more metaphysical level, analysing music and borderscapes as an expression of cultural space and mobility in Jamal Mahjoub’s fiction.

The next two chapters deal with postcolonial literatures and spaces. The colonial and postcolonial Caribbean as a cultural space has generated specific cultural practices and formations, and in “Postcritical Erotic Intimacy: Engaging with Oral Sex and Change in Caribbean Literature,” Elina Valovirta explores the expression of sexuality in Caribbean literature. Colonial history is present also in Amin Beiranvand and Joel Kuortti’s chapter “Written on the Body: Representing Torture in Waiting for the Barbarians,” an exploration of different types of physical and mental torture J. M. Coetzee’s Waiting for the Barbarians. The novel portrays colonial South Africa, and through an analysis of the colonialistic image of the barbarian, the writers

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show how the colonizer recontextualizes the colonized as the other in order to justify torture.

The last two chapters in the Part I concern questions of identity. In his chapter “From Dublin to London: Dermot O’Byrne, Arnold Bax, Pádraig Pearse, and the Music of Identity,” Anthony Johnson studies the cultural chameleonism and social mobility of Arnold Bax, i.e. Dermot O’Byrne, man of complex and mobile personalities, namely Irish and English; poet and composer; Irish nationalist and Master of King’s Music. Johnson shows how, through his music and poetry, Bax/O’Byrne claimed two different, even conflicting, national identities. Part I concludes in “In Search of Identity: Terms Related to American Nationalism during the 1760s and 1770s,” where Johanna Rastas conducts a diachronic analysis of identity-related lexis in contemporary letter materials to explore the theme of change in the context of the development of American national identity.

*From Time to Time*

*Time.* If possible, time is an even more complex and elusive term than place. When did time begin and (when) will it end? The measurements of time have changed during its history, and the current scientific as well as everyday basic unit is the second. Second was defined in 1967 as “the duration of 9 192 631 770 periods of the radiation corresponding to the transition between the two hyperfine levels of the ground state of the caesium 133 atom,” and in 1997 refined that “this definition refers to a caesium atom at rest at a thermodynamic temperature of 0 K.” In textual narratives time is not, however, restricted by the physical realities of time. Thus, as we saw already in “The Instructions of Šuruppag,” narrative time can go against the continual present of existence, and the duration of a second is not constant. Consciousness of time enables (at least) humans to play with the ideas of going back and forth in time, even if that would not be possi-

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ble in the real world. Cultures have developed different conceptions of time from linear to circular and variations of these.

Just as time in literature is mutable, literary studies deal with time in numerous ways. One of the approaches has to do with literary periodization. Literature (just like any other strand of culture) has been divided in historical periods that are given specific characteristics. Then, narrative manipulation of time is an important topic in literary analyses. Furthermore, study of literary translations considers the significance, methods and contexts of translation, just as well as the changes in these aspects over time. Reflecting these lines of enquiry, **Part II** opens with two considerations of literary periods.\textsuperscript{12} Mehdi Ghasemi, in “Hyperhybridism: Postmodernism is Old but not Old Fashioned,” examines one literary-cultural period or style, namely postmodernism. Ghasemi discusses the discontents expressed against the term and the alternatives suggested for it, proposing one further label, ‘hyperhybridism’, to cover the elements the elusive period designation carries. In the second chapter of Part II, “Movement in the Present: Poetry as a Mindfulness Project in Bernadette Mayer’s Studying Hunger Journals,” Elina Siltanen suggests that the hard-to-periodize author, Bernadette Mayer, should be studied outside the existing discussions of experimentalism and traditional self-expressive fiction. She conducts an analysis of Mayer’s work as a mindfulness project, an exercise of observing, rather than analysing one’s own cognitive movements.

The following three chapters concentrate on the questions of new discourses and communicative practices in a changing environment forcing the discovery of new strategies. In “Reading and Translation in the Age of the Internet: Findings from a Case Study of a Terry Pratchett Novel Read in Finland,” Damon Tringham studies the new information retrieval strategies used by present day readers of translations, when encountering an unfamiliar cultural concept. Hanna Limatius’s chapter “From Fat Acceptance to Body Positivity: Social Movements in Plus-size Fashion Blogging” analyses the discourses on social movements of body positivity and fat acceptance in present day fashion blogs. The change of ideas analysed in the chapter is located in the online communities constructed through blogs. In the final chapter of Part II, Erzsébet Barát analyses the figure of the migrant in present day Hungarian political discourse. In her chapter “Study-

\textsuperscript{12} Bulk of the contributions in the volume were first presented as papers at the 8\textsuperscript{th} conference of the Finnish Society for the Study of English in Turku (2017). The theme of the conference was “What’s in a Century?” and it dealt with issues like periodization.
ing Forced Mobility: Critique as a Matter of Shifting Perspectives,” she shows how irony may be mobilized as a discursive tool that allows migrants agency.

**Between Times and Places**

In the humanities and the social sciences, place and time can never be considered wholly separate phenomena. The context and circumstances of a person or event are always dependent on both of these aspects, and movement in space always also implies a movement in time. The human experience itself – our memories and personal histories – are construed as segments in time; consequent events taking place in space. This may be seen in the opening chapter of Part III, Lena Englund’s “Where the Past and the Present Intersect: Memory and Regret in Doris Lessing’s Autobiographical Writing,” where themes of movement and change are explored through the analysis of Doris Lessing’s autobiographical writings, treating time and regret as the focal points through which different positions taken by Lessing in different times are recontextualized. A rather opposite position is explored by Ira Hansen in “I’ve been here before: Ursula Todd’s Repeated Returns in Kate Atkinson’s Life after Life,” where the fictional life and repeated rebirths of Ursula Todd are analysed as a representation of the meshwork structure of the human life; the movement through life as a complex structure of entangled lines.

The last two chapters the volume explore the effect of time on representations of people, things and phenomena. Joel Kuortti’s chapter “Babur and Rushdie: Negotiating Mughal Histories,” explores the representation of a people in two texts of different text types describing the same Mughal community and its significant historical events. Time is a significant aspect here as it determines the perspective of the text, while the theme of place may be viewed in more metaphorical manner; a place of representation of a pluralistic view of the events in different text types. Finally, in, “Between Domestic and International: Sibelius-related Translations as Reflections of National Change,” Turo Rautaoja closes the volume with an exploration of the shifting perceptions of Jean Sibelius and Finnishness, presented by the original and translated versions of Georg Göhler’s essay “Orchesterkompositionen von Jean Sibelius.” In this chapter, temporal and geographic distance of the texts explains the change in the representation of Sibelius and Finnishness in these texts.

All in all, the volume brings together a wide variety of analytic approaches to the enigmatic concepts of place and time. The articles show
that these concepts are indeed central to considerations of literature, language and society.

As editors, we would like to express our gratitude to the organisers of the FINSE8 conference at the University of Turku and the Åbo Akademi University. Thanks to all the contributors for their critical contributions, and to Atte Veistola for his diligent help at the final stage of the project. Warm thanks to the anonymous readers that helped to complete the book. Thanks to Steffen Burke and Nomos for accepting the volume in their series.

Turku December 6, 2019

Joel Kuortti and Sirkku Ruokkeinen

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Time does go on —
I tell it gay to those who suffer now —
They shall survive —
There is a sun —
They don’t believe it now —

– Emily Dickinson, #1121

Bibliography


Part I

From Place to Place
One of the more unexpected items now to be found on YouTube is the *Pathé News* film of Thomas Hardy’s funeral in 1928.¹ The event was an unusual one, even at the time, inasmuch as Hardy had requested that his body and heart be buried in two separate locations – the latter in Stinsford Churchyard – and the film captures the intense public interest in this somewhat macabre last rite. While the funeral procession – with the priest carrying the heart in a square box – exits the church in an orderly fashion, the vast crowds which fill the churchyard jostle for position, and those lining the church path to the right are clearly distracted by a disturbance off-camera. We then glimpse a policeman vainly attempting to restore order, before the crowd surges forward, like a tidal wave, once the cortege has passed. In contrast to the slow, dignified movement we typically associate with funerals, here speed is of the essence. We can see one of the elderly men in the cortege swiftly overtake his fellows in order to get to the head of procession while, on the outskirts of the cemetery, figures may be seen *running* around the back of the crowd in order to gain a better view. The burial of the heart takes place under a large tree, but – for the camera – the ceremony itself is obscured by the huge crowd that closes in around the scene. Deeply fascinating for any number of reasons, what makes this one-minute film so compelling for me is the glimpse it provides of the mobilities associated with funerals in Britain in the early years of the twentieth century and, for the purposes of this chapter, the commentary it offers on Hardy’s fiction which is strewn with tragic characters whose “hearts” likewise become separated from their “body-subjects” (see discussion following) during their life-journeys.²

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² “Life-Journey”: this is a key concept in my book on the mobilities of interpersonal relationships which signals the significance of movement of different kinds in the conceptualisation of the lifecourse (itself a well-established concept within sociology), see Lynne Pearce, *Mobility, Memory and the Lifecourse in Twentieth-century Liter-
The context for this reflection on one of Hardy’s most place-specific novels, *The Woodlanders* (1887), is my recent and on-going research on the mobilities associated with love and courtship (alongside death, memory and memorialisation). Following recent research on the impact of mobility on intimate and family relationships by colleagues working in the social sciences (e.g. Clare Holdsworth, Lesley Murray, and Susan Robertson), and publications in the subfield of emotional geography on landscape, memory and mourning (e.g. W. Scott Howard, Avril Maddrell, and John Wylie), I have proposed that mobilities of various kinds are generative of, as well as consequent upon, emotions such as love and have tested my hypothesis across a selection of nineteenth- and early-twentieth century literary and autobiographical texts. In this short chapter I explore Grace Melbury’s thwarted relationships with two suitors – Giles Winterborne and Edred Fitzpiers – to demonstrate how a mobilities-focused approach can shed new light on literary text concerned as well as the (historically specific) practice of love and courtship in the material world. Indeed, the methodological implications of bringing mobilities theories and textual practice together is my predominant concern here, since this reflexivity has, to date, been lacking in most of the publications that work across the humanities/social sciences divide. Given that readers of this volume may not,
themselves, be familiar with the theories and methods that have come to be associated with the “new mobilities paradigm,” the chapter opens with a brief overview of the key principles and theoretical approaches relevant to my own research, as well as an introduction to those scholars (namely, the anthropologist Tim Ingold; the geographer David Seamon; and the philosopher Henri Bergson) whose work, taken together, has provided the framework for my investigations into “the mobilities of love.” In particular, I have argued for the abiding significance of courtship and/or early-life mobilities throughout the lifecourse of a relationship including the practices associated with memorialisation and mourning.

**Mobile Methods and Textual Practice**

Now that the *mobilities turn* has come of age, there has been a good deal of debate as to its origins and, in particular, whether its roots belong in the humanities or the social sciences. Since Mimi Sheller and John Urry’s pronouncement of “a new mobilities paradigm” in 2006 – and the consequent raft to projects and publications emanating from the Centre for Mobilities Research (CeMoRe) at Lancaster, UK in the decades following – there has unquestionably been an alignment of mobilities research with the social sciences and innovative “mobile methods” centred on ethnographic fieldwork and digital technologies. However, as Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman have pointed out in several recent publications, mobility had been identified as a key concept through which to understand the connectedness and flux of the material world (both physical and social/cultural) several years before this. Merriman points, in particular, to Cresswell’s introduction to the *New Formations* special issue on mobility (2001) which

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7 See CeMoRe website: https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/cemore/.
“traces a genealogy of mobility theory and mobile metaphors that are [...] more attuned to the humanities literatures than any nascent social science paradigm.”10 This said, Urry’s own flagship book in the field, *Mobilities* (2007) – which complements Cresswell’s *On the Move* (2006)11 – is careful to acknowledge the contribution of the geographers – especially Nigel Thrift’s work on “non-representational theory”12 – as well as the philosophical roots of both schools to the “process philosophy” of Bergson, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and Michel de Certeau. It is also notable that both Cresswell and Urry have drawn extensively upon literary and film texts in the course of their publications on mobilities-related topics,13 as have their followers. This, itself, relates to a key principle that underpins all mobilities theory and speaks to its complexity: namely, the recognition that while mobility is one of the core materialities of the post-industrial world, its lived experience – which habitually mixes cognitive and sensory perception in the present with memory, fantasy and the imagination – is necessarily an elusive phenomenon to research. Indeed, in an earlier book – *Sociology beyond Societies* (1999)14 – Urry was already stressing the importance of studying the mobilities of everyday life in ways that accounted for the “corporeal, imagined and virtual,”15 thus hinting at the important role textual materials might contribute to our understanding of mobilities of various kinds in ontological terms. However, it is only relatively recently that those working in the mobilities field have directly confronted the methodological implications of using textual sources as a means to social and cultural analysis as I expand upon below.

15 Urry, *Sociology*, 9; emphasis added.
Notwithstanding Urry’s early acknowledgement of the role of memory and the imagination in the ‘lived’ experience of mobility, scholarship in the field (and this includes cultural geography as well as sociology) is markedly post-humanist in character and typically concerned with the mobile subject only as part of an integrated flow of human and non-human ‘actors’. The mobilities paradigm, as conceived by Sheller and Urry was, indeed, strongly influenced by Bruno Latour’s Actor Network Theory (ANT) in this regard, and those following in their footsteps have insisted that we attend to the circulation of goods, finance, commodities, data and so on alongside the movement(s) of people. As, John Law, who was instrumental in popularising ANT as an approach in Science and Technology Studies (STS), observes that “what we call the social is materially heterogeneous: talk, bodies, texts, machines, architectures, all of these and many more are implicated in and perform the social.” As well as de-centering the human subject in mobilities research, ANT’s emphasis on the interdependence of humans and things has also led to conceptualisation of human/non-human entities such as Tim Dant’s “driver-car” which epitomises the way in which humans are sutured into complex, global systems (in this case, what Urry dubbed the “car-system”) when performing everyday tasks in which they are the ostensible agents. ANT is, itself, indebted to Deleuze and Guattari’s modelling of the ontological as an assemblage of contingent, and mutable, factors (physical, social, psychological, ideological etc) and the work of a great many mobilities theorists has developed rich and evocative new ways of thinking about space and place, including what Tim Edensor has usefully identified as “extended mobile space” (e.g. the temporal–spatial space of roads) – through their phenomenological descriptions of the flux of autonomous, yet contiguous, agents at work in the production of a location at any given moment. This is demonstrated in Edensor’s descriptions of the “rhythms” of city life:


One way to grasp mobile rhythms is to consider the daily walking practices of urbanites: the timetabled journeys of throngs of children walking along routes that converge on schools, crossing roads as lollipop men and women arrest the flow of vehicles, often themselves conveying children to school, intersect with the route marches of early shoppers . . . and strolling workers en route to places of employment . . . And these walking rhythms co-exist and intersect with a host of other mobile rhythms: the regular time-tabled bus, train and tram travel, the pulse of cyclists, cars and motorcycles, and the non-human pulse of electricity, water, gas and telepathy.\textsuperscript{20}

For literary scholars whose work has, historically, centred on the individual subject through the study of textual characters, post-human revisionings of the world through frameworks such as these are clearly at odds with the (still largely unvoiced) project of a good deal of criticism: namely, to gain a better understanding of the human psyche and its capacity – or not – to exercise choice and hence determine the lifecourse of the self and others. Further, to shift one’s attention so emphatically away from the agency of the individual subject is also to undermine the Enlightenment belief in freedom and progress which has sustained so much political criticism (e.g. feminism) over the years. The benefits of a post-human “distributed cognition”\textsuperscript{21} approach to textual materials, however, is that it enables us to grasp the contingency of the subject within a systems-based social order with new clarity and, from a mobilities perspective, to recognise that mobile human lives cannot be separated from those other animals – or, indeed, the machines, commodities or services that constitute the fabric of daily life.

The reason I have dwelt on the post-human theories which underpin a good deal of mobilities scholarship in the short space available to me here is that they have unquestionably come to define the field in terms of approach and methodology. This means that a purely thematic interest in movement and mobility – as foregrounded in the work of a great many modernist and post-colonial literary scholars over the past fifty years – does not automatically qualify as ‘mobilities’ research according to the terms of

\textsuperscript{20} Edensor, “Rhythm,” 163–64.
\textsuperscript{21} “Distributed cognition”: This concept – often sourced to the anthropologist Edwin Hutchins’s work in the 1990s – proposes that cognition and knowledge are not confined to individual subjects but distributed across a diversity of human and non-human objects and artefacts in the environment. Although emanating from other disciplines, the overlap with ANT is clear and has, itself, been the subject of debate.
the paradigm. This is not, of course, to discredit work on mobility that pre-
dates, or is ignorant of, the CeMoRe school, but to clarify that this research
will be based on different assumptions, and is likely to have different ob-
jectives, than that being pursued by the authors I have cited here. Indeed,
in my own work, I have found myself having constantly to review the
methodological implications of employing post-humanist and/or phe-
nomenological approaches in my preliminary investigations of texts while
simultaneously drawing upon psychology and post-structuralist models of
subjectivity in my further cultural/historical analysis, for example when
considering the role of individual memory in the evolution of long-term
relationships.

Hardy’s *The Woodlanders*, then, serves as an excellent example of a clas-
ic–realist text whose mobilities may be productively read through both a
humanist and a post-humanist lens. Apart from the fact that it is a novel
that has been read by many critics as a dramatisation of Arthur Schopen-
hauer’s fatalistic philosophy of “the [immanent] Will.”

22 the plot turns on
what are very human, and humanist, choices, vis-à-vis characters who may
be seen to determine their own fates (even if driven by ‘universal’ forces
outside their control). The prime mover in this regard is the (middle-class)
timber merchant, Mr Melbury, whose misplaced social aspiration for his
daughter motivates – and sustains – the central action; this said, all the cen-
tral characters may be seen to be making major and minor daily choices,
often expressed through images of personal mobility and “path-taking” in
connection with the maze of roads, lanes and tracks that traverse the dense
woodland of Little Hintock. That these descriptions are part of the overt
symbolism of the novel nevertheless makes any analysis along these lines a
very different type of reading practice to the phenomenological approach I
take in the next section (which – it should be noted – also differs, method-
ologically, from William Cohen’s recent post-human ecological reading of
the text).

23 In terms of the critical insights they are likely to provide, my feeling is
that both humanist and post-humanist approaches are valuable, and that
the two standpoints may even be combined providing the author remains

22 Schopenhauer and “the Will”: Hardy was greatly influenced by Arthur Schopen-
hauer’s philosophy of ‘the will’ – a “blind incessant impulse” – as the life-force
driving humanity forwards (for better and for worse) and developed his own ver-
sion of the concept – i.e. the ‘Immanent Will’ (see W 345, note 48).
23 William Cohen, “Arborealities: The Tactile Ecology of Hardy’s *Woodlanders,*” *In-
org/10.16995/ntn.690.
alert to the methodological implications of their vacillation and, in particular, what figures as the object of the research. This last point also relates to the perennially overlooked difference between textual practice which is undertaken primarily to illuminate our understanding of the author/text in question and that which draws upon the text in order to investigate a cultural phenomenon in the material world. My own work has always tended to the latter, but over the years I have come to realise that this is a notoriously grey area for a great many commentators whose work (unconsciously) moves between the two objects and, indeed, objectives. With respect to the two humanities-focused mobilities collections I have edited to date, for example, the majority of essays have approached mobility thematically and none have espoused post-humanist approaches. I am not, of course, suggesting that there is anything inherently wrong with thematic and/or metaphorical engagements, and it may be argued that those of us working in the (‘post-paradigm’) mobilities field do not own a concept that has been employed to equally illuminating ends by generations of scholars working in other fields. However, it remains my hope that, in due course, literary critics and theorists will wish to engage with the debates begun by the many sociologists and geographers cited here in a more substantive way, not least because the representational world of literature and film has the potential to enrich, challenge, and ultimately extend the field.

Despite the obvious post-structuralist caveats that surround the use of literary and other texts as resources for anyone wishing to gain a ‘window’ onto the ontological experience of mobility – i.e. that representations, however mimetic, must not be confused with ‘real’ life, that the individual experience must not be allowed to speak for the many – it is unquestionable that they also provide the researcher with something that cannot easily be accessed through ethnography: namely, the complicating factor of temporality – both in terms of the individual life and our collective past. Colin Pooley’s historical research into early-twentieth century transport mobilities is exemplary in this regard inasmuch as the autobiographical texts with which he works have enabled him to piece together a sense of how individuals experienced the many new forms of transport that became available at the turn of the century (as well as their functionality), often in

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a surprisingly ‘integrated’ way.²⁵ In my own work on 20th-century automobility, meanwhile, I have drawn on both autobiographical and fictional materials to explore changes in what I have termed “automotive consciousness” across the century, including an investigation of how the imagination, daydream and memory are an integral part of the mobilities performed during both driving and passengering.²⁶ While such representations – which are often being put to ulterior symbolic and/or metaphorical use by the authors concerned – are hardly an unmediated snapshot of everyday life during the period in question, they can, I believe, be annexed by the cultural theorist to help model key cultural and social phenomena, especially when placed alongside existing empirical research.

Lesley Murray and Sara Upstone also address all that is at stake in bringing the representational realm to bear upon mobilities research in their edited collection, Researching and Representing Mobilities (2014),²⁷ and – with reference to the crucial role non-representational theory has played in the reconfiguration of both sociology and geography in the past two decades – reflect upon the way textual materials are uniquely positioned to capture a practice, i.e. mobility, that is itself “simultaneously representational and non-representational.”²⁸ In other words, literary and other texts are the perfect – perhaps the only? – means we have to explore what Thrift describes as the constant reinvention of “the human sensorium”²⁹ as it travels through the world. Indeed, it is precisely the fact that literature – often in fictional form – has sought to capture the sensuous, affective and cognitive aspects of a non-representational phenomenon such as speed³⁰ that renders it such an invaluable resource for mobilities scholarship. In

²⁹ Thrift, Non-representational, 3.
addition, Henri Lefebvre’s concept of “representational space,” helps to explain not only the role texts play in mediating, and shaping, our lived experience of the world but also why the writers of a given historical period make certain cultural phenomena part of the symbolic landscape of their texts: in other words, a virtuous circle is established whereby textual and other representations inform the lived experience of material subjects whose exploits then become the fodder for further textual representations of the same events. Therefore, while a textual representation of a mobile practice (such as the equation of driving at speed with madness) may appear to be reduced to a mere trope in certain texts, the fact that the author has employed it in that way nevertheless speaks to the material significance of the practice in everyday life even though its application is far from mimetic. Representation, then, is a term with several distinct but overlapping connotations when it comes to mobilities research, but one – as Murray and Upstone’s volume shows – that can be very positively exploited.

I conclude this section with a brief overview of the trio of theorists – Ingold, Seamon and Bergson – who have informed my work on courtship. The first is the anthropologist, Ingold whose book, *Lines* (2007), speaks directly to my hypothesis regarding the centrality of mobility in the production and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. While mobility remains largely unvoiced in Ingold’s original observations, the understanding that lines are not only what we create but also what we (subsequently) follow means that the two are inextricable as seen is his observation: “Everybody has their personal path and is known by it [...]. Paths have their stories just as people do.” Indeed, in his evocative descriptions of the way in which people(s) are habitually creating and following lines in the course of their everyday interactions, Ingold also alerts us to their foundational role in micro- and macro-relationship building. Seamon meanwhile, is one of the geographers now credited with bringing a new awareness of embodied spatiality and movement to bear upon our understanding of the deeply relational practices of everyday life. Based upon phenomenological principles and methods, Seamon’s *Geographies of the Lifeworld* (1979) reports upon ethnographic research conducted with an “environmental experience group” at his home University (Clark, Massachusetts) focusing both on

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31 Edensor, “Rhythm,” 165.
32 See Pearce, *Drivetime*, 156–62, for discussion of madness as an effect of speed.
34 Ingold, *Lines*, xvi.
how the “body-subject” functions in familiar environments by non-cognitive means, and the significance of everyday movement in his/her “life-world.”

Most suggestive for my purposes here, however, are his twin concepts – “body ballet” and “place ballet” which account for the way in which both individual subjects and communities choreograph with one another in familial, social and public spaces: “Body-ballets and time–space routines mix in a supportive physical environment to create place ballet – an interaction of many time-space routines and body ballets rooted in space.”

This vivid impression of how individuals, each marked by their own geography, are brought together in dynamic patterns of to-ing and fro-ing, interactivity and exchange, echoes Ingold’s conceptualisation of the “meshwork” created by “wayfaring” subjects and, once again, serves as a model for how we might map the traces of human relationships at every stage of the lifecourse. Finally, Bergson’s work on perception, movement and memory (see note 52) has proven invaluable in helping me theorise the way in which the ‘lines’ we lay down during the inception and development of a relationship are integral to both its everyday re-iteration and its memorialisation.

As with the other publications where I have deployed these theorists to identify what is specific to, and defining of, particular courtships, my reading of Hardy’s The Woodlanders compares the ways in which mobility features in the different relationships; whether they are characterised principally by movements to, and from, one another, or, alternatively, the practice of travelling with. Previous research has led me to conclude that ‘successful’ long-term relationships tend to be built upon both, and while Hardy’s intricate Shakespearean plotting means that we should not unproblematically confuse the leafy “stage” of Little Hintock with the historical nineteenth century, my reading of the text (which will endeavour to “bracket-off” the heavy symbolism attached to every footstep) will, I

36 Seamon, Geography, 41.
37 Seamon, 135.
38 Seamon, 56.
39 Ingold, Lines, 39.
40 See Holdsworth, Family and Murray and Robertson, Intergenerational.
41 The unity of the action, together with the entanglement of several pairs of lovers, means that Little Hintock is evocative of Shakespeare’s “Forest of Arden” in A Midsummer’s Night Dream. Penny Boumelha also refers to the plot as Shakespearean in her Introduction to The Woodlanders (2009), xxiv.
42 “Bracketing off”: the practice in phenomenology of suspending judgement and/or preconceptions regarding a phenomenon (or event) in order to focus on it more
trust, make newly visible the crucial role everyday mobilities can play in generating and sustaining our intimate relationships.

*Tracking Love in The Woodlanders*

In order to illustrate some of the ways in which mobilities concepts and methods can be deployed to help theorise a cultural–historical phenomenon such as romantic love (which I have written about elsewhere through a very different lens), I have elected to read Hardy’s *The Woodlanders* via the figures of *tracking*, *body-subject*, and *body memory*. The first of these is inspired by Ingold’s book on *Lines* (cited above), the second by Maurice Merleau–Ponty’s concept of the “body-subject” as utilised by Semon, and the third by the philosopher Edward Casey’s attempt to extend Merleau–Ponty’s work on the body-subject into the realm of memory. In line with this volume’s remit, it is therefore a reading that explores the way in which the life-journey of the human subject is animated by movement across a range of scales (i.e. from micro to macro), and how the restless passage “from place to place and time to time” (the thematic focus of this volume) may be seen as an integral part of both the human and non-human condition. All three concepts I work with were developed by the theorists concerned through a broadly phenomenological approach to social behaviour based upon “unprejudiced” observation, and my own reading – as noted above – will focus on the material inscriptions of mobility in the daily lives of Hardy’s courting couples notwithstanding the overt symbolism in which these are often encoded. For, despite the melodrama of the plots, Hardy’s novels *do* also constitute important historical documents of a period – the late nineteenth century – when Britain was very much ‘on

fully. This is a particular challenge in the engagement of literary texts where the representation of the material world is often symbolically encoded in relation to the plot and/or central themes.


45 Dermot Moran provides a useful short definition of phenomenology thus: “Phenomenology may be characterised initially in a broad sense as the unprejudiced, descriptive study of whatever appears to consciousness precisely in the manner in which it so appears,” “Editor’s Introduction,” in *The Phenomenology Reader*, edited by Dermot Moran and Tim Mooney (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2002), 1.
the move’ through the rapid expansion of its road and rail transport and, as highlighted in this particular text, the social mobility of its aspirational middle classes. At the same time, The Woodlanders is very evidently an elegy to a way of life that was fast disappearing at the time of its publication, with Little Hintock’s characterisation as a “sequestered spot […] outside the gates of the world” (W 46) rendering the location, and the mobile lives that inhabit it, both heterotopia and museum piece.

Tracking

In his book, Lines, Ingold draws a particular distinction between the additive and reductive ways in which lines are formed in the landscape, the second of which is of particular significance in a mobilities reading of Hardy’s novel:

Lines that are scratched, scored or etched into a surface are reductive, since in this case they are formed by the removal of material from the surface itself. Like threads, traces abound in the non-human world. They mostly result from the movement of animals, appearing as paths or tracks [...]. Human beings also leave reductive traces in the landscape through frequent movement along the same route on foot or horseback, and more recently, by wheeled vehicles.46

As well as reminding us that the laying down of tracks in a landscape is something that both human and non-human animals share, Ingold’s observation alerts us to the way in which tracks are one of the most material and lasting expressions of repetitive moment. When a track forms between one place and another it exposes what is undeniably a significant connection between the two and – as I have argued elsewhere – is a powerful figure (both actual and metaphorical) with which to gauge the seriousness of our intimate relationships.47 Although, in the contemporary world, our feet may leave no trace as they glide, invisibly, over concrete, tarmac, carpet and other post-industrial surfaces, were we to mark them with indelible ink, they would, in an instant, reveal which people, and which places, matter to us the most.

In The Woodlanders we witness characters making tracks, following tracks, reading tracks and memorialising tracks – and all in the pursuit, or

46 Ingold, Lines, 44.
47 Pearce, Mobility.
defence, of love. The “sought-for object”\textsuperscript{48} at the centre of all this track-making and route-finding is Grace Melbury – a young woman of marriage-able age, educated by her yeoman father for “better things” – who is relentlessly “tracked-down” in the course of the novel: not only by her two suitors, Giles Winterborne and Edred Fitzpiers, but also by her father. On two occasions we see, first, Giles and then Edred, follow her through the woods her with a subterfuge and intent akin to stalking:

Some flecks of Grace’s white drapery had enabled Giles keep Grace and her father in view all this time; but now he lost sight of them and was obliged to follow by ear.

Was it worth to go further? He examined the doughty soil at the foot of the stile, and saw amongst the large sole and heel tracks an impression of a slighter kind from a boot that was obviously not local. And the mud-picture was enough to make him swing himself over [the stile] and proceed. (W 48–49)

Fitzpiers’s eyes commanded as much of the ground in front as was open […]. The shape resolved itself into a woman’s; she was looking at the ground, and walking slowly as if looking for something […]. On looking around by the light thus obtained she for the first time saw the illuminated face of Fitzpiers precisely in the spot where she had left him. (W 127)

As well as being indicative of an unpleasant sexual politics in which a young woman is observed and effectively ‘hunted down’ without her knowledge (and in this regard, Giles is clearly as guilty as Fitzpiers), the unilateral direction of travel – i.e. the two men are seeking Grace, not she them – is clearly indicative of a very one-sided relationship. Even allowing for the mobility constraints attending middle-class women during this period, such asymmetry would speak volumes in any relationship.

Indeed, another nineteenth-century text I have dealt with elsewhere – the stonemason Arthur Peck’s ‘courtship diary’\textsuperscript{49} – is a telling comparison here inasmuch as my ‘mapping’ of his, and his fiancée’s, mobilities reveals

\textsuperscript{48} “Sought-for object”: one of the seven “spheres of actions” [i.e. hero, villain, magical agent etc] identified by structuralist Vladimir Propp as being present in all folk tales, see Vladimir Propp, \emph{Morphology of the Folk Tale}, edited by L. A. Wagner, 2nd ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971) [Морфология сказки, 1928].

them both travelling to and from one another’s houses; true, Peck does often escort ‘D.B’, home, or to chapel, but – were their tracks marked in ink - their mutual interest in one another would be evident. Therefore, although during the denouement of the novel – which sees Giles and Grace temporarily re-united – there are a few hours in which the two “make tracks” together (W 249–50) – Grace’s courtships with both men are singularly lacking in the mobility which I have defined as ‘travelling with’. Although Giles has vivid memories of sitting beside Grace in a “covered car” after a gypsy fair when they were both teenagers (“all the party being squeezed in together as tight as sheep at an auction-pen [...] and [...] I put my arm around your waist”) (W 40), for Grace this is the distant past. In terms of her relationship with Edred, meanwhile, Grace is seen to be even more stationery and “moored.”

Before and after her marriage, most of her time is spent in the parental home and when she does leave Hintock – for her honeymoon – it in the context of a ‘grand tour’ rather than every-day practice of ‘travelling with’ which builds intimacy through a shared experience of space and place. Both in the context of Hardy’s novel and in terms of courtship practices more generally, then, an indicative mapping of the mobilities performed in the course of Grace’s two relationships offers an unpromising outlook; the tracks of these three “body-subjects” tell their own story.

For Grace’s father, meanwhile, Grace’s track – in the form of a carefully preserved footprint – bears the hallmark of an obsessive will to control:

He took the candle from her hand, held it to the ground, and removed a tile which lay in the garden-path. “Tis the track of her shoe that she made when she came down here, the day before she went away all those months ago. I covered it up when she was gone; and when I come here to look at it I ask myself again, why should she be sacrificed to a poor man?” (W 18)

Mr Melbury’s devotion to, and investment in, his daughter is, of course, what drives the novel’s plot and tragic outcomes, but – with reference back...

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50 Early discussion of mobility proposed that it could not be thought of in isolation from the complementary state of immobility. This was conceptualised as ‘mooring’ in the Introduction of the first issue of the *Mobilities* journal, see Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry, “Editorial – Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings,” *Mobilities* 1, no. 1 (2006): 1–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/17450100500489189.
to Ingold – his preservation of her footstep may also be seen as indicative of the difference between what animal and human tracks signify (or come to signify) and how they are used. While the tracks of an animal – and, indeed, pre-industrial peoples such as the Saami and Walibi researched by Ingold51 – are unconscious signatures of connectivity within communities, for the men in The Woodlanders, Grace’s fashionable ‘urban’ footprint is one of the things that distinguishes her from the woodland community to which she once belonged and serves as an aid to her entrapment. Later in the novel, meanwhile, the horse, Darling’s, hoof-prints (W 191) are seen and interpreted by Melbury as confirmation of Edred Fitzpier’s infidelity with Mrs Felice Charmond; once again, an indication of how marks upon the landscape can bespeak, and be put to, very self-conscious human uses redolent of suspicion, jealousy and control rather than as a signifier of significant connections between social groups, both human and animal.

Elsewhere in the novel, however, the long-established woodland tracks that the protagonists follow and re-new are palpable expressions of ancient connections between families and individuals who have lived and worked together for generations. Indeed, what distinguishes the native woodlanders from outsiders to Hintock is their ability to find their way about the maze of paths, lanes and shortcuts without getting lost. Both Bergson and Merleau–Ponty would explain such a facility in terms of the “habit memory” of the body in contrast to the deliberations of the conscious mind,52 which brings us to a consideration of the importance of the mobilities associated with the “body-subject” within courtship and with regards the generation and sustenance of long-term relationships more generally.

Body-subject and Body Memory

Were an anthropologist such as Ingold able to visit the historical-fictional microcosm of Little Hintock and undertake a scientific investigation of the

51 See Ingold, Lines, on the mobilities associated with Saami (80) and Walibi peoples (101–03).
footprints and tracks that criss-cross its environs, one well-trodden path that would surely come to his attention is the one that connects Marty South’s and Giles Winterborne’s residences. Long regarded by critics as one another’s ‘double’, these two ‘native’ woodlanders are custodians of the Hintock’s forestry practices and their associated mobilities: the centuries’-long knowledge involved in planting, coppicing, harvesting, felling and wood-turning. The way in which the two work so effortlessly and ‘instinctively’ at their tasks, and with one another, is also exemplary of Seamon’s account of how “body-subjects” come to perform their ‘body ballets’ and – for my purposes here – is illustrative of a particular order of intimacy that is profoundly at odds with the conscious, pre-meditated actions of courtship and which is arguably an essential ingredient for the success of long-term relationships.

Merleau–Ponty’s concept of the body-subject – which arose from his work on perception as part of a radical challenge to the Cartesian mind-body dualism – is predicated on the notion that there is no finite distinction between the subject and the world; rather, the world is known through the body via its habitual, everyday ‘motor-skills’ – most of which are expressed as mobilities of some kind. As Seamon observes: “the body holds within itself an active, intentional capacity which ultimately ‘knows’ in its own special fashion the everyday spaces in which the person lives his typical day.”

In the novel, Marty’s character is defined by her fluent, elegant performance of this ‘haptic’ knowledge as illustrated in this portrait in the opening pages:

With a bill-hook in one hand, and a leather glove much too large for her on the other, she was making spars – such as are used by thatchers – with great rapidity [...]. To produce them she took up each gad, looked critically at it from end to end, cut it to length, split it into four, and sharpened each of the quarters with dextrous blows which brought it to a triangular point precisely resembling that of a bayonet. (W 9)

Arduous as this work is, Marty can accomplish it with a speed and grace that astonishes observers notwithstanding her gender and slight frame,

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53 Boumelha, Introduction, xix.
54 Seamon, Geography, 56.
55 Merleau–Ponty, Phenomenology, 161; see also Adey, Mobility, 137–38.
56 Seamon, Geography, 35.
thus demonstrating that skill, rather than strength, is the crucial factor. Although habitual and mundane, Marty’s work also depends upon timing and rhythm, two of the characteristics which feature in Seamon’s account of “body ballet”:

*Body ballet is a set of integrated gestures and movements which sustain a particular task or aim.* Body ballets are frequently an integral part of manual skill or artistic talent – for instance, washing dishes, ploughing, house-building, hunting or potting [...], operating an ice-cream truck can involve body ballet. Taking orders, scooping ice-cream, making change – all involve a pattern and flow that quickly become routine [...]. Words like “flow” and “rhythm” indicate that body ballet is organic and integrated rather than step-wise and fragmentary.57

For my work on the mobilities that inform our interpersonal relationships, however, the concept of body ballet becomes especially interesting when used to help explain the special – often unseen – bond between two people when they go about their everyday tasks. While such bodily synergies are not necessarily a mark of love and/or erotic intimacy, it could be argued that they are its pre-requisite.

In the fictional world of *The Woodlanders*, Marty and Giles are seen moving about one another with a fluidity and ease that is presented by Hardy as ‘unconscious’ but which is, I would argue, rather more than the functional expression of Merleau–Ponty’s ‘motor skills’ or what Hardy himself refers to elsewhere in the novel as “secondary intelligence.”58 The connotation of *dance* is, perhaps, the crucial supplement here; the body-subjects of Marty and Giles anticipate and mirror one another’s actions in ways that are as aesthetic as they are instrumental, as illustrated in the following tree-planting episode:

He had a marvellous power of making trees grow [...]. Marty, who turned her hand to anything, was usually the one who performed the task of keeping the trees in a perpendicular position whilst he threw in the mould [...].

57 See Seamon, 64.
58 Hardy himself distinguishes a type of ‘habit memory’ (see note 52 above) which he characterises as a mode of “secondary intelligence”: “Copse-work, as it is called, being an occupation which the secondary intelligence of the hands and arms could carry out without the sovereign attention of the head, allowed the minds of its professors to wander considerably from the objects before them” (W 24).
Her only reply was turning to take up the next tree; and they planted on through a great part of the day, almost without another word. (W 59–60)

Elsewhere in the novel, the embodied and kinetic empathy that exists between Giles’s and Marty’s body-subjects is seen not in their work but simply in the way they move about one another:

They went out and walked together [...]. They had no remarks to make to each other, and they uttered none. Hardly anything could be more isolated, or more self-contained, than the lives of these two walking here in the lonely hour before day, when grey shades, material and mental, are so very grey. (W 20)

Although not advertised as such, these ‘wordless walks’ may be seen as a courtship of sorts, especially given that Marty, for all her silence, is consciously in love with Giles. It is also a mode, and manner, of mobility that is singularly lacking in Winterborne’s and Fitzpiers’s courtship of Grace. The significance of this contrast, moreover, relates not only to the success, or not, of a courtship but also our capacity to remember, and mourn, our loved ones when they are lost to us. Whichever theory one draws upon to explain them, (intellectual) memories are tenuous things; however, the “habit memory” (see note 52) which, according to Merleau–Ponty, enables the subject to perform its everyday tasks with such ease, is preserved forever in the body and its movements; this facility, which has, in turn, engendered the concept of “body memory,” is the subject of the final section of my reading of Hardy’s novel.

According to the philosopher Casey, memory – habitual or otherwise – is an aspect of Merleau–Ponty’s theory of perception that was never fully developed in his writing, although its implications are felt everywhere. In his own work, therefore, Casey has sought to redress this silence by supplementing the concept of the body-subject with that of body memory. He begins by drawing a contrast between body memory and other ‘intellectual’ forms of recollection and reminiscence in which “we peer resolutely backward toward a past that is felt to have its own independent being; hence the significant distance from the present in both cases”; by contrast, “in body memory, at least in its habitual form, we have just the opposite

60 See Casey, Remembering, 159–64, on Merleau–Ponty’s failure to develop the concept of body memory.
circumstance: here the past is fully enacted in the present.”61 As in Bergson’s model of the relationship between perception and memory upon which he draws (and which I have written about elsewhere),62 Casey draws particular attention to the way in which body memory – although widely regarded as inferior to the “picture memory” of secondary recollection,63 has the capacity to bring the past alive in the present. Indeed, he regards such memory as being “an immanence of the past in the present and the present in the past.”64 Furthermore, of crucial importance in maintaining continuity between past and present, is movement:

Above all, through its active intentional arc, the lived body traces out the arena for the remembered scenes that inhere so steadfastly in particular places: the body’s manoeuvres and movements, imagined as well as actual, make room for remembering placed scenes in all their complex composition. In the end, we can move into place, indeed be in place at all, only through our body’s own distinct potencies. And if it is the body that places us in place to start with, it will be instrumental in re-placing us in remembered places as well.65

As readers familiar with Hardy’s novel will be aware, this passage speaks evocatively to the way in which Marty South’s body-subject keeps Winterborne’s memory alive in ways that are simply not available to the other characters in the text. Having worked alongside him for so long, her “body ballets” and “space-time routines,”66 which once mirrored his, live on in her everyday movements and gestures and serve as a lasting memorial to him:

“Now, my own, own love,” she whispered, “you are mine and only mine; for she has forgot ‘ee at last, and whenever I lie down I’ll think of ‘ee again. Whenever I plant the young larches I’ll think that none

61 Casey, 168.
63 “Secondary recollection”: see Casey, Remembering, 202.
64 Casey, 168; emphases added.
65 Casey, 189–90.
66 “Time-space routines”: see Seamon, Geography, 54–56.
can plant as you planted; and whenever I split a gad, and whenever I turn the cider wring, I’ll say none could do it like you. If ever I forget your name let me forget home and heaven! . . . But no, my love, I can never forget ‘ee; for you was a good man, and did good things!” (W 330–31)

As I have observed elsewhere, Marty’s manner of mourning Giles is striking in both its effectiveness and its invisibility. While Grace’s bi-weekly pilgrimages to her erstwhile lover’s grave come to an end after a matter of months, Marty – simply by continuing to practice a repertoire of movements that they once shared, can never forget him. Such a realisation – which relates to recent work done by psychologists on the “continuing bonds” that the bereaved seek to maintain with their lost loved ones, thus becomes a powerful consolation. And from a mobilities perspective, it also establishes an important continuity between the mobilities we practice early on in a relationship – the years of courtship, for example – and its progress through the lifecourse, up to, and including, death.

**Conclusion: Engaging Mobilities**

I have here sought to outline, and then demonstrate, some of the ways that mobilities concepts and their associated approaches can be engaged in the study of literary texts. My own methods, as noted above, are those of the cultural theorist rather than the critic, and here, as elsewhere, I have drawn upon a literary text in order to further test my hypotheses concerning the role mobilities play in the not only in the performance, but also the generation, of deep emotions such as love in the material world.

In the section entitled ‘tracking’, I reflected on the macro-movements of the lovers at the heart of the story – Grace Melbury and her two suitors, Edred Fitzpiers and Giles Winterborne – and observed the asymmetry of the two men ‘in pursuit’ of Grace and her own ‘immobility’ (W 150). While this contrast could, of course, be used to create psychological portraits of the characters, and a feminist stance be adopted in order to ex-

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67 Pearce, “Trackless.”
69 “Helpless immobility seemed to be combined with intense consciousness.”
plore the power politics of the relationships, my own phenomenological reading remained focused on the materiality of the movement itself in the context of my readings of other texts. The comparison with Arthur Peck’s courtship diary from the 1860s, for example, highlighted the way in which the mobilities of the courting couples were very unequal; in Peck’s diary, both he and his fiancée travel to and from one another’s homes on a regular basis, and – significantly – they also often travel together. This simple ‘mapping’ of courting couple’s journeys has therefore emerged as an effective method for analysing the dynamics of the relationship concerned; whatever we think or say on the matter, our footsteps betray our desire and commitment (or lack of it). To remain focused on this historical/cultural enquiry, it was necessary that I ignored – or ‘bracketed off’ (see note 42) – Hardy’s own use of tracks and footprints at a symbolic and metaphorical level, although I did use Melbury’s obsessive focus on his daughter’s footprint as a means of contrasting what tracks in a landscape may signify in anthropological terms (following Ingold’s work on the Saami and the Walibí) (see note 51) and the connotations they assume for a novelist like Hardy. In this regard, my phenomenological approach also had to put to one side some enticing metaphorical usages – such as Winterborne’s observation, when reunited with Grace, that although he courted her with the same “zest” it was “not quite with the same hope that he had begun to tread the old tracks again” (W 257). For although this conceit fits perfectly with my thesis regarding the significance of the repetition of particular routes and journeys in the sedimentation of a relationship in the material world, Hardy is clearly using the image as a trope.

In the final section of the textual reading, I drew upon Seamon’s concepts of “body-subject” and “body ballet,” and Casey’s work on “body memory,” to demonstrate the alternative ‘everyday’ intimacy of Winterborne’s relationship with Marty South. While many commentators have reflected on the specialness of this relationship, and searched for models of intimacy (e.g. platonic, sibling) to explain the way in which the two characters mirror and complement one another, a mobilities perspective is, I feel, persuasive in demonstrating the extent to which movement – both at a macro and a micro level – is of crucial importance in implicating one person with another. Once again, the context for these observations is my further work on the important (if generally unseen) connections between the mobilities of courtship and those of mourning, but the perspective also

70 Boumelha, Introduction, xix.
71 Pearce, “Trackless”; Pearce, Mobility.
helps to explain what is often seen as an enigmatic ending to the novel. From a mobilities perspective, there is nothing surprising in giving the ‘marginal’ character, Marty South, the final say since her ‘triumph’ exposes the very materiality – a complementary ‘ballet’ of two bodies – that was lacking in the other relationships. By forcing us to attend to the significance of movement of every kind, and of every scale – the mobilities paradigm has thus once again made visible aspects of everyday life that were erstwhile as hidden as the hamlet of Little Hintock itself.

Bibliography


Lynne Pearce


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*Lynne Pearce*
Chapter 2
Music, Mobility, and Borderscapes in the Fiction of Jamal Mahjoub
– Jopi Nyman

Introduction

This chapter will examine the ways in which the fiction of the contemporary black British/European writer Jamal Mahjoub uses borderscapes and music to address issues of belonging to place, community, culture, and nation in the context of border-crossing mobility. While critics such as Christin Hoene have addressed the role of music in postcolonial narratives as playing a central role in the formation of identity,¹ this chapter shows how Mahjoub’s fiction uses music as a part of cultural mobility. As I will show, the three novels under study contextualize music in diverse borderscapes where the relationship between the host and the migrant community, tradition and its postcolonial appropriation, is redefined. Recently several theorists have sought to develop the concept of borderscape and argued that the term refers to spaces of social and cultural interaction where intercultural processes take place, generating diverse encounters and transforming the identities of those entering the borderscape. I will argue that the borderscapes of Mahjoub’s novels are not only sites of interaction, relational and moving spaces, as Chiara Brambilla understands the characteristics of the concept,² but that they are at the same time transforming and transformative, hybrid and fluid, rather than stable and static. In the case of Mahjoub’s novels, such spaces are appropriated through fiction and organized through references to different forms of music.

In this chapter I will analyse diverse representations of music in Mahjoub’s novels to suggest that they contribute to the making of borderscapes where new identities come into existence. In so doing they negotiate the formation of migrant identities amidst hegemonic ideologies, as

well as problematize and reconstruct ideas of belonging in politically and culturally contested spaces. My analysis of Mahjoub’s works looks at the diverse roles and locations of music in the texts. In so doing, I will address their representation of music in general as well as the significance attached to jazz (and jazz clubs) and non-western musics in particular. The focus of the chapter is on the ways in which three novels by Mahjoub, namely Wings of Dust (1994), Travelling with Djinns (2002), and The Drift Latitudes (2006), use music in the context of cultural encounters. I will suggest that as narratives of borderscapes, they are sites of increasing hybridity and transnational cultural relations, and that by foregrounding music and its role in spaces that extend beyond one single culture they underline its importance in various cultural encounters and border-crossings.

**Borderscape as a Site of Becoming**

While border studies in the past has tended to emphasize the role of borders as demarcation lines and seen them as separating communities, the current understanding suggests that they are processes and sites of both bordering and debordering – in other words, they are both obstacles but also sites that bring the two parts together. Border theorist David Newman has argued that borders are not mere lines but that they are processes and institutions generating different kinds of border phenomena that may include ways to manage and guard the border as well as generate experiences emphasizing the role of the border as a location of contact and transition.³ More recently, several scholars have explored the related idea of the borderscape and suggested that the term is apt to describe locations of social and cultural interaction in the proximity of the border but also further away. Borderscapes, as P. K. Rajaram and Carl Grundy–Warr contend, are “zones of varied and differentiated encounters.”⁴ It is in such locations of socio-cultural encounters where border-induced phenomena become visible and where various encounters and exposure to Otherness may transform the identities of those entering and inhabiting the borderscape.

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The function of borderscapes resembles the ways in which the Third Space, the location of cultural hybridity and in-betweenness as outlined by Homi K. Bhabha, operates and generates new meanings in a process that he sees as one of ambivalence. According to the border theorist Brambilla, borderscapes are spaces where borders emerge as sites of interaction, as relational and moving spaces. Borderscapes are changing social and cultural constructs as well as sites where new identities emerge as results of cultural encounters. The significance of this kind of an approach to borders is that the conceptual framework constructs borders as mobile and transforming rather than as fixed objects or mere geopolitical markers. To quote Brambilla, “borders are blurring; they move around and fold.” This means that borders are on the move as they follow various groups of migrants and other travellers from their places of origin to places of settlement. In this process major European (and other) metropolitan centres become examples of the extended borderscape, inhabited by diverse mobile groups and transforming into what Rajaram and Grundy–Warr find characteristic of borderscapes, that they are “fluid terrain[s] of a multitude of political negotiations, claims, and counterclaims.”

In such locations it is possible to notice various ways of representing and living the borderscape, ways that may include both exclusionary ethnic enclaves and emergent locations of increased cultural mixing and conviviality such as parts of metropolitan London. That borders and borderscapes are linked to the maintenance and transformation of identity is evident in Brambilla’s work as she defines of borders and borderscapes as “paradoxical structures that are both markers of belonging and places of becoming.”

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11 Brambilla, “Exploring,” 24; emphasis original.
To understand belonging and becoming as characterizing the border-scape is central to my chapter since my focus is on the ways in which such locations are organized and represented through cultural texts. Borderlands and borderscapes provide conditions where identities are hybridized or in the process of becoming, and they are also sites where belonging is reconstructed, and often multiple rather than fixed, as theorists and critics such as Bhabha, Gloria Anzaldúa, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Zygmunt Bauman have suggested in different ways.

In a similar vein, Roger Bromley has argued that positionality in spaces of in-betweenness, “at the boundaries of nations, cultures, ethnicities, sexualities and genders,” generates new ways to understand belonging as well as new belongings, “new affiliations,” more generally. As a result, borders and border-crossings question conventional ways of thinking about the role and maintenance of national borders and reveal the possibility to generate new border-crossing alliances at transnational or transcultural level. In this sense, as I will show, Jamal Mahjoub’s novels construct music as an example of cultural mobility: its travels and hybridization are ways for Mahjoub to address the routes of global mobility, as well as the resultant encounters in diverse borderscapes located in spaces that go beyond cultural and national borders. Such a conception of music as intertwined with migration and mobility is based on Paul Gilroy’s work on the formation of the Black Atlantic where it is recognized that “flows, exchanges, and in-between elements,” rather than essentialist Eurocentric and Afrocentric views, generate expressions of culture such as music. For Simon Featherstone, a particular contribution by Gilroy that needs to be underlined is his understanding that music is a “migrant and hybrid performance rather than […] an expression of stable identities, national or personal.” As I will show, Mahjoub’s novels appear to present a somewhat similar understanding of music, but also attach it to the formation of black diasporic identity in Europe and neighbouring spaces.

Mahjoub’s Musical Sites of Hybridity

In approaching the representations of borderscapes in Mahjoub’s narratives, I will discuss their treatment of music as border-crossing mobility. In Mahjoub’s novels, such mobility is shown in the ways in which culture travels as a part of global mobility and is transformed through encounters that link individuals and formerly distant cultures with each other in unforeseeable ways. While Mahjoub’s works reference music on several occasions and in diverse ways, they give particular prominence to musical performances in jazz clubs, as both *Wings of Dust* and *The Drift Latitudes* centre such locations. What I will suggest is that these texts, as well as *Traveling with Djinns*, construct the borderscape as a location of cultural encounters that leads to hybridity and transnational alliances and generates new becomings and identities. In so doing they counter the maintenance of borders as exclusionary and promote an understanding of belonging as a transcultural phenomenon based on inclusion. In this process music is articulated with global mobility and seen as both transforming and transformative, promising new identifications and narratives of identity.

Wings of Dust: Intercultural Encounters at the Jazz Club

The idea of the jazz club as a space of intercultural encounters has been addressed by several critics. For instance, in Pekka Kilpeläinen’s analysis of James Baldwin’s *Just above My Head* the novel’s Paris club is defined both as “a contact zone” and “heterotopic space” allowing for utopian moments, new connections, and alternatives to racism and repression.¹⁵ As I will show, a somewhat similar view is frequently presented in the narratives of Jamal Mahjoub, most significantly in the novels *Wings of Dust* and *The Drift Latitudes* that address cultural hybridity and encounters through black music by constructing jazz clubs as spaces of borderscaping. In such locations, music has transformative powers.

