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Special thanks to our professors for their work towards producing this volume /

Un gros merci à nos professeurs et professeures pour leur participation à la réalisation de ce volume

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Welcome / Bienvenue

Congratulations for this wonderful seventh volume of *Confetti*! Encore une fois, le journal reflète l'ampleur et la richesse de notre programme de Maîtrise en littératures et cultures du monde, ainsi que l'étonnante curiosité et capacité intellectuelle de ses étudiantes et étudiants. The themes of the contributions to the volume—the legacies of colonialism, the Other in Eastern Europe, Japanese culture in America, and Western representations of gender—demonstrate how important the critical scholarly examination of cultural identities and cultural representations is and remains in our times. Je tiens à féliciter la rédactrice en chef et les contributeurs et contributrices pour cette merveilleuse réalisation.

Prof. Luis Abanto

Department Chair,
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The 2021 issue of *Confetti*, the seventh volume, is a remarkable achievement, especially considering that it has been produced in the context of a global pandemic that has impacted the academic life of our program in major ways. Le journal est le résultat du dévouement des étudiants et étudiantes de la Maîtrise en littératures et cultures du monde (the Master's in World Literatures and Cultures), un programme unique au Canada : bilingue, interdisciplinaire et dynamique. This issue showcases their research and explorations by bringing together works that encompass critical approaches and methodologies to analyze a variety of cultural expressions from around the world. On trouve ici une collection riche et variée d'articles universitaires sur des expressions culturelles de plusieurs coins du monde. In the name of the professors who have taught and supervised these creative and dedicated students, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the editor, Kara Cybanski, and the contributors.

Prof. Jorge Carlos Guerrero

Program Director,
Master of Arts in World Literatures and Cultures
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Introduction

When I took on this project, I couldn't have guessed how much I would learn. There are so many cultures, so many topics to explore that a single edition of *Confetti*, like this one, can only touch on a fraction of what the world has to offer. Ce volume est divisé en sections selon les régions étudiées, dont l'Europe, l'Afrique et l'Amérique du Nord. Mais détrompez-vous : les huit articles sont aussi uniques que le sont leurs auteurs et auteures.

The first section, *Legacies of Colonialism in Africa / L'héritage du colonialisme en Afrique,* examines the lasting effect of colonial rule in Eritrea and Morocco by Italy and Spain, respectively. Although the two authors chose different theoretical frameworks, both investigate the identity crisis resulting from European colonization in distinct African nations.

La seconde section, *The 'Other' Europe, to the East / L'Autre Europe, à l'est*, comporte deux articles singuliers qui regardent la représentation de l'Autre dans trois romans. Alors que la première investigation étudie la caractérisation de Juifs en Bosnie, la deuxième explore la vie des vétérans de l'Union soviétique qui ont combattu lors de conflits armés.

The third section, *Japanese Culture in America / La culture japonaise en Amérique*, invites the reader to reflect on Japanese immigrants and culture in North America—while the former struggle with racism and classism, the latter is celebrated in modern media. In fact, the first essay in this segment is the only one in any *Confetti* journal to investigate anime and manga as literary and cinematic creations thus far.

La dernière section, *Interrogating Western Representations of Gender / Interroger les représentations occidentales du genre*, se différencie des autres car elle se centre moins sur la région géographique et plus sur l'expérience féminine qui transcende les frontières nationales. Désormais, les deux articles analysent deux jeunes femmes européennes qui s'affrontent aux préjugés dans diverses parties du monde.

I would like to thank my classmates for working with me these many months. I hope they are as proud as I am to see their work published in this journal. Je compte aussi remercier Dr Jorge Carlos Guerrero, sans qui ce volume n'aurait pas été possible.

Happy reading! Bonne lecture!

Kara Cybanski

Editor in Chief and Master's Candidate
Rédactrice en chef et candidate à la maîtrise

Legacies of Colonialism in Africa /
L'héritage du colonialisme en Afrique

Interrogating the Metaphor of Madness and the Migratory Process in Said El Kadaoui's *Límites y Fronteras*

Katherine Bowie

Abstract

As postcolonial scholars signal, the similarities between the constructions of the racial Other and the mad are very similar and rely on a binary of the rational and irrational. Examining how the construction of madness serves as a metaphor for the migratory process and its ensuing trauma in Said El Kadaoui's *Límites y fronteras*, this paper's intent is to question how this affects the subjectivity of its protagonist. I find that the metaphor of madness serves to express the limiting aspects of identity and through the character development of its protagonist, the narration allows a more heterogeneous understanding of identity to emerge.

Keywords

madness, diaspora, identity, heterogeneity, intertextuality, Catalonia

Résumé

Comme le signalent les savantes et les savants postcoloniaux, les similitudes entre les constructions de l'Autre racial et du fou sont très similaires et se fient au binaire du rationnel et de l'irrationnel. En examinant comment la construction de la folie peut servir de métaphore pour le processus migratoire et le traumatisme qui en découle dans *Límites y fronteras* de Saïd El Kadaoui, cet article a pour bût d'interroger comment cela affecte la subjectivité de son protagoniste. Je souligne que la métaphore de la folie sert à exprimer les aspects limitatifs de l'identité et, grâce au développement du caractère de son protagoniste, la narration permet l'émergence d'une compréhension plus hétérogène de l'identité.

Mots-clés

folie, diaspora, identité, hétérogénéité, intertextualité, Catalogne

The idea of madness is a constant in literature, as Michel Foucault would point out, inaccurately representing the opposite of the perceived rationality of the sane. However, from a postcolonial position, insanity often intersects with colonialism to reveal the darker consequences of coloniality. Saïd El Kadaoui Moussaoui's novel *Límites y fronteras* (2009) situates madness in the context of the diaspora, specifically the Moroccan diaspora in Spain. How does the metaphor of madness help the reader understand the experience of migration and diaspora in this context? Through an analysis of how madness and Otherness are approached, we can draw similarities between the two, leading to the conclusion that the author appropriates the metaphor to give meaning to the experience of the marginalised migrant. The protagonist's institutionalization and recovery gradually reject the binary borders of insanity and Otherness, offering the protagonist a more heterogeneous and liminal sense of identity. In exploring the narrator's process of self-actualization, I will examine the character development through his confessions to a psychiatrist, his reading of intertexts, and his writing process. My reading of these features will reveal the author's proposal for a more flexible understanding of identity.

Límites y fronteras narrates the symbolic rebirth of its protagonist Ismaïl after his psychotic break. The plot follows Ismaïl's rupture from reality, institutionalisation, recovery, and eventual release. During the process of his treatment, the narrator confronts earlier memories, many of which relate to his experience of migration in childhood, cultural differences, and feelings of belonging. The narration is punctuated with intertextual references, failed romantic relationships, and the chaos of everyday life in the psychiatric clinic. Narrated from the first-person perspective of its protagonist, the text gives voice to two groups normally marginalized within literature: the mentally ill and the racial Other. Set in a psychiatric clinic in Barcelona, Spain, in the early years of the new millennium, the novel situates itself in the very real

experiences of discrimination and dislocation of non-European Union immigrants within Spain. Similar to the *Bildungsroman* in content, the novel ruptures the notion that the complex processes of identity creation end in adolescence (as more traditional definitions of the genre posit) but instead continues well into adulthood. Ultimately the story traces Ismaïl's process of reconciliation and self-realization, charting a new path in his life, one less constricted by constructed classifications of identity.

The trauma of the protagonist's childhood experience of migration is rooted in the very real experiences of many Maghrebi immigrants in Catalonia. In the 1980's Spain, and particularly Catalonia, saw a wave of migration from the North of Morocco. At the outset, these were primarily male economic migrants searching for employment as labourers. Subsequent family reunification would lead to the establishment of a large Amazigh Muslim community in Catalonia.[1] Both the author and the protagonist of the novel were a part of the wave of family reunification, leaving Africa as children. Due to a difficult historical relationship between Spain and Morocco, these migrants were subject to significant discrimination and alienation.[2] In the early 2000s, the Spanish literary scene saw the emergence of a generation of Catalan-Amazigh writers that included Saïd El Kadaoui, termed the Generation of '92. This generation of authors, all of whom had migrated from Morocco as children, was characterized by their autofictional tendencies and their centering of the migratory experience in their narratives.

This article is based on a combination of textual and narrative analysis of the novel *Límites y fronteras* [*Limits and Borders*] by Saïd El Kadaoui Moussaoui and uses further theoretical texts to support its argument. In order to conceptualize of the construction of mental

[1] *Amazigh* refers to the indigenous ethnic group from Morocco. They speak Tamazight and the plural is Imazighen. They are sometimes referred to as "Berbers" although many have noted that this is a somewhat derogatory term, given that it originates from "barbarian".
[2] See Daniela Fleslers' *Return of the Moor* for an in-depth understanding of the two countries' shared history.

health in the narrative, I will engage with the works of Michel Foucault, as well as with Frantz Fanon to understand how the associated inferiority complex is internalized. To relate the metaphor of madness to heterogeneous identity formation, I rely on Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La frontera* (1987) and Amin Maalouf's *Identidades Asesinas* [*Deadly Identities*] (1999). I also depend on the scholarly writings of other academics on the author and this work.

The narration draws parallels between the Foucauldian construction of madness and the construction of the racialized Other. Foucault claims that the binary of sanity and insanity has pathologized the insane as dangerous beings who must be confined for public safety reasons as well as for their own well-being. Shoshana Felman affirms that in literature the "mad" are presented as the antithesis of the rational sane, thus silencing their voice and objectifying them (2). Felman continues that the act of reclaiming the madman in literature underscores the relationship between literature, discourse, and power (2). The term pathology is important here because it indicates some type of primordial quality of insanity, something that is inherent to the biology of the insane. As many postcolonial scholars have pointed out, it is difficult to think of this construction without thinking of Eurocentric stereotypes of the colonized.[3] Understanding the metaphor of madness as a metaphor for the experience of the racial Other, we can conceive this position of marginality as being deviant or subversive in the eyes of the public, something that the protagonist has clearly internalized. As Fanon demonstrates in his psychoanalysis of Black patients, the colonial epistemology often leads to inferiority complexes in racialized patients (11). Anzaldúa and Maalouf counter this binary construction in their accounts of the multiplicities and complexities of identities. Anzaldúa's concept of the new *mestiza* (mixed heritage woman) allows us to conceptualize the instability of heterogeneous identity while Maalouf's concept of deadly identities demonstrates the dangers of enforcing binary thinking in

[3] See La Marr Jurelle Bruce, Paul Huebner, Seri Luangphinith.

relation to subjectivities. This shift from a binary perspective of identity to a more fluid conception, like Anzaldúa's and Maalouf's, functions to decolonize the constructed hierarchies attached to this binarism.

To date, the majority of scholarship on Saïd El Kadaoui has focused on his position as a heterogeneous diasporic writer. Pilar Arnau i Segarra contests that El Kadaoui is one of the integral members of the growing generation of Catalan-Amazigh authors, who are defined by their hybridity (257). The author Cristian H. Ricci dedicated a chapter of his book *Hay moros en la costa* [*There Are Moors on the Coast*] to discussing this generation of writers. In his brief analysis of El Kadaoui's novel, he states that through rejecting monolithic notions of identity, the author is able to articulate a border thinking that transcends homogenizing notions of identity (245). However, Carmen Sanjuán-Pastor claims that despite the author's attempts to renounce cultural hegemony and homogenization, *Límites y fronteras* tends to reproduce an Occidental model rather than a decolonial statement (53). Similar to Ricci, Miquel Pomar-Amer explains that the author's autofictional work *Cartes a meu fill: Un català de soca-rel, gairebé* [*Letters to my Son: A Born and Bred Catalan, Almost*] (2011), in comparison with Najat El Hachmi's *Jo també soc catalana* [*I, Too, Am Catalan*] (2004), emphasizes the physical and cultural borders encountered in the migration process. This serves as political message to the diaspora within Catalonia as well as the broader Catalan society of the discrimination faced by migrants and their children. As Pomar-Amer concludes, the message of *Cartes a meu fill* is one of interpersonal relationships as a template for bridging intercultural gaps (51). It is my intent to contribute to this dialogue through an examination of the role mental health plays in this narrative. In contributing to these conversations, I hope to increase an understanding of how discourses of madness are present in decolonial or diasporic works, especially within a Spanish/Catalan context.

Following the chronological order of the narration, the reader witnesses Ismaïl's changing perspective concerning his self-identification and self-esteem. In the protagonist's first therapy session with Don Jorge, he is asked to recount his psychotic episode and proclamation that he is "el príncipe de los bereberes" ("The prince of the Berbers"; El Kadaoui 27). Ismaïl feels a surge of intense shame at the memory, a feeling that is mirrored later in the chapter. Recovering from the humiliation of remembering his rupture from reality, he recounts how he adamantly defends the Moroccan football team in Spain, but when he crosses the Strait of Gibraltar, defends the Spanish national team. This is attributed to the fact that he is always "… construyendo grandes argumentos en [su] mente para defender que los marroquíes no [son] ciudadanos de segunda" ("constructing grand arguments in his head to defend that Moroccans are not second-class citizens"; 29) and equally defending Spain against his cousin's rebuttals that it is poor compared the rest of Europe. This sense of uprootedness is linked to his sense of inferiority claiming that "mis propios monstruos lo que me hacen sentirme inferior. E inferior en todas partes. Los que somos de familias venidas de otros lugares no tenemos país, no tenemos patria" ("my own monsters are what make me feel inferior. And inferior in all ways. Those of us who are from families from other places don't have a country, we don't have a homeland"; 30). This example associates the condition of Otherness with the humiliation of being perceived as mad. This demonstrates the narrator's initial binary perspective towards his own identity, characterized by a persistent feeling of inferiority.

The protagonist's feelings of isolation manifest in his obsessive infatuation with his nurse Candela, whom he views as eternally unattainable. Infused with jealousy and longing, he desires to be one of the other caregivers rather than a patient to be included in what he views as the more respected social strata. Describing his frustration with his current status, Ismaïl refers to his

companions as “vulgares, repugnantes y sucios” (“vulgar, repugnant and dirty”; 59) and wishes to “romper esa barrera que marcaba la diferencia entre cuidador y enfermo” (“break the barrier that marks the difference between caregiver and sick”; 59). Through an interview with Don Jorge, it is revealed that he feels jealousy towards the doctor as well as the other caregivers for the respect they are shown, which is juxtaposed with his own depreciative perspective of the other patients. Revealing that he desires to feel “… la sensación de haber cruzado esta frontera” (“the sensation of having crossed that border”; 64), he equates the metaphorical border between the patient and the medical staff with that of the distance between Spain and Morocco (64-65). The narration makes this metaphor clear when Don Jorge responds “usted ya sabe que no se vive mejor siendo europeo y olvidándose por completo de Marruecos” (“you know now that life is not better feeling European and forgetting Morocco altogether”; 65). The chapter finishes with the protagonist wondering if his grandfather would be disappointed in him for having ignored his Moroccan side. This conclusion outlines the clear similarities between the feelings of being a second-class citizen because of his national origin as well as his mentally ill status. The final moments demonstrate the beginning of Ismaïl’s desire to reconcile with his ethnic origin, despite his depreciative view of this part of his identity.

In his continuing obsession with Candela, Ismaïl reveals that this process feels repetitive, and reminiscent of earlier romantic relationships. He recounts his experience with his first adolescent love interest, Mónica, who ended the relationship after a month, because, as his best friend explained “Pero para el resto tú eres un moro, ¿y cómo va a salir un moro con Mónica?” (“But for the rest of them you are a Moor, and how could a Moor go out with Monica?”; 77). This rejection creates somewhat of an existential crisis in the adolescent protagonist who directs his frustration and hatred at his host country as well as his own ethnicity. He claims “… odiaba

aquel país que se suponía que era el mío, odiaba España que me pedía integración, pero hasta un límite. Un límite que yo me había atrevido a franquear enamorándome de una catalana" ("I hated that country that was supposed to be mine, I hated Spain, which was asking me to integrate, but to a limit. A limit that I had dared to cross by falling in love with a Catalan woman"; 76). This quote reveals the expectations projected onto the racial Other in terms of integration into the host society; despite the pressure to assimilate, there are certain privileges unattainable to those who do not fit neatly into the category of the host country's idealized citizen. As Maalouf argues, migrants are constantly subjected to primordial visions of identity, often being forced to choose between the home and host country, which he claims are the ideal conditions for the creation of legions of disenfranchised citizens and "locos sanguinarios" ("bloodthirsty lunatics"; 22). Within the microcosm of the therapeutic clinic, this is replicated in his infatuation with Candela who represents not only the sane but also the unattainable Spanish woman. As the narrator describes, this adolescent rejection by Mónica initiated a series of romantic conquests that he describes as a "venganza" ("vengance"; El Kadaoui 78). Despite this problematic view of women, the narrator admits this only serves to feed his internal conflict, rather than alleviate it, demonstrating a self-awareness that continues to develop as he confronts further memories of his childhood as well as of romantic relationships.

Confronting several negative childhood memories, Ismaïl is able to reconcile these with his feelings of alienation in both countries. He begins his session demonstrating the more liminal identity he has come to accept, jokingly referring to himself as "un amazig que se siente europeo, que quiere tanto como odia a Marruecos" ("an Amazigh that feels European but who loves Morocco as much as he hates it"; 159). In recounting two stories of different relatives' weddings that demonstrate his maternal grandmother's internalized misogyny, the protagonist makes it

clear that there are certain traditions and norms of his natal country he opposes. The grandmother finishes one of her stories by claiming that he has been Europeanised and lacks traditional notions of respect. This is juxtaposed with the following scene in which Ismaïl recounts a shame-filled experience in primary school where his morally questionable teacher referred to Islam as a religion that was impregnated with "machismo, poligamia y otras barbaries" ("machismo, polygamy and other barbarities"), holding the young protagonist responsible for explaining and justifying his religion to his peers (165). This demonstrates the double isolation Ismaïl feels from both societies. Rejecting the cosmopolitan label of "citizen of the world" (162), he instead claims that he is a citizen of neither country. The narrator, however, accepts this more calmly than previously, stating that "No se puede ser de dos lugares" ("You can't be from two places"; 162). Don Jorge responds to this with "No se puede estar en dos lugares" ("You can't be in two places"), implying that Ismaïl wishes to exist both in Morocco and Spain, while also recognizing that he is reluctant to leave the safety of the clinic (162). In this allusion, the familiar space of the psychiatric clinic is equated with Morocco; it is portrayed in a warm, nostalgic way, subverting the negative and uninviting imagery associated with both the colonized world and madness. Ismaïl concludes by accepting this duality, while agreeing that he desires to know more about the Morocco he has shunned in his formative years, displaying an open-mindedness to both facets of his identity.

In the narrator's last therapy sessions with Don Jorge, he expresses a transformative perspective, breaking from his previous patterns of thought that were characterized by their repetitiveness and motivated by jealousy and shame. He recounts how his childhood experiences lead him to look down condescendingly on those who studied hard as well as those who did not do well academically, while he achieved success with very little effort. As he explains, this was

motivated by a feeling of triumph (181). Upon learning that a former classmate who did poorly in secondary school is now working a decent job and going to be married, the protagonist reflects that he now only feels happiness for his former friend, rather than jealousy (182). This revelation represents a rupture in Ismaïl's character arc, whereby he recognizes that his internalized shame has dictated his actions, trapping him in a cycle of failed relationships and unhappy work experiences. This is best articulated in his words: "… ya había aprendido a valerme por mí mismo" ("I have learned how to stand on my own two feet"; 183). This line expresses how the protagonist's sense of self has shifted from being defined by external validation and his need to surpass the arbitrary borders imposed on his subjectivity, to one that centres on his interests and desires for the future. The section finishes with Don Jorge reminding the character that "La cordura no permite coger atajos" ("Sanity does not allow shortcuts"; 183), making clear that the work of rejecting the binaries of identity that are externally imposed is a long process of reflection and reconciliation.

The final moments of the novel, including his final interview with Don Jorge, present a version of the main character that is optimistic about the future and distinct from the Ismaïl who was institutionalized. Instead of hyper-focusing on shameful memories of the past, the protagonist is able to reflect and distance himself from them, looking towards a future in which he views his past memories not as a source of shame, but as a constructive part of his subjectivity. This transformation is especially visible through his dialogue with Don Jorge. The setting of the private office along with the assumed confidentiality of their relationship presents these interviews as a type of confessional, allowing the reader access to the protagonist's intimate thoughts. The character of Don Jorge helps articulate Ismaïl's sentiments to the reader, acting as a sort of mediator or translator. It is his psychoanalytical knowledge that explicitly

makes the connection between the discourse of madness and the position of the Other, thus strengthening the metaphor. This dialogue allows the reader to recognize its more subtle manifestations in other dialogues, such as those with intertexts.

Ismaïl's inclusion of intertextual references in the narrative add an additional layer of dialogue that allows the protagonist to relate to the experiences of other characters as well as reflect on his own identity through a critique of their actions. The first texts to which we are introduced through his perspective are those of a Lebanese female writer he claims is named Hanan. The first story describes an Arab woman who views the colonizer, the English, as inherently superior, to the point that she donates money to a begging English man to feel superior to them for once. The narrator describes the connection he feels with this female character, claiming "La lectura de este cuento que le he comentado fue algo muy importante para mí porque me ayudó a entender que son mis propios monstruos lo que me hacen sentirme inferior" ("Reading this story was very important for me because it helped me understand that it is my own monsters that make me feel inferior"; 30). The second story is that of a woman who returns to her birth country from Europe, despite her contempt for it, and recuperates a portion of her identity (31). Ismaïl explains that this story sent him into a spiral of depression that produced hatred within him, directed not only at himself but at the society that exploits his difference. This reflects what Maalouf states, that when the condition of belonging feels threatened or humiliated, it produces the ideal conditions for violence: "Hay un Mr. Hyde en cada uno de nosotros; lo importante es impedir que se den las condiciones que ese monstruo necesita para salir a la superficie" ("There is a Mr. Hyde in each of us; the important thing is to prevent the conditions that this monster needs to rise to the surface"; 18). It is this cumulation of frustration in the protagonist that leads to his psychotic break, which Don Jorge recognizes, saying "Y supongo

que la única salida que consiguió encontrar este odio que iba creciendo cada día fue la que se produjo" ("And I guess the only way out of this hatred that was growing every day was the one that came about"; 32). In this example, we see that the experiences of fictional characters provide a framework for Ismaïl's feelings of inadequacy, in fact allowing them to further develop.

Ismaïl's reading of Fatima Mernissi, the famous Moroccan feminist, helps the protagonist develop a more nuanced vision of Morocco that departs from his limited conception where it exists as a source of nostalgia or hatred. The inclusion of Mernissi brings a feminine voice into the dialogue that, like the Lebanese author Hanan, is able to expose the realities of their intersectional experiences as racialized women, transcending Ismaïl's own understanding. It is through Mernissi's *El sueño del umbral* [*Dream of the Threshold*] that he is reminded that his nostalgic memories of the female-dominated home life are symptoms of an oppressive patriarchal system. He refers to this as "un mundo de tradicionalismos que coartan la libertad" ("a world of traditionalisms that curtail freedom"; 124). Not only does this help the narrator reconcile the feelings of nostalgia with the realities of the space, but also develops his personal beliefs regarding tradition and liberty. He expresses his belief that liberty should not be constrained by cultural differences but something inherent to all societies. This is significant because we see a character development that moves away from the binary of Morocco versus Spain to encapsulate a more cosmopolitan outlook based in ideals. This is reminiscent of Gloria Anzaldua's statement that outlines an identity formed by principles of change and social justice:

> I am cultureless because as a feminist I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs … yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to one another. (102-103)

This is significant in the example of Ismaïl, who comes to realize at the close of the chapter that while his hatred of these social norms is articulated through rancour for his native country and its customs, it is in fact gender inequality that is the true source of his anger.

When describing his previous relationships with women, the protagonist relies on fictional characters and narratives to understand his situation. Outlining the various romantic partnerships that have failed because of Ismaïl's reluctance to commit, he attributes these defeats to the recurrent sentiment of "no es mi media naranja" ("She's not my other half"; 131). After an incident in the clinic provokes him to reflect on the failures of his past relationships, he re-reads *Madame Bovary* by Gustav Flaubert to gain clarity on the situation, only to discover that the Emma Bovary that he previously admired for her relentless pursuit of true love now appears to him as overly nostalgic. It is through this critique of *Madame Bovary* that Ismaïl is able to see that his own nostalgic pursuit is naïve. Likewise, it is through a reading of the Jorge Luis Borges poem "Poseer o sonar" ["Own or Dream"] that he realizes that his tendency for jealousy is debilitating his ability to continue long term romantic relationships. This jealousy he blames on his Moroccan genes and upbringing, making the connection between the irrational and uncontrollable emotion and his position as the Other. Reflecting on Edward Said's description of the way "Oriental" masculinity is constructed, as well as the rhetoric surrounding madness, we see that equating strong emotions like jealousy to one group, either the insane or the racialized male body, only serves to construct the binary opposite to the rational (311). However, through dialogue with Don Jorge, Ismaïl is made to understand this difference, as his doctor says "sus celos son suyos y los tiene aquí en España y, como ya habrá visto, los celos no son patrimonio de los marroquíes" ("your jealousy is yours and you have it here in Spain, and as you've seen, jealousy is not the patrimony of Moroccans"; El Kadaoui 145). Through his own analysis of the

intertexts present in the work, Ismaïl is able to initiate a dialogue about his failed romantic partnerships that leads him to a greater understanding of the ways in which his upbringing influenced his adult relationships and the recognition of a need to move past his simplistic conception of his flaws.

Our protagonist repeatedly declares his admiration for different literature, at one point even stating that it is a form of therapy for him. The novel finishes with his ultimate self-actualization through his decision to study his true passion, French literature, in university. The narrative demonstrates how Ismaïl's dialogues with fictional characters, such as Emma Bovary or the protagonists of Mernissi's tales, allow him to further understand himself. This analysis of his connection with literary protagonists, with the help of Don Jorge, changes his outlook on many of his core values. Ismaïl's perspective begins to question his assumed anger towards both Moroccan and Catalan society for the trauma they have installed in him, allowing a more nuanced critique of the conditions that have made him feel this way, such as the way he internalized an inferiority complex and patriarchal gender norms. What is interesting is that the majority of the books to which he relates have female protagonists. This reinforces the similarities that exist between the constructions of the racial Other and the insane, as well as the feminine. These constructions of Otherness are further explored in Ismaïl's writing endeavours.

It is through the protagonist's creative writing that we see how he dialogues with not only his own memories but also with the outside world. As these writings are often part of the creative writing workshop in the clinic, there is the assumption that they will be read by others, meaning that while they reflect private sentiments, they are also a public presentation of the protagonist's self, whether explicitly or in more coded language. Ismaïl's first piece is a first-person story detailing the admittance of a pharmaceutical representative into a psychiatric clinic after he

attempts to sell the clinic his products. While constantly trying to explain that he has been mistakenly admitted, he is met with the phrase “la primera semana es la más difícil” (“the first week is the most difficult”; 43). The first-person narration allows us insight into the perspective of the institutionalized, presenting him as completely rational, both subverting the stereotype of the insane and questioning the reliability of the narrator. The story describes his unwilling institutionalization, constructing the space of the psychiatric clinic as a type of imprisonment he cannot escape, which he describes as leaving his person completely “sin credibilidad” (“without credibility”; 43). Then, the assumption that he is insane demonstrates the ways in which this discourse of Otherness is projected onto those who are assumed to fit into that category, rather than as the result of critical investigation. This short story allows the reader access to the ways in which the protagonist feels that Otherness is defined by the limits or borders he cannot evade. Ismaïl’s obsession with rupturing the limits of the imposed social order becomes present in the protagonist’s personal writing and search for meaning.

The protagonist’s obsession with limits is revealed in his personal writing, where he explains the ways in which he finds himself in repetitive cycles that only serve to increase his frustration with his situation. Reflecting on the strong feelings he has for Candela, he deduces, in his writing, that this must be obsession and must represent something subconscious, perhaps the desire to be considered normal rather than insane. He relates this experience to that of his adolescence when he would spend every weekend cycling in the hills of Catalonia to come home exhausted and immediately fall asleep. The protagonist reflects on how this constant motion of pedaling until exhaustion, weekend after weekend, was a form of escapism, saying “Todas estas opciones me parecían una forma de hacer más pasajero el tiempo, como si la vida fuera eso, buscar la manera de despistarla” (“All these options seemed to me to be a way to make time

more fleeting, as if life were just that, looking for a way to mislead it"; 93). He reckons that he is trying to escape the feeling of not belonging. It is clear that a feeling of double exclusion from both his home and host cultures has been the cause of his escapism and obsessions, as he then describes the symbolic rupture from his parents' culture as the consumption of a Frankfurt sausage (which contains pork and is prohibited under Islamic law) while recognizing his feelings of apathy regarding the independence movement in Catalonia, viewing it as something on which he is not allowed to have opinions.[4] The narrator's recognition of this fact will be vital in his recovery.

As he explains, the focus of many of the articles that Ismaïl writes is the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as well as the deaths of migrants that cross the Mediterranean from the Maghreb. As his recovery progresses, his views of these two issues shift from unilateral support for the Palestinian and Maghrebi migrants, violently condemning the Occident for having created these conditions, to a more nuanced view of the conflicts. He justifies this feeling of closeness with Palestine, claiming that the shared experience of living without a "Tierra" ("Land") forces him to empathize deeply with their cause (119). Just as we witness his perception of Morocco transform from one of mixed hatred and nostalgia to a more informed critique, his perspective on the conflict in Palestine-Israel shifts to a more humanistic view. In what he claims is his final article on the subject, he recognizes that it was wrong for him to think of the conflict as a tension of clashing identities, when what is most important is the lives of those affected. He finishes the article by stating that since the biased press reviews anger him, he has decided to focus more on reading novels instead (120). While this may initially appear to be

[4] The Catalan independence movement is a nationalist movement in the province of Catalonia, Spain, with the objective of greater social, political, and linguistic independence for Catalans within the region. For some supporters, this means total independence as a nation-state. This cleavage has caused considerable tension within the region, as well as in Spain, as Catalan nationalist sentiments clash with Spanish nationalism.

wilful ignorance, it demonstrates Ismaïl's desire to move beyond reading the media sources that are responsible for constructing the discourse surrounding the issue and identity, instead choosing to empathize on the individual level with authors and characters to build a more heterogeneous understanding that does not revolve around identity politics. This reflects Maalouf's statement that the recognition of our similarities and common humanity is much more effective in the achievement of various projects, in contrast to a focus on differences (59). He concludes with "Me daba perfecta cuenta de que había recuperado mis ganas de vivir y tenía proyectos que hoy estoy realizando. Ya no me sentía un loco" ("I realized that I had regained my will to live and I had projects that today I am carrying out. I no longer felt crazy"; El Kadaoui 120). In this respect, he recognizes that the experience of being mentally ill and recovering have been essential in leading to his less binary ways of thinking about identity.

