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Editor:
Claudia Ioana Doroholschi

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Faculty of Letters, Theology and History
West University of Timişoara
Bul. V. Pârvan 4
300223 Timişoara, Romania

CONTENTS

Cătălina-Teodora Andronache
1st year, Irish Studies MA
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

TOM PAULIN:
THE POETRY OF PARTITION, BRITAIN AND THE "JUST STATE" OF NORTHERN IRELAND

As one of his academic fellows would say with regards to Tom Paulin, "free speech is tested to the limits when it becomes unpopular" (Foster 2002) Such a remark would perfectly describe the literary, social and political figure that this Northern Irish poet and critic is.

Born in Leeds, but brought up in Belfast, as the only child of a Northern Irish Protestant mother and a Scottish father, Tom Paulin has attained the reputation of a powerful free thinker and speaker; although he is of Unionist Protestant background he isn't against Republicanism; alongside Brian Friel, Stephen Rea, Seamus Heaney and such others, Tom Paulin was part of the multi-cultural and political project bearing the name of Field Day Theatre. He believes in the existence of a "Fifth Province" as a place founded on equality, justness and civic and common sense:

> My own critical position is eclectic and is founded on an idea which has as yet no formal or institutional existence. It assumes the existence of a non-sectarian, republican state which comprises the whole isle of Ireland. It also holds to the idea of sanctuary, and to the concept of "the fifth province". The other, invisible province offers a platonic challenge to the nationalistic image of the four green fields. (Paulin cited in Kennedy-Andrews 2008:183)

Paulin is known to express his views – especially the political ones – with such passion and largeness that he stirs never-ending controversies. It is Paulin's conviction that poetry should stand for something, should awaken both minds and spirits and achieve exceptional resonance.

Tom Paulin is considered one of Northern Ireland's best. His poetry of Partition projects an unadorned and often combative reality, a reality which neither the Irish nor the English can, in good conscience, deny. This kind of poetry does not reminisce about the old traditional and fantastic Irish ways. In his poems style and verse become the tools for the expression of dissent. He uses language as a means of redefining nationalism as neither pertaining to the left nor to the right, neither Protestant Unionist, nor Catholic Republican, at least not in the traditional way. It also shines light over the actions and reactions of the English in the matter of the Troubles.

His critique of the British world is both acerbic and unrestrained and he seems to be able to express it best through his subversive poetry. It seems that some sort of radicalism exhales from his writings and one may identify some socialist traces in the DNA of some of his poems. This assessment comes as nothing uncommon of Paulin, as he was part of the Trotskyist Socialist Labour League and also a member of the Labour Party. He is known to admire the writers of the Russian Gulag era, who unlike the artists of Northern Ireland, have been recognised and rewarded for their sacrifices, and he has oftentimes associated Protestant Ulster with Stalinist Russia.

It is important to state here that Tom Paulin's poetry of Partition does not subscribe to the art for art's sake principle, nor does it mean to flatter or impress, to establish one side or the other as the essential truth-bearer. He does nothing to aestheticize violence or to powder it so as to influence opinions, but makes use of it in its raw, untrimmed and unsavoury form. "For Paulin, ideas of home rooted in history, land, language, tribe ancestry and race memory harbour a dangerous essentialism" explains the same Elmer Kennedy-Andrews (2008: 180).

The paper aims at approaching a number of poems from various volumes published in the years within the extent of the period of the Troubles. The analysis will be centred on the effects of the Partition in late 1960s Northern Ireland and also on the response of the English government to this stringent problem happening on what was to remain after all a part of the United Kingdom.

The Partition of Ireland happened in 1921 and it meant that the Irish were to be legally separated between the Republicans, living in the south, in the Irish Free State which later came to form the Republic of Ireland, and the Unionists, living preponderantly in the north of the island, an area known to the day as Northern Ireland. Although they enjoy some autonomy, the Northern Irish are still part of the United Kingdom, and partly under British rule; they are also considered British citizens. Therefore, when referring to the notion of "British", this paper will automatically speak of both English and Northern Irish elements.

The Troubles is the way in which the violent sectarian conflict between Protestants and Catholics, Unionists and Republicans came to be known to the world. The year of 1969 marked the beginning of the Troubles, which lasted until 1998, when the Irish and British politicians and military finally managed to reach a peace agreement, known as the Good Friday Agreement. During the thirty years of conflict, both loyalist and republican paramilitaries had tried to attain power through any means available to them and chase away the soldiers sent in with the purpose of both levelling the situation and trying to protect the civilians.

The poem "A Just State" (Paulin 2010) was first published in the volume *A State of Justice* in 1977, alongside another of the poems discussed in this paper, "Settlers". In the history of the Troubles the decade of the '70s was one of the most violent in both Northern Irish and English memory. According to an account given by Tom Wharton, former British Army soldier, only the year of 1970 was marked by

"170 bombings, 213 shootings and 2 RUC officers, 13 civilians and 10 terrorists killed" (Wharton 2008: 65). These were the statistics that British officials and civilians would live to see gravely topped by the following years, a total number of approximately 530 British military personnel being most often killed either by IRA snipers or bombings until 1980 (Wharton 2008:502-521). In the same period of time a staggering number of 1,186 civilians would have given their lives to the conflict. The publishing year of Paulin's *A State of Justice* was accompanied by "1,143 bombings, 1081 shootings and the deaths of 29 soldiers, 14 RUC officers, 59 civilians and 10 terrorists" (Wharton 2008:248).

"A Just State" faces the reader with a grim image of darkness, war and chaos. Paulin makes use of the city as the appropriate setting for the modern means of a world dehumanized. The title of the poem may be seen as an allusion to Plato's Socratic dialogue in the *Republic*, which explores the concepts of justice, injustice, the condition of the individual in a just state. The poem is clearly sarcastic, a vivid and enraged reaction to the status quo thrown out of reason in Northern Ireland during its troubled years, a representation of the social and political impasse that, like Plato in his Republic, Paulin tries to make sense of. It speaks of the many ways in which the people fighting on either side of the struggle misunderstood the concept and process of creating a reasonable and just state.

From the first stanza one can understand how much power history and memory have over people; how it is that the past becomes the present, simply by repeating itself. "Its memory is perfect" may be seen as a suggestion of the closed circle in which violence begets violence and that some mistaken attitudes were perpetuated from generation to generation in Northern Ireland's culture of nationalism. Tom Paulin does not support the type of nationalist line of thought that would favour the concept of *nation* over the concept of *state*, because, in Irish heritage, the first is bound to entrap the latter in a circle of parochial, ethnic, sectarian violence. The Law, spelled with capital "L," could be the law of God, hence a clear reference to the religious turmoil that swiped the country after Partition. This law, in such a context, is perverted and it does not work with or for the state, but it can only bring it down by allowing its people to kill each other in its name. It is also the judicial law which has been misused and interpreted in order to favour only a part of the population, namely the Protestant Unionists. Again, one key-cause of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

It seems in the end that the rebellious, the ones who hold hands awaiting for their sentence, entrusted in the justness of their cause, are the ones betrayed by it. They are betrayed perhaps because it is a pseudo-cause; it forges false unity, for the sake of sheer violence.

The second stanza is a bare representation of a world in conflict on every possible level. The fact that the frontiers are shown to have "sealed against its enemies" may suggest that everybody was in the end considered an enemy of the state, in all the confusion created. Somehow such a situation had the power to choke

allies and enemies alike. They were forcefully kept there, by their impossibility to change their reality, something which makes the whole idea of the battle seem even more futile and pointless.

In the last stanza the concept of justice restated by the mentioning of "bare wood and limewashed bricks, /Institutional fixtures, uniforms, /The shadows of watchtowers on public squares" (Paulin 2010). Instantly one may think of a despotic environment, where people are constrained through such institutionalized tools. One may think of Stalinist Russia. The militarised, cold landscape that is supposed to provide with the implementation of law and order is a hoax and it only adds to the general claustrophobic atmosphere that the text evokes. The Troubles are, therefore, institutionalized and they seem to last a lifetime. The reader is led to believe that justice is by no means the higher objective, but a "greased trap" because it has failed its purposes, the people and therefore the state.

In "Settlers" Paulin shifts the focal point towards farther times, towards what may be considered to be one of the roots of the Irish-English dissention, the Plantation of Ulster. Describing the historical process, the poem depicts how Scottish Presbyterians were brought from Glasgow and how the process of colonization took place, how they "began to belong", slowly replacing the men and women who were sometimes forced to flee their homes into mainland Europe. Through the line "Nighlandings on the Antrim coast" Paulin may refer to how the counties of Antrim and Down were colonized by landlords unofficially, privately. "Sundry kirks and tabernacles in that country" may suggest how the colonization eventually led to the religious circumstances that propelled the instauration of the Troubles. But, read in another, less remote and much more practical key, one notices the presence of guns and the name of McCullough. McCullough is a variation of McCulloch, a name which might have been firstly used inside the Strathclyde Kingdom placed in the area that covers today the south of Scotland and the north of England. The Scottish surname is a direct reference to the Protestant paramilitaries, through their ancestry. Therefore, the landings speak about the smuggling of guns inside Northern Ireland under the cover of night. The lorry is warm because the engine is left running. The engine is left running because they need to leave the place as fast as possible, in the utmost quietness. The illegal weapons are being hidden away under the floors inside Presbyterian churches: "Now snug in their oiled paper below the floors/ Of sundry *kirks* and tabernacles in that country" (Paulin 2010).