*Wings of Dust* is a novel told by its aging exilic narrator Sharif, a former government official from Egypt who reflects on his life since his colonial 1920s childhood, through his Oxford years with other African students, and later cosmopolitan life in post-World War II Paris. In this novel jazz is

clearly located in a transatlantic framework and seen as a part of black internationalism, as a part of the culture of the Black Atlantic diaspora as outlined by Gilroy, and its function is to link people of African origin with each other. While Sharif is not a musician himself, he has a long relationship with Ruby Booth, the Contessa, an African American singer, also known as “The Rose of Harlem.”¹⁶ Black music, the novel tells, is a marker of freedom and black culture that diasporic blacks can identify with. The following passage shows how Sharif’s introduction to jazz promises him a new space for identity, a borderscape constructed through travel and the black tradition, attaching Sharif with the cultural heritage of the black diaspora:

The soft mellow sound of the Big Band music would fill the hall as the young men and women gyrated awkwardly in the tight suits and economically cut skirts that were themselves a sign of the times. They heard in that music the shades of something much darker and more rebellious, a raw and vivid brand of jazz that had yet to filter across the Atlantic but which played away in my head like a constant distraction, a reminder that there were other worlds than that in which I found myself. It played in the gramophone records that Shibshib and I had brought back from our trip. (WD 22)

The view that black music is performed in liminal and marginal sites capable of offering a sense of belonging for the diasporans is evident in the novel’s use of the jazz club as a site of intercultural encounters. The club that the novel repeatedly returns to is The Silver Moon Club in Liverpool visited by Sharif and his friends regularly. Run by Djage, “an old merchant sailor who had landed ashore here one day and decided to stay”, (WD 49) this club is a “legendary” place offering musical entertainment as well as opportunities for sexual satisfaction as it doubles as a brothel – it is here that Sharif loses his virginity with a prostitute named Alice.

The emphasis in the novel shows that the club is not racially exclusive but brings migrants from different backgrounds together; rather than restricted for promoting a black experience, it contributes to diasporas more generally. The customers of The Silver Moon tend to represent “the merchant marine profession. Sailors from all parts of the world – Africans, Chinese, Malay, with one or two white faces dotted around – Poles drinking energetically and laughing out loud” (WD 52). As is to be expected

¹⁶ Jamal Mahjoub, *Wings of Dust* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1994), 76. Further references to the novel are given parenthetically, preceded by WD.
from a club catering for marginalized customers, its musical offerings do not provide mere moments of flow and pleasure. The description emphasize the liminal and marginal character of musicians represented as disabled, nearly non-human characters:

A small band comprising a bass player with a wooden leg, a blind drummer and trombone player with his flies open were struggling through a Louis Armstrong number. The bass player doubled on piano, setting down the bass and then shuffling his stool across the space to the upright with a practised crab-like movement. (WD 49–50)

By emphasizing the link between black music and identity, the novel shows that the utopian glimpse offered by Europe for African American musicians is temporary. Rather than providing full belonging, it accepts them only temporarily, and primarily because they are musicians. The discourse of race dominates the continent in the same way it locates the black subjects in the United States at the time. To quote the novel:

People like Chune and Tyrone who played with the Contessa found a freedom here which they did not have at home in the United States. Here they had respect and were constantly in demand for their skills as musicians. People speak of equality and freedom as though they were qualities of the mind that once attained would never be lost. Yet history has shown that the raised consciousness that allows them is not the result of aspiration or evolution, but rather a spirit that has less to do with the development of the mind than with the generosity of the times, an allowance made by the coincidence of history and place. (WD 81)

In sum, while music offers the possibility of becoming and attaining a new identity, the process remains a contingent one, suggesting of the power of the forces of history that border and regulate the locations of individuals and groups.

Travelling with Djinns: Musical Border Crossings

While the role of sound and music is more limited in Mahjoub’s Travelling with Djinns, a road novel telling of its protagonist Yasin’s travels through Europe with his son, the novel constructs music as a border-crossing phenomenon that moves across cultural and other borders. In addition to providing several references to popular music, the role of music is particularly emphasized on two occasions, one dealing with the protagonist’s musings
over the signature music of BBC World Service where he works, the other reflecting on the ways in which diverse forms of music travel. While both passages imagine sonic borderscapes by showing how music and sound travel across borders, they approach the ideas of belonging and becoming differently, as I will show next.

The first episode dealing with the narrator’s childhood memories of listening to the signature tune, “military march,” and the tolling of the Big Ben opening each World Service broadcast is partially nostalgic, partially critical, and supports the narrator’s general identification as a person inhabiting the borderlands. He is both British and non-British, European and non-European, marked by racialization and an object of Othering. The explicit link with Englishness as an identity is represented in the narrative through Yasin’s mother living in the Sudan, whose position is in contrast with the narrator’s own position described as “belong[ing] to that nomad tribe, the great unwashed, those people born in the joins between continental shelves.” 17 For her mother, however, the ritualistic sound and music signify belonging, which the narrator finds uneasy as a mixed-raced person in contemporary Europe where his presence is frequently questioned. He reflects nostalgically onto his mother’s habit:

Could there be anything more English than that voice assuring us in the same sombre tones as one might announce the death of a beloved statesman or the imminence of nuclear apocalypse that “This … is London”? [...] There it was. All was well with the world, London was in its place. The flag was flying over the Houses of Parliament and there was that old bell chiming. Whitehall was intact on yet another glorious morning. (TD 250)

Here the border-crossing sound of the short-wave radio transmission is associated with stability and the British Empire, and it supports the narrator’s mother’s status as a member of the British diaspora in the Sudan. In so doing, the passage shows how sound and music, as well as the BBC news, are sonic elements that reveal the presence of the homeland in Yasin’s mother’s everyday life. As the novel puts it, it is through “the robust old Grundig that my mother used to lug around the house with her in the morning, from bedroom to bathroom to kitchen to living room, clinging to the old world for a precious fifteen minutes a day” (TD 249) that she has access to past and its values as well as with her memories of

17 Jamal Mahjoub, Travelling with Djinns (London: Chatto and Windus, 2003), 4. Further references to the novel are given parenthetically, preceded by TD.
the homeland and its safe ritual. Such belonging, however, is inaccessible in the present of the novel where Yasin is estranged from his siblings and his ex-wife as well as the values of European nation-states.

What is significant in the novel is the way in which it constructs music as a mobile form of culture, capable of crossing borders and generating new identities, which is seen on various occasions and in various settings. These include the following examples: the narrator’s Anglophile Arab father’s musical favourite is Paul Robeson’s “Old Man River,” one of his two LPs, the other LP being *The Immortal Speeches of Dr Martin Luther King Jr.* (*TD* 103), the self-identification of a Moroccan prostitute with the Swiss/Canadian popular singer Celine Dion (*TD* 121), and the two street Paris street musicians in the metro who first “play a very fast version of ‘Those Were the Days’” and then “go straight into something that sounds like gypsy music, even faster, trying to finish before the doors open in the next station” (*TD* 107). In the last example in particular, the link between music and global mobility is approached at the grassroots level, signifying not only the commodification and appropriation of popular tunes under the conditions of global capitalism but also showing how music is present in migration-induced cultural encounters in contemporary Europe.

A further passage reflecting on music in global contexts concerns the novel’s representation of the West African string instrument *kora* whose sounds the protagonist listens to while visiting friends in the South of France: “A gentle ripple of strings, trickling up and down the scales, filters out through the window to the terrace” (*TD* 265). His ex-lover’s partner, Lucien, has set up a system of loudspeakers whose location in the different parts of his house comes to resemble the way in which music travels, this is, how it enters different cultures and reaches different audiences, often unexpectedly. Lucien, a nomadic artist with a history of travel, is described as someone who – like the process of globalization – puts the process “in motion” and generates surprising cultural encounters as seen in Yasin’s response where music is likened to souvenirs and objects from other cultures:

sets the music in motion from some undisclosed location, inside his studio, or upstairs in their bedroom perhaps, and the house, digitally wired, comes alive. Some days it is Stravinsky, others Verdi’s *Aïda*, gnawa music, Indonesian gamelan or the Rolling Stones’ *Exile on Main Street* album. This kora is the music he brought back with him from his last trip. The house is filled with curious objects, mementoes from his travels. (*TD* 265)
In this passage, the idea of travel and mobility as characterizing the contemporary global condition is addressed through intertextual references. The composers and styles referred to support the novel’s idea of music being formed out of the mobility of cultures as they are linked with different experiences of global mobility. First, they deal with exile as seen in the references to Igor Stravinsky’s Swiss period and the Rolling Stones album title, and second, they address colonialism and cultural contacts as Giuseppe Verdi’s opera *Aïda* (1871) was set in Egypt and commissioned by the Khedive of Egypt. Third, the references foreground cultural hybridity: while Islamic *gnawa* music is a travelling music as it combines Nigerian *hausa* music with Arab sounds and is currently performed in Morocco by displaced black West Africans, Indonesian *gamelan*, however, has a more local history but one that is not without signs of cross-cultural interaction since Dutch march music has been played by gamelan instruments since the eighteenth century, and experiments with fusing gamelan and western music styles have been conducted in recent decades. Similarly, the history of the *kora* is a transnational and hybrid one: while the instrument is today associated with the Mandingo *griots* in West Africa, it has been common throughout the Sudanic belt, a linguistic-cultural area that extends from the West to Ethiopia.

The novel takes its border-crossings further, showing their presence in contemporary Europe where travelling music forms the soundscape of the narrator’s stay with his friends, at one level linking him with his roots and, at another transforming the French house into a sonic borderscape where different musics come together and generate moments of becoming. In other words, references to music in the novel underline the fact that music travels and transforms cultures, constructing both moments of belonging and becoming, and in so doing shows how the border between cultures and nations is not fixed but fluid and changing. In this sense Mahjoub’s understanding of music as a migrant and border-crossing form of culture

follows the view presented by Gilroy, suggesting that identities are similarly produced in spaces in-between cultures.

The Drift Latitudes and the Sonic Borderscape

In his later novel *The Drift Latitudes* Mahjoub addresses the role of music further by developing the idea the (jazz) club in the context of cultural encounters. It shows that the club is a borderscape, a site of cultural transformations, becomings, that extend beyond the construction of blackness and black identity. Set partially in Liverpool, the novel presents the city as a multicultural urban space where people of different origins have come together: “There were Irish names, English, Jewish, West Indian, African, Caribbean, Hindus, Bengalis, Sikhs. People spoke of ‘back home’ as though it were accepted that part of everyone belonged elsewhere.” This characterization of Liverpool as a form of diaspora space is developed by representing it as a sonic borderscape – a borderscape where music is a central identity-constructing element – through the story of aging Miranda, the mother of the novel’s mixed-race protagonist Jade, an architect, whose mission becomes to excavate the silenced history of her migrant family. Upon clearing her mother’s attic, Jade enters the musical past of her family as well as that of the black diaspora:

Inside was a handful of large black discs inserted within sleeves of waxed brown paper. Sliding one of these out onto the palm of her hand a ray of light strafed the shiny grooved surface. Old 78s. On the label she read the title: “I thought I heard Buddy Bolden Say” – Sidney Bechet, His Master’s Voice, 1940. The familiar little logo of the dog looking into the phonograph horn. She slid it carefully back into place and picked out another. A red label this time: Charlie Parker. Other records were by Duke Ellington, The Hot Sevens, Benny Goodman. Jade slid the fastenings into place. Maya and her mother were calling her to come in for lunch. As she turned to leave, she hesitated a mo-

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23 Jamal Mahjoub, *The Drift Latitudes* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2006), 6. Further references to the novel are given parenthetically, preceded by DL.
ment and the pushed the case over to the door with her foot, ready to take with her. (DL 64)

Through this decision to enter the black music tradition, signified in her picking up the case and carrying it away with her, Jade enters the sonic borderscape that leaves to her identity reconstruction. The role of music in identity transformations, or becomings, is more general in the novel and shown through several other characters. Not only did Jade’s German father Ernst Frager learn of jazz in Weimar Germany, but when the Nubian club owner Ismail Bilal is reported to hear jazz in New York for the first time he enters the culture of the black diaspora and feels the music in his body: “His heart beat in his throat. Men like him playing. Africans, and this was their music” (DL 142).

Music is also at the core of Jade’s mother’s, Miranda’s, life. Ever since starting to sing in Ismail Bilal’s Liverpool jazz club The Blue Nile at the age of 16 in the late 1950s, Miranda has entered a music-induced space where different musical trends are present and meet with each other. The collision of cultures exemplifies the work of the sonic borderscape and is described as “a form of bewitchment, a kind of spell […], it was a confluence of dreams” (DL 80), a phrase resembling the uncanny and uncanny moment that Bhabha has associated with the process of hybridization.24 As Mahjoub writes, the musical styles and groups construct a transnational borderscape on the Liverpool waterfront:

The music of a cacophony of places and styles from every corner of the plane. Most of the time it was just plain old Dixieland waterfront jazz. Out-of-tune four-piece combos of machine fitters and stevedores, off-duty tug pilots who could manage a passable imitation of New Orleans syncopation. Those were the regulars. On other nights there was a steady stream of musicians passing through, bringing with them mournful songs from other ports. One night it might be Portuguese fa-do, the next night it would be a tango trio from Buenos Aires, or a bouzouki troupe from Piraeus; an Icelandic ragtime pianist; a nineteen-piece orchestra complete with tuba, all the way from Turku; Brazilian crooners nobody could understand until they started moving their hips; once even a trio of mournful zither players from the Black Sea. (DL 81)

24 Bhabha, Location, 9–10.
In this sonic borderscape black music, and jazz in particular, plays a significant role as it “stops the universe from whirling apart, is what pushes the stars into pretty shapes in the sky. It makes all the notes hang together, hooks them in and sets them jangling in harmony” (DL 137). Music, in other words, plays a role in cultural encounters, organizing and reconstructing identity, and as in the previous novel Wings of Dust, it brings people of different cultural backgrounds to shared spaces and crosses cultural and racial borders.

The novel also voices another concern peculiar to the borderscape that deals with cultural transformation as a result of the interaction in this space. The cultural and musical border crossings, described as a “profusion of musical innovations” (DL 81), construct sonic spaces that combine unexpected elements and styles with each other: “Django Reinhardt meets Trini Lopez. Cajun crosses Texas honkytonk. Jamaican ska cut up by a soaring Ornette Coleman aspirant playing a kettle like a muted trumpet” (DL 81). The passage underlines how in this club space, a “zone [...] of varied and differentiated encounters,”25 conventional musical and other borders are dissolved, and new configurations emerge. What this means that the club takes of the role of a borderscape where intercultural encounters lead to the formation of new mixed identities that problematize the fixed narratives telling of the purity of national cultures. The borderscape, as Brambilla has suggested, is “[a] place [...] of becoming.”26 Through the narrative of the sonic borderscape and its effects on those who have entered it, the novel emphasizes the transformation where the liminal is centred and the marginalized is empowered: “The music was the magic that dispelled cobwebs, chipped classes, burn marks in the linoleum – in here everyone looked good. Once the music began to flow you could be anything or anyone you wanted to be” (DL 82). In other words, this is both a space of belonging where everyone is accepted, and a space of becoming that transforms all participants as well as mixes musical genres from various cultures. The process of debordering is clearly present in several ways.

Conclusion: The Potential of the Sonic Borderscapes

The readings of the role of music in the three novels by Mahjoub show that their sonic borderscapes are capable of critiquing the dominant and
producing new and hybrid musical practices and forms, as well as of resisting fixed identities by insisting on the mobile and travelling nature of music. This is shown slightly differently in each novel. First, *Wings of Dust* foregrounds the jazz club as a site of generating a distinct black identity through music, in a space that is located in the marginalized extended borderscape, a process that is also explored in *The Drift Latitudes* and its representation of the Liverpool jazz club. *Travelling with Djinns*, however, uses an explicitly Gilroyan strategy as it directly understands music as a mobile and hybrid cultural product that crosses borders and gains new meanings through such encounters. Such an understanding is also present in *The Drift Latitudes* where the port of Liverpool emerges as a borderscape, as a site of becoming, where new musics and hybridities emerge, together with new identities.

By using music and musical encounters as a narrative strategy, Mahjoub shows how much cultures are formed by each other, both historically and today, and that national and cultural borders are unable to prevent the border-crossing mobility of music.

**Bibliography**


Chapter 3
Postcritical Erotic Intimacy: Engaging with Oral Sex in Caribbean Literature
– Elina Valovirta

Introduction

Few critics would venture to claim that sexuality in the Caribbean is unproblematic or straightforward. In fact, it has become commonplace to reiterate, how ambivalent, problematic, or contradictory Caribbean sexualities are. Part and parcel of this axiom is the conceptualization of sex and sexuality in polarized terms; it is either frank or prude, shameful or casual, hypersexual or asexual. Research on Caribbean women’s sexualities tends to vacillate between topics like sexual violence and shame to sexual openness and eroticism. This tendency to treat sexuality in polarized

terms is understandable, as the legacy of colonialism in the past and global sex tourism in the present continue to leave their trace on sexuality and sexual relations as contradictory and almost always a source of trouble. The axiom of Caribbean sexuality as inherently problematic, it nevertheless must be said, is the most commonplace way to describe sex and sexuality in the region.

Despite – or because of – the abundance of problems characterizing sex and sexuality, the literary tradition of Anglophone Caribbean women’s writing has a strong emancipatory drive, and – with overwhelming force – focuses on processes of healing and recuperation. They are, as Gay Wilentz famously termed, “healing narratives.” This tendency, which can be dubbed reparative, makes the tradition especially suitable for a postcritical reading, which in Rita Felski’s terms rejects “skepticism as dogma,” which has underlined critical fields of study such as feminist and queer studies from their inception. Instead of resorting to a hermeneutics of suspicion, a postcritical reading finds affectivity its dominant mode of inquiry while foregoing unnecessary skepticism. Affectivity, or affects, in this context refer to the abundance of “sexual feelings” in Caribbean women’s writing, but also in the act of reading. The affectivity of reading in the work of feminist literary theorists like Lynne Pearce and Felski means that we take emotions, feelings and other embodied responses in the reading event seriously. Having done so for the past twenty years, feminists theorizing affect see it as inextricably linked to processes of meaning production. This means that the patriarchal hegemony of pure “thought” becomes undone and we see that the affective bears upon the cognitive, and vice versa. When we “read with feeling,” we also mobilize affects for change and ac-

8 Valovirta, Sexual.
9 Lynne Pearce, Feminism and the Politics of Reading (London: Arnold, 1997); Felski, Limits.
11 Felski, Limits, 25.
knowledge their potential for affirmative, not predominantly skeptic, ways of knowing. This “more affirmative or engaged aesthetic response” in Felski bears the name postcritical and is in the centre of this scrutiny of Caribbean sexual feelings.13

The “lure of the postcritical” is especially lucrative in reading Caribbean women’s writing,14 as the inherently reparative nature of writing by authors such as Erna Brodber, Edwidge Danticat, and Jamaica Kincaid, to name but a few, suggests that processes of identity-formation and liberation are possible with more focus on a reparative impulse such as men and women’s co-operation, finding one’s identity through ancestry, and gynocentric rituals of healing from sexual, mental and physical violence. Processes of sexual emancipation, particularly from shame and violence, are especially prominent and – shifting focus from identity to acts and relations – the question here arises, what types of sexual activity are deemed fit for these processes? It is evident that some forms of sexualities and sexual acts are more suitable for the kind of reparative impulses fuelling Caribbean women’s impressive literary tradition. So, while it is evident that Caribbean literature has a thoroughly affective base, only certain sexual acts seem to be permitted to express its various kinds of sexual feelings and desires. One such tabooed sexual act is oral sex, which has hitherto been largely absent as liberating or positive in Caribbean women’s literary representations, until the recent anthology, Caribbean Erotic, edited by Opal Palmer Adisa and Donna Weir–Soley, which will be the focus of this chapter.

Oral sex (i.e. cunnilingus, fellatio, analingus or any other type of erotic oral stimulus to the body’s erogenous zones) is, according to sex reports like Kinsey, Hite and National Health, an ordinary part of the average Westerner’s sexual repertoire today.15 On the other hand, it is a penal

13 Felski, Limits, 151.
taboo in some environments across the globe, and while technically legal in the Caribbean, oral sex appears to be a very precarious subject in its cultural production including fiction and poetry. To wit; in *Caribbean Erotic*, Imani M. Tafari–Ama’s survey of sexual practices clarifies, how “penile penetration of the vagina is perceived as the only normal way to have sex,” and oral sex is disapproved of and a taboo. Importantly, however, she reveals an observable discrepancy (delicately enclosed in a footnote): “However, when I probed into privately guarded sentiments, I discovered that these practices [of oral sex] were very much part of what both men and women desired.” Heterosexual penis-in-vagina sex thus arises as the primary definition for sexual acts in the region, and while oral sex can be, in light of statistics, seen as ordinary in the US and the West, it becomes exotic and the other in the context of Caribbean problem sexuality.

Sex as a problem, in other words, is normal, but oral sex is not. The way *Caribbean Erotic* counters this taboo is by representing oral sex through positive affect; it is seen as liberating, mutually enjoyable, and as elaborated further below, it is everywhere in the collection. Oral sex and desire for it, in other words, are on their way of becoming – not tragic, oppressive or exotic – but in fact the new normal in the Caribbean context. The proliferation of this tabooed sexual act in the form of literary fiction and poetry, then, becomes central for questions of sexual liberation and identity-formation.

Feminist and queer studies of sexuality traditionally emphasize the centrality of identities, not just sexual acts, as defining sexuality – as we know, one may easily engage in same-sex sexual behaviour but identify as straight – but in this instance, practices, behaviours and act(ion)s arise as primarily significant. Politics of sex(uality) as an act lives beside the politics of identity in that erotic intimacy shapes us. Identity then becomes understood in light of different types of acts, where literature serves an important function in bringing to light “certain silenced and liminal practices, experiences and relationships.” Erotic intimacy in the form of oral sex envi-

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17 Tafari–Ama, “Norms,” 331.
18 Tafari–Ama, 338.
sioned in terms of positive affect, in other words, is important for questions of identity while not staying reduced to questions of being or doing. Lauren Berlant has envisioned intimacy as a type of economical communication: “To intimate is to communicate with the sparest of signs and gestures,” and this primarily affective way of communicating may offer us a way to rethink politically hegemonic desires. She also writes, that “to rethink intimacy is to appraise how we have been and how we live and how we might imagine lives that make more sense than the ones so many are living.” In doing so, in the context of Caribbean literature and erotic oral intimacy, we might bring the private (sex act) to the public (politics of sexuality), and thus effect change in existing gender relations.

The argument put forth here is based on a reading of the texts highlighting orality and oral sex in *Caribbean Erotic* and asserts that ways of performing sexual intimacy in the Caribbean are deeply evocative of a changing attitude towards the more open and explicit end of the spectrum in the polarized continuum of Caribbean sexuality. In 2006, for example, Alison Donnell made the point that the covert voicing of sexuality in literature by Caribbean authors denotes a refusal “to trade in (or off) the vocabulary and identity politics” of the West, and these euphemized expressions of sexuality are a way to further sexual politics. In *Caribbean Erotic*, veiled and metaphorized expressions of sexuality also abound, but they are supplemented by explicit expressions of oral sex presented through positive affect. Taking on this proliferation of oral sex as explicit and/or enjoyable, this chapter suggests that *Caribbean Erotic* serves as a tipping point in the changing discourse of oral sex in Caribbean cultural production.

This discourse of oral sex and positive affect connects with another major paradigm of intimacy in Caribbean literature, and that is the desire to change attitudes regarding Caribbean gender relations, particularly manhood and men’s relationship to women. There is a persistent stereotype of Afro–Caribbean men – and Jamaican men in particular – as either abusive

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24 One must here make the distinction between erotic literature as erotica and erotic literature as an expression of silenced sexualities: the former is written with the express intention of titillating readers and profiting from that need, whereas the latter has a different objective (if not necessarily a different reception), to create a new sexual expression through the literary arts.
or absent in fiction by women. Recent Caribbean women’s writing displays a striking need to reimagine Caribbean masculinity as caring, healing, and understanding.\textsuperscript{25} A similar type of idealized intimacy arises from the depictions of oral sex between men and women (and, to a lesser extent, between men) in the collection. As such, they speak of a similar need to reconcile manhood as giving and catering as opposed to aloof and abusive. Besides identifying this new paradigm of mutually enjoyable oral sex in the sexual repertoire of Caribbean fictional characters gay and straight, there is a further objective put forth by this chapter regarding the ways of interpreting such novel vistas for erotic intimacy. What, if anything, does this changing paradigm mean for the ways in which we read and interpret Caribbean literary sexualities?\textsuperscript{26}

A Felskian postcritical reading resonates, as mentioned, with the emancipatory drive in Caribbean writing, striving for healing, growth and liberation despite the dominant discourse of paradoxical sexuality. \textit{Caribbean Erotic} is no exception, in that it presents oral sex in both explicit and metaphorized terms – but with the difference to the previous secrecy in its absence of shame, the affect of sexuality and identity.\textsuperscript{26} Shame as an affect operates through exposure of the self’s transgression, for example,\textsuperscript{27} and as such parallels with the overwhelming force with which feminist literary criticism has invested in the power of \textit{exposing} mechanisms of oppression. This practice of paranoid reading as a dominant mode of inquiry, according to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, finds its counterpart in the more affective way of reparative reading, open to surprises and other affective responses in the act of interpretation. Postcritically speaking, the different ways of representing oral sex and pleasure denote an open-minded curiosity to explore something in surprising ways akin to a reparative impulse the way Sedgwick envisioned it.

Felski’s postcritical reading, in turn, is a kind of reparative reading 2.0; it shifts focus from the cynical power of criticizing, exposing and demystifying – modes of doing traditionally characterizing feminist literary criticism – to a more affective stance open to affects like love, affection, or intimacy. In a time of trouble, postcritical reading tries to find ways more explicitly than reparative reading “to do better justice to what literature does

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{27} Ahmed, \textit{Cultural}, 103.
\end{flushleft}
Postcritical Erotic Intimacy: Engaging with Oral Sex in Caribbean Literature

and why such doing matters.”28 Making something possible through representation and interpretation confers our need to envision the historically precarious gender relations in the Caribbean differently. In the case of literature, the act of reading is the place where new meanings are generated as we engage with texts in an affective manner. As Felski notes, “affective engagement is the very means by which literary works are able to reach, reorient, and even reconfigure their readers.”29 In an effort to fulfil Felski’s dogma idea of orienting ourselves through critique in affective terms, the chapter first explicates what Caribbean desires might entail in the region in general and in the collection in particular. The discussion then moves on to tackle the ways in which oral sex becomes legitimized as a taboo sexual practice in a very explicit – in-your-face – manner in the collection. From explicitness we move to various affective expressions of oral sex, such as epistemic uncertainty and healing men, and finally, move on, in the final part, to discuss how to negotiate these acts of oral sex and orality in postcritical terms and what might be at stake in that endeavour.

Caribbean Desires

The Caribbean in its largest sense is, historically speaking, an object of desire. Those desires have been marked by violence and exploitation in the form of colonialist desires for raw material (sugar, coffee), land conquest, landscape (tourism), and – most importantly – people (including the breeding of new slave population by rape).30 Remnants of those desires are at the root of Caribbean tourist economy and sex tourism.31 It is no wonder, therefore, that “sex is very contradictory in the Caribbean,” as Carole

28 Felski, Limits, 13.
29 Felski, 177.
Boyce Davies remarks in her essay in *Caribbean Erotic*. Yet, the mode of feminist inquiry into sex and gender relations (particularly between men and women) seems to be conciliatory, possibly thanks to men and women’s relative equity as slaves but also thanks to complementary gender formations. Despite the history of violent desires colonializing the Caribbean, the reparative drive has resulted in a surge of studies on sexuality and gender in Caribbean literature in the past two decades. For example, María Alonso Alonso list an impressive number of titles on the subject in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*’s 2014 and 2015 bibliographies on scholarship on Caribbean literature. Alonso Alonso dubs 2014 “a truly prolific year for both creative and academic Caribbean writing,” and many of the titles in both bibliographies clearly highlight themes of sexuality and gender.

Despite this surge of interest in sexuality, one can see why some of the pioneering Anglophone Caribbean authors eschewed sexuality in their work, as it befell particularly on Caribbean women to act as guardians of morality on behalf of others, which understandably caused sex and sexuality to be a source of reservations, reticence, and contradictory feelings for.

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36 For example, Bartosz Wojcik makes the point regarding Jean Binta Breeze, the Jamaican poet, that migration to the UK was essential for her beginning to address questions of sexuality in her poetry: Bartosz Wojcik, *Afro–Caribbean Poetry in English: Cultural Traditions (1970s–2000s)*, 226. Transatlantic Studies in British and North American Culture. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2015. Incidentally, the second-wave British feminist influence may also be seen as a precursor of *Caribbean Erotic*, as its manifestative style is reminiscent of the anthology, *One Foot on the Mountain*, from 1979, which likewise features dozens of contributions by poets on female sexuality and corporeality. (This connection was generously brought to my attention by Lynne Pearce, whom I would like to thank for continued advice.)
women. We may trace the origin of oral sex as a taboo into a similar discourse of (moral) hygiene, where Victorian ideals of cleanliness coded black bodies as dirty, and their functions as morally reprehensible. Much of contemporary generation of Caribbean women writers present sex and sexuality as marked by violence and negative affect (such as in the work of Danticat) despite the strong emancipatory drive to shed those burdens.

Focusing on oral sex exclusively through positive affect, Caribbean Erotic highlights contributions by sixty-three individual authors (including its editors) hailing from the Caribbean in the largest international sense. They write “from and about” the islands, as Helen Scott has usefully characterized how spread out Caribbean writing is. The authors here hail from places as diverse as the Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti, and Jamaica. The non-resident writers living in the United States and Canada, for example, all have ties to various islands and languages, writing mostly in English (although there is a French and Spanish component to the collection, too). The editors, Adisa and Weir–Soley, are of Jamaican origin, and are also both creative writers and critics. Household names in Caribbean women’s writing and its criticism such as Audre Lorde, Davies, and Danticat are also featured in the anthology. Thematically, the writers manifest, instead of the deep conservatism, contradictions, and reticence related to sexuality in the Caribbean, the very erotic and sexually charged orientation of Caribbean cultural life and expression. As Weir–Soley writes in her introduction, there is a discrepancy between talk and behaviour, between values and acts related to sex in the region. The anthology is thus a conscious effort to provide a “safe space” for authors to probe the subject within a literary context that not only welcomes, but applauds their preoccupation with the Caribbean erotic.

40 Weir–Soley here echoes Myriam Chancy’s 1997 book Searching for Safe Spaces: Afro Caribbean Women Writers in Exile, thereby consciously linking writing and/as political refuge. Furthermore, a word on the publisher of Caribbean Erotic is in order to acknowledge how the publishing industry may offer safe spaces for those authors perhaps marginalized in and by it. The anthology’s publisher, Peepal Tree Press, located in Leeds, UK, promotes independent and experimental Caribbean and Black British writing.
Thanks to the safe space of literature, oral sex as a taboo sexual practice is broken and celebrated at the same time in the collection. Only five poets’ contributions to the anthology contain no oral dimension explicit or implicit in their poems, whereas twenty-six of the forty-two poets have chosen to discuss oral sex more or less explicitly in their poems. Most of these are women depicting consensual heterosexual sex, and a small minority depict non-heterosexual sex acts. Even if some writers are less frank, they nevertheless highlight orality as a feature of the erotic by referring to the lips and mouth (Nancy Morejón), or by denoting orality with expressions like “lapping” and “swallowing” (teenah edan). Furthermore, they may refer to the lips, tongue, or licking (Marion Bethel, Eintou Pearl Springer, and Christine Yvette Lewis, respectively).\(^{41}\) The explicit articulations of oral sex are the most revolutionary in their openness, and shall be dealt with in the following, while the ones featuring less explicit oral intimacies are saved for another discussion.

Explicit Explorations

It is perhaps unsurprising that the collection’s editors are both eager promoters of a diversity of sexual acts as necessary for depicting “the Caribbean erotic” in its full manifestations. Both Adisa and Weir–Soley feature their poetry and fiction in the collection, and likewise, both feature explicit oral sex in their texts – Adisa in her poetry and Weir–Soley in her short story.\(^{42}\) Adisa’s four poems all feature an explicitly oral dimension. For example, in the five-stanza free verse poem entitled “What I Want,” the speaker urges her lover to “let your tongue/tease my thighs apart/turn

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\(^{43}\) Adisa, “What,” 44.
me gentle/placing your head/in my calabash.”44 The poem’s second stanza ends with the invitation to “indulge as much as you like,” while the last stanza asks the lover to advance upwards and “suck honey from my nipples” and proceed to penetration. Oral sex, it is intimated, is to be expected of foreplay. In “Nothing but Love,”45 in turn, the speaker feels “your tongue/unfurling my petals,” utilizing the oft-seen metaphor of a flower blossom as shorthand for the vagina and its petals for inner and outer labia. The poem “A Smile on My Face” has the speaker’s lover exclaim, that “your toes taste like/chocolate popsicles/you said/sucking each one,”46 while elsewhere in the poem when the lovers kiss, the poem’s speaker runs “my tongue/over your lips”47 and he circles “my wrists with your tongue.”48 Like in her 1997 novel, It Begins with Tears, Adisa is here again invested in highlighting orality as central to sex and sexual pleasure.49

In the fiction section forming another part of the anthology’s creative writing content, references to oral sex are by and large less explicit, but also some texts depicting oral eroticism in this genre do exist. Weir–Soley’s short story “Purple Blindness” features the long-term relationship between a Jamaican man, Jarrett, and his African-American girlfriend, Jasmine, in the San Francisco Bay Area. The story itself is focused on domestic issues like commitment, parenting, and working-life with children besides the erotic, but the story’s ending sees the couple making love, when Jarrett gives Jasmine oral sex, resulting in her orgasm. During the oral sex, Jasmine’s thoughts wander from visits to Jarrett’s home village in Jamaica to the purple juice of the star-apples growing there, resulting in the same-coloured energy as her orgasm builds. As he gives her oral pleasure, Jasmine begins to come to terms with Jarrett’s full commitment to her as a loving-co-dependent but rather, “loving me without needing me.”50 Oral sex, in other words, serves as a moment of self-realization and a new understanding of self-other relations, where one’s belonging in a relationship is not reduced to a merging of subjectivity but rather, existence of two full individuals choosing to be together.

44 The calabash is multi-functional in Caribbean folk culture; the dried gourd-like fruit can be used in cooking, as a container or even as an instrument, Valovirta, Sexual, 42.
45 Adisa, “Nothing,” 40.
47 Adisa, 42.
48 Adisa, 43.
50 Weir–Soley, “Purple,” 266.
Similarly, in Chandis’s erotic short story “Heat Wave,” a sexually liberated woman in her late twenties returns to Jamaica and reconnects with Tai, a childhood friend of hers from Kingston. An accomplished software specialist, Tai is the opposite of the myth of Jamaican men as “apathetic weed-smokers or gun-toting yardies,” making him an attractive prospective partner for the professional Dezirae. The two begin a relationship and their sex scenes are described in detail, like in the scene where she straddles above his mouth and receives oral sex while feeling the “voltage that passed from his knowing tongue to my cunt.” In the next sentence, she reciprocates by burying “my face in his groin.” Furthermore, the two kiss post-oral sex savouring each other’s tastes, like in the passage where he runs “his fingers through my juices and licked them clean,” which thrills her. A sexually generous man is here raised as a pinnacle of ideal Jamaican manhood, and the way he embraces her bodily fluids after their love-making flatters her (and the reader) by showing his full acceptance of her corporeality.

A hero like Chandis’s Tai appears in Afua Cooper’s poem, “Man of Fire,” whose speaker fondly reminisces how the lover covered “my belly with midnight kisses/feasted from my honeypot/then rode me on the night wind/Man of fire.” A new, sexually generous and attentive type of manhood or model for masculinity emerges from these textual renditions of sexual intimacy: contrary to the idea of sexual prowess determined only by the size of one’s “manhood” or stamina (not to mention physically precarious sexual acts like daggering), the texts imagine ideal manhood as gentle, caring, and unafraid of oral intimacy. The speaker in Jacqueline Johnson’s poem “Her One True Self” discusses a lover, whose ring finger’s ring mark she chooses to ignore, and instead points to “my second mouth/where you loose your tongue,” evoking a hedonistic attitude not concerned with institutions or (what in the Caribbean are often seen as) middle-class aspirations like marriage. As evidenced by the speaker’s lack of concern for propriety, the collection’s texts do away with dogmatic views on what kinds of relationships are appropriate for oral sex and positive affect. Erotic oral intimacy is then about the moment of its occurrence, which is both erotic and affective at the same time. Political implications may follow, but the

52 Chandis, 186.
53 Chandis, 187.
54 Chandis, 187.
55 Cooper, “Man,” 141.
56 Johnson, “Her,” 36.
moment of mutual desire causes one to question reality and mix metaphors, as will be discussed next in a continuing exploration of affective oral sex.

Mind Blowing: Mixed Metaphors and Heroic Men

Epistemic uncertainty brought on by the sensations associated with oral sex is another way in which the collection’s literary expressions highlight the affective importance of oral erotic intimacy. One example in this context professes matter over mind, when in Craig Smith’s poem the speaker loses his ability to think while receiving oral sex. Tackling the topic of oral sex head on, he writes in “Mind Blowing,” how “Love is in the mind/But when you givin’ me head/I cannot think straight.”57 The one-liner separated into three poetic lines makes its case candidly: sexual pleasure eschews rational subjectivity. A similar sense-making effort escapes the speaker in Obediah Michael Smith’s “Chapel Steele,” where the poem’s speaker speaks in Biblical terms to describe oral lovemaking. The erotic landscape of a lover’s anatomy is depicted in the following:

I’ve had my head between her legs,  
where her thighs meet  
bushy place to ramble wild,  
berries growing by the spring I make flow  
in this I wash my face to wake myself  
face in the Bible she opens to let me read  
to convert me to true love, to the truth of love,  
to let me taste the fruit of love.58

Oral sex emerges in this instance as exploratory and revelatory, when Biblical and fruit metaphors allude to its forbidden yet spiritual nature.

Another exploratory quest is to be detected in the use of varied metaphors in Smith’s poem, “On Adelaide Beach,” where the speaker muses on “peering into a cave, so pink, so small, so new.”59 The beachside sex act is likened to cave-spelunking, and in the next lines the speaker, as if thoroughly confused, shifts into animal imagery in portraying the vista ahead: “like a kitten upon its side, yawning/so wide I could see into its deli-

57 Smith, “Mind,” 60.
58 Smith, “Chapels,” 82.
cate throat/on my belly, my head between your thighs.” Spatial and animalistic analogies invite connections to the natural world, which allows for sexual activity to be expressed more freely. Furthermore, metaphors specific to the Caribbean flora and fauna locate sex in a particular geographical and botanical context. Metaphor as “an indispensable tool of thought” thus yokes the sexual body with the landscape, something customarily associated with Caribbean women’s poetry. However, as Denise deCaires Narain argues, the conflation of woman/land typical of Caribbean women’s poetry (such as Louise Bennett, Grace Nichols or Lorna Goodison) becomes much more problematized in the work of lesbian authors, like Dionne Brand, showing how only certain types of sexualities seem to be articulable through Caribbean soil while others are only able to find a home in the metropolis.

Thankfully, in the recent years, there have been explicit attempts to remedy the situation where non-heterosexual sexual bodies are illicit in the islands. Following in the footsteps of Thomas Glave’s edited collection, *Our Caribbean* (2008), Adisa and Weir–Soley’s anthology likewise features non-heterosexual writers’ work in an effort to showcase Caribbean sexuality in full. The collection does not shy away from explicit explorations of oral sex in this respect, either. Interestingly, Colin Robinson’s “Loosening My Tongue” utilizes again the power of metaphor to convey sexual meanings in the ambivalent but explicit poem about an older government employee discussing policy proposals and political issues with a younger colleague, which places “sex in my mouth again.” The poem amalgamates the theme of oral sex with the poem itself, when it mentions “a metaphor I can swallow whole,” when he is thinking about how

a gasping warm white
stanzas flows between my legs
into a purposeful brown

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60 Felski, *Limits*, 52.
man
hole
envelopes my tongue.64

The poem’s meaning becomes two-fold in the way it is split into lines, its innuendo made explicit in a reading tracing the erotic: we could either read the poem as a white governing-class man dreaming of a brown-skinned younger man – or as semen trickling after analingus-induced orgasm. The poem ends with an observation confirming this conjunction: “young/man you/are a/metaphor on the tip of my tongue/making my poems come/whole again.”65 Metaphor personified in the young man blurs the boundary between explicit and implicit, showcasing how poetry calls into question rigid hierarchies between what can and cannot be articulated. Another oral dimension is provided by the poem “Lovers-in-waiting” by the same author, dedicated “for Tim.” The dedication steers the poem’s reading as being about sexual longing for a particular man, whose body is waiting “for my tongue and fingers/and eyes/to move down and up and down and all around you,”66 creating a scene of intimacy not shying away from playing with the notion of going down as shorthand for oral sex.

In discussing oral sex, the poems seem to also highlight a reparative impulse by gently encouraging the prospective partner to explore possibilities they may not have approached before. For example, in Helen Klonaris’s poem, “Woman, Come,” a female speaker promises her female lover to be pleased in ways she may have yet to experience. The poem culminates in the words “tongue/finding/her way/in the dark,”67 again suggesting an oral form of pleasure to be derived from an erotic encounter. Sajoya’s “Ital Stew” is likewise almost overtly pedagogic in gently urging her lover to not feel embarrassed in inviting him to “know that you are blessed!/For when you taste me/when you embrace me/when you kiss/my clitoris/the essence of yin/replenishes within.”68 The mention of yin evokes the traditional idea of Caribbean gender relations as complementary, where the existence of one sex precludes the other, but the way the poem makes oral sex a spiritual practice is evocative yet again of the “power of the erotic” to nourish

64 Robinson, 112.
65 Robinson, 113.
oneself. The speaker asks the lover to run his tongue “inside my thighs” rhyming with “moans and sighs,” clearly signalling enjoyment from the treatment. The poem discussing oral sex is particularly provocative in this context, as the religion is generally speaking prohibitive of the female body and its secretions. The radical breaking of a religious taboo is reinforced by the poem’s title, Ital Stew, which is a reference to Rastafarian religion and diet, which avoids meat and salt, while the poem itself is an ode to the male bodily form by praising the lover’s muscular physique; legs, chest, biceps and other body parts – almost like a piece of meat.

The sense of taste, foods and eating are furthermore yoked in Rosamond King’s poem “Black Girls Taste Like” when she compares their taste to “Those hard bits of brown/sugar you roll with/your tongue” and continues with “Black girls taste like/those hard bits of sugar/and something deep fried.” King deliberately makes reference to two significant food items in describing Black female bodies: sugar as the historical cornerstone of plantation slavery and deep fried dishes as the cornerstone of Black culinary traditions. The female body as sugary sweet emerges also in Omi J. Maya Taylor–Holmes’ “Oral Fixation,” where the speaker makes the difference between candy that wants to be “sucked and tasted” by anyone and her own skin, which recognizes her preferred lover’s lips “when it’s kissed.”

Here the sense of taste guides oral pleasure, and aims to disabuse the reader of the oft-heard misogynist and racist notion of the female body as pungent, unhygienic or foul-tasting. In the poems not dealing with oral sex as such but featuring some form of oral pleasure, the mouth, tongue and sense of taste are also essential, incorporating an oral dimension to love-making. Sandra García Rivera’s longing poem, “That Kiss,” makes its desire clear in stating “I want a kiss…I want a deep-in-the-throat, make-me-wanna-holler, make-out kiss/tongue-rolling, gliding across my lips, your teeth/tongue kiss.” In a large number of cases, the mouth, eating, and

taste arise as central to love-making, and ways of expressing oral pleasure in this context.

Central characteristics arising as significant in these explicit expressions include heroic men willingly engaging in oral sex with their (female) lovers, epistemically confused expressions of oral sex mixing metaphors and eluding rational sense-making, tentatively exploring new territories like same-sex oral desires, gentle coaxing as well as yoking oral sex with food, fruit and other edibles. A full spectrum of possible sex and sexual possibilities becomes articulated in Caribbean Erotic, and the question arising from this sketching of oral erotic intimacy pertains to the uses of literature in this context. The ways in which these texts may be of use for new vistas and possibilities will be further explored in the final section discussing how literature’s affective function may invite political implications.

The Power and Intimacy of Narratives

If the modernist period opened up literature for sex, the twentieth century saw all kinds of sex acts become mainstream in literature, from “underage sex, BDSM, incest, rape,” thereby challenging pre-existing notions of propriety and purity, but the political uses of those sex acts in the Caribbean context have been unaccounted for. Literary texts are irreducible to mere political tools (which we nevertheless tend to do). Between the aesthetic and political functions of literature, however, lies the affective; we “read with feeling” even when we claim being untouched by a text, as pure moodlessness is impossible. The way Felski discusses the attachments in our uses of literature, and our attitudes towards literature in critique, coincide with the dream of sexual freedom in the form of oral intimacy in the Caribbean context. Oral sex posited in affective terms is not only about positive emotions but also about liberation as the affect of politics. Literature helps us see how something is imagined, and at the risk of sounding

76 Felski, Limits, 29.
77 Feagin, Reading.
78 Felski, Limits, 29.
79 Felski, Uses.
80 Felski, Limits.
obvious, the existence of these stories outside erotica denotes that authors have felt the need to imagine an underrepresented form of intimacy into existence. Advocating sensualities and sexualities to appear in literary form reimagine what sexual intimacy could be, not just as a sexual act but as consensual sexual interaction, something communicated and communicable in and by fiction. Rather, here they reorient one’s intimacies through the taste, touch, mouth, kisses and oral sex, re-engineering desires into new orientations and sexual gestures.

The question of oral sex as liberatory in literature previously evading such representations is, thus, not simply about revealing, but engaging.\(^81\) Hanna Meretoja contends that texts have “existential–ontological significance” when they are seen as not just representations but also interpretations\(^82\) which participate in creating human experience and reality.\(^83\) Central to this consideration is the question of who gets to tell which stories, and decide on the relevance of some over others. Rights to tell and interpret are thus heavily regulated and steer our experiences and hence, our interpretations and lives. Seeing this reciprocity helps us understand, why we should care about narratives promoting or discussing oral sex in a positive light in a Caribbean setting. Narratives and their interpretations make sense of the world and the struggle for representation is far from over.

The question of reimagining and re-signifying Caribbean sexualities and sexual acts is therefore not just a question of representation but interpretation, which is performative in character.\(^84\) Oral sex goes to the root of sexual liberation and personal freedom, all values revered by modern societies, where actions as performatives replace silences when we bond with works of fiction and poetry in our readings. Poems have speakers, but they also have readers, who do not merely receive texts, but actively interpret them and hence construct new social realities, as Meretoja argues.\(^85\) Perhaps it is unsurprising that the orally vocal genre, poetry, has been chosen by most authors as the appropriate way to speak out sexual freedom in Adisa and Weir–Soley’s collection. Poetry has – perhaps more than fiction – the potential to be interpreted in a way which opens up new avenues of under-

\(^82\) Meretoja, “Interpretation,” 104.
\(^83\) Meretoja, 99.
\(^84\) Meretoja, 107.
\(^85\) Meretoja, 107.
standing the world.\footnote{In narrative fiction, the moment of storytelling may present itself as constructed and aware of its constructedness. Meretoja’s example of a novel by David Grossman strikes as a particularly prevalent example of this constructedness. Refugee narratives, for example, offer a chance for people to develop a fuller sense of their possibilities, and question what is seen as right or wrong, true or false in the world (Meretoja, “Interpretation,” 108).} In the Caribbean context, in particular, poetry has been regarded as – not high-brow or inaccessible – but the people’s genre, closer to its audience than fiction.\footnote{Laurence A. Breiner, \textit{An Introduction to West Indian Poetry} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 19.} The specific quality of such understanding lies on the intimate, affective-corporeal level of engaging with literature. Poems in particular appeal to the senses; as speakerly texts, they already contain an element of orality and storytelling, and their narrators are called speakers. They are thus intimately tied to the moment of utterance.

This condition of speakerliness coincides with oral storytelling traditions particularly in the Afro–Caribbean context famous for folklore, dub poetry and other oral genres. The formal features of poetry (such as imagery, ellipsis and stylistic fragmentation) as opposed to other genres grant it special means for exploring sexual intimacy.\footnote{Cooke, “Making,” 12.} How we write about something means a great deal for how we understand it, and poems in the collection call for an intimate reading experience thanks to their connection to the Caribbean oral literary traditions and orality as oral sex; Both are transmitted through the use of the mouth, lips, tongue, and saliva, where language and the body are not just figuratively connected. Both oral sex and oral stories are also bodily acts marked by their fluidity in bodily fluids and in eschewing rigid written boundaries like orthography.

Following Elizabeth Weed, the “lure of the postcritical,” in reading \textit{Caribbean Erotic}, lies in a momentary shedding of the burden of the colonial legacy in envisioning new modes of sexual being and doing.\footnote{Weed, “Gender.”} While that legacy cannot and should not be fully neglected, the reparative impulse in these accounts of oral sex denotes how important it is to celebrate alternative modes of sexual expression free from shame, the affect of sexual colonization. (Only one poem in the collection refers to shame.) In reading a collection so dedicated to exposing freedom instead of oppression, putting energy into exposing a plot, to paraphrase Weed,\footnote{Weed, 154.} is perhaps unnecessary. The postcritical, in other words, is crucial to “the future of critical and political thinking” in expressing – and making available for affec-
tive engagement – hitherto sanctioned sexual practices like oral sex. Sedgwick does not offer a step-by-step instruction on how to read in a reparative manner, nor is reparative reading a blueprint or a methodological dogma. Reading anything rooted in the tragedy of the Middle Passage is necessarily tied to the depressive position and hermeneutics of suspicion. They are there, but they are not the focus of this kind of inquiry, nor should they be forgotten by other types of inquiry. Reparative reading does not claim hegemony, nor is it likely to become one considering the historically deconstructive critique from which feminist criticism stems.

It is obviously very convenient to read these emancipatory vistas in a reparative manner, when misogyny, rape and sexual abuse are largely absent. A reparative reading applied to a reparative text only reaps so many benefits. The real test is in reading texts which are openly hostile to women in a reparative manner, but as Weed contends, it is possible, because one never claimed to do away with critique at all. The problem remains of course, why would we be so preoccupied with reading something so familiar to feminist thinking that its “descriptive expansion seems superfluous and useless”? In the context of Caribbean women’s writing, we already know the inner workings of colonial racist misogyny, shame and internalized racism for women and gender relations, at least to the extent that the burden of proof has eased. As Faith Smith notes, sexual taboos have been “useful structuring signposts” in upholding colonial sexual morals. That much we know. What we do not yet fully know, is how we can envision alternatives including sexual acts whose taboo nature partly stems from those sanctions laid on colonized peoples by adopted Victorian class, race, gender and sexism based moral codes so well analysed by Anne McClintock and others.

In the end, it is the possibility of being surprised that marks a reparative, postcritical mode of reading. As Sedgwick notes in relation to reparative reading, some surprises we encounter are pleasant, some not. To reflect

91 Weed, 154.
92 Valovirta, Sexual, 35.
93 Weed, “Gender,” 155.
94 Weed, 159.
95 Weed, “Gender,” 159.
97 Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Ethnicity in the Colonial Contest (New York: Routledge, 1995).
98 Sedgwick, Touching, 146.
on my first reading of *Caribbean Erotic* as a kind of “readerly guinea pig,” the proliferation of oral sex and absence of shame was (and is) a surprise, having accustomed myself to read this tradition of literature through a skeptic’s lens. Another aspect surprising my somewhat formulaic initial critique, in hindsight, was to discover male and female, gay and straight authors alike discussing oral sex. Why would one be surprised, though? In *Caribbean Erotic* we again see what has been confirmed before, such as the accustomed, reconciliatory treatment of gender relations as complementary and creation of idealized caring men. Perhaps Caribbean women’s writing and its critique ought to drop its critical mood of treating sex as a problem, because caring men are the new normal, and affective sensibilities abound in these erotic scenarios celebrating consensual adult sexual activities. Perhaps not, as it might hide new mechanisms of oppression brewing in secret while the skeptic has momentarily put down her paranoid goggles. Suffice it to say, that what else could open up from this kind of engagement, is yet to be seen, as from surprises we can begin generating new kinds of questions, engagements, and potentially – more sexually liberated futures.

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Chapter 4
Written on the Body: Representing Torture in Waiting for the Barbarians
– Amin Beiranvand and Joel Kuortti

Introduction: Torture throughout the Ages

Torture remains one of the more bitter realities in the contemporary era. Throughout the ages, torture has been a regular practice to maintain control, and even today, laws of a given society might endorse forms of torture that are in its interest, even contrary to international jurisdiction and despite explicit decrees against it: “Torture proves a slippery concept, especially for law.”¹ One of the major consequences of torture is that its victims are denied humanity. This dehumanisation is twofold: on the one hand it alienates the tortured person from their individual rights, and, on the other hand, it justifies the brutal treatment of people in the interest of the torturer.

In this chapter, we investigate the implications of torture in J. M. Coetzee’s third novel Waiting for the Barbarians (1980).² In connection with torture, the term ‘barbarian’ of the novel’s title has commonplace usage in contemporary rhetoric. In the era of European colonisation, the colonised were called barbarians by the colonisers to justify oppression. In the novel, Coetzee elaborates on the issue of mental and physical torture by the colonial agents of the Empire, whether benevolent or harsh. The former is represented by the unnamed, first-person narrator, the Magistrate, running the administration of a remote frontier outpost, and the latter by Colonel Joll, who is sent from the metropolis to secure the border area and to defeat the so-called barbarians. Through these two characters, the novel establishes that exerting either mental suffering by a benevolent person or physical pain by a cruel person can connote torture.

¹ Michael Richardson, Gestures of Testimony: Torture, Trauma, and Affect in Literature (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 2.
² J. M. Coetzee, Waiting for the Barbarians (London: Vintage, 1980). References to the novel will be given parenthetically, preceded by WB.
We argue that Joll and the Magistrate constitute two sides of the same coin – two sides of colonialism. We propose that despite the soft nature of the Magistrate and despite of the fact that at some point in the novel he takes sides with the nomads, for example, by returning the nomad girl to her family or by criticising the public torture of nomad captives, he cannot be exonerated since he is indeed complicit in interrogation and torture of the nomads. To depict this duality of colonialism in the novel, we investigate the ways both Joll and the Magistrate treat the nomads and argue that their ways to hey treat them are comparable, that is, they both ultimately have the same objective: to coerce information by inflicting pain on the colonized other.

Joll, a ‘harsh’ colonizer, is involved in the physical torture of the captives. He believes that the best way to protect the imperial borders is to treat the nomad people uncompromisingly; for him, torture is a practical means to terrorize people into obedience. In contrast to Joll’s physical violence, then, the Magistrate is portrayed as a ‘soft’, allegedly benevolent, colonizer, who is, however, implicated in the violence. This is apparent firstly in the way he treats the captive girl to whom he both offers shelter and, at the same time, causes mental pain when he tries to find out about her experience of torture. Secondly, his treatment of the captives he interrogates. For both the Magistrate and Joll, pain is a sign of the meanings they consider written on the bodies of the people they interrogate and which they intend to interpret.