It is through writing that the protagonist is finally able to overcome his deep infatuation with Candela. This revelation comes to Ismaïl after a conversation with Don Jorge in which he states "Candela viene a cubrir este vacío que siempre necesita llenar … llevarlo al papel, construir una historia literaria que nazca de esta necesidad y conseguir sacarle algo bueno en vez de tanto sufrimiento" ("Candela came to fill this void that always needs to be filled ... to put it on paper, to build a literary story born from this need and to get something good out of it instead of so much suffering"; 175). It is this comment that allows Ismaïl the liberty to imagine his possible life as a writer. In the short diary entry based on a dream he had, he imagines himself in conversation with a literary critic named Steiner, in which he discusses his recently published novel and some of his literary influences including Flaubert and Leo Tolstoy. This imagined conversation finishes with his affirmation that the novel is the product of dedication and certain sacrifices in his life, but that it was worth it (179). In this way, Ismaïl expresses his aspirations

for the future as being connected to literary success. Directly after this moment, he dreams of a vivid sexual encounter with Candela. This moment serves as a type of closure in his ongoing obsession. As he describes the next morning, "Ya no me importaba tanto verla como una cuidadora con la que jamás tendría otro tipo de relación. Aún hoy sigue siendo un misterio para mí aquello que precipitó el cambio" ("I no longer cared so much about seeing her as a caregiver with whom I would never have any other kind of relationship. What precipitated the change remains a mystery to me to this day"; 180). The narration leaves it clear that his fantasies involving Candela, which revolved around a need for acceptance, have been replaced with his goals and projections for a literary career that will provide him a type of self-validation. This transformation demonstrates the ways in which the writing process allows the protagonist to dialogue with himself and achieve a clarity in terms of personal objectives.

Ismaïl's final written piece in the novel is a meditation on his experiences in Morocco after he is released from the clinic and travels back to his hometown to reconcile some of the conflicting feelings he has towards the country. Before introducing his written reflections, the protagonist prefaces them, claiming that he intends to critically contemplate Morocco without feeling the guilt of being unfaithful to his origins. He announces that "La línea que separa la idealización del desprecio es extremadamente delgada" ("The line between idealization and contempt is extremely thin"; 185). His written work outlines conversations with two different cousins that share different opinions on the role of traditionalism in Morocco. The first conversation he records demonstrates how his cousin Jamal, while he complains about the state of poverty and corruption in Morocco, continues to live a more traditional life without making any radical changes. The narrator is initially critical of this approach but later realizes that this was his position before his institutionalization. He says:

> Vivíamos en una cárcel de palabras, de creencias, de ideas y de automatismos difíciles de mover. Ahora tengo la sensación de que he conseguido desenredarme de toda aquella telaraña que me atrapaba de forma violenta. Poco a poco he ido encontrando una puerta más a mi medida. La cárcel en la que he vivido ha sido la de creer que mi cultura era aquello, que criticarlo era criticar mis raíces y poner en peligro todo lo que yo era.[5] (191)

This citation exhibits the metaphor of the prison to describe Ismaïl's anterior mentality, demonstrating how he has been liberated from this way of thinking through a more liminal critique of his birthplace that does not entirely condemn it without a more critical understanding of the reasons why. He also expresses anger with the Occident, in particular Spain, for its trivial critique of Morocco that reduces it to a space of folkloric and backwards cultural representations (191). This is complimented by the following conversation with his cousin Farid, who looks to Europe as an example. While Ismaïl states that this is an illusion, and that Spain has no shortage of exploitation or gender violence, his cousin replies that the fundamental difference is democracy and the existence of a social security system (192-193). The protagonist concludes the writing with the recognition that corrupt governments and historical conditions are to blame for the drastic differences between the two. This last piece of literature solidifies and reconciles many of the protagonist's previous frustrations. Here we see a version of him that equally recognizes his Moroccan origin, and offers criticism of it, unclouded by nostalgia. He is able to recognize the conditions that have created this inequality between the two countries, leading to his constant feelings of inferiority. As Anzaldúa states, this double consciousness is what breaks

[5] "We lived in a prison of words, beliefs, ideas, and automatisms that were difficult to move. Now I have the feeling that I have managed to untangle myself from all that spider web that trapped me violently. Little by little I have been finding a door that fits me better. The prison in which I have lived has been that of believing that my culture was that, that to criticize it was to criticize my roots and put in danger all that I was."

binary thought patterns, and leads to ruptures from oppressive systems (102-104). He embraces the experience of his psychotic break and subsequent institutionalization as being an essential experience in the formation of his new subjectivity and new consciousness.

To conclude, Saïd El Kadaoui's narrative explores the similarities between the discourses surrounding mental illness as well those surrounding the migrant as a racial Other, revealing a striking similarity between the two. It is through an examination of this metaphor that we see significant character development of the novel's protagonist Ismaïl as he transforms from an uncomfortable subject shrouded in an inferiority complex and motivated by jealousy, nostalgia, and frustration, to one who actively pursues his own self-actualization, no longer motivated or hindered by external perceptions and expectations of himself. Presenting a series of dialogues with supporting character and psychiatrist Don Jorge, the narrative expresses how conveniently the metaphor of madness functions to express the hardships of the migratory experience. Intertextual insertions allow Ismaïl to dialogue with fictional characters and demonstrate a greater reflection, while also allowing for a comparison to the ways in which femininity is constructed and treated as Otherness. The protagonist's personal articles and diary entries allow the reader to view the cognitive process of his reflection and reveal the ways in which the migratory experience, as well as that of institutionalization, have shaped his subjectivity. El Kadaoui's skilled narration reveals a detailed examination of many of the daily challenges faced by the Maghrebi diaspora in Europe and particularly Spain and Catalonia. His narrative reveals the psychological trauma of migration, while exposing many of the reasons migrants choose to leave. He presents a more nuanced view of the critiques of both societies. Ismaïl's story presents a roadmap for comprehending identity in a world that is increasingly heterogeneous and diasporic, allowing us to conceive of these subjects as individuals.

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Self-Representation in the Contact Zone: An Autoethnographic Reading of *The Conscript*

Zoë Hughes Waldick

Abstract

Considered the first post-colonial Eritrean novel, *The Conscript* by Gebreyesus Hailu was originally written in Tigrinya in 1927 and published in the same language two decades later. The novel follows Tuquabo, a young soldier recruited by the Italian colonial army to fight Arab nationalist forces in Libya. The emergence of post-colonial African literature was shaped by what Mary Louise Pratt has conceptualized as contact zones. I develop Pratt's notion of the 'contact zone' as the site not only of cultural clashing but also of undoing harmful beliefs and false narratives. This article posits an autoethnographic reading of *The Conscript* because of its status as the first book formally published in Tigrinya, the ironic response to Italian colonialism in Eastern Africa, and the incorporation of multiple oral story-telling methods.

Keywords

Autoethnography, self-representation, contact zone, Italian colonialism, orality, *The Conscript*

Résumé

Considéré comme le premier roman érythréen postcolonial, *The Conscript* par Gebreyesus Hailu a été écrit d'abord en Triginya en 1927 et publié dans la même langue deux décennies plus tard. Le roman suit Tuquabo, un jeune soldat recruté par l'armée coloniale italienne pour combattre les forces nationalistes arabes en Libye. L'émergence de la littérature africaine postcoloniale a été façonnée par les zones de contact, notion élaborée par Mary Louis Pratt. Je développe la notion de Pratt de la « zone de contact » non seulement comme le site d'affrontements culturels, mais aussi un espace où défaire les croyances nuisibles et les faux récits. Cet article postule une lecture autoethnographique de *The Conscript* en raison de son statut de premier livre officiellement publié en Tigrinya, de la réponse ironique au colonialisme italien en Afrique de l'Est et de son incorporation de multiples méthodes de narration orale.

Mots-clés

Autoéthnographie, représentation de soi, zone de contact, colonialisme italien, oralité, *The Conscript*

Foreign discourse has long dominated the perception and imagination of post-colonial African countries. The imperial partition of the continent by major European powers, also referred to as the Scramble for Africa, invented territorial boundaries based on colonial politics with no regard for the pre-existing diverse cultural and societal organization of African regions (Gikandi 381). Eritrea, a northeastern African country on the Red Sea, developed from this history through Italian colonization and shares its post-colonial borders with Ethiopia, Sudan, and Djibouti (Appendix A). Simon Gikandi has suggested a stronger level of African agency in cultural encounters than previously indicated by earlier critics; this is witnessed by turning to the cultural production of arts such as literature.

Highly regarded as one of the first postcolonial novels, *The Conscript* by Gebreyesus Hailu provides an ironic reflection on Libya's anti-colonial war (1922-1932) through the eyes of an *ascari,* the lowest ranking officer in the Italian colonial military hierarchy. The story follows Tuquabo, a conscripted soldier recruited by the Italian colonial army to fight the nationalist Libyan forces resisting Italy's colonial presence in Libya. The short novel is divided into three main parts of a journey, beginning with a brief narration of Tuquabo's childhood and insight into Eritrean cultural values and attitudes at the time, followed by the conscript's departure for war, and finally their arrival in the Libyan desert, where those who survive spend two years fighting under Italian commandment. *The Conscript* is rife with examples of Italy's conquest and power, and their effects, but also full of questions of identity, community, and home. Originally written in Tigrinya in 1927 yet published in 1950, this work is considered the first Eritrean novel. It was later translated into English, adding to its global visibility within the literary realm as a revelatory piece of world literature.

The emergence of post-colonial modern African literature was shaped by what Mary Louise Pratt coined ‘contact zones’, defined as social spaces of interaction between cultures to “meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths” (34). Consequently, the colonial experience has been a central and enduring theme of African literature since the 20th century (Gikandi 379). Pratt also put forward the notion of the ‘autoethnographic’ text, which describes one’s self or one’s group in “ways that engage with representations others have made of them,” typically in response to ethnographic texts by European metropolitan subjects commenting on their conquered Others (35). I will explore the following questions: How and where are contact zones represented in this novel? In its depiction of asymmetrical power relations, in what manner does *The Conscript* negotiate the binary colonizer-colonized relations in its style, narrative, and plot? Drawing on Pratt’s theoretical concepts and Nir Arielli’s historical account of the role of colonial recruits, I argue that Hailu’s work can be read as an autoethnography related to Eritrean self-representation for three reasons: 1. it is a response to Italian colonization; 2. it was originally published in Tigrinya, an Ethiopic language; and 3. it adopts a narrative style incorporating orality in multiple ways. Beginning with a brief historical background, followed by an analysis of the text as autoethnographic, I aim to develop the contact zone as the site of not only cultural clashing but also of undoing harmful beliefs and false narratives.

A brief historical background is necessary seeing as the novel begins *in medias res* and little exposition is provided in terms of Italy’s colonization of Eritrea. The Scramble for Africa is a term designating the conquest which took place between 1881 and 1914, increasing Western European control over African regions tenfold (Press 206). This invasion, occupation, and rapid partition of African territory by European powers followed the Berlin Conference of 1884, which

formalized external control over the lands. During this period, control over customs, taxes, criminal jurisdiction, and military rights in African regions was claimed by European imperial nations (205). In its ambition to become a great power, Italy's colonial expansion took partial possession of the region now known as Eritrea in 1870 and 1882, forming Italian Somaliland in 1889; Asmara was declared the capital of the newly established colony of Eritrea, replacing Massawa (Appendix B). At this time, the regions under Italian imperial rule were Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, Libya, Eritrea, and Somalia.[6] The events in *The Conscript* occur in Tripolitania, during the Italian government and its armed forces' "lengthy, difficult, and bloody attempts to subdue the colonies" during the second colonial war in Libya (Arielli 47). In 1922, Italy launched a "military re-conquest of the colony", marking the end of a somewhat peaceful co-existence between Italians and Arabs in Libya (49). The novel begins here, the year the *Habesha* conscripts leave for Tripoli.[7]

Borrowing from the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, I posit an autoethnographic reading of Hailu's work. Autoethnography emerged from postmodern philosophy as a method of questioning traditional science and research and offering a way of "giving voice to personal experience to advance sociological understanding" (Wall 39). Clair Doloriert and Sally Sambrook trace the definitions, epistemologies, forms, and critics of autoethnography to better understand its interdisciplinary application. Epistemologically, autoethnography means writing about a nation or group of people and the self; the term has been commonly adopted in qualitative anthropology and sociology (Doloriert & Sambrook 83). In anthropology, it is used to capture indigenous people's accounts of their own cultures (84).

[6] Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were later united to form a nation renamed Libya (Arielli 47). The names Tripoli and Tripolitania are used interchangeably in the novel.

[7] *Habesha* is a self-designating term used by the people of highland Ethopia and Eritrea, who see themselves as possessing a distinct identity (Belcher 19). The *Habesha* "have been Christians for millennia and not because of European missionaries" (19).

Although Sarah Wall uses autoethnography and personal narrative in the sociological field, I apply her definition in tandem with Pratt's understanding of autoethnography as a *response* to ethnography, specifically in the Italian colonial context.

The Conscript is a poignant, multi-faceted, and early response to Italian colonialism in Eritrea in which colonizing tropes and binary beliefs are simultaneously exposed and dismantled. Binary language and understandings of the world are foundational underpinnings of the colonial project of conquest and domination. European imperialist powers adopted an essentialized, ethnocentric worldview which centred their cultural existence at the expense of the 'savage' or 'uncivilized' Other. This binary relation became further reinforced through the essentialization and dehumanization of colonial subjects.

As a ruling imperial power, the Italians had a sense of national, racial, and class superiority over their colonial subjects and used the attribution of animal behaviour as a devastating justification for the *Habesha*'s subjugation. The departure of the *ascari* from Asmara is the narrative's first instance of dehumanization and collective suffering of Eritreans at the hands of the Italians. The colonized subjects are reduced to animal status as "the military police would intervene and beat them with a whip (yes, with a whip like a donkey)" (Hailu 12). The interjection of the narrator's voice employing repetition further confirms and emphasizes the Italians' cruelty in their position of authority. During the journey to Libya, the Italians' hierarchical position is both literally and metaphorically reinforced by their seating on the upper deck of the ship. They consistently dehumanize the Eritreans, whipping or shooting them for their disobedience, and segregating them in an area of the ship with no protection from the elements in "a place where you put animals" (Hailu 14). Segregation as a practice, according to Uoldelul Chelati Dirar, constitutes the very essence of colonialism (258). The dehumanization of

the Eritreans at large provides a critical framework for understanding how the colonizers exerted control based on racism to uphold their dominance.

Rooted in racism, the dominance-subjection relation between the Italians and Eritreans represents both an ideological and an active manifestation of domination over somebody who is considered an inferior being. Fear and punishment tactics are used to control the *ascari*, including but not limited to physical punitive measures, namely flogging and the withholding of crucial survival supplies such as food, water, and shelter. At war in the Libyan Desert, the asymmetrical power relations between the Italians and the *Habesha* worsen through their shift into a master-slave dynamic. The submission of the Eritrean Other to the colonizer's will is most apparent in the following exclamation on the narrator's part: "they tell you to do nothing, even if you are slaughtered, until they give their order!" (Hailu 39) This comment speaks to the cruel nature of the colonial war as well as the infantilization of conscripted soldiers in Italian colonial discourse.

Language and identity are inextricably linked as shared languages facilitate communication while providing a sense of belonging through understanding. Languages also play a crucial role in the representation of communities and the power relations between them (Dirar 265). According to Ghirmai Negash, *The Conscript*'s translator, "written African literature evolved out of the colonization of Africa by Europe"; hence, the African literary canon has primarily consisted of anticolonial and postcolonial texts predominantly written in the languages of former colonizers (74). *The Conscript,* however, was first published in Tigrinya, an important literary language of the Horn of Africa, spoken in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Autoethnography has also been defined as the entry of marginalized groups into "dominant circuits of print culture" (Pratt 35). The novel's publication nearly thirty years late is

relevant to its consideration as an autoethnographic text because, due to its content and language, in the 1930s, there was no way to formally print and distribute such a novel under Italian rule (Negash 82). The colonial policy held a deliberate aim to suppress local linguistic identities, "with a particular hostility toward the Tigrinya language" (Dirar 265). Being the first novel written in this language, *The Conscript* represents an autonomous and alternative perspective, simultaneously creating self-representation while condemning injustice and the erasure of cultural identity. It must be noted that the *Habesha* have an ancient written culture and have exercised self-representation for over two thousand years in written texts in their own language, *Ge'əz* (Belcher 19). The *Habesha* "have been producing bound manuscripts … since at least the sixth century" and wrote many original books of poetry, theology, history, and biography (ibid).

In *The Conscript,* contact zones are designated spaces of social interaction between different cultural or ethnic groups within the overarching structure of asymmetrical power relations, dehumanization, paternalism, and white superiority. Multiple cultural, racial, and religious encounters occur in the novel, involving the Italians, *Habesha*, Somalians, and Libyans. Conflict is an overarching theme of the story, primarily between imperial powers and anti-colonials, but clashes also occur within the Italian army itself because it plucked soldiers from various African countries. The dynamics between the *Habesha* and Sudanese demonstrate how, fueled by a "divide and conquer" logic, the Italians exacerbated intragroup tensions in pursuit of colonial expansion. The first encounter between the Ethiopians and the Sudanese on the ship involves tension and racism. The Sudanese refer to the Ethiopians as "slaves" going to Tripoli for the money, whereas the Ethiopians call the Sudanese "black people" who could never be superior to them (16). Both groups harshly judge each other according to assumptions that are rooted in prejudiced racial beliefs.

Due to the harmful slurs and racist myths perpetuated by colonial forces, the Arabs had a reputation of indolence and were perceived as merciless killers who could not be trusted to keep their word. Dirar speaks to the Italians' "construction of the colonial subject" through which the *ascari* were expected to act as "agents of Italianisation" within Eritrean society (268). The *ascari* subsequently adopted stereotypical views perpetuated by the Italians painting the Arabs as a notoriously lazy, treacherous, and untrustworthy group (Hailu 32). After conveying this information, the narrator clarifies, "this is what the white people said about them" (ibid). The Italians weaponized these racist stereotypes for the dual purpose of protecting their white superiority and constructing the Arabs as the enemy, ensuring that the conscripts follow their orders. Hailu reveals the strategies adopted by the Italians to exploit and exacerbate existing prejudice and racial tensions between different East African regions to their advantage.

Beyond simply displaying the exploitation that resulted from asymmetrical power relations between the Italian colonizers and Eritrean colonial subjects, Hailu takes his critique further by dismantling racial and cultural stereotypes. In the following excerpt, he ironically co-opts the colonial language of representation of the *Habesha* as animals.

> It was exactly like watching a dog whose eyes, while one is eating, are raised and lowered following the movement of one's hand. They were, after all, like dogs, if you compared them with the Italians. In fact, dogs fared better; they at least ate their masters' leftovers. (46)

Through simile likening the *Habesha* to dogs, Hailu ironically incorporates the colonizers' language and their representation of his people to unpack the severity and extent of the *Habesha*'s mistreatment. This narration actively conveys the cruelty of the Italians in their

purposeful reduction of the *Habesha* to animal status, forcing them to suffer through inhumane conditions such as slavery, starvation, and extreme thirst over an extended period of time.

Dirar argues for an analysis of the colonial power structure from a more complex standpoint, viewing colonialism as a "plurality of actions and actors … motivated by broad shared logic" but not always cohesive in their institutional and operational activities (257). He quotes Alexander Naty on the shortcomings of solely emphasizing the exploitative relations between the colonized and colonizer, its limitation being the ignorance of complex interactions of societies with the colonial powers (ibid). This is in agreement with Gikandi's comment about African agency in cultural encounters. Dirar highlights the combination of institutional mechanisms and Italian colonial policy, and their interaction with local identities which must be put into conversation with *The Conscript.* Hailu's novel speaks to the hybridity arising from the contact zone. The colonial influence over language becomes apparent when the *Habesha* adopt the word "marching" into their Tigrinya vocabulary "as a testimony to their exhausting experience" (Hailu 27). This is the manifestation of contact zones as spaces where differing cultures imprint on one another but, in this case, only the colonized is imprinted upon.

As opposed to this book's titular implications, the *ascari* were not technically conscripted soldiers because their participation in the war was 'voluntary'. This label is inextricably linked with agency; however, rather than digress toward a discussion of volition, the focus here remains the representation of socio-cultural processes factoring into the *ascari*'s military participation in *The Conscript.* In a historical investigation into the military contribution of colonial troops, Arielli emphasizes the Italians' heavy reliance on Eritrean recruits for financial and political reasons during the counter-insurgency in Libya (48). Positioned at the bottom of the colonial military hierarchy, the *ascari* posed significantly less of a monetary burden than Italian soldiers

(53). As well, loss aversion was a major political consideration for the Italians, as they would receive less backlash in Italy over the deaths of colonized subjects as opposed to Italian soldiers (ibid). These factors were key in Italy's pursuit of expansionist policy in Libya using recruits from the Eritrean colony.

Aside from the imposition of Italian colonial rule, a number of cultural values influenced the participation of *ascari* in the war. Principles of moral courage and masculinity incited many young Eritrean men to voluntarily join the imperial force's army, blinding them to the fact that they were being used without any benefit to their own country. In his youth, Tuquabo witnesses the first wave of war in Tripoli and internalizes thoughts and beliefs rooted in male cultural pride and bravery. These Eritrean social values are passed down generations and repeated in songs. One lyric in particular vocalized by the youth, "He is a woman who refuses to go to Libya," effeminizes men who do not desire to partake in the Libyan war (Hailu 7). Gradually, "all the songs and information were stamped on [Tuquabo's] heart" (ibid). It is through a generational process of learning and socialization within his village that he comes to understand gender roles and equate masculinity with strength and bravery as did his father and the fathers before him – but Tuquabo becomes used for the benefit of the colonizer.

The *Habesha* chiefs, held in high esteem in Tuquabo's community, equally play a role in this conditioning because they boastfully express their desire for war and Tuquabo "developed an interest in weaponry and the military" as a result (Hailu 5). Though his parents are extremely disheartened by his decision to go to war, they exhibit great pride in Tuquabo's knowledge of weaponry throughout his childhood (5). Influenced by community leaders, his father, and the perception of masculinity within the community at large, the idea of fighting grows on Tuquabo

and he resolves to "fight as a hero and gain fame" (7). Eritrean participation in the colonial war is further explored through the different reactions in the local community.

Contrary to the *Habesha* warriors, the family members of the *ascari* and townspeople alike vocalize their disagreement by questioning the soldiers and shaming their decision to fight (8). Struggling to understand why he wishes to fight for foreigners, Tuquabo's parents experience a great deal of sadness and distress once their son is "in the hands of the heartless Italians" (ibid). At his departure, his mother's collapse prompts other Eritreans at the train station to curse Tuquabo, labelling him a "cruel son" for leaving his parents to join the fight (8). Regardless of differing opinions vis-à-vis the war, the East African colony was not in a position to provide all the necessary manpower (Arielli 55). *The Conscript* speaks to this issue in its mention of the Eritrean people saying that "not even one young man can be found; all have gone to Tripoli," reminding the reader of the devastating effects of this colonial war on the local communities (Hailu 26). Hailu's inclusion of this cultural context reveals the complex web of colonial policy, local socio-cultural beliefs, and motivations resulting in the *ascari*'s military participation in the colonial war and its effects on the people of Eritrea.

Though *The Conscript* is narrated omnisciently, fluctuating between the third and occasionally first-person narration, the majority of the story occurs through Tuquabo's perspective. This decenters the Italians, instead focalizing on the *Habesha* soldiers' collective experience, engaging in reflection from a lesser-heard marginalized perspective. Personal narratives can provide a "new vantage point" at the intersection of the personal and societal (Wall 39). Considering autoethnography as "more of a philosophy than a well-defined method," its textual appearance and configuration may vary (Wall 39). Tuquabo's story deals with issues of personal importance "within an explicitly acknowledged social context" and of evaluating

one's actions, two central autoethnographic elements (Wall 39). Tuquabo's character is consistently on the move; beginning in his youth, his cattle-owning family afforded him occasional travel opportunities with his father (Hailu 6). However, he never ventured a great distance until the war because the passage to Libya is his first experience seaside. The majority of the narrative is structured as a journey, from leaving the train station to setting sail on the Red Sea, to marching across the desert daily.

The transitory nature of his existence in this narrative can be read as progress and development, ultimately leading to Tuquabo's awakening. Initially, Tuquabo proudly and voluntarily leaves home to fight for the Italians. Approaching the novel's culmination, the *ascari* experience a major contact zone at war in Libya where the Italian military, composed of subgroups, encounters the Arab Libyan nationalists in battle. The contact zone is emphasized in the description of the three different fighting styles according to three cultural backgrounds. Unaccustomed to the Italian military techniques of lying low, the *Habesha* prefer to face their enemy standing tall but are obligated to follow the commandments issued by their Italian superiors (Hailu 39). Meanwhile, fighting for their country on their lands, the Arabs sing war songs expressing the insurgent sentiment to "liberate [their] land or … be buried there" (37).

Tuquabo gradually experiences an awakening of consciousness and comes to understand the reality of his predicament precisely when he says, "we let our country be taken, and we are now instruments to occupy someone else's country" (Hailu 42). Tuquabo's reflection on the Arabs' protection of their "barren" land as nomads prompts his awakening to the *ascari*'s predicament when he recognizes his tragic use as an Eritrean mercenary 'owned' by the Italians (43). Upon realizing the ironic contradiction of fighting to maintain a colonial system oppressing him and his people, Tuquabo unlearns the essentialist beliefs imposed on him and becomes

entirely disillusioned with the war. This awakening enables him to evaluate his role as a tool for oppression, ultimately leading to a deep sense of regret, shame, and unworthiness reflective of the critical and reflexive nature of autoethnography (Doloriert & Sambrook). A patchwork of feelings, experiences, and emotions is woven into this pluralist, autoethnographic approach to literature, calling the Eritrean soldiers to rethink their situation and, above all, its implications.

Language plays a crucial role in the (re)production of society and identity; orality is *sui generis,* in other words, self-constitutive and unique (Gunner 1). The narrative blends oral story-telling and written methods, affirming Liz Gunner's argument that orality has not disappeared, but rather has adapted itself in many forms as a "vehicle" for expressing the fears and hopes of new generations of Africans (12). Defined as the language and performativity of the body in both public and private spheres, orality facilitates the self-regulation of societies, organizes the past and present, and creates spaces of philosophical reflections (Gunner 1). It is the age-old practice of holding and transmitting cultural knowledge and social values across generations through poetry, song, and dance. In reciting the names of his male ancestors with his father, Tuquabo participates in the oral transmission or exchange of culturally significant, local, intergenerational knowledge. This is just one example of the multitude of ways in which *The Conscript* works with orality.

In the desert, the *ascari* soldiers are addressed by a mysterious vocal interjection that prompts a reflection on their predicament. Upon the *Habesha*'s arrival in the Libyan desert, an anonymous internal voice manifests itself in the minds of the soldiers, simultaneously and directly addressing them all. Hailu interjects dramatic irony into the narrative, foreshadowing the conscript's brutal betrayal by the Italians: "Beware, Habesha; the Arabs are not your enemies. Will you be able to recognize your true enemy?" (Hailu 21). Whether this voice is the narrator,

or a God, or something else entirely is unclear but its purpose is to inform them that the Arabs are watching. This foreshadows the *ascari*'s dreadful treatment by the Italian commanders who later abandon their colonial troops, most of whom will die of thirst. More importantly, it exemplifies the insertion of the composer's voice and evokes a collective consciousness shared by the *Habesha*, transcendent of the boundary between the self and society.

Autoethnography can also entail the "incorporation of elements of one's own life experience" (Reed-Danahay 6). At multiple points in the story, there is an abrupt transition from third-person to first-person narration to recount historical information and personal anecdotes relevant to the narrative's events. To emphasize and relate to the reader to what degree the desert conditions made the *Habesha* suffer, the narrator interjects: "I recall one day myself running unawares into one of those hot ash craters. My legs sank up to my knees; I was full of burn wounds" (Hailu 24). Moving beyond the individual life experiences of Tuquabo and the narrator, and following indigenous oral tradition, Hailu juxtaposes the biographical and the collective (Negash 75). This leads to the linkages between orality, song, and memory, which are equally prominent themes in the text.

Orality and music coexist, and the narrative's most poignant scenes are almost always marked by singing. Song is often a testament to the memories of lived experiences, both individual and shared. At the departure from Asmara, women "sang together a melancholy song" when they bid the soldiers' farewell (Hailu 12). Likewise, seeing their native land moving away from the ship, absorbed in their memories, "all of [the *Habesha*], together, were thinking about their country at the same time" (16). As they bid their homeland farewell, catching one last glimpse of the familiar landscape, Tuquabo is reminded of a traditional song which prompts him to feel regretful and forlorn. Finally, the train station scene is paralleled in the end as the women

sing to welcome the surviving *Habesha* home two years after their departure. The reader is reminded by the narrator that, despite the emotional poignancy of this story in particular, it is "not extraordinary" and happened "each time conscripts arrived in the train station" (Hailu 55). This advises the reader that despite the focalization on Tuquabo, he is one of thousands conscripted soldiers among many waves of troops sent off to fight against Libya's anti-colonial war which spanned a decade. In this case, the focus on Tuquabo as an individual acts as a refraction of a collective representation (Belcher 8).

Beginning and ending at the Asmara train station, the novel's circularity builds on poetic rhetoric and pays homage to oral storytelling. In the same way it began, chaos reigns at the train station awaiting the *Habesha*'s return, and once again the local crowd is likened to animals, such as sheep looking for their lambs (Hailu 54). Only this time, the Eritreans are the agents of authority. Not only do they speak Italian phrases, but the smug guards carrying whips and pistols have adopted the colonizer's propensity for violence. This internalization of violence is yet another consequence of the contact zone. Their "order" was to whip any *Habesha* who came too close but never any foreigners (53). This moment paints a striking portrait of the devastating violence of the colonial era and its lasting ramifications. In protest of this development, people sing "God save us from your wrath, the *Habesha* clerk has turned against his own" (Hailu 53). Singing and, in other instances, its absence mark the story's crucial, most emotional moments.

The stark contrast of the *absence* of song is just as remarkable. For instance, the utter silence upon the *Habesha*'s arrival in the Libyan Desert is conveyed when "not even one song or meaningful word was heard in the entire group" (Hailu 23). It is in this hot and dry environment that the *ascari* have their voices taken away, poetry and song being a central part of their culture. Nevertheless, Hailu's prose still feels poetic, packed with vivid imagery and symbolic language

to describe the natural environment as reflective of the narrative's events. He compares the depressing desert scene to the expanse of the sea, emphasizing the land's barrenness and hostility through the lack of greenery and animal life, symbolic, perhaps, of the effects of colonization (Hailu 24). Praise poetry is a West African tradition of oral poetry that looks at the personal and collective histories while deeply engaging with imagery of the natural world (Gunner 3).[8] Poetry and song are a "license for those without formal power to comment and criticize" (Gunner 7). Consisting of a narrative shaped by orality, *The Conscript* becomes a site of questioning and contesting power by exerting pressure on pre-existing social conditions and asymmetrical power relations. As a radical political approach, autoethnography entails the concept of "resistant memory" which holds minority histories and ensures the maintenance of a community (Gunner 6), as seen in this powerful narrative.

