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**COMMUNITIES OF FLOW:**
**THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE EPIC REMEDIATED IN DIGITAL GAMES**

Diachronically, the epic transaction is the single, most crucial element that defines the genre. Whether we refer to ancient epics belonging to the Middle East and Asia, mediaeval tales of the European courtly tradition, or African folklore that continues to be productive to this day, the negotiation and transmission of meaning is intrinsic to this literary and anthropological category. Despite great variation in terms of size, form, and performance from one culture to another, the fact that each of these works were made for an audience, while reflecting another, is indisputable. Social configurations are defined within the epic tradition by means of their myths of origins, rites of initiation, beliefs regarding certain aspects of life, value scales, superstitions, but also common, every day interactions between individuals. In addition, the context of reception is crucial to defining what the epic is and is not. Using reception theory, Adeline Johns-Putra reconciles two seemingly disparate view of genre as contract and as process – a theory of what the text is, on the one hand, and the accumulation/shedding of assumptions surrounding the epic by critics, authors, and audiences, on the other (2006: 4-6) – by hypothesizing that the contract itself is also developing, albeit at a slower rate and with significantly greater difficulty than individual readings.

Recent research on the subject matter of the epic has already acknowledged the transmedial nature of the genre, Johns-Putra making the point in her concluding chapters that the principal mode of epic transmission at the turn of the 21st century was the epic film. This is obviously mirroring narratology's shift in the 1990s and early 2000s towards a multiplicity of narrative models, encompassing a wide range of theories and disciplines that seek to scrutinize discourse in general, not just media-specific productions (Fludernik 2005: 37). In terms of the epic, we needn't restrict ourselves to cinematography. Luke Arnott, for one, proposed that popular epics are now "predominantly linked with new media" (2016: 2) and that, just as what "once meant a certain type of epic oral poem, was later expanded to mean narrative in the epic mode" can now be "re-embedded in other linguistic forms, and even other media (comic books, films, video games, etc.)" (2016: 18). As such, this paper examines how video games created in the epic mode perceived and re-mediated the social functions of the epic in

order to better engage with their audiences. Exemplifying some of these elements with the help of Blizzard Entertainment's World of Warcraft, the kernel hypothesis is that both the epic and our understanding of it are being altered by the transformations, adaptations, and developments now manifest in videogames that seek to be a part of this mode.

Currently, the most appropriate perspective for discussing video games in narratological terms is that of interactive digital narratives (IDN). Although reception theory has already re-evaluated the relationship between reader, author, and work, IDN accurately encompasses the way in which "audiences take on an active role and the narratives become malleable" (Koenitz 2015: 91) within digital games. If the cognitivist strain of transmediality confirmed "the spreading of narrative content across multiple media platforms" (Ryan 2014: 30) including that of computer games, it follows that the typologies of these stories are also translated, rendering the former literary genres themselves transmedial. The features of interactive narratives that interest us for the purposes of this investigation are its embeddedness, emergence and enactedness. The latter refers to the possibilities of acting out "specific roles within an existing narrative universe", while the first indicates the degree in which certain "spatially distributed narrative-infused encounters" (Koenitz 2015: 95) construct meaning. Emergence is related to the appearance of unstructured, personal narratives engendered by the game system, whose idiosyncrasies were not directly predicted by the developers themselves. In an epic where the audience is no longer exposed to a closed, clearly defined artefact, but rather becomes part of its performance, the work makes it possible for the reader to actively engage with the community that is constructed and precipitated by it. The dimension of enactedness is the means through which the viewer can take up the role of a protagonist and engage with the culture they are exposed to, rather than imagine this interplay. Every completed quest, defeated monster or character met (be them NPCs or other players) articulates the embedded narrative plot of each individual walkthrough. For emergence to take place, a degree of personal innovation and creativity is necessary so that every character and their story does not follow a pattern that is pre-determined by the game. However, emergence is also possible at the level of game design, algorithm permitting.

A distinguishing aspect of in-game interaction is that certain video games, commonly MMORPGs, offer players the possibility to constitute electronic tribes, usually under the distinction of "guilds." The latter "at once transcend and encompass biology, spatial distribution, and all the singularities of the traditional concept of tribe, without losing the associational specificity and other socio-interactional quiddities of conventional tribe formations" (Adams and Smith 2008: 15). Through a common culture,

a linguistic affinity, or a form of government under a specific structure, in-game tribes are made up of those with a common set of values and beliefs. The multitude of social interactions that occur within guilds, "asking questions, posing problems, and providing solutions and answers," (Adams and Smith 2008: 16) have been grouped as a behavioural pattern under the term "storytelling," a practice that defines a tribe's core.

When peoples' stories overlap, the situatedness of each playthrough is enhanced by the knowledge that another consciousness may intersect or participate to it, which effectively makes up what Gordon Calleja defines as shared involvement (2007: 87). If a player's actions can be witnessed and evaluated by others, then the experience of play benefits from an inherent element of performance – the more idiosyncratic an action, the more likely it is to be registered by other players. Although skill and proficiency are obviously some of the easiest to remark features, interactional patterns, rituals and values can be equally appreciated by others. Nick Yee, the researcher responsible for the largest database of statistics on MMORPG players, suggested that the desire to socialize is one of the fundamental reasons why people play (along with achievement and immersion), contrary to folk belief that individuals actually seek to avoid interactions with others (2014: 29). The main patterns of in-game social interaction are chatting for the sake of conversation, making an effort to build a friendship, engaging in superstitions related to the game world and, most importantly from a statistical and emotional viewpoint, teamwork (2014: 31-33).

Predictably, since most titles belonging to the genre do not freely permit players to modify their in-game names, managing one's reputation is an instrumental process to making others perceive oneself as a desirable partner for play. "On a group level, reputation is a key component of the creation of social hierarchies" (Lukacs 2014: 412), an idea which is also emphasized by Nick Yee, Rachel Kowert and Gordon Calleja. Thus, the attributes of a player's identity within the framework of the digital epic, their player character and how good they are at their role are greatly influential variables in terms of the social interconnectedness they can experience in a particular walkthrough. As Lukacs states out in quoting Taylor, both individual and organizational "(guild) success is predicated upon reputation and status management, and the development of a sense of trust and responsibility" (2014: 412). In her analysis of non-digital role-playing games, Sarah Lynne Bowman provides a systematic scrutiny of inter-personal and intra-personal interaction evoked by the experience of play, whereby "role-players temporarily identify with a character whose personality traits and choices often differ from their own. (…) Regardless of the level of divergence between the relative identities of player and character, the process forces players to adopt a theory of mind, to think 'as if' they were someone else in a unique set of circumstances" (2010: 57-58). This is all the more authentic

for actual participation in the digital game world, as the phenomena of immersion and incorporation make it easier to behave in character.

The best way to illustrate the extent to which the social functions of the epic are similar to past traditions, but also heightened and enhanced by the technological possibilities of digital media is to show how they emerge within video games. For ease of use, the now legendary franchise of Blizzard Entertainment's World of Warcraft (2004 – present) will serve as an example. To begin with, the participatory dimension of WoW, how users actively shape the game itself, but also the community of players through their media content, group initiatives, opinions, add-ons or guilds, is a phenomenon worthy of study.

Indeed, it is particularly noteworthy how the artefact itself has changed as a result of input from its readers. By means of official forum, intended by the developers as a direct means of communication with their players, but also other media that facilitate social interaction, such as guild webpages, YouTube videos, Facebook or Twitch, information becomes outstandingly accessible to all individuals who play(ed) the game. Although the number of players has fluctuated greatly over the years – from 5 million in 2006 to over 12 million at the end of 2010 and back to around 5.5 million in 2015 (Vas 2015: 3) – their voice and input often translated into meaningful changes to the game or the platform itself. One of the most iconic such contributions is the 'Leeroy Jenkins' viral phenomenon, which followed a video of a raid group planning their encounter with a raid boss, dating back to 2005. The hilarious moment became so appreciated by the community and developers alike that the game introduced an achievement and title for all characters (obtained by doing what Ben Schulz did as Leroy in his video), as well as designed a Hearthstone card with his name.

Another similar instance is the 'Red Shirt Guy' incident, which began with a player who, at BlizzCon 2010, pointed out to the developers during the Q&A Session that they had missed out on an important leader of the Dwarven faction, which appears in the lore of the game. As homage to the playert, the designers added an NPC to the game, a dwarf in a red shirt, precisely in the game area he was discussing at the time. The NPC closely resembles the audience member who asked the question at the convention and its name is "Wildhammer Fact Checker" (WoWPedia 2018).

In 2010, Blizzard wanted to exercise more control over their players by having their real name attached to forum posts. Needless to say that the outrage at such a change was of such magnitude that Blizzard's chief executive at the time responded in kind and gave up the idea (Arthur 2010). Furthermore, the possibility to play with people from other servers, a long-standing ambition of the entire community, was gradually introduced. Similarly, the player base brought thousands of contributions to balancing the game itself

by providing accounts of (or exploiting) bugs and possible fixes, participating in public test realms before expansions are released or just sharing their thoughts on the experience of play as a whole. The fact that the community had a felt and distinctive impact on the game is a widely acknowledged aspect of the equation. The deceased Author of post-structuralism is revived, by video game epics, in an amalgam entity that encapsulates a conglomerate of developers, testers, managers, executives, players, and more.

The second, major way in which WoW is facilitating an epic social function for its player base is represented by the premise of a community. Although present in former examples of the epic through an assumed history of people, places, the world, and even the universe itself, video games are modifying the configuration of the genre's possible worlds and their communities by introducing the participatory aspect. Starting from an assumed, more or less canonical story of the world, developers have opened the production of the epic mode to the audience itself, through enacted, embedded, and emergent narratives. Sharing in the story of the game is arguably one of the most thorough, immersive and enjoyable aspects of gameplay in this particular instance. From cosmogony to present days, there is an entire written history of the game universe, which accounts for the clash between the two major factions (Horde and Alliance), major events that shaped the political, natural and demographic configuration of the game world, as well as the lives of the most important divinities, leaders, figures and races within books numbering hundreds or even thousands of pages, such as the World of Warcraft: Chronicle – Volume 1, the World of Warcraft: Ultimate Visual Guide and World of Warcraft: Paragons (Blizzard 2018).

Each of the 13 playable races belongs to an idiosyncratic culture, replete with a detailed system of beliefs, a separate linguistic system, complex engagement rituals and an intricate pantheon that structures their view of life and the otherworld. For example, the Draenei, whose name is translated as "the exiled ones," are a faction of the magically endowed eredar race dwelling on planet Argus. When Sargeras, an evil Titan, offered them the promise of immense power and knowledge, two of the three leaders of the race, Kil'jaeden and Archimonde, eagerly accepted and were thus corrupted by dark magic. Velen, however, did not. He manages to escape Argus with a significant fellowship on the ship called the Exodar, with the help of the Naaru, a sentient race belonging to one of the primordial energies that forged the game universe. In addition to canonical lore, fans have also attempted to fill the gaps and blanks through speculation, as illustrated by the Reddit page dedicated to the lore of the game (Reddit 2016).

Despite numerous tomes recollecting the entire history of the world of Azeroth, the player can experience embeddedness and enactedness just by playing the game, reading the information provided by it, and affording their characters a personalized

background in relation to other players, NPCs, or the virtual game world as a whole. In online games, role-play tends to have two different meanings, so that there are only a handful of servers entirely dedicated to this aspect within WoW. Of course, anyone, at any point can engage in such an act, but outside of these servers, the norm is given by a behaviour that is somewhat between real-life identity and in-game character.

Through exploration, spatial configurations frequently reiterate the stories of the world, so that, during the Cataclysm expansion, users entering the Alliance city of Stormwind would now see large parts of it devastated as a result of being terrorized by the deity-like figure of Deathwing the Destroyer. In fact, the latter's arrival reconfigures the entire world in one way or another by means of the havoc he wreaks. Emergent narratives are abundant, as illustrated by the numerous player accounts of their individual storylines shared in Nick Yee's research or the anthropological investigation by Bonnie Nardi in My Life as a Night Elf Priest. Emergent play at the level of game design is also intimately linked to the history of WoW. Illustrative examples are the Corrupted Blood debuff that escaped from the dungeon of Zul'Farrak into the open world, the fiasco that was brought about by the opening of the Gates of Ahn'Qiraj, the first and last ever simultaneous real-time event organized by Blizzard in-game (Kohler 2010), or the Saronite Bombs incident leading to the first 25-man Lich King kill (Waxpaper 2010). What this means for the epic genre is that the individual is now able to participate to the story and the universe wherein it takes place. They can bring their contribution to it, critically challenge its basic assumptions, alter the experience for everyone else, and actively develop their inner selves by means of the interaction with elements of world, as well as other players. This mosaic of exchanges between audience and developers has not only re-shaped the way in which we understand the reader-author relationship, but also re-defined the genre, so that the posthuman story of contemporary times is an essentially participatory and transmedial epic.

Two other compelling social aspects of WoW that influence how we read and understand the epic genre are the notions of social reputation and theory of other minds. Every serious electronic tribe, or guild, requires players to submit an application, which can be quite lengthy, depending on the requirements of the members and its tradition, wherein they are evaluated based on a number of factors, including the role they play and the details they chose to share about themselves. The level of skill and personality that each player can potentially bring to a group seem to be the two most important features that determine their social reputation. Add-ons can store a player's experience during difficult encounters, a performance which can serve as testament of their knowledge, proficiency and approach to the role they play. It is not uncommon for dedicated players to examine others' performances in order to improve their own.

Another common phenomenon is related to making alternative characters ("alts," as opposite to the one they are applying with, "primary") in order to better cater for the guild's needs at a given moment.

Alternatively, there are social guilds whose main purpose is in-game interaction. Generally, they do not require individuals to submit an application, while their rules, if any, tend to be scarce and flexible. Although less scrutinized and more open, such groups of people have a habit of exhibiting a lower degree of in-game organization, capacity to work together and, therefore, are less able to explore the more challenging aspects of end-game content. Most notably in WoW, the content that becomes available once a character reaches the maximum level is tiered in multiple layers of difficulty, which offer progressively better rewards as they are completed. Whether role-play, PvP (player vs. player) or PvE (player vs. environment), another common practice is to submit candidates to an interview or a trial run, to get a sample of how and whether they fit in the group. Despite the fact that it is not possible to rate others' characters, a player's achievements, game goals with different levels of difficulty, and the timeframe when they were attained will also give others a good sense of an individual's ability. Already aware of this aspect, players must self-assess how they will be perceived when applying for a guild, hypothesizing on what is likely to convince a group of people of their potential, short of an actual experience of play. Thus, we observe epic productions wherein the individual reader has the possibility to witness themselves from the perspective of others, by gauging a group or a community's reactions to their own actions, as well as through theories of other minds. On its own, this process renders the epic mode more relevant for individual development and self-becoming.

Given these dimensions of social reputation, the degree of customization possibilities intrinsic to the game's design, as well as the inherently shared culture that the artefact itself registers, the epic of posthumanism is just as much a story of notable, real-life players and their hard-earned achievements, in-game and outside of it, as it is an account of fictional characters and events. The syncretism of designed experience and community feedback gives rise to a palimpsest of developer intentions imbricated by the practices of open play. The possibilities of interactive digital narratives have commendably transformed the genre of the epic, rendering the work itself an authentic expression of group collaboration among players and producers, so that it is no longer possible to outline a reader-author relationship. Nonetheless, this new paradigm of transmedial epic production allows us to construct a more accurate timeline of technological change, one that is paralleled by evolving social movements in what can be more faithful representation of the current zeitgeist than would be possible in a written, fixed example of epic.

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# THE EMERGENCE OF MEANING: STORYTELLING AND AGENCY IN DIGITAL GAMES

In his introduction to the first issue of *Game Studies*, Espen Aarseth, its editor-in-chief, proclaimed the year 2001 to be the Year One of computer game studies (2001: 2). Of the six other articles published in the same issue, four discussed the alleged inability of the new media to tell stories. Markku Eskelinen, for instance, opened his essay by sarcastically stating that "if I throw a ball at you I don't expect you to drop it and wait until it starts telling stories" (2001: 1). At best, it was concluded that if and when a video game did tell a story, the latter was secondary and non-essential (Ryan 2001: 31). While, over the course of the next decade, game studies followed mainly in Aarseth's steps, that is, with a pronounced focus on ludology and often overlooking the narrative component of digital games, the industry itself evolved in a different direction, represented by numerous prominent titles with powerful storytelling backgrounds. Indeed, as Jonathan Ostenson put it in an article on the potential use of the new media in the English classroom, "video games have come a long way from the days of *Pong* and *Pac-Man*, and not just in terms of graphical complexity. [They] have come to rely more and more on the elements of fiction in their design, and they represent unexplored territory in studying the nature and impact of narrative" (2013: 71). The present paper is part of a larger project focused on reaffirming the role of storytelling in digital games. Its chief aim is to demonstrate the essential nature of storytelling in the creation and enhancement of interaction and, more specifically, of player agency, two components of the new media that are considered to be defining for the latter. To illustrate my point, in the second part of this paper I will refer primarily to CD Projekt RED's *The Witcher III: Wild Hunt* (2015), a title that earned its widespread notoriety precisely by means of a powerful story.