All in all, being a benevolent colonizer does not absolve the Magistrate from the responsibility for colonial violence. He is part of the oppressive system, has helped to maintain the Empire, and is involved in its tyrannies. In his critique of colonial domination, the Tunisian writer Albert Memmi criticizes benevolent colonizers as collectively responsible:

To tell the truth, the style of a colonization does not depend upon one or a few generous or clear-thinking individuals. Colonial relations do not stem from individual good will or actions; they exist before his arrival or birth, and whether he accepts or rejects them matters little. […] No matter how he may reassure himself, “I have always been this way or that with the colonized,” he suspects, even if he is in no way guilty as an individual, that he shares a collective responsibility by the fact of membership in a national oppressor group.3

In the same way as Memmi argues that the colonial conditions “do not stem from individual good will or actions,” Coetzee’s novel challenges the efficacy or the ultimate rationale of the Magistrate’s self-professed critical stance against his harsher colonial colleague. When the Magistrate indicts Joll for violence and torture, he responds by declaring the Magistrate to be naïve and a hypocrite – “Thus speaks the judge, the One Just Man” (WB 114) – who is sneered by the people.

Memmi writes that having exposed the outrage of colonialism, the benevolent colonizer can no longer accept to be a part of the oppressive group. In so doing, he may openly protest against the tyrannies. This is what happens to the Magistrate who is himself arrested and beaten by the Third Bureau. Having observed the tyrannies of the Third Bureau, he protests against them. Notwithstanding, according to Memmi’s definition of a soft colonizer, the Magistrate is still a colonizer and complicit in the oppressions of the colonized.

Changing Faces of Torture

The United Nations substantiates the twofold quality of torture – as both physical and mental – in its definition:

For the purposes of this Convention, the term torture means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

The UN Convention against torture is a relatively recent introduction to the sphere of regulating states in their conduct. Besides the Convention,

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4 Memmi, Colonizer, 63–64.
torture had already been banned in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”6 While Coetzee’s novel is placed in an unspecified7 setting before international legislation on torture, its framework is clearly Colonial South Africa, and it is written in the context of Apartheid government, from the vantage point of the debate against torture – especially since 1975 – that eventually led to the UN Convention.

The gradual change in view of the use of torture (especially as a legally justified instrument for governments) for acquiring information or confessions and for inflicting punishment or intimidating others began to take critical shape in the eighteenth century. The Italian Enlightenment criminologist Cesare Bonesana di Beccaria (1738–1794) was one of the first scholars to conceptualize torture (and the death penalty) as a crime, upheld by traditions: “The torture of a criminal, during the course of his trial, is a cruelty, consecrated by custom in most nations.”8 Furthermore, Bonesana di Beccaria sees torture as futile as it is only in excess of required punishment if the suspect is found guilty or else inflicts pain on an innocent. His conclusion on torture is, then, that

it is confounding all relations […] that pain should be the test of truth, as if truth resided in the muscles and fibres of a wretch in torture. By this method, the robust will escape, and the feeble be condemned. These are the inconveniences of this pretended test of truth, worthy only of a cannibal; and which the Romans, in many respects barbarous, and whose savage virtue has been too much admired, reserved for the slaves alone.9

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9 Bonesana di Beccaria, Essay, 59; emphases added.
Bonesana di Beccaria’s comment on truth written on the body, “in the muscles and fibres,” is an ironic view – denoted by the phrase “as if” – of the torturers’ mind-set, and at the same time it emphasizes the corporeality of torture. The comparison of torture to the practices of cannibals further highlights its unacceptability.

Cultural Significance of the ‘Barbarian’

Before embarking on an analysis of torture in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, a comment on the roots and significance of the term ‘barbarian’ is in place. Throughout history, the term has been predominantly used to demarcate self from the other, to envision a circle and to imagine anybody who is outside of the circle to be of an inferior culture. The history of the term goes well beyond the modern epoch. Its roots are in the ancient Greek word *barbaros* (βάρβαρος) which referred to people from outside the Greek settlements, a foreigner whose language for the Greeks was incomprehensible and resembled stammering. In India, the Sanskrit word *barbara* (बब्बर) has similar semiotic uses, so the term, nor indeed the idea, is not limited to the European context. In the Middle Ages, ‘barbarian’ indicated all heathens outside Christian Europe. By the breakup of Medieval Europe in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, European colonisers had acquired a patronizing attitude toward the nations they gradually dominated.10

The negative depictions of the other, albeit in different eras and in different contexts, share a sense of commonality: The uncivilised pose to the civilised an imminent threat which needs to be shunned. The idea of civilised Europeans versus low-cultured others manifested during the era of white hegemony in South Africa as well, where the white settlers considered themselves as advocates of civilization against the perceived threat of so-called barbaric black South Africans.11 The duality between civilization and barbarism is distinctive in the Greek poet Constantine P. Cavafy’s (1863–1933) poem “Waiting for the Barbarians” (Περιμένοντας τοὺς Βαρβάρους, 1904),12 from which Coetzee borrowed the title for his novel. In the poem, people gathered together are fearfully waiting for the barbar-

12 Constantine P. Cavafy, “Waiting for the Barbarians” [1904], in Cavafy, *Collected Poems*, translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, edited by George Sa-
ians to come: “The barbarians are due here today.” Anxiety and anticipation lay the foundation also for the theme of the novel, as well as their consequence: torture.

The age-old opposition between civilization and barbarism is manifest in Coetzee’s novel as well. That is to say, calling nomads ‘barbarians’ serves as a pretext to mobilize the army, to hunt them down and torture them. The poor nomads had been living their lives by their own standards and had not adapted to the values of the Empire or converted to their religion. Thus, the stage is set for their oppression. Nonetheless, these pretexts cannot serve as justifiable grounds for launching a military operation. Therefore, the Empire needs to justify its violence in the colony in other ways. For this purpose, it needs to fabricate an uncivilised enemy, the nomads. They are depicted as barbarians who invaded the colony, justifying thus the presence of the imperial agents and, subsequently, torture. Since the threat will not be removed by a single military excursion, to secure imperial interests and safeguard the civilians, the empire needs to establish permanent presence in the outpost of the Empire.

Coetzee’s Barbarians and the Real and Fictional Use of Torture

Even today, the use of torture is widespread, especially in its form of state terror. In a recent Amnesty International report, it was declared that state officials in 141 countries have used torture between 2009–2013, in other words, three quarters of the countries in the world have witnessed torture within the last decade.

14 Torture as state terror differs from other forms of torture in that it is legally (at least nominally) sanctioned but it can still be either rational or irrational, see Penny Green and Tony Ward, “Torture and the Paradox of State Violence,” in Torture: Moral Absolutes and Ambiguities, edited by Bev Clucas, Gerry Johnstone, and Tony Wad (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009), 171–83.
Torture as a theme has long found its way into creative literature, as well. In modern times, from Joseph Conrad’s *Nostromo* (1904) to George Orwell’s *1984* (1949), and from Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* (2000) to Janette Turner Hospital’s *Orpheus Lost* (2007), writers have grappled with this extremely painful topic. Michael Richardson has studied the effects of torture and their representations; he argues that “literary witnessing is possible and necessary for both the eyewitness and the bystander.” Complying with this stance, Coetzee maintains that “torture has exerted a dark fascination on many other South African authors,” himself included. This is indeed the case with *Waiting for the Barbarians*, which deals with this contradictory and contested topic.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the rumours about the barbarian attacks and the emergency regulations bring Colonel Joll and the troops of the imperial Civil Guard, the “Third Bureau” – “unsleeping guardian of the Empire” (*WB* 20) – to the outpost which the sympathetic representative of the Empire, the Magistrate, manages. Joll believes in responding to any perceived threat against the Empire with an iron fist. The alleged danger is accentuated by the rumours that have been spreading from the capital:

> Traders travelling safe routes had been attacked and plundered. Stock thefts had increased in scale and audacity. [...] The barbarian tribes were arming, the rumour went; the Empire should take precautionary measures, for there would certainly be war. (*WB* 8)

The rumours are so pervasive that when a girl is raped, her friends point an accusing finger at a nomad man on the basis of his ugliness (*WB* 123). The negative (physical, psychological, and ideological) portrayal of the nomads has manipulated citizen’s attitudes towards them so much that people rely on the army as their sole saviour from the nomads and support the troops


removing the perceived threat: “Now that they seem to be all that stands between us and destruction, these foreign soldiers are anxiously courted. […] They are welcome to whatever they want as long as long as they will stay and guard our lives” (WB 131). In this way, the Empire achieves its goal: people do not object to their presence but consider the imperial army as a mediator between themselves and the enemy; moreover, the stage is set for hunting down and torturing the nomads.

To eliminate the perceived threat, Joll leads an operation and captures some nomads, whom he labels ‘barbarians’. They are, in fact, nomads who lead a peaceful life, but Joll depicts them as a danger to the Empire. This negative depiction serves as a justification for their persecution. In the words of literary critic Rosemary Jane Jolly, “Coetzee’s Empire depends upon the operation of the imperialist manichean opposition, whereby it can identify itself as just[ified] by identifying the barbarians as the enemy.”19 Developing on Jolly’s observation, scholar of cultural memory Stef Craps argues that “Joll’s practices of inquisition and torture can be seen as an attempt to coerce the natives into assuming the identity of barbarian and enemy that the Empire requires of them in order to assert its existence.”20 In other words, for the Empire to perpetuate its existence, it needs to identify the nomads as barbarians.

The nomads in the novel, as the reader is made aware, are not barbarians and do not constitute a threat. This is suggested already in the beginning when the Magistrate is taking Joll for a tour across the fort and they enter a room with two prisoners, an old man and a young boy. The Magistrate comments that there are no barbarians at the outpost, only poor tribal people, and at most they may sometimes commit petty thefts:

These are the only prisoners we have taken for a long time […]. A coincidence: normally we would not have any barbarians at all to show you. This so-called banditry does not amount to much. They steal a few sheep or cut out a pack-animal from a train. Sometimes we raid them in return. They are mainly destitute tribespeople with tiny flocks of their own living along the river. (WB 4)

The labelling of the nomads as barbarians is further subverted in the Magistrate’s description of Joll’s operation to subjugate them. Referring to the

troops that have been sent to vanquish the barbarians and to remove their perceived threat, the narrator says: “These men have not been at war: at worst they have been roaming the up-river country, hunting down unarmed sheep-herders, raping their women, pillaging their homes, scattering their flocks” (WB 99), and in fact, the army had been tyrannizing the nomads and wreaking havoc with them.

To rationalize the crimes of the army, the nomads are portrayed as a threat. That is why the Magistrate criticizes Joll’s operation to defeat them. He thinks that the troops had just terrorized ordinary people, if anything, and “at best they have met no one at all – certainly not the gathered barbarian clans from whose fury the Third Bureau is engaged in protecting us” (WB 90). Just like the Magistrate fears, the army had actually been threatening and exploiting the nomads, and he declares that the “pitiable prisoners” arrested by the troops are not the enemy, and concludes defiantly: “You are the enemy, Colonel!” (WB 125). For his part, then, Joll scolds the Magistrate for being naïve: “You are living in a world of the past. You think we are dealing with small groups of peaceful nomads. In fact we are dealing with a well-organized enemy” (WB 114). Following scholar of narrative ethics Michael Marais, defining the nomads as the barbarian other legitimates their torture as enemies.21

**Brutal Treatment of the Barbarians**

In the novel prisoners are mistreated. One of the two prisoners at the fort, the old man, is killed during interrogations. As is typical of oppressive systems, the imperial agents deny that it is murder, and the brief official report to the Magistrate proclaims:

> During the course of the interrogation contradictions became apparent in the prisoner’s testimony. Confronted with these contradictions, the prisoner became enraged and attacked the investigating officer. A scuffle ensued during which the prisoner fell heavily against the wall. Efforts to revive him were unsuccessful. (WB 6)

The textual context implies that the report is fabricated, distorting the conditions of the old man’s death, even though his body is replete with signs

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of torture. This perception is corroborated when the Magistrate sees the corpse and witnesses the severe marks on the deceased: “The grey beard is caked with blood. The lips are crushed and drawn back, the teeth are broken. One eye is rolled back, the other eye-socket is a bloody hole” (WB 7). In other words, the damage to the old man’s body signifies torture, not accidental death. This incident marks the beginning of the torturing of the barbarians, and worse is to come.

Shortly after his arrival, Colonel Joll dispatches the army to suppress the barbarians. In the operation, several nomads are arrested and subsequently questioned. While being questioned, they are mistreated and tortured, resulting in the death of another nomad man. The man’s daughter is also tortured; she partially loses her eyesight, and is not able to walk properly. After the Magistrate has taken the girl in to help around the house, the girl finally decides to tell how Joll and his men tortured the nomads:

I saw the marks where they had burnt people […]. They said they would burn my eyes out but they did not. The man brought [the red-hot fork] very close to my face and made me look at it. They held my eyelids open. But I had nothing to tell them. That was all. That was when the damage came. After that I could not see properly any more. (WB 41; emphasis added)

The girl’s testimony records both the suffering of others and her own, as well as the futility of her torture: “I had nothing to tell them.” Through such scenes, the novel describes the mistreatment of the nomads who have been driven out of their lands.

The most extreme torture scene is depicted when a group of arrested nomads is brought to the city square. The captives belong to the same people as the girl and her murdered father. The noise from the square alerts the Magistrate to notice the army returning with the group held in inhuman conditions: roped together, neck to neck, connected by a wire that goes through the flesh of each prisoner’s hands and mouth, they are forced to kneel (WB 103). Joll stains the back of each prisoner with sand and with a piece of charcoal writes “ENEMY” on them before they are brutally beaten:

The soldiers use the stout green cane staves, bringing them down with the heavy slapping sounds of washing-paddles, raising red welts on the prisoners’ backs and buttocks. [...] The black charcoal and ochre dust begins to run with sweat and blood. The game, I see, is to beat them till their backs are washed clean. (WB 105)
The flogging goes on relentlessly until, ironically, the soldiers are exhausted. What happens next pushes the Magistrate to publicly shout out in protest. The tired soldiers offer the onlookers their canes to continue the beating. After one girl tentatively takes a cane and gives a blow to one of the prisoners, the crowd rushes to continue the beating. In this collectively shared complicity, the Magistrate is left alone, “one man who in his heart was not a barbarian” (WB 104).

Joll’s torture of the nomads seeks, as Elaine Scarry points out, to deconstruct the prisoner’s voice:

Physical pain [...] is language-destroying. Torture inflicts bodily pain that is itself language-destroying, but torture mimes [...] this language-destroying capacity in its interrogation, the purpose of which is not to elicit needed information but visibly to deconstruct the prisoner’s voice.22

The prolonged interrogation, however, also graphically objectifies the step-by-step backward movement along the path by which language comes into being and which is here being reversed or uncreated or deconstructed. Scarry’s point here is that by denying the victims a voice of their own, by deconstructing their language through the pain of their own bodies, the torturers replace it with their voice. The aim of torture is not to gain truth or information but to humiliate the tortured person and to elicit such information that the empire’s agents have already branded upon their victims. Thus, as a coloniser, Joll uses torture to force confessions that would justify the oppression. As Craps points out: “Moving in a hermeneutic circle, Joll produces marks of torture on the bodies of his victims only to read these marks as signs of guilt. The only truth that he extracts from the barbarians is the one he has projected onto them.”23 Craps’s observation denotes that language deconstructed into bodily pain in torture does not translate into truth but only corroborates the torturer’s voice.

How does the Magistrate as a soft colonizer, then, compare with the ruthless Colonel Joll? In the following, we analyse how the cruelties affect him, and how he reacts to the incidents. We argue that despite the reservations and objections he has for Joll’s conduct, he cannot claim impartiality in the affairs of the Empire and in fact he is an accomplice to the tyrannies of the oppressive system. To illustrate how he is the other half of colonial oppression, we look at the way he deals with the nomad girl he takes into

his house and the way he interrogates the captives to find out the truth about any conspiracies against the Empire.

A Benevolent Colonizer and Complicity

During the atrocities, the Magistrate’s viewpoint appears different from Joll’s. That is to say, his thoughts and comments are represented as humane, and he tries to vindicate himself from tyrannies of the Empire. One of the early instances in which the Magistrate tries to exonerate himself from imperial blame is when he is aware that torture is most likely taking place, and he denies hearing anything: “Of screaming which people afterwards claim to have heard from the granary, I hear nothing” (WB 4–5). He attributes his ignorance to the immensity of the building and “the noise of life” in the fort (WB 5). Yet, even he himself is not convinced by his reasoning but concludes his thoughts in parentheses: “(At a certain point I begin to plead my own cause.)” (WB 5). At other instances he takes a stance to show his distance from the offenses of the Third Bureau. Moreover, he objects openly to the beating of the nomads by the Third Bureau and even tries to understand the captives: “I grow conscious that I am pleading for them” (WB 4). For example, he openly scolds Colonel Joll for the mistreatment of the nomads when the first captives, whom he recognizes as ordinary fishing people, are brought to the fort during the expedition, even though he knows he is acting disrespectfully towards the Colonel. Such is the implication of his words as he scolds the troops: “You are supposed to help him track down thieves, bandits, invaders of the Empire! Do these people look like a danger to the Empire?” (WB 17).

The Magistrate’s strong opposition to the brutalities manifests in the torture scene on the square. He objects to the torture, shouting at the Colonel – before being beaten up himself: “You! [...] You are depraving these people!” (WB 116). When the Colonel depicts the nomads as a threat, the Magistrate argues that they are innocent and says: “Those pitiable prisoners you brought in – are they the enemy I must fear? Is that what you say? You are the enemy, Colonel!” (WB 125).

The Magistrate wants to be seen to represent the humane face of the Empire and tries emphatically to acquit himself of the brutalities of its representatives. This is further suggested when he says: “There is nothing to link me with torturers, people who sit waiting like beetles in dark cellars. [...] I must assert my distance from Colonel Joll! I will not suffer for his crimes” (WB 44; emphasis added). This stance of asserting his distance notwithstanding, his behaviour does otherwise suggest that he is indeed ir-
reparably associated with the colonial system. Therefore, we need to con-
sider if it is possible for officials like him to atone for the tyrannies of em-
pire. In other words, we need to see whether it is possible for an actually
benevolent colonizer to exist.

At some points during his confrontation with Joll, the Magistrate’s
statements imply that he is party to the atrocities of his harsh counterpart,
as there are some similarities between them. This is suggested when the
Magistrate begins questioning Joll and tries to position himself in the role
of the tortured; he asks: “What if your prisoner is telling the truth, […] yet,
finds he is not believed? Is that not a terrible position? Imagine: to be pre-
pared to yield, to yield, to have nothing more to yield, to be broken, yet to
be pressed to yield more” (WB 5; emphasis added). As Adams points out,
the Magistrate’s query implies another position:

[W]hat it means if he is not believed by the collective you, the readers
to whom his thoughts are directed. The following question he poses –
Is that not a terrible position? – therefore articulates his own terrible
position as complicitious in this torture as an agent of the Empire.24

From this perspective, the Magistrate’s concern is not as altruistic as it
might seem. His further comment has a similar motive: “And what a re-
sponsibility for the interrogator! How do you ever know when a man has
told you the truth?” (WB 5). From this moment on, the Magistrate’s view
of himself changes when he realizes his similarity Joll: “[W]ho am I to as-
sert my distance from him?” (WB 5). Like his cruel counterpart, the Magis-
trate is complicit in the interrogation of the captured nomads. For ex-
ample, when an old man is arrested, he pleads with the old man to tell the
truth:

We have brought you here because we caught you after a stock-raid.
You know that is a serious matter. You know you can be punished for
it. […] This gentleman [Colonel Joll] is visiting us from the capital.
[…] His work is to find the truth. That is all he does. He finds out the
truth. If you do not speak to me you will have to speak to him. (WB 3)

As the Magistrate persuades the old man to speak, he seems to work for the
Empire, albeit with gentle measures. Similarly, when the officers find a
boy in the square “wrapped in his blanket asleep” the Magistrate applies

Waiting for the Barbarians,” Ariel: A Review of International English Literature 46
the same method in addressing the boy: “Listen: you must tell the officer the truth. That is all he wants to hear from you – the truth. Once he is sure you are telling the truth be will not hurt you. But you must tell him everything you know. You must answer every question he asks you truthfully” (WB 7; emphasis added). Although he seems to act out of benevolence – tell the truth so he will not hurt you –, ultimately he is not helping the natives.

Later on, when the magistrate is informed that the boy has made a confession, he again interrogates him to make sure that he has said everything he knows: “Are you telling the truth? Do you understand what this confession of yours will mean?” (WB 11). He speaks of a massacre to make sure the boy is being truthful: “There is going to be killing. Kinsmen of yours are going to die, perhaps even your parents, your brothers and sisters. Do you really want that?” (WB 11). In this way, the Magistrate tries to get the truth in his own way, by interrogation, without treating the captive violently.

The Magistrate’s Complicity and Ambivalence

An even more personal dimension in the Magistrate’s complicity can be seen in his treatment of the nomad girl whom he shelters. Distressed by her injured body, he tries to make the girl to reveal to him who had tortured her. She is not, however, willing to do this and the Magistrate’s constant questioning puts her under pressure and causes mental pain, another form of torture. As Jennifer Wenzel puts it:

> On the surface, torture appears to be a kind of conversation in which physical and mental pain is used by one person to encourage another person to speak. The means of encouragement’, of course, represent the inequity of power in the verbal and physical exchange between tortured and torturer.25

Here the “inequity of power” is especially noteworthy. While on the one hand the Magistrate offers shelter to the captured girl, on the other hand the girl – devastated and physically tortured in the hands of Joll and his men – is once more tortured, this time mentally, by the Magistrate with his repeated questions, causing her agony.

In this way, the Magistrate becomes another of her persecutors, albeit unwittingly, in the guise of benevolence. Susan VanZanten Gallagher writes that “the Magistrate acts like an obsessed man. He continually asks her about her experience of being tortured, probing for every last detail.”26 Furthermore, the girl’s reluctance to cooperate by his terms stem from her experience as Wenzel notes: “Both Joll and the Magistrate fail to understand how the experience of torture has transformed the girl’s relationship to language.”27 For the difference of their interpretive stances, consider the scene where they are looking at the ancient wooden slips inscribed in an unknown script (WB 110–13). The missing rapport between them leads him to insist on finding out the truth: “It has been growing more and more clear to me that until the marks on the girl’s body are deciphered and understood I cannot let go of her” (WB 33; emphasis added). He keeps on interrogating the girl – “What did they do to you? [...] Why don’t you want to tell me?” (WB 31) – which only makes her more reluctant. With his questions, the Magistrate ignores her unwillingness to talk about her trauma, and the possible reasons for this reluctance. It is this kind of construction of otherness that allows torturers to ignore the pain of their victims. For the very same reason, the Magistrate is going to persist until he can finally elicit the truth. Likewise, Joll demands the truth regardless of the feelings and consent of the people being questioned and the pain inflicted on them. He says:

I am speaking only of a special situation now, I am speaking of a situation in which I am probing for the truth, in which I have to exert pressure to find it. First I get lies, you see – this is what happens – first lies, then pressure, then more lies, then more pressure, then the break, then more pressure, then the truth. That is how you get the truth. (WB 119–20)

What ultimately enables us to compare the Magistrate’s involvement in torture with Joll is the fact that they both consider their victims as “the other” and thus those whom they can torture to gain information, if not the truth. The girl’s maimed body – her partially blinded eye and her damaged ankles – is a stimulant for the Magistrate’s hermeneutic interest which has its origin in torture. Jolly expands on this interpretative stance of both Joll and the Magistrate:

Joll and the magistrate [...] turn the ‘girl’ into a text from which they believe the truth will originate, Joll through implanting the marks of torture upon her and reading the result as proof of her guilt, and the magistrate by attempting to possess the truth behind torture by reading the ‘script’ that Joll has ‘written’ on her body.28

That a body can be turned into a script and a text implies an inequity of power between the torture and the tortured that Wenzel discusses. The Magistrate’s complicity is further inferred in his suspicion whether “I was not in my heart of hearts regretting that I could not engrave myself on her as deeply [as Joll]” (WB 135). His recognition of regret shows how fine the boundary between harsh Joll and soft Magistrate is: “I behave in some ways like a lover – I undress her, I bathe her, I stroke her, I sleep beside her – but I might equally well tie her to a chair and beat her, it would be no less intimate” (WB 43). On both sides of the imaginary boundary, colonial agents, regardless of their inclination, cause pain to the colonized other.

Conclusion: No Body to Write on

In this chapter, we set out to discuss the roles of the Magistrate and Colonel Joll in performing violent acts of torture against the nomads whom the Third Bureau considers to be the enemy. Waiting for the Barbarians is not the only novel where Coetzee deals with such ethical dilemmas written on the body. In Life and Times of Michael K. (1983), deformed, hare-lipped Michael protests through silence: “I was mute and stupid in the beginning, I will be mute and stupid at the end.”29 His muteness and self-professed stupidity form a strategy to uphold integrity and independence rather than submission and collaboration. In Foe (1986), then, Friday’s silence is (allegedly) forced because his tongue has been cut off. In both Michael K. and Foe, reading the other to find the truth becomes an obsession. In Foe, Susan Barton, who is trying to elicit Friday’s story, finally concludes that “the true story is buried within Friday, who is mute. The true story will not be heard till by art we have found a means of giving

28 Jolly, Colonization, 62.
29 In the novel, the question of collective and individual responsibility is explicitly present in a discussion between the medical officer and his superior: “Perhaps we are soft [...]. Perhaps we think that if one day they come and put everyone on trial, someone will step forward and say, ‘Let those two off, they were soft,’” Coetzee, Life and Times of Michael K. (New York: Penguin, 1983), 181.
voice to Friday.” The interpretative power of the Magistrate, too, is frustrated when he realises that “how natural a mistake to believe that you can burn or tear or hack your way into the secret body of the other!” (WB 43). He cannot enter the girl’s interior with his questions, as if there was only the uninterpretable bodily surface.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, there is a duality between Joll and the Magistrate, but it is also contested. In the sense we suggest, they both compose two sides of colonialism, the harsh and the soft. This two sidedness is substantiated by the Magistrate’s own words when he maintains that there is no need to be harsh (as Joll), that there is a soft way of treating these people, exercised by the “new men of the Empire,” to which he considers himself to belong:

*New men of the Empire* are the ones who believe in fresh starts, new chapters, clean pages […]. I order that the prisoners be fed, that the doctor be called in to do what he can, that the barracks return to being a barracks, that arrangements be made to restore the prisoners to their former lives as soon as possible, as far as possible. (WB 24–26; emphasis added)

The Magistrate refutes Joll’s orders and they end up in open conflict resulting in the beating and arrest of the Magistrate. The Magistrate’s realization of the proximity between himself and Joll comes as a shock to him: “No! No! No! I cry to myself. […] There is nothing to link me with torturers” (WB 44). Drawing on Memmi’s assertion that even a coloniser who rejects is still a coloniser, we conclude that the Magistrate’s disavowal from violent measures does not relieve him from responsibility. Whether he rejects or not, whether he is soft or harsh, there is no escape: he is irrefutably a colonizer, complicit in the atrocities of the brutal imperial system.

Furthermore, the Magistrate’s complicity becomes more and more obvious when he considers things like “who am I to assert my distance from him?” (WB 6): “But I do nothing” (WB 20), and “The distance between myself and the torturers, I realize, is negligible; I shudder” (WB 27). Both ‘harsh’ Joll and ‘soft’ Magistrate utilize torture. Both approaches, we argue, are harmful for the ‘barbarians’ and the ways the colonizers treat the nomad people are comparable, that is, they both endeavour the same objective: to coerce information through inflicting pain on the colonized ‘other’. Cavafy’s poem ends with the waiting for the barbarians ending in frustration:
Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.
And some who have just returned from the border say
there are no barbarians any longer.
And now, what’s going to happen to us without barbarians?
They were, those people, a kind of solution.  

Seeing the nomads as an enemy enabled Joll, as synecdoche of the Empire, to maintain colonial power. The bodies of the colonized others carry the signs of this colonization, and reading them only confirms what the colonizers want to see: “I was the lie that Empire tells itself when times were easy, he the truth that Empire tells itself when harsh winds blow. Two sides of imperial rule, no more, no less” (WB 133). The bodies of the nomads are a convenient ‘solution’; both the messenger and the message the Empire wants to send to its subjects, that order shall be maintained. If there were to be “no barbarians any longer,” there would be no bodies on which the message could be written.

Bibliography


“It has been suggested that all art derives from a sickness in the soul, just as a pearl is generated by a diseased oyster.”
(Sir Arnold Bax) 1

Writing Irishly

This chapter examines an extraordinary case of cultural and intermedial, chameleonism. En passant, it will also take stock of a number of ways in which the creative friction experienced by an individual attempting to establish viable positionalities within different places, cultures, and even art forms, may sometimes result in the enrichment of each milieu.

Praised by W. B. Yeats but banned by the British censors, there is something rather slippery about Dermot O’Byrne’s lament for the Easter uprising – A Dublin Ballad and Other Poems (1918). On one hand, we need not doubt its sincerity. Its creator, after all, had certainly attracted the sympathetic attentions of the uprising’s leader, Pádraig Pearse: who, reciprocally, remained something of a hero to O’Byrne throughout his later life. On the other hand, as in so much of Yeats’s output, A Dublin Ballad is a work of masks and ventriloquism. Yet beyond even Yeats’s self-dramatizations, “Dermot O’Byrne” was himself a cipher: an acquired identity into which

1 “Arnold Bax Talks on the Radio” (BBC, June 6, 1949), 8’37”, posted by “newhope123” on YouTube, accessed November 21, 2018. Hereafter, references to this interview are abbreviated in the main body of the text as “AB 1949,” followed by the requisite time code.

its chameleonic English owner slipped during his frequent visits to Ireland.

In *propria persona* O’Byrne was, in fact, Arnold Bax, whose achievements as a composer were one day to gain him the knighted status of Master of the King’s Music in England. With respect to such an iconically ‘English’ composer, it therefore seems palpably ironic that so much of Bax’s musical (as well as poetic) identity was forged upon the anvil of the Celtic Twilight: reading Yeats; mingling in the Dublin circles of poets like Æ (i.e. George Russell); and living for some years in Glencolumbcille (Co. Donegal), where he imbibed a good deal of traditional lore and music alongside a working knowledge of Gaelic. Not less striking is his insistence that the experience had led him to “write Irishly” in his music as well.3 Perhaps subconsciously, what may have motivated him in this respect is that, by “using figures and melodies of a definitely Celtic curve,”4 he was able to distance himself from the norms of English composition. Ultimately, this resulted in the creation of provocative works looking past the Celtic Twilight, such as “In Memoriam Pádraig Pearse” (1916): which was finally premiered in England after Bax’s death, and was not performed in Ireland until the 2016 centennial commemoration of the Easter uprising.

Cognizant of recent writings on O’Byrne and Bax, the present study adopts an intermedial approach in order to examine the imagined communities and identities presupposed by Bax’s poetic and orchestral tributes to Pearse: opening up the cultural and aesthetic faultlines that are thereby exposed. With a nod to Finland’s centennial celebrations in 2017, the chapter closes by considering parallels between the contribution of Bax and Jean Sibelius (a composer much admired by the former) to the developing national imaginaries of the states with which they became associated.

**Imagined Irishness: Dermot O’Byrne’s Dublin Ballad**

In the grand scheme of things, it is hardly to be expected that the appearance of *A Dublin Ballad and Other Poems by Dermot O’Byrne* – printed in 425 copies by the Candle Press of 44 Dawson Street Dublin in 1918 – was going to make any particular impact.5 After all, larger issues were at hand.

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5 Further references are given parenthetically, preceded by DB.
The First World War was coming to its close; the events of Easter 1916 to which the title poem of the collection referred were now a thing of the past; and, anyway, few people would have actually heard of Dermot O’Byrne. Yet the little volume probably made enough of a splash to have satisfied O’Byrne himself. Partly because his favourite poet, W. B. Yeats – holding forth in a Dublin drawing room – had publicly declared it “a masterpiece.” And partly because, despite the complications that this entailed, O’Byrne’s critique of how the British Government had handled the Easter Rising did catch the ear of the authorities so that, paradoxically enough, the banning of the book by British censors elevated its publicity and prestige in some circles.

Looking at the contents of the volume, it is not difficult to guess at the reasons for official censure. The first is its incendiary tone, which would have hit readers like a Molotov cocktail from the opening quatrain onwards:

“A Dublin Ballad” – 1916

O write it up above your hearth
And troll it out to sun and moon
To all true Irishmen on earth
Arrest and death come late or soon. (DB 5; emphasis added)

A second reason for censure lay in its uncompromising critique of the management of the uprising by the British establishment, with what the text terms their “pomp of huge artillery,” their “brass and copper haughtiness” (DB 5); the hearts of the Dublin citizenry being set up as a good “mark/For Tommies up before the lark/At rifle practice in the yard!” (DB 6). From other poems in the collection, we may likewise note allusions to the “brutish masteries” of the British and the “arrogance” of their bayonets in “MARTIAL LAW IN DUBLIN” (DB 19). Not to mention the “dark House of Lies on Thames” castigated in “THE EAST CLARE ELECTION

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1828–1907” (DB 21). Or the shelling of Oranmore in April 1916 (DB 16). And so on.

Given the circumstances, Yeats’s praise of this overtly propagandistic poetry may be comprehended equally well, even though the latter’s own “Easter 1916” arrives at a more subtle voice for combining poetry and politics than O’Byrne was ever able to achieve. To say this is not really to put O’Byrne down, as his admiration for Yeats knew no bounds. Indeed, in a formulation which – for reasons which will manifest themselves in due course – has astonished critics of his work, O’Byrne once wrote that the poetry of Yeats meant more to him than “all the music of the centuries.”

Politically, O’Byrne also shared Yeats’s unease about the violence undertaken in the name of the Republican cause as well as its suppression, commenting on the “gaps of grey and blue” left in the cityscape by the conflict:

Where Lower Mount Street used to be,  
And where flies hum round muck we knew  
For Abbey Street and Eden Quay. (DB 7)

Like Yeats, too – chance perhaps assisting his natural inclinations on the subject – O’Byrne was not in Dublin at the time of the uprising. “Ah!,” his narrator cries in the opening poem of the sequence,

where were Michael and gold Moll  
And Seumas and my drowsy self?  
Why did fate blot us from the scroll?  
Why were we left upon the shelf,  
Fooling with trifles in the dark  
When the light struck so wild and hard? (DB 6)

That there is a degree of Yeatsian self-irony in this is signalled later in the poem, when the same speaker mocks those non-participants who subsequently – “With desert hearts and drunken eyes” – find themselves “free to sentimentalize/By corners where the martyrs fell” (DB 7). For as O’Byrne subsequently makes clear in the poem “AFTER,” he has no patience with the self-pity of the “babbling patriot” from Rathgar who drunkenly intones “I wasn’t there, I wasn’t there!” as an obsessive litany through his “rattling teeth” (DB 13). Although, additionally, the poems do voice a certain amount of compassion in the heroic mode for the fallen, within the

8 Quoted in Scott–Sutherland, Arnold, 115.
collection as a whole it does not appear to be the violence of the public act which has aroused his sympathy so much as the summary executions of his friends in a time of war.

Overwhelmingly, in fact, O’Byrne’s responses seem deeply personal. Living in Dublin’s Rathgar suburb in the years leading up to the uprising, he had enjoyed the company of many of the city’s intellectual élite, attending the gatherings of George Russell, more familiarly known as the poet Æ (and immortalized by Joyce’s tribute in *Ulysses*, “A.E.I.O.U.”). Other radicals with whom he mixed included Yeats’s erstwhile muse Maud Gonne, along with Thomas McDonagh and Constance Markievicz (organisers of the rising who were both fated, in due course, to receive death sentences for their part in the event). On one occasion O’Byrne even spent a pleasant evening with the mastermind behind the uprising, Pearse himself. On a personal level, he and Pearse seem to have hit it off, talking not only of poetry but also, in an easy, detailed, and informed way, of the latter’s native Connemara. When, eventually, Pearse had to leave he famously whispered to Molly Colum that the poet “may be one of us.” Adding, “I should like to see more of him.”

With this in mind, it perhaps makes sense that the centrepiece of the collection is O’Byrne’s longer poem, “IN MEMORIAM,” dedicated to “My friend/PATRICK H. PEARSE/(Ruler of Ireland for one week)” (DB 8–10). Understandably, too, the poem is suffused with the stuff of local observation implicit in this one recorded discussion with Pearse – the “Connemara hearth,” “the silken cotton-flower/In Connaught bogs,” the “breath of Galway turf-smoke,” and all that the revolutionary leader had “loved best on this fantastic earth” (DB 9–10). However, rather than dwelling in outrage on the execution of his friend, O’Byrne’s opening – following a strategy reminiscent of that employed by one of his earlier poetic mentor, John Keats – attempts the impossible task of clasping his addressee’s “nerveless hand/Assoiled now of all stain” (DB 8).

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MEMORIAM,” the events of Easter 1916 have soured the mythic springs of Nationalistic optimism with “martyr’s blood,” the stain itself soaks through into the language of the Celtic Twilight as the poem progresses, metamorphosing by the close of stanza two into the dark plash of “pulpy berries.” Nor is it just any Celtic Twilight that O’Byrne is invoking here. Rather, through his evocation of the bitter fruit of “the seven Hazels,” which had “fallen at the brink of Connla’s well” (DB, 8), he is surely alluding to Æ’s Theosophical poem “The Nuts of Knowledge,” written in 1903 and reprinted a decade later in the Collected Poems of Æ. In the myth to which Æ’s poem refers, Conna’s mystic well, surrounded by magic hazels, gathers the falling nuts and berries of wisdom which, in turn, are swallowed by the Salmon of Wisdom swimming within. The quasi-magical powers disseminated by the nuts are attainable only by those of an exceptional purity and cautiousness. By contrast, those who fail to observe the correct protocols for visiting the well are liable to drown:12 O’Byrne’s point, made with a hindsight not available in 1913 (let alone 1903), being perhaps in part that the “ruddy berries” dropped by “high and lonely thoughts” in Æ’s poem are sometimes purchased at a real-world cost which outweighs their symbolic benefit. In part, as the sixth stanza of his poetic response makes plain, it is not so much the wisdom of Pearse’s rebellion which is at stake here as the fact that, through “too much love,” he has unwittingly “wrecked” the “poor stunned city” of Dublin (DB 10). O’Byrne’s poem is a passionate cry for humanity rather than a defence of violence to advance political ends. And it is with a real poignancy that Pearse’s soul whispers at the end of “Was it all for this?”:

‘Was it for this?: Wilfred Owen and O’Byrne

Was it for this the wild geese spread
The grey wing upon every tide;
For this that all that blood was shed,
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,
All that delirium of the brave?
Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone,
It’s with O’Leary in the grave.13

In his magnificent survey of over a thousand instances of the formulation “Was It for This?” in Anglophone literature, Daniel Shore pauses to cite the above stanza, remarking that “W. B. Yeats’s poem ‘September 1913,’ though a late adopter to be sure, nevertheless repurposes the phrase as a reflection on Irish politics and particularly on the apparent demise of Irish nationalist hopes at the hands of middle-class greed and fear.”\(^{14}\) For present purposes this is an extremely valuable observation as one has only to read the stanza against O’Byrne’s “IN MEMORIAM” to realize the extent to which Pearse’s question is in dialogue with Yeats’s position. Even though O’Byrne’s wartime poetry is haunted by Yeats’s sonorous namings, cadences, and reiterated rhetorical questions, it seems that here (for reasons we will examine in more detail presently), O’Byrne feels compelled to resist the desolate vision of his older contemporary. “No,” he replies (the affirmative negation of Keats’s Nightingale against death almost bursting out of his opening line),\(^ {15}\)

\begin{verbatim}
it was not for this, mad hero-heart,
Not all for this! Up from the tragic flame
You lit new buds of climbing fire shall start,
And flowering with the enchantment of your name
Strike wildly on a myriad drowsy eyes,
And blaze your dream to unborn centuries. \(\text{(DB 10)}\)
\end{verbatim}

Like Keats’s nightingale, singing to a benumbed humanity across the centuries with an unprecedented clarity so, in time (O’Byrne’s narrator promises), Pearse’s vision will also find its audience. And where, in Yeats’s poem, the Republican leader Robert Emmet is relegated to the grave with O’Leary, in the final stanza of O’Byrne’s response, Pearse is pictured “with Emmet soul to soul” – watching “Dawn reddening round the Isle of Destiny” while (“flame on flame”), a “new sunrise” rolls “Across the mound where her great lovers lie” \((DB, 10)\). Naturally enough, at the time of writing and publication, O’Byrne could not have known that in December of the same year Sinn Féin was to gain a landslide electoral victory, paving the way for the creation of a breakaway government and the declaration of independence from Britain on January 21, 1919. Or that, from the point of view of Irish Republicans, the positive sentiment with which O’Byrne in-

\(^{14}\) Daniel Shore, “Was It for This?” Chapter 3 of Shore’s *Cyberformalism: Histories of Linguistic Forms in the Digital Archive* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 84.

\(^{15}\) “Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!,” “Ode to a Nightingale,” in *Poems of John Keats*, 271, stanza 7, l. 61.
vigorated the final stanza was to be at least partially vindicated by these historical events.

With another sort of historical hindsight, we may also wonder whether the interrogative leading to O’Byrne’s “all for this” in a poem written shortly before the end of the First World War has a wider European (and, indeed, global) resonance. After all, the same device is used, more famously, in a sonnet penned at Ripon in May of the same year, and published in *The Nation* on June 15: “Was it for this the clay grew tall?” asks Wilfred Owen’s narrator in the sonnet, “Futility” – itself an “In Memoriam” to a man who has died for the cause upon the field.16 If we were to speculate on the possibility that Owen knew O’Byrne’s poem – which, as we shall see, may have been available through some channels by April, 1918 – we could do worse than to examine O’Byrne’s printed lines against four of Owen’s surviving manuscript drafts, created at Ripon in the following month. *MS1*, provisionally titled “Frustration;” *MS2*, titled “Move him into the Sun;” *MS3*, which – titled “Futility” – witnesses the first appearance of the line “Was it for this” (“… the clay grew tall?“); and *MS4*, also titled “Futility” – a version which is very close to the poem’s final form.17 In *MS3* and *MS4*, there is only one word (“all”) separating O’Byrne’s formulation from Owen’s, while they share a striking similarity of situation. At the beginning of each poem, the narrators are trying to come to terms, in very primal ways, with the draining away of heat resulting from the loss of *élan vital*. Thus O’Byrne’s speaker, trying to clasp (and presumably warm) the “nerveless hand” of his dead “Brother,” comes to realize that “No fiery breath/Of holy rage can stir you now” (*DB* 8), while *MS2*’s experimental title, “Move him into the Sun,” foregrounds the importance of the same at-

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tempt in the mind of Owen’s narrator. Curiously, too, the thought behind Owen’s line seems to be an inversion of Shakespeare’s “Fear no more the heat o’ the sun,” sung in Wales at that moment in Cymbeline where the brothers Arviragus and Guiderius are performing the funeral rites for a dead “brother” (who is, unbeknownst to them, their lost sister, Princess Innogen – and who will be resurrected over the course of the play).

Naturally enough, poetic allusion does not normally need to restrict itself to close repetition. Granted, for allusiveness to be detectable at all, there have to be some commonalities between the texts compared. Yet as often as not, these may generate dialogue or creative friction, rather than merely copying, echoing, or plagiarizing the source text. Hence, where Pearse is “mazed in sleep” (DB 9), “sleep” is invoked in MS1 as something from which the dead man can no longer be reawakened. Where O’Byrne’s narrator hopes that “death was kind” to Pearse (DB 9), Owen’s sun is first “kindly” [MS1], and subsequently “kind” [MS2]. Where O’Byrne refers to Ireland, Pearse’s native Connemara and the yard of Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin (DB 9) (where he has been executed in enemy territory), Owen [MS1] refers to the dead man’s native Wales, and France (where he has died in enemy territory). Where in O’Byrne the “cold winds sob/Flinging pale screaming wreaths to stars and souls” (DB 9), Owen’s MS1 – at the beginning of a revision which is eventually going to create a brilliant outcome – invokes “the sands of a cold star.”

In addition to the formula (“was it … for this?”), these seven words, alongside those mentioning subtextual kinships such as brothers and hands/limbs, certainly support the idea of a close intertextual relation between O’Byrne’s and Owen’s poems. (Interestingly, none of them are present in, for instance, Yeats’s poem.) But what about the social realities? Is it possible that they could have known one another’s work? The question is particularly pertinent since the banning of O’Byrne’s book meant that it could only be distributed privately, while Owen’s use of the “Was it for this” interrogative was (as consultation with the manuscripts reveals) something toyed with in the later stages of revision, shortly, before he, himself, was killed in the war? Fascinatingly, the possibility of such a connection is not easily to be discounted. With regard to A Dublin Ballad

18 For greater clarity in this discussion, key overlapping terms have been italicized. One difference here is that, rather than restricting himself to hands, Owen’s drafts experiment insistently with “limbs” and “Nerves,” “still warm.”
we do know that, although it had been “announced” as “ready for publication on April 15th 1918” and subsequently blocked by the censor, Colm Ó Lochlainn – the printer at the Candle Press – had circulated the book anyway. Yeats, for one, was publicly talking about it in following year.\textsuperscript{20} Added to which, towards the end of his life, Owen was increasingly mixing with English literary élite (attending, for instance, Robert Graves’s wedding in January 1918). So it may not have been unlikely that he would have been able to get his hands on the “forbidden” war poetry of the moment through such channels.

“Dermot O’Byrne” and Sir Arnold Bax

More to the point, however, is the contingency that – over the entire period of Owen’s London visits from 1914 to 1918 – O’Byrne was in England, for the most part mingling with London’s artistic élite. It was also in England that he penned \textit{A Dublin Ballad and Other Poems by Dermot O’Byrne}. For the irony of this, as already mentioned, is that “Dermot O’Byrne” was actually a pseudonym. And rather than being just the poet and storyteller designated by his \textit{nom-de-plume}, he was that Londoner, Arnold Bax, bound on the separate career trajectory which would ultimately lead to his becoming a figurehead of the English Establishment: knighted in 1937; Master of Music to King George VI from 1941; and composer of Queen Elizabeth II’s Coronation March. “Dermot O’Byrne” was, in other words, the acquired identity into which its owner crawled on his frequent visits to Ireland: self-confessedly sloughing off his Englishness on arrival in Dunleary or Rosslare like “a snake its skin in the spring.”\textsuperscript{21} It was a role in which he unashamedly revelled. In fact – as he gleefully recounts in his 1943 autobiography, \textit{Farewell, My Youth} – immediately prior to his conversation with Pearse his hostess, Molly, had said: “My goodness, Mister Pearse, would you ever have supposed that this fella was an Englishman?” To which


\textsuperscript{21} Quoted in Trelawny, “Seditious,” online.
(“with the ghost of an ironic smile”), Pearse had apparently replied: “I’m half-English myself?”

The truth is that, as a late adolescent, Bax had read Yeats’s *Wanderings of Oisin* (1889), and fallen in love with Ireland as well as with the poetry itself: “[I]n a moment the Celt within me stood revealed,” he recalled. As a result, he had travelled increasingly to Ireland, living at different times in Dublin and Glencolumbcille (Glenn Chomb Cille, on the West Coast of Donegal), where he had learned Gaelic, lodging in what is now Roartys hosteltry and a little cottage opposite where the Glencolumbcille Folk Village Heritage Museum now stands. There he composed a good deal of his early work – including *A Connemara Revel* (1904), *An Irish Overture* (1905) and *Cathleen-ni-Hoolihan* (1905). *Into the Twilight* followed in 1908, and *In the Faery Hills* in 1909. That he also successfully tried his hand at writing stories and poetry was simply a bonus; his real aim (as he confessed in a 1949 BBC broadcast) was a musical one: to “write Irishly” in his music, “using figures and melodies of a definitely Celtic curve” to create provocative works which looked beyond the Celtic Twilight (AB 1949: c. 2’41”). These included tone poems such as *The Garden of Fand* in 1906.

When Bax returned to England around the beginning of the First World War, it was therefore tantalizing rather than exceptional that the circles in which he and Owen moved during the course of the latter’s London visits from 1914 to 1918 should have overlapped. Most strikingly, Owen, who lived much of the time across the road from Harold Monro’s bookshop, attended readings there: making the acquaintance of the poet Eleanor Farjeon as well as Monro himself (to whom he entrusted a number of his manuscript poems – including his late sonnets – for scrutiny and critical comment). In turn Monro, and especially Farjeon, were well acquainted with the Bax family during these years, Eleanor having known Arnold from his student days. Remaining in close contact with Arnold’s

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brother, the poet and dramatist Clifford Bax, Farjeon had worked with the latter (among much else) on easing the way for young poets. One was Edward Thomas, who acknowledged their kindness by dedicating his 1915 collection, *Four-and-Twenty Blackbirds*, to Eleanor and Clifford.\(^\text{26}\) Despite Clifford’s benignity, however, Edward was not a great fan of his poetry; as Jean Moorcroft Wilson has pointed out, he preferred the verse and stories of the fledgling Dermot O’Byrne, which he “enjoyed … very much.”\(^\text{27}\)

To say that *A Dublin Ballad and Other Poems by Dermot O’Byrne*, written in England, was carved out of the frustrations of the land which Bax had so assiduously sought to make his own may, in fact, be an understatement. As Judith Butler has insistently reminded us, all identities are performances.\(^\text{28}\) And they are seldom achieved without pain. For Bax, the very identity of Dermot O’Byrne had depended on a deep identification with Celtic culture. But as he confessed in his 1949 broadcast on the BBC: “The catastrophe of 1914 certainly threw a cloud upon the imaginations of men, and bundled away dreams, such as those in which I had hitherto indulged” (AB 1949: c. 9’04”). Hence, having resisted Yeats’s judgement on the death of “Romantic Ireland” for as long he could, he finally gave in, acknowledging the fading of his Celtic fantasy in his 1919 poem, “The Ships.” “Out of that beautiful and treacherous West,” he resolved, “I will call home my fragile fleet of dreams,”

Nor seek again those vain Isles of the Blest
Nor heed again the phantom sun’s behest
Nor sea-allurements in his last red gleams.\(^\text{29}\)

It was a hard-fought loss. For O’Byrne, the war years in England – where fragile health prevented him from seeing overseas service – became a time of intense creative friction: not only in terms of poetry, but also in terms of

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\(^\text{29}\) Quoted in Scott–Sutherland, *Arnold Bax*, 55.
music. As Bax observed in the 1949 broadcast: “The demon of the time
seized upon us and forced us to his will” (AB 1949: c. 9’25”). In the poetry
of A Dublin Ballad, this resulted in the dissonance between the spirit of as-
piration that O’Byrne had fought so valiantly to preserve in the “In Memo-
rium” and the increasing bitterness of tone emergent in the voices of his
poetic narrators. And in music, equally, the experience of Easter 1916 was
lived out through the composition of a number of orchestral scores over
the summer which transmuted Bax’s Celticism into something harder, sad-
der, and darker. Most notably, In Memoriam Pádraig Pearse (1916): an or-
chestral elegy which, for understandable reasons, was not performed in
England or in Ireland until after Bax’s death in 1953.

Just as O’Byrne’s literary writing is suffused with allusions to the avatars
of the poetic and literary dream he is living so, too, Bax’s music at times
acknowledges influences – such as Richard Wagner, Johann Strauss, Maur-
ice Ravel, and even melodies from the Irish popular tradition – at the
same time as it self-consciously distances itself from the work of his British
contemporaries. In this respect, however, “Celticism” here did not neces-
sarily include direct reference to traditional Irish dance music for even
though Bax studied that music with the musicians of Glencolumbcille, it
was not really his cup of tea. Rather, as he conceded in Farewell, My Youth,
his thinking on the subject was that “you should make a point of trying
every experience once, excepting incest and folkdancing.”

That said, Bax did collect a number of Donegal tunes as well as embroidering the titles of
well-known rebel songs (such as “Who Fears to Speak of Ninety-eight”) into A Dublin Ballad. In musical form, the same theme – the first line of
William Elliot Hudson’s nineteenth-century composition “The Memory of
the Dead” – also appeared in the orchestral In Memoriam Pádraig Pearse.
Transposed from what would have been the unequivocal F Major of Hud-
son’s melody into a somewhat darker F Dorian setting, Bax’s rendition of
the line clearly retains its allusive power (to Irish ears, at least), even
though it loses a little of its bounce (see Figures 1 and 2). On the other
hand, as Bax admitted to his sometime lover, Harriet Cohen, on August 7,
1916, the allusion “would quite remove it from the sympathy of a British
audience if it were recognized – which is in all probability unlikely.”

30 Bax, Farewell, 17.
31 See stanza two of the title poem, which begins: “Some boy-o whistled Ninety-
eight/One Sunday night in College Green” (DB 5).
32 Quoted by Graham Parlett, “The Background to In Memoriam,” The Sir Arnold
Bax Web Site (March 9, 2017), http://arnoldbax.com/the-background-to-in-memor
seems that here, even more markedly in his music than in his poetry, Bax is engaged in a chameleonic game: endeavouring to “pass” unnoticed in the national colours of both cultures.

Similarly, the beautiful opening of main theme of *In Memoriam Pádraig Pearse* bears a close relation to the chorus of the well-known ballad, “The Fields of Athenry.” Here it is as if, in much the same way as Giacomo Puccini had adapted the “Ballad of Lord Franklin” for “Nessun Dorma,” Bax had repurposed an iconic folk song for formal orchestral delivery within a concert hall (see Figures 3 and 4):

Compellingly, the memorable first bar in both passages is identical – its expansiveness giving (in different ways) an enormous lift to both works – while the Elgarian sweep of the second bar of Figure 3 feels like a simplifi-
cation of the more elaborate variation voiced in the second bar of Figure 4. It is only thereafter that the two tunes diverge.

If this sort of grand balladic allusion was what Bax had been aiming at, his choice would have been well-made at a semantic, as well as an aesthetic, level. Because “The Fields of Athenry” nowadays enjoys the status of a traditional “rebel song,” it is wholly reasonable to suppose that here, in an analogous manner to his quotation from “The Memory of the Dead,” Bax may have been slyly alerting his auditors to the political orientation of his main theme. Especially since, at the insistence of Pearse himself, Athenry had been earmarked as a key position in which to establish a rebel headquarters during the uprising. In the event, Pearse’s plan was thwarted by a failure of support and supplies during the rebellion itself: contingencies which eventually forced the 650 rebels who had gathered there on the Easter Wednesday of 1916 to surrender to the authorities. One long-term consequence of these events was that Athenry became one of four locations outside Dublin selected to host a State ceremony for the 2016 centennial commemoration of the Easter Rising. And accordingly, it would have been comprehensible if some listeners attending the Irish première of Bax’s In Memoriam Pádraig Pearse at Dublin’s National Concert Hall on February 19, 2016 had experienced an enriched sense of cultural synchronicity. Not least because, under such circumstances, Bax’s theme may have been interpreted as fulfilling a double function: complementing the immanent Athenry Festivities at the same time as it commemorated Pearse’s wider endeavour.