The novel ends with a dirge—a lament composed by Tuquabo to pay respect to his deceased mother. In this case, memories and experiences are presented in a circular manner because the story begins and ends with the protagonist's relationship with his parents. In the beginning, Tuquabo's background is framed by his mother Tek'a's memory of the day he was born. Tek'a dreams of six flowers, representing each of her children, being plucked away one by one by a sickle representing the hand of death (Hailu 4). She names her son after Medhaniya Alem who, in her dream, saves her baby boy from illness (ibid). In the end, she is the one who passes away before her son's return from Libya, ravaged by grief and despair. Songs and laments allow moments to live on in the collective memory and have a "dual role of catharsis and revitalization" in educating generations about the past (Gunner 10). *Melqes* poems are part of a Tigrinya genre performed by oral poets to mourn the dead (Negash 85). In his composition,

[8] This tradition is rooted in West African poetry, therefore, not of the same regional origin as the *Habesha*. My aim here is not to lump together cultural practices from different African regions, but simply to use the term to compare general techniques of oral practices to *The Conscript.*

Tuquabo expresses extreme regret and shame toward his decision to fight the colonizers' battle. "I am done with Italy and its tribulations / That robbed me of my land and parents" (Hailu 57). Not only does this pay respect to his mother, but also denounces the imperialist war by ending the novel with Tuquabo's tremendous suffering as a direct result of Italian colonialism in Eritrea.

The evocative, emotional narration in *The Conscript* transcends the binary colonizer-colonized social relations, reaching a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of Libya's anticolonial war. The multiple instances of cultural encounters with various Others develop the contact zone as a central concept throughout the text. These contact zones are spaces of oppression and chaos, but also of questioning and dismantling of essentialist beliefs. Although Hailu offers a scathing account of Italian colonial practice, resilience prevails as a dominant theme embodied mainly through the protagonist. Focalized through an Eritrean soldier, *The Conscript* dismantles Italian essentialist beliefs about the local populations of Eritrea and Libya, adopting and merging oral tradition with 'modern' narrative forms to rewrite a shared and complex history. Hailu's writing is self-reflexive in its approach and he does not limit himself to criticizing the Italians. He combines oral traditions of poetry and song with a 'modern' form to produce self-representations offering an alternative perspective and nuanced understanding of the mechanisms and the manifold ramifications of colonialism.

The importance of analyzing *The Conscript* as an autoethnographic text lies in the legitimation of different forms of knowledge production and distribution. In its narration and form, lines are blurred between the objective and the subjective, creating space for cultural production outside the well-established Western methods and pushing for the combined revival, renewal, and evolution of genres to reread, rewrite, and revise historical events. Increasing the visibility of texts like *The Conscript* is crucial; however, this may raise important questions

regarding translation as a practice and its capacity to preserve and transmit the original meaning and voices of autoethnographic work. Regardless, its translation into English and additional languages is a gift bestowed upon readers worldwide.

APPENDIX A

Present-day map of the African continent, emphasizing in yellow the modern-day place names for the pertinent locations in *The Conscript* (mapchart.net).

APPENDIX B

Map of Eastern Africa, as partitioned by the imperial powers c. 1914 (Encyclopedia Britannica).

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The 'Other' Europe, to the East /
L'Autre Europe, à l'Est

The Jewish "Other" in Ivo Andrić's *The Bridge on the Drina*

Stephanie Azoulay

Abstract

This article analyzes the representation of Jewish characters in Ivo Andrić's novel *The Bridge on the Drina*. The analysis progresses chronologically through the novel, taking note of the increased frequency and length of the Jewish characterizations that reflect the community's evolution, growing freedoms, and increased visibility in Višegrad, Bosnia between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. The author pays particular attention to the lone Jewish female character in the novel, Lotte, whose Otherness—as a Jew, an impoverished widow, a woman, and a foreigner—is utilized by Andrić to portray actions, choices, and behaviours that are outside the norm for a woman of her era. The trajectory of Lotte's character, a steady rise and a steep downfall precipitated by the First World War, serves as an important metaphor for many of the novel's central themes: secularization, modernization, migration, and the ultimate fallibility of imperial rule.

Keywords

Bosnia, Drina, Ivo Andrić, Jewish, Lotte, Other, women

Résumé

Cet article analyse la représentation des personnages juifs dans le roman d'Ivo Andrić, *Le Pont sur la Drina*. L'analyse progresse chronologiquement à travers le roman, en prenant note de l'augmentation de la fréquence et de la longueur des caractérisations juives qui reflètent l'évolution de la communauté, les libertés croissantes et la visibilité accrue à Višegrad, en Bosnie, entre le XVIIe et le XXe siècle. L'auteur accorde une attention particulière au seul personnage féminin juif du roman, Lotika, dont l'altérité—en tant que juive, veuve pauvre, femme et étrangère—est utilisée par Andrić pour dépeindre des actions, des choix et des comportements qui sont hors norme pour une femme de son époque. La trajectoire du personnage de Lotika, une montée continue et une chute abrupte précipitée par la Première Guerre mondiale, sert de métaphore importante pour plusieurs des thèmes centraux du roman : la sécularisation, la modernisation, la migration et la faillibilité ultime du pouvoir impérial.

Mots-clés

Autre, Bosnie, Drina, femmes, Ivo Andrić, juif, Lotika

What is a bridge? A point of entry and an escape route. A means of getting from point A to point B. A charming architectural detail, a mundane thoroughfare, and a destination. A connector and a divider. While the world around them may be in a state of constant flux, bridges are the ceaseless, stalwart observers of history. This is the case in Ivo Andrić's *The Bridge on the Drina*, an epic tale spanning four centuries in the town of Višegrad, Bosnia. The Mehmet Paša Sokolović Bridge, the only constant throughout the narrative, is arguably the central character in the novel. As remarked by Nicholas Moravcevich, "[t]his work does not tell the story of a particular person, or even a group of people, for its characters number into the hundreds, and many of them simply disappear from the reader's view with no further information. Central to the action is an object, the famous old bridge; or rather two objects: the bridge and the river, forever linked in time" (314). We are thus offered glimpses into the lives and tales of many of the town's inhabitants, but the narrator does not linger for long on any one individual or group. At the beginning of the novel, the town finds itself on the border between two empires, at a so-called meeting point between East and West, coloured by a multitude of nationalities, religions, languages, and cultures.

While the omniscient narrator touches upon the lives of a wide variety of individuals, this article will take particular interest in how the Jewish characters are portrayed throughout the novel. As with all of the other characters, the Jews are equally minor and sparsely interspersed throughout the text. Over the course of the novel, Andrić slowly builds upon his representation of Jewish characters living in Višegrad. His initial portraits are brief and sparing, becoming more frequent, more detailed, and more fulsome. In exploring these depictions, this article will argue that this narrative progression reflects the Jews' burgeoning freedoms—religious, ideological, and economic—as Višegrad transitions from Ottoman to Austro-Hungarian rule. Particular

attention will be paid to Lotte, the local hotel manager, as she is the most contemporary Jewish character in the novel, as well as being one of the most particular in the entire work.[9] Her representation raises many interesting questions. Why does Andrić choose a widowed Ashkenazi Jewish migrant from Galicia as a focal point in this work? Why is she one of very few characters—and a female one at that—depicted repeatedly and in such detail? Why is she given permission to lead a life outside of prescribed norms? Andrić clearly establishes all of his Jewish characters as Others in Višegrad, but none more so than Lotte. In establishing Lotte as a supreme Other—as a Jew, an impoverished widow, a woman, and a foreigner—Andrić has the liberty of using her character to portray actions, choices, and behaviours that are outside the norm. As a result, Lotte serves as an important metaphor for many of the novel's central themes: secularization, modernization, migration, and the ultimate fallibility of imperial rule.

While the opening chapters of Andrić's fictional Višegrad are populated with Muslims and Christians of various stripes, no Jews are mentioned. This absence speaks to the Otherness of this "closed community" whose members' "way of life, as well as their foreign tongue, set them apart from their neighbours" (Gorup, "Review" 206). From a chronological standpoint, about two hundred years have elapsed by the time Elias Levi is introduced in "the second half of the eighteenth century" (Andrić 84). He is "known as Hadži Liacho, the Jewish rabbi well known far beyond the town for his sound judgment and open nature" (85). Until the narrative lands on Lotte in the late-nineteenth century, all of the Jews that are depicted by the narrator are of Sephardic origin, illustrating Bosnia's particular Jewish history. According to Fran Markowitz, when the "Jews [were] expelled from Spain at the end of the fifteenth century [they] were greeted with tolerance and granted refuge when they arrived in Ottoman Bosnia" (112). As was true in most

[9] In other editions of the novel, this character is named Lotika. In the English translation used for this paper, the character's name has been translated to Lotte.

European countries, the Jews were not typically permitted to assimilate or granted the same freedoms as other citizens. The Sephardic community in Višegrad would have been no exception, particularly while the town was under Ottoman rule.

It is perhaps no accident that the rabbi's appearance coincides with a "great flood" (Andrić 84). It is of note that this first Jewish character is not represented independently, but rather alongside a host of other religious representatives. This narrative choice symbolizes the limited agency and freedom of the Jewish community, hemmed in on all sides by the other more populous and powerful religious communities in Višegrad.[10] With this particular tale of the town's history, Andrić is drawing a seemingly overt parallel to the biblical story of Noah and the Ark. In doing so, the author connects this tale to a long history of oral storytelling, religion, tradition, and patriarchy, all of which are embodied by Hadži Liacho's rabbinical character, as well as the other religious figures in the scene. The scriptural reference additionally serves to underscore the common roots shared by the three major religions represented in Višegrad, meaningfully brought together during the flood. For the first time, "Turks, Christians and Jews mingled together" (85). As noted by Radmila Gorup, "[c]rises and disasters tend to reduce socio-cultural differences and change cultural practices. The existential threat by natural elements, not ideology, makes the contact between different ethnic groups possible" ("Boundaries and Crossings" 6). Where normally these religious communities would remain quite segregated, an "act of God" forces them to unite, blurring the boundaries between their constructed identities. This is reinforced when the gathered men "from all three faiths" are described as "wet, pale, with clenched jaws, but outwardly calm" (Andrić 85). This "transient island in the flood of time" (86), a short-lived mirage of peaceful coexistence, evaporates once the narrator describes Hadži Liacho as "red-faced and smiling, with riotous tufts of white hair snowing from under his

[10] Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians.

unusually shallow fez" (88). The rabbi is the only character of the group singled out by the narrator and described in such detail, so that he is set apart, his "unusually shallow fez" marking him as strange and Other. This description serves as a reminder that these men have only been brought together due to the extraordinary circumstances of the flood; they will all return to their respective corners once the flood waters have receded. As the rain subsides, the image of the town "without a bridge" and with only the *kapia* visible "above the surface of the troubled waters" (89) not only emphasizes the submersion of the "transient island" but also foreshadows the waning dominance of the Ottoman Empire and the advent of modernity.[11]

About a century later, as the Austro-Hungarian Empire takes control of Višegrad and other lands formerly under Ottoman rule, we are introduced to the rabbi David Levi, Hadži Liacho's grandson. His character embodies the passing of time, tradition, and the transition between empires. In parallel to the aforementioned flood scene, the religious figures of the town are once again assembled, but under different circumstances. Rather than an act of God, these men are brought together by an act of imperialism. The newly appointed Austro-Hungarian rulers have ordered the "recognized notables" of the town to gather and greet an "Austrian commandant … on the *kapia*" (141). David Levi is included in this group, having inherited his grandfather's "name, position and property but nothing of his spirit and serenity" (145). This is the second time that a Jewish character is represented in the text, once again alongside other religious leaders of the town. In contrast to the previous scene, *all* of the religious leaders are described in detail, with the young rabbi saved for last. The transition from one description to the next could be likened to a narrative diminuendo, from most powerful and flattering to least. The rabbi, "[t]he fourth of the 'notables,'" (145) is described in a particularly unflattering light:

[11] A *kapia* is a Turkish phrase for an outdoor meeting place, usually located at a public intersection or bridge.

> He was pale and puny, with dark velvety eyes and melancholy expression. He was inconceivably timid and silent. He had only recently become rabbi and had married not long before. In order to seem bigger and more important he wore a wide rich suit of heavy cloth and his face was overgrown with beard and whiskers, but beneath all this one could discern a weak sickly body and the childish oval of his face peered out fearfully from the black sparse beard. He suffered terribly whenever he had to appear in public and take his part in discussions and decisions, always feeling himself to be weak and undeveloped. (145)

This description speaks to a young man who has inherited traditions and responsibilities that he is not mature enough for or particularly interested in taking on. He is expected to do so, dresses the part, and goes through the motions of playing the role of rabbi and patriarch. His character represents a weakening of religious authority and tradition that can be connected to the new Austro-Hungarian rulers. The Austrians deplored "the Oriental backwardness and savagery of the Balkans" and entered "Bosnia with a civilizing mission" (Gorup, "Boundaries and Crossings" 6). This perspective is reinforced with the arrival of the Austrian colonel; neither he nor his entourage "paid the least attention to the 'notables' who remained alone on the *kapia*" (Andrić 149). This encounter represents a confrontation between tradition and modernity—and between the pre-constructed notions of Orient and Occident—illustrating how the religious leaders are losing their power and relevance as a new age begins to take shape. Once the colonel has left, the rabbi is described hurrying off "with tiny steps in order to get home as soon as possible and feel again the warmth and protection of the family circle in which his mother and his wife lived" (150). This final image of the young rabbi represents how one community amongst many is desperately trying to hold on to waning traditions and ways of life. As Ali

Gunes notes, it is clear that with the arrival of the Austrians, "the 'sweet tranquillity [*sic*]' and traditional stability of life and identity [will] shift, crumble and dissolve" (105). Aside from the fact that he is a Jew, David Levi is represented as an Other in his inability to occupy his prescribed role in society. His lack of manliness, his failures as a patriarch, and his desire to remain within a traditionally feminine, domestic sphere add additional layers of Otherness to his character. Finally, the image of a young religious patriarch scurrying towards the insular safety of home and hearth speaks to the growing power and emancipation of women.

The span of time separating the description of Jewish characters gets shorter and shorter as the novel progresses. One can read the increasing frequency and length of these descriptions as symbolic of the growing freedoms and increased visibility of the Jewish community in Višegrad and in Europe. Andrić's narrative structure is a visual representation of the Jewish community's evolution. The third Jewish character portrayed in the novel is Bukus Gaon, "the eldest son of the pious, poor and honest barber, Avram Gaon" (Andrić 172). In contrast to the two rabbis who have been depicted thus far, Bukus Gaon is the first secular (at least insofar as he is not a religious figure), explicitly poor, and possibly uneducated Jewish character represented in the novel. At a time when class and wealth distinctions are beginning to more markedly etch themselves upon Višegrad society, Bukus Gaon's poverty, in addition to his Jewish identity, both mark him as an Other. His character ultimately represents the early consequences of modernity as it takes hold in Višegrad, as well as the resulting collapse of religious traditions and values centred on family and community.

Rachel Manekin observes that in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Jewish communities "enjoyed equality before the law, and freedom of movement, domicile, assembly, religion, expression, occupation, and association, as well as access to public offices. Although in practice

the extent of these rights in their application to Jews was sometimes limited" (4). In theory, the laws of the new empire led to a distinct improvement when compared to the Jews' quality of life under Ottoman rule. At this point in the story, Višegrad is in the midst of some important transformations. Physically, many changes begin to take place, and the inhabitants observe "[t]his continual need of the newcomers to build and rebuild, to dig and to put back again, to put up and modify" (Andrić 158). In contrast to the *laissez-faire* Ottoman approach, the Austro-Hungarians are rapidly modernizing and developing the town and its environs according to Western notions of progress. In addition to these physical changes, there are important behavioural and psychological changes manifesting themselves amongst the town's inhabitants. For example, Jews are noticeably more visible in public, which seems to reflect a change in mindset in response to the more tolerant policies of the new ruling powers. It is "noticed that now Serbs and Jews came more freely and in greater numbers to the *kapia* and at all times of day, paying no heed as they once had done to the habits and privileges of the Turks. Otherwise all went on as before" (159). Up until this point, the two characters mentioned above, Hadži Liacho and David Levi, are described in public scenes alongside other religious figures. They are never really represented within their own communities, alongside other Jews. The first time a *group* of Jews is described in a public setting is in the following scene:

> It was a Saturday. As always on Saturdays, the Višegrad Jews, merchants with their male children, were gathered on the *kapia*. At leisure and in the formal dress, with satin trousers and woolen waistcoats, with dull red shallow fezzes on their heads, they strictly observed the Sabbath Day … they sat on the *kapia*, carrying on loud and lively conversations in Spanish, only using Serbian when they wanted to swear. (172)

In terms of Jewish representation in the novel, this scene depicts an important transition. The "dull red shallow fezzes" are no longer described as "unusual," as had been the case with Hadži Liacho. Moreover, their "dullness" speaks to their use and the longstanding presence of the Sephardic Jewish community in Višegrad. The Jews are openly gathering in public, easily identifiable in terms of dress, language, traditions, and religion. Thus, not only are the Jews—and their fezzes—a much more common sight, they now seem to be perceived as slightly less Other by the narrator and the general populace.

The aforementioned Bukus Gaon belongs to the group of Spanish-speaking Jews on the *kapia*. In direct contravention of the Sabbath rules, he retrieves a Hungarian ducat wedged in a crack on the bridge; he simply cannot resist the lure and promise of its golden sheen. This seemingly simple act sets off a series of unfortunate events, representing an important shift in values amongst all of the communities of Višegrad. Prior to the arrival of the Austrians, "life used to be very simple, though narrow, for the people and the daily activities they carried out in Višegrad; nothing else concerned them very much beyond their families in the small world of their town; they were happy and secure; what they had was enough for them 'within definite limits, without looking much ahead or too far into the past' and future" (Gunes 105). The moment that Bukus Gaon retrieves the ducat from the bridge signals the beginning of a new capitalist age, one where the inhabitants of Višegrad begin to consider life beyond their immediate surroundings and old belief systems, entertaining the possibilities of "more." Such is the case of Bukus Gaon, who proceeds to quadruple his wealth in a game of cards. With his newfound wealth, "his glowing imagination opened far and glorious prospects which threw a glittering sheen over his poverty and swept away the whole town down to its foundations" (Andrić 174). Where David Levi reluctantly and resignedly carried on the responsibilities and

traditions he inherited from his grandfather, Bukus Gaon is part of a new generation that exercises its freedom of choice. He chooses to reject religion, tradition, family, and responsibility in search of a better life. In the modern, secular world introduced by the Austro-Hungarian rulers, values and priorities have significantly shifted. Where all the members of this small town would once have lived contentedly within their means and prioritized religion, family, and community, the new order favours individualism, profit, and the pursuit of upward social mobility. Bukus Gaon embodies this new approach to life, becoming "a gambler and a vagabond" (174) and disappearing from the town in pursuit of his wildest dreams. His father "Old Gaon shriveled up from shame and grief for his eldest son, and the whole Jewish community felt the misfortune as if it had been its own" (174). Old Gaon mourns the loss of his heir apparent, the son that would have carried on the traditions and responsibilities of the family. The "whole Jewish community" feels this misfortune, for it is a reflection of how the community as an entity is losing touch with its ancient roots, its traditions, and its values when faced with the onslaught of modernity.

At this point in the novel, only Sephardic male Jewish characters have been described by the narrator. According to Jonna Rock, it is "with the occupation of Bosnia by Austro-Hungarian armies (1878) that Ashkenazi Jews" begin to arrive ("Sarajevo and the Sarajevo Sephardim" 894). The narrator notes that, "[b]esides the Spanish speaking Jews, the Sephardi, who had been living in the town for hundreds of years … there now came the Galician Jews, the Ashkenazi" (Andrić 201). This influx of Galician Jews brings us Lotte, arguably the most significant character in the entire novel. As the history of Višegrad enters into the late-nineteenth century, she is the first and only female Jewish character represented in any detail. Part of a large, German-speaking Ashkenazi Jewish family, she is culturally and linguistically distinct from the

Sephardic Jews that have thus far been depicted and, by contrast, have been settled in Bosnia for hundreds of years. Though all descended from common Jewish origins, the distinctness of these communities often led to their segregation, in a sense recreating—on a smaller scale—a separation between East and West. As already touched upon, the greater frequency and length of the description of Jewish characters in the novel, particularly in Lotte's case, serve as a visual and narrative representation of the Jewish community's growing freedom and presence in Višegrad. This notion is supported by the large influx of Jews from other regions of the empire. In Lotte's case, nearly two entire chapters are dedicated to her arc, so that she is given a far more three-dimensional depiction compared to the other characters (Jewish or not) in the novel. Lotte resists easy categorization, for she is a multifaceted character that takes on a multitude of roles and traits. She is only able to do so because, as already mentioned, she is a supreme Other—as a Jew, an impoverished widow, a woman, and a foreigner. It is only because she has been Othered on so many different levels that the life and history of Višegrad can be projected onto her. Her trajectory mirrors that of the town and the empire; it is an allegory for all of the dying empires of the early twentieth century.

When Lotte is first introduced, she is described as "the real proprietress" of Zahler's hotel, "a young and very pretty widow with a free tongue and a masculine energy" (203). This is an important period in Višegrad, when "money starts circulating among a greater number of people when compared with the past" and the people "achieve a new perception of life as being 'wider, more luxurious and freer'" (Gunes 106). Concurrently, as Vladimir Biti notes, "[l]eisure is replaced by feverish activity that becomes an end in itself, spawning devastating consequences" (162). Lotte personifies this new era, while also portraying the evolution of

gender roles in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As the proprietress of the hotel, she occupies a traditionally male sphere, adding to which:

> She controlled the destinies of a whole dozen Jewish families, entered into the minutest details of their lives, arranged their marrying and giving in marriage, sent healing to the sick, warned and admonished the work-shy and spendthrift and praised the thrifty and industrious. She … incited all of them to a more understanding, better and more dignified way of life and at the same time made this more possible and easier for them. (Andrić 206-207)

As the breadwinner and decision-maker for her entire family, she takes on the role of a patriarch. Further enhancing this image, Lotte is only ever depicted working, reviewing her profit margins, and corresponding with her family. Her "personal life stays in the background and appears empty and without love" (Gorup, "Women in Andrić's Writing" 170). In her introduction above, she is overtly described as having a "free tongue and a masculine energy" (Andrić 203), but there are many other examples that characterize her in similar terms, including: "quick intelligence and masculine heart" (204); "like a torero with a bull" (204); "more cunning than a woman has and more strength than any man could muster" (210); and "[s]he was the 'man' of that household and 'Aunt Lotte' to the whole township" (307). The way in which she is described suggests that the narrative voice is male, for what we encounter here is an overtly male gaze, and a rather pejorative bent to the "unfeminine" ways in which she behaves. When a woman's behaviour is likened to that of a man, this usually serves to foreshadow a steep, impending downfall, as a punishment for lack of conformity.

Rosa Mayreder, a contemporary Austrian feminist, quotes Nietzsche when she writes that "'[m]an makes himself an image of woman, and woman shapes herself to this image'" (188).

There are many instances in which Lotte "shapes herself" to the male gazes that assail her day in and day out, usually to achieve her own mercenary ends. At the outset, she is described as "young and very pretty" (Andrić 203) embodying the "idea" of "something beautiful that gives meaning to man's life" (Gorup, "Women in Andrić's Writing" 156). At the hotel, she is "at everyone's beck and call, always amiable, always the same and always bold and discreet. Well built, plump, with ivory-white skin, black hair and smouldering eyes" (Andrić 204). The narrative hones in on her appearance, for this is where Lotte's value lies in a traditional, patriarchal society: in her attractiveness and her ability to attend to male needs. She is additionally described as "a glittering, expensive and cold *fatamorgana* who played with their senses" (204) and as

> that untiring and cold woman of chilled passions, quick intelligence and masculine heart [who] tamed every fury, silenced every demand of uncontrolled men by the inexplicable play of her perfect body, her great cunning and her no less great daring, and always succeeded in maintaining the necessary distance between herself and them, which only served to inflame their desires and increase her own value. (204)

Lotte repeatedly appropriates the male gaze, knowing precisely how to manipulate her male patrons using her feminine charms, while never compromising her own integrity. It is worth paying particular attention to the parallel drawn between Lotte and a "*fatamorgana,*" which can be interpreted as a reference to a femme fatale, mirage, or sorceress. The latter interpretation would be a particularly negative and common descriptor used for women who do not conform to societal norms. A few pages earlier the same term is used: "when the nineteenth century spread out before the eyes of millions of men its many-sided and deceptive prosperity and created its *fatamorgana* of comfort, security and happiness for all and everyone at reasonable prices and

even on credit terms" (198). The double usage of this term is no mere coincidence, and serves to once again foreshadow Lotte's downfall. Just as she projects a false image that taps into male desire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire projects an illusory promise of boundless prosperity and mobility that taps into the myth of progress.

It is precisely this myth of progress and modernity that is essential to understanding Lotte's rise and fall. In her feverish devotion to work and family, cooped up in the hotel or her office, she loses sight of the changing world around her. She falls out of step, doggedly devoted to her own belief system, and ultimately pays the price for it. Aside from physical attractiveness, the only value that a woman can offer in society is by way of marriage and reproduction. Mayreder explains how

> woman is only a means to an end: first, for man's gratification; secondly, for the reproduction of man, who is in himself the final end of all the contrivances of Nature as well as of the State. No intrinsic worth as a self-sufficient personality, or a self-justified individuality, is granted to woman. She is of value only to the extent in which she serves as a means, and the only condition which morally and practically justifies the existence of woman, is marriage. (184)

As a childless widow with no demonstrated interest in remarrying, Lotte does not fit into the mold of her time, nor would she possess much "intrinsic worth." Rather than trying to attain a higher social status for herself through marriage and child-rearing, she selflessly aims to do so for her extended family. Unlike the earlier depictions of the Sephardic characters in the novel, there is nothing overtly "Jewish" about Lotte, but she is described as such and is thus Othered. This would seem to suggest that her Jewishness is an inescapable facet of her identity, whether it is overtly expressed or not. Aside from her gender, the only trait that openly distinguishes her as

foreign or Other is that "[s]he spoke incorrectly, for she never learnt Serbian well" (Andrić 204). She is otherwise indistinguishable from her fellow citizens, which may speak to an effort at assimilation. With the introduction of purportedly equal freedoms to all citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, assimilation would have been a more common occurrence from the late-nineteenth century onward. Though it is not explicitly addressed, Galicia would have been a relatively hostile place for Ashkenazi Jews in the late-nineteenth century, which may have spurred their initial migration to Bosnia. Though Lotte would have already been settled in Višegrad for some time, Daniel Unowsky remarks that "[i]n 1898 anti-Jewish violence swept across the western and central districts of Galicia" (5). With much of her extended family still living in this volatile region, her fear of their persecution, as well as their entrenched poverty, may play into her extreme work ethic. As mentioned, Lotte's truest preoccupation is the well-being and advancement of her extended family. They make up the "second, hidden part of her life which belonged to her alone" (Andrić 206). Lotte is a character made up of many dualities; just as she embodies both male and female characteristics, she additionally represents the interplay between public and private spheres. The latter duality is particularly evident when she escapes the public world of the hotel and secludes herself in the private world of her office, where "she cast[s] aside the smiling mask" and "her face [grows] hard and her glance sharp and sombre" (206). It is within this private space that Lotte allows herself to exist as her true self, no longer playing a role, corresponding "with her very numerous relatives … all the hordes of Jewish poor from Eastern Galicia, now scattered through Galicia, Austria and Hungary" (206). Lotte's life's purpose is in raising "the standard of the whole family" (207) so as to remove them from the clutches of poverty and persecution.

In her devotion to her family, Lotte personifies yet another duality: the push and pull between tradition and modernity. Lotte's values are more closely aligned with the old ways and traditions of Višegrad, associated with Ottoman rule, rather than those associated with modernity and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Lotte's priority is her family, whom she perceives as her true community. She is not wholly a part of Višegrad society, for she always maintains a certain distance, and this is yet another factor that sets her apart. While she does not work towards her own personal gain and advancement, she does participate in and profit from the capitalist mechanisms put in place by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Lotte's work life is very much a by-product of the *fatamorgana* mentioned above. She wholeheartedly believes in—and is completely dependent upon—the nineteenth century myth of progress. She has bought into the notion that accumulation of wealth and social status can guarantee a better outcome or future, namely for her extended family. The "Jewess with the two faces" (207) ultimately fails in this hopeless endeavour; none of the family members for whom she sacrifices herself manage to attain a higher social status, and those that manage to escape the "shameful poverty" (305) of Tarnow do so without looking back or taking "any responsibility for new relatives born and growing up in poverty in Galicia" (305). One can draw a parallel here to Bukus Gaon, who similarly shirks tradition and family in pursuit of his own reckless whims, never looking back. A chasm opens up between Lotte and her family, paralleling that between tradition and modernity, and connoting the final image of the bridge with its "broken arches [yawning] painfully towards one another across the break" (364). Her business is failing and she is without her community and sense of purpose; Lotte is desperately alone, isolated, and out of place. She "felt at every step that the times were out of joint" (300). When she had first arrived in Bosnia, it seemed that "[e]veryone was moving in the same direction as she was; work and family. Everyone was in his

right place and there was a place for everyone. … Now everything had changed and was topsy-turvy. Men were divided and separated without, it seemed to her, rhyme or reason. … Life was bursting asunder, was crumbling, was disintegrating" (300). Unbeknownst to Lotte, a new world had come into being outside the walls of her hotel, governed by rules, values, and behaviours that were now foreign to her. Zoran Milutinović captures this state of affairs with perfect clarity and concision:

> In these societies everything was connected, one thing locked firmly into another, one thing supporting another, and watched over by everyone. Each individual took care of the whole, and the whole of each individual. … Each person was closely linked with the fate not only of his relations and those in his household, but also of his neighbours, fellow-believers and fellow-citizens. … If anyone stepped outside that pattern, following his own instincts and will, it was as though he had committed suicide and, sooner or later, he would inevitably be destroyed. Such was the law of these communities, mentioned even in the Old Testament. It was the law of the classical world as well. Marcus Aurelius wrote somewhere: 'Whoever avoids the obligations of the social order is an outcast.' (xxi)

As the "obligations of the social order" are sacrificed in the pursuit of individual gain, a burgeoning disunity characterizes the beginning of the twentieth century, ultimately leading to Lotte's demise and the fall of the European, Ottoman, and Russian empires.

As the Austro-Hungarian Empire goes to war, Lotte's physical and mental breakdowns reflect what is happening in the wider world. Physically, she has been ravaged by time: "[o]f her onetime beauty only traces remained. She had grown thinner and yellow in the face; her hair was without lustre and was growing thin on her scalp, and her teeth, once shining and strong, were

yellow and showed gaps. The glance of her black and still shining eyes was hard and at times sad" (Andrić 299). The war-torn landscape of Europe is reflected in Lotte's appearance; her decay parallels that of the empires. Her external state is additionally mirrored by the state of her hotel. It was now "completely deserted and closed. Its roof had been damaged by shellfire and the walls pitted with shrapnel" (349). Both Lotte and the hotel are nothing more than dried up shells of abandoned hopes and dreams. Lotte's physical deterioration is coupled with a mental breakdown, for as E. D. Goy remarks, "war comes as the destruction of her personality" (325). The moment of her demise, when she is truly lost, is when she is described as "a weak old Jewess who could not look after or care for herself, who shivered from reasonless fear and who wept like a child, not knowing how to say of what she was afraid or tell what it was that pained her" (Andrić 350). As the First World War rages on, destroying all semblance of stability and normalcy, Lotte suffers a complete and total nervous breakdown from which she is not likely to recover. Hers is an incredibly tragic end, and "[h]ad her fate not been what or where it was, who knows what this wise and humane woman … could have been or could have given to the world" (205). Perhaps Lotte dreamed too big or reached too high, but the real tragedy here is that her fate was sealed from the very beginning. No woman of Lotte's era—particularly one as Othered as she—could have broken through the patriarchal restraints of the time.