In 1997, when Janet Murray published her seminal *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, she defined the new medium of video games in terms of two main characteristics, immersion and interactivity (1997: 71). Furthermore, she described the latter as resulting from the fact that video games were procedural, embodying "complex, contingent behaviours" (1997: 72), and participatory, or responsive to the user's input (1997: 74). In 2004, James Newman clarified the concept of interactivity, which he defined in the following manner:

> [I]t is this facility of the player through some manipulation exacted during their performance of play, such as the imposition or implementation of a rule, for example, to affect a transformation on the game or 'text' that defines the interactivity of forms such as the videogame. (2004: 26)

In other words, the notion of interactivity was applied to digital games in order to refer to the program's ability to respond to player input and the player's ability to generate significant change in the program as a result. While the precise definition of the term was contested by scholars following Murray or Newman, the idea that computer games were essentially interactive remained central to their study. Lori Landay, for instance, explains interactivity in the new media as "communication between a human and a computer," where the user controls the computer in order to do something meaningful and the system changes in response, thereby creating a "loop" of exchanged information (2014: 173). She argues that the concept has been, at times, "misused," and that its definition is broadly contested (2014: 174), but that in spite of this, it may be the "element of video games that best distinguishes them from other media" (2014: 181). Similarly, Chris Crawford supports that "the only factor that is truly new and revolutionary about the computer as a medium is interactivity." In the future, he claims, the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st will not be referred to as the "Computer Revolution," but rather as the "Interactivity Revolution" (2003: 262). A likeminded Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern contended that "the experience of manipulating elements within a responsive, rule-driven world, is still the raison d'être of games," while proposing interactivity as "the primary phenomenological feature" to be used in distinguishing the new media (2005: 643). At the same time, Mark J. P. Wolf stated that not only is interactivity a defining feature of digital games, but it is also the "more appropriate way of examining and defining video game genres" (2001: 114). In his address to game developers, game critic Orson Scott Card emphasized an analogous idea: "[r]emember, gamewrights, the power and beauty of the art of gamemaking is that you and the player collaborate to create the final story. Every freedom that you can give to the player is an artistic victory" (cited in Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. 2008: 100). In the case of several of the above assumptions and others, interactivity is defined primarily by means of player agency. For example, when Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman state that the "depth and quality of interaction" depends on the manner in which the system responds to player choice (2003: 61), they indirectly refer to the player's capacity to make a difference in the game world.

Agency, then, which Janet Murray initially defined as "the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices" (1997: 126), is intimately connected with the interactive quality of digital games. According to Sebastian

Domsch, a system that permits player agency is necessarily nodal. More specifically, it is a system featuring multiple nodes or situations that allow for more than one continuation (2015: 7). Ideally, for the player to experience a maximal sense of agency, the system should allow for each player's input to be considered. However, this would lead to an infinite number of possible outcomes, which, at least at present, cannot be programmed into a digital game or any other computerized system, for that matter. As such, the aim is rather to "prune" away "dramatic options," as Chris Crawford refers to them, and to reduce possibilities to a manageable number. This must be achieved not so much by arbitrarily choosing one option over another, but by devising a set of laws which the player can assimilate and which "naturally and automatically constrains [their] options without appearing intrusive or overbearing" (2003: 263-4). In other words, the game designer must carefully craft "every single-player action in a game in order to provide the illusion of choice" (Kwan 2016: 1). Thus, while unfettered player agency remains a Holy Grail of game design, out of reach as of yet, a form of "bounded agency," whereby player choice is constructed so as to "deepen each narrative arc in [a] game" (Bizzochi and Tanenbaum 2012: 401) is nevertheless a satisfactory compromise. When properly applied, bounded agency allows both for the player to feel in control of the gameplay and for the designer to tell a specific story (Kwan 2016: 197), which brings me to the main topic at hand.

Indeed, storytelling can be, and often is, employed in order to create the effect if bounded agency. If, in the absence of any narrative background, the player can choose arbitrarily each time they are provided with multiple options, stories that are optimally placed prior to a particular choice can create expectations for the player and motivate them towards one option or another (Figueiredo and Paiva 2010: 26-7). This does not only resolve the issue of arbitrariness, but it also ensures that the options programmed into each situation by the game developers are more likely to meet the player's envisioned course of action. Furthermore, by means of a fluid narrative framework, divergent narrative paths dependent on player agency, and sufficient optional narrative content, authorial agency may be transferred, at least partially, from the game designer to each player, who may experience the game in a unique, personalized way (Holmquest 2013: 44-6). One title that achieves most, if not all, of the above, and that is therefore appropriate to illustrate the present thesis is *The Witcher III: Wild Hunt*.

Published in 2015 as the final instalment in a series that spanned over nearly a decade, CD Projekt RED's *The Witcher III* is an action role-playing game wherein the player assumes the role of the familiar protagonist Geralt of Rivia, a witcher trained from early childhood, whose body was alchemically mutated in order to fight monsters in exchange for coin. Throughout the final instalment, Geralt finds himself in search for Ciri,

his protégée and the heiress of Elder blood, who has returned to the Continent after a long absence and who is being pursued by the evil elves of the Wild Hunt for her extraordinary power. In his quest, Geralt unwillingly becomes involved with the war raging across the Continent, fought between Redania and the Nilfgaardian Empire, as well as with numerous subplots dealing with the bloody consequences of the military conflict. Finally, on a more personal note, he is faced with a choice between Yennefer, his life-long love, and Triss, whom he became involved with while suffering from amnesia after an encounter with the Wild Hunt. Several other women also make the object of Geralt's romantic interests, but the main storyline does not allow for either of them to become his partner in an actual relationship.

In terms of game mechanics, as any role-playing game, *The Witcher III* features several possibilities for character customization. Although the title does not allow for the player to create a personalized avatar, Geralt's physical appearance can be minimally altered and his equipment or gear can vary depending on player preference. A levelling system whereby Geralt earns experience through defeating enemies and completing quests is implemented, while each level permits the allocation of additional ability points and ability slots. Abilities are distributed over four trees (combat, alchemy, signs, and general) and, since only a limited number of abilities can be slotted at a time, this leads players to consider a variety of "builds" or sets of abilities that synergize well together. The setting of *The Witcher III* is an unnamed continent, which can be explored freely as an open world, rather than linearly, as dictated by a predetermined storyline. The player is motivated to travel across the Continent primarily by means of quests, which can be part of the main questline or secondary, and which guide the exploration of available game content. Geralt is often required to look for clues leading up to monsters, as well as to defeat the latter in typical, more or less difficult, combat. Finally, though this is not required in order to progress through the storyline, the player can access the mini card game of Gwent by challenging non-player characters and collecting cards from various sources. It may seem tedious to list the chief game mechanics that characterize *The Witcher III*, and, to anyone with a fairly decent knowledge of the RPG genre, the mechanics themselves appear to be more or less derivative. But that is precisely the point. In other words, if the paragraph above gives *The Witcher III* the ring of a non-descript role-playing game, it is because that is exactly what the title is in absence of its rich narrative background.

What makes it unique is its dialogue and dialogue options, as well as the manner in which the storyline progresses around the player's various choices. Indeed, if most games will reveal the consequences of the player's choice immediately after the decision is made, this is not at all the case with CD Projekt RED's release. On the contrary, the

effects of most player choices are only revealed at a great distance in time. For instance, completing Ciri's questline alone requires at least fifty hours of gameplay, while the outcome of the latter is revealed only during the game's conclusion. However, this outcome is influenced by choices that the player begins to make only several hours into the game. The result is that, if the conclusion of the player's choices in an undesirable one, such as Ciri's death, for example, correcting it is not simply a matter of loading a previous saved game. As such, decisions weigh more in *The Witcher III*, and their impact upon the player has the potential to conjure powerful emotions. Player agency is manifest particularly at this level of dialogue, where Geralt is asked to decide, sometimes unwillingly, the fate of various characters of the game world. Yet what meaning would be attached to any death if the victim were a non-descript character? Differently put, if player choices took place in a vacuum of meaning, they themselves would likely be equally meaningless, and the player would decide arbitrarily. Each choice in *The Witcher III*, on the other hand, is preceded by a more or less complex story, which is why the player feels as if they are affecting change in the game world, thereby experiencing the illusion of agency or a form of bounded agency.

In this regard, there are two types of choice confronting the player of *The Witcher III*. The first comprises choices that affect a storyline, either primary or secondary. Such are, for example, the decisions put before the player during Keira Metz's questline, and particularly during the quest titled "For the Advancement of Learning." Prior to the events of *The Witcher III*, Keira Metz was the esteemed advisor of King Foltest, as well as a member of the Lodge of Sorceresses. In a turn of fate, she lost the King's trust and was forced to go into hiding due to the witch hunt underway throughout Redania, ordered by King Radovid and carried out by the Church of the Eternal Fire. Having been accustomed to luxury and power for most of her life, Keira is unable to settle for the life of a village wise-woman in Velen, where Geralt first encounters her during *The Witcher III*. She uses the witcher in order to obtain the research notes of the mage Alexander, which she intends to use in the development of a cure for the Catriona plague. She hopes to use the cure as a bargaining chip in a negotiation with Radovid, whereby she believes she can purchase her own protection in Redania. Geralt finds out as much when he confronts Keira during the final events of the questline. At this point, the player can forbid Keira to use the research notes, which ultimately leads to combat and the woman's death, or attempt to convince Keira that Radovid, often referred to as the Mad King, will show no interest in the cure and will, instead, execute her. If the player chooses the latter, Geralt will propose to Keira that she head for Kaer Morhen for sanctuary. Keira agrees, and the player is faced with yet another choice, to greet the character or to demand Alexander's notes. If Geralt takes the research notes, Keira does indeed go to Kaer Morhen and is safe

for the remainder of the game. If, on the other hand, the witcher allows Keira to leave with the notes, the latter attempts a negotiation with Radovid in spite of all warnings, and is savagely executed. The series of choices mentioned above, then, do not affect character progression or any other game mechanics for that matter. Their consequences have to do with the story of Keira Metz, and it is at the level of this story that the player can experience agency.

A second type of choice in *The Witcher III* does not affect the game world either in terms of game mechanics or story progression, but it nevertheless remains meaningful for the player and it allows the manifestation of agency. An appropriate illustration for this is the series of dialogues that Geralt entertains with the Bloody Baron in Velen, whereby Geralt hopes to learn news about Ciri and the Baron attempts to decipher the fate of his missing wife and daughter. In exchange for information, Geralt must find the Baron's family, who has allegedly disappeared overnight. As it turns out, the Baron had been physically abusing his wife and, when this caused her to lose a pregnancy, she and her daughter ran from their home. With no means to support herself or her offspring, the wife is ultimately forced to submit herself to the service of three crones, in exchange for protection, shelter, and food. The story itself is a rather shocking one, especially since the witcher, at one point, investigates the couple's bedroom and becomes aware of the violence that had taken place therein. When Geralt confronts the Baron, the latter attempts to justify his actions with his own version of the family history, which the player can choose to hear or not. The Baron recounts that while he was absent from home, fighting on the front, his wife took a lover, whom he killed in a fit of rage upon discovery. According to the Baron, this was the moment when he became addicted to alcohol and, as a result, degenerated into a violent behaviour. At this point, the dialogue options made available to the player, which range from expressing disgust at the Baron's deeds to blaming both the man and his wife, do not affect in any way the progression of the story. However, they are nevertheless meaningful for the player, who likely feels the need to position themselves in relation to such abhorrent events. As a result of these choices and the story that precedes them, the player may experience agency, even though, practically speaking, they do not affect any significant change in the game world.

Ultimately, what the examples above show is that, in the case of *The Witcher III: Wild Hunt*, player agency is most potently manifest in matters that pertain to the numerous stories emplotted by the title. On the one hand, these stories are designed and played out in such a manner so as to direct player interpretation and to limit the number of likely responses to each event. This means that, when faced with a decision, the player often feels that their reaction can be translated into the game world, and frustration is avoided at this level. On the other hand, player choice is manifest precisely in terms of

various narratives, which change according to some of their decisions. As such, the player can experience agency not only by directing the course of stories, but also by expressing their stance in relation to the latter and the characters that participate to them, effectively feeling in control even when no noteworthy transformation occurs. Certainly, *The Witcher III* is by no means an exhaustive example, but it is highly representative of the digital games that have become wildly successful over the past decade. If nothing else, it demonstrates that, at least in some cases, "video games are (partially) ontologically rooted in their fictions" (Tavinor 2014: 440), and moreover, that most, if not all, video games, regardless of genre, can employ storytelling in order to enhance player agency and overall interactivity. In other words, appropriately-designed narratives can play an essential role in emphasizing the quality of the video game medium that, many scholars agree, makes the latter unique. In light of this, the re-evaluation of storytelling and its functions in the new media appears to be long overdue.

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# THE *ANTI*TRADITIONAL REPRESENTATION OF GENDER ROLES IN *DUBLINERS* BY JAMES JOYCE

Although it is often seen by readers as James Joyce's most traditional writing, *Dubliners* is a collection of short stories displaying various aspects which undermine tradition, such as language, for instance. The main element which will be discussed in the following paper, taking into consideration the transition from the Victorian society to the modernist society in James Joyce's writing, is gender, which is also a contemporary topic, relevant for the society nowadays.

One of the main interests of this paper is to highlight the existence of the traditional Victorian gender stereotypes and how, in *Dubliners* (1914), this phenomenon begins to be questioned, challenged, and altered. Thus, the behaviours which are specific to some of the male characters become possible for several female characters as well and vice versa. In the first part of the paper, gender of the the traditional Victorian society will be analysed, while in the second part, the focus will be on how the breaking of the gender boundaries is performed in the Modernist society. The aim of this paper is to highlight that there is a modification and a subversion of traditional gender roles in several stories in James Joyce's *Dubliners* because they challenge the Victorian conception that a man and a woman ought to have their specific activities which are representative for them.

There is a modification of the Victorian gender roles, which oscillates from male to female and conversely and, hence, gender becomes just a "performance" (Butler 1988: 528). Related to this, gender is considered to be defined by society according to one's behaviour because "gender performances are governed by regulatory social conventions" (Butler 1988: 527). When referring to gender as performance, the analysis departs from the point that "gender is no way a stable identity" (Butler 1988: 519) because it is defined and "compelled by society" (Butler 1988: 520).

In order to challenge the modification of roles in some stories of James Joyce's *Dubliners*, a brief analysis on the traditional Victorian representation of gender roles is necessary. Thus, in Victorian society, "gender norms" see gender as part of a community, considered to be a "patriarchal belief system" (Hall 1996: 10). The society of this period is dominated by "male power" (Hall 1996: 3), in which "masculinity was identified […] with intellectual qualities, with originality, with power, and with truth" (Thompson 1996:

20). The feminine is usually associated with the "stereotypically female qualities such as weakness or feebleness, and lack of significant power, intellect or ideas" (Thompson 1996: 20). Women are also considered in the Victorian period as apparently "pure, domestic angels of the house" (Thompson 1996: 14), being trapped in their familiar duties and routine and, thus, being "prisoners of the house" (Ingersoll 1996: xiii). In addition to that, Mendus and Rendall (1989: 3) state that "the particular qualities attributed to masculinity were authority, rationality, force, and to femininity domesticity, innocence and weakness". Thus, gender in Victorian period was defined by a person's behaviour, according to their specific (re)actions. All the mentioned characteristics representative for each gender in Victorian mentality and society, so that femininity is encapsulated in a patriarchal society and associated with modest or negative characteristics.

Tracing the transition from the Victorian period to the beginning of the 20th century, this paper is going to demonstrate the existence of an *anti*traditional representation of the feminine and of the masculine roles in the Modernist writing of James Joyce, as it appears in his work *Dubliners*. The stories on which the analysis will focus are "Eveline", "The Boarding House", "A Little Cloud", "Clay", "A Mother" and "The Dead". The main focus will be on the manner in which the traditional roles of some of the female characters are altered and the ways in which some of the male characters begin to have different perspectives on life from those typical of Victorian society. Related to this, Galea (1996: 59) states that "at the beginning of the twentieth century, as a result of the breakdown of traditional values", there is a modification of gender roles and the characters go "across the conventional boundaries of gender" (Ingersoll 1996: xiv). Also, the "'masculine' and 'feminine' do not carry their traditional meanings" (Ingersoll 1996: 16) anymore and the fact that "liberation, movement, and activity are associated with the «masculine», while oppression, servitude, and passivity are associated with the «feminine»" (Ingersoll 1996: 15) is no longer convincing and viable for some of the characters in *Dubliners*, such as Little Chandler, Maria, Mrs. Mooney or Mrs. Kearney.

The female protagonist in the story "Eveline" represents the first signs of a sense of *anti*traditionalism. Being trapped in the prison of society, Eveline has the ambition to overcome her limits and condition. Taking into consideration the expectations of the Victorian system of beliefs, Eveline's female gender would be defined through feminine stereotypes, being weak, with "limited, domestic knowledge" (Thompson 1996: 14) and cornered by familiar duties and obligations. However, her signs of antitraditionalism depart from these traditional expectations and the character shows the ambition to overcome her domestic and traditional limits: "Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home" (Joyce 1994: 26), "She was about to explore another life with

Frank" (Joyce 1994: 28), "She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too" (Joyce 1994: 30).