However, and notwithstanding the potential of such a scenario, in reality something more complex appears to be in play here. For it turns out that the words and music of “The Fields of Athenry” – despite their antiquated flavour – are not traditional at all but were composed by the Dublin-born singer Pete St. John (aka Peter Mooney), in the 1970s. In itself this finding does nothing to undermine the historical details supplied above. Or, for that matter, the vicarious feeling of cultural parallelism which may have been sensed by celebrants in Dublin and Athenry in 2016. (As the Dublin Professor of Music, Harry White put it in January of that

year: “If In Memoriam isn’t Irish music, it is hard to know what is.”) But because Bax’s composition precedes Mooney’s by over forty years, it becomes important to consider whether the directionality of the allusion actually works the other way around; or whether the similarity between the two themes should be regarded as merely coincidental, and cast to the winds. With respect to the question of whether Mooney could be quoting Bax, it is certainly the case that In Memoriam Pádraig Pearse existed in a piano redaction which was presented to Éamon de Valera by the pianist Harriet Cohen in 1955 and eventually housed in the library of University College, Dublin. On the other hand, it is not very likely that Mooney would have had cause to access it there. Likewise, because the full orchestral score was lost until 1993, there was no chance that he could have heard it in the 1970s. All the same, it does seem extraordinary that the same melodic motif should have promoted an independent but convergent association with the Irish rebel tradition in the two themes. The question as to whether the melody reached the public ear in a different form is therefore something we will return to shortly.

Pearls of the Chameleonic: Bax and Creative Friction

By Bax’s own account, as we have seen, the Great War marked a severance point in his relationship with Ireland. That is not to say that he did not love the country for the rest of his life, returning to it in old age, and dying there. Rather, it is to acknowledge that the romance and, more specifically, the learning curve involved in his attempt to mould a Celtic sound of his

34 Harry White, “‘One of Us’: When Arnold Met Patrick,” Irish Independent (January 21, 2016): 10, https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/1916/rising-perspectives/one-of-us-when-arnold-met-patrick-34379297.html, accessed November 7, 2018. Ironically enough – although this merely emphasizes the chameleonic nature of Bax’s work – Andrew Blake, writing about Bax’s English reception in 1996, argued that he was then being championed for the most part by “conservative Little Englanders of the type currently called Eurosceptics, who think that English music should be promoted, and who are convinced that Bax was a Great Composer,” see Andrew Blake, “T. H. White, Arnold Bax, and the Alternative History of Britain,” in Impossibility Fiction: Alternativity – Extrapolation – Speculation, edited by Derek Littlewood and Peter Stockwell (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996), 32.

35 It was not until 1998 that “In Memoriam” was finally recorded by Vernon Handley and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra; in Bax, Arnold, Bax: Bard of Dimbovitza – In Memoriam – Concertante for Piano (Chandos 9715, 1998).
own became increasingly assimilated into new imaginative worlds over the second decade of the twentieth century, as Bax flirted with the contemporary musics of Russia and Scandinavia. Naturally enough, new identity formations (whether they be artistic or personal) are seldom attained without some sense of loss, and it would be invidious to suggest that Bax's formative experiences did not, at times, return to haunt him.

In 1948 for instance, some twenty years after *A Dublin Ballad* and twenty-two years after the orchestral *In Memoriam*, Bax – writing music for the climax of David Lean's film, *Oliver Twist* – reached into his back-catalogue and aired, one last time, his magisterial “Pádraig Pearse” theme in its original key (see Figure 3, above). What is the meaning of this? Is it just pragmatic re-mediation resulting from the fact that, by then, Bax was approaching sixty-five and the work had never been performed? Or was it because Lean’s imagery speaks for the untenability of the social injustice in the world where Oliver finds himself, even as it critiques Sikes’s recourse to violence? Whatever the case, Bax’s decision is a good one, closing what proved to be a popular movie with what, in Victorian London, feels like a breath of fresh air. From place to place. And time to time. It is as if, in some dreamlike way, the spectre of the crowd scenes, Oliver on the roof, the fatal gunshot, do elicit memories of the siege of the Dublin GPO, and those difficult times a quarter of a century earlier.

What, in the end, are we to make of this chameleonic composer-cum-poet who represents the cause of Irish Republicanism with the first plural pronoun at one time and accepts his role as an iconic member of the British establishment at another? In his recent revaluation for the *Journal of Music* the composer Séamas de Barra may have a point when he insists that the sort of Irishness embraced by O’Byrne and Bax was always an illusion. It may be fair, too, to point out that – for whatever reason (and it might include issues such as the frail infrastructure available to orchestral music in Dublin at the beginning of the century as well as Bax’s own personality as a composer) – Bax seemed to segregate his musical life into an English environment: paying little attention to music within Irish high

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36 That said (and leaving aside de Barra’s somewhat proprietorial attitude toward national identity), the article is somewhat weakened by the writer’s apparent confusion of O’Byrne and his poetic narrators with Bax himself (as witnessed, for instance, by his somewhat simplistic attribution of O’Byrne’s poetic narrator’s richly ambiguous expression, “my drowsy self” (*DB*, 6) to Bax’s own biographical situation). See Séamas de Barra, “Into the Twilight: Arnold Bax and Ireland,” *The Journal of Music* (March 1, 2004), http://journalofmusic.com/focus/twilight-arnold-bax-and-ireland, accessed November 7, 2018.
culture. But all the same, such considerations do not necessarily need to disqualify the Englishman from having made a modest contribution to Irish culture. The late, great, Donegal fiddler, Tommy Peoples, recently wrote that Irish music is an attitude of mind, and that if you partake of that attitude with respect, it does not matter where you come from. Certainly, Bax performed his chameleonic cultural identity with sincerity and respect. His poetry was a small part of the rebellion; indeed, the middle stanza of his “Shells at Oranmore” was published by the Irish Government as part of the 50 year anniversary of the State, while his music and poetry were regularly featured in Ireland by both RTÉ and the national press in connection with the 2016 anniversary of the Easter rising. Perhaps climactically, the 2016 Dublin performance of the orchestral In Memoriam signalled its establishment as one of the markers of that Imagined Community which the Government felt belonged to the cultural definition of the Irish State.

From another perspective it is clear that, like Yeats, O’Byrne/Bax was an artist who moved into modernity from romanticism through the use of masks. Hence, in this sense, the cultural hybridity created by performing different cultural identities may also be seen to contribute to cultural change. As Andrew Blake puts it: although Irish music remained something of a “constant” reference point in Bax’s work, vibrantly present, for instance, in the final movement of the Third Symphony (1929), as that piece progresses, the jauntiness is reduced (though some of its “Celtic inflection” is retained), and the later stages are overlain by German and Scandinavian textures. “What was happening,” Blake surmises, “was that Bax was beginning to express his ambiguity towards Englishness by moving away from folk-music modalities and towards the sound-world of the Scandinavian symphony, especially the sound-world of Sibelius.” Or, to take a final example, Blake argues that in the opening phrases of Bax’s seventh, and last, symphony (performed in 1939), “the sea and wind, Irish music, the rhythms of Sibelius and the North, are all conflated.”

What we are experiencing here is just one example of how – with attention, inventiveness, and (hopefully) some degree of respect behind it – friction at the interface between our contested identities may occasionally (very occasionally) contribute to the generation of cultural pearls.

37 de Barra, “Twilight.”
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Chapter 6
In Search of Identity: Terms Related to Emerging American Nationalism during the 1760s and 1770s

– Johanna Rastas

Introduction

The relationship between a mother country and its colony is generally considered problematic. From the perspective of the mother country, financial gain from the colony has often played an important role. For colonies, a restraining feature is usually the fact that real decisions are made elsewhere, and the colony has only executive power. The mutual relationship between Britain and its rapidly grown American colonies is a good example of this. The colonies were a mosaic shaped on the basis of how the colony came into being and what were the local circumstances, until their relationship to the mother country changed during a special time period in the 1760s and 1770s and they became more united.¹

The rebellion of the thirteen colonies led to the Revolutionary War and, eventually, to the declaration of independence in 1776. At that time the newly born state was not like any other known nation. The inhabitants had to define themselves as other than subjects of the British Crown. This transformation process of national identity from British colonists into American citizens was slow and it had already begun before the declaration of independence.²

Despite the fact that the leading figures in the rebellion could easily change their allegiance from the King to the new nation, the idea of national community in the thirteen British colonies was unfamiliar for the majority of the ordinary people.³ In this chapter it is examined how the national identity of the colonists evolved during the 1760s and 1770s and

³ Marienstras, “Nationality,” 682.
what kind of terminology the colonists used in relation to British or American identity. This subject has been previously studied using material from newspapers, but in this chapter it will be approached by using letters as primary material.

**Historical Background**

The original thirteen colonies belonging to Britain on the east coast of North America were Virginia, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maryland, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Georgia. The relationship between Britain and its American colonies became increasingly strained when people living in England noticed that there was a difference in taxes between Britain and its American colonies.

When the French and Indian War ended in 1763 it was felt that the colonies should, in turn, help in maintaining the empire by paying more taxes, as costs of the war had been great, and the British considered that they had helped the colonists during the war. Several strict laws were passed, and taxes raised concerning the American colonies in the 1760s and 1770s and these were also more vigorously enforced. Many colonists started to feel distant to the mother country, and this started to bind the colonists together in the thirteen different colonies. Acts, due to which the colonists’ nationalistic mentality grew stronger, were, in particular, the Stamp Act in 1765, the Townshend Acts in 1767, the Tea Act in 1773, and the Coercive Acts in 1774.

The colonial situation became a major political theme in England for two decades from the early 1760s onwards. The Parliament in Britain had divergent views on the colonial situation. In America, those who defended

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the rights of the colonies contacted a faction of Whig politicians called the Rockinghamites in Britain, as they understood the views of the colonists.7

It is said that the leader of the Rockinghamites, politician Charles Watson–Wentworth, Second Marquess of Rockingham, was the best-informed politician in Europe concerning the situation of the colonies, which is why the material of this chapter consists of ten letters written from the American colonies to Watson–Wentworth in Britain. Watson–Wentworth was a prominent British Whig statesman, and he served two terms as Prime Minister of Great Britain. Some of the letters he received conveyed information, and some were clearly petition letters for favouring certain causes against English oppression. The Rockinghamites could exploit this information in political comments and discussions and ended up supporting the independence of the American colonies.8 The breach between the colonies and the mother country led to Revolutionary War which began in 1775 and to the Declaration of Independence in 1776. However, it was only in 1783 when Britain acknowledged the independence of the United States.

National Identity

Identity can, of course, be defined as people’s sense of who they are. According to John E. Joseph a person’s identity consists of two basic aspects: their name, which separates them from other people, and something which does not have a specific term, something that is abstract and lies deeper than the name, constituting the person’s real being. Joseph identifies three pairs of subtypes regarding personal identity: “[O]ne for real people and one for fictional characters; one for oneself and one for others; one for individuals and one for groups.”9

There is a clear difference between individual identity and the identity of a group, for example that of a nation. Group identities, like American, are more meaningful than the names of people. In addition to the fact that they indicate certain persons, they also express something more significant about them. However, the difference between these is not so simple. A person’s so called deep personal identity partly consists of the various group identities into which one stakes a claim, but people still like to believe that they are more than just the sum of these parts.¹⁰

Joseph considers group identities to be more abstract than individual identities, as they do not exist separately from the people possessing that group identity. Moreover, it is common that the most concrete group identity manifests itself in a single, symbolic individual. It is also useful to acknowledge that even though the group identities adopted by individuals makes it clearer for them to sense who they are, there is a possibility that these identities smother the real self. Individual identity is partly established by rank which is relative to other people sharing the same group identity. Thus, there is tension between these two types of identities and that “gives the overall concept of identity much of its power.”¹¹ It can be stated that there are repertoires of identities that individuals feel they possess themselves and that others possess for them. Moreover, identities are not natural facts about us, they need to be constructed. Therefore, identity does not remain stable throughout one’s life.¹²

Several scholars agree that nation is also a mental construct.¹³ According to Max Savelle,¹⁴ the nation is both real and nonetheless non-existing, it is a mental construct, a concept only in the minds of several people. Initially, national identity, for example American, exists only as a desire. If the motivation is great enough, people sharing this same desire can become a critical mass in the putative nation. That is when the concept or category, like American people, becomes real.¹⁵

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¹¹ Joseph, 5.
¹² Joseph, 6, 9.
¹⁴ Savelle, American 67, 901–02.
¹⁵ Joseph, Language, 106.
Benedict Anderson’s conception of defining the nation as “an imagined political community”\textsuperscript{16} has been influential. It is imagined as the members of this nation will never know most of the other members, but the image of their unity lives in their minds. Ernest Gellner’s statement is in agreement with Anderson’s definition when Gellner states that “[n]ationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.”\textsuperscript{17} Its invention, however, needs to be forgotten. In order to the nation not be perceived artificial, it is essential to create a belief that the nation, in fact, has not been invented.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{The Emergence of American National Identity}

In eighteenth-century North America the determination of one’s nationality might have changed and for many people it may have been a complicated and protracted process. The majority of the first colonists were previously citizens of Great Britain. The inhabitants of the American colonies were loyal to the King of England a long time after they arrived on the American continent. As they, too, were royal subjects, they expected to have similar rights to other British subjects.\textsuperscript{19}

Thus, as mentioned previously, the colonists were against the numeral laws and acts which were imposed only on the colonies by the Parliament in Britain. A number of colonists felt that they were singled out from British subjects who were living in Britain. Even though many writers both in the colonies and in Britain continued to refer to the colonists as ‘His Majesty’s subjects’, a distinction had been made by the Parliament and it changed the way the colonists saw themselves and their place in the empire.\textsuperscript{20} The process of nation-building in America was slow, and it had begun long before the Revolutionary War. According to Richard Merritt, even though the rise of American nationalism was a slow and gradual process, there were certain periods during which the development was more rapid.\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
Jon Butler states that the colonies were anglicised in the first half of the eighteenth century, as there were advancements in communication and transportation, leading to easier access to British goods and culture for the colonists. Alan Taylor also points out that a threefold increase in ships crossing the Atlantic between the years 1670 and 1730 provided a strong sense of unity with Britain as the ships carried people, information and goods between the colonies and the mother country.

However, there was also Americanisation occurring in the colonies. The colonists supported local craftsmen and artisans, which were growing in numbers, by using their new economic strength. Therefore, it can be stated that the colonists began to have a stronger sense of themselves as being distinct people, who wanted to be self-sustaining and focus some of their attention on their own society, while, at the same time, being strongly influenced by the mother country.

In newspapers both colonial and British writers referred to the colonists as a collective group of people, separate from their fellow subjects in Britain. The colonial writers did this mainly to take a stand against the violations of the rights made by Parliament and to symbolically include all colonists in their fight against British rule. Notwithstanding the fact that the colonists were referred to as a unified group, the writers still had many different terms with which to describe them.

Some scholars believe that right up until the Revolution the colonists were still loyal to Britain and the King. Several scholars suggest that the American nation was born within the quarter century from 1750–1775. Therefore, loyalty to the King existed at the same time as a growing sense of a separate identity and desire for independence.

Negative feelings from both sides began to increase after the French and Indian War, which ended in 1763. During the war many soldiers from Britain and the colonies encountered each other for the first time and found that they were, in fact, quite different and even disagreeable. At this

24 Butler, Becoming, 156.
26 Florio, 10.
time the British also needed to do some adjustments in their administra-
tion and began to raise taxes in the colonies to cover for example the war 
expenses. Thus, the tension between the colonists and the British govern-
ment, Parliament and the King’s ministers in particular, had already in-
creased a decade before the Revolution. A distinct identity was certainly 
developing, but at that time they were not ready to break with Britain and 
the King.29

The next example is from the material of this chapter, from a letter sent 
from Philadelphia on May 14, 1774:

The people of Pennsylvania, my Lord, are accustomed to look upon all 
the manoeuvres of the inhabitants of New England with a jealous eye: 
But the Cause in which they are at present so deeply engaged is consid-
ered as a general one, & the maxim throughout the colonies is – we 
stand or fall together.30

The sentence in the previous example relates to the controversies between 
Britain and the colonies. The writer of the letter, reverend Thomas 
Coombe, acknowledges that there are differences between the colonies, 
but states that there is a common cause and that they are united.

Even in the beginning of the 1770s the Revolution was not inevitable. 
The actions of the Parliament in Britain created a common enemy for the 
colonists, but they were still only protesting against certain issues and not 
creating a single American identity. The colonists had also other difficul-
ties in forming a unified identity, in addition to their challenging relation-
ship with Britain.31

According to Emma Florio,32 it would be simple to state that the 
colonists probably felt more and more “American” as the 1770s pro-
gressed, but the loyalists, who were great in number, must also be taken 
into account. If the colonists had a larger sense of community, it was more 
often as a British subject, or within the city, region, or colony in which 
they lived than as an “American.”

Furthermore, it is often thought that a colonist either had an American 
or a British identity, but it should be taken into consideration that people 
living in the colonies had come from several European countries. There 
were large numbers of people living in frontier areas who did not feel

29 Florio, “Analysis,” 5–6, 16.
30 WWM/R/1/1489, Letter from Rev. Thomas Coombe, Philadelphia, to Rocking-
ham, 14 May 1774.
32 Florio, 10.
bonded with other colonists and did not have a sense of identity as a British subject or as an American.33

There were different circumstances socially, economically, and politically in each colony. Moreover, as stated in the previous paragraph, ethnic diversity was quite significant. On top of this, the land area was extremely vast, and the colonists did not have the need or even means to interact with other people outside their own colony. Gradually, however, the differences became less noticeable as the colonies became more and more similar.34 However, Florio reminds that while the economic and social conditions became more similar, the colonists might not have been aware of that.35 Therefore, even though their lives were not that different, the colonists may not have had a connection ideologically.

Slowly these intercolonial communications increased. The gradual unity of the colonies can be noticed in a letter which is included in the material of this chapter: “our People are imbolden’d – Add to this they are all United – Every man inspirits his neighbor and Colonies echo to Colonies. We are Englishmen and will be free.”36 This letter has been sent from New York on November 8, 1765. As can be noticed from this example, some writers refer to the colonists as Englishmen, usually in connection to their rights as Englishmen.

At some point, however, the colonists started to identify themselves as American and not as British, which can be referred to as the emergence of American national identity. It was not a natural process or bound to happen at some point. As it was a collective imagining of a new identity by a great number of people, there must have been forces that encouraged people to think of themselves as American.37

A breaking point was in 1775 when the Revolutionary War began from the battle of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. It seems to be the date on which Great Britain officially became the enemy of many American colonists.38 According to Alexander Ziegler,39 1775 appears to be the

33 Florio, 6, 16.
36 WWM/R/1/522, Letter from Governor Thomas Boone, New York, to Rockingham, November 8, 1765.
37 Ziegler, “Colonies,” 347.
38 Ziegler, 353, 361.
39 Ziegler, 361–362.
jumping off point for an emerging sense of American identity. When the colonists had distanced themselves enough from the mother country, a group of select men declared the colonies independent in 1776.  

Recent Studies

As mentioned in the introduction, some scholars have examined the development of American national identity in newspapers published in the American colonies. Two most recent studies are Ziegler’s and Florio’s articles written in 2006 and 2013, respectively. The goal of both of these studies was to detect the emergence of American national identity as evidenced by the language used in newspapers in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

From 1750 to 1775 Ziegler focused on the South Carolina Gazette, which was published in Charleston. After 1775 he read other Charleston newspapers until 1800. In order to analyse the content of the newspapers, Ziegler formulated a list of terms for which he would search for in the newspapers during his research. This list consists of two groups: British identity, containing words or phrases supportive of British culture and their control over the colonies, and American identity, containing words or phrases supportive of a new American culture and freedom from the British rule.

Based on his findings, Ziegler states that the American nation was not established at a specific moment in the minds of the colonists. The growing of American national identity was a gradual process, but Ziegler identifies 1775 as a breaking point and from 1785 their identity started to spread more rapidly.

Florio examined what kind of words were used to describe the colonists (for example Americans or British subjects) in order to find out how they were viewed and how the colonists viewed themselves. Florio looked at three newspapers, The Boston Post-Boy, The Boston Gazette, and the Georgia Gazette, at three different periods: 1765–1766, 1769, and 1773–1774. These years were chosen as they are set between the end of the French and Indian War and the beginning of the Revolution, and thus provide a good range.

41 Ziegler, “Colonies”; Florio, “Analysis.”
42 Ziegler, “Colonies,” 353.
43 Ziegler, 367–68.
These years also depict the political atmosphere in the colonies with 1769 being a relatively quiet year and the other two periods more turbulent with the stamp duties in 1765–1766 and more concrete rebellion in 1773–1774, for example the Boston Tea Party and its aftermath. Florio suggests that despite the fact that many secondary sources state all colonists had a clear idea of themselves as being a single group of people, this was, in fact, not the case. According to Florio, neither the colonists nor people in Britain could identify the colonists as a group with a clearly distinct identity. Throughout the time period from 1765 to 1774, there were several terms in use when referring to the colonists. The colonists did have a steadily increasing sense of a distinct identity, and the term American is more widely used by the 1770s, but it cannot be stated that a single colonial identity existed prior to the Revolution.

In addition, Rogan Kersh has studied the development of separate colonies into united colonies which functioned more clearly together, and eventually, the development into the United States. In Kersh’s study this development culminates in the years 1775–1776 and it is clearly seen rhetorically as well.

Material and Methods

Using newspapers as material was justified by Ziegler by a statement that the rise of the American national identity was driven by the colonial elites as they were the ones who had the tools for print communication. Many other scholars have also underlined the importance of newspapers and the press in bringing the colonists together before the Revolution. Pauline Maier reminds, however, that the majority of the colonists might not have had access to these newspapers.

It is therefore interesting to examine the development of American national identity in letter material. The material for this chapter consists of ten letters belonging to an archival collection called Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments: Papers of Charles Watson–Wentworth, held in the Sheffield City

45 Florio, 32–33.
46 Kersh, Dreams, 52–57.
Archives. The letters are mainly unedited. One letter has been printed in the first volume of *Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and his contemporaries* by George Thomas Keppel\(^\text{49}\) and one letter has been partly edited and published in the second volume of *Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and his contemporaries*.\(^\text{50}\)

The letters have been sent from the American colonies to Watson–Wentworth in Britain during the 1760s and 1770s. Four of these letters are from the latter half of the 1760s and six are from the first half of the 1770s. Six of the letters are from New York and two from Philadelphia. One letter has been generally marked “North America” and in one letter the place from where it has been sent is not mentioned. However, from the contents it can be deduced that it is from North America, possibly from Providence, Rhode Island.

Two of the letters have been sent by a member of the higher class and one sender belongs to the middle class. Two senders are not known people and their rank in the society cannot be determined. As many as five of the letters are unsigned. Unfortunately, in the scope of this chapter the personal lives, opinions, or other political activities of these known senders cannot be examined further. The length of these ten letters ranges from a one-page letter of 164 words to a sixteen-page letter of 3,721 words. Altogether the material consists of 11,678 words. Therefore, the material for this chapter is very small, but it still gives an idea of the development of American identity.

In this chapter certain predefined terms are looked for in the letters in order to find tendencies pointing to either British or American identity. The terms can be found in Appendices 1 and 2. The method of data collection is content analysis of private letters. Content analysis refers to any technique that enables to draw systematic and objective conclusions by identifying special characteristics of messages relating to social communication.\(^\text{51}\)

The terms are the same Ziegler used in his study in which he examined terminology used in American newspapers.\(^\text{52}\) As stated in the previous section, this list of terms consists of two main groups: British identity and American identity. The group referring to British identity contains words


\(^{52}\) Ziegler, “Colonies.”
or phrases which support British culture and British supremacy over its colonies. This group includes references to the British Empire, to British possessions, to the King of England, and to the colonists as subjects.

The group referring to American identity contains words or phrases which support the new American culture and people who are no longer under the British rule. It includes references to America, to colonial union, colonial possession and to colonists as being citizens of an independent nation. If a phrase contains more than one of these terms, the phrase is still counted as one. The results and discussion on the basis of these results are presented in the next section.

Results and Discussion

In this section I will present my findings in terms of quantity and percentage of the occurrences. I will also discuss the quality of these occurrences and some of their possible implications. In the following Figure 1 the number of references in terms of quantity is given.

In Figure 1 is listed the number of occurrences of references to British identity and to American identity per 1,000 words. These are arranged in chronological order from the oldest letter onward. A month could not be provided for the second letter, as it only contains the year in which it was written.

![Figure 1: Quantity of references to national identity.](https://doi.org/10.5771/9783896658685)

142
It can be detected in this figure that the occurrences referring to American identity are more frequent in the 1770s than in the 1760s and that there is a clear drop in references to British identity in the course of this ten-year period from 1765 to 1775. The spike in letter 5 from February 1774 is the result of exuberant use of the terms *colonies* and *colonists*.

The development can be compared in Figure 2, which shows the percentages for these two categories. For example, in the first letter, written in November 1765, the percentage for references to British identity is 57 and, correspondingly, the percentage for references to American identity is 43. The increase of the percentage for American identity is not clearly linear. The total number of occurrences in the second letter from 1765 and in the third letter from January 1768 is very small and that might make the results somewhat distorted. However, the overall pattern is the increase in references to American identity and the decrease in references to British identity, which is line with Ziegler’s findings. The last letter from October 1775 has a ratio of 69 per cent of references to American and 31 percent of references in relation to American and British identity, respectively.

Most of the examined terms were used at least once. The most common terms are *His Majesty/Majesty’s, the King, subjects, His Majesty’s subjects, subjects of Great Britain, province, colonists/colonies, America/Americans, the peo-

53 Ziegler.
The most common terms pointing to British identity are references to British possession, especially the terms colonists and colonies. References to the King of England are also frequent. There are also many references to colonists as colonial subjects, but from May 1774 onward these terms disappear and there is only one reference to the King of England after this date.

The most common terms pointing to American identity are references to America and references to colonists as citizens of an independent republic. References to colonial union are also frequent, especially from May 1775 onward, which is natural, as the Revolutionary War had begun a month earlier. The start of the Revolutionary War is also a significant watershed in the overall occurrences of references to national identity; after that the references to American identity outnumber the references to British identity.

Terms of which there were no instances are His Excellency, English settlements in America, United States of America/United States, fellow citizens, patriot, Continental Association, Senate, and House of Representatives. The term United states is used after the Declaration of Independence from 1776 onward. It is thus natural that it is not found in the material of this study. Ziegler found the terms patriot, Senate, and House of Representatives only in newspapers dated after 1775, so it is not surprising that these terms are not found in this material either.

The term American is very significant in building identity and creating unity amongst the colonists. The term American or Americans is used before the Revolution, but the terms subjects, His Majesty’s subjects, and Englishmen are used almost as frequently, and the term colonists is very popular as late as 1774. According to Florio, the term Americans had become generally accepted by the 1770s, but it was only a term with which it was convenient to refer to the colonists as a single group, for example as a geographical unit. At the beginning of the 1770s this term was not yet used to refer to the colonists as a group with a common identity or ideology. Based on the adjectives used in connection with the term American, the term can also have a negative implication. For example, this is the case in the phrase plain American which refers to Americans in a derogatory sense. However, in the material of this study there were no instances of this kind of use.

54 Ziegler, 370–71.
56 Florio, 29–30.
The term *subject* is interesting as it has many variations: in addition to using the term as such, it can be extended to terms like *His Majesty’s subjects*, *British subjects*, *subjects of Great Britain*, and *American subjects*. All of these terms convey the identity of the colonists in a different way. The term *His Majesty’s subjects* makes no distinction to subjects in other British colonies or people in Britain and therefore does not treat people in the American colonies as a distinct group. However, often this term can be refined, for example as *His Majesty’s subjects in America*, which makes that distinction. *His Majesty’s subjects* contains the idea of being subjects of the King, but at the same time it does not exclude the idea of being Americans.

Therefore, the term is vaguer than *British subjects*, which mentions the place of origin and thus implies a closer connection to being British. However, this term also excludes a large proportion of colonists who came from somewhere else than Britain and did not consider themselves British.57 Similarly to the term *Englishman*, the term *British subjects* was used when the colonists wanted to emphasize their rights, as this example from the material shows, “the Colonists are, I conceive, entitled to all the Liberties of British subjects.”58 According Florio, *British subjects* were considered “natural born” while *American subjects* were considered “liege,” connected to Britain only through their loyalty and not through a natural connection.59 References to colonists as colonial subjects occur steadily from 1765 to 1774, but are not found in the last four letters of the material for this chapter, all written in 1775.

As a result, it can be stated that although writers referred to the colonists as a unified group, they still used many different words to describe them. Sometimes these references appear in the same sentence as is the case in this example from the material: “People of America Subjects of the Crown of Great Britain.”60 This example has been considered as two individual phrases: *People of America* and *Subjects of the Crown of Great Britain*. Even though these phrases, in turn, contain more than one relevant term each, they have been counted as one, as stated in the methodology. The variety of terms with which the colonists have been described asserts Florio’s notion that neither the colonists nor people in Britain had a clear idea of the identity of the colonists.61

57 Florio, 25.
60 WWM/R/1/1480, An unsigned letter, 5 February 1774.
As the 1770s pressed on, it can be noticed that references to colonial union increased. A good example is the term *Congress*, which identifies the governing body for the colonies. In the six letters from 1765 to 1774 this term was used altogether three times, but in the last four letters from 1775 it was used altogether eleven times. If all references to colonial union are counted, it can be noticed that there were altogether nineteen references in the four letters written in 1775 and only twelve references in the six letters written before 1775.

The results of this study have largely been in line with Ziegler’s findings, but a differing result is the use of the term *state*, a term traditionally used by the patriots in opposition to the term *province*, which was traditionally a European term. Ziegler found in his study that the word *state* did not appear before 1780 in his newspaper material. However, in the material of this study the word *state* is used already in the earliest letter from 1765. There is not, however, a particular increase in the use of this term, it is rather steadily used during the ten-year period from 1765 to 1775. Furthermore, the use of *province* did not decrease during this period, it is also steadily used. Sometimes these two terms are used in the same letter, which is particularly interesting. Possibly the letter writers of this study did not relate these terms to British or American identity.

When the contents of these letters are evaluated as a whole, their purpose was to be an unofficial way to influence the legislation of the mother country and the attitude concerning the situation of the colonies, and also to give information to the receiver about the colonies and about the writer’s views. The letters are sent by writers who supported a greater level of independency for the colonies or at least going back to the situation prior to the Stamp Act crisis in 1765. Therefore, the letters do not represent the attitude of all people living in the colonies, but the change in the minds of active agents and how it was reflected in writing.

**Conclusion: The Evolution of National Identity in the Thirteen Original Colonies**

This chapter examined the evolution of national identity in the thirteen original colonies which belonged to Britain until 1776. The evolution of national identity was examined through the terminology used in letters sent from the colonies to Britain during the very crucial period of change.

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in the 1760s and 1770s. In 1775 this period culminated in the Revolutionary War.

The letters were sent across the Atlantic to the centre of power in Britain in order to get the people in power more aware of the situation in the colonies. The receiver was an opposition politician whose group was able to bring to the discussion in Parliament views which supported a greater level of independency for the colonies or were otherwise in favour of the colonies.

The study was carried out by scrutinising terms pointing either to British or to American identity. This study is in agreement with previous studies in that the results show the change from British colonists to Americans was far from being a quick and simple process. Stating a specific date or event when the American nation came into existence is, naturally, impossible, and was also not the purpose of this study. However, this study strengthens the view that even during the 1760s and 1770s, when Britain imposed taxes and laws to the colonies, the colonists still seemed to be loyal to the King and saw themselves as members of the British empire, not as Americans. The beginning of the Revolutionary War in 1775 seems to be the moment when the colonists started adopting a separate identity.

It would be easy to state that the American nation came into being when the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, but even at this point the identity of the Americans was in flux. In October 1775 there were still references to colonies as being British possession while at the same the colonists fought for their independence. Ziegler states that the American nation did not exist even in 1780 and that the development of their national identity became more rapid from 1785 to 1800. By 1800 it was clear that the American nation was becoming established.

Unfortunately, the material used for this study was only from the years between 1765 and 1775. Therefore, examining the developments after the Declaration of Independence was not possible. Moreover, the amount of material used in this chapter was very small. In order to get a better understanding of this complex subject, this kind of study could be carried out by using a bigger corpus of letters.

There are also other problems which would need to be addressed in a wider study. For example, simply counting the specific words and phrases does not take into account whether these uses occurred in positive or negative contexts. Considering also the context might alter the results to some

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63 Florio, “Analysis”; Merritt, Symbols; Ziegler, “Colonies.”
64 Ziegler, “Colonies,” 367–68.
extent. Moreover, even though this study does bring out tendencies relating to the overall development of American national identity and to some extent generalisations can be made, the use of certain terms points only to the letter writers’ national identity, and even then it cannot be stated with certainty that a particular word was used as a conscious political statement. According to Florio, the writer may have found a certain word only as the most convenient term to use.65

Many of these words open up further discussion, for example the word *subject* which was used in different phrases. Considering in which kind of contexts a specific term, like *subject*, occurs, could give more insights into the term. It could also be possible to create time spans for different terms, which would in turn provide more information about the evolving identity of the colonists.

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Appendix 1: Terms Suggesting British Identity

References to the King of England
His Majesty / Majesty’s
The King
His Excellency
Royal

References to colonists as colonial subjects
Subjects
His Majesty’s subjects
Subjects of Great Britain
British subjects
Englishmen

References to the British Empire
Empire
Imperial

References to British possession
Province
His Majesty’s colonies in America
English settlements in America
Colonists / Colonies

Appendix 2: Terms Suggesting American Identity

References to America
America / Americans
North America / North Americans
United States of America / United States

References to colonists as citizens of an independent republic
The people
Fellow citizens
Inhabitants of North America
Patriot

References to colonial union
Continental association
Continental Congress
Country (this/our)
Congress
Senate
House of Representatives

References to colonial possession
American colonies / colonists
North American colonies / colonists
American colonists
State (of)
States
Part II

From Time to Time
Premature Declarations of Postmodernism’s Death

Several scholars and critics have announced the death of postmodernism that once itself announced the death of the author, authority, authenticity, centre, certainty, finality, fixity, determinacy and subject. British cultural critic Alan Kirby writes that postmodernism is dead and buried, and believes that the death of postmodernism becomes even clearer “by looking outside the academy at current cultural production.” Kirby notes that most of the undergraduate students taking courses on postmodern fictions at the time (2006) were born in 1985 or after, while almost all of the postmodern texts on the module under consideration had been published before 1985. Likewise, Brian G. Toews, an American theologian, records the death of the fathers of postmodernism, including Michael Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard, and draws our attention to the fact that their seminal works on postmodernism had been written before the mid-1980s. Toews then concludes that postmodernism had indeed died in the 1990s, and that “we have killed it,” and would have to “live in the light of postmodernism’s death.” My contention is that Kirby and Toews confine postmodernism to a finite time span, assuming that with age, postmodernism shall die; in other words, it exhausts itself, and becomes obsolete. Unlike Kirby and Toews, I consider that while postmodernism is undoubtedly old it is not old fashioned or dead. Postmodernism has avoided exhaustion through recycling and replenishment from time to time.

2 Kirby, “Death,” 34.
time, and now it has generated a pedigree with several successors; it has grown a tall family tree with several branches.

In the second edition of The Politics of Postmodernity, Canadian literary scholar Linda Hutcheon also declares the death of postmodernism: “Let’s just say it: it’s over.” Hutcheon, however, neither offers clear reasons to show how the postmodern moment has passed nor elucidates the clear rift time between postmodern and post-postmodern periods. Notwithstanding the declaration of postmodernism’s death, Hutcheon believes that postmodernism’s “discursive strategies and its ideological critique continue to live on [...] in our contemporary twenty-first-century world.” This reveals that Hutcheon, while announcing the apocalyptic ending of postmodernism, is reluctant to surrender the postmodernism and believes that postmodernism’s principles and practices continue to linger on in the twenty-first century. Admittedly, the only way to justify Hutcheon’s contradictory statements is to say that postmodernism, in Hutcheon’s view, consists of a physical and a spiritual life. The former has a limited time span and naturally ends after a while, whereas the latter passes on from time to time. Accordingly, Hutcheon believes that the spirit of postmodernism, unlike its physique, does not cease to exist. Later in her book, Hutcheon challenges the readers to find a name for post-postmodernism by saying, “post-postmodernism needs a new label of its own, and I conclude, therefore, with this challenge to readers to find it – and name it for the twenty-first century.” I argue that since postmodernism favours diversity, it would be impossible to find and agree on one single label for it as required by Hutcheon.

Following Hutcheon’s challenge, several scholars have attempted to label the era succeeding postmodernism. French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky’s proposal for the phase after postmodernism is “hypermodernism.” Lipovetsky believes that we have “moved from the ‘post’ era to the ‘hyper’ era,” and as a result, “a new society of modernity is coming into being,” which has “a vast enthusiasm for change, reform and adaptation.” According to Lipovetsky, in hypermodernity, the past is not destroyed but reformulated, reconceptualized and reintegrated in the modern logic. Like Lipovetsky, I believe that we have moved to a “hyper” era, in which there

5 Hutcheon, Politics, xi.
6 Hutcheon, Politics, 181.
8 Lipovetsky, Hypermodern, 160.
is a desire for change in all aspects of man’s life; however, it does not mean that we have passed behind the “post” era, and as Lipovetsky’s statements convey, we cannot expect to experience genuine originality in the “hyper” time.

Another suggestion is made by American culture scholar De Villo Sloan, who introduces “postliterature” as postmodernism’s successor, noting that unlike postmodernism, postliterature uses common language in lieu of metalanguage. According to Sloan, postmodern American literature experienced its peak in the 1960s and 1970s, and “postmodernism as a literary movement in the United States is now in its final phase of decadence [...] and American culture moves into an era of postliterature.”

Sloan draws a graphical representation of postmodern era and marks its most important moments while believing that postmodernism has oversaturated the American literature with its metalanguage. Sloan notes further that “as postmodernism fades into the past, there is no evidence that any meaningful literary movement will follow it.” On the one hand, Sloan announces the death of postmodernism and introduces postliterature in its stead, but on the other hand, he expresses his uncertainty about the functionality of postliterature and even other alternatives proposed for the twenty-first century.

For Kirby, the successor to postmodernism is “pseudo-modernism,” which emphasizes the media and their roles in creating cultural contents. In pseudo-modern age, cinema has become another computer game, wherein images, once captured from the factual world, are now created and edited virtually on computers. Kirby further notes that in pseudo-modernism, the media have prepared the ground for the superficial and instantaneous participation of people in culture through for example clicking, pressing, choosing, downloading, phoning, or texting. Kirby suggests “digimodernism” as another term to describe the contemporary epoch, predominated with “the computerization of text, which yields a new form of textuality characterized in its purest instances by onwardness, haphazardness, evanescence, and anonymous, social and multiple-authorship.” Digimodernism shatters the encounter between computerization and the text, and, similar to postmodernism, it disrupts the traditional idea

of authorship and readership. I here argue that by introducing two different terms for the epoch Kirby manifests his lack of conviction over the feasibility of one single term to cover and represent all diverse features of the new era.

Like Kirby, Robert Samuels, American culture scholar, describes the current era with the term “automodernism,” in which digital youth use new media and technologies. Samuels believes that “we have moved into a new cultural period of automodernity, and the key to this cultural epoch is the combination of technological automation and human autonomy.” Automation has enabled the digital youth to express their autonomy, “copy and paste texts from the Web and then distribute them in chat rooms and e-mails.” Accordingly, the digital youth has also challenged the traditional models of educational systems, which once were book-centred. I agree with Samuels that the digital youth has access to plethora of information sources in automodernity, and this possibility offers them alternative models of education. However, I believe that, like pseudo-modernism and digimodernism, automodernism is very limited in scope and fails to cover many other aspects of the current era. In addition, Samuels fails to show how automodernism shifts away from postmodernism.

Media and culture scholars Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker introduce “metamodernism” as a successor for postmodernism. According to Vermeulen and van den Akker, metamodernism is “inspired by a modern naïveté yet informed by postmodern skepticism, the metamodern discourse consciously commits itself to an impossible possibility.” They argue that metamodernism oscillates between the modern and the postmodern: between modern enthusiasm and postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naiveté and acumen, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity. In my view, since metamodernism, as defined by Vermeulen and van den Akker, swings between the present and the past, it covers the timespace between modernity and postmodernity. In their article, these scholars do not

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15 Samuels, 220.
illuminate whether postmodernity is still continuing, or if it is already over. If the former, they fail to elaborate on the connection between postmodernity and metamodernism, and if the latter, metamodernism holds no connection with postpostmodernity.

In addition to the above names for the twenty-first century, there have been suggestions such as “post-humanism,” “post-millennialism,” “altermodernism,” “post-truth” and “performatism.” However, none of these has yet made it to mainstream usage. My contention is that postmodernity has several successors, which is appropriate, for postmodernity itself favours multiplicity, plurality, diversity, fluidity and openness over essentialism, grand narrative, closure, univocality and absolutism. Thus, I argue that the contemporary era is defined by multidirectionality. Based on these arguments, any attempt to find one single successor to postmodernity is doomed to fail, and thus, all of postmodernity’s successors, mentioned above or named hereafter, are equally valid as different branches or recycled tenets of postmodernity. In what follows, I develop yet another heir to postmodernity, which I call hyperhybridism. As I discuss below, hyperhybridism exists synchronically along with its ancestor and recalibrates some of its key assumptions.

Hyperhybridism

As one of the postmodernism successors, hyperhybridism repeats and revises some of the features of postmodernism. Hyperhybridism opens up some spaces for the arrival of new forms and contents, new cultures and colours, new genres and genes, new disciplines and fields; however, what it offers is not totally new and navigates between sameness and difference, oldness and newness. To create difference and newness, exponents of hyperhybridism even resynthesize what had formerly been synthesized, using different options and opinions until new or different paradigms open before them. With a hyperhybrid impulse, hyperhybridists intend to subvert some aspects of dominant cultures beyond; however, their involvement with a set of used conventions obstructs them. To put it differently, hyperhybridism consists of innumerable alternatives that altogether make up the whole of what we become or produce, making us and our products kaleidoscopic, situational and contradictory. As a result, hyperhybridism occasionally generates irregularity, imbalance, unconventionality and defamiliarization.

Since hyperhybridism embraces and mixes multitudes, it is a new attempt to become. It is, per se, not a finished entity; rather, it is an attempt
to take humankind to the next level. Like postmodernism, hyperhybridism resists essentialism, purity and dominance of one single colour, race, material, style, etc., and consequently, through the combination of different devices, genres, genes, materials and elements, it stirs pluralism and diversity. In line with postmodernism, hyperhybridism rebuts the notions of a unitary truth offered by dogmatism or monism. In this light, through promoting a politics of difference, hyperhybridism contributes to the spirit of heterogeneity and tolerance for difference.

In its many guises, hyperhybridism appears in different domains of the world today, including industry, art, music, literature, politics, and architecture, to name a few. Like its ancestor, hyperhybridism functions to challenge and change some of the routine patterns and practices in these disciplines in an effort to free minds from outworn structures and former forms. Due to its potential to collage and montage different elements, hyperhybridism oscillates ceaselessly between two poles of “presentation” and “representation,” and as a result, it has been favoured by some designers, writers, artists, politicians and architects, who wish to offer divergent models in their fields.

Hyperhybridism in Industry and Daily Life

Hyperhybridism primarily manifests itself in industry. For instance, nowadays some cars have become hybrid and use double energy resources. It seems that experts in car industry are in a trial and error period, trying different forms of energy resources to see how they can find a way toward clean, green, reliable and renewable energy resources for cars. Like hybrid cars, Smart TV, also known as hybrid TV, is a convergence between computers and flat screen television sets, equipped with both an Ethernet port and built-in Wi-Fi support for internet access, providing the users with internet connection and online interactive media.

By the same token, through the amalgamation of different devices and applications, now we have a tablet and/or a cell phone that can serve as our TV, radio, newspaper, library, photo album, chat room, camera, personal computer, phone book, calendar, navigator, watch, alarm clock, step counter, to name but a few. The omnipresence of these devices and apps at one single moment in one single place can hybridize several activities and blur the timelines and geographical locations. These devices intertwine our workplace and working hours with our recreations and vacations. For instance, while visiting a gym, we receive and answer messages, phone calls and emails from our colleagues, clients or students. As soon as we arrive at
our hotel room in Rome during our vacation, our manager asks for an urgent Skype meeting to discuss a project. While we are supposed to be fully engaged with our duties during office hours, we might post something on our social media pages or play games. In fact, we hybridize and conduct all these different tasks instantaneously, which create non-linearity in our daily life. As Robert Samuels puts it, “when one goes to a café, one sees people working with their laptops as if these customers are sitting at home: they have their food, their phone, their newspaper, and other personal items displayed in public. The reverse of the public being absorbed into the private is therefore the private being displayed in public.” This shows that some elements of hyperhybridity are present in automodernism, blurring the borders between private and public spheres. The ubiquity of these devices and apps has also challenged and changed the old definitions of shopping. To do shopping, once customers had to visit a shopping centre in person during their opening hours, choose and purchase the items they needed, but now they can order whatever they wish from anywhere at any time on line or by phone and receive them wherever they wish.

Yet in another case, people assemble different texts and sources in a remix culture to generate an intertext, made primarily from fragments of several existing texts. While they work on an essay in MS Word program, they search in different websites and sources to find some required and appropriate information. They copy/cut and paste some texts and images in a new file, change their sequences, remix them with existing ones, revise them, trim some parts, add some others, move them back and forth and change their font sizes, colours, alignments and typefaces. This feature of hyperhybridism, which hybridizes authorship, bears a resemblance to palimpsest, wherein an original text of an old manuscript made of papyrus or paper is partially erased or scraped, and this makes room for new texts to be written on the layers of the original one, which results in the creation of a hybrid text. Kerstin Schmidt contends that “the palimpsest provides a [...] model for explaining how layers of different texts and discourses are built upon each other.” Based on these definitions, one can assume that information hyperhybridity offers a multi-layered text, which includes

some traces of both old and new views, written by different authors, known and unknown, at different times and places. As a result, text hyperhybridity creates a new inter-, intra-, para- and meta-textual structures and contents. Kirby refers to this as “the era of the hybrid or borderline text,” showing that digimodernism also contains some traits of hyperhybridism.

In hyperhybridity, we also mix reading with watching and listening. The emergence of e-books and audio books has made it possible for some readers to listen to a book while driving, jogging or eating. At the same time, the number of people who use their mobile phones, tablets and laptops for reading or listening to texts are increasing. In this regard, Kirby claims that “Young people today don’t know about books, don’t understand them, don’t enjoy them; in short, they don’t read.” Unlike Kirby, I believe that young people read and enjoy reading, but their methods of reading have differed. The traditional methods and disciplines of reading are no longer appealing to them, and thus, they have updated them. Here I should note that interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies, which have emerged as an inevitable hybridization of different disciplines and fields of research, are another signs of hyperhybridism in our time.

Like in car and electronic industries, hyperhybridism has affected fashion industry. As we commonly see in our daily life, a number of teenagers and youths wear new but ripped jeans and coats. The rip-off in the clothes shows the convolution of oldness and newness, poverty and affluence, low class and high class, and this hybridity not only enables designers to open new paradigms in fashion designs but also helps them add to the fascination of their products and earn more profit. Thus, in its focus on the marginal, hyperhybridism just like postmodernism attempts to question ruling forms and norms and take the marginal into account, too. In a similar manner, some people use a mishmash of unconventional colours and shades to dye their hair. They divide their hair to several parts and dye, for example, one part violet and the other parts orange, pink, green, blue, etc. Some people also shave one-half of their head and keep the hair on the other half as long as they can, and accordingly, their hair colours and styles might look both different and queer. The performativity of hyperhybridism can be also perceived in hybrid nail polish designs, wherein several stunning colours, images, shapes and shades are merged in one single nail and hand, showing that hyperhybridism has the potential to put together different, and, in some cases, contradictory trends.

21 Kirby, Digimodernism, 274.
22 Kirby, 67.
Hyperhybridism has been also implemented in food industry. We are sometimes astonished to see many different colours and flavours of ice creams while visiting some ice-cream bars, especially in multicultural cities. To make multi-coloured ice creams with synthetic flavours, some ice-cream suppliers mingle several different spices, colours, fruits and additives in varying degrees. It is more astonishing to see that some customers, owing to optionality, choose several scoop combinations, consisting of different flavours and colours, for their ice-cream cones. As another example, international restaurants are growing in different towns and cities worldwide, and their expansion has affected local and traditional cuisines in each region. With their multilingual fascia signs, they change the face of towns and cities, and with their cuisines, they challenge cuisine homogeneity. To attract more customers from natives, some of those restaurants mix local and traditional cuisines and ingredients with their own national cuisines and ingredients. For instance, nowadays mulligatawny soup is served in some Indian restaurants based in the UK; however, the use of some ingredients, favoured by the English, has made it an English-Indian food. This shows that hyperhybridity can convert local to glocal.

Hyperhybridism in Art and Literature

Like industry, hyperhybridism has not left art, culture and literature untouched. To eschew cliché styles of art and literature, a number of artists and writers have resorted to hyperhybridity. For example, some of the paintings by Brazilian street artist Dinho Bento can be considered as clear examples of hyperhybridism in visual art. Bento mostly depicts half-animal, half-human hybrids, drawing images of humanimals. For instance, in one work, a horse has the head of a teenage boy with a cap and sunglasses, eating a McDonald’s sandwich. The horse has blue Nike shoes on his four feet, and it suffers from obesity, since it has the whole globe in its belly. In another work, he draws an image of a dog, which has a woman’s head. She has dyed her hair blue, polished her nails red, putting on four high-heeled red sandals and carrying a red Chanel bag over her shoulder, while she has a red Coca Cola can in front of her mirror table. Through his art, Bento criticizes capitalism that only thinks of its own profit and rebukes our contemporary consumerist culture, which entices people to purchase whatever famous brand companies offer. He also criticizes consumers and their folly that reduces them to some obedient animals – like horse and dog – fully controlled by brand companies, their advertisements and products. How-
ever, the use of hyperhybrid elements makes Bento’s street art paintings look distinct and bizarre.

In a similar vein, some images tattooed on some people’s bodies mix the worlds of humanity with animality and materiality. Some tattoo artists mix different colours, words, icons and pictures together to express their feelings, love, hatred, protest, freedom, strength, hope, despair, etc. In one tattoo case, named “Owl and Crow,” one can detect more than ten colours and animals, including a fox, a crow, an owl, a bug and a bunny, mixed with some flowers, a watch, a balloon, a heart, a candle, a pair of scissors and some unfamiliar images. The combination of different colours and images in one single image creates diversity, pluralism, decentrement, multiple perspectives and settings, which is also in line with postmodern tenets.

To expose humanimality, Russ Foxx from Vancouver, Canada, who calls himself a transhumanist, has had over one hundred modifications applied to his body. For example, he has implanted a couple of silicone horns on his head to challenge the conventional assumptions of humanism and human embodiment. Here I should note that organ transplantation is another manifestation of hyperhybridism. In such surgeries, the organs of donors and/or artificial organs are located in the body of a transplant recipient, creating a hybrid body. Likewise, gender reassignment surgeries function to create gender hybridity in one single body. For instance, applicants for male-to-female surgeries undergo different surgical procedures, including hormone therapy, facial feminization surgery, breast augmentation, male genitals reshaping, etc., to remove their male signs; however, some male anatomical traits remain intact in the sex-reassigned body, generating a site of gender convergence. As such, hyperhybridism can complicate essentialist gender categories and turns monolithic gender identity into a gender dualism.

In literature, the high and low discourses as well as global and local styles of writing blend and create uncustomary styles of writing. The wide use of inter-, intra- and meta-textuality through borrowing from different literary works further expands the scope of hyperhybridity in such literary works. Through the employment of different languages and their diverse accents and dialects in one single work, these works incorporate lingual hyperhybridity, too. Furthermore, the use of historical figures along with fictional and contemporary ones creates the ground for recontextualizing old and new motifs. It is worth noting that to live in hyperhybridism is to further amalgamate fake and real things and to manipulate the users with the help of new technologies and devices so much that the distinction between fake and real is totally dissolved.
In addition, some writers might mix different genres together and innovate hyperhybrid genres. A clear example is the formation of “noveramatry” wherein novel, drama and poetry merge, and their borderlines blur, so that narrative forms mix with dramatic and poetic forms all in one line in one single work. Four clear examples of such works are my own fiction books: *Flight to Finland: A Noveramatry* (2016), *How I Became a W Finn: A Noveramatry* (2017), *Finnish Russian Border Blurred: A Noveramatry* (2018) and *A Farewell to the Earth and Kepler 438b: A Noveramatry* (2019). In these hyperhybrid works, different characters immigrate from different eras and areas and share their mininarratives and experiences with the readers, and since the characters belong to different geographical locations and historical times, they use different languages. The employment of different languages in one single literary work brings about lingual hybridity. In parallel, empty spaces and overcrowded spaces mingle, and thus, the omnipresence of non-textual sections along with the sections with plethora of details breaks up the textual unification. Moreover, the identities and genders of several narrators in one single work occasionally merge and create voice and gender hyperhybridity, which requires the readers’ strenuous efforts to distinguish different voices and genders from each other. However, the use of excessive ambiguity and indeterminacy, which was prevailing in postmodernism, is moderated in hyperhybridity, and through combining ambiguity and clarity, hyperhybrid authors move toward further clarity. This might meet with the requirements of those readers, who have been frustrated with postmodernism’s excessive use of ambiguity and indeterminacy.

Yet in another example, Manoucher Parvin, the Iranian American writer, writes his novel *Dardedel: Rumi, Hafez & Love in New York* (2003) entirely in verse. In his novel-in-verse, Parvin mingles different philosophies and cultures, including Eastern and Western, and different languages and literatures, including Persian and English. For instance, in Chapter 11, entitled “West Side Stories, East Side Stories,” Parvin offers a comparative analysis of *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare and *Layla and Majnun*, a romance by Nizami Ganjavi, the 12th-century Iranian poet. Parvin also combines ancient and modern times, and this enables him to recontextualise a number of classical and modern poets, their works and words. For example, Rumi and Hafez are reincarnated first as two saguaro cacti in Arizona and then as two New Yorkers in modern time. The book features mixture of different times, philosophies, cultures, languages and literatures and forms a mosaic built out of the juxtaposition of prose and poetry.

Hyperhybridism is also happening in music nowadays. Diverse music genres, sounds, rhythms, languages and accents mingle, and they sound
like a blend of simultaneous styles. Two clear examples include “Pray for Me” by The Weeknd and Kendrick Lamar, which combines pop music and rap music, and a piano performance by Iranian musician Saman Ehteshami, entitled “Shookhi ba Piano” (2016), which combines famous Western classical pieces with Iranian classical music. Similarly, in architecture, different styles from modernity and antiquity mingle. In some cases, the combination of those elements might look odd, unconventional and even controversial. For instance, “double coding” is used to describe the architects’ attempts to establish some links between the present and the past through blending modern techniques with old patterns in a construction. For instance, they fit new buildings into old structures; thus, a building may look quite old or ancient, but upon entering it, one finds it totally new and modern. Moreover, unlike the past time, wherein the house furniture, walls, ceilings and kitchen cabinets consisted of one single typical colour and material, nowadays they are made of two and even several different idiosyncratic colours and materials.