Hadži Liacho, David Levi, Bukus Gaon, and Lotte.[12] In telling the stories of these four Jewish characters, Andrić essentially distills the key moments of Višegrad's history. Hadži Liacho represents the early history of Višegrad under Ottoman rule. The Sephardic Jews are a more or less uniform community, segregated from the rest of the population, keeping to

[12] One Jewish character, Santo Papo, was not discussed in this paper. His interlude in the book (a momentary appearance on page 218 and a full scene in Chapter XX) is quite brief and his inclusion in this article would not have added much to the discussion. He is another Sephardic Jewish figure, though of the merchant class, unlike the other characters represented. Should this article ever be expanded in future, he will be included.

themselves. David Levi carries on the mantle of his grandfather's legacy, but reluctantly and without much success. His character represents the first cracks in the veneer of tradition and religious authority. With Bukus Gaon, the cracks widen. He is swept up by the myth of progress and its attendant illusions of wealth and power. He abandons his family and his responsibilities to his community in pursuit of a hapless dream. Lastly, there is Lotte, a seemingly secular Ashkenazi Jew from Galicia who does not share the same history, language, or traditions of the established Sephardic community. She embodies every duality within the Austro-Hungarian Empire: male and female, public and private, traditional and modern, communal and individual, and so on and so forth. Her rise and fall, in parallel to the empires of Europe and its environs, is tied to the rapid and massive changes that swept across the continent at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. It is the breakdown of community and tradition, and the favouring of the individual over the whole that ultimately lead to the breakdown of the European, Ottoman, and Russian empires in the early twentieth century. Given that Andrić wrote this novel during the Second World War, publishing it in the aftermath, he was fully aware of the fate of the Jews of Europe. When he describes Lotte and her family leaving Višegrad, "like Jewish refugees who had been walking all the roads of the world in search of refuge," (350) he not only signals Lotte's circular return to her humble, impoverished beginnings, but also to the continuous cycle of persecution, tragedy, and migration that characterizes the Jewish diaspora. With this final image, Andrić foreshadows the horrors that are yet to come.[13]

[13] "During World War II, more than 80% of Yugoslav Jews – 82,500 people – were killed … Due to the extreme loss of speakers during the Holocaust, Judeo-Spanish could not be maintained" (Rock, *Intergenerational Memory* 895).

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À la guerre, le silence est d'or
Une analyse comparative de *La guerre n'a pas un visage de femme* (1985) et de *Les Cercueils de zinc* (1989) de Svetlana Alexievitch

Dominic Couture

Résumé

Cet article analyse l'importance du silence en tant que thème littéraire dans les romans *Les Cercueils de zinc* (1989) et *La guerre n'a pas un visage de femme* (1985) par Svetlana Alexievitch. Ces romans démontrent comment les vétérans de l'Union soviétique qui ont combattu lors de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et de la guerre en Afghanistan, ainsi que leurs proches, ont été confrontés à une culture du silence. On les réprimait dans leur besoin de parler de leurs expériences, ainsi que dans leur désir d'être reconnu pour avoir combattu pour leur patrie. Cet article élabore trois types de silence que l'on peut retrouver dans les deux œuvres d'Alexievitch : le silence étatique, le silence sociétal et le silence individuel.

Mots-clés

Svetlana Alexievitch, *Les Cercueils de zinc, La guerre n'a pas un visage de femme*, vétérans, Union soviétique, silence, État, normes sociales, mutisme individuel

Abstract

This article analyses the importance of silence as a literary theme in the novels *Zinky Boys* (1989) and *The Unwomanly Face of War* (1985) by Svetlana Alexievitch. The novels dramatize how Soviet veterans of the Second World War and the Afghanistan War, as well as their close relatives, were confronted by a culture of silence. They were repressed for their need to speak about their experiences, as well as for their desire to be acknowledged for having fought for their homeland. This article explores three types of silence found in Alexievitch's work: State silence, social silence and individual silence.

Keywords

Svetlana Alexievitch, *Zinky Boys*, *The Unwomanly Face of War*, veterans, Soviet Union, silence, State, social norms, individual mutism

L'homme est l'un des très rares êtres vivants à se faire régulièrement la guerre pour de multiples raisons, que ce soit pour la conquête de nouveaux territoires ou pour se défendre contre un envahisseur. Certains peuvent même penser que, malheureusement, la guerre fait partie de l'expérience et de la culture humaines. Les guerres sont devenues particulièrement destructrices avec l'avènement des technologies du 20e siècle, comme dans le cas de la Première et de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, ainsi que de la guerre d'Afghanistan (1979-1989). Ces guerres apportent leur lot de malheur, de destruction et de tragédies humaines (comme les génocides, les persécutions ethniques ou religieuses, les viols, etc.). Parmi ces malheurs, on peut compter le silence des victimes, des vétérans, ainsi que des élites politiques. Dans *La guerre n'a pas un visage de femme* (1985) et *Les Cercueils de zinc* (1989), Svetlana Alexievitch montre comment des milliers de femmes et d'hommes qui ont combattu pour l'Union soviétique lors de Deuxième Guerre mondiale et de la guerre d'Afghanistan sont confrontés à une culture du silence après leur retour au pays.[14] Les différents témoignages recueillis par Alexievitch dans ses deux romans démontrent que le silence sous toutes ses formes fait partie intégrante des conséquences de la guerre.

Svetlana Alexievitch nait en Ukraine en 1948, trois années après la fin officielle de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, mais elle grandit toutefois sous le régime soviétique. Après des études en journalisme en Biélorussie, elle publie en 1985 le roman *La guerre n'a pas un visage de femme*, dans lequel l'auteure relate l'histoire de beaucoup de femmes qui ont été au front lors de la Grande Guerre patriotique – le nom donné par les dirigeants soviétiques lorsqu'ils se référaient à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale (Novikau, 2017, p. 316). Pour ce faire, elle interview plusieurs femmes d'une façon minutieuse « [pendant] sept années d'enquête, d'écoute, de maturation [et] de recomposition ... » (Bouthors, 2016, p. 124). Dans *Les Cercueils de zinc*, qui

[14] Des citations ont été tirées de la version anglaise et de la version française de ce roman.

est publié pour la première fois en 1989, Alexievitch compile les témoignages de soldats, d'infirmières et d'employé(e)s civil(e)s qui ont participé de près ou de loin à la guerre en Afghanistan et qui y dévoilent « ... le voile de mensonge qui recouvre la réalité que [le gouvernement soviétique] cache à un pays qui ne doit pas savoir que ses enfants meurent dans un bourbier où ils commettent des saloperies sans nom » (Bouthors, 2016, p. 124). On lui décerne le Prix Nobel de littérature en 2015 pour souligner l'ensemble de son œuvre, ainsi que pour son écriture polyphonique qui témoigne autant de la souffrance que du courage des gens en temps de guerre. (« Le prix Nobel de littérature 2015 », 2020, paragr. 1; Novikau, 2017, p. 323).

Jean-François Bouthors souligne que l'écriture d'Alexievitch est différente de celui des autres récipiendaires du Prix Nobel de littérature dans la mesure où ses romans constituent « une "littérature des voix" [qu'Alexievitch crée] en composant les récits qu'elles recueillent ... » (2016, p. 124). En effet, Alexievitch écrit *La guerre n'a pas un visage de femme* et *Les Cercueils de zinc* de façon à ce que les deux romans soient des recueils de témoignages racontant l'histoire des femmes et des hommes qui ont combattu lors de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et de la guerre en Afghanistan. Selon Aliaksandr Novikau, ces témoignages oraux sont l'essence de tous ses livres et leur but est de révéler les souvenirs et les sentiments individuels qui étaient profondément enfouis dans la psyché des témoins de la guerre depuis fort longtemps (2017, p. 318-319). Cependant, cette tâche ne s'avère pas toujours facile, car cette auteure est tantôt confrontée à des personnes qui changent souvent leurs témoignages pour mieux refléter le discours officiel « héroïque » qu'entretenait le régime soviétique (Novikau, 2017, p. 320), tantôt à des menaces et des poursuites judiciaires (Novikau, 2017, p. 323), ou encore à des personnes récalcitrantes pouvant lui dire des paroles offensantes, comme cet homme qui lui téléphone après la publication de *Les Cercueils de zinc* :

> Écoute ..., j'ai lu ton tissu de calomnies… Si tu publies encore une seule ligne de ce genre… On fera encore appel à nous, on nous donnera de nouveau des armes pour que nous rétablissions l'ordre. Vous devrez alors répondre de tout [...] Je déteste les pacifistes ! Tu as déjà grimpé dans les montagnes avec tout ton barda sur le dos ? Tu as roulé en BTR par une chaleur de soixante-dix degrés ? Tu as passé tes nuits à respirer l'odeur âcre des épines ? Non ?… Alors, touche pas à ça ! C'est notre affaire ! En quoi ça te regarde ? Toi la bonne femme, t'as qu'à aller faire des gosses ! (1989, emplacement 398)[15]

Cet ancien soldat manifeste son mécontentement concernant *Cercueils de Zinc* à Alexievitch directement. Outre son langage déplacé, il est évident que l'homme ne veut pas que ce qui s'est passé lors de la guerre soit révélé à tout le monde, notamment quand il demande à Alexievitch de ne plus aborder la situation en insistant que les événements entourant la guerre d'Afghanistan ne concerne que les vétérans uniquement.

La guerre n'a pas un visage de femme est une compilation des témoignages de femmes ayant participé au combat durant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Presque un million de femmes servent dans l'Armée rouge pendant la guerre ; 200 000 femmes sont dans l'aviation et la moitié des médecins, des chirurgiens et des assistants médicaux sont des femmes. D'ailleurs, seules des femmes occupent le rang d'infirmier (Woll, 1993, para. 9). Au total, ce sont près de « huit millions d'hommes et de femmes des forces armées soviétiques qui ont perdu la vie pendant la Grande Guerre patriotique. » (Merridale, 2006, p. 306). Les témoignages dans *La guerre n'a pas un visage de femme* relatent les expériences qu'ont connues ces femmes sur le champ de bataille

[15] Puisque plusieurs citations ont été tirées des versions électroniques de *The Unwomanly Face of War* et *Cercueils de Zinc*, la pagination des livres électroniques est légèrement différente de celle d'un livre imprimé. Le mot « emplacement » indique l'endroit où le lecteur ou la lectrice peut retrouver cette citation en lisant le livre. Cette convention de l'auteur a été utilisée pour toutes les citations qui proviennent des romans d'Alexievitch.

et dans les camps militaires : la mort, les blessures souvent létales, les rêves brisés, les réalités du champ de bataille, le froid écrasant, la fin de leur féminité, le viol, ainsi que la nécessité de tuer. À la suite de ses interviews, Alexievitch note qu'il est beaucoup plus difficile pour une femme de tuer que pour un homme, car les femmes portent la vie (Alexievitch, 1989, p. xxxi). Par conséquent, les femmes éprouvent beaucoup plus de difficultés de tuer un autre être humain que les hommes, selon les observations d'Alexievitch. *Les Cercueils de zinc* traite de la guerre en Afghanistan, qui entraine la mort de milliers de jeunes hommes. Bien qu'il y ait des femmes qui ont directement été au combat dans *Les Cercueils de zinc*, Alexievitch montre plutôt les témoignages des hommes soldats. Des mères s'expriment également sur le syndrome post-traumatique dont souffrent leurs enfants quand ceux-ci reviennent du front (Novikau, 2017, 321).

Avant de continuer, il se peut que le lecteur se demande pourquoi il y a plus de femmes qui s'enrôlent lors de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale que durant la guerre en Afghanistan. Ceci peut s'expliquer par la légitimité du conflit. Dans le premier cas, les femmes sont nombreuses à s'enrôler dans l'Armée rouge pour défendre leur patrie, leur famille et leurs amis contre l'envahisseur nazi, comme le montre cet extrait : « [t]out le monde n'avait qu'un souhait : aller au front … Effrayant ? Bien sûr c'était effrayant … mais tout de même … [n]ous sommes allées au bureau de recrutement [… n]ous avions 16 ou 17 ans ... » (Alexievitch, 1989, p. 49, Traduction de l'auteure). Dans le deuxième cas, peu de femmes qui joignent les rangs de l'armée lors de la guerre en Afghanistan ; beaucoup de femmes refuse d'ailleurs de participer à cette guerre pour protester contre ce conflit qu'elles jugent illégitime (communication personnelle, 2020). [16] Il faut mentionner que beaucoup de gens ne soutiennent pas la décision du gouvernement soviétique d'envahir l'Afghanistan.

[16] Il s'agit d'une information partagée par le Dr Clayton, qui est spécialiste de la Russie et de l'Union soviétique.

Outre les horreurs qui découlent de la guerre, il existe un autre thème qui est commun dans ses deux romans : le silence. On peut catégoriser ce silence en trois catégories : le silence étatique, le silence sociétal et le silence individuel. Ce sont trois types de silence qui ont différentes connotations et qui se résument bien par une expression idiomatique précise. D'ailleurs, Denis Barbet et Jean-Paul Honoré énumèrent beaucoup d'expressions idiomatiques construites autour du silence en expliquant que « [l]a langue française regorge d'expressions relatives au silence ... » (2013, p. 8), comme *passer sous silence* ou *silence coupable*. Certaines de ces expressions sont utilisées dans cet article pour résumer et illustrer le sens du silence étatique, du silence sociétal et du silence individuel.

Le silence étatique implique qu'un État essaie de contrôler la population en utilisant différents stratagèmes, comme la propagande et la censure, ou bien en ignorant des situations qui peuvent éventuellement lui nuire. Comme le rappelle Catherine Merridale : « ... plusieurs des pires désastres humains de l'ère soviétique ont été officiellement ignorés ou même reniés ... » (1996, p. 2). Par exemple, Josephine Woll relate qu'aucun témoignage physique, comme des statues, n'est érigé en l'honneur des millions de femmes qui ont participé aux efforts de guerre après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale (1993, paragr. 14), ce qui est très étonnant de la part d'un gouvernement qui prône les actes d'héroïsme et de patriotisme. Dans sa propagande, le gouvernement de Staline appelle la Deuxième Guerre mondiale la Grande Guerre patriotique (Merridale, 2006, p. 308), probablement pour galvaniser l'esprit patriotique des soldats afin de les convaincre de combattre et de mourir héroïquement pour protéger la patrie. Pourtant, la propagande tourne aussi autour de la censure, la population étant contrainte au silence à cette époque. Le témoignage d'une infirmière dans *Les Cercueils de zinc* illustre bien cette contrainte imposée par le gouvernement :

> Nous ne pouvions même pas écrire la vérité dans l'avis de décès. Les garçons sautaient sur des mines… Souvent il n'en restait qu'un demi-sceau de viande… Nous écrivions : tué dans un accident de la route, tombé dans un précipice, mort d'une intoxication alimentaire. Quand on commença à compter les morts par milliers, [c'est à ce moment] qu'on nous autorisa à dire la vérité aux familles. (Alexievitch, 1989, emplacement 619)

Comme le montre la citation ci-dessous, le personnel soignant a l'ordre stricte de ne divulguer aucune information aux familles des soldats décédés, et ce, jusqu'à ce que le gouvernement fasse volte-face après que les morts commencent à s'accumuler en grand nombre et que la population s'interrogent sur la pertinence de cette guerre.

Par le biais des officiers, les infirmières et le personnel médical cachent la vérité aux familles, car le gouvernement les y oblige. Le silence étatique montre donc le refus de l'État de partager des informations importantes aux civils, ainsi que les moyens employés pour y parvenir : la propagande, l'interdiction de partager des informations, ainsi que la censure ou le déni de la contribution et des sacrifices des femmes ayant servi lors de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Voici un exemple provenant de *The Unwomanly Face of War* qui le démontre bien : « [a]vant la guerre, il y avait des rumeurs que Hitler se préparait à attaquer l'Union soviétique, mais ces rumeurs étaient interdites. Certaines organisations [s'assuraient que ces rumeurs restent secrètes]. Vous savez ce que je veux dire ? Le NKVD … les tchékistes … » (1989, p. 47, Traduction de l'auteure).[17] Cet extrait illustre bien les purges de Staline pendant les années 1930 lors desquels ses opposants et leurs proches se font expatrier vers les goulags en Sibérie.[18] Le rôle de ces purges est de faire taire les dissidents du régime. Une expression idiomatique comme

[17] L'abréviation NKVD se réfère au Commissariat du peuple aux Affaires intérieures et agissait comme une police politique pour Staline (Walker, 2017). Les tchékistes étaient membres de la Tchéka, qui était une autre police politique qui s'attaquait aux ennemis du peuple, qu'ils soient réels ou imaginaires (Schindler, 2017, para. 4).

[18] Le goulag réfère au système de camps de travaux forcés qui étaient courants en Union soviétique.

passer sous silence ou *silence coupable* caractérise très bien ce que l'on entend par le silence étatique. L'État impose le silence par différents moyens coercitifs dans le but de faire taire ce qui peut lui nuire. Pour ce faire, il crée des corps de police spéciaux qui ont pour tâche de réduire au silence ceux et celles qui ne se plient pas aux règles du régime. Toutefois, l'imposition du silence n'est pas seulement l'affaire de l'État. La population impose également le silence face à des événements qu'elle aimerait mieux oublier.

Le silence sociétal relève des coutumes, des valeurs et des secrets de Polichinelle d'une société en particulier.[19] Dans le cas de la Russie, le silence sociétal décrit bien ce que l'on appelle *le silence russe* dans la littérature. Il s'agit d'une tendance « au mutisme social, qui est défini par un apparent manque d'opinion publique qui est basé sur une méfiance partagée de la société ... » (Mazour-Matusevich, 2014, p. 296, Traduction de l'auteure). En fait, le mutisme social de la société russe est une réponse collective aux catastrophes humaines ayant frappé le peuple**,** comme la famine, les guerres et les persécutions menées par le régime de Staline. Des millions de personnes y trouvent la mort. Le silence sociétal s'explique par les dures épreuves auxquelles les Russes et les autres peuples que regroupe l'Union soviétique doivent affronter. La montée au pouvoir de Staline, la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et la guerre en Afghanistan, entre autres, contribuent à renforcer le mutisme social lors de situations difficiles. De plus, Merridale rapporte :

> A people accustomed to silence, or at least to a certain kind of tact, does not necessarily need to be coerced again, this time into the disclosures characteristic of a society where victimhood is acceptable and even faintly chic. 'We have our own ways of dealing with

[19] Selon le Larousse, des secrets de Polichinelle sont des choses qui sont connues de toute la société, mais la société préfère en faire abstraction.

> trauma', [a] bishop [told me.] 'Perhaps you should be considering whether yours would be as effective if your people had shared our history.' (2000, p. 55)

Dans cet extrait, le prêtre argumente avec Merridale en lui disant que les Russes choisissent d'oublier leurs traumas en n'en parlant plus, lui demandant ensuite comment les Américains, ou tout autre peuple, affronteraient leurs traumas s'ils avaient vécu les mêmes expériences que les Russes.

La faible qualité de vie pendant l'ère soviétique renforce aussi le silence de la population face aux traumas causés par les deux guerres mondiales, les famines et la dictature. Selon certaines estimations, une personne sur quatre est morte lors de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, faisant en sorte qu'il ne reste plus que des femmes, des enfants et des personnes âgées dans des villages de certaines parties de l'Union soviétique (Merridale, 2000, p. 52). Dans *La guerre n'a pas un visage de femme*, le lecteur peut se rendre compte que tous les hommes capables de se battre sont partis au front : « [d]ès les premiers jours de la guerre, il y a eu plusieurs réorganisations dans notre club : les hommes étaient [appelés pour aller au front] et nous, les femmes, les avons remplacés [...] Mon mari a été le premier à partir pour le front » (1989, p. 57, Traduction de l'auteure). Le mari de la femme a rejoint le front bien avant elle, laissant sa femme seule pour gérer les activités de la famille et même du village. Ainsi, l'extrait illustre que les femmes prennent les positions laissées vacantes par le départ des hommes pour le front.

Une autre catastrophe qui frappe l'Union soviétique même avant que la guerre ne commence est la famine de 1933. Cette famine renforce le mutisme social pour les décennies à venir. Merridale raconte qu'il n'est pas rare d'apercevoir des drapeaux noirs à chaque extrémité de la rue principale d'un village à l'époque pendant cette période. Les drapeaux noirs indiquent que tous les villageois sont morts de faim (1996, p. 4). Cette famine est si terrible que plusieurs

ont recours au cannibalisme pour tenter de survivre. La collectivisation des terres imposée par Staline n'aide certainement pas à calmer les impacts dévastateurs de la famine. Merridale ajoute que près de huit millions de personnes y trouvent la mort et que le taux de mortalité atteint même un pourcentage de 65 à 70 % dans les régions particulièrement affectées par la famine (1996, p. 5).

La stigmatisation est un autre facteur qui renforce ce refus de se confier. En effet, nombreux sont les témoignages dans *La guerre n'a pas un visage de femme* et *Les Cercueils de zinc* où les vétérans affirment que la société les renie une fois de retour au pays. Par exemple, une survivante de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale partage à Alexievitch que sa mère refuse qu'elle retourne à la maison familiale, craignant que « everybody in the village would believe that her daughter had been a camp follower during the war » (Novikau, 2017, p. 322), bien que sa fille ait combattu pour défendre le pays contre l'envahisseur.[20] Ces représailles de la part des autres habitants du village que la mère craint autant sont avant tout hypothétiques, car rien ne prouve hors de tout doute que les habitants seraient réellement méchants envers la jeune femme. Il s'agit plutôt de la peur d'une mère, ce qui ne justifie en rien son refus de laisser sa fille entrer dans la maison. Ceci démontre que ces anciennes combattantes sont souvent victimes de stéréotypes de la part de leurs concitoyens, car, pour plusieurs, la femme n'a pas sa place à la guerre, ce qui vient contredire les principes de la société patriarcale de l'époque, où la femme est responsable du foyer. Néanmoins, elles font le même sacrifice que les hommes avec qui elles combattent pendant la guerre. Les soldats ayant sacrifié leur jeunesse pendant la guerre en Afghanistan souffrent également de la stigmatisation de la société, comme le démontre cet extrait :

[20] Il ne semble pas avoir une traduction équivalente pour *camp follower* en français. Les *camp followers* étaient des civils qui suivaient l'armée pour offrir des services aux soldats, comme la cuisine, la lessive, ou des services sexuels.

> Pourquoi faites-vous ce livre ? Pour qui ? Nous qui sommes revenus de là-bas, il ne pourra pas nous plaire. Comment raconter tout ça ? Les chameaux et les hommes morts dans la même flaque de sang, leur sang mélangé. Et à part nous, qui s'y intéressera ? Nous sommes des étrangers pour tout le monde. Ce qui me reste, c'est ma maison, ma femme, mon enfant qui va naître bientôt. Quelques amis de là-bas. À part eux, je n'ai confiance en personne. Et je n'aurai plus jamais confiance. (*Les Cercueils de zinc*, 1989, emplacement 529)

Tout d'abord, le lecteur note que ce survivant semble éprouver de la solitude depuis son retour du front. Merridale explique que la plupart des jeunes soldats qui se sont enrôlés dans cette guerre de gré ou de force voulaient reproduire les exploits d'héroïsme de leurs prédécesseurs lors de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Cependant, ils ne reçoivent aucune ovation du public pour leur service, parce que cette guerre est de plus en plus perçue comme une erreur de la part d'un gouvernement qui perd rapidement l'appui de la population (2000, p. 53). L'auteure ajoute que la société soviétique préfère nettement oublier et ignorer la guerre d'Afghanistan, à l'instar des Américains qui rejettent la guerre du Vietnam (Merridale, 2000, p. 53). Alors que ces hommes s'attendent à recevoir les plus grands éloges de la part de leur gouvernement et de leur entourage pour avoir servi le pays, ils sont plutôt confrontés au silence d'une société qui les rejette, les laissant seuls avec des syndromes post-traumatiques et des vies brisées par la guerre.

Pour terminer, le silence collectif et le silence étatique amènent également les vétérans à souffrir au plan individuel. Voici une brève conversation :

> ALEXIEVITCH. Saying good bye, she awkwardly reaches her hot arms out and embraces me.
>
> FEMALE SOLDIER. 'Forgive me…' (1989, p. 43).

Dans cet extrait, il semble que des vétérans finissent par développer un sentiment de culpabilité, comme si le silence collectif les avait convaincus de devoir s'excuser pour avoir combattu au nom de la patrie. C'est peut-être la raison pourquoi l'ancienne combattante exprime le besoin de s'excuser auprès d'Alexievitch après leur entretien. En se rapportant à Barbet et Honoré, les expressions idiomatiques *silence coupable* et *silence radio* (2013, p. 8) illustrent bien ce que le silence sociétal implique. Le *silence coupable* envoie l'idée que toute la société est responsable du maintien du silence. Le *silence radio* ajoute l'idée qu'il existe une sorte de consensus au sein des membres de la société qu'il vaut mieux se taire plutôt que de raviver des blessures du passé. Comme le dit Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi : « collective forgetting is … thought to be a silencing and muting of the past. » (2010, p. 1103). Vinitzky-Seroussi avance ici que le pardon collectif est influencé par le silence; c'est-à-dire, les gens se disent que leurs traumas finissent éventuellement par disparaître d'eux-mêmes s'ils adoptent une culture du silence et une sorte de renie de ce qui s'est réellement produit.

Le silence sociétal à l'ère du gouvernement soviétique semble aller de pair avec le silence étatique. Comme son nom l'indique, le silence étatique est renforcé par l'État et a un important impact sur les populations, car les décisions du gouvernement vont diriger et rythmer la vie des citoyens. Lorsque le gouvernement poursuit une démarche répressive, il commence une campagne de propagande et adopte une série de mesures coercitives pour effrayer la population. À la suite d'une répression, le réflexe de la population est de se replier sur elle-même petit à petit et de rester silencieuse dans l'adversité pour survivre ou pour éviter une nouvelle répression. Cet extrait de *The Unwomanly Face of War* illustre la répression qui a alors lieu en Union soviétique : « [n]ous avions un oncle [dans] un camp de travail, le frère de maman, un travailleur du chemin de fer, un vieux communiste. Il a été arrêté au travail […] Vous savez qui l'a arrêté ?

Le NKVD [… n]otre oncle bien-aimé, et nous savions qu'il n'était coupable de rien [de grave]. Nous le croyions » (1989, p. 47, Traduction de l'auteure). Voici un exemple où une personne est arrêtée par des autorités après avoir enfreint un ordre du gouvernement au pouvoir.

Dans le cas des Russes, le silence sociétal caractérise le silence russe qui est expliqué par des auteurs comme Yelena Mazour-Matusevich : « it is a silence of a noizy [*sic*] mass made of individually 'mute' people » (2014, p. 295). Le silence sociétal se compose donc de plusieurs silences individuels. Les différents extraits de *La guerre n'a pas un visage de femme* et de *Les Cercueils de zinc* le démontrent bien. Le rejet de la société fait que la majorité des hommes et des femmes vétérans préfèrent demeurer silencieux, évitant de parler de leurs expériences et de leurs souffrances vécues, car ils ne veulent pas recevoir des rétroactions négatives. Le silence individuel est encore plus frappant chez les femmes : « la société a constamment supprimé [l'existence] de plusieurs politiques reliées au genre lors des dernières guerres » (Novikau, 2017, p. 320), ce qui renvoie aux stéréotypes créés par la société patriarcale dans laquelle la place de la femme est le foyer. Par exemple, Alexievitch rapporte à un moment donné qu'il a été difficile d'interviewer l'une de ces femmes, parce que le superviseur des ressources humaines de l'endroit où cette femme travaillait aurait tenté de convaincre Alexievitch de s'entretenir avec un homme qui a aussi participé à la guerre.

En effet, il semble que le patron pensait que le discours de la femme serait à la fois moins crédible et maquillé par des *fantaisies féminines* (Novikau, 2017, p. 320). Il s'agit d'une vision où l'on considère que la guerre est un univers réservé aux hommes. Les femmes brisant ce stéréotype s'exposent donc à des jugements semblables à celui rapporté par Alexievitch ; leurs témoignages sont ainsi dévalués au profit de ceux des hommes, ce qui ne convainc généralement pas ces vétéranes de se confier à une tierce personne. Toutefois, ces femmes veulent absolument

partager leurs expériences sans pouvoir trouver une oreille sincère pour les écouter jusqu'à ce qu'Alexievitch commence ses interviews. Par exemple, Natalya Ivanovna Sergeeva lui partage son soulagement de pouvoir enfin en parler :

> I want to speak … to speak! To speak it all out! Finally somebody wants to hear us. For so many years we said nothing, even at home we said nothing. For decades. The first year, when I came back from the war, I talked and talked. Nobody listened. So I shut up… It's good that you've come along. I've been waiting all the while for somebody … (Alexievitch, 1989, p. 46)

Il est clair que cette femme est soulagée de pouvoir rencontrer Alexievitch et de lui raconter ses expériences. La visite d'Alexievitch a soulagé un besoin réprimé depuis longtemps chez cette femme.

En ce qui concerne les survivants de la guerre en Afghanistan, les vétérans ont également adopté le mutisme individuel à la suite du renie auquel ils ont été confrontés été à leur retour en Russie. Outre les soldats, il faut compter d'autres victimes du silence individuel : les mères des soldats. Sans être allées sur le champ de bataille, ces femmes vivent le traumatisme de voir leurs fils partir au combat sans savoir s'ils reviendront en vie. C'est une situation où la peur est constante. D'ailleurs, des milliers de mères vivent un deuil après l'annonce que leurs enfants reviendront au pays dans un cercueil en zinc, puisqu'ils sont morts au combat. Même dans les cas où le fils revient en vie, elles doivent faire face au syndrome post-traumatique de leur fils et, ce, avec très peu de ressources. Une mère se confie à Alexievitch à propos du repli sur soi de son enfant après son retour du front :

> MÈRE. Parle-moi de l'Afghanistan, lui ai-je dit un jour.
>
> FILS. Tais-toi, maman !

> MÈRE. Quand il n'était pas là, je relisais ses lettres, pour essayer de comprendre ce qui lui arrivait. Je ne trouvais rien de particulier [… m]ais je voyais bien qu'il se passait quelque chose. On m'avait rendu un autre garçon. (1989, emplacement 80)

Par conséquent, à la suite de l'analyse des témoignages dans les deux livres d'Alexeivitch, on peut affirmer que la guerre engendre trois types de silences dans la société russe de l'époque soviétique : le silence étatique, le silence sociétal et le silence individuel. Dans le cas du silence étatique, celui-ci provient principalement des activités du gouvernement. Le gouvernement soviétique contrôle la vie de la population en ayant recours à différents stratagèmes, comme la propagande et la censure, tout en veillant scrupuleusement à ce que des événements qui s'avèrent gênants pour le régime demeurent aussi secrets que possible. La guerre en Afghanistan est l'un de ces moments que le régime soviétique et qu'une partie de la population préfèrent ignorer. Le silence sociétal trouve sa source au cœur même de la société. Dans le cas des Russes, il s'agit du *silence russe* auquel des auteurs se sont référés autrefois. Le silence sociétal provient des traumas que la population veut oublier pour éviter de raviver de vieilles blessures. Le silence individuel, qui est une conséquence du mutisme de la société, amène les gens à préférer ne pas parler des événements difficiles de leur histoire. Le silence individuel est une forme d'autocensure qui se caractérise par le mutisme des membres de la communauté qui optent pour le déni face à un événement pénible, comme la guerre d'Afghanistan. Ces trois silences peuvent être interdépendants selon les situations, quoique le silence étatique paraisse être le plus autonome des trois, car la société et les individus ont très peu d'autorité sur les décisions et les agissements d'un gouvernement répressif. Toutefois, le silence sociétal ne peut pas exister si l'impact du silence étatique est minime. Moins l'État est

répressif, plus les individus peuvent s'exprimer librement ; le silence sociétal n'a pas de raison d'être si le silence individuel ne devient pas l'une des normes sociales d'une nation.