There is a fluctuation of Eveline's ambition to escape to Argentina with Frank and her questionable choice at the end of the story. Anthony Burgess (1994: x) states that "the heroine of 'Eveline' longs to escape from her drab life and she has her chance", but she does not manage to do it in the end. The fluctuation at the end of the story represents the figure of an emotionless Eveline whose ardour culminates with an unexpected choice: "No! No! No! It was impossible!" (Joyce 1994: 30). The mentioned aspects represent the prototype of a slight sense of *anti*traditionalism, but ends with the "vulnerability or powerlessness within patriarchy" (Ingersoll 1996: xiv), as the stories do not highlight a full-fledged antitraditional attitude.

The story "A Little Cloud" has a similar approach as in the case of "Eveline", in the sense that one of the masculine characters, Little Chandler, aspires to freedom and to escape from his marital and domestic life, but ends up being trapped in his traditional role. In this case, there is a "gender role reversal" (Norris 2003: 64), as Little Chandler would like to follow the example of his friend, Ignatius Gallaher, who aspires to be rich, free, loved by several frivolous women, a traveller etc. He is a "[…] sensitive nature. He felt acutely the contrast between his own life and his friend's and it seems to him unjust" (Joyce 1994: 68). To be more precise, one may argue that Little Chandler's preoccupations are similar to those of a female character, like those of the protagonist in "Eveline". Earl Ingersoll (1996: xiii) states that in the case of the 20$^{th}$-century society in *Dubliners*, there are "men who are confined to the house and women who would travel", meaning that there is a reversal of gender roles and the actual gender of Little Chandler is just a performance, which does not define his identity in the society. Similarly, to Eveline, the masculine character has just a slight sense of antitraditionalism, as Little Chandler turns out to resume his traditional and household role.

The stories "Clay" and "The Dead" highlight female characters that are considered to be traditional according to their workplaces and social status, but they try to break the Victorian feminine stereotypes of being considered as the prisoners of the house. For instance, Maria in "Clay", "had to laugh and say she didn't want any ring or man either" (Joyce 1994: 88), meaning that although she is "trapped in life" (Henke 1990: 34), she still seems to be a strong feminine character. In the case of Maria, there is a challenging of traditional roles by force of circumstance. She is important, though, not only for how she creates an independent life for herself, but also for the way in which she manages to transcend religious boundaries. Moreover, Lily from "The Dead" considers "with great bitterness" (Joyce 1994: 159) that "the men that is now only all palaver and what they can get out of you" (Joyce 1994: 159), when asked by Gabriel Conroy if she

would like to get married. Despite the fact that both Maria and Lily are trapped in their traditional role, defined by their workplaces, both being maids, they still represent challenges to tradition according to their ways of thinking. These characters lead to the idea of breaking the "gender stereotypes" (Norris 2003: 233) related to marriage, family and "angelicism" (Hall 1996: 5).

When considering their female characters, the stories "The Boarding House" and "A Mother" have, as central figures, powerful women who are able to exert their control and their influence on the other characters, especially on the male ones. This aspect contradicts the traditional feminine stereotypes which state that women are weak, subordinated to the ambitious and imperative men and that they are part of a "patriarchal society, where no woman is allowed to succeed" (Ingersoll 1996: x). Thus, Mrs. Mooney from "The Boarding House" runs a profitable business, a boarding house, in order she earns a living. Starting from this, one may already infer that this famale character is indeed powerful, independent and goal-oriented: "She was a woman who was quite able to keep things to herself: a determined woman" (Joyce 1994: 51). Furthermore, Mrs. Mooney's powerful presence is also highlighted when she is called as "The Madam" by the lodgers, showing their appreciation and respect for her.

Similarly, the female character in "A Mother", Mrs. Kearney, is extremely manipulative and influential, even though she is surrounded by male characters. Related to this, we can observe that she is challenging the traditional female stereotypes. Mrs. Kearney's organizational abilities and her arguments with the other male characters reflect that she certainly is a compelling and influential woman and not a feeble one: "She forgot nothing, and, thanks to her, everything that was to be done was done" (Joyce 1994: 122). The feminine in the mentioned stories is, hence, represented by mothers who are powerful, authoritative, influential and who have the ability to break the boundaries of the conventional stereotypes regarding women as mothers in Victorian society, in which they were considered to be "women who suffered through the agonies of labor" (McKnight 1997: 1) and "miserable or missing mothers" (McKnight 1997: 23). As a result, the mothers in "The Boarding House" and "A Mother" become "female characters who are forced to travel across the conventional boundaries of gender" (Ingersoll 1996: xiv), while "male characters are confined to the house by their own timidity" (Ingersoll 1996: xiv).

Having analyzed some of the stories from *Dubliners* by James Joyce, it is evident that they represent the images of a society at the beginning of the 20th century in which the subversion of gender roles both male and female is beginning to be visible. The traditional Victorian stereotypes related to men and women are beginning to be challenged by some characters. In conclusion, the sense of antitraditionalism is

established and it challenges several characters, such as Eveline, Little Chandler, Maria, Mrs. Mooney and Mrs. Kearney. In some cases, there is a slight sense of antitraditionalism and in some cases there is a complete modification of the gender roles, which leads to the fact that "gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (Butler 1988: 527). Furthermore, Judith Butler states that "as a public action and performative act, gender is not a radical choice or project that reflects a merely individual choice, but neither is it imposed or inscribed upon the individual" (1988: 526). Consequently, some of the mentioned characters in *Dubliners* represent candidates for the subversion of the gender roles, by refusing the Victorian notion that the masculine and the feminine have their own specific and limited (re)actions. The analyzed characters ought to become powerful, ambitious, and free, as well as having different perspectives on life. They are challenged to become *anti*traditional.

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# "IRISH BY NAME AND IRISH BY NATURE:" IRISH SELF-IMAGES BETWEEN SUBVERSION AND MIMICRY

Among the most consistent and uncompromising images of hyphenated identities, we find those of the Irish nation. Their history and, implicitly, their mentality, is dominated by a sundering duality (or even multiplicity) of allegiances: subversion and incorporation can be deemed the two poles of its postcolonial dialectic. In the case of subversion, England, the oppressive matrix, is subjected to a conscious ironic parodying of its distinctive elements. In this way, by attacking the colonizer's quintessence, the Irish, as a subaltern nation, seek to undermine, override, and demote the latter, magnifying itself and reiterating its individuality in the process. Conversely, the products of the side which *incorporates* become equivocal – literally, a mixture of voices. Their language, as a consequence, becomes two-fold as well: one layer imitates colonial speech and their version of truth, while the other, underlying one, represents the genuine utterances of the colonized, as well as a disavowal of the colonial influences permeating it. It is repetition, not representation; it replicates pieces of the master's narrative, threatening the latter's authority. Nevertheless, there are instances in which the line between subversion and incorporation cannot be drawn; the thinking subject becomes suspended between two discursive modes, yielding a third variant of undecided partiality.

In order to discover the role each of them plays in "writing the nation," as Homi Bhabha (1994) describes the process, it is necessary that we contrast these literary signifying modes. Thus, the 14th episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, 'Oxen of the Sun', – especially the three sub-stories it encompasses – can be regarded as representative of the parodic category emerging from The Republic of Ireland – regarded as the "third world," to which Jameson ascribes "national allegory" as a rhetorical constant. As far as Northern Ireland's response to the culture of the colonizer is concerned, the practice of mimicry is illustrated by Seamus Heaney's "Ocean's Love to Ireland" (1974). Lastly, another plane of the Northern experience produces a hybrid voice in Paul Muldoon's "The Boudary Commission" (1980), which blends mimicry and subversion, defying our previously-established rhetorical paradigms.

Firstly, an overarching view of the episode in *Ulysses* shows the superficial narrative which engages the characters, linking the separate underlying events. Thus, we have Mrs. Purefoy's lengthy delivery in a maternity hospital, punctuated by the

irreverent remarks of a group of medical students, accompanied by Stephen Daedalus and other acquaintances. Leopold Bloom visits and sympathizes with the mother, continuing to serve as a caretaker to Stephen throughout the episode.

The signifying act, however, occurs beyond the main frame. 'Oxen of the Sun' comprises a collection of literary styles prevalent in England, ranging from Latin incantations to Anglo-Saxon alliterative prose to Swift, Dickens, and Carlyle. Evolving through historical ages in a rhythm similar to the development of a foetus, this process metaphorically represents the birth of language, saturating the entire structure – not only the story – with the theme of fertility. Therefore, this is not the common exaltation of child-birth, but an inverted, parodied, defiled delivery, as is that of Mrs. Purefoy – turned into laughingstock by the uncouth men in the other room. Similarly, the literary heritage of the English is distorted and profaned on multiple levels through Joyce's appropriation. One of the most significant and easily observed is the incongruous employment of prestigious varieties in the exposition of mundane events: "And there came against the place as they stood a young learning knight yclept Dixon. And the traveller Leopold was couth to him sithen it had happed that they had had ado each with other in the house of misericord…" (Joyce 2008: 369). Here, the encounter between Dixon, the medical student, and Bloom is described in an imitation of the medieval romance 14th century style of *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (Gifford 2008: 411). The former is thus portrayed as a knight and the latter as a traveller, while the hospital room where the boisterous gathering takes place is reinterpreted as a "castle" for merry-making. Not only is the sacramentality of both literary style and birth mocked, but, in issuing this derisive procession, the author emulates the boisterous group within the story.

The first of the significant sub-stories describes Stephen's satirical communion. During it, he appoints himself priest, replacing sacramental wine with the alcohol at his disposal, gesturing and reciting: "…he gave them for a pledge the vicar of Christ which also as he said is vicar of Bray. Now drink we, quod he, of this mazer and quaff ye this mead which is not indeed parcel of my body but my soul's bodiment. (…) This is the postcreation" (Joyce 2008: 373). This last sentence contains the leitmotif of Stephen's transcendental creative act. He is the "maker", the prime mover who participates in the eternalization of creation by replicating the sacrament and transgressing its limits. His act of procreation surpasses in significance the embodiment of the divine word through birth: "In woman's womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away" (Joyce 2008: 373). Interpreting this, McCarthy argues that "Stephen, who is both priest and victim is distributing his 'soul's bodiment' to the people just as an artist gives of his soul each time he releases to the public a new creation" (1969: 134). The engendering of art is, therefore, on par with giving

birth, only the first overcomes worldly limitations; it is *post*creation. The ritual performed by Stephen, as artist and priest, at a microcosmic level, is echoed macrocosmically by Joyce, whose collection of the rudiments of English culture – made into spare pieces and subjected to his treatment – is greater and more enduring than the sum of its parts. If Bhabha's concept of "mimicry" would have us believe that the colonized reduces "the high ideals of the colonial imagination" to "its low mimetic literary effects" in an ironic attempt to reconcile the ambivalence brought about by the culture of the colonizer (Bhabha 1994: 122), it is not so with 'Oxen of the Sun'. This chapter does not represent mere imitation, or an undecided hybrid, but a voluntary, self-aware and -reflexive reassembling of English material into a self-standing satirical work of art.

The second telling segment of the episode occurs during a discussion about a common disease affecting cattle. A series of puns ("take the bull by the horns") and allusions to colonial activity ("Doctor Rinderpest, the bestquoted cowcatcher in all Muscovy", where Muscovy is one of the first trading companies established by the kingdom) turn England's emblem (John Bull) into an extended metaphor. Through Pope Adrian (born Nicholas Breakspear) – dubbed "the bravest cattle breeder of them all", the second meaning of the word is played on: "It is that same bull that was sent to our island by farmer Nicholas". The papal bull referred to represents the concession of Ireland to Henry II, anticipating the Norman Conquest and the beginning of the country's colonization. For this reason, the document is subsequently turned into its zoomorphic double – an actual bull, wearing the burlesqued "coat of gold" symbolizing the cassock, which spoils the shamrock. However, there is also "an Irish bull in an English chinashop", portraying the people as awkward, forced to tread carefully on the territory of the ostensibly refined and superior colonizer. The alternation in the attribution of this symbol furthers the superior-subaltern dialectic, in which the nations now exchange places. These punning exchanges revolving around the "bull" convey the most overt representation of the Irish self as perceived by the people: "Irish by name and irish by nature" (Joyce 2008: 381) – not deserving of a capital letter.

Mulligan's horror story in the style of 19th century gothic fiction is the third instantiation of discursive counteraction. The character recounts before his audience how Haines appears from behind a panel, holding a phial of poison and a book of Celtic literature, and revealing himself to be the murderer of Samuel Childs. The murderer utters in torment that he is stalked by the ghost of his victim, adding significantly that "[his] hell, and Ireland's, is in this life". This is a true sample of subversive imitation of the genre, with tell-tale gothic motifs. Yet, above all, this is a projection of England's admission of guilt as envisaged by the Irish; Haines, the Englishman, is made into a mouthpiece and receptacle of the grievances of the colonized. "An Englander confesses

his imperial crimes," Kiberd states in a chapter called 'James Joyce and Mythic Realism' (2002: 353). In this function, Mulligan redefines reality according to his desire, turning his fable into a proper example of "mythic realism". Or, we might interpret it in a Freudian key and posit that this fable is the expression of his repressed desires, freed from censorship.

The entire episode downplays and mocks the self-importance of the imperial dominator. John Wilson Foster condenses in *Colonial Consequences* the reasoning behind Joyce's satirical manipulation of English heritage, adopted in response to a "subliminal sense of linguistic deprivation:"

> The Irish writer's linguistic *brio* may be a disguised double act of revenge – an attempt to enliven the foreign tongue with the energy of the native (…) and to colonize in turn, if not the English, then tracts of English literature. (Foster 1991:49)

He also comments on the "poetic licence" which endorses the Irish writer's account; since English is not *his* language, he has the liberty to depart from regulations. Regulations which, in fact, belong to the opposing classes whose victim he is (Foster 1991: 49). It is the distance offered by Joyce's "third-world" status of a Catholic writer in the Republic that enables him to belittle and defy the imposed order. Only the third story could be said to resemble mimicry in its imitation of the Gothic style. Still, as a framed narrative in the context of the over-all subversive counterargument of the episode, it is exempt from rules as well.

Examples of authentic mimicry commonly emerge from members of the Irish "second world" – the Anglo-Irish, British subjects bred in Northern Ireland as successors of the Protestant Ascendancy. It is them we would envisage as such, bearing the encroachment of the colonizer as a matter of fact, subsumed under the effigy of England. However, Heaney's employment of this device extends its usage even to the Catholic side of the Northern part. Adding an anthropomorphic filter to the brutal antagonism between England and Ireland, the poet depicts the relationship as an allegory in "Ocean's Love to Ireland." England is therefore embodied by Sir Walter Raleigh, who rapes the maid substituting Ireland. He defiles her, destroying her reputation and the possibility for international affiliation, as well as extinguishing the country's native language. Heaney employs a variety of precise allusions to the background and notoriety of the male character, including his origin ("speaking broad Devonshire"), his unremitting allegiance to Elizabeth ("his superb crest inclines to Cynthia," "the splashy spots where he would lay/ His cape before her"), and his acclamation in the homeland ("In London, his name/ Will rise on water"). In turn, Ireland is shown as helpless, humbled, and

subdued by the attacker. Tarnished by this abuse, she is no longer appealing to other suitors ("Ocean has scattered her dream of fleets"). In addition to this, "the ruined maid complains in Irish," a language discounted by the conqueror, who supplants it with the "iambic drums/ of English." Finally, the woman disintegrates into mere "ringlet-breath and dew." Revisiting the original title of Raleigh's poem, "Ocean's Love to Cynthia," and reworking colonial history so as to follow the intertextuality with an exposure of the sterling courtier's immorality, Heaney participates in the mimicked counter-discourse of Ireland. He thus shifts the focus away from the grand narrative, relocating it in the midst of "the maid's" anguish. The hegemonic culture is "deauthorized," as Bhabha would term it (1994: 130).

Mimicry reaches threatening dimensions because the new text has the potential to "rehistoricize" the ruling discourse. What is more, by copying the original name, the poet engages in the practice of "re/citation," which Terdiman describes in *Discourse/Counter-discourse*. According to him, when the "ideological discourse" of the colonizer is quoted or "reframed," the "counter-discursive citation" produced menaces, like mimicry, hegemonic power. In his view, ridicule and mockery always accompany the "duplication"/ "parroting" of this discourse. When re/citing, the colonial subject distances himself from the orthodox narrative and asserts the difference in identity which is essential to his emancipation (Terdiman 1985: 209). Nevertheless, menacing though it may be, Heaney's reiteration of history makes use of assimilation, rather than subversion. The difference between second-world and third-world accounts is that only the latter truly diverges from the model. "Ocean's love to Ireland" repeats, it does not represent, because it remains ingrained in Raleigh's pattern. It makes this fact explicit by adumbrating the presence of the Other in its structure.