Hyperhybridism via Immigration and Globalization

Immigration has also catalysed the process of hyperhybridization. Immigration has paved the way for multiculturalism and the hyperhybridity of different, and in some cases contradictory, cultures, religious beliefs, races, ideologies, languages and nationalities. Immigrants transfer their own cultures and customs to their adopted homes and attempt to preserve and live with them. However, in order to integrate in the host society, they need to adopt parts of dominant cultures, and this creates a ground for them to host several cultures within their minds, households and workplaces. As a result, hyperhybridism defies the purity of cultures and customs.

Likewise, immigration has affected religious beliefs and blurred the sharp borderlines between different religions. Immigration has made the interaction between followers of different religions feasible, providing the grounds for some immigrants to speak with followers of other religions, detect some similarities between some of the key principles of different religions and question the superiority of their own religions. Thus, the interaction between different religious beliefs and ideologies can make some immigrants fully or partially, voluntarily or involuntarily adopt some of those new beliefs and ideologies, and this generates religious and ideological hyperhybridity in varying degrees. As Lipovetsky writes: “We are no longer Jewish, Muslim or Basque ‘as easily as breathing’; we question our identities, we examine them, we want to appropriate for ourselves
something which had hitherto gone without saying.” In this light, some believers incorporate teachings and principles of some religions based on their own yearning, which undermine their strong biases toward one particular religion.

The interracial marriages that recur nowadays because of immigration throughout the world further hybridizes different races, and as a result, hyperhybrid races and genes are created. Like the mixture of races, high, middle and low classes as well as privileged and unprivileged, superordinate and subordinate classes are mingled in hyperhybridity. Until some years ago, it was the common belief that royal family should only marry a member of royal family, and no one could foresee that, for instance, one day Prince Harry marries Meghan Markle – the result of a hybrid marriage – a half-black and half-white woman, whose father was Caucasian and her mother an African American. This shows that in hyperhybridity those who have been the result of a hybridity are rehybridized. In addition, Prince Harry’s decision to marry a girl from a different race and class clearly shows that we are in the age of hyperhybridism, wherein – in spite of the common beliefs and expectations – blue blood and red blood can mix and challenge the hegemony of hierarchies. Immigration has also made the hyperhybrid nationalities feasible, since the number of people with double and even triple citizenships are dramatically increasing. Overall, religious, cultural, racial and national hyperhybridity can bring about hyperhybrid identities; identities that sometimes concur and sometimes clash.

Like immigration, globalization has sped up the process of hyperhybridism. It has made the world a smaller place as many people can communicate easily and travel freely. Linguistic bricolage is also an outcome of globalization and immigration. Nowadays, different languages extensively borrow words, phrases and structures from each other. Moreover, the spread of Western ideas, mostly through the mass media, has affected some of the world educational, cultural, social and political systems and created a global hyperhybrid world. George Ritzer has called this process of spreading Western ideas “McDonaldization” in his book, entitled The McDonaldization of Society. Ritzer argues that world cultures are becoming similar to one another in the way that fast food chains are similar to each

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other. However, I argue that although the cultures of the world meet and affect each other – at least for a while that the culture hybridity is in process – we take distance from homogeneity and assimilation, and this tendency toward heterogeneity and dissimulation is more visible in areas that have been further touched by immigration and globalization.

As an example, it is for a while that some countries that once had very strong communist or socialist tendencies have shown an inclination to capitalism. The amalgamation of capitalist ideologies with communist or socialist ideologies has changed some of those countries to “state capitalism,” a social system, combining capitalism with ownership and/or control by the state; a new phase in the pursuit of preserving the welfare society on the one hand and adopting the global dominant culture on the other hand. In addition to the states, in such systems, people also oscillate between two systems. Although there is a demand for luxury in those states, some citizens socially and culturally attempt to moderate their demands for luxury with longing for mental peace, physical convenience and satisfaction with what they own and earn, swinging between an economic intensification of the power of consumerism and longing for a simple life. The redefinition of communist and socialist tenets offer alternative values, which make pure socialism and communism fade.

To conclude, hyperhybridism is discerned in all guises of the world today. Following postmodernism, it is anti-foundational and relativistic and renounces originary and homogenizing impulses. Consequently, like postmodernism, it disrupts the boundaries between the dominant and the marginal, high and popular cultures, and provides the grounds for mixing different ideologies, religions, cultures, discourses, languages and styles of life and writing with the dominant ones, which in some cases is riddled with contradictions. Likewise, hyperhybridism promotes the politics of difference and tolerance. It also enables us to have and experience several paradigms, colours, flavours, cuisines, nationalities, genes, genres, beliefs, activities, etc. all at once. Like its predecessor, hyperhybridism functions not as a philosophy or a movement but as a principle of inclusivity, a means for including and juxtaposing different and in cases contradictory elements. Thus, in the age of hyperhybridism, a mosaic – no style of fixed shape, colour and design – is built out of the juxtaposition of various alternatives. In this context, hyperhybridism is not a departure from postmodernism but an integral part and continuum of it. Hyperhybridism offers a

means, but that means is not an end in itself, and accordingly, hyperhybridism serves as a transition period until human beings manage to enter another era; however, it is not clear how long this transition period of hyperhybridity lasts.

Bibliography


Bernadette Mayer writes in the beginning of her poetry book *Studying Hunger Journals* that

*if a human, a writer, could come up with a workable code, or shorthand, for the transcription of every event, every motion, every transition of his or her own mind, & could perform this process of translation on himself [...] be or we or someone could come up with a great piece of language/information.*”¹

Mayer started working on her project in 1972 while she was undergoing psychoanalysis because of anxiety. *Studying Hunger* was first published in 1975, but the entirety of the journals only saw publication in 2011. In her large volume that contains stream-of-consciousness prose mixed with occasional lineated poetry, Mayer focuses on observing the movements of her mind and her emotional and affective responses. The comment in the beginning of the book begs the question of what happens with Mayer’s attempt to transcribe “every transition of [...] her own mind.” While it is obvious that it is impossible to transcribe every thought that crosses one’s mind, because writing takes its time, I will discuss how *Studying Hunger Journals* presents a poetic experiment of observing instead of analysing the movements of her mind. This, I argue, shifts Mayer’s poetry away from its starting point in psychoanalysis towards what I will call a mindfulness project. I will make this argument through considering how Mayer’s experiment can be understood in cognitive terms. A related aim of this discussion is to consider what might happen cognitively and affectively when we read complex experimental poetry.

Mayer wrote her journals as a tool to be used in psychoanalysis but also as a poetic experiment. She had previous experience from journal art projects, particularly from *Memory* (1972), which was originally a gallery

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exhibition, complete with photos and audiotapes of journal notes, and published as a book later. While working on *Studying Hunger*, she kept two journals, so that her analyst, David Rubinfine, could read one while she wrote in the other. The analysis would therefore be conducted by an outside reader, while she, as the writer, would merely observe and present her thoughts. In a sense, this sounds like a common situation in poetry: the writer expresses herself and readers or critics analyse. Nevertheless, by presenting a poetic text that is obviously difficult to analyse, Mayer emphasizes observing movements of the mind and emotions instead of analysing and evaluating them.

Appearing as it did in 2011 in its entirety, *Studying Hunger Journals* has been little discussed, as if it had been lost in limbo in between its first appearance in 1975 and its publication as a complete version in 2011. As a poet, Mayer has proved difficult for critics to situate and periodise. She has been associated with different groups of writers in recent US poetry like the experimental Language Writing of the 1970s and 80s, the so-called second-generation New York School of the 1970s, and conceptual poetry, which has only become more widely practiced over the last 20 years but has its roots in the conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s. Mayer has been viewed as an influence for the second-generation New York School and for poets associated with Language Writing, particularly because of her poetry workshops in New York City that some Language poets attended in the 1970s. On the other hand, her deliberate use of self-expressive tendencies and attention to confession were, according to Gillian White, also criticised by the experimental Language poets, some of them even viewing these features in her writing as a betrayal of experimental values. Critics and others participating in discussions of poetic periodisation, then, seem to disagree on whether Mayer is an experimentalist or a more traditionally...

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self-expressive writer. What I suggest below about *Studying Hunger Journals* as a poetic experiment of observing instead of analysing also helps clarify how Mayer might be situated with regards to these discussions.

**Mindfulness as a Cue for Reading**

*Studying Hunger Journals* describes ordinary, daily events as well as strange and illogical dreams. Mayer meets people in and around New York, talks to them, goes to parties and sleeps, perchance to dream, and often writes about food. Early on in the book, Mayer explicitly addresses observation and analysis:

> I have my intentions: to record states of consciousness, special involving change and sudden change, high and low food, levels of attention and how intentions change. And to do this as an emotional science as though, I have taken a month-drug and work as observer of self in process, to do the opposite of “accumulate data” (Memory). Yes, no. A language should be used that stays on the observation/notes/leaps side of the language border between observation and analysis (just barely), but closer I guess to analysis than “accumulate data.”

Mayer wishes to record movements of her mind and changes in her “states of consciousness,” hoping that her writing would veer on the side of observation instead of analysis (even if “just barely”). *Studying Hunger Journals* is to be distinguished from the earlier project *Memory* which, for Mayer, was more about collecting material than observation or analysis. *Studying Hunger Journals* is about working with movements of the mind, which might be seen as an attempt to get at affects, described by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth as “visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion – that can serve to drive us toward movement, to thought and extension.”

In wishing to produce “a great piece of language/information” from “every motion, every transition of [...] her own mind,” and doing this in the context of psychoanalysis, Mayer seems to be connecting language with the unconscious, much as in psychoanalytical thinking like for example Jacques La-

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can’s, who is explicitly mentioned in the text. Discussing Lacan’s ideas at length is outside my scope here but for now, suffice it to note that for Lacan, “the unconscious is the Other’s discourse,” which is made of language and through that of other people’s words and the like. Studying Hunger Journals is, indeed, preoccupied with wandering thoughts and conversations, as well as dreams. However, as Studying Hunger Journals foregrounds the distinction between observation and analysis, it also reminds us of the contemporary buzzword mindfulness and not simply of analysis.

The notion of mindfulness has its roots in Eastern philosophies like Buddhism and meditation, and in Western psychotherapy contexts it has been defined by Jon Kabat–Zinn as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.” It means an orientation towards the present that is “neutral, objective, and open” and fosters “deep respect for emotions which involves learning to pay attention to, embrace, and respect what unfolds.” Alex Gooch writes that “secular mindfulness” can be understood as a way of separating the observer from what is observed, for instance from emotions and thoughts. This separation can help avoid judgment of thoughts and emotions, which is how mindfulness has been used in psychotherapy contexts, for instance as a way to reduce stress. It can, essentially, be viewed as a kind of attention that is

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10 This is not to claim that Studying Hunger Journals simply could not be read within a psychoanalytic frame. For instance Sophia Wang has discussed this at length in Radical Matter: Materiality in Postwar and Contemporary American Mixed Mode Poetry, PhD Dissertation (Berkeley: University of California, 2012), 58–72, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7ob0t46k, accessed December 2, 2019.
concerned with *observation* instead of *analysis*. Certainly psychoanalytic psychotherapy, too, can be understood to involve “the cultivation of a non-judgemental observational stance towards spontaneously emerging experience,” as for instance Gavin Ivey remarks, but he maintains that this must be complemented with interpretation as a shared experience between the client and the analyst “in order to repair and expand compromised ego function.”\(^{15}\)

Bryan Walpert, in his book *Poetry and Mindfulness*, argues that poetry and mindfulness share an attention towards the present and towards observing an experience as a process.\(^{16}\) For Walpert, much of poetry has a mindfulness quality, and his study offers a useful general framework for understanding what poetry and mindfulness might have in common, but I contend that Mayer’s *Studying Hunger Journals* exhibits this connection in a particularly prominent way, which is somewhat of a paradox given the work’s connection to psychoanalysis. As Walpert notes, mindfulness has gained popularity over the past couple of decades, coinciding with a general waning of attention connected to the rising use of technology.\(^{17}\) He suggests that engagement with both mindfulness and poetry as a reader or as a writer can help with the ability to distance ourselves from our own perspective and from “predetermined or habitual conceptions, positions, and judgments” as well as to cultivate respect for “the unfolding nature of experience.”\(^{18}\) What this might mean in the case of a work like Mayer’s is my focus in this article.

The concept of mindfulness has been variously understood in psychotherapy contexts or in the context of (Western) interpretations of Eastern philosophies, and I use the concept here as a rough amalgamation of such ideas. I do not wish to make specific claims about Mayer’s interest in Eastern philosophy. Like Walpert’s, my focus is different from for instance Gisela Ullyat’s in her article on “Buddhist mindfulness in Mary Oliver’s poetry.”\(^{19}\) Ullyat discusses how the *content* of Oliver’s poems implies a

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18 Walpert, 76.
mindfulness approach, whereas I want to discuss the concept of mindfulness in Mayer’s book as a way of presenting information, as a metaphor for a particular kind of attention in writing and as a cue for reading. Walpert, too, emphasizes that aligning poetry with mindfulness does not have to mean that a particular poem should be about mindfulness or that the author’s thinking should be related to Buddhism. Mayer’s poetry does occasionally address ideas that might be connected to mindfulness, as I will remark below, but primarily mindfulness should here be understood as a mode that emphasizes observation over analysis.

While it may be impossible to steer entirely clear of analytical and reflective comments, Mayer’s writing does emphasize observation, as the following passage serves to exemplify:

I dream free marinated fruits. I can feel the blood rushing into my hands and head. The grilled cheeses are burning. Max says, “I’ve eaten all your breakfast, you have three places to look.” I answer, “I shouldn’t be living in Ridgewood anymore, I should get another apartment, it would be dull, no woodwork.” Childhood fantasies of having a refrigerator next to my bed and a machine that cooked small chickens by turning them on a spit.

The passage refers to dreams and to other disjunctive occurrences like the conversation with Max. The distinctions between dreams and real conversations are not clear. The notion of “hunger” is evident in the dream of free fruit and in the wish to have a refrigerator next to the bed, but Mayer does not analytically comment on the significance of such instances. She observes her bodily states, the sensation of blood rushing to her hands and head, perhaps as a result of an “affective appraisal,” which is caused by perceiving something as important and leads to a physical reaction. What is missing from this passage are the links between, for instance, the dream of fruit and the physical sensation of blood rushing. We do not know whether the rush of blood is a result of excitement, fear or something else. The text frequently presents emotionally charged or affective experiences, but there are no explicit causal links between affective experiences and particular thoughts.

21 Walpert, Poetry, 8, 44.
22 Mayer, Hunger, 43.
Studying Hunger Journals is a stream of thoughts and observations rather than a narrative that would have certain key turning points. We might, after reading Mayer’s work, describe it in general terms and present examples of what went on in it, perhaps even stopping to consider our interpretations of particular states of consciousness that she presents to us, but interpretation can only go so far. Interpretation can be viewed in cognitive terms as “the result of affective responses and subsequent cognitive monitoring of them, including judgments about whether my initial responses were appropriate,” but judging whether our interpretations of or reactions to Mayer’s observations could be justified is beside the point in reading Studying Hunger Journals. What is more significant is that those responses happen in the first place. Our observation, then, of our responses is more central than our interpretation of them.

In attempting to understand Mayer’s experiment in cognitive terms, we can turn to Reuven Tsur’s work on cognitive poetics. Tsur writes that cognitive poetics rests on the notion that “poetry exploits for aesthetic purposes cognitive processes initially evolved for nonaesthetic purposes.” Poetry, of course, is notably often understood as a mode of writing that pays special attention to the present moment, but consciousness can be oriented to the present in ordinary or irregular ways. “Ordinary consciousness” is about organising and selecting information; it is about “perceptual constancy” and “cognitive stability.” Poetry, Tsur notes, can work to disrupt the ordinary consciousness. Beyond a sense of stability, our minds process what Tsur calls “pre-categorial, inarticulate information” such as “feeling” and “affect.” In the above passage from Studying Hunger Journals, the sentences about the “dream [of] free marinated fruits” and the sensation of “blood rushing” present pre-categorial information of movements of the mind from which one would have to select in order to construct a stable picture of what is happening and of how and why Mayer moves from one observation to another.

24 Robinson, Deeper, 123.
27 Tsur, Cognitive, 15–16.
28 Tsur, 25.
29 Tsur, 17–18.
30 Mayer, Hunger, 43.
By contrast to ordinary consciousness, Tsur discusses poetry’s connections to “altered states of consciousness,” that is, “mental states in which adult persons relinquish to some extent the already acquired control of ‘ordinary consciousness’.”

This includes for instance meditation, and poetry that has a meditative quality might lead to “heightened consciousness” where emotions are paramount. Studying Hunger Journals can be viewed as concerned with a “heightened consciousness” as it presents movements of the mind instead of being concerned with pinning down emotional experiences and explaining them. Tsur then proceeds to discuss Chanita Goodblatt and Joseph Glicksohn’s article, where they claim that Walt Whitman’s catalogue-style in “Song of Myself” is “a poetic realization of the meditative technique of ‘mindfulness’.” Goodblatt and Glicksohn suggest that the mindfulness quality of Whitman’s poem deviates from “everyday perception with its inherent categorization,” attempting the “uncoupling of thought from perception,” which experience the poem then conveys to readers.

In Studying Hunger Journals, then, we are also dealing with an attention that does not aim to categorise or to fully differentiate between experiences.

When a poem like Whitman’s, Tsur notes, presents several similar phrases and sentences in succession, readers are faced with “cognitive overload and are ‘compelled to handle this information by collapsing it into an undifferentiated mass.’” Even more than Whitman’s poem, Mayer’s long book presents readers with a “mass” that delays its cognitive processing. Whitman’s catalogue technique differs from Mayer’s observation of her affective experiences: Whitman mainly lists emotional and corporeal states as well as observations in noun phrases, whereas Mayer frequently relies on sentences with active verbs and a first-person position, as in the above example of “I can feel the blood rushing into my hands and head.” Mayer’s observations are more diverse in terms of phrase and sentence structure than Whitman’s. A speaking “I” is central in Mayer’s presenta-

32 Tsur, 451–52.
35 Tsur, 459.
36 Mayer, Hunger, 43.
tion of thoughts and physical and emotional reactions, even though this position is not narrativised into a coherent character.

Mindfulness, the Self and the Unconscious

Walpert notes that a central aspect where mindfulness and poetry align is the Buddhist concept of “no-self.”37 Discussing the origins of this concept is outside the scope of this article, but according to Walpert, the no-self can be discovered through “[m]indfulness meditation [which], in watching thoughts and feelings arise and depart, develops an awareness of the impermanence of the self, guiding us to see that we are not the fleeting emotions that roil our minds.”38 The role of language in constructing the self and the idea of the self’s lack of coherence are, Walpert reminds us, also familiar ideas in recent poetry.39 The Language Writing of the 1970s and 1980s in particular went to great lengths to examine the notion of a coherent self in a poem as a mere illusion.40 As I noted above, Mayer’s relation to Language Writing is conflicted. Her disjunctive style in *Studying Hunger Journals*, which discourages readers from attempting a coherent interpretation, is where her writing comes close to Language Writing. On the other hand, as White remarks about Mayer’s late 1970s work, her focus on self-expression separates her from Language Writing.41 But clearly the inconsistent mass of writing in the approximately 450 pages of *Studying Hunger Journals* does not exhibit a coherent self but is well aware of impermanence.

In psychoanalysis, too, which is Mayer’s starting point, how the self should be understood is a central question. For Lacan, Bruce Fink explains, the “ego” is “a construct, a mental object,” which is similar to the idea of the “no-self.”42 Furthermore, for Lacan, the language of the “ego” is conscious and “in control” and the “Other discourse” is unconscious.43 In analysis, the objective is to focus on the unconscious rather than on the

38 Walpert, 81.
39 Walpert, 83.
41 White, *Lyric*, 158.
42 Fink, *Lacanian*, 37.
43 Fink, 4.
imaginary construct of the ego. Interestingly, Mayer comments on Lacan in a humorous or even derogatory manner: she appears to be sceptical of the “Imaginary Other” when she writes, in a four-page section that intermittently comments on Lacan, for instance that “My Imaginary Other is across the street vacuuming, ha ha and drilling holes.” The book presents a somewhat inconsistent view of the role of the unconscious. Elsewhere, Mayer asserts that precisely the controlled, conscious “ego” is missing from her text: “It’s not the whole story I’ve left out the psychology of it the motives the history […] because in that way I could be pinned down, possibly tortured.” Focusing on observation, then, is preferable to stabilising the self because the latter would make her vulnerable.

At the end of Studying Hunger Journals, Mayer has included a short section titled “INTRODUCTION to MY JOURNALS and the RECORDING of the ACTIVITIES of the HUMAN MIND.” There she writes that “I had started, no, I start my making of the unconscious conscious, and, each step of the way, I take the rage emerging there and vent it, unattested.” As Mayer attempts to produce “a great piece of language” through observing “every event, every motion, every transition of [the] mind,” she arguably wishes to gain access to a “language [that] […] operates independently, out of our control,” as Fink writes about Lacan’s understanding of the relation between the unconscious and language. On the other hand, this might be viewed as an attempt to translate affect towards consciousness, to conflate the conscious and the unconscious and to focus on the limit space in which affects and sensations turn into conscious thought. We do not, of course, have to take Mayer’s own comments as the ultimate truth about the text’s relation to mindfulness and psychoanalysis. But even if we disregard explicit acknowledgments of such ideas in the text, the structure of Studying Hunger Journals that focuses on observations and on the way the mind moves proves that controlled, conscious thinking is not central.

Confessional poetry is a relevant point of comparison here, given that it is often understood to revolve around a poetically conservative stable self, even though arguments to the contrary have recently been presented. White has devoted an entire book to reading against the grain of what she
describes as the common denigration of lyric self-expression, and she discusses Anne Sexton and Mayer, among others.\textsuperscript{51} Like Mayer, Sexton wrote poetry in conjunction with therapy, and Mayer has indeed named Sexton as an important poet for her.\textsuperscript{52} Even though Mayer’s poetry does differ from the “canonical personal lyric” of the 1970s, White views her focus on self-expression as an anti-avantgardist move, because presenting an inconsistent self has become more or less the poetic norm, especially after Language poetry emerged in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{53} Sexton, says White, does not fit neatly within the norms of confessional poetry either because she is, according to White, aware of the “materiality of language” and of how “thoughts about myself are not only about myself.”\textsuperscript{54} White thus absolves Sexton from the charge that she is merely interested in herself.

In a discussion of lyric poetry that is informed by a psychoanalytical frame, Mutlu Konuk Blasing approaches Sexton’s confessional self from another angle, noting that her “confessional work is shaped by the conflict between the therapeutic project of ego stabilization and the poetic practice that destabilizes an ego.”\textsuperscript{55} Therapy, she states, is “a narrativizing project.”\textsuperscript{56} Blasing, like White, also affirms that Sexton is not merely interested in a conservatively stable self.\textsuperscript{57} Reading Sexton’s poem “Said the Poet to the Analyst,” Blasing concludes that poetry and analysis have different relations to language, as analysis focuses on “how words may mean something other than what they say,” while poetry is about “literal, surface language” and “[w]ords in poetry are sounds, shapes, letters, feelings, sensations.”\textsuperscript{58} Mayer goes further in her exploration of this distinction as her project is to present movements of the mind through language. As I argued in the first section, this kind of writing does not encourage readers to analyse either, except perhaps for Mayer’s original intended reader, her analyst.

At the end of Studying Hunger Journals, Mayer comments on her understanding of the self in a manner that is reminiscent of Buddhist thought,
explaining that her interest is on the self’s belonging to the larger context that surrounds it:

I have no private property. Nor are these journals a diary of change. They are a simple recommendation to be driven to the present with the chances that may allow to change not one’s self but the world. We cannot begin to know science and poetry until we understand the people and the machines with which they work, the eyes, a glance, the hands.\textsuperscript{59}

Mayer wants people “to be driven to the present” and notes that she is interested not so much in people as essential entities but in the processes and gestures that constitute them, such as “a glance.” Such an understanding of the self does not emerge as a result of analysis but unfolds in the process of observation.

Mindfulness and “altered states of consciousness”\textsuperscript{60} as part of a poetic project can be viewed as ways of coming to “understand” the self through a different route than what has commonly been expected of self-expressive poetry. Balveer Singh Sikh and Deb Spence explain that mindfulness engenders “an unfolding of being and understanding.”\textsuperscript{61} They note that the Eastern nondualistic worldview understands “the person ontologically, as part of the phenomenon, a view similar to Martin Heidegger’s notion of being.”\textsuperscript{62} In such a view, understanding the self happens in the process of observation rather than through analysis.

Regardless of what may have been the project of Mayer’s psychoanalysis, \textit{Studying Hunger Journals} does not expect its readers to act like analysts, constructing the speaker as coherent.\textsuperscript{63} Instead, the work, engaging as it does with “cognitive overload”\textsuperscript{64} through presenting a large amount of inconsistent material, invites its readers to observe affects and thoughts in an undifferentiated state. Understood thus, Mayer’s “great piece of language”\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{59} Mayer, \textit{Hunger}, 457.
\textsuperscript{60} See Tsur, \textit{Cognitive}, 25.
\textsuperscript{62} Sikh and Spence, “Methodology,” 4.
\textsuperscript{63} As noted above, psychoanalysis has been viewed as a relational interpretative experience, see Ivey, “Mindfulness,” 387–88. For a discussion of readers’ therapeutic roles in confessional writing as opposed to the more experimental Language Writing, see Siltanen, \textit{Experimentalism}, 40, 49.
\textsuperscript{64} Tsur, \textit{Cognitive}, 459.
\textsuperscript{65} Mayer, \textit{Hunger}, 2.
attempts to stay on the surface, emphasizing poetry as “a process whose meaning is in every step,” as Walpert writes about the connections between mindfulness and poetry.66

**Mindfulness of Hunger**

As a brief case study, I will discuss mindfulness in relation to hunger, which is the self-proclaimed focus of *Studying Hunger Journals*. Mayer explains that “[t]he ‘hunger’ in the title comes from regular hunger which I felt in the extreme because my parents had died young (there was nobody to feed me)” and because “[t]he synaesthesia I experienced made the letters & words seem as edible as paintings.”67 She had problems also with swallowing, in relation to anxiety. Sophia Wang notes that the connection between these two experiences with eating is a token of Mayer’s investment in a psychoanalytical explanation.68 She argues that the notion of “hunger and the trope of consumption contribute to the text’s larger project of not only studying hunger, but of cultivating and instrumentalizing hunger as a textually productive force.”69 The following description from Wang captures Mayer’s focus on hunger well:

Diverse acts of consumption—from quotidian meals and midnight snacks to the climactic cannibalization fantasy that concludes *Studying Hunger* (and which appears early in the last book of *Studying Hunger Journals*) – punctuate the text as episodes where Mayer figuratively feeds the hungers that motivate the project, each instance of feeding never adequately meeting the literal or figurative hungers operating in the moment or throughout the text.70

One might say that hunger to express the movements of the mind is the driving “force” of the text, the overarching affect that operates “beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing,” as Gregg and Seigworth write about affects.71 Wang does not mention affects, but her description points to how there is no ultimate moment of satisfaction when hunger would have been quelled. She writes that hunger works “as an ana-
logue to grief and a symptom of loss or lack, but [is] also expressive of a visceral relationship to language as a visually and materially available medium: ‘as edible as paintings’. Nevertheless, the reflections of hunger are not really metaphorical moments or conclusive keys to “understanding” the text. While for instance the section that describes the cannibalistic consumption of a human being stands out in the 1975 publication of Studying Hunger, appearing as it does in the last paragraph of the book, in Studying Hunger Journals its position is not quite as pivotal, because it appears in the midst of the text. By not highlighting her observations of hunger as metaphorical moments, Mayer presents words and sentences as consumable, as ordinary as food, and invites consideration of the affects involved in such movements of the mind.

An evocative long sentence in Book I displays the urgency with which food is approached in Studying Hunger Journals:

Are you waiting, is it time, I open my mouth, soon I’m starving, I love grapefruit and cheese, fish, strawberries, asparagus and cream, nuts, snowpeas, potatoes and cream, leaves, corn, squash, mushrooms, scallops, onions, coffee and tea I’ve eaten enormously brandy and bed, I love fall, who else eats this much, who else is served such sauces separately.

As Ben Highmore notes, eating is an experience that connects several senses in addition to taste, even somewhat similarly to synaesthesia. He also discusses how eating and flavours can take on affective dimensions. Reading the above passage with a focus on affect might involve considering the qualities that might be associated with each type of food listed here, for instance the sour taste of grapefruit, the texture and yellow colour of cheese, the smell of fish, the sweetness of strawberries, the crunchiness of nuts, the warmth of coffee and tea, and the affects such sensual experiences evoke. As an aesthetic experience, Mayer’s sentence points to several

72 Wang, Radical, 57.
74 Mayer, Hunger, 380–81.
75 Mayer, 57.
77 Highmore, “Bitter.”
different directions. In its excess of food and the sensual associations that the food items propose, it is not about hunger or lack but an abundance. The phrase “I love” suggests that these are all pleasant sensations. Highmore connects eating and taste judgments to the aesthetic experience, which similarly involves taste, sight and sound, noting that aesthetics has unprofitably become connected with art alone.78 This, Highmore explains, has often meant that “the artwork completes sensual experience (resolves it into more satisfying and morally superior forms)” and does this at the expense of that which is “irresolvable and desperately incomplete,” for instance many affective experiences in the everyday.79 Highmore does not mention mindfulness, but in a sense, mindfulness is concerned with tolerating incompleteness. Studying Hunger Journals does not aim to conclude the experiences of consuming food or hunger it presents. Instead, it explores the aesthetic experience of the everyday in its incompleteness as it observes the movements of the mind whether they be about food, dreams or more general anxieties or frustrations.80

As it focuses on observation instead of analysis, Mayer’s experimental writing might help develop particular qualities of the mind. For instance Amy L. Eva–Wood states, drawing from studies on metacognition and reading, that “poetry reading might be considered a particularly relevant comprehension activity for prompting more deliberate and meaningful engagement with both cognitive and affective responses.”81 She proposes that more attention should be paid to emotion when poetry is taught, which would be particularly helpful when a poem causes “cognitive confusion” because of unusual or experimental strategies.82 Eva–Wood describes four “affectively based strategies” for reading poetry, which are “Responding to key words and phrases,” “Visualizing and using the senses,” “Relating the text to personal experiences” and “Identifying with the speaker.”83

As I noted above, Mayer’s writing does not encourage identifying with a coherent speaker. Lack of clear points of identification can, according to

78 Highmore.
79 Highmore.
80 For a discussion of Mayer as a poet of the everyday, see Epstein, Attention, 170–208.
Eva–Wood, make poetry difficult for (student) readers. However, the avoidance of a simple identification can be viewed as useful, too: it encourages readers to focus on the process and on the “irresolvable and desperately incomplete” nature of experiences rather than on a coherent end product.

Of the four strategies Eva–Wood lists, the most relevant ones for reading Mayer would be to use the senses, similarly to what we saw above, and to respond to key words and phrases. Although deciding what the key phrases of Mayer’s text are would be difficult, this might mean simply responding to a particular sentence, for instance to the opening one of section 5 in Book II: “I make these divisions unconscious like cutting a pie, there’s a whole history involved with it.” The sentence refers to something that usually goes unnoticed, given that it is as simple or automatic as “cutting a pie” might be. By not focusing on the “whole history involved” in her observations, Mayer’s writing draws attention to affect over cognition, inviting consideration of the emotional and affective experiences that go into making “divisions” or “cutting a pie.” Studying Hunger Journals relies on mindful observation over analysis in order to explore the ways in which affect works underneath impulses and actions.

Conclusion: Mindfulness as a Cue for Reading

I have argued that Studying Hunger Journals presents a mindfulness project that is concerned with observation of the movements of the mind as a process, instead of a psychoanalytical project of understanding the self, even though the latter is its starting point. Mayer’s incoherent mass of a text delays its cognitive processing, inviting readers’ attention towards the present moment and to affective experiences as they occur. Studying Hunger Journals postulates that our attention on the present of the poem and on our states of consciousness throughout the reading should trump our hunger for interpretation.

Early on in this chapter, I noted that Mayer’s position among different communities and groups in recent poetry has been ambivalent. We have seen that she is interested in self-expression, not in a standardly self-expres-

85 Highmore, “Bitter.”
86 Mayer, Hunger, 81.
87 See Tsur, Cognitive, 459.
sive way that would aim at stabilising the self for easy identification, but in
a way that emphasizes affects. As noted above, Mayer has also been viewed
as a conceptual poet: Andrew Epstein calls her “a major progenitor of […]
‘conceptual writing,’ especially as it is practiced by women.”

88 Studying Hunger Journals is a conceptual project in that it presents a concept as its
starting point, the idea that Mayer wants to record movements of the
mind. Studying Hunger Journals shows Mayer exploring the affective possi-
bilities of conceptual writing, and thus presents her as an experimental po-
et participating in contemporary debates on poetry. 89 The work mobilises
both the implied speaker’s affect through recording movements of the
mind as well as readers’ affect as it offers mindfulness as a cue for reading,
without suggesting that there should be a simple identification or an ana-
lytical approach on readers’ part. Studying Hunger Journals offers mind-
fulness as a cue for reading in order to uncover movements of the mind that
are not strictly personal. Rather, it asks us to be present with movements of
the mind, or with poetry, as in mindfulness meditation.

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Chapter 9
Reading and Translation in the Age of the Internet: Findings from a Case Study of a Terry Pratchett Novel Read in Finland

– Damon Tringham

Introduction

Until relatively recently, reading was done with the support of solely physical reference material – if you wanted to check a word, you used a dictionary, and if you wanted to check a term, phrase, place, event or person, you used an encyclopaedia. Today, this has all changed. With the advent of the Internet it is now possible to check all such matters on-line. In some cases, the information is provided there in a manner no different to the physically published material – for instance, on-line dictionaries and Wikipedia – but the presence of search engines, of which currently the most prominent is Google, has brought the ability to mine the knowledge of the on-line community for answers to even trickier questions.

For both the translators and readers of novels, the consequences of this shift are significant. For translators, in addition to checking word meanings and the like, the ability to seek explanations for cultural references appearing in the texts they are working on from the pool of knowledge on

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the Web is invaluable. For their readers, this is also very much the case; indeed, they may well be using the same sources. How often do readers actually use the Internet for such purposes, however, whether or not reading a translation? What is the ‘check threshold’ for them, that is, the point at which they decide that it is worth looking for additional information online?

The wide range of electronic devices that can be used for reading has facilitated the consumption of books (and other written material) read in this way. Desktop computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones all allow you to read electronically and on-line, thereby also providing the opportunity to check matters of interest on the Web. The advent of dedicated machines for reading, such as the Kindle, Kobo and Nook devices, has taken this one step further, simultaneously lowering the check threshold – one reader on the popular on-line forum Quora comments: “Might I say that this is one reason that reading on a Kindle almost exclusively is fantastic […] one touch and I can look up any word. My reading flow is never interrupted.”2 Not interrupting reading flow seems to be important to some readers, as will come up again later.

In this chapter, I will first present a little background information regarding how readers today are characterised and what they say about how they read, discuss how translators and readers have had their sources of information transformed by the Internet, and then look at what that might mean. I move on to look at how a group of Finnish students responded to a number of questions concerning their use of reference materials, both digital and physical, when confronted with unfamiliar cultural references in fiction. Last, I discuss how the same group responded to questions regarding extracts from a particular novel, Terry Pratchett’s *Jingo* (1997), some reading in the original and some in translation.3 I conclude with a brief examination of what the data may suggest and what it may mean for both readers and translators with regard to their changing practices.

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The World We Live in

Here, I shall examine a few contributions made to the discussion of how the environment in which we read and work has changed. It has been suggested that the generation of today has different habits due to the prevalence of electronic sources and the ease of accessing information online. It is also relevant to consider the views of readers themselves, here culled from discussions on the website Quora, alongside those expressed by eminent academics involved in translation, such as Professor Michael Cronin, and translators working in the field.

Readers

The omnipresence of the Internet has led to major claims concerning changes in how people live, work and play. One such claim is related to the definition of “Digital Natives,” that is, those raised in the period after the widespread use of the Internet. The essence of the idea is that there is a difference between their behaviour and that of ‘Digital Immigrants’ – those whose adult lives straddle the appearance of the Internet. The concept of the Digital Native was first proposed by Marc Prensky in an educational context in 2001, and it has been criticised and defended over the last 17 years.

grant accent’ can be seen in such things as turning to the Internet for information second rather than first, or in reading the manual for a program rather than assuming that the program itself will teach us to use it.”

It is not necessary to accept the concept of the Digital Native (or indeed Digital Immigrant) to see that even simply changing information-seeking habits from printed to electronic form will have repercussions for those translating and reading. Information today is on-line and available to all in the blink of an eye.

Many readers are pleased with the ease of access to electronic dictionaries and other sources of information, for instance this response, again on Quora:

Also, what does “looking it up in the dictionary” involve for you? Are you using a physical book for a dictionary? That will seriously slow you down, because you have to flip though pages to find the word you’re looking for. Electronic (online) dictionaries are much faster. Keep a google tab open when you’re reading.

The comment considers the nature of “looking something up” as a choice between physical and electronic resources and comes down strongly on the side of those accessible on-line.

Thus far, it has been mostly words that have been the subject of discussion, but other issues affect reading, too, and a final comment from the Quora readership takes us in that direction. What does one do when reading if it is a cultural concept that is obscure? Quora member Adonay Berhe says

I find that looking up the words in classic fiction interrupts their flow, and takes away from a focus on the plot points. However on the concepts, in between your reads, it is worth exploring these briefly. For example in War and Peace, a significant portion of the book follows Napoleon’s war with Russia in the 19th century. Having that context, which Tolstoy presumed of his Russian readership, helped me follow along. Perhaps write down a couple of words and key phrases as


you go along, and then once you’ve finished, take a couple of minutes to look them up. If you’re on the Kindle, don’t know if they’re relevant anymore, then it’s really easy to do it.\textsuperscript{10}

It is interesting that here the writer distinguishes between words and concepts as possible items of interest when it comes to filling gaps in one’s knowledge. For readers of fiction, cultural references are likely to cause the occasional hiccup in understanding if the storyline takes place in another place or time – or both – and these matters can be more difficult to solve than simply checking the meaning of a word, whether on-line or in a physical dictionary. The writer still recommends looking these up electronically, but after reading.

\textit{Translators}

The readers may be benefitting from such easy access to on-line sources, but then so are translators. Cronin sums up the changes in translation that had taken place by the end of the first decade of the new millennium:

The omnipresence of online translation options, the proliferation of smartphone translation apps, the relentless drive towards automation in large-scale translation projects, the fundamental changes in literary practices as reading migrates from page to screen, the unforgiving instantaneity of electronic communication as responses are demanded 24/7, the ever-changing wardrobe of digital translation props such as endlessly mutating translation memory software – all of these factors contribute to the sense that ‘this feels different’.\textsuperscript{11}

It \textit{does} feel different – the Internet has absolutely revolutionised how translators work. As one user on the professional translator site ProZ puts it:

Because most or all of a translator’s tools are now online, that means all we need is a laptop and WiFi and we’re good to go. [...] The Internet has made not just \textit{research} quicker and easier, it has also increased a million-fold the opportunities for telecommuting [...]. I wouldn’t


have it any other way and I feel incredibly lucky to be doing what I'm doing in this day and age.\textsuperscript{12}

Here, the writer mentions “research.” Translators often feel that their profession is misunderstood as simply involving a find-and-replace process to change the words from one language to another. This can be true of very basic translations, for which automated processes are far better suited anyway, but for complex issues such as terminology in different fields, changes in register, rhetoric and cultural matters one needs a competent professional to carry out the necessary research – and for that research the translator needs good sources. Today, both readers and translators turn increasingly to the Internet for such sources.

In the field of technology, when an audience uses multiple screens (TVs, desktop computers, laptops, tablets, mobiles) it is termed ‘multiscreening’, and it can be done in three ways: \textit{shifting}, \textit{stacking}, or \textit{meshing}. Shifting is the use of one screen after another, stacking is using a second screen to do something unrelated to the first, and meshing refers to “using a second screen to enhance the media experience by researching, talking about or engaging in the content being viewed on the television screen.”\textsuperscript{13} Although the concept was designed around the use of a TV screen combined with one or more others, can this system be applied to reading and translating? With some modification, it can.

Whether we replace the TV screen with a physical book or an electronic one, the idea is interesting. The category of stacking of little interest here as by definition it involves two separate, unrelated activities. The other two categories, however, provide food for thought. Quora reader Berhe above recommended looking up concepts after reading – this would clearly be shifting. In his example concerning Napoleon’s invasion and retreat from Russia, a degree of effort would be required to find the required information and significant time to digest it, assuming that more than a few paragraphs were involved.

The other Quora members that suggested looking up words and phrases immediately the problem arose are clearly advocates of meshing, in terms


of enhancing their experience by briefly checking points either on another
device (as in traditional multi-screening or when reading a physical book
and Googling) or the same device by opening another window or equiva-
 lent feature. This type of meshed research work is also familiar to transla-
tors, as the ProZ user MK2010 suggested. In short, both readers and trans-
 lators are using technology to exploit the knowledge on the Internet with
increasing frequency as its ubiquity, ease, and inexpensiveness make it the
natural first port of call when trying to resolve a potential difficulty.

Next, I shall look at how a group of young adult readers describe their
use of such sources to better understand problematic cultural references
encountered when reading fictional works.

Recourse to the Internet – Reported Behaviour

To discover more about how the supposed Digital Natives of today read, I
created a couple of simple questions to ask that would shed light upon the
respondents’ past behaviour when solving cultural references.

The Respondents

The respondents were 29 young adults aged between 19 and 31, but with
the great majority (25) aged 25 or under. The data gathered therefore con-
cerns people born after 1986, all thus comfortably after 1980, the initial
age point associated with millennials and also broadly attributed to Digital
Natives. In terms of their level of education, the respondents are all univer-
sity students in their first year at a department of English, some as majors
and some as minors. They are all relatively proficient in English since the
entrance exam requires extensive background reading in English and only
a proportion of those applying are successful.

Data-gathering

In order to gain data on their behaviour, the sample group were asked to
recall the most recent novel they had read and say whether or not they had
resolved gaps in their cultural understanding while reading by looking for
information elsewhere. They were then asked how many times they had
done this and to which sources they had turned.
As the questions posed were responded to anonymously and without the respondents being able to see each other’s answers, social desirability is not an issue when it comes to influencing answers. The respondents were informed in the instructions of the fact that not knowing a reference was as interesting to the researcher as knowing, and that they should provide the most truthful answers that they could.

Discussion

I asked the respondents the following questions:

1. Think back to the last time that you read a fictional work (novel, short story, etc).
2. When reading that work, did you at any point look up a reference to something (a place, person, event, concept, book, work of art, behaviour pattern, etc) that you did not recognise or understand?

The aim was to elicit data based upon actual events, that is, actions that the recipients have already taken, and not simply record actions that they claim they would carry out if the situation were to arise. This is because it has been shown that self-reporting of actual behaviour is usually more reliable than asking about intentions in imaginary situations.

The follow-up questions depended upon whether the recipient responded Yes or No. If they responded Yes, I asked first how often they had looked up such material (1, 2–5, more than 5 or more than 10 times) and second how they did it (on-line, printed works, or both). If they responded No, I asked why this was (did not want to break their reading, no access to Internet or printed works, understood everything, or some other reason). In this way, I sought to understand the way that these respondents had read the novel in terms of recourse to material both on-line and in print. The responses to the questions are provided in Tables 1 and 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2–5 times</th>
<th>Over 5 times</th>
<th>Over 10 times</th>
<th>Only online</th>
<th>Only printed</th>
<th>Online and printed</th>
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Table 1: Those reporting that they had looked up one or more references

A total of 14 respondents checked cultural references that they did not understand while reading. Of these, the majority (10) checked several times (2–5 times). The three that checked only once are clearly relatively marginal cases as they were asked about the timeframe of reading an entire
book, and a single check for information on a cultural reference is a small figure. There was also the one reader who checked more than five times. We cannot read too much into these absolute figures as although the books were all novels, the number and complexity of cultural references involved would vary from volume to volume.

What does stand out here is that of the 14 who looked for further information, not one used a physical reference source – every one of those who checked turned to an on-line resource. This would have been impossible only a little over 25 years ago; now, it appears to be the default option.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understood everything</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No way of checking</td>
<td>0^{14}</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never want to break reading</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other reason</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book too full of references</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References not important enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fictional places and people – not worth checking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Only ever check where the reference prevents understanding of the text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Those reporting that they did not look up any references

A total of 15 respondents claimed that they did not check any cultural references. Five said this was because they had understood everything, which reduces their relevance as we cannot know what they would have done had they encountered a reference that they did not understand. Six said it was because they never want to break their reading to check something, and the remaining four had their own individual reasons.

The question of reading flow has reappeared here after first being mentioned in the context of readers from the Quora site. Since being immersed in a fictional world is one of the principal elements associated with reading novels, it is not to be wondered at that nearly one in five of the respondents seeks to avoid recourse to other sources than the novel itself. For these readers, the change in the availability of information plays little or no role, and the way that they read is more similar to that of readers of 25 years ago, whether they read electronic or physical books.

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14 One respondent had selected ‘No way of checking’ but had also simultaneously selected ‘Understood everything’. Given the two reasons, the latter clearly dominates as the lack of access to reference material scarcely matters if the need did not arise. The respondent is duly included in the figure given for ‘Understood everything’.
The four with their own reasons said that the book was too full of such references, that the references were not important enough, that as the place and people were fictional there was need to look anything up, and that they only check where it prevents understanding of the text, respectively. This is an interesting collection representing very different ways of responding to unclear references.

The person claiming that the book was too full of such references probably lies nearer in reading style to those who answered Yes, as it seems likely that if the number of problematic elements had been fewer the respondent would have checked. The person stating that the references were not important enough and the one referring to the fact that the character and locations were fictional both focus on the perceived value of the references, which suggests that if they were more prominent or actually real, the respondents may have checked – though this remains conjecture. The final respondent is similar, in that the references were not important enough, but the emphasis is slightly different – it is the work as a whole that is seen as central, and the references are treated as an afterthought. This makes the references less important overall as they would only trigger checking if they prevented the reader from understanding the text on a broader level.

The most salient findings are firstly, that overall the instance of checking at least once is approximately 50%, and secondly, that all those who checked did so on-line. As American poetry scholar Ann Hoff says,

students of the Net Generation are not merely computer proficient; they are computer fluent. [...] And while it may not occur to my students to turn to the informational notes at the back of a text (or for that matter to read those provided at the bottom of a page), they are quick to “Google” a phrase they suspect to be an allusion. Their instinct, when seeking information, is to seek it online.15

A final element that is of some interest is the possible connection between how much the person reads fiction and how likely they are to look for more information on cultural references. Any such connections are only putative, since the data pool is small, but there are some potential patterns. Of those who said Yes, three of the five reading in English read only 1–5 novels a year, one read 6–12, and one read 13–24; whereas of those who said No, five out of six reading in English read 6–12 novels a year, and only

Does this suggest that better-read students, more familiar with fiction, manage better regarding English language and culture and so look things up less often? Naturally, any such connection would need to be followed up via further research.

Understanding Cultural References – Terry Pratchett’s Jingo

Given the number of cultural references and the difficulty in identifying them, it could well be expected that non-native users of the language and those reading in translation will struggle to understand them. A questionnaire was designed to investigate this: Is there a difference in the level of self-perceived understanding between competent non-native users of English reading the texts in the original and those reading a translation, and what do they do when they believe that they have not understood? Secondly, with regard to specific references, are the reactions to these the same in both languages, or are different references problematic?

The Source Material

Terry Pratchett has written a large number of books, but the best-known collection is his Discworld fantasy series of 41 novels, with other short stories, additional non-novel fictional works and co-authored pieces also belonging to the same milieu. He is well-known for his use of cultural references in his works. These references are frequently amusing, but are also sometimes somewhat obscure, leading to a certain degree of pleasure for the reader when they are spotted and understood. As a result, identifying and comprehending them becomes an integral part of the reading experience for the reader and is shown by the collection on-line of such references by fans of his work.

16 As Ritva Leppihalme puts it: “Recognition of a creative allusion and the subsequent deeper understanding of a passage or text means that the reader is participating in the creation of the text and may be rewarded by a sense of achievement and self-congratulation. In essence, s/he may feel that s/he has passed a test with flying colours, showing that s/he is part of an in-group of readers, on the same wave-length as the author,” Ritva Leppihalme, Culture Bumps: On the Translation of Allusions, PhD Dissertation (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1994), 29.
The Respondents

The respondents for the second set of questions were a slightly larger group of 36 young adults aged between 19 and 31, with all but five aged 25 or under. Of the 36, 27 overlap with the group discussed above. The educational level and language proficiency of the additional nine are identical in profile to the original group description.

Data-gathering

This group of respondents were provided with a larger, separate questionnaire about how they understood certain cultural references provided to them from a work by Pratchett, half of them reading the original in English and half a Finnish translation. Some of the data from this questionnaire is used here to further particularise the readers’ responses to cultural references they are unsure of.

Discussion

Firstly, a brief overview is presented of how many times the respondents claimed that they would turn to the Internet or other, non-electronic, sources for help in understanding. Second, data on the individual responses to specific references is examined for trends.

The responses concerning whether the respondents checked at all and how those that did went about it are set out in Table 3 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group:</th>
<th>Number of respondents checking at least once</th>
<th>Checks using Google</th>
<th>Other types of check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English extracts</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish extracts</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Respondents’ claims on their use of the Pratchett extracts.

Only 16 respondents from both the Finnish and English extracts claimed that they would look for more information on these cultural references in any way, that is, either on-line or physical books or asking another person. That is almost half, and this is in line perhaps with the reported behaviour of the first group. However, one immediate fact that stands out is that only a little over half of those checks would be on-line. This is much lower than the results for the first group. Recall that the groups are near identical in
terms of the actual respondents, and that the additional nine respondents present in this data are identical in profile to the others. It suggests some form of dissonance between what they believe that they would do and what they actually do in such circumstances. There is no apparent difference of any note involving the frequency or type of checking between those reading the original and those reading the translation.

To examine how the nature of the specific references may have affected the respondents’ understanding, it is worth looking at the individual responses. The references in Table 4, below, were provided, each embedded in its source passage of text (either in English or Finnish) to provide context.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Referent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“which kills people but leaves buildings standing”</td>
<td>The neutron bomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“any citizen has the right to bear arms”</td>
<td>US gun law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Johnny Klatchian”</td>
<td>The English term ‘Johnny Foreigner’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“The Artful Nudger”</td>
<td>The Artful Dodger of Dickens fame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“We don’t want to fight, but—’ ’By jingo, if we do, we’ll show those—’ ”</td>
<td>Music Hall song 1878 song by G. H. MacDermott and George William Hunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lord Selachii began.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“ ‘We have no ships. We have no men. We have no money, too,’”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“His ship is the Milka”</td>
<td>The English advert for milk in the 1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Drinka pinta milka day,” and the name of one of Columbus’s ships, the Pinta.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“pints of Winkle’s Old Peculiar”</td>
<td>The English ale ‘Old Peculier’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“The Pheasant Pluckers”</td>
<td>An English tongue twister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: References used and their referents

The respondents’ self-reported reactions to each extract in terms of whether it was experienced as a problem are set out in Table 5. Even if an extract was viewed as problematic, not all respondents would then take any steps to resolve the problem. Further, unlike the responses to the earlier questionnaire, many claim that they would turn to sources that were not on-line.

17 The textual contexts are not provided here for reasons of space.
For those reading in Finnish, five of the extracts (two, three, five, six and seven) posed so little a challenge, or apparent challenge, to their understanding that only one check would be made via Google (four occasions) or other sources (two occasions). Extract seven is a little peculiar in this regard as four respondents had found it problematic. Two other extracts (four and eight) generated even less of an urge to check. This means that despite those seven references generating 16 problems, no more than a third of these would have been checked.

Of more interest is the first extract, since six of the respondents, a full third of the readers, found it problematic, and two checks would be made both on-line and in other sources to obtain a better understanding. It seems that, at least in Finnish, the allusion to the neutron bomb is unfamiliar – perhaps the phrase is more recognisable in its English form given its origins in America.

Examining the data for those reading in English, there are some similarities with the responses to the Finnish. A total of four respondents had felt that extracts six and seven were problematic, although here this triggered no desire for more information, and extracts two and eight were not seen as problematic. Greater differences appear elsewhere, however: the first extract, so tricky for the readers of the Finnish translation, caused problems for only three readers of the 18, and none of these thought that they would take it any further. Perhaps the phrase really is more familiar in English.

Extracts three and five are interesting as they caused difficulties for the readers in four cases each. For both extracts, the respondents stated that they would make two checks using Google and two other sources. The two references in question are to somewhat dated English references or speech patterns – ‘Johnny Foreigner’ and ‘By jingo’, respectively, which may have made them less accessible to the Finnish readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Problematic</th>
<th>Google</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Problematic</th>
<th>Google</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Respondents’ self-reported reaction to the references
The most interesting reaction concerns extract four. Only two of the readers of the Finnish translation had found the reference at all problematic (presumably the entirely invented name used in the Finnish felt natural in its cultural context), whereas as many as six readers of the English original did, with Google or other sources proving equally popular to help clear up the matter. The reference in English is quite clearly to the Artful Dodger – made especially clear by retaining the “Artful” element along with the “-er” structure. Despite the fame of Dickens overall, Oliver Twist as a book and play and the Artful Dodger as a prominent character, this generation of Finnish readers do not appear to find the structure familiar even if they have chosen to study at an English department. Those turning to Google would have found their solution swiftly – simply typing “the artful” into the search engine generates “the artful dodger” as one of the top suggestions. That said, another prominent result for “the artful dodger” is a music band, so the reader would still need to be cautious enough to determine which of the results features the intended referent.\footnote{In this case, identifying the correct reference is presumably easy as the character description in the Pratchett book matches that of Dicken’s creation almost exactly.}

This responsibility on the part of the user to sift the information they find on-line is a heavy one. Both translators and readers have access to the Internet, to official sites by authors or publishers, to sites of varying degrees of authority such as fan club sites with crowdsourced material, and to individual people’s pages, the quality of which may vary greatly. Crowdsourced material can be very useful to both translators and readers since it allows for a greater number of minds, knowledge, experience and criticism, and this is the factor that gives Wikipedia its prominence. But what are the risks in using such sites? Is the information provider correct? Is it opinion? How does one tell?