En conclusion, ce travail aborde un effet peu étudié des guerres : le silence. Trois types de silence sont répertoriés dans cette analyse : le silence étatique ; le silence sociétal ; et le silence individuel. De plus amples recherches sont nécessaires pour établir de meilleures corrélations entre les zones sinistrées par la guerre, par exemple, et le rôle du mutisme social dans les sociétés humaines touchées par les conflits. Davantage de recherches sont également nécessaires pour renseigner le public sur l'expression du silence à la suite de traumas collectifs et générationnels.

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Japanese Culture in America /
La culture japonaise en Amérique

Subverting Feminine Identity: Reinvention of *Sailor Moon*'s Girl Power in *Violet Evergarden*

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Abstract

During the 1990s, *Sailor Moon* and the Girl Power movement came face to face with young girls worldwide. As an anime based on the shōjo manga *Sailor Moon*, the adaptation set a precedent for heroic feminism within the male-dominant industry. In modern Japanese literature—namely light novels—we encounter other female heroines who reinvent the notion of Girl Power by challenging the weaponized femininity presented in Victoria Newsom and Joanette Quenby's work around the reclamation of the girlish and alternative gender identities. Moreover, as a new form of fiction, light novels challenge older forms of Japanese literature—mostly manga—which continue to subvert the dissemination of this Girl Power. Consequently, this article further develops the idea that the modern anime *Violet Evergarden*, based on a light novel of the same name, reinvents *Sailor Moon*'s Girl Power through the modern form of Japanese literature and the titular protagonist's otherworldly presence within a liminal space. Magical girl anime typically limits itself to the socially constructed masculine heroism that Violet reinvents through her newfound strength and subversion of the feminine.

Keywords

manga, Girl Power, anime, magical girl, shōjo, light novel

Résumé

Au cours des années 90s, les jeunes filles autour du monde ont découvert *Sailor Moon* et le mouvement « Girl Power ». Basé sur le shōjo manga *Sailor Moon*, l'adaptation filmique a fixé un précompte de l'héroïsme féministe au cadre d'une industrie à prédominance masculine. Au sein de la littérature moderne Japonaise—en particulier le *light novel*—nous rencontrons d'autres héroïnes qui réinventent la notion de « Girl Power » en stimulant la féminité militarisée selon les recherches de Victoria Newsom et de Joanette Quenby en ce qui concerne la revendication de l'identité féminine (« the girlish ») et des identités de genre alternatives. De plus, en tant que nouvelle forme littéraire, les *light novels* défient les formes plus anciennes de littérature japonaise—principalement le manga—et continuent à subvertir la diffusion du mouvement « Girl Power ». Par conséquent, cet article développe davantage l'idée que l'anime moderne *Violet Evergarden*, basé sur le *light novel* du même nom, réinvente le « Girl Power » de *Sailor Moon* à travers la forme moderne de la littérature japonaise et l'existence du protagoniste titulaire fantastique dans un espace liminal. L'anime du genre *magical girl* se limite généralement à l'héroïsme masculin socialement construit que Violet réinvente par sa force et sa subversion du féminin.

Mots-clés

manga, Girl Power, anime, magical girl, shōjo, light novel

Many girls—including me—grew up watching (or reading) magical girl anime. *Sailor Moon* by Junichi Sato from 1992, based on the manga *Sailor Moon* by Naoko Takeuchi, is one of them. We idealized the Girl Power that the titular protagonist, Usagi Tsukino (Sailor Moon), put forth through her perseverance, resilience, friendships, and love. Nowadays, we encounter remakes of other magical girl favourites, such as *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (2018) from the 1985 original American animation *She-Ra: Princess of Power*, or *Powerpuff Girls Z* (2006), from the original 1998 *The Powerpuff Girls*.[21] In addition to these magical girl genres, we come across other powerful heroines that subvert our standard view of Girl Power in anime—namely, the 2018 anime *Violet Evergarden* by Taichi Ishidate, based on the Japanese light novel written by Kana Akatsuki and illustrated by Akiko Takase. Violet challenges our notions of heroism and Girl Power. Within Girl Power scholarship, Victoria Newsom focuses on how the concept, within *Sailor Moon*, empowers the young female body after the hero's critical transformation. Moreover, Joanette Quenby believes that Girl Power challenges gender identities within North American heteronormative society. By contrast, my approach reinvents Girl Power because I focus more broadly on a subject—Violet Evergarden—which shifts the female hero's narrative. Violet exemplifies an otherworldliness and almost god-like development beyond the Girl Power realm, or even the limitations of the young female (or girlish) body as her metamorphosis takes place after her time as a hero. While the titular heroine of *Violet Evergarden* appears to follow the narrative of Girl Power, I will argue that Violet's otherworldliness is, in reality, a reinvention of the 1990s Girl Power figure from the magical girl anime *Sailor Moon*.

[21] Other shows of the magical girl genre are *Revolutionary Girl Utena* (1997), *Tokyo Mew Mew* (2002), *Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha* (2004), and the *PrettyCure* franchise (2004).

My paper will begin with a historical background of manga, light novels, and anime within Japanese society and culture. I will define Girl Power in the world of shōjo and magical girl anime and its importance within the *Sailor Moon* adaptation. Consequently, I will apply this reinvention of Girl Power onto *Violet Evergarden* through the different challenges to femininity, their similar yet contrasting physical appearances, their transformations into heroes in a liminal space, as well as their relationships with others and how they indicate the confines of a young girl's body.

Defining the Terms: Manga, Light Novels, and Anime

Manga, or commonly referred to as Japanese comics or comic art, has been a part of the country's history and culture for centuries. Kinko Ito states how it is closely connected to their "politics, economy, family, religion, and gender" (26). Their influence, reflecting both Japanese society's realities and fantasies, shapes what has become of their nation today. Throughout our globalized times, manga—along with Japanese light novels and their adaptations into anime—have penetrated North American media, though to a much lesser extent in Canada than in the United States. Blockbuster anime shows like *Astro Boy* (1963) and *Speed Racer* (1966) paved the way during the 1960s, but Dragon *Ball Z* (1989), *Sailor Moon* (1992), *Pokémon* (1997), *Hunter x Hunter* (1999), *Naruto* (2002)—with some shows that still run today, or have been readapted due to high demand—reign in this category. As a result, Japan and the U.S. have become the two biggest consumers of manga and anime. Beáta Pusztai states that "[w]hat makes manga so attractive in [their] eyes … is the generic and thematic diversity of products – as opposed to their American and most European counterparts, Japanese comics are targeting readers from all age groups, males and females alike" (144). These demographics are essential to define manga, such as the two main genres we encounter—shōjo and sōnen.

Shōjo manga are girls' comics. They are commercial genres marketed to female audiences and adhere to a character type that appear in entertaining graphic narratives or non-narrative games and campaigns—emulating the cute adolescent girl, according to Jaqueline Berndt et al. (1). Sōnen, originally meaning 'children,' means 'boys' today (Takahashi 115). Mizuki Takahashi further explains that shōjo "refers to a socially conservative gender role that owes its origin to the formative phase of the educational system in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (116). More specifically, this transformation, from 1887, is "[k]nown as the *chūtōgakkō rei* (the junior high school law) … [which] sacrificed girls' education in [favour] of boys'" (Takahashi 116). Consequently, as girls were expected to become domestics, wives, housekeepers, and child-bearers, they often did not possess an advanced education compared to boys. This aspect of Japanese history strongly influenced girls' representation, and even women's eventually, because they all had the same roles. Manga, anime, and, finally, light novels created a male-dominant space within this Japanese industry until *Sailor Moon* challenged the norm of male heroism. The hegemonic masculine discourse, or even the heteronormative narrative, depicts a shift in female representation, especially when introducing *mahō shōjo* (magical girls) into both the manga and anime world.

As a manga and anime, *Sailor Moon* falls into the magical girls' category because of Takeuchi's powerful female-dominant world around Usagi. Magda Erik-Soussi states that "[e]ven with a majority-male animation staff and the modification eventually made for a Western audience, *Sailor Moon* still [channelled] … women writing emotive, dramatic, unapologetically feminine fantasy works for other women" (24). However, although these works are under a socially constructed understanding of the feminine, magical girls are "often dedicated to [subverting the patriarchal system entirely], primarily associating superpowers with being or

becoming feminine" (Erik-Soussi 28). They equally disrupt their gender roles because Usagi, along with her friends and fellow Sailor Guardians, occupies traditionally male-dominant spaces like educational institutions, the job market, arcades, and the public sphere at large. Women often found themselves in private spaces, primarily the home, so their subversion of this facet of femininity already presented a challenge to society and gender performativity. *Violet Evergarden*, both through literature and character, solely continues to disrupt these spaces in a contemporary manner.

Along with Usagi challenging social norms comes the portrayal of Violet Evergarden, further altering one's outlook on girls, or shōjo, in Japanese culture, society, and even literature as we find ourselves in the newer realm of Japanese light novels. In the 1980s, according to Satomi Saito, while modern media enjoyed the "prosperity in the global market, a return to paper media has also been observed in Japan at the same time … [t]hese paper media, closely tied to anime, manga, and larger media franchises, are widely called 'light novels' (*raitonoberu* or *ranobe*)" (315). They are small narratives with occasional illustrations; however, they are not considered graphic novels. Moreover, light novels went viral "among [adolescents] [and] young adult audiences as an extension of or even a substitute for anime and manga" (315). Rósa Björk Blöndal highlights that there are also "novelizations [of] anime or manga with a few illustrations by the original *mangaka* [manga artist]" (22). Kamikita Keita, who coined the term light novels, made the "conscious decision to avoid already established terms in the publishing industry such as 'juvenile,' 'young adult,' or 'teen's novel' [which] shows his keen observation of a gradual shift in Japan's entertainment market in the 1990s" (qtd. in Saito 317). In this way, *Violet Evergarden* challenges society both within a modern subgenre of Japanese literature and her characterization. Violet's existence, in contrast to Usagi, poses a challenge to the question of

feminine life and women's agency because they put forth different narratives. While Usagi knows, with age, how her entire life will unfold and the role she performs within the feminine or somewhat subverted feminine role, Violet must define this aspect of her life because her unconventional upbringing within the army and consequent removal destabilizes her identity and her performance within society. I will later touch on the significance of their characterizations more with the Girl Power trope's reinvention from Usagi's journey onto Violet's life within their respective anime shows.

Finally, anime—forged by Osamu Tezuka approximately before World War II—refers to Japanese animation. It has quickly become one of Japan's most prominent emblems. Manuel Hernández-Pérez believes "[a]nime is defined in relation to other Japanese national branding components such as manga, J-Pop [Japanese pop music] or sushi" (4). It is most common that "[t]he stylistic characteristics that define anime, including its serial character and its visual style, find their origin in adaptations inspired by the original manga" (6) and light novels. Therefore, Takeuchi and Akatsuki's respective creations of Usagi and Violet as the titular protagonists play integral roles in defining their anime as dominant female figures within a male-dominant industry. They create a space for girls and set the precedent of their Girl Power. What truly makes anime a treasure for its viewers—often initially readers of shōjo manga and light novels—is how they adapt it from the original version. These adaptations make or break the cinematic experience. We look to the directors, namely Sato and Ishidate, and their storytelling methods to understand their works, especially in a globalized manner, for their notable depiction of Girl Power.

The adaptation process of *Violet Evergarden* in juxtaposition with *Sailor Moon* is a critical aspect of the reinvention of Girl Power as we enter from one century into the next, with

more than twenty years between these two shows. Mark W. MacWilliams posits that Japanese literature and anime "share a mixed or hybrid nature … [because] they both blend the visual and the verbal into a unified whole, manga [and light novels] via a synthesis of text and images and anime through dialogue in cinematic live action" (6). Anime's cinematography has inevitably improved, but more importantly, the new technology has emphasized and adjusted the exaggerated Westernized feminization of women and girls in these original works.

In *A Theory of Adaptation,* Linda Hutcheon considers how "contexts of creation and reception are material, public and economic as much as they are cultural, personal, and aesthetic" (28). In this way, although two Japanese women wrote both *Sailor Moon* and *Violet Evergarden,* their anime's creation matches North American cultural aesthetics more than the traditional East Asian materialization because their viewership derives from inside and outside Japan and Asia at large. They cater to larger groups beyond their own societies—all ranging from East Asian and mainly North American girls (the general shōjo demographic) as well as boys and men of all ages—with the occasional hyper-sexualization of female characters. Additionally, their overall public reception—covering some of the world's biggest consumer countries—fuels more tremendous economic success with the creation of this Westernized aesthetic. Moreover, Hutcheon wisely mentions that "we react today, for instance, when a male director adapts a woman's novel" (28). This reality is true for both *Sailor Moon* and *Violet Evergarden* due to the imposed male gazes of their respective male directors, Sato and Ishidate. Therefore, as male adapters of female literary works, their final results significantly affect the audience's engagement, which is, once again, primarily young girls worldwide, though mainly in Japan and the U.S. These fans create a community that adapters need to nurture. Hutcheon believes that the latter must realize how "young women in particular need to be able to 'appropriate cultural

material to construct personal meaning' … [they] create imaginative worlds, complete with their own history, geography, people, and rules of [behaviour], and they inhabit these imaginatively" (116). These appropriations made the Girl Power movement of the 1990s crucial for decades to come in the shōjo world. The female-dominant concept enabled girls to define their own identity and sense of agency within this newfound femininity of *Sailor Moon* and now *Violet Evergarden* beyond society's patriarchal impositions and gendered objectification.

DEFINING AND REINVENTING GIRL POWER

Girl Power is an integral aspect of magical girls' manga, and anime—primarily *Sailor Moon*—and equally manifests itself within Violet Evergarden's narrative, even if it is solely presented as a light novel. Most definitions of Girl Power are within a North American context and mainly affect their young female demographic. On the one hand, Quenby claims that *Sailor Moon,* "as a 'girl-power' text, demonstrates alternative gender identities that were largely ignored in American popular culture texts during the early 1990s" (2). On the other hand, Newsom defines Girl Power primarily through the lens of third wave feminism as they align in the 1990s movement:

> [G]irl power [is] the ability for young women to achieve personal empowerment while maintaining a distinctly "girlish" style, in a U.S. context. In this context, "girlish" refers to a style of personal expression that both promotes and reclaims traditional feminine stereotypes, co-opting them as sites of empowerment, particularly personal empowerment. The personal empowerment of the Girl Power character is an ability to find both personal pleasure and success simultaneously. (57)

This concept is a direct response to the 1970s superheroines who worked within the patriarchal system. Girl Power represents how Sailor Moon and her fellow Guardians disrupt this status quo

and, as previously mentioned, occupy all spaces—both private and public—despite the limitations put forth by society. Both Takeuchi and Sato illustrate how the feminine body is the only one that can enact this power of personal pleasure and success as Sailor Moon's character transcends all of society's associations of empowerment with the masculine. Usagi and her friends become role models in their heroic journeys. However, the manifestation of their Girl Power equally takes form "without necessarily 'becoming' male" (Newsom 59) even if they occupy male-dominant spaces and appropriate the conventionally masculine notion of heroism. This appropriation of masculine performance takes place as Usagi makes herself a feminine space within the heroic masculinity in manga and anime and within patriarchal gender binaries at large.

Sato's adaptation emulates Sailor Moon's evolution of the girlish and reappropriates masculine elements within her performance to challenge patriarchal impositions of gender binaries and empower her femininity. Judith Butler's theory of performativity establishes that "[g]ender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (179, original emphasis). This performance is crucial as Usagi's repetition of girlish acts end up becoming her most potent weapon, subverting the masculine expectation of power. Both Takeuchi and Sato present these girlish tropes in the first volume and episode of the series. Usagi's character demonstrates that "[she] [is] a bit of a crybaby" (Takeuchi 9; Sato 02:34; Appendix A) and is often ditzy, like when she trips over a cat, Luna, tardily on her way to school (Takeuchi 10; Appendix B). However, she is an equally compassionate individual as she caresses Luna to make her feel better (Sato 03:04; Appendix C). Her hypersensitivity and caring demeanour make her the best candidate for a conventionally

feminine figure, and this performance of femininity remains the same throughout the entire first volume, in addition to the *Sailor Moon* adaptation's first episode (appropriately titled "The Crybaby: Usagi's Beautiful Transformation") and, more broadly, the entire season. Sato also presents Usagi's girlish performance, as it intersects with aspects of heroic masculinity, primarily when she fights evil. In the first episode, she must help her friend, Naru, when a villain takes over her mother's jewelry business. Usagi transforms into Sailor Moon—I will analyze her symbolic transformation later in juxtaposition to Violet—and begins to cry because she does not know how to fight evil yet (Sato 19:40; Appendix D). After some help from Tuxedo Mask, her male counterpart in the series, she wins the battle with her "Moon Tiara Action" (Sato 20:45; Appendix E). Consequently, Sailor Moon's performance establishes that Girl Power indeed does use femininity—in the shape of a crown—as a weapon. This weaponization of femininity within Girl Power, however, does not look the same for everyone.

Although Violet's character still ultimately seeks personal pleasure and success in her assigned duties, she reinvents Usagi's performance of Girl Power through a modernized depiction of her strength that manifests neither within feminine nor masculine spaces. Unconventionally, Violet does not fit in either of these spaces as she is an orphaned girl who is brought to a military base and is used as a 'weapon' or "tool" (Ishidate 11:57) for their army. She possesses quick, assassin-like skills, which make her too masculine and intimidating for men and not feminine enough for women, not even for the 'girlish' empowerment of Sailor Moon. This portrayal is not the typical premise of shōjo or even magical girls. However, Violet's power stems from her implied otherworldliness that transcends gender binaries even more than Sailor Moon. In contrast to Usagi's journey, who overcomes evil with the help of intimate relationships and femininity, Violet's otherworldliness puts forth her existential challenge to find a space for

herself in society. She wishes to define her own gender and performance notions once she is no longer needed in the army. This reinvention is critical to Violet's Girl Power because she subverts the process of being girlish and adopting heroic masculinity to already being an otherworldly hero and developing an understanding of her powerful presence. Violet "spent [her] life fulfilling [her] duties" (Ishidate 17:55) as a soldier in the Leidenschaftlich Army during a fictional war, but she can now define her own identity and sense of agency. Within the light novel and anime adaptation, Akatsuki and Ishidate go on to demonstrate how Violet's otherworldly portrayal of Girl Power compares to Usagi's exuberant Girl Power. This in-depth analysis will compare Usagi and Violet's appearances and the projection of their emotion concerning the use of colour within their respective adaptations.

WESTERN FEMINIZATION

Side by side, the only glaring difference between Usagi and Violet is the quality of their adaptations (Sato 17:16; Ishidate 13:55; Appendix F). They are both blondes, with large, round, captivating blue eyes and fair skin. Fusami Ōgi et al. state that during this time in the 1990s, it had been a few decades that "the term *kawaii* (cute) became prevalent in Japanese girls' culture" (100). The *kawaii* images were predominantly of European girls who looked like princesses and used excessive amounts of pink or other hyperfeminine colours. It brought an entire aesthetic movement to Japan with the Lolita fashion found throughout anime and manga, and even more prominently in cosplay.[22] However, the argument has been made by many that Japanese literature "written by and for women, created a style erasing … Japaneseness and replaced them

[22] See Mari Kotani and Thomas LaMarre. The term cosplay is an abbreviation of "costume play," which has become a blanket term that refers to dressing up or wearing disguises. Cosplay sometimes refers more specifically to dressing up as manga or anime characters in the context of conventions and fairs, although it frequently extends far beyond those contexts into daily practices.

with feminine, beautiful Westernized images" (100). More specifically, Akatsuki's portrayal of Violet matches this theme:

> [B]londe, blue-eyed woman who possessed a beauty that seemed to have come straight out of a fairytale answered in monotone, without putting on a fake smile. The woman named Violet Evergarden was a figure as reticent and charming as an ordinary doll. Her blue irises, partially covered by golden locks, shone like the ocean, with cherry blossom pink-tinted cheeks over milky-white skin and glossy, lustrous rouge lips. (8-9)

In this way, Violet "represents a type of fantastic 'otherness'" (Newsom 65), which is emphasized by her Western appearance in relation to her heroism, or instead her reinvented Girl Power. One can say the same about Sailor Moon, but she has a fellow Guardian, Minako, who looks like her—blonde and blue-eyed—so there is no uniqueness in Sailor Moon's appearance that way. There is no one else in *Violet Evergarden* that looks like Violet, which highlights the importance of her characterization. If Violet looked like everyone else—the same way Usagi looks like Minako—her Otherness would be meaningless. Ishidate's adaptation of Violet equally comes into play when discussing how colour challenges the notion of Girl Power, feminization, and *kawaii*.

Ishidate presents Violet in a colour scheme that virtually rejects Girl Power and the girlish appearance it exudes. Although her eyes glow like in every shōjo anime, the rest of her appearance does not match this brightness. Her clothes do not possess a bright colour scheme to match Usagi either. They are lifeless (Ishidate 10:01; Appendix G), except for her shiny emerald brooch, which was a gift from her Major during the war (Ishidate 00:41; Appendix H). Violet does, however, match one aspect of *kawaii* through her clothes—the Lolita aesthetic. She traditionally wears a long, layered, predominantly white dress that exemplifies her otherworldly

appearance. Her skin is like porcelain, which, as previously mentioned, emulates a doll. According to Theresa Winge, this doll image, "through the use of *kawaii* objects, … [embodies] and visually communicate[s] much more than "cute" or "feminine/cute"; they also represent a desire for empathy … within the understood and hierarchical power structure" (59). There is a specific rejection of the infantilization in this way. While Sato uses bright yellow for Usagi's hair and cobalt blue for her eyes, these colours put forth women's infantilization to keep Girl Power only within the specific young female body. Even the colour pink is found everywhere throughout *Sailor Moon,* so the *kawaii* aesthetic powerfully penetrates this image in addition to their Western feminization. Therefore, Ishidate's adaptation of Violet Evergarden challenges this theme of shōjo and the girlish. Antonio Horno-López claims that colours are not used by chance, "and that there is an important colour relationship with a high level of connotative and symbolic meaning" (46). This element is crucial to differentiate the magical girl within *Sailor Moon,* in contrast to the neutral or even morose colour scheme of *Violet Evergarden*'s anime, which continues to reinvent Girl Power. Violet's otherworldliness, through appearance and colour, inherently creates a distance between her and the rest of the world.

Within this distance, she finds herself in a liminal space that intensifies her ethereal presence in society.[23] This liminality equally reinvents an aspect of Girl Power because it removes the duality of Usagi Tsukino/Sailor Moon's character as a regular girl/magical girl hero within shōjo. Violet's character does not hold this duality because her sole identity as Violet Evergarden does not entail a specific transformation to become powerful—she already exudes this strength, which is why she is otherworldly. Usagi's transformation into Sailor Moon is notably one of the aspects of femininity, or the girlish, which leads to the hyper-sexualization of

[23] See Gemma Irving et al. One "[enters] a liminal space of 'being betwixt and between' when they realise that their previous understandings are inadequate but before they have fully developed a new understanding" (356).

these female Guardians and their premature bodies' objectification. This element poses another challenge to Usagi's Girl Power because Ishidate desexualizes Violet's appearance from Sato's imposed male gaze. Newsom believes "the primary restrictions of Girl Power in patriarchy are the body type [favoured] within the Girl Power construct; the style of representation, including clothing styles that are appropriate for the Girl Power practitioners; and the constant stereotyping of hyperfemininity" (60). While we often find Usagi in her school uniform, her emblematic appearance takes form when she is in her magical girl hero costume. Her costume consists of a white sleeveless bodysuit with a short royal blue skirt, red knee-high boots, a tiara, and her moon prism (Sato 17:16; Appendix F)—"[t]he costume is as much a part of a Scout's character as is her flesh" (Quenby 76). Her body metamorphizes into Sailor Moon, but she must be nude before this can happen. Quenby claims that Sailor Moon "is noticeably void of female genitalia—'unsexed and sexualized' at the same time" (60). The Guardians' "breasts are void of areolas" (Quenby 60-61) as well to demonstrate their youth and degendered bodies. However, as they are subject to the male gaze, Violet demands a different regard for her presence. The woman who illustrated Violet, Takase, ensured that she would not face the same fate as the other representations of Girl Power. She solidified Ishidate's efforts—as a man and the creator of *Violet Evergarden*—to adapt Violet accurately. Therefore, her body, which is always covered, does not need to exude the necessary 'femininity' to acquire her Girl Power.

In contrast to Usagi enduring a transformation to become a hero, Violet continues to subvert the traditional Girl Power narrative when she endures a transformation after her time as a hero. While Usagi must transform to become powerful, she must also use weapons to exemplify such strength—namely her Sailor Locket and tiara (Sato 15:41; Appendix I). In this way, her weapons "materialize from within her body, reflecting the source of her power" (Quenby 76). As

she evolves throughout the series, she uses other objects such as a moon wand and a sceptre to strengthen her presence. In comparison, Violet uses virtually nothing 'magical' to materialize her ethereal strength. In the first episode, she loses both her arms during the war and eventually wakes up in the hospital with bandages around her limbs (Ishidate 01:22; Appendix J). However, this time, she has hands and arms "made of adamant silver" (Ishidate 09:58) that she covers with gloves. Although this is analogous to a soldier receiving prosthetics after battle, this metamorphosis further demonstrates Violet's otherworldliness. Her bodily transformation also changes the Girl Power narrative because her new arms hold a dual meaning. On the one hand, the addition of her silver limbs demonstrates a disempowerment because her natural, otherworldly strength is removed from her young female body. With this removal, Newsom would assume that Violet no longer possesses Girl Power as the standard feminine body is an integral aspect of her self-actualization. On the other hand, the alteration, or even the fragmentation, of Violet's young female body presents a challenge to femininity being the sole source of Girl Power. Violet's strength is still unparalleled. She uses this transformation as a learning opportunity to find a new purpose and redefine her identity without the sense of being a weapon or hero within the war. She develops agency within her newfound independence, even if she is still subject to patriarchal constructs of what it means to be a hero.

In *Sailor Moon*, Usagi grows into a powerful hero through her connection to friends, family, and new cat, Luna. As she develops these strong, intimate relationships with others, she builds her confidence and attempts to become an independent person. Newsom states that "[g]irl power suggests a means for personal empowerment and independence to the practitioner, especially in terms of personal pleasure … [h]owever, the nature of Girl Power prevents the practitioner from fully developing an independent nature" (60). This personal empowerment is

crucial to Sailor Moon's Girl Power narrative. It encourages the idea that creating these connections with others will allow her confidence and consequent independence to grow. However, the idea that Usagi needs these supportive friends to cultivate her growth demonstrates her unwavering dependence. Frequently, Usagi fantasizes about boys, manga, and even superhero games. Even in the first episode of the series, as she wakes up late for school, Usagi asks her mother, "Why didn't you wake me up sooner?" (Sato 02:17). Her mother responds, "I tried many times. And you told me to go away each time" (Sato 02:20). She is still "a growing girl" (Sato 04:16) and her lack of maturity even shows through her failing grades (Appendix K). Her teacher explicitly makes a point by giving her a 30 percent on their most recent test. Throughout the series, Usagi makes a conscious effort to improve, but ultimately her dependence and lack of maturity become a part of her identity within the Girl Power form—conforming to the limits of a young girl.

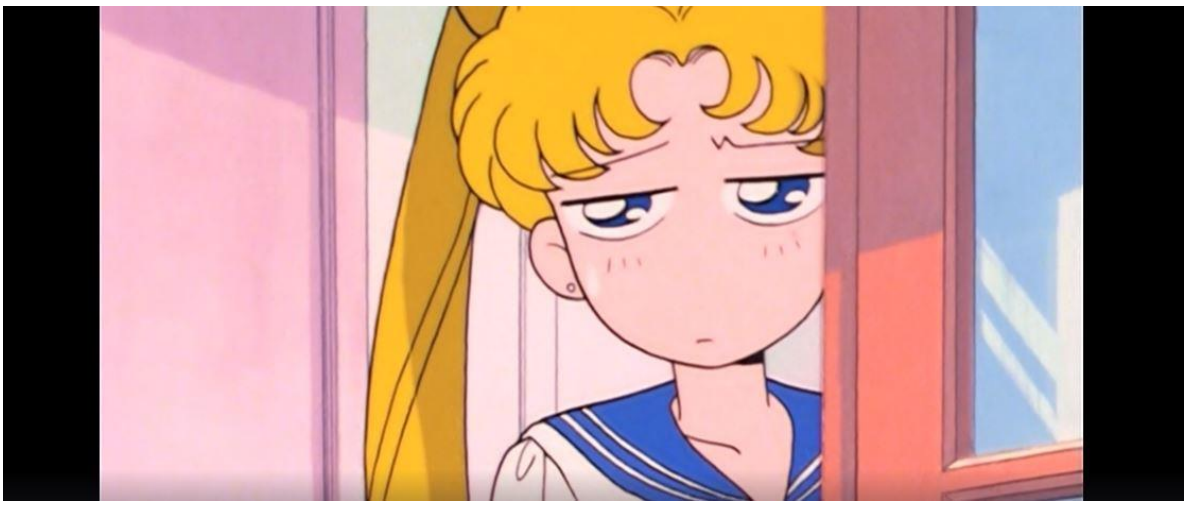
In *Violet Evergarden*, Violet also begins as a dependent person because she is placed in the care of Major Gilbert—her leader and love interest—during the war. She "had always just followed [his] orders" (Ishidate 22:39). However, even as Violet develops other relationships, namely with Mr. Hodgins, Gilbert's closest friend, she often appears distant from them. This distance, which encourages the liminal space she occupies, is unique to Violet's adaptation and, once again, subverts the typical narrative of Girl Power. While Sato's adaptation of *Sailor Moon* presents a sense of closeness to the viewer, Ishidate dismantles this theme using distance through her physical and symbolic placement. In particular, we come across a significant scene between Violet and Hodgins: Violet stands at a distance from the viewers, but equally in juxtaposition to firelight, as they discuss how "[she] [is] burning" (Ishidate 18:30). As Violet and the firelight mirror one another, Ishidate exemplifies a vulnerability and maturity in her, which offers a

deeper understanding of herself (Ishidate 18:12; Appendix L). As she begins to "realize for the first time that [she has] many burns" (Ishidate 18:47), the self-actualization of her trauma allows her to further develop a healthier independence that does not merely demand for her to remain in this liminal space, at a distance. Ishidate beautifully finalizes this scene by merging Violet and the firelight to demonstrate how she will always grow even as she is burning (Ishidate 18:51; Appendix M).