The third form of engagement with the English colonizer and the disruption this relation brings about in Ireland can be observed in Muldoon's "The Boundary Commission". The response to the newly-established boundary between the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland is harvested at grass-roots, at the minute level of everyday experience. Conjured from memory, as if already remote, the issue of the border is depicted as endlessly baffling and absurd: "the border ran/ Down the middle of the street,/ With the butcher and baker in different states". The two staples of the community metonymically embody the cleavage of the island, while the imaginary line sundering them highlights the impossible and tantalizing proximity between the two divisions. The "shower of rain" which "stops cleanly across Golightly's lane" shows the artificiality of the separation – since rain cannot be confined to a precise perimeter –, while its materialization into a "wall of glass" proves once again that mental constructs are only made palpable by human beings, at ground level. Finally, the person who contemplates

the fixity of the border, struck by a Godot-esque paralysis, is torn between the two sides: "He stood there, for ages,/ To wonder which side, if any, he should be on."

The last form of colonial resistance is performed with the specious neutrality and obliquity which defines Muldoon's style. A certain strain of mimicry appears as well. It is the type mentioned by Bhabha in reference to Locke's Second Treatise, where the term "slave" connotes both the "locus of a legitimate form of ownership" and "the trope for an intolerable, illegitimate exercise of power" (1994: 86). Likewise, in Muldoon's poem, the formality of the title and the unaffected use of the word "border" abide by the colonizer's system of thought. However, the quantifier "any", in "which side, if any, he should be on" betrays the dissidence and frustration of the colonized. The refusal to choose sides has thus the potential to evolve into a definite *non serviam.* By placing oneself in a position of liminality, one takes distance from either possibilities, halting the antagonism between them and stepping into momentary atemporality. There, as in a quantum state, in Bhabha's "interstice," the colonized inhabits a region of transculture where borders are abolished – the "time lag" which engenders a new "locus of inscription" (1994: 242). In doing this, the subject also utters a "contrapuntal critique" of fixity, thus negating imperial authority (1994: 164). It also destabilizes the prescribed system of signification by negating the very notion of "border," which may represent the first step towards reclaiming agency and the status of subject, instead of object.

All in all, it appears that the manifestation of postcolonial resistance in Ireland and Northern Ireland is (at least) three-fold. The approach to the colonizer and its influence varies in accordance with the allegiances and experiences of the subject which produces the discourse. On one hand, in *Ulysses*, James Joyce avails himself of his position as a "third-world" Catholic in the Republic, employing subversion, irony, pastiche and parody so as to dismantle and take possession of the colonizer's prestigious literature and symbols. A shift in rhetorical attitude appears in works produced by "second-world" inhabitants of Northern Ireland. In "Ocean's love to Ireland," Seamus Heaney reproduces the discourse of the matrix, but with an ambivalence which juxtaposes it with his nation's own version of the story. The slippage between the two contains the menacing counteraction of the colonized. Consequently, the latter is the same, yet different, at once, which epitomizes Homi Bhabha's concept of "mimicry." Paul Muldoon, still a hybridized "second-world" voice from Northern Ireland, adopts a different stance in relation to England. Better yet, he expresses the possibility of *not* choosing, of situating the colonial subject at the border between realms. It is on this threshold that, time being annulled, one may exist free of geographical and cultural membership. It is also there, and by deliberately *standing* there, that one can regain agency. This is achieved through mimicry, as well as departure from mimicry.

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# THE GROWING PARTICIPATOR APPROACH

## Introduction

Throughout history there has always been the desire or the need to learn a foreign language. The English language is considered an international language, since it is required in almost every corner of the world. The same happened with Latin five hundred years ago. The process of learning Latin was a traditional one. The students used to learn grammar rules, conjugation, translation and, afterwards, they had to write few examples (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 1-2).

This classical method of learning Latin was used until the 18th century, and by the 19th century it became the standard way of learning a new language in schools. The *Grammar-Translation Method* used at that time was focused on learning grammatical rules and applying them by translating sentences. In the same period, some language teaching specialists reformed learning methods by developing new approaches (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 3-5).

In the aftermath of modernist movements, which entailed migration and cosmopolitanism, the acquisition of a second language has become vital. Viviana Cook asserts: "monolinguals are becoming almost an endangered species" (Cook 2016: 1). In fact, multilingualism is the norm nowadays since about 60% of the population is multilingual (Richards and Rodgers 2014: 4). In order to help people of 21st century acquire a second language more effectively, many methods of teaching a foreign language have been developed, bringing changes and innovation. While before the focus was on reading comprehension, nowadays oral efficiency and accuracy are considered a priority (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 3).

The learning process of a language is not an easy one. It requires patience, perseverance, time, effort, discipline, money and sacrifice. Due to the use of an inappropriate methods of learning, many people no longer have the courage or the desire to start learning a new language. The idea of a classroom, homework and a lot of exercises is scary for many and pulls them back. But what if the learning process is not just about that? What if learning a language actually means having fun?

In order for students to consider the learning process pleasant and entertaining, it is necessary to choose the proper method. Hence, it is important for a person to know

his/her personal style or way of learning according to his/ her own personality. It is known that every person has two different sides of a brain, the left one and the right one. In the process of language acquisition, the right brain it is more used, that is why a good method of studying is absolutely necessary. Furthermore, it is important that activities will be adapted in such way that they fit one's language level (Sinclair 2006: 100).

Another reason why people give up on learning a language is the high expectation of seeing great results in a short period of time. Unfortunately, several people want to learn a language quickly, trying methods that promise ideal results but, afterwards, they bring disappointments. Before starting the learning process everyone should know that language learning does not mean just being able to understand or speak a language.

**Language learning is socio-cultural**

The effort that one makes in learning a language in a classroom through traditional methods will not be enough in order to be fluent in a language and to be able to speak to a native or understand him/her perfectly. A lot of persons consider that they speak a certain language perfectly but when they have to speak to a native speaker, they realise they speak in a different way and they have trouble understanding spoken language as well. (Thomson 1993, 1-2) Therefore, it is necessary to interact with native speakers of the target language. Studying the target language in the country where it is spoken is the ideal situation. Thus, the language ability will improve and it will also increase the ability to socialize, aspects which are less possible in a classroom (Kinginger 2013: 4).

Outside the classroom and during the interaction with the native speakers, a person can learn the target language better. Moreover, studying in another country may offer many opportunities that are not possible in the home context: may accelerate the personal development, enrich the linguistic skills, enhance the self-esteem, increase the capability to be effective in linguistics and can give the opportunity to exchange ideas and having new experiences (Kinginger 2013: 24).

Nowadays, learning a new language is a must due to the requirements of the workplace, service work, social or religious organizations, internships, or just because of change experience. Studying abroad is not just an opportunity to learn to speak almost as a native, but also means stepping away from one's own cultural background and getting involved in the new culture, identifying with new values, actions, beliefs or behaviours of the host people. Doing this doesn't mean that one should forget about his/her own beliefs or culture, but to become open minded reaping the benefits of having

a multiple culture. "An immersion program in another linguistic and cultural context can provide a different range of experiences than can tradition university courses" (Kinginger 2013: 5, 79, 93).

**The GPA**

Greg Thomson, started to be interested in linguistics after his failure to learn Blackfoot, a language spoken by a historical group of indigenous people in North America. For many years, he tried different methods without any success. As a missionary, he had also the opportunity to visit different countries and to be exposed to other cultures. Thomson started seeing improvements in his learning process after listening to a friend who advised him to have a native speaker as helper. Afterwards, Thomson joined the Blackfoot community (Caasi 2005: 2-3). After this experience, he developed a method, similar the way a child learns how to speak, called the GPA (The Growing Participator Approach). In 2000 he presented his work at the University of Alberta, US (Noguera & Baiguatova 2015: 169-172).

The GPA is similar to the method developed in 1983 by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell, known as the Natural Approach, which emphasizes communication, the accumulation of words, input and comprehension, without forcing the output but allowing it to come automatically (Cassi 2005: 18). The methods which focus on grammar were dismissed by Krashen and Terrell. (Richards, Rodgers 2014: 263)

In Thomson's opinion, since we are social creatures, in order to learn a language, it is necessary to have the community experience (Caasi 2005: 25). In fact, he believes that the perfect place to learn a language is not in the classroom, far away from the community that speaks the target language, but in the society itself. He agrees that learning a language from a social-cultural point of view is the natural way of learning a language. Certainly, he doesn't underestimate the lessons given in a classroom but he's considering the socio-cultural dimension of language learning as primary and the cognitive dimension as secondary. Therefore he states: "For me, the proper place to look for language learning is in the fabric of the life of the language learner living in the host society." Furthermore, "[a] minute portion of the growth happens in the classroom. Most of it happens in life" (Thomson 2006).

**Terminology**

According to the method, the learner who wants to acquire a language takes the name of *the growing participator (GP)* because, in order to develop his language skills,

he/she has to participate actively in the host community. Furthermore, the aim of the GP should not be just the acquisition of a language, but also the enhancing of relationships (Thomson 2006). Developing relationships in the speech community, the learner's language skills will improve and then he/she will become a member of the community (Caasi 2005: 2).

The person who introduces the GP into the new culture and helps him/her to enhance the language skills takes the name of *nurturer.* The nurturer can be hired by the GP, who, before starting the learning journey has to introduce him/her the method. Having more than one nurturer will help the GP to be aware and get used to different accents or ways of speaking the same language. It is not necessary for the nurturer to be a trained teacher, he/her can be an ordinary person from the host community (Thomson 2006).

The nurturer plays an important role in the GP's process of learning the language. At the beginning, the newcomer may look odd or different, due to his inability to speak, that is why the nurturer is the most appropriate to guide the newcomers into the social life of the community. With the help of the nurturer, right as a baby, the learner will take his/hers first steps into the new society (Thomson 2012).

**The six phases programme**

Since this method is similar to the way a child acquires a language, in Thomson's opinion, the process of learning a language is a long one. A child arrives at a basic level of understanding and speaking a language approximately at the age of one year and 2 months (Thomson 2006).

Thomson created activities developed in 6 phases that aim to increase people's ability to understand everything they hear in the language they're learning and then to be able to speak it. The activities in the classroom encourage the social interaction in the target language, the grammar explanations being just a few. The verbal interaction will be made through specially designed activities (called *information gap activities*) and the objects used for many of the activities are objects like: food, water, toys, plastic animal toys, toy furniture, toy vegetables and fruit, candy in different colours and so on (Noguera & Baiguatova 2015: 170-172). Relating words to something that can be seen, objects or pictures, helps the GP to memorize the words better (Thomson 1993: 4).

Thomson asserts that the way to get to accurate language production is by allowing yourself to make mistakes in speech. Besides, he believes that moving from the fear of "getting the grammar right," to concentrating instead on getting comprehensible input and speaking, the grammatical accuracy will improve (Thomson 1993: 9).

The first phase lasts approximately 120 hours. The first period of this phase is known as the silent period. In fact, in the first thirty hours, the GP is requested only to listen to the nurturer's instructions and questions and respond non-verbally. In this period of time, he/she will learn around 800 words, many simple grammar constructions and expressions needed for survival. The GP should audio-record the words the nurturer pronounces, and then, as homework, listen to them again and again. Thomson claims that the memorization of words is not necessary. The words will come out naturally after listening to them several times (Thomson 2007).

The way the GP learns new words and masters the vocabulary is made through the activity called *Quick and Dirty Dozen Vocabulary.* The activity implies around fifteen new objects or pictures. If, for example, the GP is learning the names of fruits, the nurturer will introduce him/her to a picture that contains 9-12 small pictures with different fruits. The nurturer would have to tell GPs for several times: "This is an apple," or "This is an orange." When the nurturer asks where the apple is, the GP should respond by pointing, not speaking. Furthermore, when the nurturer notices that the GP already knows the words, the teacher will add a new word. Through *Lexicarry*, a book containing pictures that illustrate different communication situations, the GP learns small dialogues and survival expressions. Another way to do so is through *Total Physical Response,* an activity developed by James Asher in 1960-1970. This activity fully involves the GP in the process of learning and does not put any pressure on the GP because he/she does not have to speak but only to answer certain commands given by the nurturer. For example, the nurturer can ask the GP to sit, to stand, or to go bring him an object. (Caasi 2005:17; Noguera & Baiguatova 2005: 171; Thomson 2009)

Thomson compares the number of words, concepts or cultural expression learned in a new language, to an iceberg. The words that are situated at the top of the iceberg are the words that are totally mastered. The words that are barely familiar are situated at the lower part of the iceberg. The aim is not to put as many words at the top of the iceberg but to put them into the lower part of the iceberg, letting them to climb alone. The more they will be heard in different contexts, the more they will climb to the top of the iceberg. If a GP's purpose is to learn by heart 300 words and to master them immediately, he/she will soon find out that less than 200 will remain at the top of the iceberg. If the student's desire is to learn 1000 words, investing the same effort as the first one, he/she will see that more than 200 words are already on the top of the iceberg and 800 are on the lower part of the iceberg (Thomson 2009; Noguera & Baiguatova 2005: 171).

During the second phase, the GP starts to speak freely, with the help of the nurturer. The main activities include wordless picture stories that increase the GP's ability to narrate and understand a story told by the nurturer. The nurturer has to create

a story, together with the GP, using picture books or toys. By doing this, the GP also has the opportunity to see these stories from the nurturer's eyes (Thomson 2006).

During the next phase, the GP will be able to have a normal conversation. He/she is able to understand a complex speech, but only when a story that he/she already knows is being narrated. In the fourth phase, the relationship between the participator and the nurturer or the host people should go deeper. The GP has to get involved even more into the host community, to explore people's life, to speak to as many of them, asking them to share their stories of life (Thomson 2006).

The GP is encouraged to have deep relationship and to participate actively into the host community when he/she arrives at the fifth phase, to the point where he/she will be considered by the host's people one of them. The activities include discussions about literature, books, movies, or talk shows and also reading. In the last phase, the GP should have the ability to understand native speech. Thomson claims that the more the GP becomes involved in the community, the more the language skills will develop. Besides, he/she will be accepted among particular groups in society (Thomson 2006).

## Conclusion

The Growing Participator Approach is an innovative method adequate for both children and adults. The different activities increase someone's linguistic skills, teaching him/her to socialize with someone from another society and to identify with other culture. Learning a language means not only being fluent in that language, but also getting to know other people, simultaneously allowing them to enrich your life.

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# CITIZENS OF THE WORLD - IDENTITY AND ORIENTALISM IN *PERSIAN LETTERS* AND *THE CITIZEN OF THE WORLD*

The greatest part of human existence deals with finding a purpose to one's life, and, implicitly, giving a purpose to oneself in this world. The search for stability and the formation of one's identity never ceases, as an individual will always seek to stabilise and give coherence to his/her self and his/her life. This need for coherence has its roots in the human desire to understand life, an ontological drive of humanity. In order to achieve coherence, identity needs continuity and chronology, thus providing the individual with the feeling of completeness and with the feeling of being in control of his/her life. But when an individual or community considers their identity as not only superior, but also 'the right one,' excluding alternative ways of living, there appears a discordance in the unity of human identity. Such is the case of the Western-Eastern division that has not yet been reconciled and which dominates the world and allows for perpetual conflict between these two identities. This conflict finds its roots in the incapacity of human beings, to understand the Other not on their own terms, but as an alterity which is not less valid than themselves.

The problem of human identity is a debated subject, as it is a relative notion to which humanity always tries to impose a definite status. The matter of human identity in terms of the West-East divide was examined by many scholars in the course of time, but it was also tackled implicitly through the literary works where a trace of the ideology of Orientalism can be found. Such an example might be the eighteenth-century interest in the epistolary novels that deal with an Easterner who travels to the West and comments upon society, religion, politics, and other such matters. I find such works of importance for the discussion of human identity because I perceive them as a mirror which reflects the conscience of an entire period and the manner in which this period deals with the image of the Other, the Oriental. Two prominent European authors of the eighteenth century, namely Montesquieu and Oliver Goldsmith adopted the epistolary form in writing two very interesting novels, namely *Persian Letters* (1721), respectively *The Citizen of the World* (1760-1761). As we shall further see, these writers tackled the issue of otherness in quite a peculiar manner. Hence, the focus of the present paper is to see how Montesquieu and Goldsmith represented otherness in their novels, as well as if and how

the identity of the Oriental protagonists changes in relation to the Western environment to which they travel for the very first time.

Europe of the eighteenth century started to show an increasing interest in other cultures, especially Oriental cultures. The idea of otherness as it appears in the image of the Oriental became so popular in the eighteenth-century Europe that the West started to commercialise it. While trying to explain the dynamics between East and West, Edward Said came with the concept of 'Orientalism.' According to Said (Said 1979), Orientalism is a discourse whose purpose is to present and describe the Orient for the Occident, so the latter could understand it. However, the Occident could only understand the Orient in Occidental terms. Thus, the Occident identified itself in opposition to the Orient and considered itself superior. The identity of the Oriental is reduced to a sum of generalisations, prejudices, stereotypes, and cultural representations assigned by the West. Thus, Orientalism is a divisive discourse that separates humanity into two categories: the Occident and the Orient, civilisation and barbarity, superiority and inferiority, humanity and non-humanity. Literature played a very important role in shaping the image of the Oriental. The Occidental literature on the Orient, which was mostly inspired by Oriental folklore, propagated the image of a fabulous Orient, with mythical creatures and veiled by an aura of mystery and fantasy. The Oriental was represented for the Occidental like he or she was a fictional character. Occidentals viewed the Oriental as a character from a book, but not one with whom they could identify, rather one they could wonder at and laugh at. Orientalism is a discourse which was spread especially with the help of these literary productions which taught the Occidental what to believe about the Orient. It shaped the identity of the Oriental, without giving him/her a voice.