One such site devoted to the works of Terry Pratchett is lspace.org, which devotes one section of its site to the collection by fans of cultural references that they feel they have spotted, “The Annotated Pratchett File.”\footnote{Leo Breebaart and Mike Kew, eds, “The Annotated Pratchett File, v9.0,” www.lspace.org, version 9.0 (2016 [1992]), https://www.lspace.org/books/apf/, accessed December 2, 2019.} Certainly, at least one entry on that site is clearly opinion. In a page devoted to the book Soul Music, the page declares:
‘Well... ...one out of three ain’t bad.’

With the many Meatloaf references in Soul Music it is perhaps no surprise many people think they’ve spotted another one here, namely to the ballad ‘Two Out of Three Ain’t Bad’ on Bat out of Hell. But in this case both Terry and Meatloaf are simply using a normal English phrase that’s been around for ages. There is no connection.20

How does the author of this assertion justify the claim? They do not, and indeed cannot. Who can tell what Terry Pratchett was thinking?21 For translators using this site to aid them in locating (and subsequently translating) such references, this kind of opinion dressed up as fact can be a serious problem. Literature translators working into Finnish are normally native speakers of Finnish, not English, and if they follow statements like that above on the grounds that a native speaker knows the language and culture better, they may be making errors.

Conclusion: Handle with Caution

The changes in translator and reader behaviour brought about by the possibilities of the Internet to a large degree must run in parallel – after all, translators are firstly readers, and both groups have access to on-line resources and search engines. Their use of on-line sources for information brings advantages and disadvantages, though not perhaps in equal measure.

The main findings involve two different aspects of reader behaviour. Firstly, readers of the extracts claimed that they would use on-line resources far less than their self-reported actual behaviour. Whereas nearly half of the checks that the respondents had claimed that they would make were to other sources, all those who actually checked had done so on-line.22 Perhaps they are more dependent upon the Internet than they believe – or would like to believe. It is possible that they lie in a transitional state and, even though they may qualify as Digital Natives according to the

21 For what it is worth, the present author feels that it is far more likely to have been intentional.
22 One student even volunteered the following information at the end of the second questionnaire: “[A]lso, as a modern person who spends too much time on the internet, my automatic reaction is to google everything I don’t immediately understand.”
general definition, the attitudes of the generation before them may influence their thinking, if not their actions.

Secondly, there appears to be no meaningful difference between those reading in English or Finnish regarding the frequency with which the respondents claimed that they would look for further information. There was, however, a big difference in which references caused problems. This may be connected to either the familiarity of certain phrases in specific languages in the case of some references or to the translation strategy used in others, though such considerations lie outside the scope of this chapter and would require considerable further research.

Finally, though both translators and readers benefit greatly from the material now available to them electronically, in terms of both official and unofficial sources, the reliability of such information varies greatly, and only experience can help one sift through the mass of on-line data. I can only agree with Emeritus Professor James Knowlson, who, when exploring the possibilities of an Internet search for allusions in the works of Samuel Beckett, concluded “how invaluable it can be in certain cases, but also how, as with any other research tool, it needs to be handled with caution and be backed up by the most rigorous scholarly criteria.”

Bibliography

Primary material


Secondary material


Chapter 10
Fat Acceptance or Body Positivity? A Discourse-based Investigation of Plus-size Fashion Blogging and Social Movements
– Hanna Limatius

Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate the ways in which plus-size fashion bloggers discursively construct and define two social movements related to body diversity and representation: the fat acceptance movement, and the body positivity movement. Several previous studies have illustrated the positive effects that blogging has for plus-size women,\(^1\) including an increased sense of community and self-worth,\(^2\) as well as improvements in physical and men-

\(1\) While there are also male and non-binary plus-size fashion bloggers, my work focuses on a specific group of female bloggers. For this reason, the pronouns she/her are also used when referring to the bloggers in this chapter.

The majority of the existing literature on plus-size blogs – especially those that focus on fashion, also known as “fatfashion” blogs – views the fat acceptance movement as an important ideological force behind this genre of blogs. However, in recent years a similar – but not synonymous – concept of ‘body positivity’ has become increasingly popular on social media in general, as well as among bloggers in particular. In July 2018, the use of the hashtags #bodypositive (6.2 million posts) and #bodypositivity (1.9 million posts) clearly eclipsed the use of the most common fat-acceptance-related hashtags, #fatacceptance (65,500 posts) and #fatpositive (69,400 posts) on Instagram.

The concepts of fat acceptance and body positivity illustrate the constant movement and change in social media trends – specifically, the ways in which people present and (re)construct their relationship to their bodies online. This chapter demonstrates that although many fat acceptance advocates have embraced the newer, arguably ‘trendier’ concept of body positivity, we can also detect movement to the opposite direction – going ‘back to the roots’ of body activism, as it were. Moreover, there are also those who subscribe to both movements and allow them to coexist.

In this chapter, I analyse a set of blog texts and comments that are part of a self-compiled blog corpus using a qualitative, discourse-analytic approach. The blog data was collected from twenty UK-based blogs in January 2015. I will also compare and contrast the ways in which fat acceptance and body positivity are discussed in the blog material with questionnaire responses that were collected from nine bloggers in 2017. My research questions are the following:

1. How do the bloggers talk about fat acceptance and body positivity in blog texts and comments? In what type of contexts do these terms occur, and are they given any definitions by the bloggers?
2. How do the bloggers define the concepts of fat acceptance and body positivity in their questionnaire responses? What kind of similarities and/or differences are there between the pre-2015 blog data and the more recent questionnaire data?

3 Dickins et al., “Fatosphere,” 1685.
5 Limatius, “Nothing.”
The structure of the chapter is as follows. Since my data consists of fashion-focused blog texts written by plus-size women, as well as questionnaire response data from these women, I will begin by contextualizing the study by discussing the plus-size fashion industry, and its relationship with traditional, so-called ‘straight size’ fashion, as well as the normative representation of women’s bodies in mainstream fashion media. I will then go on to discuss the social movements of fat acceptance and body positivity, illustrating the differences and similarities between the two. After these theoretical sections, I will move on to describe my data and methods, followed by a presentation of the study’s results. I will conclude the chapter with a discussion and suggestions for future research.

**Plus-size Fashion Industry and Normative Beauty Standards**

Fat people\(^7\) are marginalized and discriminated against in many ways in modern Western societies.\(^8\) As Daiane Scaraboto and Eileen Fischer state,\(^9\) in the field of fashion, the societal prejudices against fat people are intensified; despite the growing interest in more inclusive representation in fashion on social media, thin and toned bodies remain the ideal in the industry.\(^10\)

It could be argued, however, that the exclusive world of fashion is – slowly but surely – changing, or at least becoming more diverse. Thinness may still be the norm in ‘high fashion’ or *haute couture*, but the success of plus-size models like Ashley Graham and Tess Holliday shows that different body types are now being accepted into the mainstream fashion media discourse. Even successful fashion designers, most notably Christian Siriano, who dressed 17 women to the 90\(^{th}\) Academy Awards in 2018, are now advocating for diversity in fashion. According to Harper’s BAZAAR, one

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7 In this chapter, the word ‘fat’ is used as a neutral adjective with no negative intent, as it is also used by the majority of plus-size fashion bloggers and fat acceptance activists.


9 Scaraboto and Fischer, “Frustrated,” 1239.

of most well-known fashion magazines in the world, Siriano has been campaigning for “inclusivity on the runway” for years, offering to dress celebrities who have been turned down by other designers, such as Leslie Jones.11

Yet, for average plus-size women with no means to access creations by designers like Siriano, the field of fashion appears as ‘othering’; they are consistently being treated as the abnormal. For these women, fashion blogs, which present fashion on regular people instead of models or celebrities, can become an important source of inspiration and self-confidence. As Agnés Rocamora explains, fashion blogging has “enabled women traditionally excluded from the realm of fashion imageries to enter its visual scape.”12 Several previous studies have established that reading and writing fashion blogs offers many benefits for plus-size women in particular, such as community building, peer-support, opportunities for (positive) identity construction, and the possibility to resist and reconstruct the normative fashion imagery.13 Indeed, as suggested by Scaraboto and Fischer,14 and evidenced by successful bloggers like Gabi Fresh15 building careers as fashion designers and plus-size models, blogging can even offer opportunities to change the field of fashion.

_The Fat Acceptance Movement_

As Marissa Dickins et al. state, there is no universal definition for the term fat acceptance. However, they offer the following explanation for the movement:

[The fat acceptance movement] is regarded as a consumer-based movement comprised of individuals from varying philosophical back-


grounds who question the dominant discourse of health reporting and information about obesity, including critical examinations of the weight-loss industry. Critical elements of the movement include acceptance of one’s body and relinquishment of the idea that one’s body is unacceptable if it does not conform to a societal ideal of thinness.¹⁶

Unlike the body positivity movement, which is still relatively new and mostly online-based, the fat acceptance movement is more established and has a long history, especially in the United States; Dickins et al. mention organizations such as the National Association for Fat Acceptance (NAAFA) and the Association for Size Diversity and Health (ASDAH).¹⁷ However, even though the fat acceptance movement pre-dates the internet, online communication has been in a key role in spreading the word of the movement.¹⁸ Plus-size fashion bloggers or ‘fatshion’ bloggers can be viewed as a part of a larger collective of fat-acceptance-influenced blogs, the Fatosphere, although as Scaraboto and Fischer note, not all fat acceptance activists consider this positive because of the presumed “triviality” of fashion.¹⁹

Although Scaraboto and Fischer state that there is “overlap” between the (online) community of fat acceptance activists and the plus-size fashion blogosphere,²⁰ and most plus-size fashion bloggers appear to support the principles of the fat acceptance movement, it would be an overgeneralization to claim that all plus-size fashion bloggers have an interest in fat acceptance activism. This is also reflected in my own previous work, which has demonstrated the diversity within this genre of blogs; the fact that a person identifies as fat and embraces that identity does not automatically mean they wish to participate in activist discourse on “fat politics.”²¹ One explanation for the rise of the body positivity movement can be found here – the more fluid, less radical idea of body positivity may attract those wanting to embrace their own body whilst still taking part in the trends of mainstream fashion media.

¹⁶ Dickins et al., “Fatosphere,” 1681.
¹⁷ Dickins et al., 1681.
¹⁸ Scaraboto and Fischer, “Frustrated,” 1239.
¹⁹ Scaraboto and Fischer, 1239; see also LeBesco, Revolting.

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The body positivity movement, more recent and less organized than the fat acceptance movement, is not easily defined, either. The core idea of body positivity appears to focus on acknowledging two facts: a) the fact that thin, toned bodies have become the norm in Western mainstream media, and b) that the portrayal of such an ‘ideal’ body should be challenged with more inclusive imagery that showcases bodies of different shapes and sizes. Online interaction and social media have a central role in the body positivity movement, and defining the movement itself is also a topic of lively online discussion. The increasing awareness of “the importance of body positivity” in the USA in particular draws attention to the dangers of weight bias and fat shaming. Although the body positivity movement can be interpreted to be more inclusive – and thus more fluid and challenging to define – than the fat acceptance movement, it still has a strong connection to issues related to weight and obesity.

Despite its focus on inclusiveness and challenging the normative media imagery of bodies, the body positivity movement can also be problematized. Alexandra Sastre, who studied three body positive websites, calls for a more “radical” approach to body positivity. According to her, body positivity merely shifts “the focus from the modification of one’s body to the modification of one’s relationship to one’s body.” Physical appearance/attractiveness continues to dominate the discourse on bodies; even if the consensus is no longer “bodies like X are beautiful,” but rather “all bodies are beautiful,” the focus is still on beauty. Thus, Sastre does not believe that body positivity in its current form is truly a “resistant or a radical” alternative to mainstream discourse on bodies, even if the goals of the movement appear to be well-intentioned.

Although the body positivity movement allows for more inclusivity than the traditional media representation of bodies, it still presents a “prescribed path” that the individual must follow. In an earlier study of plus-size fashion bloggers and their body positive blogger identities, I observed

23 Sastre, 933.
26 Sastre.
27 Sastre, 941.
something similar. While the bloggers resisted existing normative ideas about the body (for example, “you need to lose weight to be acceptable”), at the same time they constructed new norms within their online community (for example, “you need to accept and love your body just as it is”).

It was thus also possible to “fail” in being body positive, or to “not be body positive enough.” The increasing commercialization of the body positivity movement, and the fact that ‘body positive’ has become something of a buzzword in social media marketing can also be problematized, as I will illustrate further on in this chapter in my analysis of the questionnaire data from 2017.

Data and Method

The starting point for the present study was a corpus compiled from twenty UK-based plus-size fashion blogs. The corpus contains all blog texts and comments that were posted on these blogs before January 2015. At the time of collection in early 2015, I obtained permission to use the blog material from all 20 bloggers whose blogs were included in the corpus.

I searched the corpus for all blog posts where fat acceptance (all terms beginning with “fat accep,” including “fat acceptance,” “fat accepting”) and body positivity (all terms beginning with “body posit,” including “body positivity,” “body positive,” and the slightly unusual “body positive-ness”) were mentioned. Out of the 7,776 posts in the larger blog corpus, fat acceptance was mentioned in 20 posts by five out of 20 bloggers. Body positivity was mentioned in 64 posts by thirteen out of 20 bloggers.

I started the analysis by reading through each blog text as well as all the comments that had been posted to the texts. While reading, I made notes on the general context in which the terms were used (for example, describing a group of people or talking about one’s own identity), as well as the more specific linguistic context (for example, what type of words appeared in close connection with the search terms). Next, I read through my notes several times and started combining the topics of discussion that were present in the data into more cohesive themes using Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke’s approach to thematic analysis. Finally, I distinguished

28 Limatius, “Nothing.”

three overarching main themes under which all the existing themes could be grouped: movement, participants, and boundaries.

I considered the concepts of fat acceptance and body positivity as defined through movement when they were described as something fluid, with the potential for change, either from the perspective of the individual or society in general. These types of definitions included, for example, metaphorical talk of fat acceptance and/or body positivity as a ‘journey’, on which the individual can face both triumphs and setbacks. The idea of movement was also present when fat acceptance and/or body positivity were described as something that was “spreading,” gaining more followers and becoming more visible. Finally, fat acceptance and/or body positivity were also described as transformative phenomena that could affect the views of the mainstream media by “challenging,” “countering” and “breaking” normative ideas about beauty and the body.

Fat acceptance and body positivity were also defined through their participants, i.e. the people, or non-human entities like blogs and websites, that subscribed to these movements. For example, people (often bloggers) could be described as “advocating for” or “promoting” fat acceptance and/or body positivity. In such cases, the concepts of fat acceptance and body positivity were not necessarily explained in any other way – it was merely stated that a specific person or a blog is body positive and/or fat-accepting. The supportive role of the online community was often highlighted, and the people who promoted fat acceptance and/or body positivity were also portrayed as having other shared values, such as feminism.30

Finally, the fat acceptance and body positivity movements were also defined by drawing boundaries. That is, they were defined by the phenomena they did not promote, and by the people who were not considered their participants. As Daphna Yeshua–Katz states, while the boundaries of an (online) group may not be explicitly stated, they are important in helping group members in “defining and defending the group’s existence.”31 Plus-size fashion bloggers can define their social identity by making a distinction between those who share their characteristics – such as “being body posi-

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“Fat Acceptance or Body Positivity?” – and those to whom these characteristics (presumably) do not apply, such as the people who represent the mainstream media’s thin ideal, and thus do not “need” the fat acceptance and/or body positivity movements. Interestingly, such boundary management also causes internal conflict for some bloggers – several people mentioned the fear of not being “body positive enough” or being “too body positive,” especially in the context of weight loss discourse. The idea that fat acceptance and/or body positivity could have limits is an intriguing contrast to the instances where these concepts were described through the idea of movement. Both body positivity and fat acceptance can thus be considered (at least to a certain extent) fluid, but at the same time confined within certain boundaries.

As well as analysing the blog texts where fat acceptance and body positivity were mentioned, I studied questionnaire data that was collected from nine bloggers in 2017. The bloggers were asked to define fat acceptance and body positivity in the following way: “In a few words, describe what you think about the following terms. Do not try to come up with a ‘correct’ definition for the word; say what they mean to you or what comes to your mind when reading them. There are no wrong answers!”

The questionnaire was sent out to 13 bloggers as a part of my PhD research project, and it also contained several other questions that will not be discussed in the present study. Nine bloggers responded to the questionnaire. The main goal of the questionnaire was to see whether any changes had taken place in the blogging community in the period 2015–2017, and if so, what kind of changes the bloggers had observed.

33 See Limatius, “Nothing.”
The Discursive Construction of Fat Acceptance and Body Positivity in Blog Texts and Comments (pre-2015)

In this section, I will illustrate the three ways of defining fat acceptance and body positivity – definitions through movement, participants and boundaries – using examples collected from the blog data. The bloggers’ names have been anonymized from the text. Each blogger has been randomly assigned a number ranging from one to twenty, as in the following: “Blogger 13 states that …” Bolded text is used in the examples to highlight linguistically and discursively significant words or passages.

Defining fat acceptance and body positivity through movement

The journey metaphor was used to construct both fat acceptance and body positivity in the blog texts. Individuals within the plus-size (blogging) community all had their own journeys and could be described as being at different “stages” of those journeys:

1. I guess what I’m trying to say is that, we’re all at different stages of acceptance, some of us still diet, some of us happily never want to see another set of scales in our lives, some of us have been to hell and back in pursuit of something we thought was “normal” and “beautiful” and some of us haven’t even formed an opinion as to how we feel about our bodies, and some of us don’t give a shit and just want to wear pretty clothes. (Blogger 4)

In (1), Blogger 4 sees (fat) acceptance as something gradual and diverse – each person has their own journey and their own challenges and should not be judged for it. The same blogger also refers to discovering fat acceptance as something of a turning point in her own life, talking about her “BFA (before fat acceptance) days,” as well as discussing having weight loss surgery in the past and speculating whether she would have made the same decision had she discovered fat acceptance earlier. It is also notable how she uses the first person plural pronoun throughout the excerpt in (1): no matter what stage in their journey people are, she considers them to be a part of the same community – a part of “us.”

35 On pronoun use in plus-size fashion blogs, see Limatius, “Nothing.”
The journey metaphor was also common in connection with the body positivity movement (2), and sometimes body positivity and fat acceptance were used side by side when the bloggers talked about their “journeys” (3):

2. The very first blogger I stumbled across before descending down the path of body positivity was Gabi Fresh, she was gorgeous, she was fearless, she was fat... (Blogger 3)

3. I didn’t know what fat acceptance or body positivity was, I didn’t realise there was a whole community of plus size bloggers out there and I certainly didn’t know there were so many wonderful, inspirational and welcoming people that were ready to embrace me and support me. (Blogger 6)

Other movement-related uses of fat acceptance included discussing fat acceptance as something that one actively “does” (e.g. “carrying on with fat acceptance,” Blogger 19), as well as discussing fat acceptance (or body positivity) as something that can “replace” the ideal beauty standards of the mainstream media.

Body positivity was also constructed through the use of other movement-related metaphors, for example as something that was “spreading” like an “infection” (4) or something that certain people (like celebrities) were “bringing to the spotlight” (5):

4. Through meeting so many fabulous women through blogging, I caught the infectious body positivity that they were spreading around like some kind of viral infection. (Blogger 3)

5. From one sex siren to another I have a major girl crush on Beth Ditto. Bringing body positivity massively into the spotlight as she shocked and amazed audiences with her love for her big beautiful curves. (Blogger 17)

The viral infection metaphor in (4) is particularly interesting, as the blogger is talking about body positivity as something good, describing the people “spreading” it as “fabulous,” yet the metaphor she uses has traditionally negative connotations. This type of discursive construction of the body positivity movement is also interesting considering the medical and societal “obesity epidemic” discourse, which is often present in mainstream media discussions on fatness.36

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36 Dickens et al., “Fatosphere,” 1681.
Defining fat acceptance and body positivity through participants

As we already saw in example (1), where the author referred to different people at different stages of their “journey” to acceptance, the fat acceptance and body positivity movements were also constructed through the people who participated in them. Body positivity in particular was often used in descriptors for participants, as in “person X / blog X is body positive.” In such cases, the writer of the post did not explain what she meant by “body positive”; it was expected that the audience would know the meaning of the descriptor. Thus, understanding the meaning of “being body positive” could be considered a part of the shared linguistic repertoire of the blogging community.\footnote{In “A World of Beautiful Fat Babes,” I examined the blogging community through the community of practice framework. A shared repertoire, along with mutual engagement and a joint enterprise, is one of the defining characteristics of a community of practice. See also Etienne Wenger, Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity (Cambridge University Press, 1998).}

Blogging and interacting with other bloggers were mentioned as catalysts for participating in both movements. Embracing body positivity and fat acceptance themed blogs was seen as a way to construct a more positive self-image (6), as well as a way to find a group where the plus-size individual felt like they belonged and could relate to others (7):

6. Since I’ve started reading more body positive and plus size fashion blogs however, I’ve been feeling more confident in what I wear and now it’s reached a point where I can’t wait for the sun to come out so I can actually feel like a person again and not some gross cretin that lives in a hole somewhere whenever the sun shows its’ face lol! (Blogger 10)
7. This is why I feel on-line communities like this are so important for girls, it shows that fat acceptance exists, even if it’s not in the public eye and gives us role models we can actually relate to. (Blogger 15)

One difference between the fat acceptance movement and the body positivity movement became apparent when looking at the ways in which the bloggers constructed these movements through their participants. Here, the idea of body positivity being “more inclusive” was visible; while the bloggers acknowledged that there was variation within the fat acceptance movement, as well as different approaches to promoting fat acceptance, the assumed participants were people – usually women – who identified as fat. When discussing body positivity, the bloggers talked about other
marginalized identities as well, although being body positive and fat accepting still seemed to go hand in hand:

8. On Tumblr (at least the people I follow) are so body positive and accept [that] all bodies are good, however they come - thin, fat, white, black, brown, gay, straight, pansexual, trans*, hairy, bald, whatever. (Blogger 2)

9. If we’re going to be body positive then we need to understand what that means to everyone, not just plus sized women, it’s not exclusive. (Blogger 3)

In (8), the blogger illustrates the inclusivity of the body positivity movement on Tumblr by listing different characteristics – some of them characteristics of the body, some of them not – that can be seen as marginalized in the mainstream media. In (9), inclusivity is explained simply as the opposite of exclusivity; no examples of other marginalized groups are given here, but the author stresses that the body positivity movement is not something that exists only for plus-size individuals. However, it should be noted that the context for (9) is an introduction of a series of posts were the blogger has invited a team of writers “from different backgrounds, genders and sizes” to write about body image.

**Defining fat acceptance and body positivity through boundaries**

Finally, the bloggers also used boundary work to construct their definitions for fat acceptance and body positivity. As well as defining the actors – people, blogs, etc. – that participate in these movements, the bloggers also accentuated the differences between their community and those institutions and people that were seen as the “counter-movement”:

10. For today’s post what I decided to do was have a look around at what is currently available, looking specifically for swimwear that accommodates my bra size which, when I looked around last time, was rarer than a body positive comment on the *Daily Mail*. (Blogger 1)

The mainstream media is often presented as the opposite of the online fat acceptance and body positivity movements in plus-size fashion blogs. Tabloids such as the *Daily Mail* are mentioned several times in my blog corpus, and they are often criticized for their representation of women’s

38 On boundary work, see e.g. Yeshua-Katz, “Online.”
bodies. In (10), the focus of the blog post in question is not body positivity as such; the blogger is discussing shopping for swimwear that accommodates a larger bust. However, in her post she quips that finding a well-fitting swimsuit is, for her, “rarer than a body positive comment on the Daily Mail.” Thus, the Daily Mail is portrayed as something that does not support the body positive movement – quite the opposite – and a boundary is drawn between the body positive community and those who agree with the portrayal of (women’s) bodies in the Daily Mail. Again, understanding the reference requires that the audience of the blog already knows the Daily Mail’s presumed stance on body positivity – the joke would be lost on those who are not familiar with a) the concept of body positivity, and b) the way this issue is discussed (or not discussed) in the Daily Mail.

As the examples in (8) and (9) in the previous section illustrate, body positivity was often defined as something that includes all people, with an emphasis on those who are socially and politically marginalized. However, there were also instances in the data where the struggles of marginalized people could be seen as hierarchical:

11. Yes, lots of people get stick, but the health judging we face in my humble opinion is worse than a lot of other appearance-based judging. (Of course I’m NOT saying it’s as bad as the prejudice People of Colour, gay and trans* people face, I’m talking purely about looks.) A fat person knows that almost everyone who sees them will assume they live off doughnuts and pizza 24/7, never move and are destined to die decades earlier than everyone else. That is what differs between judging people for having blue hair, 27 facial piercings or 45 tattoos. No one gets it easy in this life, but if we were to take away the stigma attached to the word fat life would be easier for me and people like me. (Blogger 2)

The context for (11) is that Blogger 2 has written a post on fat acceptance, with an emphasis on “claiming back” the word “fat.” In the comments section of this post, one reader expressed that she could empathize with the struggles of fat people as she had faced “a lot of negativity concerning [her] tattoos.” In her response to the comment, Blogger 2 gently reprimands the reader by stating that while no-one should be criticized for their appearance, the challenges that fat people face in society are, “in her humble opinion,” worse than the criticism people with tattoos and other forms

39 For more on this topic, see Harju and Huovinen, “Fashionably”; Limatius, “Nothing.”
of body modification receive. Notably, she also stresses that the prejudice against people of colour and LGBTQ+ people is a more serious issue than the marginalization of fat people. According to this perspective, certain types of systematic discrimination are “worse” than others, which is why specified movements such as fat acceptance are needed.

Despite its presumed inclusivity, the discussions on body positivity also included some boundary work. As well as being body positive, a person could also be described as having body positivity – for example, Blogger 2 described another blogger by stating that “she has body positivity in spades.” Naturally, if body positivity is seen as something that can be measured, the question arises: how much is enough – or too much – body positivity? Both concerns were present in the blog data, often in connection with discussions on weight-loss:

12. I had been doing really well and managed to lose a stone, however, I definitely don’t feel as though I am trying quite as hard as I could, I know I could try harder and I’m feeling the guilt today... With all this in mind, I ask the question, is being body positive bad for my health? I still think that we need to embrace who we are, but could this newfound confidence actually be doing me more harm than good?” (Blogger 8)

In (12), Blogger 8 problematizes body positivity from a health perspective. She is trying to lose weight and worries that her “newfound confidence” is hindering her efforts to improve her health by losing weight. She is torn between wanting to “embrace who she is,” and following a diet. In another blog post, the same blogger also problematized body positivity by pondering whether the body positivity movement had made her vain and self-involved, as a family member had commented negatively on her daily habit of taking selfies.

However, the conflict between weight loss and body positivity was not always viewed from the perspective presented by Blogger 8. In fact, most of the discussion on the topic focused on the opposite – bloggers were afraid that if they lost weight, they would be criticized for it by others in the blogging community:

13. People telling me all the time that my weight is a problem and that I am overweight and saying it negatively could make me believe them. I don’t want to go back to that place, I like the place I am in now, I love who I am, I am part of an amazing community of fabulous plus sized woman who also love who they are. I fear losing weight will make me a traitor to everything I stand for and the plus size community

Fat Acceptance or Body Positivity?
stands for. I also fear that I would lose the weight and end up being a size 18, on the cusp of plus size and become on the edge on the community, become stuck between plus size and main size. I am probably being irrational about it all, but bottom line, I need to lose weight and I think it will do more damage than good. (Blogger 15)

Although Blogger 15 faces a conflict similar to Blogger 8, her viewpoint is rather different. In the post, she talks about a health issue for which the doctor had recommended weight loss. Blogger 15 is distressed by the idea that she would have to change herself after finally coming to terms with her body. She is also worried about being excluded from the community, fearing that losing weight would mark her as a “traitor” to the community. According to Blogger 15, the blogging community has boundaries, as she is afraid of becoming a UK size 18 – clearly, this size represents the “border” of the community to her.

Blogger 15 ended her post by asking her readers whether they thought it possible to be body positive while losing weight. She received several supportive comments from other plus-size women who encouraged her to do what she felt was best for her and her body. However, there were also commenters who admitted that the conflict she felt resonated with them. Even though the body positivity movement was thought to be inclusive, equally celebrating all bodies, the bloggers appeared to be seeking out some boundaries to help define it.40

Bloggers’ Definitions for Fat Acceptance and Body Positivity in Questionnaire Responses (2017)

In this section, I analyse the responses I received from nine bloggers when I asked what they thought about the terms “fat acceptance” and “body positivity” on an online questionnaire in 2017. Again, bolded text is used to highlight specific discursive or linguistic features in the examples. To protect the respondents’ anonymity, blogger numbers (e.g. Blogger 1) are not used in the examples from questionnaire data.

40 For a more in-depth discussion on the ways in which body positivity and weight loss are negotiated within the blogging community, see Limatius, “Nothing.”
Fat acceptance in 2017

All nine bloggers who responded to the questionnaire in 2017 defined fat acceptance in a positive or neutral manner. Fat acceptance was described as “radical,” “something we need more of,” and something that “should be on the lips of everyone who claims to love all bodies.” The bloggers emphasized the need for equality between fat people and those who are not considered fat; thus, the idea of boundaries was present in the questionnaire data as well:

14. Acknowledging that we are people too.

Fat acceptance was seen as self-acceptance, but also as acceptance of others, as well as a way of educating community outsiders:

15. Accepting fat people, or trying to get people to accept fat people.

One respondent also wanted to make a separation between fat acceptance and body positivity:

16. The break away from body positivity which is no longer about fat positivity.

The words “no longer” are especially interesting in the response in (16), as it implies that, at some point in the past, body positivity was about fat positivity, but that is not the case anymore. As demonstrated in the previous section, in the blog data the two movements were often discussed side-by-side, or in the same context. In the time between collecting the blog corpus in January 2015, and sending out the questionnaire in the spring of 2017, something within the blogging community appears to have shifted. This distinction becomes even more apparent when we look at how the nine respondents defined body positivity in 2017.

Body positivity in 2017

Whereas fat acceptance was defined in positive terms in the 2017 questionnaire responses, body positivity was widely problematized. In fact, only three respondents defined body positivity without any problematization of the concept, summarising it as “every body being a good body,” “being positive about ALL bodies,” and “realising that it is OK to be positive about your body, whatever the size.” These definitions are fairly consistent with the general outlook of the body positivity movement, and the way it is presented on social media.
However, the remaining six bloggers had a different outlook on the body positivity movement in 2017. It was problematized for being difficult to define, which caused misunderstandings, and potentially offended people. Most of the critique on body positivity revolved around the fact that it had become commercialized; the bloggers saw it as something that was originally created by the members of the fat acceptance movement, but now “overrun with white, thin, conventionally attractive young people edging out everyone else.” The popularity of the body positivity movement on social media was not seen in a completely positive light, either:

17. **Sadly** now a big trend.

Thus, there was a contrast between the ways in which body positivity was constructed in the blog texts prior to 2015, and the ways in which the bloggers defined it in 2017. In terms of movement, it appeared that body positivity had moved in a direction where it was more widely known, but less appealing to the original target audience (those with marginalized bodies). The participants of the movement could no longer be easily identified to share a common ideology, which resulted in new types of boundary work within the body positive community itself.

**Discussion and Conclusion: Change from Fat Acceptance to Body Positivity**

Considering the current popularity of the body positivity movement on social media, I initially expected that fat acceptance would be more prominent in the blog data (posted before 2015), and that body positivity would be highlighted in the more recent questionnaire data (collected in 2017). However, the results of the study show that body positivity was in fact discussed more frequently (in 64 posts) than fat acceptance (in 20 posts) in the blog corpus. This is an interesting finding given the strong connection between plus-size (fashion) blogging and the fat acceptance movement that has been presented in previous research. The change from fat acceptance to body positivity appears to have begun earlier than I assumed.

As the analysis of the questionnaire responses reveals, however, the body positivity movement is currently criticized and problematized by

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41 It should be noted that in the other parts of the 2017 questionnaire that are not discussed here, some of the respondents also acknowledged the positive sides of commercialization, such as the facts that plus-size women were more visible in the mainstream media, and there were more clothing options available to them. See Limatius, “We.”
bloggers, while the fat acceptance movement is characterized in more consistently positive terms. This could indicate that some bloggers are moving back to the direction of “traditional” fat acceptance activism, which focuses more specifically on fat people, and the treatment they receive in society. Interestingly, when comparing the blog material posted prior to January 2015 with the 2017 questionnaire responses, the bloggers’ perception of the fat acceptance movement appears to have stayed roughly the same, while body positivity is now viewed in a more problematic light. In summary, the bloggers’ views on the fat acceptance movement are more positive throughout the data, while their views on the body positivity movement become more critical in 2017 – however, body positivity incites more discussion than fat acceptance in both blog texts and questionnaire responses.

While both movements seem to be fluid when it comes to their definitions, the fat acceptance movement – perhaps because of its longer history and more established nature – appears slightly more stable, while attitudes towards body positivity can be characterised as more susceptible to change. The inclusivity of the body positivity movement is both a blessing and a curse; it invites everyone to embrace and celebrate their bodies, but at the same time is more open to commercial exploitation, and more likely to create boundaries between the participants of the movement because of their different perceptions of what it means to be body positive.

It is also worth noting that fat acceptance and body positivity were often mentioned in the data side-by-side, in the same context. Although there is movement both from fat acceptance to body positivity, and “backwards” in the opposite direction, the concepts can also co-exist, and bloggers can move between them depending on, for example, their intended audience.

As the present study can be characterized as a case study of one specific community of plus-size fashion bloggers, further research is needed. In the present study, I performed a qualitative analysis of a small dataset; in the future, the study could be expanded on by looking at, for example, the collocations of the terms “fat acceptance” and “body positivity” in large online corpora. Future studies should also look at the body positivity phenomenon from the point of view of different marginalized groups – for example, disabled people, transgender people, non-binary or gender non-conforming people, and people of colour – to explore the different ways in which this social movement is constructed, discussed and understood.
Bibliography


Chapter 11
Studying Forced Mobility: Critique as a Matter of Shifting Perspectives
– Erzsébet Barát

Social Critique

The theme of the present volume is movement and change in relation to matters of present-day interest and concern. As a scholar whose main research interest is critical studies of discourse, more specifically the relationship between meaning making and ideology, I would like to explore the discursive articulation of the ‘migrant’ figure in contemporary Hungarian political discourse. My choice is motivated not only by a commitment to destabilizing the daily routine of hate speech but also to finding a rhetoric that may be effectively deployed to that end. My approach is originally grounded in Nancy Fraser’s criterion for doing a (feminist) critical study.\(^1\) She contends that producing (social) critique above all entails speaking to relevant social events in order to deconstruct their hegemonic logic. However, Fraser does not problematize the very act of ‘finding’ such an event. I would want to argue that such a ‘choice’ emerges out of a contingent triangulation of multiple perspectives on ‘migration’ in order to forge a critical position that recognizes the agency of the (relatively) dispossessed participants in the event and does not simply reiterate a self-congratulatory discourse of humanitarian pity – in Lilie Chouliaraki’s sense of the term.\(^2\) In agreement with her, I want to see how it is possible to go beyond the arguably sympathetic representations dominating main stream (visual) media coverage when representing the sufferings of the distant other (refugees), which tends to evoke a response either in terms of some humanitarian pity (drawing on an alleged sameness between refugee and

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spectator) or that of irony that is in the name of an irredeemable difference between the two. However, unlike Chouliaraki, I shall argue that irony can be mobilized for collective transformative action that does not deny the agency of the refugee in so far as it produces a ‘we’ of partial inclusion.

The particular social event I have chosen is the Hungarian Government’s campaign to mobilize people to participate in a referendum on October 2, 2016 ‘in defence’ of the country’s autonomy against the (alleged) imposition of the European Union in the form of a refugee quota for Hungary. In my analysis I explore the symbolic (i.e. conceptual) aspect of power, with a specific focus on the logic of argumentation in favour of political mobilization in order to be able to tell apart pro- and anti-democratic discourse perspectives in terms of their denial of, or invitation for agency for their audience. My point of departure for the analysis of the political propaganda materials is the perspective of gender relations as the most salient dimension of the complex matrix of ideologies in play, more specifically masculinity. The turn to masculinity may not be uncontroversial in the feminist scholarly field of critical studies of discourse that is inevitably dominated by the desire to make women/femininity (more) visible. See, for instance, Michelle Lazar’s volume that is the first book-length publication that uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) for exploring the linguistically mediated maintenance of unequal relations of gender but all chapters in the edited volume focus on exploring various conceptualizations of femininity in a global/local dynamic – my own contribution included. Still, in my current study I must focus on what Michael Kimmel calls articulations of the angry white men’s “aggrieved entitlement” to their privileges – as the mobilizing ideology addressed to the citizens in the campaign, legitimizing the hate speech of various forms of exclusion against the ‘refugee’. When analysing the Hungarian Government’s 2016 billboard campaign from a gender perspective, it is precisely the white Christian men’s ‘aggrieved entitlement’ to own their ‘country’ against the diverse forms of ‘threat’ associated with the ‘migrant Islamic male’ that the analyst’s feminist critical gaze needs to deconstruct and expose.

When selecting the social event and the texts involved, we also need to keep in mind that commitment to social change may not be necessarily for
a more democratic space. As Sandra Harding observes, social change may work both in reactionary and democratic directions. I agree with Harding that the exploration of the distinction between the two strategies requires, amongst other things, that we analyse the assumptions upon which their understanding of change is implicated to be based. Since global capitalism’s oppressive economic, political and cultural relations in the 1990s started to dramatically affect groups that previously were relative beneficiaries of globalization, we needed a critical insight to explain how their new forms of dispossession do not result in democratic agendas but in a global shift to right-wing populist discourses. This entails a critical perspective that may allow us not only to explore the reasons for the ‘obvious’ position of exclusionary politics shared by otherwise diverse conservative groups, such as white middle-class men in various groups of the so-called Men’s Liberation Movement, or that of the angry youth at underground music concerts enjoying racist lyrics, or unemployed men in the countryside but also to explore one that opens up to the participants’ agency on their own terms. That is why I have included the ‘passivist’ campaign by the Two-tailed Dog (mock) Party (Kétfarkú Kutyapárt) challenging the dominant logic of the hate campaign through the agentive power of irony.

Methodological Decisions

The data for my comparative analysis comes from two sets. One is the infamous “Tudta?” (Did you know?) billboard campaign promoting the Government-initiated (sic) referendum on October 2, 2016 against the (alleged) imposition of an EU quota of the refugees to settle down in Hungary. The other set is the billboards launched by the Two-tailed Dog Party. The latter was not the only counter-discourse but the most effective campaign that turned out to successfully reconfigure the Government’s rhetoric of violent othering – from within the ‘bottom-up’ position of

irony – instead of its usual ‘from-above’ stance of distancing, resulting in moments of agency.7

The key aspect of their comparison is the symbolic practices of conceptualizing the ‘we’ the ideal spectator is invited to assume. That is, my focus is not that much on the actual political agendas but on the logic that informs the conceptualization of the ‘we’ evoked. The themes, the actual ‘issues’ keep changing but the disposition about the formation of ‘us’ via hate-speech prevails, should it be the ‘migrant question’, the ‘gender ideology question’, the ‘CEU question’ or the ‘civil society question’, the subjectivities implicated by them can all be seen as the imaginary hostile alien ‘we’ are to defend ourselves against. I agree with Michael Billig who argues against the collapse of benign and banal (against the real ‘hot’ statements) in the assessment of various forms of unflagged nationalism in political discourse.8 It is particularly important to argue for their danger when hate speech becomes banal, ordinary as is the case in the contemporary Hungarian political discourse. It has emerged as a hybrid of any particular ideologies, such as nationalism, patriarchalism, Islamophobia, sexism or xenophobia whenever seen of legitimizing power for the government’s populist agenda. A particular act of naming emerges as successful in so far as the multiplicity of the meaning of ‘manhood’ can be effectively articulated to naturally come from within a homogenized discursive field evolving around concepts that all seem to belong in the ‘same’ semantic field of nationhood and national belonging vis-à-vis the equally homogenized intruding migrant Other. This semantic centre can be captured by Ernesto Laclau’s category of “the empty signifier.”9 My analysis will explore the production of a homogenized ‘manhood’ that functions as an ‘empty signifier’ around which the diverse social groups of ‘our’ men can easily and conveniently come together to re/imagine themselves ‘strong’ defenders of the nation while safely failing to see that their sense of ‘fairness’ and ‘legitimacy’ has always been built on the backs of various others. The Government’s right-wing populist communication appeals to the ‘strength’ of the nation vested in them to ‘protect’ our Christian family values against the ‘other’ men, the homogenized Muslim male ‘intruders’ and – more indirectly –

7 I have analysed the billboards in Erzsébet Barát, “Populist Discourses in the Hungarian Public Sphere: From Right to Left (and beyond)?” *Journal of Language and Politics* 16, no. 4 (2017): 535–50, https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17026.bar, but with a focus on the form of populism.


against the gender and human rights craze of ‘Soros-sponsored’ civil society ‘behind’ the ‘invasion’. The ideological work of this empty signifier is effectively exposed through the modality of irony in the alternative billboards of the Two-tailed Dog Party (TTDP). Their irony can mobilize the citizens around a different kind of ‘empty signifier’, one that is informed by an appeal to transformative action. It invites ‘anyone’ willing to occupy the polling booths and cast an invalid vote in what was nicknamed as the ‘national drawing competition’ and – against all regulations – even take a photo of their art piece and share the picture on social media.

In choosing the articulatory logic of ‘us’ for establishing the difference between pro-democratic and reactionary politics, what is ultimately at stake is the deconstruction of some conventional binaries about the relevance/irrelevance of the category of ‘identity’ for political activism. It is the very binary that Harding herself takes for granted in her categorization of pro-democratic political movements as given into identity-based (minority and as such of lesser importance) versus non-identity based (humanitarian, in the sense of the scale of humankind, such as environmentalist) movements. I believe that the main specificity of the modalities of agency in the alternative billboards of the mock party lies in articulating a symbolic site structured by multiplicity that cuts across the migrant victim versus humanitarian caring ‘host’ community binary through recognizing that ‘the host’ is also to suffer some structural injuries – although indirectly in a society that is organized by the routine logic of hate. The logic of their irony hinges on the importance of understanding that there is a relative distinction between immediate and indirect targets of hate crime, implicating the non-migrant Hungarian citizens as potential targets in the Government’s dictatorial political practice. What their irony is doing is inviting the citizens to understand that in a system of coercive power, we are all caught within the structural effects – to differential degrees and according to some contingent dynamics but never outside of it. Hence, we should defend the actual group of refugees in the middle of the immediate target of the government’s attack at the moment. The mock-party’s irony works as a twofold act of wielding the power of populism by precluding the binary formation of the right wing’s ‘us’ dreading the othered ‘enemy’ while also discrediting any sense of collective belonging that should appeal to ‘our high standards’ of caring humanitarianism of pity. The ‘us, sympathetic provider’ versus ‘them, victims of precarity’ typically mobilized by the political discourses of the left not only denies the agency of survival to the

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10 Harding, “Transformation.”
refugee when inflating the ‘agency’ of care but, more importantly, indirectly it implicates the generation of the ‘against and above’ binary logic vis-a-vis the ‘cruel Government’, a priori granting our values the status of (more) superiority.

Rhetorical Analysis of Othering

According to Laclau, populism is one form of totalizing politics that seeks to overcome the negativity of the social by building a sense of ‘we’ rather than channelling and managing citizens’ already defined sets of interests. The value of populism lies in bringing together people across diverse institutional locations, giving them a (new) sense of belonging while changing their understanding of who they are. In bringing together disparate ideological positions or political demands, populism stresses their equivalence against a ‘common enemy’ that is either a potentially threatening group of ‘aliens’ (right-wing populism) or a given configuration of political power or authority, the existing political system (left-wing populism) that fails to mobilize and attend to the general frustration of its citizenry. As my analysis will show, the important difference of the ‘we’ articulated by TTDP can be established on two intertwined accounts. First, it is not formed according to the binary logic of positioning itself ‘against and over’ an enemy. The appeal is not made in the name of ‘a people from above’ – where ‘above’ implicates either the mediation of a ‘charismatic leader’ or a righteous claim to ‘value’.

Right-wing political populism in Hungary systemically reifies the centralized power of the ‘charismatic leader’ vested in the person of the current Prime Minister. The political communication of TTDP draws on a practice of categorization of partial distinction. The logic of their ironic billboards configures the Self in relation to others as a matter of partial internalization of some (relevant aspects) of the Other’s vulnerability, organizing the potential participants in the referendum who all will cast a vote of abstention, in the name of an ethical responsibility of transformative action.

The billboards appeared in July 2016 in the second wave of the Hungarian Government’s general xenophobic hate campaign against refugees. They were meant to promote a referendum on October 2, 2016 upon the motion of the Government to find out about the citizenry’s opinion on Brussel’s alleged scheme of obligatory quota of resettlement of asylum seekers in Hungary. But the referendum, even if valid, was not declared to be of binding force for the Parliament to act upon. Nor was the question
articulated as a proposal about some specific action to accept or reject implicating the European Union’s policy at that moment. The referendum question for which the billboards functioned as an interpretative context was worded as follows: “Would you want the EU to prescribe a mandatory settlement of ‘non-Hungarian citizens’ [sic] in Hungary without the Parliament’s preliminary agreement?” In other words, the alleged plan of settling asylum seekers was thematised as a matter of the country’s political autonomy at risk by the EU’s unilateral imposition of practically anyone who is not a Hungarian citizen on ‘us’. The action was totally unfounded. The European Council’s Emergency Response Mechanism was adopted in September 2015 and proposed that member states relocate altogether 160,000 asylum seekers under a quota system, including only 1,492 people to be (temporarily) relocated in Hungary. That is, there were no plans about ‘resettlement’ that should implicate granting permanent residence upon refugee status but ‘temporary location’ while waiting for the deliberation on their appeals.

Apart from the fact that the choice of identity category (‘non-Hungarian citizens’) is infinitely and conveniently vague to function as an act of naming, what is worth exposing is the speech act chosen. The statement is not articulated as a genuine question seeking information, i.e. wanting to know the citizens’ opinion for an informed decision. It is a rhetorical question that allows for agreement only through its assumption, inviting the citizens to say no to the alleged EU scheme. To formulate an information-seeking yes-no question one should have a particular proposal. However, any explicit policy could undermine the imaginary homogeneity of the non-citizens even if in absence of such proposal the question misfires. One could argue that the ideological work of the billboard campaign is precisely to cover up this void.

Out of the countless posters I have selected only three, representing the three dominant strategies of argumentation at work in them. The colour scheme is meant to evoke the European Union’s flag: a white text with the key phrases highlighted in yellow against the blue background. The surface is divided horizontally into three fields. In the first one is always located the same question – “Did you know?” – attracting the viewer’s attention. It is followed by the second field in the middle providing the proposition the citizen is assumed to be uninformed about yet. The third field at the bottom of the billboards has the actual political event, the referendum mentioned and its date.

The first one goes like this: “Did you know? Brussels want to settle down a city’s worth of illegal migrants.” (Italics added to indicate the change in colour in the layout of the billboards.) I have chosen it to represent the
systemic use of ambiguous categories when exact ones could be an option but that would undermine the Government’s preferred response to the referendum. How many refugees should count as a city’s worth? In the absence of the actual number proposed by the EU (1,294), the spectator can conjure up any size of a city, depending on the intensity of their fear and/or hatred, and regardless the actual demographic data on urban population. Should it be the size of Páháza, the smallest town in the North-East of Hungary, with a population of 1,060 or that of Debrecen, the biggest town outside of the capital, with 203,059 inhabitants – almost two-hundred times bigger? Above all, how should we read the category of “illegal migrant”? How can the EU legitimately propose the settlement of ‘illegal’ migrants? In what sense of the term could these people be categorized as ‘illegal’ at all? The fuzziness of the quantifiable data allows for the legally diverse categories of migrant merge into the threatening ‘illegal’ intruder, legitimating for the Government to run a referendum and ‘us’ to say no to its question and keep ‘them’ out of ‘our’ country.

The second one reads as follows: “Did you know? Since the beginning of the migration crisis, the number of sexual violence against women has increased dramatically in Europe.” It represents the strategic use of ill logic. If A (increase of sexually harassed women) follows B (migration crisis) then A comes to be implicated to be caused by B. The cause and effect logical link between B and A mobilizes several problematic ideological meanings at the same time. Above all, it implicates the ‘migrant’ to be a heterosexual male predator. At the same time, ‘our’ women are implicated to be in need of ‘our’ men’s protection from the alien ‘rapist’ whose implied (Muslim) religious disposition is thereby outed as corrupt against the ‘immaculate moral standards’ of ‘our’ men – provided we all say ‘No’ to the referendum’s question. The latter assumption, especially in the light of the extreme violence (verbal and physical) against women in Hungary, is particularly outrageous and hypocritical.11

The third example, “Did you know? Since the beginning of the migration crisis in Europe, there have been over 300 victims of terrorist attacks.” is representative of the pervasive strategy of obvious lies. The actual number of deaths in the terrorist attacks and the events were all reported in the Hungarian media so the figures can be easily recovered: November 2015, Paris 128; March 2016, Brussels 34; July 2016, Nice 84. However, my point is not simply about providing ‘correct, reliable figures’. Nor do I argue that terrorism should be a legitimate political act. I am rather interested in the ideological effect of the figures provided. To the extent the spectators engage in fighting over the accurateness of the figures, about the correspondence of the figures to ‘reality’, they become caught in the fetishization of truth as (if) a matter of transparent counting. The strategy can abstract the critical gaze away from the identity of the attackers who were mostly European citizens of migrant decent and the potential criticism of integration policies. At the same time, the mention of the various European cities as targets of the attacks may also evoke the myth of ‘us’, the Hungarian people as ‘protecting shield of traditional European values’. The myth appeals to an ethnicised cultural community, reifying and legitimizing Hungary’s hostile disposition to the EU that threatens ‘our internal cohesion’, the ‘autonomy’ of Hungarian legislation. The European Union is associated with ingratitude in return for ‘our’ defence of the ‘other, real Europe’ of conservative Christian values and as such “based on the exclusion of all foreign.”

The three strategies focalize the male ‘migrant’ figure as an empty signifier mobilizing the implied empty signifier of ‘us’, the ‘Hungarian male patriots’ at the intersection of diverse and contradictory statements. Brussels comes to be accused of wanting to resettle Muslim ‘migrants’ that have committed sexual crimes of violence and have also been involved in (planning) their terrorist attacks on ‘us’, both motivated by their alien religious faith. At the same time, the argumentation works to induce fear in the implied male reader, getting him entangled in the confusing list of activities, deciding against reasoning in favour of unconditionally believing (in) the billboards, i.e. willing to see the Government as ‘the real defender’ of human lives and values in the country and Europe. Such a mighty and cunning ‘enemy’ calls for their equal match, heroically defending ‘us’ without any help from outside. Casting the ‘No’ vote is then implicated as an act of

building a symbolic bridge between the ‘protecting super hero’ above us and ‘us’ below – jointly fighting to protect a Christian Europe against the evil (liberal) power of Brussels. Ironically and painfully, what is eventually at stake in this discourse is precisely giving up one’s (will to) citizenship and surrendering to the centralized authoritarian power for the promise of regaining his mythical masculine power.

The Mobilizing Power of Irony

To demonstrate that irony does not necessarily produce an unreconcilable difference between the ideal viewer and the suffering other but may evoke an ethical engagement that rests on the recognition of their partial similarity, I have chosen three billboards of the Two-tailed Dog Party. They represent the ‘disengaging’ rhetoric of irony pushing the citizens beyond the Government’s logic of hate for the autonomous act of disidentification. The TTDP, whose prominent figures are known to be Monty Python fans with a ‘program’ of a similar humour, was formed as a satirical mock-party in 2013. Only a month before the 2016 referendum they crowdsourced a €100,000 billboard and poster campaign on Facebook and YouTube to mock and expose the xenophobic ideology of the referendum and its campaign, attesting to the affective power of their alternative stance.¹³

The visuality and layout of their billboards are meant to resonate with the Government ones; except the key terms keep flashing in alerting red against a grey background. In the top field, we have the same question “Did you know?” followed by the message in the middle. However, in the bottom section we have the party’s iconic mascot, the two-tailed dog wearing a neck-tie coupled with the statement “To Stupid Questions Stupid Answers – Vote invalid,” inviting their viewers to participate but cast an invalid vote.

In the first example the answer to the question – “Did you know?” – is “What is often repeated seems true,” repeated several (in fact nine) times, running all the way down to the bottom of the billboard. This literal overflow is the embodiment of the excessive use of irony, literally showing the working of the ‘impossible logic’ of exclusion. The use of excessive repeti-

¹³ The television interview they gave on the organization of the campaign is available (in Hungarian) at: Gergely Kovács, a Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt elnökét, Telefonon kapcsoljuk, Este9, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgeV-j3xi2Y (3:56), accessed December 2, 2019.
tion of the same statement exposes the Government’s systemic strategy of turning meaning inside out. The visual representation of the propositional content of the statement exposes the irrationality of the very idea of flooding all public spaces by the referendum billboards as well as the coercive logic of the Government’s ideology of hate: ‘seeing is believing’. The ironic distancing invites anyone to join ‘us’ in laughing on ‘our’ terms. From within the systematically evoked laughter at the Government’s logic, there are serious statements about the existence of various social problems, including the war in Syria. When coupled with the question ‘Did you know?’ the statement, “In Syria there is a war,” may read like the index of the absurdity of the official propaganda.

The strategy of a reality-check works by redirecting the gaze to the structural conditions of the situation. The simple declarative statement amongst all the clutter and noise of the hate campaign sounds like a sobering voice. The force of the constative partly consists in implicating ‘us’ as citizens, as responsible parties for the situation of the migrants, pushing ‘us’ to go and cast an invalid vote. The very existence of the alternative billboards may function as an ‘empty signifier’ that implicates not only the actual refugees (through the location of the war in Syria) but anyone willing to join ‘us’ including the volunteers of civic activism contributing to the crowdsourcing, the ones casting an invalid vote that, if successful, may be beneficial both for ‘them’ and ‘us’. Inviting people to cast an invalid vote on purpose can sidestep the exclusionary logic that a simple gesture of disidentification (‘This is not my government so I do not go’) could easily get caught in. If successful, the invitation to cast an invalid vote instead of staying home can make boundaries fuzzy and bridgeable. The other option that the opposition was arguing in favour was not to participate. The TTDP’s message got heard through the clatter of hate-speech. The number of invalid votes was exceptionally high, 6.3%. It is more than all invalid votes in the previous four referendums since the system change. What is more, countless photos were taken and shared of the various forms of producing an invalid vote: ranging from cutting out the circles for the yes, no, and abstain options, through drawing penises integrating the circles as balls, to writing quotes about the importance of freedom and solidarity.

**Conclusion: Reclaim Irony as an Effective Political Strategy**

The contrastive analysis of the billboards has shown that it is reasonable to argue that there is nothing inherent to irony that should prefigure its use only as a strategy of unbridgeable distance. In the context of the mundane
routine of hate-speech it can be effectively invested to mobilise people and act as responsible citizens that can indirectly work in the interest of the refugees.