The Partition and its effects are again conveyed in the poem "Line on the Grass", first published in the volume *The Strange Museum* in 1980. It is interesting to notice the manner in which Paulin manages to attach countless layers of meaning to seemingly ordinary words. For someone who is not familiar with the background from which this poem comes, the line on the grass may be just that. The style is oblique and it obscures the meanings. It sounds simple, mundane and, although one can identify the tense atmosphere of the poem, the depth in message could elude any casual reader. Yet for those who have lived through the history of the poem or

are familiar with the events which it describes, the line on the grass is clearly the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, "a sweep of broken ground/ between two guarded towns". It is the place where shadows find their way into one's mind, the shadow of doubt and distrust. And it is rightly described so, because during the period between early 70s to late 80s, vehicles would be stopped, people would be checked, suspected of being terrorists or perhaps in connection to some of the rebels, smuggling goods from one state to the other, a permanent state of paranoia would reign. These are only the disturbing realities of the Troubles, during which the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic was constantly under British military control.

Throughout the whole poem we are faced with what looks like a town devastated by a siege, we've got "A tank engine rusting/in the long grass,", "a burnt-out customs post/ on an asphalt apron", "civilians at four o'clock" (Paulin 2010). Still, the line on the grass may be interpreted as a less palpable, material border. It may simply refer to the many degrees of separation between people who lived in the same town, in the same neighbourhood, but would not share religious and/or political beliefs and, therefore, would be consumed by the same anxiety and paranoia as those being controlled at gunpoint by the Army. Last but not least, many of those who had no political affiliation whatsoever were naturally caught in the crossfire, finding themselves forcefully part of one side of the conflict or the other. The angst cedes to them as well.

Paulin conjures up in this poem the feelings of uncertainty and never-ending suspicion and mistrust of everything and everyone, of "The men riding black bikes stiffly along the road" (Paulin 2010). This gives the impression of weariness and uncertainty. There is also some sort of atemporality that Paulin introduces very subtly to the reader through the lines: "This looks so fixed, it could/ be anytime" (Paulin 2010). It calls again to the impression that the Troubles are somehow ubiquitous, consuming energies in their path. Such timelessness may be correspondent to the feeling of exhaustion that came with the fear that the war was never going to be over. But it may also be indicative of how the people began to get used to the presence of the army and how conflict became to be accepted as some sort of normality.

"Surveillances", also published for the first time in the 1980 volume *The Strange Museum*, depicts once again the liberty-constraining, socially restrictive and abusive environment of a place kept under constant control, under constant surveillance. It may be that through this poem Tom Paulin ascertains the condition of the poet, the one who must identify himself with the inmate in the prison camp, with the soldier headed towards another violent district, with those watching the helicopters circling around the town. A poet must be all these in order to distance himself from the "culture of bungalows/ And light verse" (Paulin 2010), and to depict reality for his art to have a true purpose. Otherwise, the poet is unworthy of his gifts. Moreover, when violence causes silence, then the unjust state has won. Casualties of

discrimination and inequality are not counted only in the number of the dead and the injured, but also in the number of those who refuse to speak up against unfairness or let fear muffle their voice: "And if you would swap its functions/ For a culture of bungalows/ And light verse,/ You know this is one/ Of the places you belong in,/ *And that its public uniform/ Has claimed your service*" (Paulin 2010).

The last approached poem of Tom Paulin is "Desertmartin", published in 1983 in the volume named *Liberty Tree*. Desertmartin is a small village in Co. Londonderry, Northern Ireland. It is a predominantly Protestant place where, in 1981, on the night of April 1, "Ian Paisley gathered five hundred men brandishing their gun licenses and vowing to oppose the growing entente between Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland." (Hufstader 2008: 200)

Paulin's "Desertmartin" shines evocative light over some of the geographical dimensions of Protestantism, "between Draperstown and Magherafelt", the place where the word of God had lost its meaning and where the people have reduced spirituality to "a few perched certainties" and "a crop of Bibles"; one possible translation for this could be the following: simplified, gratuitous religious malevolence. Similar to "Surveillances", "Desertmartin" reveals the poet's condition as "the owl of Minerva", which in ancient Roman belief was, just like the goddess Minerva-Athena in Greek mythology, the symbol of wisdom, of knowledge, and the protector of the arts. Such a sacred creature and the values for which it stands is forced by demagogy to keep itself at bay "in a hired car", because when faced with the Law of sectarian violence, no knowledge detains any sort of power.

Paulin also concretizes the status of the British army, through the squaddie, a most ordinary soldier, a random man, a no-name thrown into a conflict about which, very often, he knew too little. Through words such as "happy and expandable", "useful thing", "almost at home", Paulin exteriorizes an idea which identifies the English, Scottish and not rarely Irish soldiers sent in the heart of the conflict as unknowing, sometimes ignorant, expendable cannon fodder, also victims of demagogy. Doing their jobs, they were more often than not poorly equipped, trained and briefed in comparison to the situations they would encounter on the ground. This would make violence almost always inevitable. The line "Almost at home, and yet not quite, not quite" (Paulin 2010) projects a powerful image of a distorted and denatured world for both the soldiers and the civilians. They were fighting a war on what each party believed to be their homeland and this created confusion and distrust.

Ian Paisley, in Paulin's view the Big Man, leads wee people, the people who followed blindly a radicalized faith, as toxic and threatening as a "Masculine Islam." Although a Protestant himself, Paulin denounces this kind of Protestantism as a "theology of rifle-butts and executions (...) where the spirit dies". It could easily be extrapolated to nowadays situations of terrorism. He condemns such a culture, by calling it the "culture of twigs and bird-shit", he gives Protestantism no hope of surviving. On account of this whole poem one can discuss the problem of belonging.

Who did the people in Northern Ireland really belong to, as it was obvious that they had two very distinct notions of the place to which they *wanted* to belong? If the Ulster Protestants – to which Paulin refers here – were part of the British Kingdom, then how did Northern Ireland become so much of a hell-rising land and why does it feel like this region has been more or less ejected by the motherland? How were they treating the Ulster Unionists and what was the Unionists' treatment of the British?

> Looked at from another perspective, though, Paulin's self-contradiction skilfully reproduces the tonalities of the culture which they represent. At the dead centre of a faith, Ulster men cling to a dead faith; they cannot give it up, and they cannot revive it. They are loyal to England, but England is not loyal to them; they cannot give England up and they cannot rejoin it (...) (Hufstader 2015: 202).

Tom Paulin seems to be very much a man who will make it particularly hard for anyone to agree with him. He is a stubborn individual and a very intense critic, most certainly unsettling many of his readers. His points of view often sound quite unorthodox. However, his poetry, as extreme as it may seem at times, forces its audience to take a better look at life and the consequences of one's action. His poetry of Partition, although sharp and somehow geometrical, many times too hard to permeate, is what seems to do justice to Northern Ireland. You grind your teeth and close your eyes, as if the apple you just bit tastes more sour than sweet. However, this sort of experience is the only one offering an honest account and painting a vivid picture of the changing world of the Troubles, while allowing for the survival and development of the poet as a human being and as an artist.

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Luiza Ciobanu
2nd year, American Studies
West University of Timișoara

THE WEAKNESSES OF THE AMERICAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY

The Constitution of the United States was one of the most revolutionary political documents in the history of humanity. It was so well-penned and -planned that it is still today the basis and engine of the American economy, society and politics. The Constitution also ensures the existence and functioning of the system of checks and balances, through which neither branch of the government can assume too much power over the other two. Their powers are supposed to balance each other out through this intricate system of constitutional laws and regulations. However, many weak points have been observed in the system of checks and balances, so that a justified question of whether today's separation of powers is still efficient enough must be raised.

Although many system vulnerabilities might be argued to exist, this essay will argue that there is insufficient review of the Supreme Court by the Legislative and Executive branches. This analysis will be done through the lens of the case study of corporate personhood. Firstly, there will be a short analysis of the historical cases that, over time, provided corporations with human rights and of the systemic circumstances that allowed for these decisions to be made by the Supreme Court. Secondly, this study will analyze the possible issues that could arise on the American political scene from corporations having certain human rights.

We will begin by briefly explaining what a corporation is. A corporation is defined as a legal entity/person which is owned by one or more shareholders, but is considered a separate and distinct entity from that of its owners. The owners share in the profit and losses of the corporation, but have limited liability to creditors. A corporation can "buy, sell, own, enter into a contract, and sue other persons and firms, and be sued by them. It can do good and be rewarded, and can commit offence and be punished." A corporation also has continuity of existence beyond the life spans of its owner(s) (Business Dictionary, n. d.). The fact that an impersonal economic entity is separated in its responsibilities from its owner(s) raises concerns that we will discuss throughout this study.

Next, we will explain how corporations came to receive the status of a "legal person". When talking about the historical views on corporate personhood, there were two main theories of corporate personhood developed in the nineteenth century: corporations as natural entities (persons) and as artificial entities. In Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad 1886, a corporation was decreed to have

fourteenth amendment rights because it was considered a person. This is the first historical moment when the theory of a corporation as an artificial entity has been refuted in favour of it being a natural entity, that is, a person. This case was cited as a precedent for granting corporations other constitutional rights later on (Mayer 1990: Ch. "The Rise of Corporate Theory").

What we need to look at closely in the Santa Clara case is how those decisions were made and why, to understand how the weaknesses in the system of checks and balances led to this outcome. In this case the Southern Pacific Railroad managed to invoke fourteenth amendment rights to avoid state regulation, which imposed higher property taxes for corporations than for individuals (Mayer 1990: Ch. "The Corporate Legal Response"). We notice two things that the Supreme Court has done here without any review from the other branches of the government (or other institutions). Firstly, this was done without hearing argument and secondly, the Supreme Court declared corporations persons to be able to grant them a constitutional right, overruling state regulations (Nader, Mayer 1988). This shows that the Supreme Court has the power to interpret the Constitution in many subjective ways and overrule state, and even federal, regulations, without being questioned. The Supreme Court has the power of judicial review over the other two branches of the government, but no branch truly and thoroughly assesses the decisions that the Supreme Court makes.