To summarize, Violet's otherworldliness within Taichi Ishidate's 2018 anime adaption of Kana Akatsuki's light novel *Violet Evergarden* reinvents *Sailor Moon*'s notion of Girl Power as she ultimately challenges the specific feminine body, appearance, and behaviour of the magical girl hero. Within the realm of magical girls' anime adaptations, Violet does not follow the typical narrative of Girl Power as her journey reinvents the notions of feminine heroism. Violet defines her sense of agency through self-actualization by "[asserting] her own will" (Ishidate 22:43). This reinvention of the 1990s movement utilizes different aspects of the modern Japanese literature form—the light novel—and adaptation to present subverted female heroism within the twenty-first century. Moreover, Ishidate's version of Violet through varying colours, physical appearance, bodily transformation, desexualization of the male gaze, and performance allows self-actualization to penetrate the sphere of shōjo and redefine its preconceived notions of femininity. Ishidate's depiction of Violet has shifted our representation in modern times of these feminine tropes. However, future changes within the genre will provide a new reality for viewers, especially through opportunities to distinguish themselves beyond societal binaries or even Sailor Moon's Girl Power.

APPENDIX A


MY NAME IS TSUKINO USAGI. I AM 14 YEARS OLD, AND IN 8TH GRADE.
WHINE
Mom, you dummy, why didn't you wake me up sooner?!
I'm leaving!
TRIP
STUMBLE
ouch! I must have stepped on something
I don't wanna hafta go to school ~
why does morning always have to come so soon? I'm still sleepy!
PANT
PANT
I AM A BIT OF A CRYBABY
sniffle
EVEN THOUGH I DON'T LIKE TO ADMIT IT
9



APPENDIX B


Ah, maybe it's only because I stepped on her.
It's a little black cat. She looks a bit shabby though.
MEOW
OWWWW
No way! I tripped over a cat?!
Sorry, I'm so sorry! Did I hurt you?!
smoooooch!
TEE-HEE, you're so cute! Forgive me! MWAAA~
POT POT
WIGGLE WIGGLE
Why the hell are you scratching me like that?!
Huh? What's that? Do you want me to take off your bandaid? Okay, okay
HEH
Giggle
SCRATCH SCRATCH SCRATCH
OW OW OW OW!!
KYAAA!!

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX E

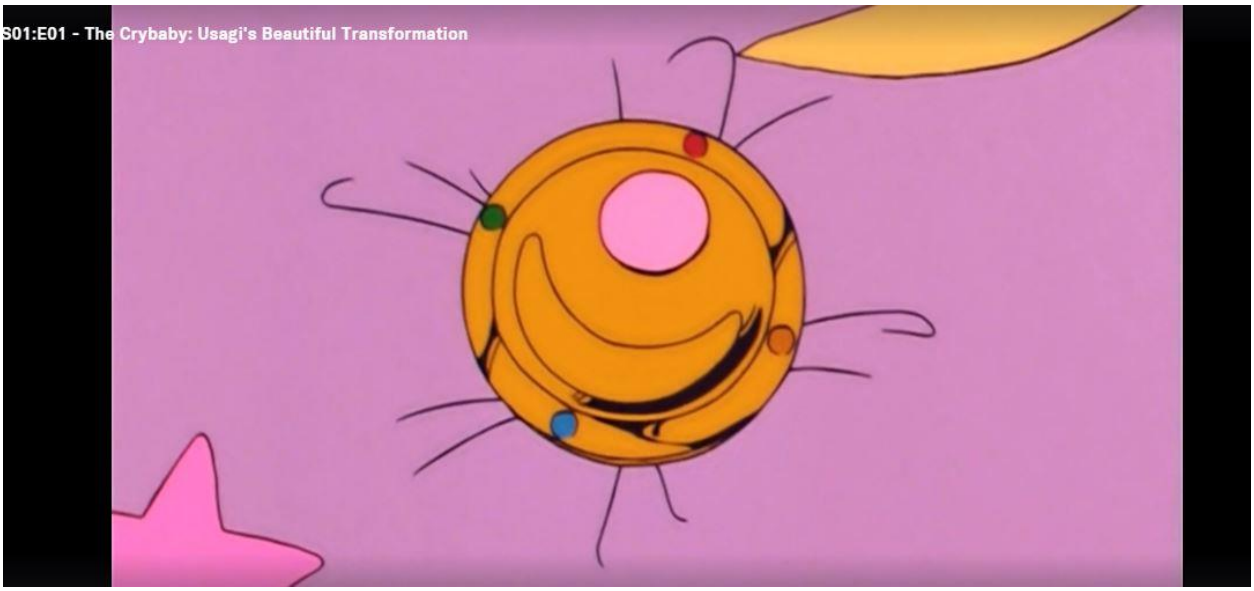
APPENDIX F

APPENDIX F (*cont.*)

APPENDIX G

APPENDIX H

APPENDIX I



APPENDIX J

APPENDIX K

APPENDIX L

APPENDIX M

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Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic*: The Japanese American Immigrant Experience and Racial Prejudice in the U.S.

Pamela Cisneros

Abstract

This paper examines Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic* through feminist and postcolonial considerations of the Japanese American experience. Japanese women who emigrate to the U.S. as picture brides are the work's central focus. It is through a collectivist perspective that these women describe their contact with racial and gender discrimination while adapting to their roles as wives and mothers. In the narrative's first half, I apply Luce Irigaray's theory of women's identity being malleable within a patriarchal structure, depicting these women as powerless to change their lives because of their gender. This leads to disrespectful physical encounters with their husbands and American employers because of their bodies and ethnic differences, respectively. Motherhood also alters racial prejudice on an intergenerational level because of how the children perceive their parents' struggles. The novel even references the political agenda behind the Japanese American displacement and features a brief reflection from the neighbours in order to memorialize a little-known chapter of WWII's political transgressions.

Keywords

Japanese American, Julie Otsuka, women, racial prejudice, gender discrimination, Other, *The Buddha in the Attic*

Résumé

Cet article examine l'expérience japonaise-américaine dans *The Buddha in the Attic* de Julie Otsuka d'une perspective féministe et postcoloniale. Les femmes japonaises qui émigrent aux États-Unis en tant que photo-épouses sont au cœur de l'œuvre. C'est dans une perspective collectiviste que ces femmes décrivent leur contact avec la discrimination raciale et de genre tout en s'adaptant à leurs rôles d'épouse et de mère. Dans la première moitié du récit, j'applique la théorie de Luce Irigaray selon laquelle l'identité des femmes est malléable au sein d'une structure patriarcale, dépeignant ces femmes comme impuissantes à changer leurs vies vu leur sexe. Cela conduit à des rencontres physiques irrespectueuses avec leurs maris et leurs employeurs américains en raison de leur corps et de leurs différences ethniques. La maternité transforme également les préjugés raciaux au niveau intergénérationnel à cause de la façon dont les enfants perçoivent les luttes de leurs parents. Le roman fait même référence à l'agenda politique ayant causé le déplacement des Américains d'origine japonaise et présente une brève réflexion des voisins des Japonais afin de commémorer un chapitre peu connu des transgressions politiques de la Seconde Guerre mondiale.

Mots-clés

Japonais américain, Julie Otsuka, femmes, préjugé racial, discrimination de genre, Autre, *The Buddha in the Attic*

The immigrant experience memorializes individual dreams and the acculturalization of a people. Julie Otsuka's 2012 historical fiction novel *The Buddha in the Attic* follows a group of Japanese women who emigrate to the U.S. as picture brides and struggle to ascertain their self-identities as both women and new American citizens in the mid-20th century. Otsuka addresses evident paradoxes: opportunity and hardship; reality and the imaginary; hope and despair; past and future. Such contradictions illustrate the concept of the Other in this work through the shared experience that these women endure. I propose to apply a chapter of Luce Irigaray's feminist theory from her text *This Sex Which Is Not One*, where she explores the malleability of a woman's self-identity within a patriarchal structure. Irigaray's theory is relevant to the first half of Otsuka's work because the narrative's characters discover how gender discrimination, and their subsequent recognition through their bodily identity as women, accompanies their subjection to Othering as racialized immigrants. Moreover, these women inevitably encounter an intergenerational kind of racial prejudice through their roles as mothers. *The Buddha in the Attic* accentuates the commonality of prejudice and the struggle to assimilate to an American life despite sexist marriage practices and racially discriminatory government decrees. As a result of their personal growth into old age, Otsuka's collective of women confronts the consequences of immigrating to the U.S. and the subsequent resolution in which their neighbors adopt the role of onlooker to reflect on the political transgressions against Japanese Americans.

The lives of Otsuka's characters find a purpose around the concept of picture brides, which refers to Japanese women who immigrated to the U.S. to find promises broken and deception commonplace. From 1885 to 1910, the "picture bride" marriage tradition emerged from feudal Japan's "aristocratic circles and … samurai classes" and favoured the socioeconomic futures of men over women (Adachi & Lee 95). Photography was a convenient way to find a

potential Japanese partner, involving a "go-between" who researched each match's "socioeconomic status, [education], and family histories" (95). In Otsuka's narrative, the first impressions of these men's photographs are favorable, notably attributed to the fact that they resembled their "brothers and fathers back home, only better dressed, in grey frock coats and fine Western three-piece suits" (4). The brides are conditioned to believe from their correspondence that their Japanese American husbands achieved economic and financial prosperity and their photos support such beliefs, depicting the men with material possessions such as "A-frame houses … and Model T Fords" (4). The women trust these men given that they "promised to be there, waiting for [them], in San Francisco, when [they] sailed into port" (4). However, it is only after this initial revelation that the women question the state of their lives: "Would we love them? Would we recognize them from the pictures…?" (4). These doubts were historically well-founded because potential suitors often sent either "photos from years earlier … or even photos of younger friends" to increase their chances of finding a wife (Adachi & Lee 95). Otsuka subsequently confirms such fears when the narrator reveals that their husband's "photographs … were twenty years old [and that] the letters … had been written … by people other than [their] husbands … whose job it was to tell lies and win hearts" (18). These arranged marriages are revealed to be a system that oppresses women, benefiting men at the expense of these women experiencing irrevocable deceit as a result of their decision to marry and immigrate to the U.S.

From the beginning, the novel frames the storyline around Japanese picture brides traveling to San Francisco from Japan in order to pursue a viable quality of life. The novel's emphasis on Othering presents itself through these women's exploration of self-identity, highlighting both their gender and Japanese ethnicity. Wolfgang Stroebe and Chester A. Insko define the "stereotype" as a set of beliefs about the personal attributes "of an aspect of reality,

especially … persons or social groups (6-7). In connection to Otsuka's work, the women rely on stereotypical imagery of the U.S. in their native Japan because they consider such information a reliable representation of their new world: "The women were loud and tall … The language was ten times as difficult as our own and the customs were unfathomably strange. Books were read from back to front and soap was used in the bath" (Otsuka 7). Furthermore, the American treatment of women is a primary concern throughout the work's initial chapter given their attempts to remember a prior Japanese unspoken code of conduct: "*A girl must blend into a room: she must be present without appearing to exist*" (6, original emphasis). There remains, however, the supposition that they will achieve a better quality of life away from Japan in terms of gender norms: "And wherever you went the men held open the doors and tipped their hats and called out 'Ladies first'" (7). Otsuka describes their impressions as reliant on the idea that women are treated with more respect and are not expected to work at all compared to Japanese expectations to adhere to an agricultural working life where men are not held to these mannerism standards (7). They attempt to assimilate into American culture without drawing attention to themselves, but racial and cultural differences prevail.

Although the women observe each other's socioeconomic roots, whether that be women "from the city, [who] wore stylish city clothes, [or] from the country and … wore the same old kimonos" (3), rather than "learn each other's names [they compared] photographs of [their] husbands" (3). The novel's first chapter introduces a collective of Japanese women who express excitement and uncertainty given their status as picture brides, but it is only when they finally meet their prospective Japanese American husbands that they realize the futility of their aspirations and subject themselves to a patriarchal authority. Additionally, they use stereotypes as coping mechanisms to lessen their concerns about their U.S. immigrant status temporarily.

Otsuka's narrator, who adopts "first person plural" perspective (Maxey 1) as well as a collective "stream of voices" (Monteiro 1), introduces the reader to these Japanese women who convey their naivety.

In addition to stereotypes on both sides, the women contend with an inevitable culture clash because perceptions of the fantastical American versus ordinary Japanese culture ultimately become the source of racial prejudice over time. For instance, the women worry about being subjected to the category of the Other, asking questions such as "would we be laughed at? Spat on? [Would] … we not be taken seriously at all?" (Otsuka 7). These thoughts proliferate as they reflect on the eclectic nature of belongings—visual illustrations of their connection to their Japanese heritage. There are "colorful cotton kimonos" and "mirrors" (10) in terms of clothes and feminine accessories; "tiny brass Buddhas [and] ivory statues of the fox god" are now the remnants of their religion and culture as they pursue a new life (9). Japan remains present during their voyage and is a source of comfort in light of their new life abroad, notably through their dreams of "rice paddies, [from] which [they] … had desperately wanted to escape" (5) alongside an encounter with a whale that they described as "*looking into the eye of the Buddha*" (13, original emphasis). However, the fact that their husbands are also of Japanese heritage causes them to believe it is a guarantee to future happiness.[24] The women's admittance of being enamoured with the idea of being "in America with [their] new husbands" overshadows the subsequent gender disparity they have yet to experience at this point (10-11). These women's past lives in Japan and their lack of knowledge about the U.S. interfere with one another. They worry about the ship's condition en route to America but decide that any worries about their

[24] In 1915, the Supreme Court defeated Japanese American Takao Ozawa's petition "to be classified as a 'free white person' … [,] eliminating any path to citizenship for him and all other Japanese immigrants" (Adachi & Lee 53). The implementation of the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952 made American citizenship accessible for Japanese immigrants (53).

future lives are unfounded because their new homes would give them the opportunity to take up new pastimes such as gardening and running a hotel (10). On the contrary, these reflections reinforce their unworldliness and reliance on their future husbands to provide them with a better life that they could not pursue on their own.

Irigaray's feminist approach can befit Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic* to demonstrate how the women are perceived as submissive and racially different as a result of their circumstances during the early years of their marriages, before they become mothers. Irigaray et al.'s 1985 text *This Sex Which Is Not One* features the chapter "Women on the Market", which argues that women are considered inferior to men because "society … is based upon the exchange of women" (170). Otsuka begins to interweave this notion through the men's immediate perceptions of their wives as commodities in light of the arranged marriages (Adachi & Lee 95) and the women's indifferent compliance with gender norms based on their actions towards them. Irigaray et. al suggest that society depends on "women's bodies" in order for "social life and culture" to thrive and men, as the only participants in this "transaction", proliferate women's inferiority (171). Additionally, the fact that men "do not enter into any exchanges *with* [women]" continues to enforce this gender disparity (172, original emphasis). This lack of communication recalls once more the circumstances of these marriages (Otsuka 3). In particular, the only attention women receive is with respect to their physicality which must be treated as an "*abstraction*" because their individuality and even their "femininity" are ignored in totality (Irigaray et al. 175, original emphasis).

For instance, the women are treated as commodities rather than individuals when their husbands immediately take advantage of them. On their wedding nights, the men do not acknowledge their wives with respect but, instead, subject them to non-consensual sex that the

women feel obligated to follow through with now that they are married: “That night our new husbands took us quickly. They took us calmly. They took us gently, but firmly, and without saying a word” (Otsuka 19). This experience is described as a collective one and the use of “we” not only signals the shared experience but also emphasizes that “the women’s individuality is erased” (Maxey 10). Flávia Rodrigues Monteiro argues that Otsuka’s narrative in this section iterates “the phrase ‘they took us’” in order to highlight that these women “are mainly identified with a [sexual and] reproductive apparatus”, accentuating the “asset” role that men ascribe to them (5). Otsuka describes these sexual encounters as non-consensual and even as instances of extreme physical and emotional violence. Although some women “did not let [their husbands] touch [them] again for three years”, other women admitted that they “knew [they] would always want them” (22). In this particular shared moment, a woman’s essence and decision over her own body do not belong to her. The language here even stresses that their husbands regard their wives as belongings, which concludes with the realization that “in the morning when [they] woke [they] were theirs” (22). In doing so, the first night that these women spend with their husbands foreshadows their future struggles not only as immigrants but first and foremost as women.

As these women become accustomed to their marriages, they battle gender inequality in their daily lives and despite the kindness that certain individuals impart, the experience intersects with racial prejudice. Otsuka describes how these women begin to fulfill the traditional domestic role of a housewife, but also begin to repress their femininity. They transform into vestiges of themselves to the point that they recognize how this state of existence infiltrates their marriages: “We cooked for them. We cleaned for them … But it was not we who were cooking and cleaning and chopping, it was somebody else. And often our husbands did not even notice we’d

disappeared" (37). This behavior of indifference then becomes more evident when their letters to their families in Japan turn into lies about their own realities, defining their life abroad as the epitome of all the happiness and success to which they aspired. They boast to friends and family about their newfound successes in "*a nice house in town*," but they hide the truth concerning the fact that they essentially became domestic servants, an occupation that is considered back home as "the lowliest job a woman would have [in Japan]" (45, original emphasis). These false stories continue to juxtapose their realities through the experience of being Othered. They resist coming to terms with their contemporary world despite their admittance that they want to be treated as equals rather than individuals who "do the work that no self-respecting American would do" (29). Japanese Americans find themselves living in "the space of the invisible" where they amplify their feelings of marginalization, refusing to "be noticed" in a society that cannot treat them as American citizens because of their ethnicity (Monteiro 6). This desire for equality also manifests itself in how the Japanese women wish to emulate American women in terms of their appearance, "[their] … endearing ways" and personalities, especially their "confidence which [the Japanese women] lacked" (Otsuka 39). Additionally, they dream of achieving material and societal success—an American woman's ideal life. This dream takes the form of residing in a better home complete with accessible water and "a servant who brought … breakfast every morning … and swept all the rooms by hand" (40). In reality, many of these Japanese American husbands are extremely poor and the only place they can afford for their wives to live is "in the servants' quarters of the big houses in Atherton and Berkley" (37-38), in exchange for labouring in the gardens of these homes belonging to affluent Caucasian families. The amplified version of luxury remains a fantasy for their wives.

Although their initial experiences as domestic servants are positive, the Japanese women

retain their status as the Other when they work under the conditions that the Caucasian husbands and wives stipulate. The American wives Americanize the Japanese women, and "[praise] … [their] hardworking ways … They claimed to like [them] much more than they did any of the others" (40-41). This friendliness eventually becomes genuine, given how these Japanese women assume the role of unofficial therapists for their American counterparts, listening to "their deep, darkest secrets" and helping them divert their husband's attention from secret marital affairs, and looking after the children as if they were their own (40-41). Furthermore, this impression of acceptance becomes a complex social realm to navigate. American women provide a world of privilege and opportunity in return for the Japanese women's domestic labour which results in the latter taking English classes or even the promise of being "left … a fortune" after the death of their American employers (42). The best experience, however, is the opportunity to play the role of a homeowner and it is only then that these women are at peace: "We felt, for once, like ourselves" (42). In spite of this freedom, the women also contend with the repercussions of losing their job stability, choosing to remain truthful when they make mistakes or failing to resist their penchant for "*pretty things*" even out of nostalgia when one woman steals "[a] porcelain vase that was the same shade of green as [their] mother's jade Buddha" (43, original emphasis). In addition, racial discrimination never disappears from their lives in the U.S. They are relegated to the background as they look after their employers' homes and are sometimes "dismissed … without any warning" or explanation (43-44). The lack of transparency is associated with matters such as the inability to carry out their work properly or even "understanding their English, which bore no resemblance to … [the] books" (43-44). The friendly though unfavorable integration into American society that the Japanese women experience turns into animosity. Racism inevitably exposes the limitations of their job security.

The women also learn to come to terms with their realities through their experiences of (sometimes unwanted) marital affairs because of men who treat them as an Othered commodity. However, these women consciously process the disrespect they receive and eventually turn to their own communities in order to belong. Gender degradation and class status contribute to these women being targeted. When they continue their work as domestic servants, their gender is degraded as they become mistresses to American husbands who echo their own husbands' disregard for their individuality and are unconcerned for their well-being (45-47). These American men present the Othering of Japanese women from an exotic perspective, reviving the colonizer-subject relationship (Monteiro 6). The affairs reflect the "'Hottentot Venus'" in which the women fulfill "men's fascination to explore them as 'the unknown'" (6-7). This leaves the women vulnerable but self-aware "that they do not even need to understand [English] … to know the men's intentions" (7). Additionally, Otsuka's characters assume "the form of commodities [through] … a physical or natural form, and a value form'" (Irigaray et al. 176-177). The natural form focuses on a woman's appearance while the value form is malleable because "*she can be exchanged*" (176-177, original emphasis); as a result, men assign women their "value" (176-177). Irigaray et al. further postulate that men's refusal to consider women as individuals means that women do not assume a self-sufficient identity distinct from the "natural form: that of exchange value" unless "[their] nature … only … [relates] to another commodity" or another woman (180). Men prevent women from assuming "any possible identity" because they adhere to a one-sided and biased interpretation of women as "commodities rather than as people" (187-188). These affairs reinforce the Japanese women's objectified status. However, the resulting emotional turmoil enables the Japanese wives to find a different sense of purpose within their own heritage towns (Otsuka 51-52). Women could go about their daily errands in these Japanese

heritage towns, but this sense of belonging disappears when they leave their homes and are subject to racial prejudice (51-52). Disrespect becomes the norm again. The mistreatment extends even to the children and wives of these American men who tell them "to move away … when [they] were standing too close" (52). At the same time, the women recognize they are trapped because of their husbands as a result of economic hardship and their conformity towards the familiar: "Who would weep for them? Who would turn the other cheek for them and then one day—because we were tired, because we were old, because we could forgive them? *Only a fool*" (53-54, original emphasis). They conform to a superficial life rather than end their marriages, which reiterates the lack of respect they receive as women and citizens.

When these women become mothers, their new identity saves them from their previous treatment as commodities and enables them to live independently within new Japanese-influenced communities. Nevertheless, motherhood presents another kind of Othering about reaching a common ground with their children. The narrative illustrates the difficulties involved in childbirth and recalls the traditional role of women to bear children (Monteiro 5). A myriad of experiences accompanies these women as they become mothers either alone or with the help of their husbands, friends, and doctors. Otsuka emphasizes the era's significance when the children's names equalize promising futures beyond their parents' livelihoods: "We gave birth to Nobuo and Shojiro and Ayako… We gave birth to babies that were American citizens and in whose names we could finally lease land" (58-59). An unlikely contributor to this new dream is the development of Japantowns across the U.S. which become sanctuaries that lessen American anti-Japanese discord. Japanese immigrants developed these towns or "'nihonmachis'" complete with the necessary establishments, "residences, businesses, and … community organizations such as temples, churches, and social associations" to mitigate racial prejudice against their

people and children (Adachi & Lee 41). Animosity did not belong in these eclectic neighborhoods (Monteiro 7). These communities are reminiscent of life in Japan: "We bought our groceries at Fujioka Grocery … We bought our dresses at Yada Ladies' Shop and our shoes at Asahi Shoe … We went to the public bathhouse every Saturday and gossiped with our neighbors and friends" (Otsuka 50-51). They find comfort in a community free from racial discrimination, concluding that the "four-block-long stretch of town … was more Japanese than the village [they'd] left behind in Japan" (52). Even so, this lifestyle is not without its familial difficulties in relation to the next generation.

The children establish close bonds with their mothers at a young age, enabling the women to feel less alone because their children were "worried when … [they] were tired [,] … when they were sad, [and] when [their] knees were bothering [them]" despite the fact that their mothers needed to work (Otsuka 62-64). Additionally, these children embrace their American lives. They play with their friends, and like their mothers, dream of "leaving home, one day for the … world beyond" (66). However, the mothers warn their children of racial prejudice, continuing a deep-rooted awareness of racial discrimination as well as of Japanese stereotypes against Americans and other Asians: "Don't be loud like the Americans. Stay away from the Chinese. *They don't like us*. Watch out for the Koreans. *They hate us*" (69, original emphasis). The children also internalize their ethnic differences which impact every facet of their lives: "They learned to find protectors. They learned to hide their anger … They learned that some people are born luckier than others and that things … do not always go as you plan" (77-78). Nevertheless, this lifestyle does not ruin their dreams of higher education, prestigious careers, and normalcy (79). Their futures are accessible at the expense of the harsh racial prejudice and gender discrimination their mothers endured.

In light of their early exposure to racial prejudice, the children, now older, model an indifferent attitude towards Japanese culture and localize their experience in accordance with Dominique Groulx and Louis Porcher's definition of the "Other" (32-33). This occurs through the distinctions they create with their mothers who are now "issei" or "first-generation" Japanese American citizens, a term clarified by Jane H. Yamashiro (765-766). Otsuka's narrator contributes to this severance through the use of "'they'" as a modified narrative structure, highlighting a "struggle between the permanence of old traditions and the creation of new traditions" (Monteiro 7). These children develop a tense cultural dynamic with their parents, as the narrator describes how they "spent their days … living in [English], whose twenty-six letters still eluded [their mothers]" (Otsuka 73). Likewise, they exercise racial disparity and resentment against their parents, ridiculing their "heavy accents" and wanting "different and better mothers who did not look so worn out" alongside "real fathers with briefcases" (75-76). The children's haunting animosity towards their parents also illustrates how Otsuka's narrative style "exposes the clash between public and private, the individual and the communal, freedom and conformity" (Maxey 1) because of the variation between first, second, and third-person pronouns alongside the diversity of life experiences within the Japanese American community (Monteiro 2). Consequently, the indifference these mothers experience from the next generation does not convince them to rob the children of their peaceful lives given "the darkness coming" (Otsuka 79) in which racial prejudice produces overt hatred towards the Japanese.

Discrimination reaches a critical point in the narrative's second half, presenting both nationality as a source of fear for Japanese American families and even an abrupt narrative switch to an American speaker who reflects upon the irrational attitudes towards these immigrants and the town's changes after the government's removal of the Japanese community

to internment camps following Japan's Pearl Harbour offensive. A.L. Kagedan states that the action of Othering proliferates when this "also relate[s] to … grievances toward a minority that are linked to security, the economy, or social and cultural life" (69). Likewise, the American government hides results from "investigations about potential disloyalty on the part of American Japanese" which concludes that Japanese immigrants are indeed "loyal to their adopted country" (73).[25] Lee Adachi and Jonathan H. X. Lee echo this discrepancy, stating that "internment was unfounded [because there] was not a single documented instance of espionage, sabotage, or other fifth column activity on the part of either American-born Japanese or resident Japanese noncitizens" (35). Still, the government chooses not to prevent emerging "anti-Japanese sentiments" among Americans (73). Otsuka adopts a fictional approach to the growing anti-Japanese sentiment in her novel. Her narrator recounts how a routinely edited "list … drawn up hastily, on the morning of the [Pearl Harbour] attack" seeks to identify and take away Japanese citizens at a moment's notice (83). As a result of this government decree, Japanese families begin to hide their presence: they "[removed their] names from … mailboxes … brought in [their] shoes from the front porch … [and] did not send [their] children to school" (81). They also erase physical indicators of their Japanese heritage, including "diaries, Buddhist family altars, wooden chopsticks, paper lanterns, … anything that might suggest [the] husbands had enemy ties" (86-87) to avoid being Othered as "the enemy" (89). These actions succeed prior "stories in the papers" that portrayed Japanese American citizens as allegiant to Japan given that, reportedly, "[their] children … bragged to their classmates that 'something big' was about to happen" and "[Japanese American] parents had celebrated the news of the attack for days" (85). On the contrary, the husbands' self-doubt concerning any "mistake they had made … which they

[25] Adachi and Lee clarify that the American government's suspicions and subsequent "[uprooting]" of Japanese families included children (102). Accommodations for Japanese children included the creation of "[makeshift] schools, sports activities, and even … the Scouts … to give the children some semblance of normality" (102).

were not aware [of]" confuses them regardless (91). Every family renounces their heritage at least in appearance.

However, the American government continues to enforce strict measures against the Japanese community. The narrator describes how their "contraband" is taken, their livelihoods are reduced to nothing such as ten "dollars for a new stove … bought for two hundred the year before" (Otsuka 101), and targeted lockdown procedures thwart potential Japanese military offences (91-92). In these bleak circumstances, the Japanese also experience betrayal and dishonesty from people who become "informers" to oust their former neighbors and friends for money (96-97). Safety is unguaranteed thanks to the newspaper's misinformation. Disagreements begin to spread concerning the conditions behind the "mass removals" of Japanese citizens as well as whether their homes and businesses would either "be confiscated" or left to the husband's wives and children in name only (93-94). However, these clarifications were futile because the women and children were taken away after the men (94-95). They find themselves incapable of escaping suspicion and lack answers even as they are taken away from their American lives. The narrative's subsequent chapter displays Otsuka's "first person plural" speaker (Maxey 1) within the myriad of intergenerational Japanese American families from across the U.S. in order to stress the gravity of their displacement.[26] Everyone is forced to leave their homes and personal belongings behind no matter their social status, livelihoods, and dreams (Otsuka 106-109). Otsuka's presentation of these Japanese American characters resembles a parade in which husbands and wives recount their pasts, followed by their "older daughters …

[26] The total number of Japanese Americans interned during World War II is estimated to be "approximately 120,000 individuals" (Adachi & Lee 33).

[and] … sons" and younger children, even orphans (109-115). Everyone is led to an undisclosed location later described as "a safe place" (115) to take part in a Japanese American exodus.[27]

The Buddha in the Attic's final chapter accentuates the aftermath of the Japanese community's uprooting and the lack of remembrance through a Caucasian narrator. This narrator accedes to the racial prejudice that the Japanese Americans endured from their former neighbours who distinctly addressed them as "the Japanese" (Otsuka 115) and denounced their ethnicity but also secretly reveals a hidden empathy towards them, "[wondering] if [the Japanese American departure] wasn't somehow all [their] fault" (122). Although their Japanese ethnicity partially contributed to their quality of life, the narrator also acknowledges them as outliers of a distant past and victimized by war, given that their former properties are now abandoned. Urban areas change because of the Americanized expropriation of Japanese businesses, notably Harada Grocery where on "its front window hangs a handwritten sign [no one] can remember having seen there before—*God be with you until we meet again*" (115, original emphasis). In spite of the community's early reluctance to accept the deportation rumours of Japanese immigrants to internment camps, Lena Ahlin argues that there is no genuine prioritization of the truth given that "the initial concern … turns into apprehensive questions [resurrecting] the common stereotypes of the Japanese as treacherous, sly and violent" because there is no acknowledgement of the dangers and acceptance of racial prejudice (95). This perspective evidently increases through the pronoun usage of "'we' … to signify a different collectivity" (Maxey 10). A modern life overtakes the past. This narrator describes a superficial interest for Japanese culture as a result of former Japanese American homes being ransacked, presenting an ironic scenario where new

[27] Adachi and Lee stipulate that Japanese immigrants and their children were sent to one of "10 'War Relocation Camps' primarily located along the West Coast" (33-34).

fashion trends such as "chopstick hair ornaments" (Otsuka 122) capitalize on a culture once regarded as inferior and later considered undesired.[28]

Still, culpability prevails amongst the American neighbours who are troubled by the Japanese who "[watch them] from the shadows, … [watch their] faces for … grief or remorse" while the mayor's assurances that the Japanese "left … without rancour" contributes to a mistrust concerning the official narrative about their fate (124-125). However, the community's redevelopments place the Japanese in a state of such "oblivion" that their existence is forgotten altogether (Ahlin 96) and the narrator resorts to their own memory to reach a logical conclusion. The novel's final passage highlights the replacement of former Japanese-owned businesses and the eventual reappearance of Japanese families across the U.S. (Otsuka 129) although the narrator accepts the inevitable: "[We] shall probably not meet [the Japanese Americans] again in this world" (129).[29] Ruth Maxey states that their reflection recalls Otsuka's epitaph inclusion of Ecclesiasticus 44-8-9 because a Christian religious text is an opportune point of convergence for this American era (9).[30] Consequently, the narrator's sense of regret signals the impossibility of intercultural dialogue because the Japanese American community will never return to its pre-war existence.