*Persian Letters* and *The Citizen of the World* are two epistolary novels which deal with the journey of three Eastern protagonists from the Orient to Occident. In *Persian Letters,* the Persians Usbek and Rica embark on a journey to France where they remain for nine years. The purpose of their journey is revealed in the first letter. Usbek tells his friend Rustan that he and Rica have decided to leave their native land in a quest for wisdom. Usbek predicts that this might not be an easy task, but the desire for learning is their drive: "Rica and I are perhaps the first Persians whom the appetite for learning has prompted to leave the land of their birth, and forsake the charms of a peaceful life in favour of the arduous quest for wisdom" (Montesquieu 2008: 4). Usbek implies that he and Rica are among the first Persians to try to break their cultural boundaries and search for knowledge. His attitude is influenced by the spirit of cosmopolitanism and a desire for diversity in the field of learning: "[w]e were born in a prosperous realm, but did not believe its boundaries should be the boundaries of our knowledge, and that the light of

the Orient need be the only light to illuminate our path" (Montesquieu 2008: 4). The protagonist of Goldsmith`s *The Citizen of the World*, the Chinese man Lien, has a different reason for coming to the West. Allured by accounts about the English opulence, sciences and arts, he makes a journey from China to England in order to see this Western country with his own eyes. As in the case of the Persian protagonists, his motivation is epistemic. But while the Persian protagonists begin their journey in search of wisdom, Lien`s drive is curiosity.

When it comes to the authors' representation of the Oriental, both Montesquieu and Goldsmith adopted a similar approach. In the "Preface" of *Persian Letters*, the reader finds out about the main characteristics of the two Persian men. In this respect, Montesquieu says: "I even happened upon some [letters] that they would have been most reluctant to let me see, so mortifying were they for Persian vanity and jealousy" (Montesquieu 2008: 3). It was a common belief in Europe that the Muslim man was characterized by jealousy and tyranny, not only in the family, but also in his way of governing the country. Montesquieu implies that the letters he received from these Persian men abound in such characteristics. Thus, Montesquieu created a Persian paradigm which is best represented in the novel by Usbek. The letters reveal that Usbek is a patriarch who has a harem under his complete authority. He becomes very easily jealous and keeps his wives away from the sight of any other men except the eunuchs. He treats them severely and inflicts harsh punishments if his wives break the rules of the harem.

A key trait that was supposed to be universally attributed to all Muslim men is despotism exercised in political absolutism. Montesquieu created this paradigm in order to reflect the despotic ruling of the Oriental lands, which, according to the European viewpoint, fails (as in the case of Usbek`s authority) because despotism creates only disorder and chaos. Despotism is not an appropriate manner of ruling and is directly opposed to the French monarchical government. Montesquieu's view is the European view of a Muslim, and by extension, of an Oriental.

This image is further extended to the whole 'barbaric' Orient. Montesquieu applied this ideology in *Persian Letters*. But despite this initial impression, Montesquieu approaches the Oriental narrative differently. As Andrew Kahn states in the introduction of *Persian Letters,* "Montesquieu's Orientalism does not fall precisely into the style of writing about the Orient that was immediately available. The vogue for the Orient was inseparable from its image as a place of marvellous storytelling" (2008: xxiii). Montesquieu based his narrative on a less fantastic version of the Orient and presented two Persian men who have the same questions and desires as the enlightened Europeans. Both men began their journey in search of wisdom. Usbek had learnt science in Persia

and he was curious to learn more. Usbek and Rica are not two Orientals whose reality and identity are fractured from the reality of the Occident. They have the same capacities and aspirations as French citizens, they are as human in their drives as the Occidental. Montesquieu destroys the dynamics of the Orientalist discourse, which views the Occident as innately superior and the Orient inferior, by projecting the same type of humanity upon Usbek and Rica as that of the European.

Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* shows the creative originality of its creator. He "pulls away from the dominant trend of associating the Orient with entertainment by not creating a fabulous Orient" (Kahn 2008: xxiv). His characters are not fabulous: they are human beings who face the same issues as Europeans. Their emotions and observations are as valid as those of the European. As Montesquieu said in the "Preface", "[o]ne thing has often amazed me: to find that these Persians are sometimes as knowledgeable as I myself am about the customs and manners of this nation, so much so as to be familiar with the finest points" (Montesquieu 2008: 4). The fact that they are from an Oriental culture does not impede them from making intellectual observations which contain valid criticism regarding France.

Similar to Montesquieu, Goldsmith's auctorial intention becomes apparent from the preface. China was considered by eighteenth-century Europe as a tutored nation, a nation of reason, similar to England and France. This attitude is reflected in the preface, where Goldsmith (2007) says that the English were surprised to find out that the Chinese visitors are similar to the English. Goldsmith tries to highlight this idea. As Ros Ballaster (2005: 247) says, "[t]he circumstances of these fictional Chinese informants provide an opportunity for genuine mutual 'enlightenment'.". Another stereotype usually associated with the Chinese by eighteenth-century discourse referred to the character of the Chinese. Goldsmith (2007: page?) says that "[t]he Chinese are always concise, so is he. Simple, so is he. The Chinese are grave and sententious, so is he. But in one particular, the resemblance is peculiarly striking: the Chinese are often dull; and so is he." The most common characteristic attributed to the Chinese was dullness and repetitiveness.

Goldsmith proposed he would provide a new image of China and the Chinese to the Europeans. In the allegory of the fashion fair, Goldsmith says:

> I am resolved to make a new adventure. The furniture, frippery and fire-works of China, have long been fashionably bought up. I'll try the fair with a small cargoe of Chinese morality. If the Chinese have contributed to vitiate our taste, I'll try how far they can help to improve our understanding. (2007)

He mentions the popularity of chinoiseries which were very fashionable in the eighteenth century and wants to bring to the understanding of the English another side of China, less consumerist and more profound.

A very important aspect of this novel is how Goldsmith managed to introduce the effects of the Orientalist discourse in order to escape its absurdity. Goldsmith creates a contrast between the character of Lien and how he is perceived by the English society. In Letter 14, Lien recounts his experience with a 'lady of distinction' who desperately desired to meet him. When Lien first observed the impatience of this lady to meet him, he thought that she had seen him somewhere and liked him, and this is why she has this attitude unusual for a woman. When he finally meets her, he is disillusioned to find the real reason for her desire to meet him:

> As I was dressed after the fashion of Europe, she had taken me for an Englishman, and consequently saluted me in her ordinary manner; but when the footman informed her grace that I was the gentleman from China, she instantly lifted herself from the couch, while her eyes sparkled with unusual vivacity. "Bless me! can this be the gentleman that was born so far from home? What an unusual share of somethingness in his whole appearance. Lord how I am charmed with the outlandish cut of his face; how bewitching the exotic breadth of his forehead. I would give the world to see him in his own country dress. Pray turn about, Sir, and let me see you behind. There! There's a travell'd air for you. You that attend there, bring up a plate of beef cut into small pieces; I have a violent passion to see him eat. Pray, Sir, have you got your chop sticks about you?" (Goldsmith 2007)

This fragment perfectly sums up the attitude of the eighteenth-century European when he or she encounters an Oriental. When the lady encountered Lien for the first time, he was dressed in English clothes, so she saluted and treated him exactly as she normally did with her countrymen. However, when she was informed that he was the man from China, her attitude changed completely. She became very enthusiastic to talk to him merely because he was Chinese and this lady had an obsession for China and chinoiseries. She tells him that his appearance has 'an unusual share of somethingness.' Still, she had not noticed it until she learned that he was Chinese. Thus, she projected on Lien her constructed image of an Oriental who is different just because he is Oriental. Moreover, she does not treat him as humanly as she treats the English. She merely treats him like an animal or an object when she expresses her desire to see him in his traditional clothing and ask him a number of ignorant questions. She wants to see him eating with chopsticks. She asks him if he has with him any Chinese object that does not have any use. She completely strips the traditional Chinese objects of their meaning and uses them as

furniture. When Lien explains to her that those objects are but common Chinese utensils that are useful in every house, she does not believe him. Moreover, she accuses him of not being a Chinese but a barbarian because the reality of the Chinese identity as reflected by Lien is different from her imagined picture. Lien continually corrects her misknowledge, but she refuses to admit that she is wrong. She does not want to give up to her stereotyped image and learn the truth from an actual Chinese. The authenticity of things that make one Chinese is called into question. The Europeans created an image of what it means to be Chinese and they refused to accept otherwise.

Therefore, like Montesquieu, Goldsmith exposed the folly of the Englishmen for creating a stereotypical image of how a Chinese man should look and then extending it to the whole Orient. Goldsmith created a contrast between the real character of Lien and the way the English people viewed him. The two perspectives are very different and the real self of Lien is presented by Goldsmith as being more similar than different to the Englishman, because both have the same characteristics of the human species.

Regarding the two Persian men's identity, the reader notices two different instances. Usbek is a husband who has a harem. He entrusts the chief eunuch with authority over his wives, although he must also fulfill their wishes. Usbek begins his letter by saying "[y]ou are the faithful custodian of the most beautiful women in Persia; to you have I entrusted the worldly possessions I hold most dear; you guard the keys to those fateful doors which open solely for me. While you watch over this precious treasure of my heart, my heart is at ease, wholly free from apprehension" (Montesquieu 2008: 5). In these few lines, Usbek's identity is partly revealed: he is the model Muslim husband who is the master of a harem. He describes his wives as his 'worldly possessions' to whom only he has access. While he is away, somebody must be entrusted with guarding his wives and making sure they respect the rules of the harem. It is clear that in his relationship with his wives, Usbek is the patriarchal figure and he has complete control over them. The longer Usbek stays away from home, the more strictly his orders of having his wives controlled become.

Usbek's cultural identity is threatened because of his exposure to a different culture that comes in contradiction with his values. As he cannot adapt or at least tolerate French culture, Usbek's cultural identity becomes his only identity. In fact, Usbek`s identity is so much ingrained in his native culture that by making sure that his wives are under his control he stabilizes his identity. But because of his increasing subjugation, his wives rebel against him. He loses control over them, thus his efforts to keep his identity stable are fruitless. He tries one last time to regain control over the harem by giving unlimited power to the chief black eunuch, who is an extension of Usbek's authority. However, in the next letter Usbek gets the news that his chief black eunuch died. His

authority no longer has a representative in the harem and, thus, cannot subjugate anyone any longer. Moreover, the letter in which Usbek entrusts all his authority to the chief black eunuch never reaches the hands of his addressee. Eunuch Narsit refuses to open a letter that is not addressed to him, thus the orders never get the chance to be applied in the harem. The fact that Usbek gets the news of the head eunuch`s death five months later, shows that it is already too late for Usbek to do anything to fix the situation. In this way he loses the control over his cultural self. Furthermore, because he refuses to adapt to the new society and culture and give up on his prejudices, he gets stuck in between two cultures without being able to fully identify himself with either of them. Thus, Usbeck fails to become a citizen of the world.

As far as Rica is concerned, his younger spirit and open mind allows him to adapt to the culture of France. At the beginning of the novel, Rica writes to Ibben: "[d]on't expect me to be capable, at present, of giving you a deep understanding of European ways and customs; I myself have only formed a vague notion of them, and I've barely had time to do more than feel astonishment" (Montesquieu 2008: 30). One can understand that Rica does not want to judge France and form prejudices based on his first impressions. It does not take long for Rica to adapt. In a letter to Ibben, Rica states: "[a]s you can see, my dear Ibben, I've acquired one of the tastes of this nation, whose people enjoy supporting extraordinary opinions, and reducing everything to a paradox" (Montesquieu 2008: 49).

It is not necessary for one to renounce his cultural identity in order to be able to perceive the similarities that all humans share. In Letter 137, Rica writes to Nathaniel Levi, "I always carry on my person more than two thousand passages from the holy Qur`an" (Montesquieu 2008: 198). Thus, Rica has not given up his cultural identity, the religion in which he was raised, but embraced the culture of France and was able to surpass the cultural differences. Reason allowed Rica to survive the initial shock and achieve reconciliation between these two cultures and to find a collective humanity beyond the cultural background. His reason was not impeded by his cultural biases, especially religion. Rica says that the only reason why he carries the quotes from Koran with him is because of a "long-established habit, following a universal practice" (Montesquieu 2008: 198). Thus, he is capable of becoming a citizen of the world, one who tolerates and embraces other cultures.

Similar to Usbek, Lien's identity is very much influenced by his native country. In a letter to his friend Fum Hoam, Lien confesses, "[t]he farther I travel I feel the pain of separation with stronger force, those ties that bind me to my native country, and you, are still unbroken. By every remove, I only drag a greater length of chain" (Goldsmith 2007). He feels attached to his culture and the first encounter with a different environment

makes him feel uncomfortable. His identity is based on his native culture and when faced with the unknown, he gets homesick. Lien is very cautious when it comes to knowing the new country. Neither does he want to base his judgment on first assumptions, nor does he claim that his descriptions are perfect. Even though Lien had at the beginning of the novel difficulties in adapting to the new culture, by the middle of the novel, the reader notices a change. In Letter LXXXII, Lien says, "I have interested myself so long in all the concerns of this people, that I am almost become an Englishman; I now begin to read with pleasure of their taking towns or gaining battles, and secretly wish disappointment to all the enemies of Britain" (Goldsmith 2007). His open mind and genuine desire to get to know different cultures allows Lien to also identify himself as an Englishman. He is able not only to adapt, but also to embrace the culture and worldview of his host country. However, he does not forget his native culture and country. He later remarks that "[t]here are no pleasures, sensual or sentimental, which this city does not produce; yet, I know not how, I could not be content to reside here for life. There is something so seducing in that spot in which we first had existence, that nothing but it can please" (Goldsmith 2007).

Lien's versatility does not imply that he must renounce his cultural background in order to be able to adapt. Unlike Usbek, he does not sink into homesickness. Reason helps Lien to overcome the negative feelings and preserve his cultural identity. By being tolerant towards a different culture, one is able to look past differences and focus on similarities. Like Rica, Lien's open mind and reason allowed him to eventually become tolerant of the English culture. He preserved his cultural identity, but he also managed to recreate his personal identity which reflects his experiences after his journey. In *Persian Letters*, only Rica is able to become tolerant of the French culture and acquire the spirit of cosmopolitanism. Usbek loses this spirit, which he advocated at the beginning, because he cannot break away from the prejudices he formed under the influence of jealousy and cannot be tolerant. Moreover, at the end of the novel, Lien tells the reader that he wants to keep travelling, so as to discover other cultures and the heart of men that lies beyond them. Thus, Lien becomes the perfect citizen of the world. He not only adapted to the culture of England, but also wants to discover other cultures. Goldsmith managed to create in The Citizen of the World the model of the prefect cosmopolitan that should be followed by everybody, including his readers.

Therefore, both authors managed to look beyond what the discourse of Orientalism propagated. Both Montesquieu and Goldsmith wrote two masterpieces that show the absurdity of the discourse of Orientalism. They denounced the ignorant behaviour of the Westerners towards the East, and advocated instead that, the humanity divided by Orientalism, will reunite. Moreover, the environment plays an essential role in the shaping of the identity of the characters. While those with a narrow mind became

stuck in between two identities, those with an open mind were able to embrace a new culture with tolerance and understanding. However, this will only be possible when people, regardless of their culture, will focus on the similarities among humans and not on the differences created by the cultural background, namely created by society. Thus, without forsaking their cultural identity, people will get to the tolerance needed to become citizens of the world.

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# CRISIS AND IDENTITY: THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF CLOSURE IN JULIAN BARNES'S *THE SENSE OF AN ENDING*

"There is great unrest:" a phrase that illustrates the human condition in a modern world marked by uncertainty, a position that produces a perpetual feeling of crisis. The purpose of this paper is to analyze some of the effects that this instability has on the conceptualization of selfhood and how they influence the possibility of attaining closure in the novel *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) by Julian Barnes. The aspects followed in the novel are the internalization of apocalyptic anxiety, the gradual loss of discursive authority, the changing nature of the event of dying, the desire for having one's story told by an alterity, and the resulting impossibility of narrative closure. The paper is based on the theoretical suggestions of literary critics Frank Kermode, Walter Benjamin and Adriana Cavarero, as well as on some ideas showcased in Julian Barnes's body of work.

The End has always had a privileged position both in fiction and in life. From the earliest of times, its inescapability and haunting imminence have generated innumerable stories that, for a while, did provide comfort. But what happens when the authority of these stories collapses? With great scientific discoveries, the human condition entered a period of great unrest and instability regarding personal identity. Moreover, events that produced mass murder altered the human perspective on death causing a perpetual feeling of crisis. Discourses such as religion, science and history lost their status of utmost authority; therefore, closure became unattainable in real-life and a consolation in fiction. Yet, however soothing it is to put a book down and have no questions unanswered, the reality we live in makes this kind of ending seem almost absurd.