The following cases have successively granted for the first time several constitutional protections to corporations (Mayer 1990: Appendix):

– Noble v. Union River Logging Railroad (1893) – Fifth Amendment property-oriented due process clause

– Lochner v. New York (1908) – freedom of contract based on the fourteenth amendment

– Hale v. Henkel (1906) – Fourth Amendment (the first time a corporation was granted intangible Bill of Rights protection)

– Armour Packing Co. v. United States (1908) – Sixth Amendment (right to jury trial in criminal case)

– Ross v. Bernhard (1970) – Seventh Amendment (corporations have the right to jury trial in civil cases)

– First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti (1978) – First Amendment (political speech)

If we look at these cases, we notice a gradual appendage of constitutional protections to corporations as persons. The Santa Clara case and the first two cases mentioned above (Noble and Lochner) opened the door and set the bases and precedent for the granting of more constitutional rights. We see here the power of precedents, which can affect the economic and political scene even 130 years after the Santa Clara case. In his dissent on the Citizens United vs. FEC case (presented later on in this study), Justice Stevens even (humorously or ironically) suggested

that, for consistency reasons, the Supreme Court should grant all other constitutional rights to corporations, now that they have full free speech rights (Garret 1990: 98).

Corporate personhood is said by some legal scholars to be the consequence of applying legal fictions to the Constitution (Mayer 1990: Personhood and Modern Constitutional Theory). Legal fictions are facts (sometimes false) assumed by judges in order to be able to apply certain laws. In our case, declaring corporations persons was done by reinterpreting the word "person" in the 14th amendment by the Supreme Court. Thus, judges assumed that corporations are persons in order to be able to grant them certain rights. Stretching and reinterpreting the meaning of certain words or phrases in the Constitution, meanings of which the founding fathers probably did not even think about, to accommodate the needs of present economic or political players does not seem like a suitable long-term solution. This also shows to what extent the powers of the Supreme Court Justices can go without review.

Another essential aspect is that the Supreme Court has the power to invalidate state and federal regulations (economic, social, environmental etc.) by invoking constitutional human rights of corporations. From the 1905 Lochner decision until the middle of the 1930s, the Court invalidated approximately two hundred economic regulations, usually under the due process clause of the fourteenth amendment (Mayer 1990: The Corporate Legal Response).

Once again, we notice how much power lies in the hands of only a few people. Also, we know that their decisions are based on interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments. However, this document was written more than 200 years ago. The American economic scene has changed quite a lot in the meantime. This might suggest that not all answers for today's economic issues can be found in a document written in a very different economic climate from today.

Next, I will discuss the possible issues that could arise from abusing human rights given to corporations. First, I would like to go into more detail about a Supreme Court case (Citizens United v. FEC 2010) which will give us better understanding of how the free speech right of corporations could influence politics, the economy and society.

The ruling of the Supreme Court granted corporations the right to unrestricted political spending in campaigns, on the grounds that corporations already have free speech rights, although it was limited until 2010. After analyzing the majority's opinion and the dissenting opinion of this case, we notice that the reasoning behind the majority's arguments is strictly related to the precedent of corporations already having free speech rights, however limited. The dissenting arguments are mainly related to the possible issues that might occur from this ruling, which seems a more reasonable way of analyzing such an important controversy (Oyez n. d.).

Also, if we look at the political affiliation of the Justices who voted in this case, we notice that the majority was all formed by Republican affiliated judges and the dissenting group was mostly Democratic. We know that Federalist 51 stated that judges should be free of political pressure because of the possibility that the judicial branch might have too much power if influenced by politicians and the fact that Justices are open about their political convictions might be a threat to the objectivity of their decisions.

Another important aspect is that in the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, the same Justices voted for changing political expenditures in favour of corporations (Oyez n. d.). This suggests that life tenure of Justices might also be an issue, since the same people can rule on similar issues several times.

Although corporations having Bill of Rights protection is a danger for many aspects of the American system, the aspect that will be discussed further is how the free speech right of corporations could affect environmental issues. According to Carl J. Mayer, "Political speech, as a means of influencing legislative economic decisions, and thwarting novel forms of regulation…" has become more and more adopted by corporations (Mayer 1990: The First Amendment – freedom of speech). If we look at Central Hudson Gas v. Public Service Comm. of NY (free commercial speech, 1980) we see here a precedent that can mark an ascension of corporations influencing consumer behaviour in a detrimental way to the environment, for example. If corporations have the political endorsement and constitutional right to do this, we can imagine how this could affect the climate change issues. By invoking the fourth amendment (e.g. Dow Chemical Corp. v. United States, Regulatory Searches,1986) and the first amendment (commercial and political speech) we could witness devastating consequences to the environment, since in this way they can easily not only avoid certain types of searches on their premises which might incriminate them, but also promote environmentally unfriendly practices through advertising and campaign funding of climate change deniers (who can promote legislation that helps corporations).

A perfect illustration of this issue would be the current nomination for the head of EPA (Scott Pruitt) and for the secretary of state (Rex Tillerson). Both are very influential climate change deniers (Tillerson's corporation Exxon Mobil has been leading a very expensive campaign against the climate change theory and environmental regulations since the 1970's). Their powerful positions in American politics combined with the first amendment rights of free political speech for corporations and their access to immense funds can pose a serious threat not only to the environment, but to individuals' health. All this is the result of a legal fiction ruled by a small number of people, whose decision was not questioned by any other power in the country.

If corporations claim more and more human rights and they are granted those rights, then we need to reconsider the type of power structure that rules America. If a few extremely influential and wealthy "persons" have the power to influence

consumer behaviour (through free commercial speech), to influence policy-making (through free political speech and spending), to avoid thorough searches on their premises, to circumvent state and federal regulation, then the obvious consequence would be that America can no longer be called a democratic system, but an oligarchical system. This is a serious potential threat for a democracy and more awareness should be raised regarding this issue.

This study has looked at the historical and systemic circumstances that allowed for the transfer of the idea of "person" to corporations. It also analyzed the potential issues that could arise from corporations being legally considered persons. The following conclusions can be reached:

Firstly, I have argued that there is not sufficient review of the decisions made by the Supreme Court from the other two branches of the government. If we take into consideration all the arguments of this study, we can conclude that there is a loophole in the system of check and balances that needs to be closed by securing more review opportunity of the judicial system for the other branches of the government or other institutions in order that "human nature" should not "reflect" too much on the government.

Secondly, the American economic scene has changed a lot since the eighteenth century, and the Constitution's interpretation into the modern global and intricate economic system might not be sufficient. Important questions that arise in the modern world, which do not have an answer in the Constitution, should not be decided by only a few politically coloured, and sometimes subjective, individuals.

Thirdly, we can also conclude that, beside the triad of the branches of government, there is a parallel triangle of powers, formed by the Supreme Court together with corporations and state/federal regulations. Throughout history we can see a continuous back and forth "negotiation" between them, when it comes to giving or taking rights from corporations or states.

Consequently, we see that the weaknesses in the judicial system no longer represent a safeguard for the individual, especially because the very notion of "person" is changing.

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Paula Larisa Fedorca
1st year, Irish Studies MA
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

SLAVE NARRATIVES: 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY PERSPECTIVES – EVERYDAY STRUGGLE AND WORK

Slavery has been around since ancient times in different forms. My paper will focus on slavery in the 18th and early 19th centuries in the United States, more precisely in the states located in the south, such as Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. People nowadays are aware of the innumerable tragedies caused by slavery, and even though many books have been published on this subject, there are few commemoration ceremonies taking place in honour of the victims. It is not something Americans take pride in since it belongs to a darker side of their history.

As ensues from slaves' interviews, upon their arrival, Africans had to endure hardships and submission to their owners. Seen as chattel, they were burdened with everything related to physical work. The living conditions were horrible; they were constantly whipped, beaten, and dying of malnutrition. They were taken to fairs where they would be sold alongside cattle, where people (white folks) made bids and touched them to see if they would be good for working in the fields or for reproduction. Slave owners arranged for their slaves to reproduce. Owners often would engage in sexual relations with their female slaves. Whipping was something normal and always to be expected. Black people were considered to be able to endure physical pain better than the white folks since their skin was "thicker." Mothers and children were being separated; rarely would one child and his parents belong to the same owner. As the narratives themselves note, adult females and men up to 30 were the most valued due to their reproduction capacity and physical strength. Clothes and shoes were rarely provided. A slave would have to wear the same shirt and the same shoes until they could be mended no more and not even then was he/she provided with new clothing or footwear.

At the core of my paper stand the vast volumes such as "Virginia Narratives", "Alabama Narratives", "Texas Narratives", which are included in the Federal Writers' Project conducted between 1936-1938 and assembled by the Library of Congress in 1941, entitled *Slave narratives, A Folk History of Slavery in the United States From Interviews with Former Slaves.* This collection of narratives contains the stories of those slaves who, after obtaining their freedom, survived into the first three decades of the 20th century. Some of them were never slaves, while others, who were extremely old, were born in slavery. When emancipation came, they could not find

in themselves the power to begin from scratch and they lived their lives with the help that they got from their friends and family and with the pension given by the state in which they lived. What is also to be taken into consideration is that some of the slaves who were interviewed refused to speak with the interviewers because they feared that the white folks would come and punish them for telling the truth. Others were very open to talking about "dem old days".

Even though slaves achieved emancipation and this was immediately thought to be best for their future, an ex-slave, Fanny Berry says: "Dem niggers who left wid de Yankees an' were sat free, but, poor things, dey had no place to go after dey got freed. Baby, all us wuz helpless an' ain't had nothin" (*Virginia Narratives* vol. XVII, 6). There was something they had to figure out by themselves, and that was how to live as independent persons. Contrary to common knowledge, most of the slaves who were interviewed said that they had a master who treated them well. There is no proof to that statement being 100% accurate since there is a slight chance that they reached that conclusion due to fear or that this idea was induced subconsciously.