Finally, Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic* presents the fictional trajectory of Japanese picture brides, offering an immersive experience into the sexism and racial disparity

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[28] The Americans here partake in cultural appropriation, "[adopting] "the practices, customs, or aesthetics of one … ethnic group by members of another (typically dominant) community or society" ("cultural" *OED Online*).

[29] Otsuka briefly mentions the Japanese Americans leaving these internment camps, which occurred upon their closure across the West Coast in 1945, finally allowing "Japanese Americans … to return to the evacuated areas (Wu & Izumi). Frank H. Wu and Carol Izumi state that before 1945, the War Relocation Authority intended to move Japanese Americans away from the West Coast to dispel their communities. During World War II, the former properties of Japanese Americans "were simply taken over by other farmers and families" and allowed a select few "to return to their property [,] restore their farms [,] and reestablish their businesses" (Adachi & Lee 110).

[30] Otsuka cites Ecclesiasticus 44-8-9 in her novel's prelude: "There be of them, that have left a name behind, that their praises might be reported. And some there be, which have no memorial; who are perished, as though they had never been; and are become as though they had never been born; and their children after them."

that they and their American families encounter. I have shown that gender-based discrimination and women's commodification are substantive to their immigrant experience by applying Irigaray et al.'s feminist ideas to Otsuka's novel. Furthermore, their roles as mothers face great strain as they support their children's dreams amidst tense political interests. The Japanese American children revive the women's social standing as peripheral U.S. citizens. These women demonstrate their ability to process both aspects throughout their lives, protecting their children alongside their overall well-being in a country that emphasizes nationalism. The outright distinction made between Americans and immigrants ultimately leads to this dark and overlooked chapter in American history.

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Interrogating Western Representations of Gender /
Interroger les représentations occidentales du genre

Prismatic Intersectionalities: An Ecocritical Negotiation of Oppositional Utopias in *L'Amant*

Alia Aluma-Baigent

Abstract

In an exploration of the concept of utopia, different elements are evaluated to analyze this unique, though not necessarily identifiable, space. With this in mind, primary constructs found within utopias are hope and desire (Levitas 191). When considering the film *L'amant* (1992), both leads display characteristics of hope and desire, creating a utopia from the Bachelor's Room, which functions as an 'Otherly place'. However, the opposing identities of the Young Girl and the Chinese Man create conflicting utopias unique to their situational idealisms, battling one another within the same 'Other place' (192-193). At the same time, ecofeminism will be used to understand how the Young Girl and her Lover interact in their 'Otherly place'. According to Douglas Vakoch (2011), ecofeminism employs a worldview that respects organic processes, such as female sexuality, pleasure, orgasm, and agency. However, the field of ecofeminism also analyses the detrimental relationship formed between women and nature, especially concerning the narratives of conquering feminine land and ownership. With this in mind, an ecofeminist framework can be used to explain the imposition of patriarchal values onto the Young Girl, as well as the way she navigates the established 'Otherly space.'

Keywords

ecofeminism, prismatology, female sexuality, social constructs, power, race

Résumé

Dans une exploration du concept d'utopie, différents éléments sont évalués pour analyser cet espace unique, mais pas nécessairement identifiable. Dans cet esprit, les constructions primaires trouvées dans les utopies sont l'espoir et le désir (Levitas 191). En considérant le film *L'amant* (1992), les deux protagonistes incarnent des caractéristiques d'espoir et de désir, créant une utopie à partir de la Salle célibataire, qui fonctionne comme un « autre lieu ». Cependant, les identités opposées de la Jeune fille et de l'Homme chinois créent des utopies conflictuelles propres à leurs idéalismes situationnels, se battant au sein du même « autre endroit » (192-193). En même temps, l'écoféminisme sera utilisé pour comprendre comment la Jeune fille et son Amant interagissent dans leur « autre lieu ». Selon Douglas Vakoch (2011), l'écoféminisme utilise une vision du monde qui respecte les processus organiques, comme la sexualité féminine, le plaisir, l'orgasme et l'autonomie. Cependant, le domaine de l'écoféminisme analyse également la relation préjudiciable formée entre les femmes et la nature, en particulier en ce qui concerne les récits ayant une conquête de la terre et la propriété féminines. Dans cette optique, un cadre écoféministe peut être utilisé pour expliquer l'imposition de valeurs patriarcales sur la Jeune fille, ainsi que la façon dont elle navigue l'« autre espace» établi.

Mots-clés

écoféminsime, prismatologie, sexualité féminine, constructions sociales, pouvoir, race

A consequence of human sexuality is the enforcement of control, or perhaps more appropriately, the establishment of power. In this regard, we must understand desire and pleasure as capital, especially when considering the sexually exploitative narrative within the film *L'Amant* (1992). Present within Jean Jaqcues Annaud's film adaptation of Marguerite Duras' coming-of-age autobiographical *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* (1984) is a sexually determined arrangement that intersects opposing ideologies concerned with sex, race, and gender. Underlying these oppositional ideologies are elements of utopia, such as the hopes and desires of the main characters and their established 'Otherly place' within the Bachelor's Room. Moreover, the filmic reimagining of the story's Otherly place establishes a series of unique relationships between environment and colour, and importantly, between environment and women. As a result, the Otherly place functions both as a setting and as a character within the affair, reinforcing the intersecting ideologies within the film's narrative. Therefore, through a feminist analysis, the frameworks held by the main characters of *L'Amant* are exposed as conflicting utopias influenced by extrinsic constructs of power that have fundamentally shaped their identities, hosted by a shared Otherly place that will be characterized by ecocritcal evaluations of colour.[31]

The course of this article will grant emphasis to a visual analysis of the film adaptation of *L'Amant*, visiting both renditions of Duras' novel, *L'Amant* (1984) and *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* (1991), when appropriate. This choice may have been made under the ecocritical conditions of prismatology, which attach significant ideologies, beliefs, and fundamental constructs of earth's life and dormancy to the spectrum of colour. The interconnectivity of

[31] As defined by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, ecocriticism, also known as ecopoetics, environmental literacy criticism, and green cultural studies, encompasses a study of the whole physical environment, composed of human and non-human and their relationship to one another. This is the study of the relationship between the physical environment and human cultures within literature. (xix)

prismaticality is constantly reiterated by Jeffery J. Cohen's in his book *Prismatic Ecology* (2013). Understandably, colour can be referenced in literature and bear significant impact upon the story, but colour written in the text is imaged within the reader's mind and therefore struggles to gain characterization discretely. A film, however, grants an unobtrusive yet startling power to setting and design through the compositional elements within mise-en-scène which, according to Cohen, "stresses that color is formative, the substrate as well as conveyor of an intricate world" (xvi). Further, the colours of interest, as found in the Bachelor's Room within *L'Amant,* being white, beige, green, and blue, intersect with compounds of utopia, with specific focus on modern feminist utopias and narrative. At the same time, the intertextual and oppositional utopias manifesting within the story's Bachelor's Room display constant negotiations of power. For instance, set in the late 1920s, *L'Amant* tells the true story of fifteen-year-old Duras and her sexual affair with an affluent Chinese man in Saigon, Vietnam. During this time, Saigon (presently Ho Cho Minh), was governed under French rule, introducing French settlers and class divides influenced by Whiteness.

Interacting with oppositions of power and socially constructed identities, the Young Girl uses her Whiteness and sexuality to sustain a financially beneficial relationship with the Chinese Man, temporarily relieving her family from poverty. This is accomplished through abusing Otherness, as witnessed with attempts by the Young Girl to belittle the Chinese Man due to race during dialogue and by ignoring him when they are in public together. At the same time, the Chinese Man attempts to break the Young Girl's confidence by using patriarchal constructs of power against her, such as virginity and premarital sex as deterants from marriageability. This is evident during a dinner scene when the Young Girl emphasizes the intolerable sexual

relationship between her and a ‘Chinaman’ and her concern around unvirginal marriage, to which her Lover replies,

> It’s no longer possible after… after that dishonor. For instance, if I wanted to marry you, I would not be allowed. We can’t tolerate the idea of that. I’m Chinese, I’m sorry. Now that you’ve done that with me, marriage between us would be impossible. (Annaud 50:25)

Slightly hurt by his response, the Young Girl defends herself by reiterating, “Well, it’s for the best then! Chinese – I don’t like the Chinese very much” (Annaud 51:43). Feasibly, these negotiations occur under the premise of female agency, as it intersects with other instances of power such as wealth and race. With this in mind, the film’s adaptation also makes nodes towards the intersection of sex work and female liberation, alternately paraphrasing the story to be a depiction of an attempted sexual utopia.

Modern negotiations of utopia have introduced, among many things, a hard-pressed removal of oppression upon female sexual agency. Perhaps, in understanding sex within a utopia, it should be taken into consideration that the first rendition of *Utopia* by Thomas More in 1516 left little to no variation for sex in favour of female pleasure (Sargent & Sargisson 301). Therefore, More’s Utopia and those that would follow for centuries contained heterosexual, patriarchal, and hierarchical sexual limitations. In most cases, women were objectified for their uterus’ capacity and sex in general was considered an indulgence unfit for a properly functioning society.

Since the concept of utopia was first proposed as a model for a prosperous society, it neglected pleasure and ensured the utmost attention to practicality. Anything that deviated the

focus of the manageable and well-kept society required enforced control. Lyman Sargent and Lucy Sargisson acknowledge this when they state,

> The need to control is apparent in *Utopia*—More was well aware that sexual attraction was more powerful than the laws and institutions of even a good society and found it necessary even in the land of *Utopia* to include the severe punishments of slavery and death for sexual relations outside marriage. (301)

With this in mind, utopia can be understood as an equation, totalling hopes and needs to construct a biosocial place that satisfies desires and upholds order for functionality (Stockton 170). However, a universal utopia is seemingly impossible due to the conditions of positionality that reveal variances among the distresses of individual citizens. Since this is the case, a collection of utopias has been drafted to satisfy different facets of life, such as modern feminist and sexual utopias. According to Ruth Levitas, within the numerous utopias suggested exist conflicts that may directly oppress the concepts within opposing utopias, meaning that a utopia can simultaneously be a dystopia (192). This occurs when a utopia oppresses a certain individual or act, such as More's *Utopia* that assumes sex is only for reproduction and that women are only as useful as their uterus is capable, emphasizing the power complex of the utopia's narrator. Therefore, one citizen's utopia may be another's dystopia.

Intertextual and oppositional utopias exist within *L'Amant* as well. First, the text is creating an inconsequential desire economy within the Young Girl's utopian consciousness, where her sexuality becomes capital in her advantage. To the Young Girl, her ability to receive sexual pleasure and companionship, without the conflicting impositions of dominating ideologies, establishes her equation of desire and hope. Having said that, the Bachelor's Room functions as her Otherly place where such desires and hopes are satisfied. This Otherly place can

also be understood as a pleasure-place, "the realm of art, where the logic of reason and the logic of desire meet and mould world and form into endlessly changeable narratives of possibility" (Wagner-Lawlor 60). It is within this place that the imagined can exist, though it transpires once it exits the established place. In this way, the pleasure-place or Otherly place is a definition of no-place, at the mercy of fiction and otherwise unable to assimilate within the society from which it is removed. Since this is the case, "This 'no-place' of fiction and fantasy is the most necessary and sought-after real estate on the map, a utopian space where what is possible can be staged again and again" (60).

However, the Young Girl's utopia is dependent on the exploitation of her Chinese Lover, as representative of the Western world's advances throughout the Orient, according to Jonathan Culler (168). Consequently, in turn, the Chinese Man has created an oppositional utopia that assumes power and dominance over his partner. Zoë Brigley Thompson underlines that within the Chinese Man's utopia are instances of aggressive dominance, establishment of financial dependency, and symbolic raping of the concept of Whiteness (3). Reasonably, the Chinese Man wants to dismantle his internalized racism complex by destroying the power complexes available to the Young Girl, such as virginity and Whiteness, while controlling her access to his wealth (4). While his utopia oppresses the Young Girl, it likely liberates his own constraints. At the same time, however, it is evident that the Chinese Man wants to be loved by the Young Girl without the negations of society constantly deterring their romance, such as religion, race, class, and age. Perhaps the Chinese Man's utopia benefits from authority over women. This includes sexual monetization as a method of control, and being the idealized patriarchal presence. Feasibly, this patriachial power is similar to the power of Whiteness from which the Young Girl benefits.

It was not until the emergence of feminist utopian discourse, or in some debates, the rise of pleasure economies that relieved, to an extent, the patriarchal and religiously influenced bounds within utopian discourse, including the patriarchal governance of sex (Sargent & Sargisson 301). Sargent and Sargisson outline the evolving discourse concerned with sexual uptopia, suggesting that when

> Looked at historically, the treatment of sexual relations in utopia has changed very dramatically, from an aspect of a hierarchical, patriarchal society in which sexual relations reproduced the power structure (in dystopias, they still do) to a gender-equal assertion of the right to act freely that challenged (and still challenges) the power structure. Also, within free and equal sexual relations, anything goes that all participants freely choose, although it is generally agreed that such relationships should be caring. Such changes would constitute a sexual revolution, but revolutions, both sexual and nonsexual, have a tendency to end up benefiting only some people. (316)

Sargent and Sargisson are therefore drawing attention to the ways that even in a utopia, a primary benefactor subjugates an oppressed receiver. With this in mind, due to the negotiations of place and body in sexual utopias, or uptopias in general, female bodies and land are intertwined, making them organically bound to the devices of patriarchal discourse (Mies et al. 14). A primary example of patriarchal control over the female body, mentioned in regard to *L'Amant* previously, is the conception of virginity, which is a direct consequence of the hymen. Jaques Derrida described the hymen as a "protective screen, the jewel box of virginity, the vaginal partition, the fine, invisible veil which stands *between* the inside and the outside of a woman, and consequently between desire and fulfillment" (qtd. in McAlister 45, original

emphasis). However, his rendition of the female body upholds the symbolic detriment of female virginity while also objectifying and rewarding her identity of *not* doing (45).

Among the many power negotiations in the film *L'Amant* is the reiteration of worth as attached to virginal value within the Young Girl. The two most prominent reinforcements of virginity occur when the Chinese Man assures the Young Girl that sex before marriage makes a woman unmarriable, even to the most undesirable of men. He assures her that she would never find someone who wants to love a 'deflowered' woman, especially one whose virginity was taken by a Chinese man. The next most important enforcement of virginity is when the Young Girl's eldest brother expresses his disgust in his younger sister's 'whore' behaviour, physically assaulting her and reducing her worth to symbolic nothingness. Tenably, the concept of virginity, as a consequence of the hymen, is a constant and unnecessary consistency upheld within the patriarchy. Nonetheless, as Jodi McAlister notes, it is completely idiosyncratic considering some women do not possess hymens at all (46). Moreover, the problematic debate around the conditions of the hymen are not particularly relevant to whether or not it exists, but moreso an attempt for the men dictating its purpose to impose their own significance into the constructs of womanhood.

Similar impositions exist when evaluating the relationship between men and nature in the fields of ecocriticism. The anthropogenic positionality of patriarchy has determined land to be a conquerable resource, made to satisfy the wants of mankind. Where the flag is punctured into land to signify ownership and entitlement, it is the same place that the phallus' self-imposed importance punctures the hymen. Since this is the case, the narration of the female body on screen or within literature must possess, to some degree, the influence of a female narrator who is inherently less concerned with conquering, and more concerned with unobjectified and non-

fatalistic narratives of herself. However, the inclusion of female agency within the production of *L'Amant* becomes complicated when considering the intrusion of the male gaze and the expulsion of the text's original author from the set.

While originally part of the advisory council for the film adaptation of *L'Amant*, a quarrel between director Jean Jacques Annaud and author Marguerite Duras led to her indefinite removal from the film set. This expulsion prompted a re-writing, or better yet, a regenerated instalment of her initial novel *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord*, in which she tells her story how she wants it to be narrated. It has been recorded that Duras detested Annaud's adaptation of *L'Amant* (Ince 114). Imaginably, the cause of this distaste was the result of Duras' entanglement with a deep toned, controllable Chinese lover, as shown on screen. Her rewriting attributes a newfound attention to the

> elements in the physical appearance of the lover: a less marked contrast in skin colour between the two lovers reduces the racial difference between them and contributes to a lessening of the supremacy of female subject over feminized male object found in *L'amant*. It also corroborates the undoing of the lover's exoticization as an object of desire. (Ince 120)

Regardless of the rewrite, which was successful in its own regard, just as her first novel, the intersecting tensions of race, power, and sex are focal points within the story. Therefore, mastering what Kate Ince describes as "Said-inspired 'orientalist' narration" to which she notes that both texts, as well as the film, contain "... (1) the eroticization of the exotic, (2) the feminization of the Other, and (3) the representation of the Orient as an ontological essence" (121). Arguably, the conditions of the Other under the dictation of Whiteness introduce an

intersection into prismatology, which explains the ecocritical significance of colour as it pertains to everything in existence.

White ecology posseses a unique elasticity within the realm of ecocriticism due to the fact that it extends to both the narration of Western, Christian, and White metaphysics, and towards the encompassing spectrum of all ecologies (Herzogenrath 1). The latter is the mimesis of the colour white, whose properties include the excretion of every colour within the spectrum. With this in mind, the colour white represents a complex space that moves intersectional thoughts through it, though they refract at their own pace without the intervention of the colour white, which instead acts like a tunnel or transit station for other ecologies (2). Understanding the colour white in this way leads to the criticism that Whiteness, as the consequence of colonial domination, is also a station of sorts that moves goods, cultures, and traditions from their points of origin and into discontextualized markets. Additionally, white is achromatic, meaning that it does not have a hue. With this in mind, Whiteness represents the determining structure within racial power, but is considered by Neil Altman to be an unracialized body (60). Therefore, when understanding Whiteness, it shall be shaped into a prismatic lens that traffics Otherness and its qualities.

Take, for example, the narration of *L'Amant,* which tells the story through the lens of a White French woman who is aware of the power dichotomies between herself and her Chinese lover, and between them and their Vietnamese environment. Noticeably, when the Young Girl ignores the Chinese Man's initial introduction, until he assures her of the potential power she holds when he says, "… it's so surprising, a young White girl on a Native bus… and you're pretty, you could do anything you like" (Annaud 16:00). Not to mention, the affordances of Whiteness are frequented within the film both through the voice-over narration of the film, and

through the film's dialogue, enforcing the visceral condition of Whiteness. Elemently, as states Bernd Herzogenrath, within the realm of Whiteness are direct routes between religious power, patriarchal enforcement of values, governance over body and state, as well as Western metaphysical inclinations (1).

Interestingly, the conditions of Whiteness are directly challenged by an opaque or slightly darker version of the colour white, as found in its close neighbour beige. As Will Stockton introduces it, "Beige is the average color. If all the light in the universe, from all its known galaxy systems, were mixed together, what results would look like a latte" (170). Commonly known, however, is the result of converging galactic matter being a catastrophic explosion, sending out debris from former systems of the universe. Since this is the case, Stockton has decided to plague beige with the responsibilities of "apocalyptic eruptions, encounters, and condensations by focusing on the creation of products coded as waste; it studies the end of the world - but also, more hopefully, the creation of new worlds …" (170).

Within these new beige worlds are shades of softer, opaque versions of other colours like red and purple, resulting in shades of pink and lavender. With this in mind, beige's ability to create new worlds and realities extends the colour into debates around sexuality, which is a natural phenomenon in the world, constantly reworked and exposed in different ways. Stockton borrows words from the ecocritics Cationa Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, who associate beige with sexual politics as it converges with biosocial constitutions within the natural world. Essentially, as explained further by Stockton, "sexual relations organize and influence both the material world of nature and our perceptions, experiences, and constructions of the world" (171). Therefore, beige is anthropogenic, arranging the universe around the consequences and practises of human sexuality. Consider briefly that the Young Girl's dress in the film is

beige, while the Chinese Man's suit is white. Consequently, the Young Girl exhibits fidelity towards pleasure and obsession, wanting to be lusted after with world-centring intensity. Presumably, this need for sexual attention could also be the result of her deteriorating family structure, her lack of love in other areas of her life, and her youthful angst. However, such grievances are better categorized by the colour blue (Joy 213-226). Regardless, she also displays accounts of female and sexual agency, determining the grounds of her sexual arrangement and enjoying it.

The Chinese Man, on the other hand, wears white to imply associations with the affordances usually reserved for Whiteness, such as his wealth, etiquette, and patriarchal power. Within his false aura of Whiteness, as the condition of Whiteness is a false one regardless of who wears it, is a grey line between sexual favourability and the impeding exoticization of his Otherness. This Otherness is examined within the controlled, built environment of the Bachelor's Room, which lacks shades of white or beige beyond the materials of the Young Girl, her Lover, and their sheets.

Importantly, within beige is the creation of environments animated by sexuality, such as the Bachelor's Room in *L'Amant*. The Bachelor's Room functions as a type of fantasy space, or Otherly place, characterized by the abject sexual practises that occur within its confines. Relating directly to sexual utopias, this room is not necessarily considered a "good sexual place," as in a utopia characterized by sexual liberation or quality, but more appropriately, '*the* sexual place,' as though it is simply a room in the utopian city that forgives the abject for being (Stockton 171). Outside this room, the abject remains.

The sexual place temporarily renegotiates limiting social consructs, to which Stockton notes that this place "... tropes sexual desires for partners across barriers of class and race

especially, facilitating an imaginative project of social remodelling in which these barriers are lowered and transgressed, though not necessarily dismantled entirely" (174). Withal, since beige is a colour representing the convergence of everything left over or wasted, it is also inclusive of societies abjections, such as sex work or other taboo relationships (171). In *L'Amant*, the affair that occurs between the Chinese Man and the Young Girl take on different abject forms, such as paedophilia (as it is recognized today in the Western world), interracial sex, and sex work.

Sex work is blatantly noted in the novel and more subtly within the film, which is instead trying to emphasize the Young Girl's circumstance as a love story, rather than a sexual arrangement. In either case, perhaps inspiring or influencing the Young Girl and her close boarding school friend Helene Lagonelle, is Alice, a dormitory supervisor at the boarding school who works within the sex industry as a companion to non-White men (116). On top of that, it is within the all-girls boarding school that the Young Girl voices her desires for sexual liberation. Following this reveal, there are a series of events in the novel and the film that emphasize the financial arrangement between the Chinese Man and the Young Girl, including the payment of her brothers' return to France (Duras 147; Ince 117). Prominently, the novel displays the feminine voice as a powerful force in generating income within a patriarchal society, monetizing the sexual objectification of her own body. The normalization of female sexual objectification is a historical circumstance of anti-feminst rhetoric which has infected Western founding thought in most cases. Arguably, Duras' novel presents a dissonant focus on sex work as taboo, and instead shifts the understanding of the sex industry to be more in tune with female agency.

The film, however, portrays the Young Girl to be her own victim, as though her sexually liberated choices and manipulation of patriarchy are inevitably intended to return heartbreak and disappointment, as the colour blue would also suggest (Joy 213-226). Briefly, blue, beyond a

deep, melancholic sadness, arguably has a distinct connection to weather. With that in mind, weather is inherently linked to water, which is a force that can be destructive in presence, such as during a typhoon, or in absence, such as drought. Debatably, water is within the realm of womanhood, as a healing property and source of life, just as the womb (218-222). *L'Amant* places the Young Girl into situations with blue, such as the Bachelor's Room which has blue walls, and also stages her in scenes with water. The blue walls of the bedroom hear the Young Girl voice her depression, inherited from her mother, while also hosting a pair of broken hearts when the affair ends. That said, the Young Girl's interactions with water occur when she arrives by boat, during her meet cute with her Lover, and also her focus on watering the wilting plants within the Bachelor's Room. Interestingly, the watering of the plants is mimicked in the bathing scene following the first sexual encounter between the Chinese Man and the Young Girl in the Bachelor's Room. In this instance, blue and green collide. For example, instead of the Young Girl watering the plants, the Chinese Man 'waters' her while she stands in a shallow basin, similar to the shallow pots that hold the plants. In her pose, her arms and legs form a stand similar to that of the small planted trees to which she tends. In this case, the Young Girl is directly compared to nature, greening her feminization and showing that she has been planted or will grow as a consequence of her sexual collision with a man. With this analysis, it may be inferred that the Young Girl takes accountability for herself as time moves forward, eventually bathing herself, even in the presence of her Lover, just as she takes accountability for the plants, watering them under her own accord. Arguably, taking care of herself is a more sustainable practise than relying on her Lover, therefore representing a dominating concept within the colour green.

Green has come to represent a collection of things, also positing itself as an intersectional colour. For instance, the colour green works to demonstrate sustainability and, in some regards, development (Nardizzi 148). This rendering is the consequence of green studies as it relates to the health of ecosystems as influenced by political representation, marketing, and public policy or advocacy. When applying sustainability to *L'Amant*, we see greenery in the tropical landscape of Vietnam, but not often in association with the Young Girl and the Chinese Man, with the exception of the two plants in the bedroom, which are only cared for by the Young Girl. The lack of green around the couple is arguably representative of the unsustainable affair. The disregard for green may also suggest that the arrangement lacks naturalness or natural harmonization, unable to grow or blossom under the predetermined conditions of society that warrants their relationship impossible. Finally, there is an intellectual and emotional development of the Young Girl, as narrated when her character says,

> Very early in my life it was too late ... I grew old at eighteen. I don't know if it's the same for everyone, I've never asked. But I believe I've heard of the way time can suddenly accelerate on people when they're going through even the most youthful and highly esteemed stages of life. (Duras 1)

Interestingly, the Young Girl seems to mature rapidly in both the novel and the film. This may be due to the length and depth of the works, the novel being composed of fewer than 150 pages and the film containing limited settings, both progressing with drastic emotional changes. Peculiarly, it is as though time both stands still and accelerates during the film, and this progress is measured by how the Young Girl styles her hair privately, then publicly, as well as how she walks. For instance, the Young Girl first appears on screen wearing her hair in two youthful French braids, which are eventually unravelled after her sexual interactions with her Lover. At first, her

unbraided hair was only present in the company of her Lover in the Bachelor's Room and then when they would go out for dinner together. In time, her free flowing, yet messy, hair and confident stride would be present around her family, which led them to the realization that she was now sexually active.

In this case, *L'Amant* is demonstrating the process of aging, while more precisely, the process of coming-of-age, thus leading into another staple of ecofeminism: the respect of natural/organic processes. For example, the Young Girl's sexual discovery reveals the organic luxury of orgasm. At the same time, the film's staging and cinematography show the natural movements of intercourse and the development of the Young Girl's body is exposed. Ergo, the relationship between sex, maturity, and time are presented in a poetic manner as Duras narrates the film's events.

All things considered, this is likely due to the fact that the novel is a powerful remembering written by a woman about herself, therein emphasizing female agency. While the adaptation by Annaud is inherently tainted by the male gaze and the ignorant confining limitations of patriarchy, the Young Girl's nude body is still a focal point, even under the influence of her own agency. According to Karen Hollinger, known to literature as feminist critique is the evaluation of patriarchal manipulation of viewership in literature and film, which is necessary when accounting for films such as *L'Amant* (7). Within this critique is Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze, which is the "totalizing conception of the workings of the Hollywood system as dominated by male structures of seeing" which navigates *L'Amant*'s cinematographic focus on the underage, nude body of the Young Girl (11). Her constant exposure leaves the "female image, as well as the female spectator, in a position of silence, masochism, and complete absorption within male fantasy" (11). That being so, feminist critique

demands that female desire and fantasy, as determined by women, be present on screen and within literature.

Feminist critique also concerns feminist utopias and narrative strategies. For example, Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor suggests that romantic narrative strategies predominantly contain utopian conclusions, resulting in the idealized "happily every after" followed by a content imaged life within "the pleasurable illusion of stasis" (1). However, when renegotiated under the supervision of feminist speculation, the generic romantic narrative is either challenged and expunged, or indulged and amplified, leading to the discussion around what qualities are carried over into a feminist utopia as constructed within feminist narrative.

Consider *L'Amant,* which is not a utopian narrative per se, but instead a feminist narrative that carries brief instances of utopia and far more attempts towards feminist sexual utopia. Since *L'Amant* is an autobiographical work, the hopes and desires present are determined by the dystopian or unfavourable circumstances of reality through a collection of remembered events. Then, in being just that, a remembering, it is at the mercy of utopian consciousness, which disturbs authenticity with the temptation of reimagining things better than they are (Wagner-Lawlor 2). In the case of *L'Amant,* Duras is rewriting the circumstances of an affair with a wealthy, older Chinese man that she had in her youth as French girl living in Vietnam. According to Katherine Nelson and Robyn Fivush, in the case of autobiographical memory, Duras is linking "self-impinging emotions, goals, and personal meanings … characteristics of authobiographical memories" (487). Since this is the case, Duras may have been shaping her memories into the more bearable version of the real events. With this in mind, her autobiographic memory may be understood as a type of declarative memory, in which she is choosing to inform herself and her readers that her story occurred as documented in her novel.

Certainly, this must be true in some form, considering the re-remembered version of events within the rewrite, *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* (1991), which creates a story that is attuned to the vision Duras has for herself, rather than the one depicted by Annaud. Viably, this demonstrates an intrusion of utopian consciousness which grants the ability to rewrite memory.

Arguably, utopian consciousness is present within all rendentions of *L'Amant,* taking form within the film as the Bachelor's Room. Functioning as an Otherly place, or pleasure-place, the blue walls and beige sheets represent a deep, melancholic sadness and sexual ambiguity. Pointing towards the conditions of ecology, the use of prismatology has allowed characterization of the mise-en-scène within the Bachelor's Room using colours to understand the different ideologies and positionalities intersecting the affair between the Young Girl and her Chinese Lover in *L'Amant.* Moreover, within this room are colliding ideologies and enforcement of power, such as classism and racism. Interestingly, this intersection is mediated via the capital exchange of sex and desire. For this reason, the conditions of this relationship have been analyzed with multiple feminist frameworks, such as feminist critique as it applies to film, and ecofeminism. All things considered, the relationship between colour, as it pertains to setting and race, intersect constantly within the Bachelor's Room. As a result, the Young Girl and her Lover represent different ideologies, which can arguably be understood as self-informed, conflicting utopias that rely on the oppression of the Other. Since this is the case, the affair in *L'Amant* is exposing extrinsic constructs of power that cannot be deferred in the identity formating of the Young Girl and the Chinese Man, even within utopian conciousness.