Frank Kermode is one of the critics deeply preoccupied with the idea of ending. His book, *The Sense of an Ending* (1968), written under the circumstances of a period of apocalyptic anxiety, after the Cold War and the atomic bombs that gave way to a new kind of "megadeath," addresses the issue of Apocalypse and its transformation from imminent to immanent and from a meaningful God-given event to a man-manufactured atrocity. Over the centuries the idea of apocalypse developed, especially after the year 1000, when it was strongly anticipated. Nevertheless, even if the estimation proved to be wrong, the idea of apocalypse was never abandoned altogether and people started

looking for a different meaning of The End. The position of the human changed, from a secure spot in the Universe, to being "in the middest" with no clear beginnings and unpredictable endings (Kermode 1968: 31). This way the idea of Apocalypse became internalized and from imminent it became immanent, instead of a radical extrinsic time, concordant with middle and end, it was conceptually transformed in moments of personal crisis, and respectively personal death.

In addition to this change, and in the circumstances of the above-mentioned concept of "megadeath," Kermode notices another alteration in the conception of apocalypse: its nature from an event that provides explanation under divine authority shifts to man-made catastrophe devoid of sense. An example of such catastrophe is Nazism. Kermode (1968: 26) uses this example as a representation of the danger that *fictions* turned into *myths* represent. He uses the term *myth* for a story that lost its fictional status and became perceived as a truth.

In order to illustrate the struggle of making sense of experience, Kermode uses the example of the minutest plot depicted by the conceptualization of time in terms of *tick-tock,* instead of the potentially phonetic tick-tick of the clock, which acts as a point of reference and provides stability and order. When the final *"tock of the death"* (Kermode 1968: 192) is devoid of meaning, the whole structure collapses.

Kermode also talks about "concord-fictions" (Kermode 1968: 59), fictions that we tell ourselves so we can grasp things that escape our understanding, and, together with literary fictions, they act as simulations of our own ending, they can provide the kind of closure that is virtually impossible to achieve in one's life. These fictions try to make sense of both life and death by promising a type of closure that can only be found in literary fiction, but even narratology fails to provide a unanimous definition of it. For the purpose of this paper, I will use Noël Carroll's definition of narrative closure as "a phenomenological feeling of finality that is generated when all the questions saliently posed by the narrative are answered" (Carroll 2007: 1). I chose this definition because it emphasizes the nature of closure as suggested by Kluck, Onea and Köppe (2016: 24) as "belief-like state" that lacks vagueness.

The plot of a narrative creates a chain from the independent pieces represented by individual events, they make up causality that is being transposed and looked for in real-life, but most of the times impossible to find. In *Flaubert's Parrot,* the difference between books and life is the simple conjunction "because:" **"**Books say: She did this because. Life says: She did this" (Barnes 1992: 95). Books provide a relationship of cause and effect, where you can pin-point exactly which is the cause and which is the effect, but these parts can easily be rearranged when applied to reality. If life is seen as a narrative, it is only natural that death must validate and resolve the plot of one's life. Death is the only

possible closure for the human and a moment in which one encounters oneself and the story of his/her life: "With the very last act of his narcissistic impulse, the memory of the dying turns him into the spectator of the film of his life-story" (Cavarero 2010: 44), thus death situates the human being in the position of the spectator, an exterior position that allows for a broader picture encapsulating the essence of one's life and providing an explanatory ending to the person's narrative.

Walter Benjamin, in the essay "The Storyteller" (1936), depicts the changed nature of death, from a ritual that made this process of reevaluation of life possible to an issue that disappeared from our culture. The obscuration of the event of dying, our making "death as invisible as possible" (Barnes 2013: 132) disallows a co-experience of the end and it becomes devoid of meaning. Closure can never come first-hand to the person and it is the role of fiction to simulate one's death, to give a kind of comfort that life lacks.

Therefore, the need of fiction is paramount in one's life in order to make sense of one's existence. The anxiety that the thought of death provokes is somewhat diminished by fiction. And here, by fiction, I also refer to the fiction that we tell ourselves about our own life and about our own person. If we are the protagonists of our own story, we should be able to relate the plot of our life, but we find ourselves at a loss most of the times as the only tool we have is memory, tool that is too limited to function perfectly. When memory lets us down, we turn to the others who have been in our stories and can complete it so that we can "remain in character" (Barnes 2013: 168). Adriana Cavarero, in *Relating Narratives Storytelling and Selfhood* (2010) touches upon the desire for one's story and the need of hearing it from *an other*. It is only when life becomes discourse that one can truly see oneself and begin to analyze his/her own identity. The *other* is paramount in the process of discovery of selfhood, "the identity of the self, crystallized in the story" (Cavarero 2010: 37).

The narratable self is the self that wants to have its story heard from an alterity, it is the story without a text (Cavarero 2010: 35). The desire to have one's story told by others is justified also by the need of concordance and unity as work of memory is "discontinuous - fragmentary, fleeting, and even casual" (Cavarero 2010: 35). The plurality of discourses told, on the one hand, by memory and, on the other hand, by the alterity, creates a feeling of crisis where unity is impossible and we find ourselves in a situation where "the "I" of which we are so fond properly exists only in grammar" (Barnes 2013: 150). Therefore, multiple discourses create multiple identities determined by a chain of important events in one's life.

However, there are cases where a single event determines the identity of the individual and Cavarero (2010: 26) uses the examples of death in order to illustrate that unity can sometimes be found in a single summarizing act. In Achilles's case, his entire

life is determined by this last moment and he becomes the subject of a story that from beginning to end is influenced by his death, his endeavor to be exemplary can only be achieved in dying as a hero. Consequently, this event becomes so entrenched in someone's life-story, or in this case death-story, if I may call it so, that it becomes the very identity of the person.

*The Sense of an Ending* by Julian Barnes presents the evolution of the naïve protagonist, Tony, from contentment to unrest. The changing state is generated by a moment of crisis that demolishes everything that seems crystal clear to him before, including his sense of self. When he gets contacted in regard to Mrs. Ford's will, Tony, now in old age, undergoes a reevaluation of his entire past having as central engines the suicide of his friend, Adrian, and also his own approaching death.

The novel starts with a strange accumulation of mental images, a list that installs in the mind of the reader questions whose answers are searched for throughout the text. Some of the elements of this list seem absurd at first, but until the end of the novel, the reader can attribute meaning to them, whereas others remain enigmatic. Therefore, the author introduces aspects in the text that will not be fully decrypted by the reader, thus some of the questions "saliently posed by the narrative" (Carroll 2007: 1) remain unanswered. The first and last descriptions "a shiny inner wrist" and "bathwater long gone cold behind a locked door" (Barnes 2017: 1) can direct the reader towards Adrian's suicide scene that Tony never witnessed.

These images shape the protagonist's view on his life-story and it is only when he hears it from Veronica that he truly understands how wrong he was in his ignorance. Tony seems to find himself literally and metaphorically on a "wobbly" bridge. He first meets Veronica, after years of trying to erase her from his memories, on the Wobbly Bridge: "it used to shake a bit – either from the wind or the mass of people tramping across it, or both – and the British commentariat duly mocked the architects and engineers for not knowing what they were doing" (Barnes 2017: 84). The bridge is important in Tony's development because it questions the stability of a well-grounded conception of reality. His encounter with Veronica in such a place shakes the stable ground on which Tony has built his life. The bridge could represent both the unreliability of discourses even in the technical domains of engineering or architecture and, more than this, unreliability of the self when presented with the past: "Time … give us enough time and our best-supported decisions will seem wobbly, our certainties whimsical" (Barnes 2017: 87). Tony begins to doubt himself and frantically look for proof of corroboration, documents that would confirm his version of the past; however, the only documents he gets are copies, or incomplete pieces that cannot satisfy his need for concordance. This is one of the reasons why the novel lacks closure. The central record in the narrative that

potentially could fulfill Tony's need for explanation is Adrian's diary but it is destroyed by Veronica.

Veronica salvages a page that she sends a photocopy of it to Tony, but instead of providing comfort, this page unsettles him even more and the ending of the page, namely the beginning of a conditional clause "If Tony," proceeds to haunt the character throughout the whole novel. Adrian arrives at this phrase when his trial of transposing his life in mathematical equations fails and he resorts to "narrative terminology:" "And not use equations and integers but instead express matters in traditional narrative terminology. So, for instance, if Tony" (Barnes 2017: 81).

Adrian tries to make sense of the events that occurred and to put them into a chain of responsibility, but this process proves to be futile as life, in contrast to fiction, has no direct cause and effect association. This difficulty of drawing the exact line between cause and effect appears in the novel more than just once, it is a problem that affects Tony deeply and is also a root of his distress. When he talks about the end of his relationship with Veronica, this issue comes forth and he questions the order of cause and effect here as well: "For instance, 'After we broke up, she slept with me' flips easily into 'After she slept with me, I broke up with her'" (Barnes 2017: 44). By having this order of events so easily manipulated by his own mind, not being able to trust his own memory and respectively himself, Tony encounters himself through hearing the story of one of the most poignant events of his life narrated by other characters, and even by his younger self through the copy of a letter that he had sent to Adrian. The letter shows a part of Tony that he himself does not recognize. In the tale of his own life, he had completely replaced that letter with a mild congratulatory one. This proves how he adjusted the narrative of his life so that it suits the desired image of self that he has created:" our life is not our life, merely the story we have told about our life" (Barnes 2017: 89)

A shift in identity can be seen in the female protagonist as well; for different characters that bring her forth in language at different points in her life, she receives another name: for Tony she is Veronica, for Tony's ex-wife she is "The Fruitcake" and later in the story she is Mary. Thus, identity fluctuates depending of the source of the discourse - there is no unitary version of identity.

The most incomprehensible character in the novel, and the one that provokes the chaos that Tony finds himself in, is Adrian. In a way, he could be associated with Achilles as used in Cavarero's example. His death is at first interpreted by Tony as an exemplary expression of free will. In the letter that Adrian leaves behind explaining his suicide, he argues that suicide is the only action of free will that the human being can take on his/her own life. Therefore, he wants his death to be heroic in a sense similar to Achilles. But his explanation is overlooked and possibly even discredited by discourses that classify

people undergoing suicide as mentally instable: "The law, and society, and religion all said it was impossible to be sane, healthy, and kill yourself" (Barnes 2017: 48).

Adrian's suicide and his last words documented in the letter build his identity and the way he remains in remembrance. As the plot develops, and the event of his relationship with Veronica's mother unveils, his last words lose credibility and the reader begins to question their authenticity. Adrian's death becomes increasingly similar to the earlier suicide of Robson, who in the event of leaving his girlfriend pregnant takes his own life. While the young male characters look down on Robson for what they consider a cowardly action, Adrian's suicide is seen at first as an emancipatory act, if the motives that he had written were indeed genuine. Suicide as manifestation of agency represents a first interpretation of Adrian's action, but the reasons that Adrian had provided for his suicide become dubitable when Tony finally finds the only possible corroboration in the living proof of Adrian's relationship with Mrs. Ford, corroboration that the written documents could not offer. This way, a second interpretation of Adrian's suicide could be as a sign of remorse, very similar to Robson's reasons for taking his own life.

Tony's discovery of Adrian's mentally-challenged son makes him feels part of the chain of responsibility and reconsiders many of the criteria on which he has structured his life. Whereas in his youth, Tony saw life in black and white: "We liked Yes v No, Praise v Blame, Guilt v Innocence" (Barnes 2017: 11), he now begins to discover a gray unsatisfactory area saturated in uncertainty.

It is only in his old age that Tony understands the instability and uncertainty that life represents. And at the end of the novel he reaches the only conclusion available for the human being in the search of making sense of one's life: "There is accumulation. There is responsibility. And beyond these, there is unrest. There is great unrest" (Barnes 2017: 142). Tony begins to see life as an amalgam of events, not as a straight causal order of happenings. The loss of certainty results in the condition of the human being in an unstable position, in a state of perpetual existential crisis whose consolation can never be found.

To conclude, Julian Barnes succeeds in depicting a state of anxiety at the encounter of crisis, a form of anxiety passed on to the reader as the end lacks the "phenomenological feeling of finality" (Carroll 2017: 1) that would provide comfort and concordance. Tony's encounter with himself and his past through the prism of his own unreliable memories photocopies of forgotten documents and stories told by others deconstruct his image of personal identity shuttering the version of reality in which he had ignorantly lived before the crisis was installed. The incipient moment of anxiety was transformed into a perpetual feeling of crisis that makes closure impossible to attain both in Tony's life, and in the narratological sense, in the novel.

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# EMOTIONS IN THE SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE: NARCISSISM, SENTIMENTALITY, AND CYNICISM

## Introduction

Human beings are faced with the necessity of adapting to unforeseen phenomena as increasing uncertainty dominates the technological, ecological, and geopolitical field. Cultural changes are correlated with changes in both society at large and individuals, especially as far as the inner dimension is concerned. It is, then, safe to assume that our psychological environment undergoes constant recalibration in response to this. David Pugmire pursues a similar line of thought in *Sound Sentiments*, where he argues that "society is as much a crucible of emotion as is personality," emotions – their type and profundity – being produced and refined by the context (2012: 5). In this sense, they may either be endorsed or shunned, dwindling as a result and yielding a historical period where only specific ones prevail – such as pride or honour in the medieval code of chivalry. Social pressure carves temperaments, but it is the range of changes mentioned initially which elicits and foregrounds them. Among the circumstantial factors which impose the need for adaptation, Pugmire includes the disappearance of a common culture and its replacement by the instantaneous products of "pundits and the fashion industry;" the "vacuum" created by a breakdown in meaning and stability, filled with utopian expectations of epiphanies; a turn to exoticism; the logic of the workplace, and external trends and imperatives issued by the media.

The portrait of the modern ambient bespeaks fragmentation, mutability, and lack of confidence. This is precisely what Bauman defines in the Foreword to his *Liquid Modernity* as the eponymous state of liquidity, a protean form of modernity characterized by its "fragility, temporariness, and vulnerability," one "avoiding completion, staying underdefined" (2010: 135).

Bauman's picture seamlessly evolves into Guy Debord's idea of a "society of the spectacle," where the spectacular becomes the universal centrepiece, as being "not a collection of images [, but] a social relation between people that is mediated by images" (2009: 10). Such a rapport prioritizes eye-catching appearance, distracting representation, alienating possession, seductive unreality, and acknowledged hypnosis. In Pugmire's view, some of the defining emotions of current society are a type of "workaday" narcissism, notable sentimentality, and cynicism. My contention is that Debord's notion of a spectacular society stems from, relies heavily on, and sustains in turn precisely the "liquid" modern typology delineated by Pugmire. The three features he selects epitomize not only the ideal subject (or member) of the latter's

vision of society, but the inner workings of the society itself as an overarching mechanism.

**Narcissism**

The variety of narcissism outlined in *Sound Sentiments* renders one's "own vantage point and interests, as temporarily configured . . . the principal source of one's emotions, [which] will make the events that impinge directly on me assume a boosted magnitude" (2012: 9). This applies, naturally, to the individual as a product of their environment, but it is particularly characteristic of the matrix, or medium, itself. *It* is the one who has grown narcissistic and, literally, self-centred to the point of hysteria – asking to be looked at. As suggested initially, this type of society consists less in the connections between its members than in the "image-objects" which have become the autonomous signifiers articulating a "world that can no longer be directly grasped," one which "elevates the sense of sight to the special preeminence once occupied by touch" (Debord 2009: 13). It is, therefore, this self-perpetuating network that charges itself with the "boosted magnitude" mentioned by Pugmire. Having acquired this pervasive authority, the matrix comes to embody and simultaneously be defined by its product, the spectacle of consumption and media reproduction, which the individual both reinforces and is subjected to, and which it idolizes in an endless cycle. Its narcissistic character is thus confirmed by its centrality: "[i]n all of its particular manifestations — news, propaganda, advertising, entertainment — the spectacle represents the dominant model of life" (Debord 2009: 11).

In Pugmire's profile of the self-centred type, one's natural interest in something, rooted in its intrinsic value and its relevance to the person in question, is replaced by a self-reflexive preoccupation with one's attitude towards it, turning thus the focus on oneself and generating "second-order emotions or desires" (Pugmire 2012: 107). It is so with the spectacle too, due to its cyclical nature and the manner in which it thrives on the signifiers (or the "mythologies" understood by Barthes as a "second-order semiotic system" as well) engendered within its confines. These signifiers are, in fact, the commodified versions of human activity become "congealed" and "abstract." As Debord further states, glorified objects and regulated behaviour are therefore fetishized, entering into a production system which stifles their qualitative value, exaggerating the quantitative instead (2009: 18). In this manner, they become images to be displayed within the spectacle. Moreover, being so ubiquitous, they come to substitute the tangible world and stand as reality itself.