It must be mentioned that during the existence of the "peculiar institution" there were laws about the rights of slaves, or more accurately what they weren't allowed to do since most of these laws were in favour of the masters:

> All over the South, however, there emerged a body of laws generally regarded as the Slave Codes, which covered every aspect of the life of the slave. There were variations from state to state, but the general point of view expressed in most of them was the same; that is, slaves are not persons but property, and laws should protect the ownership of such property, should protect the whites against any dangers that might arise from the presence of large numbers of Negroes. It was also felt that slaves should be maintained in a position of due subordination in order that the optimum of discipline and work could be achieved (Franklin 1988: 134-135).

By reading this description in its complete version, we can make a clear association between slavery and totalitarian systems. I might be exaggerating when saying that slavery probably stands at the foundation of all totalitarian systems, but the master is reminiscent of the dictator and the slaves of his "people" who have no rights to talk back to their masters, rebel against the regime, try to escape etc. By remembering what these types of systems did to their people, I believe the comparison is more than confirmed, it is accurate.

After seeing how strict the "slave code" was, there is little to surprise us when reading about the many attempts of escaping from slave owners who treated their slaves badly. Some of them were grateful for what their masters gave them and did not think much about what they were being deprived of. The fact that slaves that survived to be more than eighty years old still think that the "ole days" were better is only proof that what I have stated above is right. Others who never got used to being "caged" tried repeatedly to escape and when they were caught they were punished. What is worse is that when they escaped they were being hunted down by

"slave hounds", as if they were some kind of game. One slave responded when asked about running away: "Git away, why Madam, those nigger dogs would track you and all you got was a beating" (Aarons, *Alabama Narratives* vol. I, 9).

As I mentioned earlier, there were several means to ensure that slaves behaved themselves and did not try to escape from their owners. One such means was the patrol that was in charge with applying the existing laws regarding the rules slaves had to abide:

> These patrols were to apprehend slaves out of place and return them to their masters or commit them to jail; to visit slave quarters and search for various kinds of weapons that might be used in an uprising; and to visit assemblies of slaves where disorder might develop or where conspiracy might be planned. (Franklin 1988: 136)

Charles Crawley (*Virginia Narratives* vol. XVII, 12) presents us with the conditions in which the poor white people on his master's plantation lived. They were treated like the other slaves and they also had to get permission to leave the plantation:

> "Did you know poor withes like slaves had to git a pass? I mean a remit like as slaves, to sell anythin' an' to go places, or do anything'. Jest as we colored people, dey had to go to some big white man like Colonel Allen, dey did. If Marster wanted to, he would give dem a remit or pass, an' if he didn't feel like it, he wouldn't do it."

When medicine was needed, the master employed a doctor to live on the plantation in order to cure the owner's family but also the slaves that were sick. As the plantations were located in remote areas, quite some time would have to pass for the doctor to get to his patients so the medicinal uses of various herbs was discovered for certain ailments:

> 'Cose us hab our med'cin' sich lak elderbush tea. Hit was red 'mos' lak whiskey an' us used hit for feber. Den dere was red sassafrac tea fer spring feber, an' dey made Jerusalem oak candy full o' seeds an' gib to de chilluns to eat so dey could git rid of worms. Den us had mullen an' pine-top tea fer colds an' feber. An' when us had a swellin' dey made a poultice of mullen leabes to take de swellin' out. (Barnes, *Alabama Narratives* vol. I, 27)

In addition, "[s]laves were allowed to have small quantities of whiskey, even during the days of their worship, to use for medicinal purposes. It was a common occurrence to see whiskey being sold at the foot of the hill near the churchyard" (Grandy, *Virginia Narratives* vol. XVII, 26). Of course, initially it was used for "medicinal purposes", but seeing how easily it could be procured and that some masters gave their slaves alcohol, the numbers of alcoholic slaves was increasing.

Black people were employed in different activities ranging from working on the plantation, picking cotton or tobacco, to being "drivers," which meant that a slave was watching over the other slave workers, as a guard. There were also house servants, slaves who took care of the animals, and the older slaves were helping with taking care of the children, with the cooking, washing and other household chores. The overseer was the person in charge of watching over the slaves while they worked; most overseers were violent and on most occasions punished the slaves with or without reason.

The punishments, or perhaps we might call them the methods of torture, were diverse. The one mostly employed was whipping. They would strip the slaves or not, then whip them with all their might and afterwards they would wash the wounds the lashes left on their skin with salt water so as to damage the skin even more:

> Honey, I 'members dat he had regular days to whup all de slaves wid strops. De strops had holes in 'em so dat dey raised big blisters. Der dey took a hand saw, cut de blisters and/washed 'em in salt water. Our Ol' Mistus has put salve on aheap of backs so dey could git deir shirts off. De shirts'd stick, you see. (Davis, *Alabama Narratives* vol. I, 111)

The pain, as one can imagine, was excruciating. Other methods of punishment were the hanging of Black people, beating, or keeping them in shackles or in a box so as to prevent them from running away or to make them afraid to even think about escaping.

What is more, many black women were abused by their masters and ended up giving birth to mulattoes. These were seen badly both by the white folks and the Blacks as it showed the origins of their birth. They were often marginalized. Black children were not put to work up until they reached a certain age and used to be allowed to play with white children.

However, by reading the transcriptions of the interviews, we can see that most of the slaves declared that despite living in log cabins with beds made of a plank of wood and mattresses filled with straw and hay, they had sufficient food to eat and their menu included meat, corn, potatoes, milk, and other products. Though the rations they got seemed to hardly fill their stomachs, they did not die of malnutrition and there were not many cases of suicide. The contradiction between what they were saying and what they described later might be interpreted as though these answers were somehow automatic and superficial. Jack Bess says that

> Our ole marster, he wasn't so very mean to us, course he whips us once and awhile but dat wasn't like de slave holders what had dem colored drivers. Dey sho' was rough on de slaves. I's bean told lots 'bout da chains and de diffe'nt punishments but our treatment wasn't so bad (*Texas Narratives* vol. XVI, part 1, 79).

They also admitted that normally the masters and their misses and children were good to them and some of the white "chilluns" taught them to read and write. Most of them feared the overseer; usually a white man from outside the family, that is a stranger who having had the misfortune of growing up in a poor family or being orphaned, was in charge of supervising the slaves while at work but even after they got home from work.

The "patterollers", as the ex-slaves called them, were a sort of early police officer who patrolled the lands of slaveholders. Some of the slave owners did not allow patrols on their lands, in order to maintain order among slaves and if there were slaves who left the plantation without a pass they would beat them and track them down with "nigger dogs" and take them back to their masters. They behaved abhorrently, and the beatings fugitive slaves got often put them out of work for several days. The majority of the slave population was encountered in rural areas since it was there where plantations and farms were located. Generally speaking, there is no written mention of the hours slaves had to work since every owner of slaves made his/her own rules.

From the readings of these narratives, we get the chance to imagine how their daily routine unfolded. For instance, even before sunrise, slaves had to get up and get ready for another day of work. They had a light breakfast, some ash cake or milk with bread, and they went to their work. They only finished their working day when the sun went down, and on some occasions when they had to gather the crops they even worked in the dark. The majority of slaves worked on cotton or tobacco plantations, and the work exhausted them so much that when they got to their cabins they went directly to bed. There were not many activities for them to do and their liberties were limited, always being under surveillance. After nine o'clock in the evening slaves were not allowed to leave their cabins or walk around. If they were caught without a pass from their master – they had to receive a pass in order to leave the plantation – the overseer would make use of his power by punishing them, or the patrols would catch them, beat them and then return them to their master.

> It was generally believed that one slave was required for the successful cultivation of the three acres of cotton. The planting, cultivation, and picking of cotton required little skill, but a great deal of time. Men, women, and children could be used, though it is to be doubted if the very young and the very old were of any real value to the plantation. Aside from the duties in connection with raising the crop, there were other things to do, such as clearing land, burning underbrush, rolling logs, splitting rails, carrying water, mending fences, spreading fertilizer, breaking soil, and the like. Small wonder that many slaves worked not merely from sunrise to sunset, but frequently long after dark. (Franklin 1988: 137-138)

Franklin's description illustrates the exploitation of slaves. Working such long hours led to exhaustion and made them prone to diseases. As mentioned above,

slaves did all kinds of jobs and the need for getting the most out of a crop made the master work his slaves harder and as it was to be expected:

> In the effort to get work out of slaves the lash was frequently used. There was the general belief, born of a naïve or sinister racial justification for the institution of slavery, that Negroes were a childlike race and should be punished just as children were punished. Some planters went so far as to specify the size and type of lash to be used and the number of lashes to be given for certain offenses. Almost none disclaimed whipping as an effective form of punishment, and the excessive use of the lash was one of the most flagrant abuses of the institution. Most slaves fled because of the brutal beatings by their owner or the overseer. (Franklin 1988: 137-138)

As Franklin describes it, most slaves lived without knowing what was outside the plantation or the master's house. We must realize that the lives these people led were not easy and even if they say that they miss "dem ole days," it is obvious that nowadays they enjoy freedom. Some of them were living in such isolation that they did not even know they were free. Others mentioned that there was some kind of secret network that the slaves used in order to find out news from the war, and that the slaves that were in charge of delivering the correspondence would listen and look at the master's reactions when reading the letters, informing the other slaves whether the Yankees or the Confederates were in the lead.

All things considered, regardless of the difficulties they had to live with, they managed to create strong bonds among themselves. The sense of community was what brought them together and gave them hope for a brighter future if not for those who were old at least for the young ones who could still get the chance to live a different life. Despite all this, they managed to make a living even after being freed. The majority of slaves remained with their owners after the end of the war and worked the fields together because they were not prepared to make a living on their own.