In the reactionary political agenda of the Hungarian Government’s campaign the imagined citizen is a man invited to recall and act upon their legitimized anger and fear and turn it against the threatening trope of the ‘migrant’, retrieving their ‘lost manhood’ by participating in the referendum. The current Government routinely taps into the rage of the ‘white Christian angry men’ in their anti-refugee campaign since the summer of 2015 as a strategy to divert the citizens’ critical gaze from their insufficient action to restructure the healthcare system or to provide free education that is not elitist, and especially from the criticism of their policies by the over six hundred thousand citizens that have migrated, relocated in the European Union for economic and ideological reasons.\textsuperscript{14}

The TTDT logic does not simply react to the Government’s agenda of hate. Its imaginary ‘us’, although united in their disagreement with the Government’s stigmatization of the ‘migrant’, is not pulled together ‘against and above’ the Government in the name of the ‘we are not like that’ gesture. Instead of negation, it is organized into unity by irony that articulates the members’ distance from state power through disidentification without pretending that there can be a position outside of the hegemonic structures of power.

In short, political discourses (regardless their self-formulated claim to a right or left-wing disposition) may legitimize exclusion not only through the actual ‘content’ of their specific policies but through the articulation of the desirable subject for their program. If this subject is framed as a matter of multiple totalizing differences (such as Christian/Muslim; traditional European/multicultural liberal European, patriot/traitor, protector hero/terrorist, male/female, etc.), these binaries can indirectly legitimize the exclusion in terms of a political agenda associated with them. To reclaim irony as an effective political strategy of mobilization, it needs to work ‘from below’ and through the power of affect bringing people together in solidarity.

At the same time, the Hungarian Government’s hate-campaign in the face of the prevalence of uncertainty evoked by the refugee crisis is not a

unique response. As studies of the post-soviet Russian political media have shown,\(^{15}\) there is an intensive right-wing populist discourse ‘from above’ in play in the post-soviet region. As a response to the failure of the neoliberal political project of modernization, the major function of hate-speech is to articulate a new, increasingly isolationist nationalist agenda. However, there seems to be a relative but relevant difference between the ‘centre’ and the ‘periphery’ to me. In Russia, the new populist response to the rapid economic destabilization that discredits democracy seems to emerge against the alleged ‘Western values’. In the Hungarian populist political discourse, the ‘empty signifier’ of the Government’s discourse is ‘conveniently’ occupied by the ‘refugee’ allegedly in the very name of ‘traditional Western European’ values.

**Bibliography**


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Part III

Between Times and Places
I wish I could switch on a new light
so that I could see me before I saw myself.
(Going Home 129)

Introduction

The autobiographical plays a significant part in Doris Lessing’s oeuvre and permeates much of her writing. This has been noted by a number of scholars, among them Susan Watkins, Elizabeth Maslen, Leah Anderst and Tasiyana Javangwe. Lessing’s literary career spans seven decades, beginning in the late 1940s with her first novel The Grass Is Singing which was published in 1950 and ending in 2008 with the publication of her last novel Alfred and Emily. Thus she remains one of the most central authors of the twentieth century, taking on a wide variety of topics in her fiction and nonfiction. In her autobiographical texts, a few themes are repeatedly revisited, relating to her Southern African childhood and youth, the troubled relationship she had with her mother as well as her political affiliations in the 1940s and 1950s. Despite the sober and generally unapologetic nature of her writing, a certain sense of regret emerges in her autobiographical texts in connection to these themes in particular. This aspect of her writing has previously not been studied to any significant degree. By

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examining regret in Lessing’s autobiographical texts, new insights can also emerge with regard to the complex relationship between the past and the present. Regret inevitably relates to the past but remains a sentiment firmly placed in the present. Jeffrey K. Olick’s ground-breaking work *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* \(^2\) mainly addresses issues of national memory and politics. In the present I draw also on psychological approaches to regret and apply them to Lessing’s autobiographical texts.

The first primary text to be considered in this chapter is Lessing’s first memoir *Going Home* (1956),\(^3\) which recounts a trip she made to Southern Rhodesia only a few years after she had left the colony for London in 1949 while she was leaving her communist ideals behind. Another important text is the first part of her actual autobiography, *Under My Skin: Volume One of My Autobiography, to 1949* (1994),\(^4\) which, as the title indicates, tells the story of her childhood and upbringing on a Rhodesian farm as well as her adolescent and young adult years in Salisbury. In order to come full circle with Lessing’s writing, her final memoir *Alfred and Emily* (2008)\(^5\) will also feature in my analysis. Two themes in particular are of interest for a discussion of regret. Lessing’s political activities in Salisbury in the 1940s when she was a member of a communist group offer insights into the concept of regret and how it relates to memory, as she returned to this period in her life a number of times in her writing and questioned her involvement in the political movement. A second relevant theme concerns her parents and how profoundly the First World War affected them.

In *Alfred and Emily*, Lessing gives her parents alternative lives, what could have been had the war never happened. As Maslen concludes,

> It is fitting that this last book [*Alfred and Emily*] ends where she began, back in Africa. Yet in the long decades of her life and work the enormous scope of her writing is astounding, and we do not do her justice when we try to tie her to a narrow range of concerns or insist on prioritizing one as paramount. Social justice, colonial life, racism, femi-

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\(^3\) Doris Lessing, *Going Home* (London: HarperPerennial, 1996 [1956]). Further references to the novel are given parenthetically, preceded by GH.

\(^4\) Doris Lessing, *Under My Skin: Volume One of My Autobiography, to 1949* (London: Flamingo, 1994). Further references are given parenthetically, preceded by UMS.

\(^5\) Doris Lessing, *Alfred and Emily* (London: HarperPerennial, 2008). Further references to the novel are given parenthetically, preceded by AE.
nism, environmental issues, sex – they are all addressed. [...] Above all, she knows that everything within our own experience and beyond it interconnects, that the past paves the way to the present and future, whether we like to remember it or not.6

Despite Lessing’s unsentimental and often ruthless grasp of her own life and memories, as Maslen as well alludes to above, a certain sense of regret is, after all, detectable in her autobiographical writing and in relation to her parents, first and foremost. My argument for this chapter is that this regret has actually been something of a driving force and inspiration for Lessing, without which some of her works may never have been written. Regret is thus not seen merely in a negative light, but as a source of creativity that allows the writer to reconsider her life and examine it from multiple perspectives. Lessing mastered introspection in her writing, without ever losing sight of her own shortcomings. The regret expressed in her writing is thus often subtle, sometimes only discernible between the lines, while it from time to time is directly emphasized. As autobiography balances between the past and the present, so does personal regret as portrayed by Lessing.

Regret and Memory

In her essay “Writing Autobiography” from 1999, Lessing states that “[m]emory isn’t fixed: it slips and slides about. It is hard to match one’s memories of one’s life with the solid fixed account of it that is written down.”7 This points to the fluidity of autobiography and its unresolved issues relating to truth and personal experiences. A most useful discussion of this dilemma is presented in Leigh Gilmore’s work The Limits of Autobiography (2001).8 Lessing adds that autobiography essentially is an “interim report,”9 and this is a perceptive observation. It supports the analysis of her autobiographical writing in this context, as the different texts clearly connect with one another but remain objects of a specific period of her life.

6 Maslen, Doris, 103.
This also relates to the notion that autobiography always reveals more about the author at the time of writing the text, not necessarily about the period which is the focus of the text. “Once I read autobiography as what the writer thought about her or his life. Now I think, ‘That is what they thought at that time’.”

This is significant also from the perspective of regret. As for the autobiographical project itself, it does not seem to trigger feelings of regret per se, as Lessing asks why we “have this need to bear witness” and concludes that we tell stories because “we have to.” Such a statement remains matter of fact, just as much of Lessing’s writing generally is.

Regret has a natural connection to temporality, and Olick goes as far as saying that “regret is the emblem of our times.” Memory and time are also connected, and autobiography is often seen as the manifestation of that relationship. However, memory is also more complex than that. As James Olney concludes, memory “is both recollective and anticipatory.” Further, he states that “[m]emory reaches toward the future as toward the past, and balance demands a poised receptiveness in both directions” and that, finally, “[t]he life-writer who draws on memory does so in full awareness that the temporal position he or she occupies is the present moment of the past.”

Returning to the concept of regret, an obvious conclusion would be to connect it to the past and decisions done earlier in life which have, for one reason or another, proven to be poorly made. The following definition is therefore useful for the present study: “Regret is a burden that a consciousness can place upon itself only if it possesses memory, emotions and a sensitivity to counterfactual possibilities.” Reading Lessing’s autobiographical texts will hopefully show that regret does not necessarily have to be merely and solely a burden; it can, as stated earlier, be turned into a positive force as well.

As for temporal aspects of regret, Patrick Eldridge asserts that regret is not only connected to the past, but “we can also anticipate future events as

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10 Lessing, 154.
11 Lessing, 159.
12 Olick, Politics, 14.
14 Olney, Memory, 343, 344.
later becoming regrettable."¹⁶ This suggests that regret stretches into the future as well, creating a “complex temporal structure.”¹⁷ Alfred and Emily is an interesting work in this regard, as it could be seen as an example of what Eldridge terms in the following way: “Through regretful memory we relive a past moment in which we could have done otherwise and wish we had, but this moment is now seen from a present moment in which the past cannot be undone.”¹⁸ In Alfred and Emily, Lessing does not relive a moment that belonged to her, as she rewrites the lives of her parents creating fictive realities as if the First World War had never existed. Such a reality would obviously mean that she would not have been born either. The second part of the novella/memoir is therefore more relevant, as she goes into more detail about her parents and their lives, partly in a similar manner to Under My Skin but with a different purpose. In terms of regret, this last memoir can also be set apart from the other two analysed here. Eldridge further presents regret as giving an alternative to past events, as it offers a “counterfactual course of actions.”¹⁹ This is presented in Alfred and Emily. Lessing writes in her Foreword about the burden of the First World War, and concludes that if she could meet her parents now, “as I have written them, as they might have been had the Great War not happened, I hope they would approve the lives I have given them” (AE viii). Here, the regret is not Lessing’s own, but belongs to her parents. A more detailed discussion of the war and the regrets she connects with her parents in her autobiographical texts will follow later.

Regret is a thoroughly studied phenomenon from the perspective of psychology as well. Erika Timmer, Gerben J. Westerhof and Freya Dittmann–Kohli explore retrospective regret among people in their forties and older, and state that “[r]econciliation with one’s own past is especially important in accepting life’s finitude.”²⁰ They define regret in two ways:

‘to feel sorry for’ or even ‘to remorse’ implying that the person is responsible for the regretted event. […] In contrast, the term can also be used in the sense of ‘to lament’ or ‘to bemoan’, referring to an expression of a feeling about given events or states.²¹

¹⁶ Eldridge, “Regret,” 647.
¹⁷ Eldridge, 647.
¹⁸ Eldridge, 647.
¹⁹ Eldridge, 659.
The former would be seen as internal regret and the latter as external. This is echoed in another study with a more explicit psychological approach. Denise R. Beike and Travis S. Crone also define regret as “a counterfactual emotion,” and they divide regret into two categories: open and closed regret. Open regret would refer to things that were unfinished and closed regret to things that had been brought to a close. The connection between memory and regret has also been explored in the field of psychology, for example by Ian Davison and Aidan Feeney in their study from 2008. Their conclusion is that “the way we remember over time shapes the regrets we end up with.” They also state as one of their findings that “the tendency of our regret to become more general over time may decrease the pain of the regrettable events in our lives.”

The distinction between general and specific regrets here means events that for example span long periods of time, such as studying at university or being married to someone, or, in contrast, events “which can be traced to a unique point in time.” Again, the temporal dimension is emphasized as the two types of regrets have different relationships to time. Lessing’s need to write and rewrite her own life from many different perspectives suggests that time; the past, present and future, all intersect and cannot exist without one another. This can be tied in with regret as well, as Davison and Feeney argue that “a degree of reasoning or self-explanation may be required to determine which aspects of life one regrets.” In the examination of Lessing’s texts that follows, this is an important notion as it implies that autobiographical writing manifests that reasoning and self-explanation which are needed in order to establish regretted events and to find ways to come to terms with them.

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26 Davison and Feeney, 389.
27 Davison and Feeney, 389.
Political Involvement

Lessing’s political activities in the 1940s in Salisbury have been well documented in the first volume of her autobiography in particular. In *Under My Skin* she analyses her involvement in detail, and how she became engaged in the communist movement to begin with. She declares, simply, “I had become a Communist” (*UMS* 259). This statement is immediately followed by justifications for such politics, and an implicit note about younger people not being able to fully understand what seemed so compelling about communism:

> In my case it was because for the first time in my life I was meeting a group of people (not an isolated individual here and there) who read everything, and who did not think it remarkable to read, and among whom thoughts about the Native Problem I had scarcely dared to say aloud turned out to be mere commonplaces. I became a Communist because of the spirit of the times, because of the *Zeitgeist*. (*UMS* 259)

These events coincided with her divorce from her first husband Frank Wisdom and her leaving her two children John and Jean. “I knew I was going to leave. Yet I did not know it, could not say it, I am going to commit the unforgivable and leave two small children” (*UMS* 261). This echoes what Davison and Feeney explained about reasoning and self-explanation being required in order to determine one’s regrets. Lessing knew she would be judged for her decision, but comes to a simple conclusion when going through the reasons for her leaving her husband and children: “I would not have survived” (*UMS* 265). Again, she remains matter of fact and unapologetic.

*Going Home*, for its part, was written during a period in Lessing’s life when she was moving away from communism. She writes in *Under My Skin* that from her first interest in communism, it took four to five years to become more critical towards the movement. “By 1954 I was no longer a Communist” (*UMS* 397). *Going Home* was published in 1956. The interesting temporal aspect here is obviously that when writing the first part of her autobiography in the early 1990s, nearly 40 years had passed since leaving communism behind. When writing *Going Home*, not much time had lapsed and the retrospection she offers in *Under My Skin* makes a significant contrast to the thoughts and events that are expressed in *Going Home*. Being able to examine these two different documents together makes the question of regret even more relevant. Lessing explains why she was a communist in *Going Home*, after having found out that she was very much unwanted in Southern Rhodesia by the government: “I am, of course, consid-
ered so undesirable in these parts because I am a Communist” (*GH* 82). Furthermore, she argues that “I believe that in a decade the Communist countries of the world will be freer, more democratic (in the political, as well as the economic sense of these words) than the Western World, which is rapidly becoming less free, less democratic” (*GH* 82). This bold statement comes, however, with an afterthought: “If I did not think this I would not remain a Communist” (*GH* 82). Lessing summarizes her political agenda in a single sentence: “[i]t is a fight for basic human rights. If I were not a Communist I would be doing exactly the same thing” (*GH* 83).

Perhaps it was the unapologetic nature of the comments above that prompted Lessing to write several afterwords to her original text in *Going Home*. The first afterword, dated September 26, 1956, is mainly about Lessing being informed about her status as prohibited immigrant upon her return to London in August the same year. The second postscript is dated January 6, 1957, and Lessing uses this to give updated information on the political situation in Southern Rhodesia. She also comments on the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and the subsequent actions by the Soviet Union: “In this book I have made various statements about the possibility of Communism becoming democratic. Since writing it, the Soviet intervention in Hungary has occurred” (*GH* 237). The third afterword is titled “Eleven Years Later,” dated May 1967. Again, Lessing talks about her communism and how she had a party card and considered herself a communist while writing the book: “I am not one now” (*GH* 247). She also acknowledges that her comment about communist countries becoming more democratic proved to be “untrue” (*GH* 249). A final comment towards the end of the postscript is revealing with regard to Lessing’s political thoughts: “[n]o government, no political party anywhere cares a damn about the individual” (*GH* 252). This shows disillusionment not just with regard to communism but state politics in general.

The development throughout *Going Home* and its many postscripts and afterwords is clear, and in terms of regret, Lessing’s political activities and involvement in communism can be considered a general event as it spanned several years and was something she returned to time and again in her writing. The question is, however, whether these political views embody true regret; decisions made by an earlier self that later proved regrettable. The fourth afterword titled “Twenty-six Years Later,” dated March 1982, gives some insight into this question. Lessing outlines how she has read *Going Home* for a new edition: “I have been forced to read, then, the record of my changes of mind about communism. Embarrassing. I would prefer not to have them exposed, because, like others of my kind, the former reds, I wonder how it was possible that I held such views” (*GH* 253).
Here, Lessing seems to be suggesting that her communist affiliation was regrettable, and that she at this later stage in life could not conceive of why she had become involved in the movement to begin with. The final afterword dated October 1992 (when Lessing presumably was already working on the first volume of her autobiography) does not explicitly touch upon the subject of communism, but the topic obviously plays a significant part in *Under My Skin*.

Communism and having been a communist clearly caused some feelings of regret for Lessing, as she felt the need to return to this particular period in her life; a period which was actually rather brief; only a few years according to her own account (*UMS* 275). As Beike and Crone conclude, “*t*he pain of regret often persists despite the passage of time.” 28 Another of their conclusions is also that actively trying to forget events that cause regret may lead to intrusive thoughts and a lasting negative impact. 29 Writing and rewriting her youth in this manner, Lessing clearly felt no need to try to actively forget her communist activities. Her autobiographical texts imply that feelings of regret connected to her communist past escalated as she aged. However, as she maintained throughout her writing, her communism was mainly related to racial inequality in Southern Rhodesia: “The good citizens of Southern Rhodesia knew that all ideas to do with improving the lot of ‘the munts’ were Communist” (*UMS* 367). Lessing remembers that she joined the communist party in London too when she had relocated there, “for reasons which I still don’t fully understand” (*UMS* 275). Another retrospective thought worth mentioning here is the following remark: “I was never committed with all of myself to Communism” (*UMS* 284). A subtle regret, or at least a desire to explain or excuse her actions, can be detected here.

These various passages and paragraphs from *Going Home* and *Under My Skin* show that Lessing’s attitude towards communism transformed over the years, and this is particularly visible in the different afterwords and postscripts to *Going Home*. From a temporal perspective, the added notes on the text provide an interesting approach to regret as well. Time is essential, as highlighted by for example Eldridge. Davison and Feeney’s comment on how we remember having an impact on the regrets we are left with is relevant here too. 30 The periodic nature of *Going Home* and its many postscripts makes it almost diary-like, spanning several decades and

29 Beike and Crone, 1550.
30 Davison and Feeney, “Regret,” 401.
showing fragments of the travels Lessing undertook in Southern Rhodesia shortly after her relocation to London. *Under My Skin* offers another perspective, a more coherent whole, and a much wider scope, where her communist years are only part of the story, remembered long after the fact.

**Parents and the Great War**

Lessing’s autobiographical texts evolve to a great deal around her parents and her childhood in Southern Rhodesia, for example as retold in the *Children of Violence* series about Martha Quest. The fact that she wrote and published an entire novella/memoir about her parents and their lives and what could have been had the First World War never actually happened testifies to the need to explore them and their lives in connection to her own, but also as separate individuals and people in their own right. It is an act of setting them free and herself as well in the process. *Under My Skin* is an important text as it gives a detailed account of Lessing’s childhood and upbringing and her relationship to her parents. At the core of these memories stories is the Great War and how it changed the course of her parents’ lives. This is where a most profound regret makes itself visible and Lessing repeatedly returns to her mother and father and all their shortcomings and challenges as parents: “I am trying to write this book honestly. But were I to write it aged eighty-five, how different would it be?” (*UMS* 17). This reveals that Lessing is fully aware of the difficulties any autobiographer is faced with when attempting to write their own story, relating to anxieties about truth and verifiability. This has been discussed for example in Javangwe’s article on constructions of the self in *Under My Skin*. It also relates to the question of temporality and to how one sees one’s life at different stages. This is where the question of regret comes in.

In an interview from 2009 with Hermione Lee, Lessing states that *Alfred and Emily* is “a pretty anti-war book and quite harrowing, of course, because what happened to them [her parents] was bad.” She explains that she gave her parents the lives she thought they would have wanted, making her father an English farmer and giving her mother a life where she could use all her talents and energy. Lee addresses the fact that Lessing

31 Javangwe, “Born.”
often wrote about her parents as “quite disappointed, thwarted, angry and bitter” and asks if Alfred and Emily is “a kind of atonement.” This suggests mutual regret, and Lessing responded that the book did make her feel better. The term regret is mentioned as well, but not in relation to the war or her parents but in connection to Zimbabwe and its present state at the time of the interview. Another indirect reference to regret comes when Lessing asked “why we remember what we do remember”: “I think the reply to that by psychologists would be that you remember what is important. I wonder if that’s true. I think not necessarily at all.” The fluidity and fragmented nature of memory haunted Lessing in her writing as well, and she asserts in Under My Skin that “we make up our pasts” and she eventually calls memory “a careless and lazy organ” (UMS 13). Even here is an undertone of regret, relating to the inconsistencies of human memory and our ability to willfully forget and rewrite our past.

As the focus is on Lessing’s parents, some notes on regret and gender are relevant here. Timmer, Westerhof and Dittmann–Kohli study how perceptions of regret change over time and argue that “[r]econciliation with one’s own past is especially important in accepting life’s finitude.” They use the term ego-integrity as “a state in which persons can see their lives as a harmonious whole.” The results of their study show that men tend to remember war to a greater degree than women, and that women feel more regret with regard to missed opportunities in life, such as getting an education. Their conclusion is that four areas in life cause regret among people past their youth and young adult years: “mistakes and bad decisions, hard times, problems and losses in social relationships and missed educational opportunities.” A final comment they make is worth noticing here, and that concerns younger adults (under the age of 40) having more possibilities to undo bad decisions that caused regret. Here, Lessing’s autobiographical writing becomes particularly relevant, as autobiography is an attempt to “claim your own life” and as “self-defence” since other people may write biographies about one’s life (UMS 14). This supports the thought that writing and rewriting her life in this manner is a way of getting away from pos-

34 Lee, 20–21.
35 Lee, 21.
36 Lee, 21.
39 Timmer, Westerhof, and Dittmann–Kohli, 626.
40 Timmer, Westerhof, and Dittmann–Kohli, 640.
41 Timmer, Westerhof, and Dittmann–Kohli, 642.
sible regret; that through facing it it will become manageable. In terms of Lessing’s parents, their regret was mainly connected to hard times and the war in particular. The notion of men remembering war and women missed opportunities fit in too.

*Under My Skin* begins with her parents and their experiences during the First World War, setting the tone for the entire book. They met at the hospital ward where her father was being treated after the amputation of his leg and her mother worked as a nurse, grieving the drowning of a man she had loved (*UMS* 6–7). After relocating to Southern Rhodesia to become farmers, things did not go as planned. “My mother must have realized almost at once that nothing was going to happen as she had expected” (*UMS* 58) and “[b]oth of them believed, and for years, that a change of luck would bring them success” (*UMS* 59). This did not happen, and Lessing’s mother took to the bed for an extended period of time, thinking she had a heart condition: “Then my mother got out of bed. She had to” (*UMS* 68). This is unsentimentally written, though not without empathy, in the autobiography, and a slightly more nuanced version is offered in *Alfred and Emily*: “She got up, and what that must have cost her I cannot begin to imagine. She was saying goodbye to everything she had expected for her life in this colony” (*AE* 158). Things did not improve on the farm after that, and Lessing recounts how ten years after moving there, right before her father was diagnosed with diabetes, “affairs on the farm were bad” (*AE* 173). Again, Lessing does not resort to simple pity or regret, but offers a more complex analysis of her parents’ troubles: “It was entirely their fault, but how could they have seen it? [...] It was themselves, their nature” (*AE* 173–74). The farm proved less suitable than expected, and growing maize was a poor choice when other farmers were moving on to grow more profitable tobacco (*AE* 173–75).

The scars of war and what could have been affected not only the parents, but also Lessing herself by extension. *Alfred and Emily* was written more than a decade after *Under My Skin*, but to some extent the book already exists within the autobiography:

These two people, these sick and half crazy people, my parents – it was the war, it was the First World War, that was what had done them in. For years I kept bright in my mind, like scenes from a film, what they would have been without the war. She, a jolly, efficient Englishwoman, probably running the Women’s Institute for the whole of Britain, or some nursing service, not the kind of woman I would have much in common with, but the point was, she would have become herself, not this harried over-wrought victim. And I only had to look at pictures of
my father, before the war – these idealizations refused any of the other chances and choices life comes up with, but I was sure about one thing: my father had been strong, vigorous, in command of himself, this is how he would have gone on – and now he was an invalid, with no hope of ever being well again. (UMS 156)

This lengthy passage highlights the regret of her parents, expressed by themselves from time to time but also as perceived by Lessing herself as she remembers the anger she felt, “angry to the point of being crazy myself” (UMS 156). But the passage also shows Lessing’s reluctance or outright refusal to accept them as they were. The phrase – “she would have become herself” – points to this, and suggests that Lessing refused to see her mother as anything but a victim of circumstances, reducing her to a mere shadow of what she was always intended to be. Her mother is depicted as being so deprived by life that she was not even fully herself.

These difficulties strengthened Lessing’s desire to leave the family, to escape (UMS 157). And Lessing did leave, at a young age, and married young after having met Frank Wisdom in Salisbury. Another kind of regret is tied to this, merely in the shape of “Tigger,” Lessing’s childhood nickname.

Nicknames are potent ways of cutting people down to size. I was Tigger Tayler, Tigger Wisdom, then Tigger Lessing, the last fitting me even less than the others. Also Comrade Tigger. This personality was expected to be brash, jokey, clumsy, and always ready to be a good sport, that is, to laugh at herself, apologize, clown, confess inability. An extrovert. (UMS 89)

Lessing refers to Tigger throughout the book, for example when coming home from the Convent where she went to school. “Tigger entertained her Mummy and Daddy to the point where they wept with laughter” (UMS 121), and then when getting married at nineteen to Frank: “There was a graceless wedding, which I hated. […] In the wedding photographs I look a jolly young matron. It was ‘Tigger’ who was getting married” (UMS 207). When Lessing started having doubts about her marriage after the birth of Jean, she writes the following: “I felt as if handcuffs were on my wrists and chains around my ankles. But I smiled and chattered. Tigger was always friendly and affectionate and competent” (UMS 241). ‘Tigger’ thus becomes a separate persona, a manifestation of the regret Lessing felt with regard to her life and the roles expected of her. From a temporal point of view, this is particularly noteworthy as the regret that comes with ‘Tigger’ seems to be anchored in the past and not the present. Javangwe’s conclusions about ‘Tigger’ are overall more positive, claiming that “there is no
contradiction in the coexistence of these identities.” The way ‘Tigger’ is portrayed suggests, however, that instead of being a liberating force, the role or persona was mainly confining.

Despite there being certain elements of regret in Lessing’s texts, she remains perceptive with regard to the temptations of hindsight and remorse: “[W]hy do we expect so much? [...] Who promised us better? When were we promised better?” (UMS 312). These are valid questions, and she returns to similar patterns of thought in Alfred and Emily: “How attractive are the tidy conclusions of hindsight! How satisfying the of course of the back-looking perspective” (AE 173). A final realization reveals no regret at all: “There is really nothing much we can do about what we are born with” (UMS 377). This sentiment is in direct contrast with the earlier fantasies about what her parents’ lives could have been like, and it exemplifies the complex nature of regret that can be detected throughout her autobiographical writing.

Simultaneously, there is a sense of regret in terms of what was and could have been (and what could not have been), but also of immense resources and possibility, and something more permanent and solid; an unmovable, unyielding force. Under My Skin ends with the words “[t]he door had shut and that was that” (UMS 419), echoing her mother’s phrase when she for example cut her hair: “Right! That’s that!” (UMS 6, 8) or when her plans to start a school on the farm did not work out; “[a]nd that was that” (UMS 69). Lessing repeats this in Alfred and Emily as well after her father’s funeral: “And so, that was that” (AE 260). This phrase – “that was that” – works as a shield against sentimentality and remorse, against Lessing’s mother and her inexhaustive efforts to sort out her children’s adult lives. It is the absence of regret, but still born out of it. Lessing’s autobiographical texts are throughout unrelenting towards herself and offer great insight not only into her life but into the introspective process that goes with remembering in such a public fashion. Sometimes she expresses regret in an explicit and overt manner, and sometimes she lets it slip between the lines. “That was that” suggests an attempt at ego-integrity as defined by Timmer, Westerhof and Dittmann–Kohli, and also echoes what Eldridge stated about how “the past cannot be undone.” ‘That was that’ acknowledges this, and makes the painful parts of the past more bearable.

44 Eldridge, “Regret,” 647.
Conclusion

The three works examined here were written during different periods of Lessing’s life; *Going Home* being her very first memoir, *Under My Skin* the first volume of her actual autobiography, and *Alfred and Emily* her very last novella/memoir. Their perspectives on regret differ too, as *Going Home* depicts the travels she undertook before becoming a prohibited immigrant to the country of her childhood and youth, painting a vivid and immediate picture of the people she met and the places she visited. More interesting than the text itself are the postscripts, which reveal increasing feelings of regret as the author grew older. The same can be said for *Under My Skin* and its depictions of Lessing’s communist activities. The role of her parents cannot be understated with regard to her writing, and particularly with regard to undercurrents of regret throughout her childhood and early adulthood. Publishing *Alfred and Emily* becomes not only a tribute to her parents and the skills and qualities they possessed, but also a bridge across generations of hurt and loss. The war that “did them in,” the Great War, still affected Lessing herself too which she acknowledges in *Under My Skin* (*UMS* 10). She also explains that the war “does not become less important to me as time passes, on the contrary” (*UMS* 8). This makes it even more fitting that her last novel would be about her parents and the war, coming full circle as Maslen⁴⁵ noted as well, though her comment had more to do with Africa being the location. *Alfred and Emily* also exemplifies how regret, even on behalf of others, can become a creative and positive force.

The war and regret related to the novel further imply that intergenerational trauma is at play in Lessing’s autobiographical texts. This trauma as manifested through her shell-shocked, disabled father, and her mother whose life did not turn out as planned, takes on a near physical shape in Lessing’s writing. A relevant question here is whether intergenerational regret is also at play. The unfulfilled dreams of her parents haunted the author to such a degree that she felt compelled to reinvent their lives for them, to give them what she thought they would always have wanted. An allusion to this is present in *UMS*, where Lessing writes the following: “I do think the unfulfilled dreams and desires of parents affect their children” (*UMS* 186). The context here is about being physically fulfilled, but connections can be made with more concrete hopes and dreams as well. Lessing takes on the regrets of her parents in her writing, thoroughly processing them and herself too. The intersection of the past and the present,

⁴⁵ Maslen, Doris, 103.
“the present moment of the past” as Eldridge put it, in the texts examined here allow for both personal and political regret to become part of a greater purpose.

This can be related to Lessing’s political past as well. While writing Going Home, she still apparently at least to some extent considered herself a communist, to such a degree that she felt the need to express her regrets about this in the afterword dated March 1982. This supports the idea that regret is transformed as time passes, not necessarily becoming less acute but changing shape and form and even becoming more ingrained in oneself, part of not just one’s history and past but also something which is very much a part of the present and stretches into the future; who a person is to become. Regret can inspire new beginnings and create new futures. This also highlights where the actual strength of autobiography lies; not in its depictions of the past but in its lack of linearity, in its temporality that defies all attempts to define and contain it. Autobiography might not even exist without the presence of regret. As Lessing herself concludes in her chapter on writing autobiography, when reading a book one might find it exciting and engaging, only to think that it is quite uninteresting when returning to it at a later time.46 The same can be said for memory and regret: a painful and embarrassing memory may seem less disturbing at another point in one’s life: “Well, the book hasn’t changed: you have.”47

Bibliography


47 Lessing, 163.


Chapter 13
“I’ve been here before”: Ursula Todd’s Repeated Returns in Kate Atkinson’s Life after Life

– Ira Hansen

“The End of the Beginning”

The British author Kate Atkinson’s novel Life after Life (2013) begins in November 1930, when the protagonist Ursula Todd walks into a café in Munich with the intent of shooting Hitler. Nothing in this passage suggests whether she succeeds, nor are the possible implications to world history of such an incident revisited later in the novel. What this two-page passage does, then, is set the stage for the story to come by showing the repercussions of the act to Ursula herself: As Ursula is shot and killed in the café, “[d]arkness fell.”¹

The following chapter, “Snow,” then opens on February 11, 1910, when Ursula is born in Fox Corner, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire.² Yet, her life has hardly begun, when darkness falls again, wrapped around her neck as an umbilical cord (LL 24). As the next chapter, “Snow,” again opens on February 11, 1910, the reader begins to realize that these births are not a case of analepsis. They are second chances. Furthermore, it gradually dawns on the reader – as well as to Ursula – that while her birth necessarily means the end of life, her death also signifies a new beginning. This notion is not new in any way, but the implications are highlighted when in the course of the novel Ursula is born and dies at least seventeen times. In Life after Life, the boundaries of life and death are, at the very least, elusive.

As some reviews of the novel have suggested, the overall themes of Life after Life are conventional: the possibility of starting again, the circle of life and death, the madness of war and the ability to change its course, and even an author’s chance to write as many lives for the protagonist as they

¹ Kate Atkinson, Life after Life (London: Transworld Publishers, 2014 [2013]), 20. Further references to the novel are given parenthetically, preceded by LL.
² I count this to be Ursula’s first life.
please rather than carefully crafting just one.\(^3\) However, beneath Ursula’s *repeated returns* lie an exploration of memory, the indistinguishability of the beginning from the end, and the way our past always comes to haunt us.

I am re-appropriating the term *repeated returns* from Jason Finch,\(^4\) who uses it to describe his method of *deep locational criticism*. It means exploring how different locations – physical and imagined – are layered by histories, experiences, factual and fictive portrayals and so on, and what such a layering does to our understanding and interpretation of these locations.\(^5\)

This chapter, then, explores Ursula’s repeated returns and the layers of Ursula’s life as a way to “locate” the past, not as a memory experienced in the present, but as present itself.

Repeated returns mean moving in circles. The novel supports this thematic by creating an intricate structural pattern in which Ursula’s lives are ordered as a series of interweaving rings, and as such the novel resembles a complex ring composition. The anthropologist Mary Douglas suggests that for a text to qualify as a ring composition, it “needs to have an exposition, a split into two halves, a central place or mid-turn matched to the exposition, identifiable parallel series, and an ending.”\(^6\) In addition, it may have identifiable sections and smaller rings within a bigger one.\(^7\) In what follows I do not attempt to prove that *Life after Life* is an intact ring composition; it is not. However, using the ring composition as a starting point is useful because the novel’s rings are “densely interconnected,”\(^8\) both structurally and thematically.

In the course of the chapter, I take the elements of ring composition outlined by Douglas and let the novel answer the challenge posed. I first lay out the structure of the novel. I then explore the ring-like organization


\(^7\) Douglas, *Thinking*, 43.

\(^8\) Douglas, 37.
of the text and continue to discuss how the parallel elements and central loading generate Ursula’s repeated returns. Finally, I conclude by returning to the beginning and continuing to the end. My purpose is to show how Life after Life evolves from a ring towards a more organic meshwork, which does not show Ursula’s lives as straightforward, albeit complex and circular lines from start to finish, but as an entanglement of lines, where the beginning and the end do not necessarily exist linearly.

The term meshwork comes from the anthropologist Tim Ingold, who uses it to describe how all life is created as a series of lines. The creation of these lines and thus life necessitates movement: “as soon as a person moves be becomes a line.”9 The ring of a ring composition is, of course, also a line. However, as Douglas emphasizes, a ring composition necessarily entails that the entire structure has to be known from the outset; the author has to begin with the end.10 A meshwork, then, shows how a series of lines move to and from different directions and that the ending is not always clearly in sight.

Lines on a meshwork are ephemeral; imagination and lived experience intertwine. However, lines always leave a trace, a memory that they have existed. In Life after Life, this memory is made visible in Ursula’s growing awareness of her repeated returns, the sense of “I’ve been here before” (LL 578). The novel, then, shows how Ursula’s memory of the past – her déjà vu – gradually becomes a heightened awareness that she has power over her own life – the power to see the end, but also the new beginning. The traces left by the lines of her past have become a knowing that has been “integrated along [her] path of movement.”11 Ultimately, this knowledge results in Ursula’s self-awareness and self-understanding. As she moves along, she becomes able to relate to both her previous and future selves.

Eleven “Snows,” and so on: The Structure of Life after Life

The identifiable sections of a ring composition reveal “the meanings that have been packed together,”12 both within the sections and the text as a whole. Life after Life is divided into thirty separate sections. The prologue,

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10 Douglas, Thinking, 34.
11 Ingold, Lines, 91.
12 Douglas, Thinking, 36.
“Be Ye Men of Valour,” is followed by twenty-four chapters each containing a varying number of dated entries. Each of Ursula’s seventeen lives carry over a different number of chapters and a different number of dated entries, and the chapter and entry boundaries do not always correspond to the boundaries of her birth and death.

The twenty-four chapters are followed by five more. The first of these, “The End of the Beginning,” serves as an epilogue, to which I return below. Briefly put, the epilogue wraps up Ursula’s lives and like an echo recounts key events from her past and highlights her awareness of her repeated returns. The following section, then, is a nearly identical repetition of the initial prologue, and it literally brings the novel back to the beginning. The last three sections then, suggest that Ursula’s life-cycle begins anew. The first of the three narrates Ursula’s birth from the perspective of Bridget, the maid of Fox Corner; the second recounts the “return” of Ursula’s younger brother Teddy, who has been killed in the war earlier in the story;13 the last section again returns to the moment of Ursula’s birth, this time leaving the question of her survival open.

Each of the chapters and dated entries both repeat and add details to Ursula’s life, moving her forward and building her as a resourceful yet at times conflicted girl and woman living in Fox Corner, London and Germany. Moreover, the section titles themselves, while also linking to the temporal context of the events specified in the dated entries, create thematic connections and reveal “the meanings that have been packed together,” to return to Douglas.14 In the eleven “Snows,” for instance, the weather conditions Ursula’s survival; in her first life she dies because both the doctor and the midwife are stuck in the snow and the last section again shows at least the midwife stranded in the blizzard. Furthermore, for example the five chapters entitled “Armistice” may signify that the Great War has ended, but Ursula’s war has not: during those chapters she dies four times.

Although Ursula’s deaths are not narrated chronologically, the chapters and entries gradually grow longer along with Ursula’s lives. Moreover, as Ursula grows older so too grows her ability to sense her past lives. She has little effect in influencing the snow, but already at the age of four, when she hesitates to again fetch her doll Queen Solange from the deadly roof where her older brother Maurice has thrown it, she is able to influence her

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13 This section is significant as it both forebodes and makes possible Atkinson’s 2015 novel God in Ruins. The novel recounts the life of Teddy Todd, and several events and characters overlap with those in Life after Life. Thus, the novels run alongside one another as two entangled circles in the same meshwork.

14 Douglas, Thinking, 36.
own conditions of life and death. This ability is manifested as a series of déjà vu episodes, to which I now turn in the context of exploring the kinds of rings *Life after Life* creates.

"It’s called déjà vu": Rings within a Ring

*Life after Life* is created of several overlapping ring-like forms, both structural and thematic. Douglas suggests that bigger rings as well as smaller rings within them can highlight the structure of the composition and allow different themes to be incorporated, which then support the text as a whole.\(^\text{15}\) As *Life after Life* is not a structurally intact ring composition, it shows the amalgamation of different rings and different themes as more fluid, as a meshwork of entangled lifelines.

One of the clearest rings is the one created between the prologue and the epilogue. This structural ring shows the theme of the novel identified in the reviews I mentioned in the beginning: Ursula’s ability to alter the course of history. The prologue sets the theme and the following chapters then rerun Ursula’s life until she has understood her ability to use her déjà vu to challenge the course of her and other’s lives. The epilogue ends with Ursula preparing for her “next” life that she now knows is coming:

> There would be no mistakes this time. […] Ursula got out of bed and climbed on the chair at the open window of the little attic bedroom. […] She opened her arms to the black bat and they flew to each other, embracing in the air like long-lost souls. (LL 592)

This deliberate death, then, gives Ursula a new chance of shooting Hitler, narrated in the rerun of the prologue “Be Ye Men of Valour” that follows. Moreover, a new understanding of Ursula’s life dawns on her; the next section – “Snow” – again does not indicate whether she succeeded in her plans, only that she died trying, but this time it does not matter; the smaller and clearly incomplete ring created out of the final five sections of the novel highlights that a circular form can be endlessly repeated.

Ursula’s individual lives can also be thought to create rings of their own. She is born on February 11, 1910 and dies at different times in different chapters. Dying, however, does not automatically signify that a ring is complete. Ursula’s déjà vu highlights how the boundaries of her lives are

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\(^{15}\) Douglas, 37.
fluid: the beginnings and endings of her “life-rings” do not necessarily coincide with her birth and death.

The clusters of Ursula’s repeated returns are manifested through her propensity for sensing that “things had happened many times before” (LL 151). Ursula’s mother disparagingly dismisses these déjà vu as “trick[s] of the mind” (LL 151) and has her treated for them. Ursula experiences déjà vu when, for instance, in the epilogue she remembers having visited the psychiatrist Dr. Kellet’s office before (LL 578), or when she knows what is hidden in her Christmas present (LL 151–52). Peter Krapp suggests that déjà vu is something that “return […] in their original state, not aged or withered in proportion to the duration of their absence from consciousness.” Déjà vu is thus not something that has happened in the past, forgotten and then remembered; it is something that “is present in the world. […]It is] a fresh perception, […] in no case […] capable of pointing to a past event, unless I have some other viewpoint on my past enabling me to recognize it as memory.” This is Merleau–Ponty considering the nature of memories, and in Ursula’s case, she is precisely lacking the ability to identify her déjà vu as something that has happened before. She is not remembering something from her past but re-living it as if for the first time.

Moreover, Ursula also experiences the past as premonitions, as a “terrible fear […] that she carried around inside her” (LL 151). Five chapters entitled “Armistice” illustrate Ursula’s growing awareness and reaction to these premonitions and what they entail. Having survived the previous life by not falling from the roof, to which I referred above, the first death of “Armistice” is a chance encounter. Bridget returns from the armistice celebrations in London in the early hours of November 12, 1918 bringing with her the Spanish flu. Ursula rushes to meet Bridget, and the next morning she is “[b]oiling, like a lobster” (LL 110) and soon dies. On the second 12 November 1918 she does not run down to Bridget: “As she lay listening to the dark, a wave of something horrible washed over her, a great dread […] The same feeling she had had when she’d followed Pamela into the sea […]. She hoped it was out there and not inside her” (LL 119). However, the next morning Ursula visits Bridget who has died during the night, and soon “[d]arkness fell” (LL 127).

16 Peter Krapp, Déjà vu: Aberrations of Cultural Memory (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xx.
The third “Armistice” opens with Ursula writing a note to Bridget hoping that it will lure her out of the house on her return from London. Yet, this does not help, and “[d]arkness soon fell again” (LL 136). Next, Ursula resorts to harsher methods: “I was just coming in the kitchen door, [...] when I felt hands shoving me in the back. And then there I was, sprawled all over the ground, in agony. Small hands,’ [Bridget] added. ‘Like the hands of a little ghost child’” (LL 143). Again, the plan fails and Bridget leaves for London; “Darkness, and so on” (LL 144). At last, the same moment arrives with “everything familiar somehow” (LL 151). As a final recourse Ursula pushes Bridget down the stairs, Bridget breaks her arm and as a result cannot travel to London; “Practice makes perfect” (LL 154).

Through Ursula’s premonitions and déjà vu, her past does not merely infiltrate the present but they become one and the same thing. The déjà vu manifests as le souvenir du présent, as Henri Bergson eloquently describes the phenomenon in his 1908 article. Through Ursula’s déjà vu, then, that which cannot return, i.e. the past, is continuously repeated in the form of presence. This term comes from the philosopher of history Eelco Runia, and it denotes the way the past is an “ongoing process” experienced in the here and now rather than something that is “irremediably gone.” Presence means “‘being in touch’ – either literally or figuratively – with people, things, events and feelings that make you into the person you are.” Quite literally, then, presence for Ursula means that her past catches up with her present; it becomes immanent in her repeated returns and the way she experiences them.

Effectively, it is only the moment of survival during the last “Armistice” that closes the ring. Life after Life thus shows that the end may lie in the middle of life and that “[d]eath is a deviation, not the end of the line.” Ursula’s lives are not shown as a predestined line from beginning to end but rather as a meshwork which illustrates how life is created organically as an entanglement of lines and an “orgy of continuity and discontinuity,” where layers of the past and the present merge. The boundaries of the rings, just like the boundary between life and death becomes permeable.

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19 Eelco Runia, Moved by the Past: Discontinuity and Historical Mutation (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 57; see also Hansen, “Entangled.”
20 Runia, Moved, 53.
22 Runia, Moved, 54; also Hansen, “Entangled.”
able. This fluidity is further shown by the structural and thematic parallels that the novel creates, and it is to these that I turn to next.

“Darkness, and so on”: Repetitions and Mid-turns

An intact ring composition is divided into two parallel halves that wind around a central point, or hinge, which carries the key meaning of the story and after which the story starts to return to the beginning. All these elements occur in all of the rings and it “gives the artist opportunities of taking the text to deeper levels of analogy [...] as] items are put into concordance that had not previously been seen to be similar.” The two halves are created of a matching number of sections that are placed at directly opposite sides of the ring, and the meaning is “located in the middle.” Already the repeated section titles outlined in the table of contents of Life after Life create a sense of parallels even before the reader has embarked on the story. Furthermore, the repetition of keywords and scenes produce structural and thematic parallels in the novel. The most prominent of these is the ever-falling darkness, which is present each time Ursula’s life comes to an end and a new one begins.

Moreover, moments of darkness create bridges between Ursula’s moments of survival. Ursula’s eight life, the one in which she pushes Bridget down the stairs, ends in February 1947, when she more or less accidentally gasses herself to death in her apartment in Phillimore Gardens in Kensington (LL 170). The scene is recapped almost identically during February 1947 of Ursula’s fourteenth life. From the delivery of dirty vegetables from Fox Corner – “Wonderful! Like a Red Cross package” (LL 169, 540) – to the “grey ash [that] was a blizzard in the dark sky now” (LL 169, 540–41) the harsh conditions of post-war London, which made Ursula lose her will to live in life eight, are laid out in front of the reader. In both lives, Ursula goes to bed with a bottle of whisky and soon “[d]arkness began to fall” (LL 170, 541). Ursula’s eighth life does not continue, but the second time around Ursula wakes “with a start. [...] She had been dreaming she was trapped in a cellar. [...] She [...] realized it was the wireless that had woken her. [...] She hadn’t gassed herself after all then” (LL 541).

23 Douglas, Thinking, 26–27.
24 Douglas, 36.
25 Douglas, x.
Thus something changed, and this change can be traced back from life fourteen all the way back to life eight, with significant links to lives ten, eleven and twelve in between. Life fourteen begins on September 1940 and recounts Ursula’s volunteer work in the Air Raid Precautions (ARP). In November 1940, a bomb hits a building in her district, and when Ursula arrives at the site and looks up at the building, she sees that a dress was hanging on a coat hanger from a picture rail. [...] Although [...] she realized that there was a woman still wearing it, her head and legs blown off but not her arms. [...] The fire was burning so brightly that she could make out a little brooch still pinned to the dress. A black cat, a rhinestone for an eye. (LL 501–02)

The attuned reader now realizes that this rhinestone cat is the same worn by Ursula’s neighbour Lavinia in Ursula’s tenth life (LL 333). The location is Argyll Road, a block away from Phillimore Gardens, and the bomb is the one that has killed Ursula three times before, in lives ten, eleven and twelve. The cellar in which she was trapped in her dream in February 1947 of her fourteenth life, and which she also remembers in her eighth life, while relaying fragments of her time in the ARP (LL 164), is the location of one of these deaths.

Moreover, the passage of November 1940 in Ursula’s fourteenth life already builds towards the epilogue which is to follow. From the wall of the bombed cellar in Argyll Road echoes the déjà vu of Ursula’s past. Looking at the sand spilling from the sandbags piled against the cellar wall she is taken to a beach “somewhere, she didn’t know where” (LL 504) – the beach at which she once drowned. A moment later a painting on the wall suddenly has her “flying out of a window” (LL 505), as will happen at the end of the epilogue. It is as if the proximity of her previous death in the cellar of Argyll Road gathers the fragments of her other deaths, both those that have passed and those that are yet to come. It is this ever-growing awareness of her possibilities to dictate the passing of her life that, in the end, stops her from gassing herself to death.

Darkness, then, is present both at moments of Ursula’s death and at moments of her survival, and this illustrates the way the mid-points of Ursula’s lives – those elements which supposedly carry the most significance – can shift. In the cluster of lives in “Armistice,” as I discussed in the previous section, the mid-point is the recurring death, which Ursula attempts to defeat, and her survival is the end; in the epilogue, death is an ending that Ursula willingly embraces as it means she can forever return to new beginnings. These shapeshifting elements signify, again, that Life after Life is not an intact ring composition even if the central point of the ring does not...
need to be “in the middle in any quantitative sense.” Yet, the parallels and the mid-turns do “[add] great depth and range to the meaning of the words as their mutual echoing draws distant contexts together.” In Life after Life, the reader certainly needs to be alert, in order to spot such “distant connections” and to notice the subtle repetitions, which “turn the story around on a sixpence,” as Atkinson described her writing technique in an interview with The New York Times. Nevertheless, the key to “understanding” the novel does not lie only in taking note of the parallel points nor in being structurally attentive to the text. The reader also experiences the novel and Ursula’s life similarly to Ursula herself: as a déjà vu. The elusive parallels that abound and the swiftly repeated scenes create a sense that the reader has been there before, too. In the end, “[p]ractice makes perfect” (LL 82, 154).

“She was Ursula Beresford Todd and she was a witness”: Endings and Beginnings

The rings within rings, the parallels and the mid-turns all anticipate the beginning and the end: all of the elements are linked, foregrounded in the beginning and brought towards a completion in the end. In Life after Life, each of the different beginnings predict a development, a movement toward the end. Yet, as Douglas suggests, “[a]ny recognized kind of ending is loaded with intimations of other endings”. In the novel the anticipation at each birth is that it ends, not in death but in a new birth, which necessarily entails yet another ending. The entire novel leaves such possibilities open. This notion is emphasized with Douglas contending that coming to an end does not automatically mean that completion is achieved: “Ending is different from completion […]. The first is difficult, and the second impossible.” The nature of the circular form is such that

27 Douglas, 38.
29 Douglas, Thinking, 36–37.
30 Douglas, 134–35.
31 Douglas, xiii.
it carries on, like the snake swallowing its tail, or ouroboros, which Ursula
draws for Dr. Kellet in one of her sessions (LL 579).

As Douglas points out, in a ring composition the beginning, the mid-turn and the end all need to relate to one another.32 Bearing in mind that the ending always predicts new endings, does the ring composition really remain intact, even structurally? The meshwork, again, provides a more apt metaphor as the boundaries of the beginning, the mid-point and the end become blurred. Ursula’s birth, survival and death are all, at one and the same time, the beginning, the mid-point and the end: “Time [becomes] a construct, in reality everything flows, no past or present, only the now” (LL 579). Thus Ursula’s death and birth opens up a fistula,33 which allows the past to merge with the present. At “The End of the Beginning,” through her repeated returns, Ursula has finally learned to “[listen] to the dark” (LL 119), asking it for advice. Her déjà vu has finally become the souvenir of her present.

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33 Runia, *Moved*, 67; see also Hansen, “Entangled.”


Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss how two different types of texts written 500 years apart negotiate between two perspectives on Indian Mughal history. First, we have the Baburnama,\(^1\) an early exemplum of Islamic autobiography. It is written in the Turkic vernacular Chaghatay by the Timurid prince Babur (1483–1530; 888–937 AH)\(^2\) who was extending his reign from Kabul into Hindustan, not by impulse but with a long-standing vision. Babur's military achievements were no doubt far-reaching and remarkable – and they created durable effects on the cultural outlook of India – but even more permanent influence he has had through his memoir. Baburnama is an early exemplum of Islamic autobiography, written in the Turkic vernacular Chaghatay, and provides a first-hand account of a historical period that was to change the fate of the Indian Subcontinent.

The present-day perspective is provided by the novels of Salman Rushdie, a Cambridge history graduate. He has long had an interest in the Indian Mughal heritage, and makes recurrent reference to it in his novels starting with his second, ground-breaking novel, Midnight's Children (1981). Especially strong presence of the Mughals is found in Enchantress of Florence (2008),\(^3\) set in the times of the third Mughal Emperor Akbar, Babur's grandchild, in the heyday of the Mughal Empire. In the novel, Rushdie writes both a historical – albeit counterfactual – and fictional ac-

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1 Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur, The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor, translated by Wheeler M. Thackston, 1996; repr. with introd. by Salman Rushdie (New York: Modern Library, 2002) [orig. 1494–1529]; references to Baburnama are marked BN, pagination is first to the folio number (F), then to Thackston's translation (T).
2 In the following, the years are given first according to the Common Era calendar, and then the Islamic calendar (AH).
count of the period. Rare for a novel, even a historical one, Rushdie lists 94 sources in his (partial) bibliography at the end.

While in *Baburnama* Babur is on his way to conquer India, Rushdie writes in the climate of Indian national chauvinism that has seized power of linguistic and political identification. I argue that what Babur’s and Rushdie’s narratives records is an ambivalent time of “undecidability that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention.” Where Babur justifies his conquests through his account, Rushdie’s use of Mughal history can be described as “a tactical reversal of domination.” Thus, both texts negotiate the ground between different understandings of Indian Mughal history.

*Babur’s Writing*

The founder of the Mughal dynasty in India, Babur – Ẓahīr-ud-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur – was a Timurid prince whose father was ‘amīr of Fergāna,’ ʿUmar Shaikh Mirzā II (1469–1494; 870–899 AH), descendant of the Turcic ‘amīr Timūr ‘Lenk’ (Timūr-e Lang; 1336–1405), and mother

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6 ‘Mughal’ is derived from the word ‘Mongol’; although Babur became the first Mughal Emperor of India, he detested both India and the Mongols. In their translation of *Baburnama*, William Erskine and John Leyden have included a verse by Babur on the Mongols (omitted by Thackston who simply refers at that point to “these damn Moghuls” [BN F90b/T106]): “If the Moghul race were a race of angels, it is a bad race./And were the name Moghul written in gold, it would be odious,” Ẓahīr-ed-Dīn Muhammad Babur, *Memoirs of Zehir-ed-Din Muhammed Baber: Emperor of Hindustan*, translated by William Erskine and John Leyden (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1826), 93 [orig. 1494–1529]); see also R. W. Frazer, *A Literary History of India* (Delhi: Mittal, 1898), 353.