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Reshaping Womanhood: Lesbian Realities in *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall

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Abstract

The Well of Loneliness (1928) by Radclyffe Hall changed British perceptions of gender identity and performance in its plea for the respect of lesbian identities. While previous studies have centered on the protagonist's nonconformity and lesbianism, this paper will also examine how the novel's controversy and the author's personal ties to the subject ultimately brought more fame to what is now considered the original lesbian book. This essay will not only analyse evolving historic views on homosexuality and cross-dressing, but also assess how homophobia shaped the author's work. By considering this *Bildungsroman*'s fluctuating concepts of gender identity and gender roles, its contributions to the limited corpus of 20th century lesbian literature, and its protagonist's development and relationships, this essay will highlight the significance of Hall's work both for her era and for contemporary queer studies.

Keywords

Radclyffe Hall, queer theory, *The Well of Loneliness*, lesbianism, lesbian literature, *Bildungsroman*

Résumé

The Well of Loneliness (1928) de Radclyffe Hall a changé les perceptions britanniques de l'identité de genre et de la performance du genre dans son appel pour le respect des identités lesbiennes. Alors que les études précédentes se sont concentrées sur la non-conformité et le lesbianisme du protagoniste, cet article examinera également comment la controverse du roman et les liens personnels de l'auteur avec le sujet ont finalement apporté plus de renommée à ce qui est maintenant considéré comme le livre lesbien original. Cet essai analysera non seulement l'évolution des points de vue historiques sur l'homosexualité et le travestissement, mais évaluera aussi comment l'homophobie a façonné le travail de l'auteur. En considérant les concepts d'identité de genre et les rôles féminins et masculins de ce *Bildungsroman*, ses contributions au corpus limité de la littérature lesbienne du XXe siècle et le développement et les relations de son protagoniste, cet essai mettra en évidence l'importance du travail de Hall à la fois pour les droits de la communauté LGBTQ de son époque et pour les études queer contemporaines.

Mots-clés

Radclyffe Hall, théorie queer, *The Well of Loneliness*, lesbianisme, littérature lesbienne, *Bildungsroman*

After the First World War, Europeans and North Americans alike rejoiced in the economic growth and euphoria of the Roaring Twenties, a golden age that gave birth to the rebellious flappers and boomed with jazz, radio, new art styles, and cinema. By 1928, British women over 21 had the right to vote, fashion reflected females' newfound zest for life, and conceptions of family started to change. In fact, these English women challenged the very definition of femininity in their actions, beliefs, and writings. By the time the Second World War erupted, women's roles in both the home and the community had evolved to include factory work, nursing on the war front, engineering, and participation in the Armed Forces ("The Women of the Second World War"). The turbulence of the early 20th century not only allowed women to actively contribute to the war efforts but also to revitalize their position in the British social order, therein changing their responsibilities and their identities.

Famous British author and lesbian Marguerite Radclyffe-Hall (1880-1943), better known as Radclyffe Hall, gained fame and later notoriety for her 1928 novel *The Well of Loneliness* (hereafter *The Well*), which explores notions of gender identity and sexual orientation by following Stephen Gordon, a cross-dressing English aristocrat who develops a same-sex relationship with an older married woman, leading to her exile from her family estate and a decade-long search for love and acceptance. Although the novel was temporarily banned for encouraging lesbian practices, Hall's *Buildungsroman* brought visibility to homosexual women's plight in conservative British society and ultimately contributed to the limited corpus of 20th century lesbian literature.

This paper will examine fluctuating concepts of gender identity and gender roles in early 1900s Britain, highlighting Stephen's evident nonconformity through her appearance, her behaviour, her thoughts, and her sexual orientation. While 21st century queer theory might

consider this unusual protagonist in different terms, this paper will first focus on young Stephen navigating an identity crisis, due in large part to the mixed reactions this *chica rara* provokes in those around her.[32] Then, it will assess how both her interest in women and her phallophobia are realized by way of her relationships, from her childhood to her adult years. Finally, this paper will consider *The Well*'s controversial effect on British society from a contemporary queer studies perspective.

First and foremost, Stephen's narrative can be read as a lesbian or a transgender novel, or perhaps a mixture of both. The protagonist's "inability to identify as a woman or pass as a man" leaves her in distress (Taylor 295), unable to live an authentic life without sacrificing her home, certain friendships, and overall the respect someone of her socioeconomic status would have enjoyed if not for her *inversion*.[33] Melanie A. Taylor proposes that "the sexual desire of the character … has been read as lesbian" (287) while her masculinity simply represents "a physical expression of that sexuality," making Stephen an example of the Mannish Lesbian trope (288). In this case, Stephen's rejection of femininity is "straightforward identification with the dominant beliefs of a society that favours the male" (290). For Stephen to love women freely in her conservative European setting, she would have to be a man—then, she could provide the affection and security her lovers deserve without fear of persecution. It can therefore be argued that her masculine identity is a rightful rebuttal of the strict feminine codes of conduct that would keep Stephen from experiencing lesbian relationships rather than an example of a transgender

[32] Carmen Martí Gaite's *chica rara* [weird girl] is an unconventional woman who defies traditional societal order. This concept will be explored in detail further in the essay.

[33] Hall frequently uses the now derogatory term "invert" to designate the homosexual characters in *The Well*. According to 1920s Europe, "The term 'invert' reflects the belief that same-sex desire is in fact an inversion of the sexual instincts, since the *natural* direction of sexual attraction within a heterosexual paradigm can only ever be towards a person of the 'opposite sex'" (Taylor 288, original emphasis). Melanie A. Taylor explains that gender roles, attributes, and behaviours were considered inherent to biological sex, meaning that a woman attracted to women would be conceptualized and characterized as male (288). Therein lies the convergence of transgender and lesbian identities in early 1900s literature, a time during which even the medical field associated cross-dressing and sexual inversion (Newton 558).

British aristocrat.[34] This mannish lesbian, a term defined by Esther Newton as "a figure who is defined as lesbian because her behavior or dress (and usually both) manifest elements designated as exclusively masculine" (560), is therein a controversial character—and Stephen Gordon is the prime example. Right from birth, Stephen does not conform to her parents' or her society's expectations. Her father was so sure his wife would bear him a son that he picked out Stephen's name before the birth, then insisted on using it for his daughter, Stephen Mary Olivia Gertrude Gordon (Hall 6); the added female names serve only to mollify the priest who baptized the "narrow-hipped and wide shouldered" baby (13) and ensure that Stephen not stray from traditional female roles. Newton underlines that "Though her father gives her his looks, his intelligence, his money, and a boy's name, tragically, she cannot be his true heir" because she is female (569). In spite of Stephen's efforts to escape the limits of womanhood, her biology betrays her again and again.

The novel's protagonist demonstrates a dislike for pretty dresses and long hair, developing instead a fondness for elaborate tailored suits and fencing outfits. As a child, Stephen often threatens to cut off her hair and complains about her clothes ("'I hate this white dress and I'm going to burn it—it makes me feel idiotic'" [Hall 27]). She even dresses up as and pretends to be a boy, admitting that she feels exactly like one at the tender age of seven (11); nevertheless, she must always change back into the "soft dresses and sashes, and ribbons, and small coral beads, and openwork stockings" she so despises (12). Her dissatisfaction with her appearance, her face, and her hair inundates her childhood and continues as she ages, though less as she adopts a more masculine style. The men's jackets, trousers, and monocles worn by 1920s women including Radclyffe Hall reflect a traditionally nonconformist lesbian aesthetic. Laura Doan,

[34] For a detailed transgender reading of Stephen's narrative, see "'The Masculine Soul Heaving in the Female Bosom': Theories of Inversion and *The Well of Loneliness*" by Melanie A. Taylor.

however, critically explores women's fashions in the early 20th century and proves that before *The Well* stood trial for its controversial treatment of lesbian identities, Hall's style was more in line with modernity than homosexuality ("Passing Fashions" 122). In fact, the fashionable androgynous look of the modern 1920s woman was neither outlawed nor associated with homosexual desire as a general rule. Alison Oram and Annmarie Turnbull explain that women who passed as men "exploited all possible symbols of masculinity; posture and mannerisms, voice, aggression and domestic violence, male pastimes like drinking and, of course, male attire" without necessarily experiencing same-sex attraction ("Cross-Dressing Women" 12). These scholars clarify that economic necessity and the search for personal freedom often encouraged women to don men's clothing, adding that "Women also cross-dressed to gain physical freedom, particularly the freedom to travel and seek adventure, to go to sea or to war" ("Cross-Dressing Women" 12). Why, then, is masculine clothing so directly linked to lesbianism?

While Radclyffe Hall appeared in newspaper photographs with "short hair, bow tie, cigarette protruding from her mouth … and hand tucked nonchalantly into a jacket pocket" ("Passing Fashions" 99), her melancholic protagonist looks "wrong in the clothes she [is] wearing, as though she and they [have] no right to each other" (Hall 18) and eventually adopts her author's masculine fashion. Although 19th century sexologists often posited a connexion between cross-dressing and lesbians, *The Well*'s well-publicized trial was the first major indicator of homosexual desire based on clothing choices; Doan notes that after "the trial and the numerous photographs of Hall that circulated in the context of the trial, sexual inversion became endowed with a human face" ("Passing Fashions" 122).[35] Both Hall and her partner, Una

[35] Doan highlights the theories of sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing who, in 1886, wrote that cross-dressing, short hair, masculine features, and traditionally male activities connected to lesbianism ("Passing Fashions" 100). The following year, Havelock Ellis rejected some of his predecessor's ideas but nonetheless called "traits of masculine simplicity" and "taste for smoking cigarettes" indicators of same-sex attraction in women (101).

Troubridge, encouraged the correlation between lesbianism and masculine style and habits that "would become the distinctive marks of a lesbian sub-culture" (122). Not all lesbians and cross-dressers appreciated this newfound visibility, however. Some were ousted by this revelation (122) and the secret "visual code by which middle- and upper-class lesbians … could recognize each other" became common knowledge (117). In Hall's novel, Stephen's clothing showcases her marginalization and her alienation from her family, her society, and her own body—especially when she meets the first of her real lovers, Angela Crossby. From birth, Stephen is dissatisfied with her sort in life, often giving into outburst of anger that scare her mother. After meeting Angela, she becomes "much more anxious about her appearance" (Hall 112) and decides to revamp her style, ordering new tailor-made suits and fixing her hair. Her new masculine clothes make her feel more authentic and comfortable with her looks, and once her writing career helps elevate her status, she is considered odd, but only as a reclusive artistic type with an unusual style. Marjorie Garber reminds the reader that "Cross-dressing is about gender confusion. … Cross-dressing is about the power of women. Cross-dressing is about the emergence of gay identity. Cross-dressing is about the anxiety of economic or cultural dislocation, the anticipation or recognition of 'otherness' as loss" (qtd. in "Passing Fashions" 97). Stephen's growing confidence in her identity coincides with her exile from her home estate—a difficult cross for Stephen to bear but a necessary one once her mother discovers her same-sex attraction for a neighbouring aristocrat—and increases as she travels Europe and finds new lovers.

In fact, from her passion for sports, like hunting and fencing, to the spaces she occupies once free from her mother, Stephen fits perfectly into the post-trial conception of lesbian identity. Heather Love describes the unique position lesbians occupy, where "even the most

private domains of desire and sexuality are marked by the traumas of public identification. Hall establishes this connection in *The Well of Loneliness*, as the utopian and romantic spaces she describes are repeatedly shut down by the realities of a homophobic society" (123). In Hall's personal life as much as in her character's plight, "the public discourse of inversion" and the "private experience of desire and sexuality" are inseparable, bringing "'the whole hostile world' into the most private of spaces" (125). Stephen's relationships, both romantic and friendly, are marred by the social implications of interacting with a known *invert*, a condition condemned by a large segment of the British population. From Stephen's first kiss with a woman (Hall 10) to her eventual parting from the love of her life (373), from her mother's repulsion to her friends' unfriendly letter once they find out Stephen is a lesbian, Hall proves again and again that even the most personal of relationships cannot escape the burden of homophobia.

Furthermore, the interference of others' politics in individual matters greatly affects how Stephen sees herself. Wherever she goes, she attracts unwanted attention and curious reactions. Angela's husband thinks "She's appalling; never saw such a girl in my life" (Hall 126); the hotel porter calls her a "queer-looking girl … mannish" (135); when Stephen is ring shopping for Angela, "People stared at the masculine-looking girl who seemed so intent upon feminine adornments. And someone, a man, laughed and nudged his companion: 'Look at that! What is it?'" (139). Even her friend's mother, "the Comptesse de Mirac saw in Stephen the type that she most mistrusted" (354). These examples highlight the micro-aggressions and outright persecution Stephen faces from a young age due to her nonconformity. Luckily, she has allies in her father, her governess Puddle, and her friend Martin. With Martin, who had studied current theories on inversion and accepted Stephen for who she is, Hall's protagonist is "far more at ease … and at times far less conscious of her own inversion" (356). Puddle, meanwhile, supports

Stephen and wants to encourage her, preparing what she will say if Stephen comes forward and admits her lesbianism: "'You're neither unnatural, nor abominable, nor mad … Have courage … be honourable" (129). Unfortunately, Puddle never has a chance to tell Stephen how she feels, and Stephen's father dies in a tragic accident before he can explain to his young daughter what she is.[36] Unfortunately, Stephen's constant marginalization and her obvious nonconformity lead to a terrible identity crisis that lasts her whole life. Although she is sometimes confident in her looks, often believes in her literary talent, and loves her female partners fiercely, Stephen cannot help but internalize her community's homophobia. She suffers greatly and agonizes over the uncertainties of her identity:

> She would think with a kind of despair: 'What am I, in God's name—some kind of abomination?' And this thought would fill her with a very great anguish, because, loving much, her love seemed to her sacred … Her mind would recoil while her sprit grew faint. A great darkness would seem to descend on her spirit—there would be no light wherewith to lighten that darkness. (Hall 127)

Poor Stephen is frequently plagued with thoughts of guilt, shame, and isolation that stem from the bigotry she faces almost daily. In spite of her marginalization, Stephen's goal is to "climb to success in a world that [is] trying its best to get her under" (Hall 215). She is branded as different from the very beginning due to her appearance and activities, making her an example of Carmen Martín Gaite's *chica rara*, or weird girl. This *chica rara* is defined as "a type of woman alien to

[36] Stephen's father is crushed to death by a falling tree branch before he can explain to Stephen that he has researched her *symptoms* and concluded that she is an *invert*. When Stephen prepares for her exile, she chances upon her father's books filled with notes about her identity, namely *Psychopathia Sexuali* by Richard von Krafft-Ebing. According to Taylor, the family estate, Morton, "has been interpreted as Edenic with Stephen's expulsion as punishment for 'sin', the sin in question being 'homosexuality'" (293). Once Stephen discovers her true identity, she hurriedly accepts it but does not celebrate it—it signifies the loss of her beloved home. Love proposes that "Stephen's embrace of the medical discourse of inversion offers a textbook example of Michel Foucault's concept of 'reverse discourse,' which he describes as the process by which a marginalized group begins to speak on its own behalf in the same terms by which it has been rendered marginal" (120-121).

the conventional schemes of order and disorder that presided over feminine education at the time" (111, my translation).[37] Like the *chica rara,* Stephen leaves the traditional domestic female spaces not looking for adventure but for liberation and personal growth (113).[38,39] Puddle wishes she could tell Stephen to make it her life goal to bring acceptance to people like her (Hall 129), therein challenging sexologists' theories on homosexuality as a problem.[40] Love states that "Hall's appropriation of this discourse [by sexologists about inverts] allowed her to represent in Stephen a sexual, self-identifying lesbian character arguing for her right to existence" (120). According to Newton, Stephen "is a double symbol, standing for the New Woman's painful position between traditional political and social categories, and for the lesbian struggle to define and assert an identity" (568). Indeed, *The Well* seems like a plea for visibility and acceptance not only for Stephen Gordon, but for lesbians like Hall herself.

Another part of Stephen's difficulties with her identity can be attributed to the widespread pathologization of female homosexuality after Krafft-Ebing's studies influenced the general perception of cross-dressing women. Newton describes how "sexual desire was not considered inherent in women, [meaning] the lesbian was thought to have a trapped male soul that phallicized her and endowed her with active lust" (566). This falls into the image of the inverted woman whose internal desires did not match her physical biology. According to Krafft-Ebing, "lesbianism is a congenital form of lust caused by and manifested in gender reversal" (qtd. in Newton 566). The use of the word 'congenital' points to the abnormal, a medical

[37] In the original Spanish, "un tipo de mujer ajeno a los esquemas convencionales de orden y desorden que presidian la educación femenina de la época" (Martín Gaite 111).

[38] Although Martín Gaite's work focuses on Spanish female writers of the mid-20th century, her concept of the weird girl can easily be applied to gender nonconforming women across history. Many of the postwar female authors who wrote about the *chica rara* had been identified as such themselves when European society did not have the words to understand and express fluctuating notions of gender and sexual orientation.

[39] For more on female spaces and the importance of space for creative outlets, see Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*.

[40] Hall hints that the governess is homosexual as well, meaning that Puddle's internal discourse encouraging Stephen to live freely also works to reassure Puddle herself that she is neither broken nor ill.

condition present from birth.[41] Indeed, Stephen's friends and family, once aware of her lesbianism, never expect her to change or seek treatment—she is what she is, and each character reacts differently. As much as Stephen tries to change her clothes, her hair, and her body (through weight training), "she will always be read as a woman who looks, dresses and behaves like a man" (Taylor 293). Although her gender identity remains uncertain, her attraction to women is undeniable and marks her as different regardless of her outward appearance.

According to Newton, the 19th century saw sex as purely phallic, signifying that "sex could only occur in the presence of an imperial and imperious penis" (561). A relationship between two women could therefore not be sexual. Social status also influenced the degree to which a person could enjoy sexual activity; while males of any class were accepted as lustful beings, only "déclassé" women, working women, and women of colour were considered sexual—upper-class women were protected from sexual impurity (561). The 'New Woman' of Hall's era who came of age at the turn of the 20th century challenges some of these traditional notions. In fact, the female protagonists of Hall's *The Unlit Lamp* (1924) and *The Well* have a "masculinized body and a strong, active mind to symbolize women's rejection of traditional gender divisions and bourgeois values" (Newton 563). Stephen's very existence defies the conventional order, and by acting on her lesbian desires, Stephen once again confronts the limits of womanhood and creates a space to live her identity authentically. During *The Well*, Stephen falls in love with three women. The first is a housemaid who goes by Collins. She is much more mature than seven year old Stephen but still humours her when she pretends to be a boy (Hall

[41] Newton explores the types of lesbians Krafft-Ebing differentiates in his studies. First, there are the lesbians who do not appear inverted, but respond favourably to masculine lesbians. Then come the lesbians who dress like men followed by those who act like men. Finally, the "fourth stage" of lesbianism, "the extreme grade of degenerative homosexuality" was attributed to women who were only women in their biology. (566) This concept of homosexuality as congenital is explained by the early 20th century understanding of human sexuality that, according to Doan, "positioned the sexual subject within a regime of normal and abnormal" ("A Peculiarly Obscure Subject" 101).

11). Even as a child, Stephen is attracted to this Collins, often describing her "pretty blue eyes and … funny alluring smile" (10); when she discovers Collins with a footman, her little heart breaks and she throws a pot at the man's head (19). Both employees are soon fired. But Collins is not blameless in regards to Stephen's adoration. When Stephen is upset at Collins for lying, the latter kisses little Stephen: "Stephen stood speechless from a sheer sense of joy … At that moment she knew nothing but beauty and Collins, and the two were as one, and the one was Stephen—and yet not Stephen either, but something more vast, that the mind of seven years found no name for" (10). This is the protagonist's first plunge into physical lesbianism but, being so young and living in a society that does not flaunt same-sex attraction, she does not understand the significance of this desire. Stephen is ultimately slighted by her first love, who is soon forced to leave the estate.

Often alone, Stephen yearns for companionship and eventually finds a wonderful friendship in a boy named Martin. Together, they discuss all sorts of regular topics like trees and God and birds (78). In fact, this male-female relationship actually softens the neighbourhood's opinion of Stephen—they think she is normal after all "and almost ceased to resent her" (79). Finally, Martin declares his love and proposes to Stephen, much to her horror (81). Spurned, he leaves, and Stephen grieves their lost friendship; she cannot, however, deny her phallophobia: "What was she, what manner of curious creature, to have been so *repelled* by a lover like Martin? Yet she had been repelled, and even her pity for the man could not wipe out that stronger feeling. She had driven him away because something within her was *intolerant* of that new aspect of Martin" (82, emphasis added). Even without the words to describe her repulsion, even without a term to identify her sexual orientation, Stephen knows she cannot be with Martin and again loses a relationship she adored.

At age 21, Stephen encounters an older, married woman named Angela and immediately forgets all the unpleasant gossip she has heard about the Crossby family in the wake of her attraction to this woman (108-109). They begin to see each other frequently and Stephen, not realizing her feelings at first, feels "exultant, very much alive and full of purpose" (112). Eventually, after only three weeks, she admits to Angela: "I know that I love you, and that nothing else matters in the world" (121). Angela, too, falls for Stephen—moments later, Stephen kisses her "full on the lips, as a lover" (121). Unfortunately, Angela uses Stephen's passionate love letter to save her own reputation and marriage (168-169), therein publicising Stephen's homosexuality and resulting in her exile from her estate. She also causes Stephen's estrangement from her mother, who calls her "unnatural" and "a sin against creation" and is physically repulsed by her own daughter (171). The mother even says she would rather see Stephen dead at her feet than alive and loving a woman (171). Soon, Stephen packs her bags and leaves her home and her country. She serves as an ambulance driver in the First World War in France and settles down with a younger colleague, Mary Llewellyn, in Stephen's house near Paris.[42] But the protagonist takes this final romance slowly, now fully aware of how society treats what it calls *inverts* and wondering what she has to offer Mary but disgrace (254). Finally, while on vacation in Spain together, the two finally give into their love in spite of the consequences and, Hall writes, "that night they were not divided" (265). They spend many months if not years together, enjoying each other's company, going through ups and downs like any relationship, and joining homosexual social circles bit by bit. Then, tragedy strikes: two of their lesbian friends die, the first from illness (Barbara) and the second by suicide (Jamie) (343). This reminds Mary and

[42] Hannah Roche states that "In the move from Morton, the archetypal English country house, to London to Paris, *The Well* progresses from the Victorian to the modern and, in doing so, shifts from the feminine (Stephen as daughter) to the masculine (Stephen as Mary Llewellyn's lover)," rejecting characteristics of the Victorian romantic tradition (10).

Stephen not only of their mortality, but also of the tragic condition of early 20th century British lesbians. Not long after, Stephen pretends to have an affair with another lesbian to encourage Mary to leave her, therein protecting her from life as an outcast. Mary falls into the waiting arms of Martin, with whom the couple had reconnected. Stephen makes the ultimate sacrifice in the last pages of Hall's novel: she tricks Mary into hating her enough to leave with Martin, whom she knows loves Mary fiercely and can provide the life she deserves.[43] Love proposes that Hall

> does not offer a humanist vision of Stephen's 'true self,' separate from society and the traumas it inflicts. … Hall's portrait of the tragic lesbian comes into distinct conflict with later utopian visions of lesbian identity as outside or beyond the terms of patriarchy … Hall offers simply a plea for social acceptance, which, in her radically historicist view, is necessary for any shift in identity or consciousness. (119)

The tragic lesbian trope appears frequently throughout literature and continues to exist in contemporary media portrayals of homosexual women, showcasing the inseparable nature of personal lesbian identity and a larger societal discourse. Although the representation of same-sex couples helps shift the present consciousness towards acceptance, the manner of representation proves that the lesbian condition is ultimately a tragic one. Hannah Roche explains that "Stephen's bildung or quest for self-realisation as an invert is ultimately abandoned, with other lesbian characters finding themselves stripped of their right to love and self-fulfilment by either an engagement (Mary) or death (Jamie and Barbara)" and that "Martin's 'victory' over Stephen indicates compliance with the prescribed notion that 'the romance plot … valorizes heterosexual as opposed to homosexual ties' (DuPlessis, p. 5)" (11). This may, however, simply fit into Rachel DuPlessis' understanding of the romance novel as a genre that concludes with a wedding

[43] Love summarizes this heart-wrenching passage: "Stephen martyrs herself to the discourse of inversion, giving up the happiness she has known with Mary to open herself to the horrible army of inverts who physically possess her, demanding that she speak on their behalf" (120).

or death, therein evoking "sympathy for the cause" and appropriating "the institution of heterosexual romantic fiction" (Roche 11). Hall does not shy away from the tragic realities of love, especially same-sex love, and represents it accurately in *The Well*: "Rather than imagining a society on other terms, Hall is attentive to the destructive power of society as she currently experiences it" (Love 119). The parallels between author and protagonist bring an extra layer of desperation to the plea Hall makes in her lesbian works. This call for acceptance and recognition is most obvious in the final line of *The Well*: "'Acknowledge us, oh God, before the whole world. Give us also the right to our existence!'" (Hall 375). The voice may be Stephen's, but the message clearly goes beyond the novel's boundaries. Hall wants a better life for lesbians in her conservative British society and writes to call on her peers for support and respect.

With both implicit and explicit scenes of lesbian love, *The Well* was bound to be received amidst much controversy. Maria Popova declares that "three months before the publication of Virginia Woolf's groundbreaking novel *Orlando* … the English novelist and poet Radclyffe Hall … set into motion a cultural revolution. With the publication of *The Well of Loneliness*, the way gender and sexual identities are formulated and articulated was forever changed".[44] Hall knew, when she sent off her manuscript for publishing, that her words would have an immeasurable effect on society. In fact, she wrote to her publisher, Jonathan Cape, to say: "I have put my pen at the service of some of the most persecuted and misunderstood people in the world" (qtd. in Popova). Of course, Hall herself is included in this category of persecuted people. Soon, reviews poured in—some positive and others extremely negative.[45] The most infamous of these reviews

[44] Popova describes *Orlando* as "a classic celebrated as 'the longest and most charming love letter in literature,' which subverted censorship and revolutionized the politics of same-sex love". Both Virginia and her then husband Leonard Woolf openly criticized *The Well* for its "dullness"—Roche suggests they may have felt threatened by Hall's talent and confidence (4).

[45] Positive reviews quoted in Oram and Turnbull: "it is a plea, passionate, yet admirably restrained and never offensive, for the extension of social toleration, compassion and recognition to the biologically abnormal woman" ("*The Well of Loneliness*" 184); "I admire Radclyffe Hall's courage tremendously" (196); "When you read [*The*

came from a journalist named James Douglas and led to widespread moral panic, culminating in *The Well*'s notorious trial. In his review, Douglas said: "We must protect our children against their specious fallacies and sophistries. Therefore, we must banish their propaganda from our bookshops and our libraries. I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel. Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul" (qtd. in Oram & Turnbull 187). Doan notes that most subsequent articles about the novel or the trial included this passage about the poison of the "lesbian threat" ("The Mythic Moral Panic" 2). Douglas's scathing editorial pathologized female homosexuality, using words like *contamination*, *plague*, and *putrification* to turn his country against Hall and lesbians in general; this one journalist publishing in the *Sunday Express* singlehandedly spearheaded the movement against *The Well* (3). Although the charges against Hall and the novel's ban were eventually dropped, the public trial for obscenity served its purpose in more ways than one. According to Oram and Turnbull, the book became a "literary cause célèbre" ("*The Well of Loneliness*" 182), while Doan proposes that had Douglas truly intended to protect innocent readers, he would not have publicized his opinion so vehemently—his outcry only ensured the novel "an immediate 'succès de scandale'" ("The Mythic Moral Panic" 20). What, then, what his intention in creating such a fuss around this literary poison? While censure did not touch *Orlando* (1928), "*The Well of Loneliness* pleads the cause of sexual inversion by taking up an aggressively polemical stance," resulting in its temporary ban (Parkes 434). Perhaps Virginia Woolf's work would have benefitted from the publicity, fame, and infamy *The Well* gathered thanks to outspoken journalists like Douglas.

Well], it gave you some identity about what it was you were feeling. I really realised there was some labelling then, to who I was. … And I used to fancy myself looking like this woman [Hall], you know, with the cravat and white shirt and tie" (198); "it made me feel less lonely" (199). Although many celebrated Hall's work as "turning point in the understanding of lesbian sexuality" (181), *The Well* received no shortage of negative and homophobic reviews like this one: "this novel forces upon our society a disagreeable task which it has hitherto shirked, the task of cleaning itself from the leprosy of these lepers, and making the air clean and wholesome once more" (qtd. in Oram & Turnbull, "*The Well of Loneliness*" 186).

Though Hall could not have predicted the immensity of *The Well*'s effect on her country and later the world, her practiced hand chose exactly the right mannish lesbian protagonist. Adam Parkes highlights that "In order to advocate sympathy and tolerance for lesbians, Hall had made sure that her lesbian heroine, Stephen Gordon, appeared above reproach" (434). Indeed, Stephen is honourable and kind, ultimately sacrificing her happiness for Mary's chance at a socially acceptable heterosexual union. She serves her country in the war and is regarded as a brave person, a talented writer, and a generous aristocrat. The main criticism of Stephen's character is her overall sadness. Love asserts that "one reason why Radclyffe Hall's work has remained so controversial in the lesbian community is that she rarely, if ever, 'left out how bad people felt'" (125). Many readers "have rejected *The Well* as excessively dark" and condemn "its extremely abject tone, overblown expressions of self-hatred, and tragic ending" (117). There is no denying that the novel's underlying atmosphere is a melancholy one, but for Love, "it is precisely the tragedy of Hall's text that makes it so compelling" (118). Hall does not shy away from the hard truths of homophobia and presents her characters with the same self-awareness she has in regards to society's views on homosexuality. Some critics also denounce Hall's internalized homophobia and the stereotypes she reproduces in *The Well*: "lesbian feminists condemn [the novel] for presenting lesbians as different from women in general … the mannish lesbian, of whom Stephen Gordon is the most famous prototype, has symbolized the stigma of lesbianism" (Newton 560). According to Newton, "Hall's association of lesbianism and masculinity needs to be challenged not because it doesn't exist, but because it is not the only possibility" (575). In the 21st century, concepts of gender identity and sexual orientation are much more present and understood in social discourse, at least in the Occident. But Hall's era was more limited in terms of social justice and equality—in spite of its flaws, *The Well* is a

ground-breaking “political statement about the position of lesbians” and a “propaganda novel” intent on impacting readers everywhere and challenging dominant views on same-sex attraction (Roche 6). Taylor concludes that regardless of an individual’s opinion on *The Well* as a literary text or lesbian missive, “Hall’s fictionalisation of the female invert has made an important contribution to the establishment of a lesbian literary heritage, and the development of a visible political identity” (288). *The Well* presents a positive depiction of same-sex attraction that was broadcasted across Britain, shaping its views on homosexual and cross-dressing women.

Finally, Hall’s forlorn yet passionate *Bildungsroman* not only challenged perceptions of lesbianism but also created a sense of community among nonconforming women of the early 20th century. While Stephen Gordon confronted the gender binary and suffered through an agonizing journey to self-realization, Hall herself brought attention to British lesbians’ plight and demanded recognition, action, and respect in an effort to shift the tragic lesbian’s destiny from a personal problem to a social issue, therein reversing the aforementioned inseparability of social discourse and private desire. The original lesbian novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, disrupted the social order, changed literary norms, and contributed to the limited corpus of literature portraying same-sex love between women.

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