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Melinda-Orsolya Mándoki
2nd year, British Cultural Studies MA
"Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj Napoca

HELLS AND HEAVENS OF THE BODY: THE AMBIGUITY OF THE BODY IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S NOVEL *WRITTEN ON THE BODY*

The concept of the body was a taboo for a long time in literary writings, suppressed to an unconscious level, and emerging from time to time only on the secondary level of disease. Jeanette Winterson's novel *Written on the Body* inverts this perspective, as in it the world is sensed through the spectacles of the body; the body in the position of power but at the same time as the metaphor of subjection. The question is whether the body is a prison of the self regardless of its gender or whether it is the perfect tool to experience the realities and sensations of our universe. What causes the ambiguity and intermediacy of this androgyne body which leads and forsakes not only its proprietor, but the reader as well? This paper tries to unfold these questions by investigating the concept of corporeality, discussing various pairs where the first element is always the body: body and gender, body and sexuality, body and disease, body and perception, body and love, body and identity, to detect the source of the intermediacy of this notion.

First of all, in order to understand more deeply the origin of the issue, the concept of the body has to be discussed from a diachronic perspective. Different time periods, different cultural, political and religious environments have had an essentially variable relation with the representation of corporeality, oscillating between extremes of suppression or exhibition. Since the medieval age, where everything related to terrestrial substances was despised and the body had to be hidden on many different levels, emerging only as the primary target of torment in representations of religious elevation, the representation of the body has undergone a metamorphosis.

In the mid nineteenth-century the representation and perception of the body started to change as a consequence of the tension between scholarly and non-scientific approaches. Around the period that foreshadowed feminism, scientific discoveries from the field of psychology, biology, medicine, etc. generated a contradictory status in the social perception of women – and consequently the perception of men as well – by questioning fundamental beliefs connected to the concepts of sexuality and desire, giving an unstable status even to the literary representation of the body. For instance, James Young Simpson's essay constituted a starting point in many Victorian medical texts (Gordon 2002: 133). Dealing with the fundamental similarities of genders (similar to Darwin's hermaphroditic ancestors or

Freud's genderless libido), he questioned even the basic differences between sexes. According to this point of view, sexual desire was not related to biology, and even gender itself could lose the connection with nature and could be a "matter of social construction" (Matus 1995: 36).

According to Matus (1995: 22), scholarly representation of the sexes served ideologies of gender , but what happens in a time when politics and the media have more influence over sexuality and social perception of genders than psychology, medicine or religion had before? External forces are shaping the perception of sexes, though maybe nowadays they are called differently. Today's society is still facing the same issue, but from a slightly different angle. Gender and sexual ideologies or stereotypes, as one of the most powerful issue of today's society forming the root of many types of discrimination (Hebl, Law and King 2010: 3-23) melts in the novel of Jeanette Winterson by creating a first person androgynous narrator. As Matus points out, the question of differences between genders is never neutral, as far as it always tries to identify superiority and inferiority (1995: 27), but in *Written on the Body* the emphasis is on the likeness of the selves; however, likeness has to be strongly distinguished from sameness. The emphasis is not on creating a genderless hermaphrodite out of the female or male self and 'its body', but rather to ascend, above gender stereotypes, to a higher state, to the level of the humankind, in contrast to the superior or inferior distinction. The first and only name of the protagonist is "her lover" (Winterson 1996: 13) which demonstrates the aforementioned tendency. The narrative rises above the sexually limited self-justification so commonly used in minority writings, breaking themselves the way to equality and freedom. In this novel the concept of body, which was from ancient times the source of differentiation and later on comparison, occupies an ambiguous intermediate position between polarities merging the traditional conflicts among them. As Preda also points out, "it contradicts the preconceived idea that identity is a unitary concept bound by gender" (2010: 185) by using a narrator with no gender.

The ambiguity hits the next level as the representations of the body attached with its changes, such as its deterioration, its disease, appear as metaphors of personality. The dichotomy of the physical level streams to a higher one, to the level of the psyche and permeates the novel intensifying the central tension. One of the most powerful examples for this is the fact that the unfolding of love, the most powerful feeling attached to the soul, is only possible through the dead cells of the skin: "The piece of you I know best is already dead" (Winterson 1996: 123). A sort of prismatic reflection is created by the self, searching for the essence of love and relationship. Investigating from many different points of views the subject of his/her love on a corporal level becomes a destructive movement.

The perspective of the microscope un-builds the perception of the naked eye, pushing him/her to an ambiguous space from where there is no escape: "I'm the archaeologist of tombs" (Winterson 1996: 119), "Is that how to know another human being?" (Winterson 1996: 121). On the one hand, *corporeality* is the only source to

experience extreme happiness as the primary tool for the manifestation of love/*heaven*: "what other places are there in the world than those discovered on a lover's body?" (Winterson 1996: 82), but simultaneously, on the other hand, it is also the origin of the biggest sorrows, as it bears the potential of defenselessness through (self)devastation/*hell:*

> In the secret places of her thymus gland Louise is making too much of herself. Her faithful biology depends on regulation but the white T-cells have turned bandit. (…) Now they are the enemies on the inside. The security forces have rebelled. Louise is the victim of a coup. (…) The faithful body has made a mistake.. (…). You are the foreign body now. (Winterson 1996: 115)

At the same time it leads and forsakes the self by being insecure and also inevitable: "Nail me to you. I will ride you like a nightmare. You are the winged horse Pegasus [in ancient mythology, Pegasus is responsible for bringing the light of the heaven] who would not be saddled" (Winterson 1996: 131), not being able to control the amount of heavenly light which can burn the self to death. Simultaneously, there is the freedom – the light of the heaven – and the danger of this freedom – the shadows and the nightmares of the hell. Therefore, the issue grows on an exponential level, where the tension reaches its peak by bringing into the picture the notion of mortality and vulnerability of the body, and consequently of the self. The metamorphosis of the body leads to the metamorphosis of the personality, as the two concepts are strongly interlinked. The reality sensed through voices, scents, tastes and visions (see 132-137) by the narrator, creates or transforms his/her fiction, and fiction sensed by the narrator creates or transforms his/her reality through the perception of the body on different levels: "That's how I know you. You are what I know". Is it a "virtual world" within a "virtual world" in the endless search of the self, where the only taboo is real life? (Winterson 1996: 97)

> "The room will be a wall-to-wall virtual world of your choosing. If you like, you may live in a computer-created world all day and all night. You will be able to try out a Virtual life with Virtual lover. You can go into your Virtual house and do Virtual housework, add a baby or two, even find out if you would rather be gay. Or single. Or straight. Why hesitate when you could simulate?" (Winterson 1996: 97)

Where starts the misshapen projection of someone's identity, and where is the real identity of the individual? Starting from a holistic point of view he/she starts to anatomize her until there is nothing left, only a sweet and bitter memory-flash of her previous identity and beauty at the end of the novel. The quote "The pieces of you I know best is already dead" (Winterson 1996: 123) questions even the possibilities of knowing somebody.

It is like the irony of Elgins's life. Dealing with cancer, he knows everything about it, which is useless, and fails to discover everything which has vital

importance. The protagonist can only deal with pieces of heavens, pieces of the body, knowing only parts, loving only scraps of the other, such as the skeleton, the organs, the bones, etc. as metaphors of the identity. Talking about doctors, the irony sharpens the problem and points out the real essence of it: "They are not conditioned to understand it. In doctor-think the body is a series of bits to be isolated and treated as necessary, that the body in its very disease may act as a whole is an upsetting concept. Holistic medicine is for faith healers" (Winterson 1996: 175).

Similarly, as medicine fails to identify and to control its target – the disease –, so does the 'I' in the novel. He/she loses 'itself' in the searching process, as far as the 'I' is already emerged and identified with Louise. Not being able to 'solve' Louise, he/she is not able to 'solve' the nature of his/her own identity. The concept of the body is agglutinated with the identity of the individual on many layers, which strengthens ambiguity. First of all, the body means everything for the self, even stands beyond the soul or the consciousness, being the primary source to sense and experience the universe; the tool for the most desired feeling, which is love: "the recognition of another person that is deeper than consciousness, lodged in the body more than held in the mind" (Winterson 1996: 82). However, it hides the potential of turning against its user, leading him/her to what is literally a dead end. It is hell and heaven at the same time. As far as the 'I' starts to identify him/herself with Louise, un-building her also means un-building him/herself: "If you are broken then so am I" (Winterson 1996: 125); "Your body is twice. Once you, once me" (Winterson 1996: 99). In the endless search for meanings and in the endless investigation of the body, the protagonist finds him/herself in a labyrinth: "Explore me (…) I dropped into the mass of you and I cannot find the way out" (Winterson 1996: 121). Unfortunately, this labyrinth has no exit or nobody has seen it, there are only inscriptions on its walls that there is an exit.

The notion of personality merged with the concept of the body inherently bears an all or nothing game: "If you are broken then so am I" (Winterson 1996: 125). So does the identification of the two bodies: the body of the self and the disintegrating body of Louise. This situation assumes two options: either there is found something which redeems both of them, or there is a binary tragedy of failure. Surprisingly, in the end, the reader is left alone on the journey between fictional realities creating an ambiguous atmosphere:

> In the night, the blackest part of the night, when the moon is low and the sun hasn't risen, I woke up convinced that Louse had gone away alone to die. I didn't want that. I preferred my other reality; Louise safe somewhere, forgetting about Elgin and about me (Winterson 1996: 174).