7 Fergāna, and the Fergāna Valley, once an important post on the Northern Silk Road, is in today’s Eastern Uzbekistan.

Qutlugh Nigar Khanum (1459–1505; 863/4?–911 AH), 9 descendant of the Mongol ruler Gengish Khan (originally Temüjin; 1162–1227). Thus, Babur had a double heritage as a ruler, and in the age of twelve (1494; 899 AH), he became the ruler of Fergāna after his father. 10

Babur considered extending his reign into Hindustan already in January 1505 (910 AH) 11 when he launched his first campaign into India, as far as the Indus River. 12 He made a further raid into Adinapur in 1507 (913 AH), 13 and in 1519 (925 AH) he made the first of his five substantial forays of Hindustan. Although Babur was practically compelled to move south because he had been forced out of his Central Asian realms due to lost dynastic wars, his interest in India was not initiated by impulse. In his memoir he writes that “we had always had in mind to take Hindustan […] be it by force or peaceful means.” 14 In this he may have been inspired by Timur’s invasion of India (1398; 800 AH), 15 although Timur never did, nor intended to, rule over India.

Babur’s numerous military achievements were no doubt remarkable, but his more lasting influence is his memoir, Baburnama (i.e. Tuzk-e Babri). It is the first exemplum of Islamic autobiography, written in the (now extinct) Turkic vernacular and literary language Chaghatay. 16 It provides a first-hand account of a historical period that was to change the fate of the Subcontinent. Thus, Babur made history not only by doing but also by writing. Babur writes eloquently, and in the translator Wheeler M.

10 BN F1b/T3.
11 BN F225/T273.
12 BN F145–51b/T171–79. In 1505, Babur went down the Indus River, through Adinapur (Jalalabad, in the Nangarhar district in present-day eastern Afghanistan), the Khyber Pass, Bigram (Peshawar), Kohat, and Bangash, as far as Pir Kanu (Sakhī Šarwar by the Sulaiman Mountains) in Balochistan in contemporary Pakistan.
14 BN F223b/T271; emphasis added.
15 BN F224b/T272. Timur’s campaign to India covered all of modern Pakistan and parts of Northern India up to Delhi.
16 The users of Chaghatay Turkish called their language simply Türki, but in current discourse the name Chaghatay is used to distinguish it from the present-day Turkish, see Thackston’s notes (BN 464, n6).
Thackston’s words, his “Chaghatay is fluid, idiomatic and colloquial.” This is not perhaps predictable for a military leader, but beside a chronicler, Babur was very literate and “a noted poet and writer of Chaghātā’i Turkish of his time, second only to ʿAli Sher Nawaʾi” (1441–1501; 844–906 AH). Therefore, the memoir has carried cultural significance beyond its insights into personal or political histories.

Babur did not indeed shy away from violent means in creating his Empire, leaving behind a trail of blood and towers of skulls of massacred people: “In no time at all it [Givi’s sangar] was taken, a massacre ensued, and many heads were cut off. […] A tower of skulls was erected.” Although Babur had adopted Timur’s ruthless military methods described here, he also used strategic discretion in treating the defeated enemies: “We pardoned their offences. It was not my intent to alienate these people.” Furthermore, Babur kept also tight reins on his army when necessary: “I had one of the soldiers hacked to pieces for bothering some of the residents there,” at Pir Kanu shrine.


19 BN F148/T174. The Givi were an Afghan tribe; sangar is a temporary fortification.

20 Timur, then, had taken up the tactics from Genghis Khan and used his methods of organising the army. A basic unit of the system was ‘ordu’ – a cluster of (ten) tents – and the term stood for the whole of a Mongol encampment; see William Weir, 50 Military Leaders Who Changed the World (Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press, 2006), 83–85. Later in Europe, the Mongol word transformed into ‘horde’ to signify the Mongol army, and in North India it was taken up as the name of a Hindustani language, ‘urdu’, see Raghavachari Amritavalli and Karattuparambil Achutan Jayaseelan, “India,” in Language and National Identity in Asia, edited by Andrew Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 63.

21 BN F158b/T187.

22 BN F151b/T179.
Kabul in January 1507 (912 AH), Babur’s troops had to struggle in deep snow for several days, and when they reached Khawal Qutí below the Zirrin Pass they were caught in a heavy snowstorm. Babur refuses offers of taking shelter in a cave: “I figured that to leave my people out in the snow and the storm, with me comfortable in a warm place [...], was neither manly nor comradely. Whatever hardship and difficulty there was, I would suffer it too.” In this manner Baburnama creates a particular image of Babur both as a fierce warlord and an honourable comrade.

Having survived the Zirrin Pass, Babur continues his exploits but soon after his second Hindustan campaign in autumn 1507 (913 AH) and the birth of his first son, the future second Mughal Emperor, Humayun in March 6, 1508 (913 AH), his memoir is discontinued for over a decade, until January 1519 (925 AH). How and why this lacuna may have occurred is not of concern here, but it is notable that Babur takes up his narrative again on the eve of his momentous entries into India that eventually lead into the creation of the Mughal Empire. How then does Babur write Indian history?

Babur’s History of India

For a century several districts in Punjab and Kashmir “had been under the control of [Timur’s] sons and their followers and dependents.” The decisive step for the Mughal Empire was Babur’s conquering of the last Afghan ruler of India, Sultan Ibrāhīm Lōdī in the battle of Panipat in 1526 (932 AH). Throughout, his text is a hybrid of autobiography, history, genealogy, natural history, ethnography, poetry and anecdotes. He reveres the beauties of nature and culture, and brings this forth almost in awe, at

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23 BN F193–95b/T232–35. The location of the place is not known, as Babur did not leave any sketch maps of his expeditions. In the notes of their translation, Erskine and Leyden observe: “The Zirrin Pass seems to have lain between Yeke-aüleng [Yakawlang] and Chekheherān [Chaghcharan]” in Afghanistan (Babur 1826, 210); see also D. Moddie, “Baber’s Grossing [sic] of the Zirrin Pass, 1506,” The Himalayan Journal 18 (1954), http://www.himalayanclub.org/hj/18/14/expeditions-and-notes-18/, accessed December 2, 2019. All in all, mapping (of the area) was scant and/or nominal and often faulty, and Babur often had to rely on conflicting or fuzzy sources.
24 BN F194b/T234.
25 BN F224b/T272.
26 BN F266–67b/T325–27.
times in religious terms. On the eve of the battle of Panipat, Babur writes a
couplet describing the people of India in not so complimenting terms:

A group confused, peace of mind shattered.
A people preoccupied, a very strange people.27

It is quite clear that the conquest of India held no idyllic import for Babur
but was necessitated by political and strategic concerns.

There are certain problems in considering Baburnama as a work of his-
tory. The veracity of Babur’s narrative can be tested against other archival
material and his reliability can be evaluated textually and contextually.
Babur himself has no pretence as to his mission and writes after his return
to Kabul to quench rebels that had turned against him (1507; 912 AH):

I have not written all this to complain: I have simply written the truth. I
do not intend by what I have written to compliment myself: I have
simply set down exactly what happened. Since I have made it a point in
this history to write the truth of every matter and to set down no more
than the reality of every event, as a consequence I have reported every good
and evil I have seen of father and brother and set down the actuality of
every fault and virtue of relative and stranger. May the reader excuse
me; may the listener take me not to task.28

Babur does not have any ‘postmodern’ doubts for using terms like ‘truth’,
‘reality’ or ‘actuality’, and he claims to reveal everything as it is. In the fol-
lowing, I discuss his claims from one particular, everyday perspective, that
of intoxication and its effects. This is suggested by a reconsideration of
Babur’s truth-claims, and the noticeable change in his behaviour from be-
fore the textual lacuna and after it.

The narrative is not either elevated or flattering for Babur. Throughout
Baburnama, there are numerous references to wine, spirits and narcotics as
consumed by the various people Babur encounters as well as by himself.29

In Herat in the end of 1506 (912 AH), at the age of twenty-three, Babur

27 BN F264b/T324; see Stephen F. Dale, “The Poetry and Autobiography of the
28 BN F201/T241; emphases added.
29 E.g. “[Umar-Shaykh Mirza] grew rather fond of ma’jun” (a narcotic mixture, BN
F7b/T10); “Kabul wine is intoxicating” (BN F129b/T154), “Among the wines of
Nijrao the Ala Say wines are the strongest and have the best color” (BN F140/
T166), and “by overindulging in Herat wine he [Ibrahim-Husayn Mirza] drank
himself to death” (BN F167b/T199).

284
records: “At that time I did not drink.” He further qualifies the narrative by stating that “at that time I had not committed the sin of drinking to tipsiness, had not experienced drunkenness.”

30 Here he is not claiming absolutism but moderation. However, a turn is about to take place because “not only was I inclined to have a drink of wine, but my heart was also urging me to cross that valley”; indeed, in Herat “where all implements of pleasure and revelry were ready and present,” he takes a deliberate turn: “if I didn’t drink now, when would I? Deliberating thus with myself, I resolved to make the leap.”

31 If he indeed ‘made the leap’ and ‘crossed the valley’ at the time, it is not related in the memoir, but by January 1519 (925 AH) he certainly had. In the following, I will discuss how this comes through in the narrative.

After the conquest of Bajaur, and having another tower of skulls erected, Babur organises a wine-drinking session. Nine days later, on a way to raid the Yusufzai Afghans, Babur shares some “delicious and intoxicating kamali. […] It was fantastic.”

32 The drinking sessions seem to have become for him an ordinary, at least a weekly, routine (just like the cutting off heads). With narcotics, Babur is still a novice, but he heightens his tolerance over the years. In the text there is an interesting anachronistic moment when Babur describes his use of kamali: “These days, if I were to eat a whole kamali, I don’t know if it would produce half the high.”

33 The phrase “these days” indicates that the narrative is not recorded at the time of the events in hindsight. It is not possible to determine how much time has passed when Babur comments on his kamali-eating habits but it signals clearly that the text has been retouched afterwards, which means that the authenticity of first-hand reportage is somewhat forfeited.

Babur does not avert from writing about banalities and writes about them in a matter-of-fact manner. At one point (March 8, 1519; 925 AH) Babur overindulges in spirits: “I must have been really drunk. […] I didn’t
remember a thing, except that when I got to my tent I vomited a lot.”

His observations seem to be affected by the drinking. For example after the above drinking bout, the next time he writes is as long as three days later, when he is again taking maʿjun and having a party. More to the point, having maʿjun ten days later, he describes a psychedelic experience: “How strange the fields of flowers appeared under its influence. Nothing but purple flowers were blooming in some places, and only yellow ones in other areas.” Babur continues to pay attention to his surroundings, but his reliability and diligence can be questioned on the basis of the commentary of his own capabilities. Evidently, he is sometimes so overwhelmed by the parties that he writes only about them.

Another lacuna in the text appears in January 1520 (926 AH), when the narrative ceases for almost six years until November 1525 (932 AH). Again, Babur continues at a point when he is entering India, this time for good. The use of wine, spirits and maʿjun continues and in a letter to Khwaja Kalan, Babur writes that “the craving for a wine party was so overwhelming that many times out of longing for wine I was on the verge of weeping.” Things remain thus until February 25, 1527 (933 AH) when Babur takes the pledge of temperance, extending it through his royal decree to apply to also his subjects:

Upon the completion of this intention and the accomplishment of this hope, a decree obeyed by all the world was issued to the effect that within the protected realm […] absolutely no creature would commit the sin of imbibing intoxicants or endeavor to acquire, produce, sell, purchase, possess, or transport same.

If there are traces in the text that reveal instances of later editing, Babur’s documentation also divulges an individual who is not always fit to record the events, although he can be commended for being candid about his addictions and their effects. However, the beginning of the history of Mughal India is tinted with insobriety, a legacy that was shared with the subsequent generations.

36 BN F228b/T276–77.
37 BN F232/T281.
38 Letter on Feb. 10, 1529, BN F361/T436.
39 BN F313b–14/T382.
Rushdie and the History of Mughal India

Babur’s influence on the construction of Indian history is irrefutable although its interpretations are not uncontested. Rushdie’s interest in Mughal history, then, is equally clear throughout his novels. What, then, is Salman Rushdie’s Indian Mughal history like? In Midnight’s Children (1981), the protagonist’s father Ahmed Sinai had desired to prove his descent from Mughal emperors – “Wrong side of the blanket, of course; but Mughal, certainly”;[40] in Shame (1983),[41] Omar Khayyam Shakil’s brother had been named “Babar” after the first Emperor of the Mughals who had marched over the Impossible Mountains and conquered wherever he went”; in The Satanic Verses (1988) Zeeny Vakil holds the idea of “the eclectic, hybridized nature of the Indian artistic tradition. The Mughals had brought artists from every part of India to work on the paintings; individual identity was submerged to create a many-headed, many-brushed Overartist who, literally, ‘was’ Indian painting”;[42] Moor’s Last Sigh (1995) mentions warrior-princess Chand Bibi who held the Ahmadnagar Fort against “the armies of the Mughal Empire – of the Grand Mughal Akbar himself”;[43] in The Ground beneath Her Feet (1999), there is a mention of the “Treaty of Bassein under which the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah ceded

42 It is interesting that Rushdie should use the form Babar for Babur in his novels, cf. Salman Rushdie, Introduction to The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor (New York: Modern Library, 2002 [1996]), vii–xiii. This could be an allusion to the series of children’s books created by the French writer Jean de Brunhoff (1899–1937) about Babar the Elephant who first featured in Histoire de Babar: Le Petit Eléphant (1931). What suggest this is that for Rushdie, the Hindu one-tusk elephant-headed god Ganesha (Ganapati), patron saint of literature, has had special significance: e.g. Ganesha is the breakthrough role for Gibreel in The Satanic Verses (London: Penguin, 1988), 26; it appears in Aurora’s “Moor series” in The Moor’s Last Sigh (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 301; and in Midnight’s Children the protagonist Saleem Sinai makes a direct parenthetical confession: “Note that, despite my Muslim background, I’m enough of a Bombayite to be well up in Hindu stories, and actually I’m very fond of the image of trunk-nosed, flap-eared Ganesh solemnly taking dictation,” Rushdie, Midnight’s, 149–50.
44 Rushdie, Moor, 116.
the Seven Isles [of Bombay] to the Portuguese”; in *Fury* (2001) there is the imaginary land, “the primitive but independent nation of Baburia” ruled by the Mogol; and in *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), Prince Salim is described as “a popular figure in Kashmir, not because he was the son of the Grand Mughal, Akbar the Great, but because once he ascended to the throne as the emperor Jehangir he made it plain that Kashmir was his second Anarkali, his other great love.” On top of these examples, there are numerous other instances in Rushdie’s works where the Mughal heritage is present.

Especially strong presence the Mughals have in *The Enchantress of Florence* that is set in the times of the third Mughal Emperor Akbar the Great (Abu’l-Fath Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar, 1542–1605; 949–1014 AH), Babur’s grandchild, in the heyday of the Empire. In his novel, Rushdie combines the histories of Europe and Mughal India through the journey of the protagonist Niccolò Vespucci (or Uccello, or Mogor dell’Amore) who travels to Akbar’s Mughal court. In the guise of history, it lays emphasis on imagination and its power.

Of special significance in the story is Queen Jodhabai, one of Akbar’s (in popular imagination alleged) queens and wives:

One of these royal personages did not really exist. She was an imaginary wife, dreamed up by Akbar in the way that lonely children dream up imaginary friends, and in spite of the presence of many living, if floating, consorts, the emperor was of the opinion that it was the real queens who were the phantoms and the nonexistent beloved who was real. (*EF* 27)

Rushdie here adopts the view of leading Indian historians, who claim that there is no historical evidence of Jodha, least of all of her having been

49 E.g. Satish Chandra, “Jodha Bai: Who Was She?” in *State, Society, and Culture in Indian History*, edited by Satish Chandra (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapter 7; M. Athar Ali, “The Perception of India in Akbar and Abu’l Fa-
Akbar’s wife and queen.\textsuperscript{50} She is not mentioned in Akbar’s biography by Abu-l-Fazl,\textsuperscript{51} in the autobiography of his son Jahangir, nor in other contemporary sources.

An indication that the issue of Jodha’s authenticity still remains a heated topic is the debate that ensued the opening of the film \textit{Jodhaa Akbar} (2008) directed by Ashutosh Gowariker.\textsuperscript{52} Coinciding with the publication of Rushdie’s novel (and their production processes being involved in the debate over Jodha),\textsuperscript{53} the two narratives on the one hand take opposite views of the historicity of Jodha – Rushdie’s as imaginary, Gowariker’s as historical –, and on the other hand they both play with the idea that one of Akbar’s queens, a Rajput princess, Mariam-uz-Zamani, may or may not have been Jodha.\textsuperscript{54}
Niccolò’s journey to Fatehpur Sikri – the Mughal capital from 1571 to 1585 – is an encounter between the European West and the East in an Indian colonial context where European colonialism was still in formation. It is by far not the first contact between these different worlds. In fact, at the same time as the traveller appears in the court there are the first Jesuit visitors to see Akbar, headed by the Spanish Father Antonio Monserrate together with the Italian Father Rodolfo Acquaviva (EF 70). Historically, there was actually such a visit by these Jesuit Fathers and a number of other clerics – on February 18, 1580 to be precise. Although historically established, Rushdie’s story would locate the incident in a later moment, 1583, closer to the abandonment of Sikri. This desertion is believed to have been done because the lake where the city drew its water from suddenly dried up, which is another fact ‘recorded’ by Rushdie.

Rushdie’s Questioning of Indian History

The historical Akbar fought wars to expand his empire but he also unified Hindus, Muslims and other creeds through his religio–political inclusive-


ness, and in 1582 he tried to create a syncretic religion on the basis of Islam and Hinduism, as well as of Christianity, Jainism and Zoroastrianism. In his oeuvre, Rushdie has questioned the Hindu majoritarian and nationalist view of Indian historiography and has interpreted history in more pluralistic terms through narrative methods. This interest is echoed in the wanna-be polytheistic Akbar’s ‘Tent of the New Worship’, with the camps of Water Drinkers (the *manqul* party) and Wine Lovers (the *ma’qul* party), who debate over correct interpretation of various issues (EF 79). In the historical Akbar’s case similar debates took place in a similar hall of worship, ‘Ibadat-Khaana’.

The novel appears, thus, less as a fabricated story, ‘fiction’, than a retold history. Rushdie himself commented on this aspect in April 2008 when he replied to a “belittling review” of his novel by Ruth Morse in *The Times Literary Supplement*. Rushdie writes:

*I did not invent* the Mughals’ excessive fondness for opium, or Jehangir’s rebellion against his father, or the scheming world of the royal harem; *nor is it my idea* that the senior […] women of the Mughal court were figures of authority; *nor did I falsify* the nature of the marriage of Niccolò Machiavelli and his wife Marietta, which was characterized, as all historians agree, by her devotion and his philandering. These are matters of record […]

Throughout the pages of *The Enchantress of Florence* Rushdie emerges insistently as a historian – a Cambridge history graduate of 1968. The insistence on the correctness of historical record is peculiar, for apart from the ‘accu-
rate’ historical records there are a number of points that are less ‘histori-
cal’. In fact, the text itself is presented in the form of a generic hybrid be-
tween fictional and historiographic narrative, which is corroborated by the
fact that there is a six pages long bibliography with as many as ninety-four
sources at the back60 – excluding the more literary sources.

The bibliography could be taken as a kind of postmodern parody – after
all, we are talking about a novel, not a historical study61 – but there is
strong indication that this is not the case. One could speculate that
Rushdie is here creating a counterfactual history, a narrative universe where
certain historical events are used as invariables while others are changed in
order to see how things might have developed.

A Hidden Chapter

The traveller’s, Niccolò’s, tale is told in a proper storyteller’s fashion “indi-
rectly, with many detours and divagations,” (EF 10) to reveal a “hidden
chapter” in Akbar’s family story (EF 109). What emerges is a counterfactual
history of the European push to the East as we are introduced to a forgot-
ten, forsaken princess Qara Köz, “The Lady Black Eyes” (EF 121–22). It is
her story that the traveller has come to reveal, and to establish his own
family ties with Akbar, amazingly as his long-lost uncle. In Qara Köz’s
character Rushdie toys with two ideas.

First of all, there is the question of the influence of women in imperial
politics. Qara Köz is described as Akbar’s grandfather Babar’s sister.62 In
his ”Introduction” to the 1996 reissue of Thackston’s translation of Babur-
nama, Rushdie already evokes Niccolò Machiavelli as well as the ideas
of ”polytheistic inclusiveness” and imaginative history: “Where facts are in-
sufficient, what fills the space is interpretation.”63 Akbar comments on the
traveller’s claims: “So if your story is true, then the beginning of our own em-
pire is the direct consequence of the willfulness of Qara Köz. Should we condemn
or praise her? Was she a traitor […] or our genetrix, who shaped our future?”
(EF 216). This kind of gender reversal of the established order of things

60 About fifty of these deal with the European Renaissance, and about twenty the
Mughal, Islamic or Indian history or culture. In the other novels by Rushdie there
are no bibliographies.
61 See Stella Clarke, Review of The Enchantress of Florence, The Australian (Mar. 29,
62 BN 12, 16, 199.
63 Rushdie, Introduction, xii, x and ix.
would be anathema for any patriarchal society. Except that Akbar had, for a year and a day, been entertaining “megalomaniac fantasies of a joint global empire” with the English Elisabeth “that united the eastern and western hemispheres” (EF 74). Once again we have Rushdie developing an idea of women’s unacknowledged significance for world history, although many critics are once more not convinced of this stance.  

Secondly, there is the reverse travel of an Easterner, and a woman for that, into the heartland of Europe. Qara Köz becomes the Enchantress of Florence, who puts all of the city’s population under spell (EF 244), in her angelic form as Angelica. Hers is in a way a reverse postcolonial history. There are a number of such moments of postcolonial reversals in the novel that rewrite the hegemonic understanding of the East and the West. The English are here described as having “no future on this earth” for their lack of moral integrity (EF 98), and – as a counter-Orientalist commentary – Akbar concludes that “the lands of the West were exotic and surreal to a degree incomprehensible to the humdrum people of the East” (EF 326). The stated purpose for Qara Köz’s arrival in Florence is “the hope of forging a union between the great cultures of Europe and the East, knowing she has much to learn […] and believing, too, that she has much to teach” (EF 276). The people of Florence begin to see her as “a symbol of peace” and they “talk of her ‘Eastern wisdom’” (EF 286). In her disillusioned way, Qara Köz dismisses these ideas as follies: “There is no particular wisdom in the East […]. All human beings are foolish to the same degree” (EF 286). This ironic comment breaks the illusion of the Orientalist notion and brings both hemispheres to the same level.

Such parallel histories of the genealogy of the Mughal Empire and the envisioned unifications of the East and the West both in Akbar’s and Qara Köz’s visions seem to suggest that the colonial history was not a foreclosed, inevitable development in one direction, but a conjunction of various factors, and other possibilities would have been available.

The traveller’s linguistic capability emerges as a conjuring trick, similar to the poets and artists “who claimed for themselves the power of language and image to conjure beautiful somethings from empty nothings” (EF 47; emphasis added). He has, on his way to the Emperor Akbar’s palace, acquired

himself an important document and a role to accompany it: he has become a self-appointed Ambassador for England, a messenger for Elizabeth, the Queen of England (EF 23). If we consider historical records, such a missive was (allegedly) delivered to Akbar by one John Mildenhall (1560–1614) in 1603, pretending to have been sent by Queen Elizabeth on behalf of the East India Company.\(^{65}\)

There was also an earlier visitor with an actual letter of introduction from the Queen, namely a merchant called Ralph Fitch (c. 1550–1611). Fitch appeared in Akbar’s court in Fatehpur Sikri in 1584 and marvelled the merchandise present:

> Hither is great resort of marchants om Persia and out of India, and very much merchandise of silke and cloth, and of precious stones, both rubies, diamants, and pearles. The king is apparelled in a white cabie [i.e. a muslin tunic] made like a shirt tied with strings on the one side, and a little cloth on his head coloured oftentimes with red or yellow.\(^{66}\)

Niccolò is, then, at least an implied amalgamation of these two English travellers by Rushdie. When Niccolò gets to reveal the contents of the document to Akbar, he tells eloquently that Elizabeth is seeking alliance with Akbar on trade matters but also against the Pope (EF 72–73). It is this letter

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\(^{66}\) Ralph Fitch, “1583–1591: Ralph Fitch,” in *Early Travels in India 1583–1619*, edited by William Foster (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), 18; spelling is original; the bracketed explanation is by Foster. While Mildenhall was acting in the interest of the new British East India Company that was created in 1600, Fitch was an independent merchant, albeit with an ulterior imperial agenda corroborated by the Crown.

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that makes Akbar dream of a global empire, and also of making Elizabeth his wife.

When Akbar later in life revisits the document, he realizes that he had been deceived by Vespucci’s sweet tongue, reminding him “that witchcraft requires no potions, familiar spirits or magic wands. Language upon a silvered tongue affords enchantment enough” (EF 75; emphasis added). The power of language to create and obliterate is a recurring motif in Rushdie’s oeuvre.

Conclusion: Ambivalent Histories

Rushdie’s persistent insistence on the significance of fiction, what I have elsewhere discussed as his epistemological stance,67 is especially strong in The Enchantress of Florence. Rushdie’s texts underscore the importance of interpreting Indian history in pluralistic terms, rather than from just the Hindu interpretations that dismiss the Muslim presence in the creation of India. However, Rushdie does not paint an idealistic image of the history of Islamic India, just like Babur refuses to do in his memoir, albeit they both do this from diverse perspectives, and apparently for different purposes.

Although Western historiography (if indeed such a monolith exists) is not an objective model of enquiry, the influential social theorist Ashis Nandy comments: “Traditional India not only lacks the Enlightenment’s concept of history; it is doubtful that it finds objective, hard history a reliable, ethical, or reasonable way of constructing the past.”68 Nandy’s perspective is, I argue, at the bottom of both Babur’s and Rushdie’s texts.

The at once cosmopolitan69 and counterfactual histories that we encounter in Babur’s and Rushdie’s narratives – separated by 500 years –

67 Kuortti, Fictions.
69 Here I use the term ‘cosmopolitan history’ in the sense defined by Karen O’Brien as something that “simultaneously encapsulates an attitude of detachment towards national prejudice (often described as an ‘impartial’ or ‘philosophical’ attitude [...]), and an intellectual investment in the idea of a common European civilisation,” with the distinction that the civilization in question is not European but Indian, or Central Asian; see Karen O’Brien, Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon, Cambridge Studies in Eighteenth-century English Literature and Thought, 34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.
show that both writing and interpreting history is ambivalent. Despite his long-term desire to conquer Indian conquests, Babur did not appreciate India at all: for him the Indian language was coarse, the people were unreliable, the air was unhealthy, and the climate was too hot. However, it was Babur who brought about, in Sidney Pollock’s terms, “a tactical reversal of domination.” Babur laid foundations both for the Islamic domination of India and its historiography. The Mughal presence in India did not involve large-scale forced conversions, and especially Akbar was known for his ideas of religious inclusiveness. In contrast, Rushdie’s texts posit the Mughal history against the contemporary exclusionist Hindu extremism.

Rushdie, then, writes in the climate of national chauvinism that has seized power of linguistic and political identification. I argue that what Babur’s and Rushdie’s narratives illustrate is, in Homi Bhabha’s terms, an ambivalent “undecidability that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention.” The image of the Mughals, as historian William Dalrymple notes, remains “for many Indians today, rightly or wrongly […] as it suited the British to portray them in the imperial propaganda that they taught in Indian schools after 1857: as sensual, decadent, temple-destroying invaders.” Dalrymple notes continues that this image persists despite the fact that Akbar and later Mughal Emperors – including the last emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar II (1775–1862) – advocated a deeply cultured, liberal and pluralistic society, and together with Akbar, Zafar remains “an attractive symbol of Islamic civilization at its most tolerant and pluralistic.” Read together, Babur’s and Rushdie’s works display the ambivalent historiography of the Mughal conquest of India, as well as the ambivalence of contemporary status of Islam in India within the majoritarian Hindu framework. Thus, the Mughal history is not only a story of victories and conquests but also a story of erring humans and inclusion, a lesson in approaching historical texts.

70 Pollock, ”Cosmopolitan,” 625.
72 William Dalrymple, The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857 (Gurgaon: Penguin India, 2006), 479.
73 Dalrymple, Last, 483.
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Chapter 15
Between Domestic and International: The Finnish Translation of Göhler’s Orchesterkompositionen von Jean Sibelius as an Image Builder

– Turo Rautaoja

Introduction

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957), the national composer of Finland, was a significant force in the cultural and national awakening of Finland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and still continues to be the most important ambassador of Finnishness in the world. Texts on Sibelius and his works were an elemental building block in the construction of the image of the composer in Finland, as several books as well as other texts were published on Sibelius already during his lifetime. There was one notable feature to the more lengthy texts in this range of texts, however: save for a few exceptions, they were not originally written in Finnish but translated from Swedish, English and German.

In this chapter I examine the case of one of the earliest Sibelius-related texts, Georg Göhler’s “Orchesterkompositionen von Jean Sibelius,” which was originally published in 1908 in the German journal Der Kunstwart and translated into Finnish eighteen years later for the Annals of the Kalevala Society. The study investigates how Göhler’s essay constructed the image of Sibelius and the idea of Finnishness. In particular, through an analysis of the source text and its translation, the chapter discusses the translation as a locus of change: it considers the effects of the shifts that occurred in place, time and language and how they influenced the portrayal of national imagery.

The analysis is embedded in the theoretical framework of imagology, most notably outlined and discussed with regard to translation studies by Luc van Doorslaer, Peter Flynn and Joseph Th. Leerssen in 2015. In particular, it focuses on the dynamics of the auto- and hetero-images created by the original and the translation, that is, explores the manner in which the texts operate both as a self-reflective device and as a means of discussing the Other.

**Imagology and Translation Studies**

Imagology can be defined as the study of the mental images regarding ourselves and the Other and of the discursive practices that construct such images. Originating in literary studies, it explores representations in textual sources and aims to uncover how national stereotypes are constructed and how they operate. According to Leerssen, imagology is particularly interested in the dynamics between two types of images: *hetero-images*, which describe the Other, and *self-images* or *auto-images*, which are images that characterise one’s own national identity.

Imagology has a strong interdisciplinary identity. Hence, it is no wonder that imagological strategies have also been employed in translation studies, another interdiscipline. Some of the earliest articles testing imagological ideas were already published in the 1990s and 2000s, but a more comprising and systematic investigation into the shared properties of

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translation studies and imagology has taken place from the 2010s onwards. In recent years, the number of studies combining these two disciplines has grown significantly, and the first book to systematically chart the terrain and possibilities of the two disciplines came out in 2015 under the title *Interconnecting Translation Studies and Imagology*, edited by van Doorslaer, Flynn, and Leerssen.

In translation studies, the concept of image has traditionally had a prominent place, for instance, in the more ideologically and sociologically inclined research orientations, and the representative power of translation in the construction of foreign cultures has been generally acknowledged. Perhaps due to this history, imagological works in translation studies have often quite effortlessly ventured beyond the analysis of literary texts, favoured by more traditional imagological research: for instance, Doorslaer deployed the approach in the analysis of journalistic texts, and Julie McDonough Dolmaya examined image building in the promotion of Canadian brands through website localisation.

Both imagology and translation studies consider texts through their capacity to spread information, since, by and large, all instances of information distribution involve communication of images. Imagology posits that these images are often affected by national and cultural image building endeavours and created through the various selection and decision processes of text production. In translation, these processes are reiterated in the creation of the target text. van Doorslaer explains that when the images of the source text are carried over into the new target text, a new layer of choices and decisions on the images is added to the text on the basis of the target audience’s expectations and knowledge. The outcome is a text that differs from the original with its “changes of perspective, the use of stereotypes, 

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omissions and additions, and manipulations, up to and including varying features of censorship.”

Some of these changes will be considered in the analysis below as it continues to elaborate on the potential of combining imagology and translation studies. In the analysis, the use of the imagological apparatus is extended to the investigation of the images depicted in an essay-type article. Before the analysis, however, some thoughts on the images of Finnishness and Sibelius will be provided in the next section.

On the Images of Finnishness and Sibelius

Finnishness as a trope has previously been surveyed by Pasi Saukkonen. He maintains that the great nineteenth-century Finnish nation-building effort was in fact an endeavour of the Swedish-speaking elite, who through literary representations created an idealised image of the nation and especially of the members of its Finnish-speaking agrarian majority in order “to provide the population with a positive national self-image.”

This was necessary since, at the time, a notable cultural and linguistic divide existed between the Swedish- and Finnish-speaking demographic of Finland and the elite responsible for the nationalist movement required points of identification. As a result, it can be argued that the Finnishness the representations constructed was actually an image of the Other rather than the self and that it was the literary representation that actually engendered the characteristics which it was purported to depict in the first place. This image began to crumble once Finnish-speaking culture began to gain momentum towards the end of the nineteenth century. This was when works such as Aleksis Kivi’s Seven Brothers (1870) began to project a different national image which went against the accepted ideals. Around the same time, the movement called Carelianism sought to find the roots of Finnish culture near the Carelian border between Finland and Russia. Artists, Sibelius among them, became fascinated by the imagery of the untouched lakes and forests of the area and began to draw inspiration from the national epic Kalevala, thought to have been set in the Carelian landscape.

14 Saukkonen, “Finns,” 151.
All in all, towards the turn of the twentieth century, culture came to be an important factor in the construction of Finland’s national image. The image was built particularly with regard to Russia, as a means of distancing Finland from its ruler. Especially after gaining independence in 1917, one recurring theme in the self-images of Finns found in Finnish literature is the depiction of Finland as a Western, yet simultaneously distinct, nation. Culture more generally had already previously been harnessed to repeat this idea: the question of whether Finland should be portrayed as a Scandinavian nation or a country in its own right had been present the identity building endeavours from the 1860s onwards.

Symptomatically, the image of Sibelius is also built on his double role as a distinctly Finnish, yet simultaneously cosmopolitan composer. Sibelius’s fame abroad made him the first truly internationally acknowledged artist to come from Finland. He was seen, both in his native Finland and abroad, as the original Finnish genius, who even came to be considered synonymous with the idea of Finnishness. This synonomy justifies the approach adopted in this chapter: I maintain that when Göhler writes about Sibelius and his music, he is also writes about Finnishness more generally. This notion enables the extension of the imagological findings made on Sibelius to the ideas about Finland. The connection between how Sibelius and his native country are perceived is also apparent in the article written by Göhler.

Georg Göhler’s Orchesterkompositionen von Jean Sibelius

Georg Göhler’s article “Orchesterkompositionen von Jean Sibelius” was originally published in the German journal Der Kunstwart in 1908. The Finnish version, “Jean Sibeliuksen varhaisemmat orkesterisävellykset,” was translated by an unnamed translator 18 years later and published in a volume of the Annals of the Kalevala Society that was dedicated to Sibelius in honour of his 60th birthday in 1926. Göhler’s motivation for writing the article lay in endorsing the cultural ideals embodied by Sibelius, which he

15 Saukkonen, 152.
17 Tomi Mäkelä, Sibelius, me ja muut [Sibelius, Us, and the Others] (Helsinki: Teos, 2007), 15, 28.
sees as a counter-force to the detrimental effects of the Richard Strauß fad which prevailed in Central Europe at the beginning of the century. According to Goss, Göhler “suggests that within Sibelius’s ‘national’ art lies the kind of authentic quality that appeals to all people.” In other words, Göhler recognises a quality in Sibelius’s art that transcends national boundaries and is universally relatable. The article promotes Sibelius with the aim that he would, as the editor of the Annals expresses it, claim his rightful place in the concert halls of Germany.

The temporal distance between the original and the Finnish version as well as the contextually bound premise of the source text present the translation with several challenges. Göhler’s text is an essay set in its contemporary German cultural context and discussing a topical issue, Strauß’s influence on the cultural life of Germany. The significance of the Strauß theme and the discourse around it is highlighted by the fact that a shortened version of the text was reprinted twice in two other German publications in 1908 and 1909. Considering the cultural embeddedness of the original text, then, it is reasonable to ask why the article was translated into Finnish in the first place. The Strauß mania that prompted Göhler’s article was hardly a similar issue in Finland, which is why the creation of the translation must have been based on different motives.

The preface to the volume of the Annals provides three clues for the existence of the translation. First, the editor considers Göhler so well-versed in the character and art of Sibelius that the text deserves to be published in Finland, apparently as an example of an apt description of the composer’s music. Second, Göhler’s fight for Sibelius’s position abroad is acknowledged, suggesting that the translation is seen as a token of recognition for Göhler’s efforts. Finally, the Preface calls attention to the moral dimension of the text: Göhler’s article is presented as a reminder of the responsibilities that the Finnish readers have towards the art of their small nation. By this the writer presumably refers to an obligation to promote Sibelius’s music and its perceived unique qualities. Juxtaposing the motivations behind the articles demonstrates two differing approaches to the text: Göhler’s objective is to address a question of values in the cultural life of his own country, whereas the translation finds its right to exist through the support it lends to the character and recognition of Sibelius. The issues

19 Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja 6 (Porvoo: WSOY, 1926), 8.
20 Goss, Jean, 120.
arising from the spatial and temporal displacement of the article are thus reconciled by changing the point of view of the text.

Textual Differences between the Original and the Translation

The differences between the articles go beyond the incentives of its author and translator: the source text includes passages that are missing from the translation. While otherwise faithfully emulating Göhler’s florid sentences, the Finnish translation leaves out references to German cultural heritage found in the original article. These include a quotation from the second act of Richard Wagner’s *The Valkyries*, “In wilden Leiden erwuchs er sich selbst,” and the last stanza of the poem *Manche freilich* by Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

The Wagner quotation, which appears unaccompanied by any explanation or reference, is preceded by two sentences in which Göhler writes that Sibelius and the national character of his art can only be fully understood by Finns. Yet, the quotation, which comes from Wagner’s *Ring* cycle where god Wotan talks of his son Siegmund, aims to facilitate understanding by drawing parallels between the Finnish composer and Wagner’s hapless hero with a strong affinity to nature – at least for those who recognise the reference. The quotation links the perceived character of Sibelius’s music with the German cultural context, and even if the reference is not familiar to the reader, the message of the quotation is understandable: Sibelius is depicted as a self-made man, an original artist unaffected by the trends of the outside world.

In quoting the last stanza *Manche freilich*, Göhler appeals to the common existence and understanding of peoples.

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22 In grievous distress he grew up by himself; my translation.
24 DE: Viele Geschicke weben neben dem meinen/durcheinander spielt sie all das Dasein/und mein Teil ist mehr als dieses Lebens/schlanke Flamme oder schmale Leier;
EN: Many fates weave alongside my own/All are interconnected by a common existence/And my part is more than simply this life’s/Slender flame or narrow lyre;
same time offer something that is characteristic to all human experience (“was allem menschlichen Fühlen gleichermaßen eigen ist”), thus again drawing from the shared ideas of human existence.25

Both references contrast Sibelius’s Finnishness, his Otherness, with a common understanding of the universal qualities of his art as Göhler reminds the readers of the foreignness of Sibelius and then appeals to the assumed cultural understanding of German of his readers (who may well have also recognised such references considering the nature of the journal). The use of German poetry may be seen as harking back to a popular trope of the nineteenth century, the conceptualisation of the German people as the Volk der Dichter und Denker, the nation of poets and thinkers.26 As Göhler’s objective is to restore the authenticity of German art after the perceived damage done by the Strauß mania, the cultural references gain significance as exemplars of German achievements. Göhler sees similarities between the characteristics of Sibelius and the products of German art and demonstrates them by juxtaposing the two. The result is a negotiation of the characteristics of the Other and the self, simultaneously a hetero-image of Sibelius’s Finnishness and an auto-image, which pleads for a return to traditional German values. As the quotations are left out of the translation, the nature of the text changes. The omissions diminish the culturally bound character of the original and shift the point of view towards creating an auto-image for the Finnish readers.

As the quotations are omitted, Göhler’s descriptions of Otherness increase in importance when the images are projected at the Finnish target audience who consider the characterisations as images of themselves. This foregrounding of the resulting new auto-image of the translation is facilitated by further modifications of the source text, for the references to German culture are not the only passages that have been excluded from the translation: both the beginning and the end of the article have also been changed, suggesting a modification in the manner in which the whole text is framed.

The first three paragraphs of the German article, in which Göhler bemoans the reputation Sibelius has acquired as a composer of minor works, have been omitted from the translation. On the one hand, this is quite reasonable when taking into account the amount of time that had passed between the publication of the original and its translation. Considering the success Sibelius had met in the United States, for example, the information

provided at the beginning was simply inaccurate by the time Finnish version was published. On the other hand, the omission is also understandable in light of the fact that the Annals was published in celebration of Sibelius’s sixtieth birthday. A text evincing how undervalued Sibelius was would hardly have been appropriate.

Following from the previous observation, the omission can also be subjected to an imagological reading. The Anniversary publication provides a natural site for image construction. By removing the beginning of Göhler’s original article, Sibelius is presented to be on a par with (or above) the German composers, such as Ludwig Beethoven, Gustav Mahler and Josef Anton Bruckner, whom Göhler mentions in the article and the reader is left with an account of an original composer whose earlier works already attracted the attention of critics abroad.

The focus in the translation is on Sibelius, instead of the values he embodies for Göhler, is especially apparent at the end of the article, where the translator leaves out most of the last paragraph (emphasis added):

FI: Tämä on alkuperäistä taidetta, joka perustuu kokonaisen kansan tuntemistapaan, se on voimakkaan runollisen ja soitannollisen hengen sisäisesti välttämätöntä ilmausta. Erottakaamme musiikista tarkoin kaikki, mikä on toisenlaisen hengen luomaa. Ø

DE: Das ist ursprüngliche Kunst, die im Empfinden eines ganzen Volkes wurzelt, innerlich notwendige Äußerung starken dichterlichen und musikalischen Geistes. Scheiden wir scharf davon, was anderen Geistes ist, nennen wir ohne Scheu beim rechten Namen, was sich als Scheinkunst jahrelang aufdringlich breitmacht hat, und heißen wir jeden willkommen, sei er Deutscher, Nord- oder Südländer, der wie Sibelius aus dem Borne einer reichen Phantasie – wie außerordentlich mannigfaltig sind die Gaben seiner Kunst! – den kristallhellen, durch keine Sorte Schlamm getrübten Labetrunk echter Kunst schöpft!

28 Göhler, “Orchesterkompositionen,” 269; EN: This is original art, rooted in the emotions of an entire people, necessary inner expression of a strong poetic and musical spirit. Let us separate from it that which belongs to a different spirit, let us call the invasive spreading of spurious art, which has continued for many years, without hesitation by its proper name and let us welcome anyone, whether they be a German, a northerner or a southerner, who, like Sibelius, out of the well of abundant fancy – how exceptionally varied are the bestowals of his art! – draws the refreshing crystalline cup of real art, un tarnished by any mud!
The omission of the latter part of the final grandiloquent sentence from the translation is a telling example of the power of modification in shaping an entire piece of text. Göhler ends his article with a call for action (“nennen wir ohne Scheu beim rechten Namen, was sich als Scheinkunst jahr- lang aufdringlich breitmacht hat”) and a universal appeal for expressions of pure art (“heissen wir jeden willkommen […] der […] den […] Labetrunk echter Kunst schöpft”) which are left out of the Finnish translation. There is no compelling reason for the omission but, as before, with it the point of view of the article moves further away from Göhler’s original intent. What is left differs from the original but is directly relevant for the readers of the translation as the penultimate sentence relates the music of Sibelius to the emotions of the nation. The final truncated sentence also acquires a somewhat different meaning in comparison to the original. In the latter part of the last sentence of Göhler’s original text, Sibelius’s music and its originality are considered in the context of the prevailing Strauß fad, whereas the Finnish translation ends the article on a statement that seems to both highlight and promote the national quality of Sibelius’s music.

In terms of imagology, Göhler’s original article can be predominantly understood as an image of the Other, although Göhler also more than once provides his German readers with a mirror for self-reflection, as demonstrated above. Göhler emphasizes Finnish exoticism through statements such as “Sibelius is naturally entirely understandable only by Finns” or “How time and nature have affected this people, how they have awaken its inner life is never entirely understandable to a foreigner.” Göhler’s Finland is austere, cold and colourless but also original. Sibelius’s music is seen by Göhler as a reflection of the Finnish people and nature, and it becomes a means of approaching the Other.

For the Finns reading the translation, however, the text will necessarily have had a different meaning. The text provides the Finnish audience with a self-image that has been projected to them from the outside. Moreover, it presents the readers with an opportunity to consider the position of their nation in a wider international context. Göhler’s article becomes a space for negotiating the image the Finns have of themselves, on the one hand, and how Finland is perceived internationally, on the other. For the Finnish reader, the text is a familiar double image: the question whether Finland should have been promoted as an internationally modern Western

29 Göhler, 162, 163.
30 Göhler, 162–63.
nation or as a distinctly Finnish one was repeated throughout the early decades of independence. The fact that Göhler wrote about Sibelius as someone whose example Germans could and should follow can be read as indicative of Finland’s belonging to – or at least acceptance into – a Western cultural sphere. Yet at the same time, Göhler’s Finland is exoticised and portrayed as different and distinct, which fosters a sense of detachment.

According to Leerssen, researching national images is in fact an exercise in examining both their international and domestic manifestations and thus considering cross-national relations instead of national identities. This is indeed apparent in how the idea of Finnishness negotiates its place in the domestic and international arena not only in the article but also at the level of the entire volume of the Annals. As mentioned, the volume was published in honour of Sibelius’s 60th birthday. To mark the occasion, Göhler’s article is first preceded by congratulatory messages sent to Sibelius from abroad and translated into Finnish and then followed by a selection of translated newspaper clippings discussing the composer from the Nordic countries, Great Britain and the United States. Interestingly, no Finnish salutations or news items are included. In other words, the part of the volume that celebrates Sibelius consists in its entirety of foreign notes and impressions of Finland’s foremost cultural ambassador. Together with the medium of the *Annals of the Kalevala Society*, a prime example of a promoter of Finnish cultural heritage, the messages and article form an interesting dialogue between conveying an air of internationality and being deeply rooted in the Finnish cultural soil. While the editor of the *Annals* provided several reasons for including Göhler’s article in the publication, imagological considerations may suggest yet another possible motivation for the translation of the text. The answer may be found in the article’s capacity to construct images at a time when the nation is in a state of self-realisation: just as the sixth volume of the *Annals* as a whole, the article, too, validates both the international and the Finnish dimension of Sibelius’s image and its Finnishness. It both communicates an admiration of the uniqueness of Finnishness and, at the same time, welcomes it to join the broader European, Western cultural heritage.

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31 Melgin, *Propaganda*, 34.
33 *Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja* 6, 8–12, 27–40.
In this chapter, Göhler’s originally German essay and its Finnish translation were examined with the aim of revealing what changed or was changed when the text was transferred from one country and context to another with nearly twenty years between the publications. The motivations for the creation of both the original text and the translation were compared, and the alterations made to the translation were interpreted in light of the differing objectives of the texts. Considering the texts as instances of image construction both in Germany and in Finland provided a point of view for investigating how a national agendum might have affected the choices made in the creation of the translation.

The objective of the present investigation was not so much to chart the extent of manipulation in the translation as to consider the means and interpretative possibilities of an imagological approach. The analysis demonstrated that the omissions the translator had made had shifted the focus of the article. Although the omitted passages formed but a small portion of the overall text, their omission strengthened the translation as an auto-image for the Finns and diminished the contextually bound identity of the original. The change in time as well as place, that is, the transfer from the cultural discussions of Germany in 1908 to the anniversary celebrations of Sibelius in Finland in 1926, were seen as having clearly influenced the choices made in the translation.

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Contributors

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About the contributors

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Index

Abu-l-Fazl 289
Adisa, Opal Palmer 65, 71–73, 76, 80
Alonso Alonso, María J. 70
Anderson, Benedict 135
Anderst, Leah 249
Anzaldúa, Gloria 50
Appiah, Kwame Anthony 50
Atkinson, Kate 15, 267–277
Bābur, Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad 15, 279–281, 283–286, 295, 296
Barát, Erzsébet 14
Bauman, Zygmunt 50
Bax, Arnold 13, 109–126
Bax, Clifford 120
Beckett, Samuel 207
Beethoven, Ludwig 309
Beike, Denise R. 254, 257
Beiranvand, Amin 12
Bennett, Louise 76
Bento, Dinho 163
Bergson, Henri 23, 24, 30, 31, 36, 40, 273
Berhe, Adonay 194, 196
Berlant, Lauren 67
Bethel, Marion 72
Bhabha, Homi 49, 50, 58, 296
Bibi, Chand 287
Billig, Michael 236
Blake, Andrew 124, 126
Blasing, Mutlu Konuk 181
Bonesana di Beccaria, Cesare 92
Brambilla, Chiara 47, 49, 59
Brand, Dionne 76
Braun, Virginia 217
Breeze, Jean Binta 70
Brodber, Erna 65, 78
Bromley, Roger 50
Bruckner, Josef Anton 309
Butler, Jon 136
Butler, Judith 120
Casey, Edward 32, 39, 40, 42
Cavafy, Constantine P. 93, 105
Chandis 74
Chevannes, Barry 78
Chouliaraki, Lilie 233
Clarke, Victoria 217
Coombe, Thomas 137
Cronin, Michael 193, 195
Cronin, Travis S. 254, 257
Crombie, A. 259
Crome, Tim 23, 24
Cronin, Michael 193, 195
Dalrymple, William 296
Dant, Tim 25
Danticat, Edwidge 65, 71
Davies, Carole Boyce 70, 71
Davison, Ian 254, 255, 257
de Barra, Séamas 125
de Certeau, Michel 24
de Valera, Éamon 124

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Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>deCaires Narain, Denise</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deleuze, Gilles</td>
<td>24, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickins, Marissa</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickinson, Emily</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dion, Celine</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dittmann-Kohli, Freya</td>
<td>253, 259, 262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donnell, Alison</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas, Mary</td>
<td>268-271, 276, 277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>edan, teenah</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edensor, Tim</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ehteshami, Saman</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Einstein, Albert</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eldridge, Patrick</td>
<td>252, 253, 257, 262, 264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth I</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth II</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmet, Robert</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Englund, Lena</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epstein, Andrew</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva-Wood, Amy L.</td>
<td>185, 186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farjeon, Eleanor</td>
<td>119, 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Featherstone, Simon</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeney, Aidan</td>
<td>254, 255, 257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felski, Rita</td>
<td>64, 68, 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finch, Jason</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fischer, Eileen</td>
<td>213-215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitch, Ralph</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florio, Emma</td>
<td>137-140, 144, 145, 148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flynn, Peter</td>
<td>302, 303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foxx, Russ</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser, Nancy</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganjavi, Nizami</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>García Rivera, Sandra</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gellner, Ernest</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George VI, King</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghasemi, Mehdi</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilmore, Leigh</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilroy, Paul</td>
<td>50, 52, 57, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glave, Thomas</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glicksohn, Joseph</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Göhler, Georg</td>
<td>15, 301, 305-312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonne, Maud</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gooch, Alex</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodblatt, Chanita</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodison, Lorna</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gowariker, Ashutosh</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham, Ashley</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graves, Robert</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregg, Melissa</td>
<td>173, 183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grundy-Warr, Carl</td>
<td>48, 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guattari, Felix</td>
<td>24, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hansen, Ira</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harding, Sandra</td>
<td>235, 237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardy, Thomas</td>
<td>12, 21-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry, Prince, Duke of Sussex</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidegger, Martin</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heraclitus</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highmore, Ben</td>
<td>184, 185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoene, Christin</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoff, Ann</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holdsworth, Clare</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holliday, Tess</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital, Janette Turner</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard, W. Scott</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson, William Elliot</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutcheon, Linda</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingold, Tim</td>
<td>23, 30, 32, 33, 36, 42, 269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivey, Gavin</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javangwe, Tasiyana</td>
<td>249, 258, 261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Anthony</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Jacqueline</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jolly, Rosemary Jane</td>
<td>96, 103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph, John E.</td>
<td>133, 134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabat-Zinn, Jon</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalan, Khwaja</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keats, John</td>
<td>113, 115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keppel, George Thomas</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kersh, Rogan</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollock, Sidney</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooley, Colin</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pratchett, Terry</td>
<td>14, 191, 192, 201–203, 206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prensky, Marc</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propp, Vladimir</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puccini, Giacomo</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajaram, P. K.</td>
<td>48, 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rastas, Johanna</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rautaoja, Turo</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravel, Maurice</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinhardt, Django</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson, Michael</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritzer, George</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson, Susan</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robeson, Paul</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson, Colin</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocamora, Agnés</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubinfine, David</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runia, Eelco</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sajoya</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuels, Robert</td>
<td>158, 161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sastre, Alexandra</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saukkonen, Pasi</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savelle, Max</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaraboto, Daiane</td>
<td>213–215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarry, Elaine</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmidt, Kerstin</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schopenhauer, Arthur</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Helen</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seamon, David</td>
<td>23, 30, 32, 37, 38, 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky</td>
<td>68, 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seigworth, Gregory J.</td>
<td>173, 183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexton, Anne</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shah, Bahadur</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare, William</td>
<td>31, 117, 165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheller, Mimi</td>
<td>23, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shore, Daniel</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibelius, Jean</td>
<td>15, 110, 126, 301–312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh, Balveer Singh</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siltanen, Elina</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siriano, Christian</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sloan, De Vilo</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Craig</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Faith</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Obediah Michael</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spence, Deb</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springer, Eintou Pearl</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strauss, Johann</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strauß, Johann</td>
<td>306, 308, 310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stravinsky, Igor</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Šuruppag</td>
<td>10, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tafari–Ama, Imani M.</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, Alan</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor–Holmes, Omi J. Maya</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thackston, Wheeler M.</td>
<td>282, 292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas, Edward</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrift, Nigel</td>
<td>24, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timmer, Erika</td>
<td>253, 259, 262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timur</td>
<td>280–282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toews, Brian G.</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tringham, Damon</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsur, Reuven</td>
<td>177, 178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuan, Yi-Fu</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulliyat, Gisela</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upstone, Sara</td>
<td>29, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urry, John</td>
<td>23–25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valovirta, Elina</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>van den Akker, Robin</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>van Doorslaer, Luc</td>
<td>302, 303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VanZanten Gallagher,</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verdi, Giuseppe</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermeulen, Timotheus</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>von Hofmannsthal, Hugo</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagner, Richard</td>
<td>121, 307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walpert, Bryan</td>
<td>175, 179, 183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Index

Wang, Sophia 174, 183
Watkins, Susan 249
Watson–Wentworth, Charles 133, 140, 141
Weed, Elizabeth 81, 82
Weir–Soley, Donna 65, 71–73, 76, 80
Wenzel, Jennifer 102–104
Westerhof, Gerben J. 253, 259, 262
White, Gillian 172, 179–181
White, Harry 123
Whitman, Walt 178
Wilentz, Gay 64
Wisdom, Frank 255

Wojcik, Bartosz 70
Wylie, John 22
Yeats, W. B. 112, 113, 115, 118–120, 126
Yeats, William Butler 109, 111
Yeshua–Katz, Daphna 218
Zafar II, Bahadur Shah 296
Zi-ud-sura 10
Ziegler, Alexander 138–141, 143, 144, 146, 147
Æ (Russell, George) 110, 113, 114

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