As a corollary of the supremacy of spectacle, the members of society inevitably live in isolation, for their obsession with this supreme object of desire invalidates interpersonal bonds. As the entrancing display of commodities monopolizes their attention, they remain separate from one another. Instead, they solely contemplate objects. As a result, their contemplation leaves no time for living outside the performance. In addition to this, the individual will identify with the target of their

attention, fostering the "dominant images of need" and becoming disconnected from their own lives and desires. Paradoxically, in identifying completely with the product of the system and, implicitly, with the system, the spectacle transfers its narcissism onto the individual, who becomes as self-absorbed (seduced by their own embodiment of the spectacle and the needs it endlessly creates) as they are hypnotized.

**Sentimentality**

Sentimentality, according to Pugmire's pattern, represents the second defining trait of the modern person. In his view, this excess of emotion leads one to relish a world which is "luxurious," in the sense that one evades actual responsibility by indulging in the idealized enhancement of their object, but with half-hearted interest in truly pursuing them, and that for narcissistic reasons. Therefore, under its scope fit emotions which are produced deliberately, a "theme crafted *for* its pathos, not just *in* its pathos" (Pugmire 2012: 138). Once again, this evokes the self-generating nature of spectacular society, where the system engages in reproduction for its own sake. Similarly, commodification occurs for its own sake, because it fuels this structure. Things no longer have intrinsic value, because they only carry quantitative meaning. Debord refers to this as the "tautological" aspect of spectacle which "stems from the fact that its means and ends are identical." He also mentions that "the spectacle aims at nothing but itself," suggesting that this exaggeration (of production, consumption, and reproduction) is its only mode of being and that nothing lies beyond it. What is more, the spectacle likewise insists on the primacy of superficiality, being "an affirmation of appearances and an identification of all human social life with appearances" (Debord 2009: 12).

As expected, considering its egocentric descent, excessive sentiment also produces isolation among the spectators, even if it develops collectively. In fact, this character magnifies the different emphases of participants in a sentimental reverie because they are each shown to be concerned with their private experiences:

> We unite in a compact that allows each to exult in the outpouring of his own feelings. Here, a facsimile of communication occurs in which neither of us is ever quite heard. Yet the latter is, of course, what self-expression really seeks. We seek a genuine hearing and, perhaps, a fitting response by the other to what they have received. (Pugmire 2012: 142)

In a similar manner, Debord argues that spectacle breeds, and depends on, alienation. If within this organization, "being" is supplanted by "having," and one's achievements are measured strictly in terms of one's possessions – which are subject to the tyranny of appearances and prestige, then the possibility for authentic expression of the self is negated. Consequently, so is establishing a meaningful connection with a fellow member of society, as people have no fundamental emotional

junctures. Instead, their personality is inflected through terms of comparison, the ultimate goal being accumulation of assets. Yet, the system actually encourages effusions of sentimentality by exploiting private affairs in the public domain, especially in reality television shows. In these circumstances, overt exaggeration is endorsed because extreme emotions are commodified too. If profound emotion is nullified by the profusion of images foreign to the individual, then the emotions themselves enter into the chain of signification: "[t]he satisfaction that no longer comes from *using* the commodities produced in abundance is now sought through recognition of their value as *commodities*" (Debord 2009: 27).

**Cynicism**

Finally, the third feature listed in *Sound Sentiments*, that of cynicism, might also be traced in the type of society Debord depicts. The cynical mood, just like the narcissistic and the sentimental, becomes ingrained in the medium and its inhabitants alike, spurring the development of the spectacular ensemble exactly as it intends. To the cynic, having not yet reached disillusionment but remaining deliberately immersed in feelings of distrust and bitterness, the objective of their struggle is irretrievably lost. They nurture an inconsolable, almost dogmatic, refusal to relinquish that which seems to have been lost. They also position themselves outside and above the object of their discontent (and desire), "in a lonely citadel of discriminating judgment, probity, and good taste […] a festival of exclusiveness and superiority" (Pugmire 2012: 154). Thus, they perceive themselves as the sole arbiters and enablers of their rapport with the world, which appears as inevitably flawed, unattainable, and disappointing. Most importantly, Pugmire notes that the the cynical person is attached, again, to the appearance of things (as opposed to their essence). He maintains that "[w]hen cynical I am reluctant to relinquish control over what I have made of things, to take the risk of being fooled. I lack the nerve to be naïve" (2012: 156). This attitude, correlated with the fear of being vulnerable and easily tricked, isolates one from the uniqueness and vibrancy of casual occurrences, inhibiting further the sense of contentment.

The issue of appearance versus essence, as well as the obsessive preference of the former to the latter, can be regarded as a motif in the society of spectacle. As argued before, those who participate in this hypnotic performance value representation, mass-media, celebrity, and overall prestige as the ruling factors of their existence. Spectacular society derives its temporality from the cyclical processes of labour and production in which its members are involved – processes which "promote and maintain the backwardness of everyday life" and amplify the sense of separation (Debord 2009: 58). Therefore, the higher tiers of society (the automatized mechanism itself, along with the elites) symbolically encourage the production of a "pseudocyclical time," where time has become a commodity as well. This artificial temporality is an emanation of the system, in its image, reproduced homogenously

and quantitatively, to the detriment of quality. As an illustration of the cynical attachment to the product of one's imagination, pseudocyclical time is equally spectacular, "as time spent consuming images and . . . as image of the consumption of time" (Debord 2009: 59).

Nevertheless, instead of relying on oneself as the arbiter, or ultimate source of authority, members of specular society are divested of their critical capacity and turned into literal spectators – their only intervention being in the actual dissemination of images, which they do not question. That being so, individuals have no consciousness of their own, sharing rather the will of the system, which is imposed on them in the form of a "false consciousness." The system is cynical in that it only trusts its own products, and it does so obsessively. Its subjects become more uncritically cynical because they receive a second-order, alienating, report of the state of their existential affairs. Their disbelief and bitterness are directed at anything that is not ratified by the system: "Imprisoned in a flattened universe bounded by the screen of the spectacle that has enthralled him, the spectator knows no one but the fictitious speakers who subject him to a one-way monologue about their commodities and the politics of their commodities" (Debord 2009: 79).

Still, this "universal autism" that Debord denounces is akin to the dogmatist end of the spectrum, rather than cynicism as Pugmire views it. This society is indeed intolerant of any alternatives, and it could be said to do so grudgingly, but this might be less a proof of cynicism than one of its hegemonic pretensions. It exhibits not a loss of faith in anything else, but a maniacal self-righteousness which is perpetuated by the seasonal nature of its members' lives. Surely, in this situation, a legitimate doubt would be whether there could still exist cynicism in the sense proposed by Pugmire, considering these circumstances. Cynicism implies a nostalgic vacillation between faith in the object in question and a refusal *not* to be disappointed by its inevitable failure to materialize. The cyclical pattern and the ruthless production-line routine that characterize the society of spectacle would seize, and ultimately nullify, the seed of this vacillation.

**Conclusions**

The features of narcissism and sentimentality do manifest themselves pervasively in this society, both at the level of individuals bound together in the workings of the system, and at that of the system itself. Because of the artificiality of this ensemble, the descriptions of the two emotions apply rather metaphorically, functioning even as the archetypal tropes underpinning the discourses of this society. Regarded in this manner, they define the mode of being, or the general mood, epitomizing the age of consumption.

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# ROMANTIC RECONFIGURATIONS OF GENDER: ETHICAL AND POWER INVERSIONS BETWEEN FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY IN PERCY SHELLEY'S *THE CENCI*

## Introduction: Romanticism and Gender

Though a lot of critical attention has been given in the last few decades to the study of female Romantic writers and to establish how they negotiated gender within the bounds of Romanticism, not so much attention has been given to how they are treated in the works of male Romantic writers, especially those overtly concerned with issues of revolution (Lokke 2004: 1-3), among which Percy Bysshe Shelley was a prominent figure.

This paper proposes to study the relationship between masculinity and femininity in his play, *The Cenci*, by analysing how the two are imagined and the interaction between them. In this context, the focus will be on Beatrice Cenci and the Count, the two most important characters of the play, who illustrate the conflict between the two genders, while also paying attention to how the other characters fit in the scheme. The focus will be on the power conflict between the Count of Cenci, along with the Pope and the justice system, who are working together under common interests, and Beatrice, along with Lucretia and their other allies. This, in turn, reflects a conflict between a patriarchal model of society, supported by a law meant to preserve the status quo, and an oppressed femininity, whose revolt and struggle for freedom is embodied in the Count's murder. The two main characters are the perfect embodiment of how alterity is indispensable for identity. The Count's cruelty is all the more horrifying with the counterbalance of Beatrice's extreme selflessness, and, in turn, her goodness becomes all the more emphasized by his evil, the two thus standing for two opposite poles.

## Identity Constructions

### *The Count of Cenci, Embodiment of Tyranny and Cruelty*

Throughout the play, the Count is described as a ruthless egotistic maniac deeply reliant on patriarchal position, of "[s]trength, wealth, and pride, and lust" (I. 1. 31). He had gone through a "desperate and remorseless manhood" and now had no problem "[s]eeing I please my senses as I list,/ And vindicate that right with force or guile" (Shelley 2001). As such, he follows only an immoral exacerbated hedonism which is vindicated at the expense of others' suffering.

As to his physical traits, all that one learns is of "[h]is thin grey hair, his stern and reverent brow,/ His veined hands crossed on his heaving breast" (Shelley 2001), a picture which would normally suggest innocence, but which is combined with the knowledge that he is a ruthless murderer who pays off the Church to escape unpunished. The combination between his old age and his role of tyrant tends to create ambivalence and mixed feelings in the audience with regard to his murder (Hall 1984: 342).

Moreover, he considers his sadistic egomania generally masculine: "All men delight in sensual luxury,/ All men enjoy revenge; and most exult/ Over the tortures they can never feel/ Flattering their secret peace with others' pain" (Shelley 2001). The only thing that distinguishes him from other men is that he delights "in nothing else" (Shelley 2001). Moreover, for him, manhood remains "to act the thing I thought" (Shelley 2001), i.e. fulfilling his wishes at any cost, raising his hedonism to a grotesque dimension of sadism. In this context, manhood is also a goal to be achieved, a standard which serves as his guidance.

Once more stressing the gender universality of his character, he claims that he is "sinful indeed," but not because of some personal flaw of his, but because "Adam made all so" (Shelley 2001), suggesting that evil is engendered deep within human nature. Beatrice herself also points out that the Count's cruelty and tyranny, although exemplary, is by far not singular, since "Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody" (Shelley 2001)

A more darker side is also implied, linking the Count to a demon, an embodiment of pure evil: "I do not feel as if l were a man,/ But like a fiend appointed to chastise/ The offences of some unremembered world" (Shelley 2001), which is in direct opposition to Beatrice's "angelic" character.

***Beatrice, "the light of life"***

Unlike the stability of the Count's identity, Beatrice's undergoes several processes of change. In the beginning, she is presented as the absolute embodiment of angelic innocence. Her fairness (also a stereotypical trait associated with femininity) and goodness charm many, by embodying an idealized version of kindness and altruism:

> Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
> Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
> A Living flower, but thou hast pitied it
> With needless tears! Fair sister, thou in whom
> Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
> Did not destroy each other! (Shelley 2001)

Her fairness and goodness are presented as having therapeutic qualities, her femininity being seen as a remedy to the Count's evil side: "Where is your gentle

daughter?/ Methinks her sweet looks, which makes all things else/ Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you" (Shelley 2001). This therapeutic miraculous capacity of femininity to turn evil into good and sadness into happiness is deplored as the tragedy of Beatrice's death: "That perfect mirror of pure innocence/ Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,/ Shivered to dust! To see thee, Beatrice,/ Who made all lovely thou didst look upon ..." (Shelley 2001). It is also the angelic side of Beatrice which the Count, in his role of the Other, essentializes as something to be destroyed:

> if her bright loveliness
> Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
> If nursed by thy selectest dew of love
> Such virtues blossom in her as should make
> The peace of life, I pray thee for my sake,
> As thou the common God and Father art
> Of her, and me, and all; reverse that doom! (Shelley 2001)

In the third act, as James Wilson pointed out, the incestuous rape, which lies at the heart of the play because of the transition it brings, determines an inversion of identity between the two, the elements which previously defined the Count now being transmitted unto her. However, as soon as he is killed, Beatrice becomes pure again, being freed of the corruption implanted in her by the Count (Wilson 1978: 80-83). In this scheme, this "tragic vision of identity and alienation" represents the impossibility of pure good not to be corrupted by evil, against its will (Hall 1984: 341).

Moreover, immediately after the rape, Beatrice is no longer able to recognize herself, denying her own identity: "I thought I was that wretched Beatrice/ Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales/ From hall to ball by the entangled hair" (Shelley 2001). Therefore, the rape is seen as a haze that envelops and deprives her of the coherence of her identity, making her wonder "what thing" she is and "what name, what place, what memory" (Shelley 2001) will be hers. This goes hand in hand with an attempt to distance herself from the Beatrice who was merely a victim (Ameer 2013: 15), instead becoming an active subject in her own search for justice.

After the Count is murdered, Beatrice transcends her former self. Instead of simply resuming her former identity, she becomes a "universal" embodiment of justice, a stalwart and relentless avenger of the oppressed, fearless of the power of the corrupt justice system:

> The deed is done,
> And what may follow now regards not me.
> I am as universal as the light;
> Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm
> As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,
> Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock
> But shakes it not. (Shelley 2001)

Transcending her human identity, she becomes a Nemesis, who, knowing that she had sided with the oppressed and had only worked for the greater good, is above moral standards: "She, who alone in this unnatural work,/ Stands like God's angel ministered upon/ By fiends; avenging such a nameless wrong/ As turns black parricide to piety" (Shelley 2001), being thus able to stalwartly face and demolish the credibility of the justice system which had sought to portray her simply as a murderer.

Even in her final moments, after relentlessly arguing for her innocence, despite the torture that this led to (Wilson 1978: 75), she is still perceived as "the one thing innocent and pure/ In this black guilty world" (Shelley 2001) and as the "light of life" (Shelley 2001). Therefore, even as a universal vigilante, she still retains her unique goodness.

***Antithesis between Femininity and Masculinity***

The antithesis between the two has multiple sides. Apart from the Count being the oppressor and Beatrice the oppressed, the Count is also a symbol of "that tyranny, whether domestic, social, political, or religious, which he [Shelley] felt it was his lifelong duty to attack" (Whitman 1959: 249-250). It is also an antithesis of physical traits (the first is old, the other one is young), moral attributes (good versus evil) and features: the Count is defined by darkness and blood, while Beatrice is defined by light and vision (Wilson 1978: 80-82).

Moreover, the Count is sadistic and violent, taking pleasure only at the expense of others' suffering: "I rarely kill the body which preserves, Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,/ Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear/For hourly pain." (Shelley 2001), while Beatrice is the picture of pure innocence and selflessness: "Nor will I leave this home of misery/ Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady/ To whom I owe Life, and these virtuous thoughts,/ Must suffer what I still have strength to share" (Shelley 2001).

Additionally, while the Count enjoys "[s]trength, wealth, and pride, and lust", Beatrice is only a "[w]eak and deserted creature," who cannot do anything except "stand bickering" with her "only friend" (Shelley 2001). Likewise, she, along with Lucretia, are characterized by helplessness and lack of any support: "Shall we therefore find/ No refuge in this merciless wide world?" (Shelley 2001), while the Count boasts with his power and influence, reflecting the typical gender asymmetric power relation.

Additionally, in contrast to the remorseless hedonism shown as typical for men, femininity is presented as being the victim of this oppressive patriarchy, trapped within a domestic prison, unable to enjoy the freedom championed by men:

> Old men are testy and will have their way;
> A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal,
> And live a free life as to wine or women,
> And with a peevish temper may return

To a dull home, and rate his wife and children;
Daughters and wives call this, foul tyranny. (Shelley 2001)

## Ethics and Power

### *Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence*

Within an ethical framework, even though the deed committed under the planning of Beatrice has exactly the same consequence as the one which was to be carried out under the orders of the Pope, the first is considered a heinous crime, while the second is a legal accomplishment of justice. This difference invites the questioning of the very ethical basis of the justice system as envisioned in *The Cenci*. Accordingly, why is the Pope entitled to dispose of a tyrant's life by "unforbidden means" (Shelley 2001), while Beatrice, Lucretia, Marzio and Olimpio must pay with their lives for it?

On the one hand, the play shows a personal, apparently arbitrary justice, based on no laws or rules, represented by the members of the Cenci family who plot against the patriarch, which would theoretically allow unchecked violence. Regarding this, René Girard makes a point that the judicial system is in fact one of the most important elements of a modern society, exactly because it is the only legitimate means of stopping such a form of violence (1977: 16). In the play, however, this is overturned, as the apparently objective and neutral justice system is corrupt. It is also the difference between a form of justice in which oppressed women like Beatrice and Lucretia also have a say in their own fate and a form of justice dictated entirely by men. Therefore, the power of the patriarchal system resides in the legitimacy to make use of violence, while forbidding this to others.