Due to the fact that the narrator loses its reliability, even love can be just a mere projection of the self-imagining identity, a sort of metafiction within the narrative discourse. From this perspective, the end of the novel suggests that redeeming can only be made on an external level. "Holistic medicine is for faith healers" (Winterson

1996: 175), and that is exactly what the novel suggests at the end. There is nothing left of the self, nothing left of the new lover and nothing remained of the old one. The narration pulls back to the level of wholeness, which is the only level that can bring solutions. The only thing which remained is faith and a sort of faith healing: a hope of knowing that there is an exit leading out from self-delusion, beside the reflecting walls of the labyrinth which almost makes it impossible for the 'I' to distinguish him/herself from its reflections. The notions of entirety and wholeness are the features of life itself, while the process of analytical investigation is the field of machines and computers. The juxtaposition of animate and inanimate characteristics shows the in-betweenness of the body and its repercussions on the individual. There is no universal key, only subjective solutions for not losing the essence of life/love/attachment by searching for it.

Throughout Jeanette Winterson's novel, the body is pushed farther and farther until it reaches the most intermediate position, full of ambiguities between opposite sexes, between the self and the world, between desire and refusal, between Hell and Heaven. This duality many times emerges into a third, on a higher level, eliminating the conflict, such as gender stereotypes interlaced in the non-genderless but androgynous body. 'An ambivalent dichotomy' or a 'multiplied ambiguity' is captured between the body being the limit, the prison or the hell of the self, independently of its sex, and the body being a perfect tool to experience the realities of the universe or to comprehend others.

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Diana Melnic, Vlad Melnic
1st year, Irish Studies MA
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

READING VIDEO GAMES: A TRANSITION FROM REALISM TO MODERNISM AND BEYOND

Over the past decade, video games have gradually taken over entertainment on a global scale, with reports showing that 17% of the world population or 1.2 billion people were estimated to play video games as early as 2013 (Spil Games 2013: 4). Only in the United States, approximately 63% of households were home to at least one person who played video games regularly, in 2016 (Entertainment Software Association 2016: 2). These statistics uncover a striking resemblance between contemporary video games and the predominantly realist novel of the late 19th century and early 20th century, which was then viewed as "the great *popular* genre, the one mainstream literary mode which speaks the language of the people" (Eagleton 2005: 7). Nevertheless, video games remain a fairly young medium of artistic expression, especially when contrasted with the long-standing literary tradition of the novel. It is, therefore, our hypothesis that as they recover this distance in time and in quality, they experience mutations similar to those of the novel itself. More specifically, we argue that, at present, video games are undergoing a gradual transition not unlike the shift from realism to modernism that took place roughly at the turn of the 20th century. To illustrate our claim, we turn to several noteworthy and widely popular titles, including CD Projekt RED's *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015), FromSoftware's *Dark Souls 3* (2016), Frictional Games' *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* (2010), as well as The Chinese Room's *Dear Esther* (2012) and *Everybody's Gone to the Rapture* (2015).

From the very beginning, video games shared many of their essential traits with the realist novel, which was characterized by recognizable characters, "narrative authority and reliability, (…) ordinary speech, linear plots and extensive use of free indirect discourse" (Childs 2008: 81). As critics widely agree, however, the end of the 19th century witnessed "a great turn of the novel" (Bradbury 1993: 1), whereby authors began to experiment with a depiction of human subjectivity that would be "more real than realism" (Childs 2008: 3). The world they observed was no longer that of "an agreed common culture," but rather "a refracted thing, seen through angles of vision, through the evolving consciousness of its perceivers" (Bradbury 1993: 29). As such, their writing was characterized by stylistic innovation, the suspicion of language, the distrust of empiricism and rationalism (Childs 2008: 20), ambiguity and the temporal reordering of the chronological story (Childs 2008: 82-83). Multiperspectivism, the unreliable narrator, as well as the creation of plots

that would "discover themselves from their infant germs" were part and parcel of their array of ingenious narrative strategies (Bradbury 1993: 34). The underlying themes that early modernist writers approached commonly tackled the issue of epistemology, storytelling itself, "individuals at moments of crisis" (Childs 2008: 83), the chaotic modern world (Paddy 2009: 122), or the representation of an absent centre, an "unrepresentable thing (…) nothing less than the human subject" (Eagleton 2005: 239-240). Furthermore, the reader becomes an essential agent for the interpretation of the text and is given a "more demanding but empowering role" (Childs 2008: 82). It is commonly acknowledged that at the time, there was "a feeling (…) that the novel as traditionally conceived was no longer up to the job: that its imaginary worlds did not, in fact, correspond to the way one's fellows spent their entire lives" (Trotter 1999: 70). Approximately one century later and considering the ever-growing popularity of video games to the detriment of written literature, we observe a similar displacement of older form(s) by a medium of expression that better represents contemporary life and its "bewildering bombardment of diverse stimuli" (Wallace 2007: 19). One might argue, then, that reading video games is, in itself, an endeavour of modernist descent. It was, after all, the aim of early modernists to propose art as a "tool that shapes and creates a world rather than merely documents an external one" (Paddy 2009: 122). Contemporary video games arguably achieve this ambition to a greater extent than any other artistic media, having discovered an environment wherein the latter could seamlessly blend together.

One of the first scholars who approached video games from an interpretative perspective was Espen Aarseth. In his innovative study on *Cybertext*, he defines "ergodic literature" as a type of text wherein "nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text" (1997: 1). If in the case of traditional narratives the reader is as powerless as "a spectator at a soccer game" or as "a passenger on a train," the reader of cybertext struggles "not merely for interpretative insight but also for narrative control" (Aarseth 1997: 4). Most importantly, Aarseth does not position cybertext in opposition with "old-fashioned textuality," but rather defines it as "a perspective on all forms of textuality" and a way to "expand the scope of literary studies" (1997: 18). His theory was certainly a successful one, as video games gradually made their way into academic research and the field of literary theory. Still during 1997, Janet Murray published a similar study titled *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, where she referred to the computer as "a truly revolutionary invention" that would soon be used as a "spellbinding storyteller" (1997: 2) and that promised "to reshape the spectrum of narrative expression," not by replacing the novel, but by translating it into another framework (1997: 10). At the time, Murray argued that video games displayed the "potential for more powerful moments of revelation than they currently make use of" (1997: 54). Glancing at contemporary video games, we may confirm her hypothesis.

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt (2015) is CD Projekt RED's most popular release, an action role-playing game wherein the player explores an unnamed continent through the mediation of a player character, Geralt of Rivia. The latter is an (in)famous witcher, a monster hunter recruited from an early age, trained in the art of combat and mutated via magic and alchemy to obtain super-human powers. Throughout this third instalment of the series, the witcher is frequently involved in political plots, usually against his own wishes, but also in personal plots, the outcomes of which are highly influenced by the choices of the player. At a first glance, although it does present a certain moral and emotional involvement, *The Witcher 3* offers itself as a typical role-playing game (RPG), with characteristics commonly ascribed to realist fiction. However, as the player advances through the game, she is reminded of her previous actions and encounters by means of several "cutscenes" and a journal-like collection of entries. Naturally, the player first assumes that the story of Geralt is being told from her own perspective or, at most, from the perspective of the witcher himself. But as the initially anonymous narrative voice refers to Geralt in the third person, she discovers that this is not the case. Progressing further, it is revealed that the narrative voice actually belongs to Dandelion, a bard and one of Geralt's close friends, who is mostly notorious for his outrageous, often untruthful stories. Vastly exaggerating the adventures he has with Geralt and sometimes even switching roles with him, Dandelion closely follows the archetype of the unreliable, early modernist narrator, which determines the player to question the veracity of the entire narrative. The non-linear chronology of the storyline is reminiscent of modernist experimentation with the representation of time, while the fact that the game displays a variety of different conclusions depending on the player's choices is evocative both of the modernist preference for an open ending and of the decisive role of the reader of modernist prose.

FromSoftware's *Dark Souls 3* (2016) is similar in this respect. Allowing the player to explore the dilapidated Kingdom of Lothric by means of a customizable player character referred to as the Ashen One, *Dark Souls 3* also features multiple endings that depend on the actions of each individual and her allegiances to the various non-player characters encountered throughout. However, the story put forward by the video game makes this open ending even more impressive. The universe of *The Dark Souls Series* emerges as the result of the spontaneous kindling of a first flame, which subsequently comes near extinction. Desperate that the world might return to former nothingness, various characters sacrifice their bodies and sometimes their sanities to "relink" the first flame. A lineage of "fire lords," characters who have relinked the flame and survived, albeit disfigured, takes shape, but it is abruptly ended when Prince Lothric refuses to continue the cycle of sacrifice. The player enters the world at this moment in time as the Ashen One, a liminal figure trapped between life and death, who has died but was found unworthy to be sacrificed for the flame due to some handicap or dark secret. Her purpose is to force the fire lords back on their empty thrones, absorb their power and relink the flame in

order to prevent the settling in of an Age of Darkness. Until she fulfils this purpose, she is perpetually awakened back into existence. However, the player has at least two choices in terms of the game's conclusion. She can sacrifice herself to relink the flame, knowing too well that in the future, the flame will weaken and another sacrifice will become necessary, or she can allow the flame to die out, thereby ending the violent cycle, but knowing that embers remain and that they might, at some point, spontaneously kindle the flame once again. Thus, the underlying anxiety explored by the player of *Dark Souls 3* is that of a destabilized, incoherent sense of identity and agency. The narrative itself is literally coagulated around an absence, manifested both in the empty thrones of the fire lords and in the player character, which is gradually "hollowed" of humanity and of her sanity. This narrative of trauma is itself traumatized and disquieting at the level of diegesis, because the game refuses to provide a coherent story for the player. Instead, the player must navigate fragmentary, scattered bits of information, which never come together in a unitary interpretation, but rather remain open to interpretation. Even more so than *The Witcher 3*, the present title illustrates an aesthetics that has profoundly assimilated the core tenants of modernist art. Intriguingly, even though this is by no means an easy game to play or to read, the reactions it stirred among its audiences were not of rejection, which was commonly the case with modernist prose in its time, but rather of acclaim and approval. Players were highly appreciative of the fact that the title provided a defamiliarizing experience in terms of gaming, and as a result, they immediately engaged in communities that attempted to interpret and make sense of the storyline.

When Frictional Games' *Amnesia* (2010) was published, it offered a very similar experience, as it provoked the player to impersonate Daniel, a young man who deliberately erased his memory as a result of certain hideous crimes he had committed in the past. Locked in a castle and looking for escape, Daniel recollects his past from fragmentary letters, as well as from intrusive flash-backs of his previous life, triggered by elements from the environment. The game not only questions the reliability of the narrator, who is gradually losing his sanity as he spends time in the castle and whose mind is actually responsible for generating hallucinatory images and sounds, but it also rewrites several of the traditional conventions of role-playing video games. The aim of *Amnesia* is not to slay monsters (which are, in this case, invincible and must be tackled by other means, such as hiding or running), but to piece together the story of the traumatized protagonist. Furthermore, rendering with increased accuracy the physical and psychological experience of Daniel is an essential element of the game's design. When the player character is in the proximity of a hideous monster, for instance, the player's screen becomes blurry and dark, while the latter is able to hear Daniel's heartbeat and an incessant ring, as if to perfectly reproduce the effects of intense fear on the human body.

Dear Esther (2012) was designed by The Chinese Room even more ambitiously than the titles discussed thus far, and is perhaps the first video game that

unequivocally draws attention to a shift in video game culture. In it, the player explores a deserted, unnamed island in the Hebrides, while listening to several fragments of a man's letters to his wife. The title's novelty results mainly from the way it reinterprets conventional video game strategies and tropes. Thus, although the player can explore the island and is equipped with a usable flashlight, her interaction with the environment is very limited. The game features no traditional goals, puzzles or monsters, nor does it subscribe to a typical plot. Instead, the aim is simply to delve into the beautiful, but eerie scenery, while piecing together the narrative of the unnamed author of letters. In a sense, the exploration of the island is the exploration of the story, as each area visited by the player is commonly accompanied by a fragment of the man's letters, probably written at a time when the man himself was at the same location. The narrative is an ambiguous one, which gradually reveals itself to the player. Indeed, it seems that the unnamed narrative voice belongs to a man who has come to the island as the result of a powerfully traumatic event, with which he is attempting to come to terms by writing to his wife, Esther. Eventually, however, it becomes somewhat clearer that the two had recently suffered a car accident on the M5 highway, which is referred to as "the Damascus road." In his letters, the man's memory of the scene is that "it was as if someone had taken the car and shaken it like a cocktail. (…) it made for a crumpled museum, a shattered exhibition. (…) The car looked like it had been dropped from a great height. The guts of the engine spilled over the tarmac" In the accident, the player later finds out that Esther had died. Although this is never specified straightforwardly, images of the accident, of the narrator's last seconds with Esther and of his subsequent surgery breach his written discourse, underlying his continuing state of shock. At a culminant moment of the game, in the caves underneath the island, the player dives into a pool, following in the man's footsteps. Here, she does not find the rocky bottom of the well, but has a vision of the M5 highway, the centre of which is occupied by an empty hospital bed. No narrative voiceover accompanies this sequence, but the melange of powerful, symbolic imagery and the uncanny music create an intense emotional experience for the player. As the scene takes place while the player is submerged underwater, there is a suggestion that this is, in fact, a representation of the man's subconscious. Once the player reaches the radio tower found on the island, the man's letters have already documented a leg wound that he had suffered while climbing, as well as his use of laudanum to help ease the pain. As he affirms that he has "become an infected leg, whose tracking lines form a perfect map of the junctions of the M5. I will take the exit at mid-thigh and plummet to my Esther," the player becomes aware that the man, unable to cope with the loss of his wife, might have chosen to end his life.

Developed by the same team at The Chinese Room, *Everybody's Gone to the Rapture* (2016) is considered to be the spiritual successor of *Dear Esther*, with which it shares many similarities. The setting of *The Rapture*, however, is a fictional, small, English town called Yaughton, on June 6th 1984. As the player enters the world, she

soon realizes that the people of the town are all missing, while fragmentary, confused accounts of the catastrophic event that ended their lives are scattered throughout, either in the form of audio recordings or as rendered by luminous human-like shapes that re-enact certain essential episodes. Like in the case of *Dear Esther*, what the player learns about the past of Yaughton is determined by the places she visits or chooses to ignore. Unlike in the case of the previous title however, *The Rapture* makes ample use of multiperspectivism, illustrating the same happening from the point of view of six narrators, all of whom were marked, in their interpretation of the event, by their own lives and experiences. The story itself is centred on two scientists, who discover a pattern in the stars during a celestial event and amplify it using the observatory in Yaughton. Immediately afterwards, a form of intelligent life energy referred to as The Pattern begins to aggressively spread through the valley, consuming the human beings with which it comes in contact. Because they cannot find a way to contain the Pattern, one of the two scientists reaches out to the military and requests a nerve-gas strike on the entire valley. Each of the six narratives concludes as its protagonist witnesses this strike, shortly after being spiritually or emotionally reunited with someone important from their life. The final memory of each narrator is that of peace and exuberating happiness. Indeed, what is fascinating about the present title is the ambiguity of the language and of the story itself, which every individual player may supply with her own meaning. Ultimately, the narrative taps into the paranoia of the 1980s and the Cold War as it explores the experience of loss and the question of life after death. Because of its deliberate ambiguity, however, it allows each player to interpret it as a biblical story of the rapture, a story about an extra-terrestrial life form interacting with human beings and unwillingly harming them in the process, an apocalyptic story centred on the use of a biological weapon as an act of war or simply a metaphor for the transitory human life and the way it can acquire some meaning through the interaction and love of one individual for another. Regardless of one's personal interpretation, *The Rapture* remains a novel, thought-provoking video game that thoroughly employs modernist narrative strategies, is concerned with modernist themes and, to a certain extent, even surpasses them.

Of course, not all video games display such riveting characteristics, but this is no less true in the case of traditional literary productions, of which only a segment are legitimately innovative. However, as we have argued for each of the previous titles, video games are currently undergoing a shift similar to the transition from realism to modernism in fiction. This is not only significant as a theoretical observation, but rather it suggests that video games are substantially more similar to traditional forms of artistic expression than has previously been recognized. What is more, video games depend to a larger extent on their reception, on the popularity they acquire upon release and, of course, on the sales they accomplish. Since this is the case and since we are witnessing an increasing number of provocative, aesthetically meaningful titles, it is not far-fetched to hypothesize that there exists a

growing preference among players for an intellectualized, challenging and artistically-relevant video game typology. Such a reality gives further credit to the idea that, in the forthcoming future, video games are likely to become one of the preferred media of expression for the creation and reception of fiction.

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Andreea Daniela Țacu
2nd year, Anglo-American Studies of Literature MA
University of Craiova

METAFICTION IN NEO-VICTORIAN NOVELS: JOHN FOWLES' *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN*

Emphasizing the despotic power of the writer and posing questions about the moral and aesthetic dimensions of the works of fiction, John Fowles' well-known novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* exemplifies the fragmented and multiple-layered architecture of postmodern writings. Postmodernism is nowadays a major term in the study of literature and some of its main interests lay on the relation between text and meta-text. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is an example of postmodern metafiction, in which the author distrusts the wholeness and completion specific to traditional works of fiction and inserts metafictional elements to directly address the reader or even to enter the narrative himself by becoming a character. Metafiction as a literary device was defined by Patricia Waugh as "a fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 1996: 2). In *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* Fowles compels the readers to acknowledge the fictional status of the novel and "disrupts the narrative by parading his familiarity with Marx [and] Darwin", by stepping "into the story himself as a character" and through "the multiple ending, which resists closure by offering numerous possible outcomes for [the] plot". (Lewis 2001:127)

The present paper aims to explore how John Fowles uses metafictional devices in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a means of questioning the ethical and aesthetic aspects of the author's process of storytelling. In the novel, through the apparently objective narrator, the writer constantly enters his own narrative to comment upon it and upon the despotic power of the author. He problematizes the moral and aesthetic obligations of prose fiction both in the 19th century and in the 20th, and inserts a self-questioning narrator who creates a balance between the two centuries.

The French Lieutenant's Woman is a multi-layered novel, exploring two different romantic relationships in a Victorian environment, subjected to the 19th century moral conventions but deepened by the narrator's contemporary view on the psychological turmoil of the characters. This double temporal perspective gains aesthetic and moral dimensions in the novel and Fowles manages to offer a contemporary perspective on the Victorian Era. The apparently objective narrator serves as the link and balance between the two centuries, and constantly explains and reflects upon his own depiction of the facts, "underlying the author's access to

absolute power in relation to the fictional work" (Cooper 1991: 103). As Pamela Cooper pointed out, in Fowles' novel, "the reader may contemplate the Victorian age from the paradoxical perspective of futurity – a futurity inaugurated in the central story, but informing and directing the narratorial mediation of that story" (105). The narrator focuses simultaneously on both centuries, even though the entire plot develops in a Victorian environment. This intrusion of the author is the main metafictional device and has both an ethical and aesthetic purpose. The metafictional strategies of postmodernism might serve an ethical function in a world which increasingly, and dangerously, neglects to discriminate between different orders of fictionality (Waugh 2008: 278).

The relationship between art and morality has been explored since Antiquity, by philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Horatio. In Plato's *Republic*, the philosopher questions the advantages and disadvantages of including Arts in an ideal, moral society. On the other hand, for Aristotle, beauty is an objective of the real world and Art an imitation (a Mimesis) of the reality, which has an educational purpose since it contributes to the moral purification of men (Catharsis). Horatio's theory presents the literary, artistic work as a combination of the beautiful and the useful, aiming both to aesthetically please the reader and to teach him or her some moral values. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Fowles focuses on the same relationship from behind the mask of the objective narrator. The narrator's ability to "operate within and without the 'core world' gives to [the telescoped temporal perspective] its vital aesthetic and moral dimensions" (Cooper 1991: 105).