### *The Alliance of Patriarchal Oppression*

In the play, the unforgiving patriarchal system of oppression is formed of a direct chain between the Count of Cenci, who, as the father of the family, occupies the role of domestic and aristocratic tyrant, the other nobles and the Church, whom the Count has bribed and with whom he is in close allegiance. In his domineering stance, the Count is unopposed, as "Few dare to stand between their grave and me" (Shelley 2001).

This system embodied by the Count is not a singular case of such tyranny, but only a manifestation of a larger phenomenon (Cho 2017: 39). Therefore, apart from his complicity with the Church, the Count also benefits from the support of other nobles, who are conscious that the system can only be perpetrated through their acquiescence. Accordingly, when there "ensues a sudden rift between Cenci and the confused assembly of male Catholics (I.3.91-2)," the latter only chastise the Count with ad hominem arguments, otherwise making no effort to amend their ways and change the system (Cho 2017: 44).

As for the complicity between the domestic and the religious, besides the material benefit from the Count's bribes, the Pope is also trying to protect the patriarchy "which is a shadow of his own, defended through the full force of legal jurisdiction" (Cho 2017: 50). This does not only rob the justice system of any potential claim to ethical legitimacy, but it also shows how the status quo is maintained: any member speeds to the defence of the other, in order to make sure that no link in the chain is weakened. It is exactly this complicity which the Count is relying on when he advises the other nobles to maintain this oppression: "I hope my good friends here/ Will think of their own daughters-or perhaps/ Of their own throats'-before they lend an ear/ To this wild girl" (Shelley 2001), knowing that a destabilisation of his authority will also affect theirs. To discredit Beatrice's claim, she is associated with a stereotypical attribute commonly given to femininity: "wild," effectively labelling her as unworthy of being listened to.

It is within the same note that the Count decides to enact the rape as a method of "taming" (subduing) Beatrice: "Beast that thou art! Fair and yet terrible!/ I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,/ Now get thee from my sight!" (Shelley 2001). The "civilization" opposed to Beatrice's "wild" nature is here seen as a set of restrictive norms governing power, the status quo of patriarchal power. Little attention has been given to the reason why the Count rapes Beatrice since his evil seems to somehow go unquestioned, as self-obvious. But, the rape, far from being an instinctive sexual impulse, is something the Count has "decreed to do" (Shelley 2001), in order to prevent her from escaping the patriarchal system of power, as she had attempted to do in her public defiance at the banquet. This way, sexual power over her body implies symbolic power over her as well. When the rape is insufficient to subdue Beatrice, "[a] rebel to her father and her God" (Shelley 2001), he considers to "tame her with chains and famine" (Shelley 2001).

Thus, the Count is convinced that God cannot but fulfil all his wishes: "The world's Father/ Must grant a parent's prayer against his child/ Be he who asks even what men call me." (Shelley 2001); since God is "the world's Father," he believes that an unbreakable alliance of mortal and divine patriarchy unites them. In the face of such an oppressive system, Beatrice starts to view God as a passive witness to her injustice: "I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights/ And lifted up to God, the father of all,/ Passionate prayers" (Shelley 2001), which, at the climax of her desperation, will make her revolted against God's role as a patriarch: "Thou, great God,/ Whose image upon earth a father is,/ Dost thou indeed abandon me!" (Shelley 2001).

***Power Inversions***

Above all, the political system which legitimizes the Count's authority is based on "the naturalization of male aggression and female victimization" (Ameer 2013: 8). Accordingly, all throughout the play, the Cenci acts with the absolute conviction that

patriarchy alone is enough to legitimize his deeds. Therefore, his hate towards Beatrice, "a most unnatural thing," is stirred by her mere disobedience to him. He desires to be obeyed unconditionally, since his cursing of his daughter occurs right after she had refused to come at his summoning. In his epistemology, there is no worse crime than denial of paternal authority, supplemented by the fact that his daughter had dared question his authority in front of the guests at the banquet, risking to undermine his already-dented social reputation.

But, in the ensuing conflict, this system is severely shaken and its credibility destroyed. While the Count makes use of his vast wealth and aristocratic title to acquire wealth and power, ruthlessly crushing his opponents, Beatrice similarly uses her feminine charm to coerce others into carrying out her will. Thus, it is she who convinces and pays off the murderers, therefore instating herself in a position of power. Equally significant is the conflict over the ownership of the name, both the Count and Beatrice wishing to claim it for their own (Cho 2017: 39), corresponding to the overall battle for influence. As Lucretia points out, Beatrice is the only one brave enough to oppose the horrors of the Count's tyranny, "Until this hour thus you have ever stood/ Between us and your father's moody wrath/ Like a protecting presence: your firm mind/ Has been our only refuge and defence" (Shelley 2001), acting as an angelic freedom fighter.

***Discrediting the Patriarchy: Beatrice's Exposure of the Justice System***

By denouncing "human laws," Beatrice also denounces the patriarchal system which has created and is maintaining them, through torture, blind obedience and cruelty. Thus, her tragedy is that "[i]n this mortal world/ There is no vindication and no law/ Which can adjudge and execute the doom/ Of that through which I suffer" (Shelley 2001), i.e. she is left outside the protection of the law. Faced with this partnership between tyrants and the institutions supposed to keep them in check, she is forced to ponder: "But if one, like this wretch,/ Should mock, with gold, opinion, law and power?/ If there be no appeal to that which makes/ The guiltiest tremble?" (Shelley 2001). In the agony of not being represented by the institutions, her last resort is to justify her deeds through appeal to a transcendental system of justice based on divinity (Hall 1984: 344).

Even after the Count is removed, Beatrice must still face the system of oppression, which she does through absolute stoutness and resistance, refusing to yield to the coercive power of the judges. In supporting her innocence until the end, she also denies the legitimacy of the patriarchal system to decide her fate.

Her refusal equally stands for a movement of social liberation. In rebuking the justice system, she argues that it too should be subject to the kind of transcendental justice to which she adheres, instead of her being guilty of not obeying their structure of power:

will human laws,
Rather will ye who are their ministers, ·
Bar all access to retribution first,
And then, when heaven doth interpose to do
What ye neglect, arming familiar things
To the redress of an unwonted crime,
Make ye the victims who demanded it
Culprits? 'Tis ye are culprits! (Shelley 2001)

Additionally, even though being condemned in the end, despite all her bravery and relentless efforts to be acquitted, she manages to destroy the credibility of the justice system by being condemned without having even confessed (Ameer 2013: 22), thus demonstrating its arbitrariness, as the judge simply decides to "Let the Pope's pleasure then be done" (Shelley 2001). By convincing the judges of her innocence and yet still being executed by direct order of the Pope, she is exposing the trial as only an institutional embodiment of the most important patriarch, i.e. the Pope's arbitrary desires.

Though the justice system wants to seem objective and neutral, an ideal of righteousness, it is exactly this objectivity that Beatrice denies by convincing the judges of her innocence and still being sentenced to death. In fact, as the Pope himself admits, the sentence is merely meant as a disciplinary example that will prevent the further erosion of patriarchal authority:

Parricide grows so rife:
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs:
Authority, and power, and hoar hair
Are grown crimes capital. (Shelley 2001)

**Conclusion**

To conclude, *The Cenci* presents a vision of patriarchy as being an oppressive and unethical system, deeply immoral, corrupt and aligned with evil. While stereotypes about femininity are maintained, such as the angelic nature of Beatrice, along with her "loveliness" and beauty, she is transformed into a brave and relentless heroine of justice who is able to challenge the status quo and the power structure in order to defy tyranny. Though no easy moral conclusion can be reached regarding the legitimacy of Beatrice's deed, it is hard to deny that she inspires admiration for her bravery and stoutness in a system of power controlled entirely by men.

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# TRANSMEDIAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE GOTHIC

## Introduction

The Gothic is a term which comprises a wide range of meanings. It can refer to the Gothic people, an extinct Germanic tribe which spoke the Gothic language, as well as a style of architecture that first appeared in the 12th century in France. The term also defines a style of fiction that appeared as early as 1764 with *The Castle of Otranto,* written by Horace Walpole. The novel was the first one to combine the elements that we may now classify as "gothic," initiating a whole literary genre of its own through merging terror with medievalism. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, the gothic genre gained considerable popularity, with the help of authors such as Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, William Thomas Beckford, etc. As time passed, this genre not only spread through novels, it also made its way into poetry with authors such as William Blake or Thomas Hardy, paintings done by artists like Caspar David Friedrich, plays, operas, short stories. The genre would even appear in magazines or newspapers, television shows and series such as *The Munsters* (1964-1966), *The Addams Family* (1964–1966), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), music and music videos or video games, which will be the focus of this paper. I argue that the gothic has found a new medium in which it can flourish again, thanks to its unique mix of features, namely the play between the abject and the sublime, as opposed to its cousin genre, Lovecraftian Horror, to which it will be compared.

Since the late 19th century, more and more types of mass media have been produced, such as films, comic books, radio, television, video games and the Internet, each of them being praised for its new potential, or reviled for its possible harms. As such, "transmedial" refers to "across media," or the process of transferring a piece of information (a narrative in this case) from one medium to another. This is actually pretty common, especially in our times. We have all heard of book adaptations, theatrical adaptations, musicals and, more recently, video games. My claim is that the gothic genre and gothic horror are suited for transmediality and have been successfully transposed into other media, especially the horror games niche, ensuring their continuity, quality and preservation.

## Gothic, sublime, abjection, and horror

The *gothic genre* makes use of two very important elements that give the style its recognizable essence: the sublime and the abject. According to E. Burke (1757), the *Sublime* is a "state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree

of horror" and "the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other" (think a huge dark cathedral, an imposing castle, a queen's chamber, etc.) and its role is to "create a hypnotizing sense of focus." One way in which the sublime can be achieved is through metonymy, a literary device through which one thing is used to stand in for another. An example of this could be extreme weather conditions such as thunderstorms, blizzards or harsh wind that underline the exaggerated feelings and emotional intensity that the characters feel, as well as lending tension to the plot. Clanking chains, howling dogs, scraping of knives, locked doors, ringing bells - all these create and communicate an atmosphere of suspense and foreboding in the reader. The gothic aims to stimulate feelings within the reader to such an extent as to create a terror/fear reaction, a response that may also be stimulated by the abject.

The term *abjection* was used by Julia Kristeva to describe the process in which horror is created by presenting one with what one refuses to accept about oneself:

> A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not signify death. In the presence of signified death—a flat encephalograph, for instance—I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being" (Kristeva 1982:3).

More precisely the abject is the horror of facing our own fears.

H.P. Lovecraft defines *horror* as "[t]he oldest and strongest emotion of mankind." It provokes a physical, emotional and psychological response in the reader that causes them to react with fear. Elizabeth Barrette also states:

> We began to feel restless, to feel something missing: the excitement of living on the edge, the tension between hunter and hunted. So we told each other stories through the long, dark nights...when the fires burned low, we did our best to scare the daylights out of each other. The rush of adrenaline feels good. Our hearts pound, our breath quickens, and we can imagine ourselves on the edge. (1997)

She develops her idea in her essay "Elements of Aversion," explaining that the world feels a particular need for horror stories and fiction, and talks about its impact. The gothic genre is abundant in horror and terror elements: ruthless and mindless monsters, vampires, dangerous entities, bizarre creatures and objects, insane people, gory and ominous scenes, unexplainable events. Gothic literature generally makes use of realistic descriptions to portray all these elements, relying on a narrator to convey this horror feeling.

Ultimately, it is a rather physical and visceral approach to the genre, making the reader imagine and visualize the threats presented in literary works. When it comes to video games, the tools used to achieve the purpose of the horror genre shift

somewhat from entirely basing the effect through descriptions, to making use of a wider variety of the player's senses, cognition and reflexes. Horror is a complex genre in itself that has been adapted into many varieties of literature. However, I can argue that two major branches of it are Gothic Horror and Lovecraftian Horror, both aiming to unsettle the reader, but with major differences that are relevant when it comes to transmedial approaches.

**Parallel between lovecraftian horror and gothic horror**

Gothic horror relies on visual imagery, soundscape and immediate threats in order to stimulate visceral impulses, while lovecraftian horror relies on incomprehensible, immense, unavoidable and distant threats in order to create a feeling of despair. I chose to make this comparison to highlight the reasons gothic horror is well suited for transmedial approaches while the indescribable lovecraftian horror could be just that: indescribable, left to a reader's imagination. When reading books, we generally rely on a narrator to convey the setting, what characters think, know, and their feelings to us. This narrator can be reliable or not. However, even a first person narration presents a higher degree of detachment than, for instance, watching a movie and being subjected to prepared scenes, a soundtrack and sound effects, etc. This is arguably because much is left to the reader's imagination, which is why, for instance, the thought of blood might not have the same impact as its image. However, the attempt of representing Cthulhu may come across as clumsy, or might subvert one's expectation of the intended intangibility and unfathomable nature as otherwise presented in writing. There is a considerable number of works that deal with lovecraftian Horror - movies such as *The Call of Cthulhu* (2005), *The Thing from Another World* (1951), *Necronomicon: Book of Dead* (1993), as well as video games: *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* (2006), *Bloodborne* (2015), *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* (2011), and the list goes on. However, the list of works that are based on gothic horror is much longer compared to the lovecraftian one due to the fact that, I believe, gothic horror is more efficient, effective and impactful in its visual representations, be they movies or video games.

**The virtual medium**

The virtual medium presents three major features: interactivity, involvement and consequence. I believe the gothic and the virtual medium are well suited for each other, mainly because of these properties. Think about it this way – would exploring the "House of the Seven Gables" in a 3D render not be better than simply imagining it? Would the portrait of Dorian Grey have a greater impact on the audience if they themselves would have to observe its subtle changes instead of being relayed through the text? These are interactivity and involvement, defining characteristics especially for video games, in which you, as a player, take control of your character, decide the

course of its actions, make choices that control and lead the narrative in various directions. You invest yourself into your character, perhaps even mirroring features of your own life and experiences. The sense of having personalized the digital being that you've created and control gives a feeling of attachment and active involvement. As for consequence in literary works, I argue that there can be no real sense of danger in observing a character's terrifying situation other than the reader's empathy, while there can be a much higher level of dread in video games where the fear of consequence is present (having your character killed, losing the game, etc.), conveying the aspect that the gothic genre aims to create: a simulation of strong emotions (especially of dread) through the sublime, the abject, and many other tools.

Video games (with emphasis on the horror genre, which is by far the most abundant in gothic elements) base their effect on the player through these properties: you get involved in your character as you create and control it and you face the fear of losing your progress through the game, hence creating suspension, fear and tension, driving its player into a hypnotizing sense of focus and immersion .

Perhaps this can explain why lovecraftian horror has enjoyed relatively stable influx of new literary and cinematic creations, while the scarcity of gothic literature in the late 19th century and early 20th century has been supplanted by a recent flow of various other media, such as video games, effectively breathing new life into the genre's untapped potential. Gothic horror elements can be easily used as tools for creating effective and impactful video games, making the Gothic extremely suitable for transmediality.

**The gothic experience in horror video games**

Horror video games attempt to induce a feeling of fright and dread into the player with the situation they are presented or given in the game. They focus on disturbing images and situations, testing the player's ability to surpass certain fears and challenges in order to achieve a goal (completing a quest, killing a certain enemy, etc.). There are multiple variations of horror games that embraced different aspects of the gothic.

We could take *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* (2011) and analyze the rather strong gothic features that it is based on in order to deliver a dark, terrifying narrative to the player. Its opening scene starts as follows: "In late August 1839, Daniel, a young man from London, awakens in the dark and empty halls of the Prussian Brennenburg Castle with little to no memory about himself or his past." We start off with a typical, recognizable gothic plot. Through the entirety of the game, you control this "Daniel" figure through a first-person view and control his fate - he suffers from induced amnesia, a shadow follows him, terrifying abominations await him through the chambers of the immense castle, and you are to successfully pass the obstacles, puzzles and challenges in order to finish the game and bring him to the person that started it all.

The setting is a huge, old, abandoned castle with a vast history and background to it, dark, medieval chambers and corridors, ominous basements and sewers, eerie prisons, rooms filled with ancient arcane magics. In terms of characters, Daniel is a man who struggles to follow the notes he left for himself before he took a potion that would cause him amnesia. Baron Alexander isthe owner of the castle and of all that's happened in it. The Gatherers are monstrous beings who are Alexander's servants and Daniel's primary enemies, whom he can only flee from.

The game's mechanics do not allow the player to fight its enemies, unlike conventional games. It forces the player into a state of constant vigilance and heightened senses, creating the ideal atmosphere and state of mind that the gothic genre aims to produce. Not only does the plot of the game mimic other plot structures of gothic literary works, but its gameplay mechanics enhance the need of the player to immerse themselves into the terrifying, gothic universe and its features to fully enjoy the game.

## Conclusion

There are many more examples of video games and other media rather than novels that prove to be suitable for expressing and conveying the gothic idea. The unique properties of video games allow players to immerse themselves into the gothic universe, providing them with a side of its features that hasn't been accessible in the literary form: visualizing and experiencing them. I have attempted to show that video games make a strong claim for the most suitable means of conveying the gothic genre - through their interactivity, involvement and consequence, and the fact that the gothic genre overall was attributed more sides through its transmedial nature in the last decades.

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