The plot explores the romantic relationships between Charles Smithson and Ernestina Freeman on the one hand, and Charles Smithson and Sarah Woodruff on the other hand. The first one is the kind of romantic story typical to a Victorian novel and it concentrates around a pair of aristocratic young people. The novel opens with Charles and Ernestina discussing their engagement while walking on Lyme Bay Cobb. They tease each other about a "small philosophical disagreement" (Fowles 2004: 7) Charles had had with Ernestina's father on Darwin's theory on the origin of species. The storyline is abruptly interrupted by the appearance of a mysterious woman, sitting alone at the end of a stone quay. Ernestina informs her fiancée that the poor woman is called the French Lieutenant's Woman and has a very bad reputation, therefore she is reluctant when Charles intends to go and see whether the woman needs any help. It is evident from the very beginning that Fowles shapes his characters according to the Victorian social conventions, so they are moulded by what the Victorian people considered to be moral or acceptable regarding the relationship between men and women. Nevertheless, after creating this illusion of authenticity, the narrator scatters the plot with personal opinions, comparing the 19th century morality and normality with his postmodern times. He interferes and explains that

> the colours of the young lady's clothes would strike us today as distinctly strident; but the world was then in the first fine throes of the discovery of aniline dyes. And

> what the feminine, by way of compensation for so much else in her behaviour, demanded of a colour was brilliance, not discretion. (Fowles 2004: 5)

Although John Fowles apparently writes in the Victorian literary style, his postmodernist Victorian fiction actually parodies those generic conventions from within themselves. In her study on Fowles' fiction, Pamela Cooper points out two different dramatic appearances of the narrator:

> This manifest destabilization of descriptive literary categories functions, together with the narrator's other two dramatic appearances, to interrogate fictional conventions as deployed in the nineteenth-century novel through a literal invasion of the Victorian "core" by what Fowles sees as the metafictional responsibilities of postmodernism. (Cooper 1991: 107)

Apart from his mere intrusions in the text that aimed to explain the Victorian perspective to the postmodern reader, the narrator questions the absolute power of the author in relation to the fictional world he creates. Many times throughout the novel the narrator interrupts the story and justifies his intentions: "I risk making Sarah sound like a bigot" (Fowles 2004: 58). He confesses he is writing in the conventions accepted at the time of the story and underlines the absolute power of the author, who is mostly associated with God, yet he places a distance between himself and his characters, posing as a mere reporter of their actions.

If during the first twelve chapters the reader comfortably waves between the Victorian setting and the postmodern narrator's commentaries, Chapter 12 ends with the rhetorical question: *Who is Sarah?*, only to surprise the reader at the beginning of the next chapter with an irreversible turning point in the novel, which abolishes all the barriers between the author and the audience: "I do not know. This story I am telling is all my imagination. These characters I created never existed outside my own mind" (Fowles 2004: 95). This drastic change makes the novel look like a dialogue between the writer and the reader, and Fowles comments both on his own position as the author of Victorian fiction and on that of the Victorian author who wrote under the conventions of his own historical and social environment. He confesses that:

> if I pretended until now that I know my characters' minds and inner-most thoughts, it is because I am writing in (just as I have assumed some of the vocabulary and 'voice' of) a convention universally accepted at the time of my story: that the novelist stands next to God. He may not know all, yet he tries to pretend that he does. But I live in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes; if this is a novel, it cannot be a novel in the modern sense of the word (Fowles 2004: 95).

In Chapter 13, Fowles admits he finds himself obliged to respect his characters' free will. He acknowledges that the author is still a god, because (s)he is a

creator, but radically limits his/her power. He assumes the reader may suppose that "a novelist has only to pull the strings and his puppets will behave in a lifelike manner" (Fowles 2004: 95), that "novelists always have fixed plans to which they work, so that the future predicted by Chapter One is always inexorably the actuality of Chapter Thirteen" (Fowles 2004: 95). It is, indeed, possible for an author to do whatever he pleases with his characters, but Fowles underlines that "possibility is not permissibility". Here, he questions once again how it is moral and acceptable for a writer to lead his own narrative. Fowles does not want to push his characters into doing what he considers to be good for the story, but to be, what Cooper call, "the local spy", to unfold their story step by step, without deciding from the beginning how they should end up, so that they seem genuine, not mere puppets on a stage. He sees the world as an organism, not as a machine, therefore "a genuinely created world must be independent from its creator" (Fowles 2004: 96), if not, if it is planned and "fully reveals its planning", it is a dead world. Also, he explains that it is only when the characters and the events begin to disobey the writer that they begin to live (Fowles 2004: 96). The previous question *Who is Sarah?* remains with no answer, but it suggests that at that particular point in the narrative line, neither the reader, nor the author, know all the particularities of her character. Nevertheless, Fowles insists to underline that he has not denied his characters' existence as individual beings, but the contrary: "I have disgracefully broken the illusion? No. My characters still exist, and in a reality no less, or no more, real than the one I have just broken. […] I do not fully control these creatures of my mind, any more than you control" (Fowles 2004: 97).

On the other hand, Fowles' artistic view is cleverly embodied in Sarah Woodruff's character. Her fictionality intentionally throws the readers back to the actual narrator (Cooper 1991: 116). Sarah is the most enigmatic, yet vivid, character in the story and her way of fictionalizing her reality is another metafictional device that Fowles implies in the novel, both with an aesthetic purpose as well as with an ethic one. She embodies many typical Victorian motifs, like the governess, the orphan or the young lady reading fiction, and could easily be compared to Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre or most of Jane Austen's heroines. Nonetheless, she surpassed her condition and broke almost all rules that a respectable young lady of the Victorian Era had to obey.

Sarah's literary education became a little bit dissatisfying for her condition, since she found herself in the need of having a mentally satisfying relationship in the detriment of a conventional one, which could help her surpass her economic situation and, maybe, to prevent her from becoming socially marginalized. She constantly compared the living people around her with fictional characters from the books she read:

> Without realizing it, she judged people as much by the standards of Walter Scott and Jane Austen as by any empirically arrived at; seeing those around her as fictional characters, and making poetic judgements on them (Fowles 2004: 54).

Through Sarah's character Fowles concentrates both on the process of writing and creating fiction and on describing the reading of literature. The novels Sarah reads give her "fictional models for making moral and psychological judgements on her fellow people" (Brax 2003: 179). Her education provides her a deeper understanding of her tragic situation within a Victorian social environment, and the reading of literature "also seems to have made it possible for Sarah to take the position of an author, to gain at least some power to manipulate her own faith" (2003: 183). Her relation with the French Lieutenant is also fictitious, but it is the element that gives her a unique and individual place within her society. Therefore, she aesthetically creates an artificial identity, builds herself the aura of mystery which individualizes her as a character and transforms her into the most enigmatic figure in the novel.

Fowles' moral intention of respecting his characters' free will is somehow reflected in Sarah's personality. Fowles' morality and assumptions about freedom and dominance influence the readers' perception of Sarah. As Cooper pointed out, "while the narrator is an authorially powerful figure, the generator of both a text and a theory of textuality that challenge his readers, Sarah too is overtly presented as creatively capable". Therefore, the text created around her character, the storyline in relation to her, mostly represents "her own fictionalized life-story" (Cooper 1991: 110). Sarah fictionalizes herself, she becomes an author herself, and might be, in fact, the most important metafictional device that Fowles' uses in the novel.

The novel's metafictional strategies, as expressed and highlighted by the narrator, repeatedly emphasize the textuality of Sarah and her participation in the fictionality of the text. She is […] written with the kind of narratorial and narrational awareness that makes her part of a text in the process of revealing its own artificial and illusory nature (Cooper 1991: 114).

Fowles creates thus the illusion that Sarah is indeed free to make her own judgements on people around her, precisely through her evident fictionality. Therefore, Sarah assimilates the author's artistic and moral vision but, by constantly reminding the readers who the actual narrator is, Fowles frees her from any responsibility regarding the morality or immorality she manifests.

Moreover, at the level of the text's structure, the alternate endings represent another way of respecting the "free will" of the characters. Fowles does not want to limit his heroes' destinies to only one possible conclusion or to force them into one defined, closed ending. Showing two different possibilities and leaving place for interpretations represent for Fowles a moral attitude on behalf of the author, who allows the characters to escape from his authorial power and the readers to choose the option they prefer. Nonetheless, both endings present a free Sarah, a woman who has managed to escape her destiny and the restrictions of her contemporary society, a female artist and at the same time an artefact herself, by being represented in Rossetti's works of art.

To conclude with, John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a beautiful representation of a metafictional postmodern novel in which the writer gracefully alternates between the Victorian Era with its social conventions and the 20th century mentality and sense of morality. It is most remarkable how Fowles is able to employ metafictional devices in order to indirectly express his own perspective regarding the moral restrictions a writer should consider while playing God in his own narrative. The narrator's intrusion in the text, Sarah's own fictionalization and her way of aestheticizing the reality around herself, together with the open endings, represent Fowles' attempt to keep a fair and moral position in relation to his characters. He acknowledges the limitless power of an author, but denies its ethical or aesthetic value. For him, authors should not narrow their heroes' possibilities of developing freely or impose a fixed and previously decided closure on them, because they risk creating lifeless characters. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Fowles settles a Victorian story from the perspective of a contemporary writer, acknowledges its status as the work of an artist, and manages to ponder upon and mildly criticize both the Victorian novelist's and the postmodern one's sense of morality and aesthetic principles.

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